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## 'The Productive Beliefs

## THE COLE LECTURES

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*The Cole Lectures for 1919*  
*delivered before Vanderbilt University*

# The Productive Beliefs

By  
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The Abingdon Press

NEW YORK

CINCINNATI

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## THE COLE LECTURES

**T**HE late Colonel E. W. Cole of Nashville, Tennessee, donated to Vanderbilt University the sum of five thousand dollars, afterwards increased by Mrs. E. W. Cole to ten thousand, the design and conditions of which gift are stated as follows :

“The object of this fund is to establish a foundation for a perpetual Lectureship in connection with the Biblical Department of the University, to be restricted in its scope to a defense and advocacy of the Christian religion. The lectures shall be delivered at such intervals, from time to time, as shall be deemed best by the Board of Trust; and the particular theme and lecturer shall be determined by nomination of the Theological Faculty and confirmation of the College of Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Said lecture shall always be reduced to writing in full, and the manuscript of the same shall be the property of the University, to be published or disposed of by the Board of Trust at its discretion, the net proceeds arising therefrom to be added to the foundation fund, or otherwise used for the benefit of the Biblical Department.”

LECTURE I  
THE ADVENTUROUS GOD





## LECTURE I

### THE ADVENTUROUS GOD

**I**N the year 378 A. D. the world trembled. In that year the battle of Adrianople was fought. In that year the Emperor Valens was defeated and killed. For the first time Roman soldiers were defeated by Barbarian warriors within the bounds of the Empire. Men began to look at each other with strange eyes and to wonder what the future of the world would be. In the year 410 A. D. the world reeled as from a terrible blow. In that year Alaric and his West Goths sacked the city of Rome. The event staggered the imagination of men. It was as if the sun had suddenly begun to dance wildly about the sky. Rome the stable, Rome the dependable, Rome the eternal had bent before the onslaught of its foes. Life itself seemed beginning to fall apart. The very structure of civilization seemed about to disintegrate. With strange palpitations of the heart and with eyes full of fear and anxiety men whispered together about the bewildering days which had come upon them and the more bewildering days which lay ahead. In the midst of it all, while men's minds were dizzy and their hearts were faint, a man in North Africa caught a vision of the permanent in the midst of the fleeting, a vision of the stable and

secure in the midst of the disintegrating and the decaying. Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, witnessing the day of the humiliation of Rome, the great City of Man, wrote his powerful and inspiring book, "The City of God." In the midst of the falling timbers of the Roman Civilization he found safety and hope in that vast and imperial structure, the civilization of the Kingdom of God. His book was a great adventure of faith. But there was a solid force about it which mastered men's minds. For many a century it wielded an influence of the utmost potency. And in the day of doubt and fear when it was written it was like a shelter in a destructive storm.

The thing which Augustine did for the fifth century must be done for every century. The sense of the eternal verities which are pressing their way into the heart of contemporary civilization must be made dominating and commanding by an interpretation rich in vitality and cutting in intellectual penetration and luminous with moral and spiritual power. If this is the need of every age it is the crying need of those generations which like that of Augustine see the shaking of the very foundations of the world and the inrush of the currents of a new day. The bursting of shells along the Marne in 1914 and the bridging of the Atlantic with sturdy boys in 1918 are elements in a struggle which has changed the world for all of us. You can move your body more quickly than you can move your mind, and some of the boys who after seeing terrible fighting in France have returned to America, awake in

the morning knowing that they have not even yet been able to bring their minds back from the bitter and intolerable scenes of the battle front. Many men under the stress of the hardest hour, in the shock of the very moment of supreme demand, found themselves and life's meaning in a swift flash of intuition, and they are now wistfully wondering if the days of peace can authenticate and make real and permanent in their lives the meaning of that flaming insight.

America, which Columbus had discovered in 1492, discovered itself in 1918, and this hundred million human organism of passionate devotion to a great cause, pouring out its treasure and sending out its sons, is fairly trembling now with the shock of reaction which has come with the arrival of peace. Much disillusionment has come with peace. Many ugly and unlovely facts have been forced upon our unwilling eyes. Is there a fashion in which the deepest passion of the hour of high enthusiasm can be saved in the midst of the confusions of a world-wide reaction? Can all the impalpable and invisible glory of purpose, which responded to the demand for the mobilization of the moral and spiritual resources of the nation, be held steady and conserved and made part of the permanent possession of the country? There were groups of men who lived through the crisis with troubled and unsympathetic minds. They tried to fit into the situation in some practical fashion, but their whole theory of life, their whole sense of the moral and spiritual fitness of things was so deeply shocked that they moved about

as those in a horrible dream. They could not shout when others shouted and their whole inner life seemed out of tune in the presence of the world-wide enthusiasm. Is there a fashion in which the undoubted human idealism of this group can be fitted into the glow of a new vision of the new day, so that they shall come out of their tragic and pitiful loneliness and once more feel the currents of contemporary life flowing warmly through their veins? There were groups of people in various countries so busy thinking about the wrongs and the needs of particular classes that their eyes could not be adjusted to the world crisis. With yearning and trembling and eager fingers they are trying to rescue from the contentions of the present days a new hope for those to whom life has given least hope in the long years of the past.

Is there a fashion in which the meaning of their passion and of all the noblest contemporary enthusiasms can be united and made part of a program in which we can all join in determined conviction as we go at the task of remaking the world? Wild forces of lawlessness have been released. The lurid light of the conflagration of civilization itself shines upon us across the distances and over the seas. There are lawless forces in our own land which would spell liberty in deeds affronting every moral standard, and would interpret freedom as license to ravish every fair innocence in the world. And there are men who fearful at the thought of impending crisis have lost steadiness and poise and are spending their days and nights in fear of potential catastrophe. Is there a

fashion in which so clear and noble a view of the real meaning of political and economic and industrial freedom can be set forth and realized that all the forces of good will can be united in a strong and lucid program, the men of trembling hesitation may be reassured, and the forces of lawlessness may be held in check? In the clutter and confusion of our thinking about social problems and social relationships we have half forgotten the hungry cry of the inner life of every individual man for interpretation and satisfaction. But the cry persists. And multitudes of restless hearts and lives are waiting for the interpreting and guiding word.

Is there a fashion in which an enlarged and resilient Christianity can speak with telling authenticity in answer to the inarticulate outreach of all this need? The nations are confronted by the problem of finding a way to work out a real and unified life for the whole family of peoples in the world. Is there a fashion in which the world's idealism can be harnessed effectively and successfully for the doing of this tragically needed piece of work? And moving through this confusing mass of problems and articulate and inarticulate needs dare we say that a Christianity eternally young and nobly adequate can utter the guiding and masterful and victorious word? Is it possible in any sense to do for the twentieth century what Saint Augustine did for the fifth? Is it possible to write a City of God for our time?

At once it must be said very definitely and decisively, that this series of lectures does not contemplate so ambitious a task. This Gothic cathedral of the

mind in which the men of our time may worship must be built. But that high task is not the one upon which we are entering. There is, however, within the reach of the possibilities of the present discussion the simpler but very important work of taking a survey of the material which lies at our hands and of gaining some conception even if in shadowy outline of the fashion in which it must be used by the builders who bring adequate minds and hands to the supreme task.

The delightfully friendly, and yet urgently serious, discussion carried on by Professor Royce and Professor James as to the meaning and the range of the pragmatic principle may well be in our minds as we approach the work before us. Has the pragmatic method given us an approach to reality and a method of testing it or is our whole conception of what is real modified by the pragmatic philosophy until we must say that we are using words without meaning if we insist that there is any reality beyond serviceableness? When the question is put in this form it will not require a long process of dialectic to lead most of us to the place where we are willing to declare that as far as we are concerned the pragmatic method is of the utmost importance as long as it is just a method, but it becomes a vain pretense when it assumes to be a metaphysic. We are willing to admit that there must be some sort of reality back of a conception which year after year and century after century helps people to get on with life. But we are not at all willing to admit that the only reality it has is just this power to help people to meet life. It helps them because they believe that it stands for some-

thing objective. And if it has no objective relation its capacity to be helpful is based upon an illusion. The real and valid meaning of pragmatism may be summed up in the statement that it perpetually brings before us the fact that it is the business of philosophy to gather together and classify those conceptions which have proved themselves by their capacity to function in the field of experience, rather than to spin spider webs of formal logic and to classify those conceptions which a mathematical analysis would suggest ought to function in actual life. If a man to whom pragmatism is a metaphysic as well as a philosophy objects that this is not pragmatism, we must be content to reply if this is removed from pragmatism there is nothing left which is sound or true.

To put all this a little less formally there are two ways to approach the task of interpreting life. One is to treat the whole experience of life as a series of experiments in a vast laboratory, and then to collect the results of these experiments, to classify them and to hold fast to those views of life and destiny which have power to answer to the outreach of human nature, to discipline its energies and to release its potencies. The other is to make the whole matter an exercise of formal thought and of mathematical proof. In the former case our thinking will keep in the closest touch with life. In the latter case it will involve a wonderfully intricate and involved piece of reasoning, but it will have a strange aloofness from all the gripping and vital aspects of human experience. The act of faith which dares to assume that those conceptions which vindicate themselves by their

perpetual capacity to function effectively have a deep connection with the reality of things, is an exact parallel to the act of faith of the scientist who assumes that he can depend upon the unity, the uniformity and the dependable activity of that vast network of manifold relationships which we call nature.

The principle we are discussing was frankly made decisive for theological thinking in the most brilliant work of Albrect Ritschl. His value judgments put the pragmatic principle into theological language. The emergence of the principle is at least as early as the words of Jesus, "If a man willeth to do . . . he shall know." What a conception means to you when you put it in action is frankly recognized in these words to be of more importance than what it means simply as a result of cool and critical formal analysis.

The method which it is necessary to use in coming into some fresh and mastering contact with the realities of life and religion is then clearly before us. We must go to life itself. We must go to its deepest experiences. We must follow its hours of defeat. We must behold its hours of victory. And right in this wonderfully varied and moving contact with life we must find those facts, those principles, and those conceptions which have it in them to be the driving force of the best life of the world. We must go to the life of our own day. We must listen to the tale of all its confusion. We must listen to the tale of all its woe. We must listen to the tale of its blighting and devastating evil. We must feel the very pulse beat of its hope and fear, of its joy and its sorrow, its aspiration and its despair, the very taste of its satisfaction,



its yearning, its remorse and its peace. And in the terms of this sharply concrete and vividly actual contact with life we must do our thinking. We must seek those beliefs which have the potency of being productive in just this world, of just these problems and of just these relationships. By productive beliefs we mean those beliefs which are necessary to the full and adequate functioning of the individual man and of society. With the laboratory test in our minds we are to go forth on the quest for these beliefs.

The method which we are to follow involves in its very nature an answer to the most significant questions which we can ask regarding authority and especially regarding religious authority. Men have attempted to find a formal and mechanical authority outside themselves. They have attempted to build upon an infallible church. They have attempted to build upon an infallible book. And the external infallible authorities have proved astonishingly inadequate. Out of all these experiences the truth has gradually emerged that the authoritative must come right up out of life, the mastering must speak from within human experience, the transcendent must become the immanent in order to compel the mind and conscience, and to become regnant over the whole personality of man. Long ago Coleridge put the principle sufficiently well when he said, "The Bible finds me." The spark kindled in his own life by contact with the Bible was just the thing which made the Bible mastering to him. The objective Bible is impotent. The subjective man is just

about as impotent. It is exactly when the Bible by means of its flaming conceptions begins to burn in the mind and the heart of a man and to function in his deeds that we can actually approach the question of the power of the Bible in a fashion which is dealing not with vain words but with living experiences. It is because the Bible is in this sense a productive book that it has an absolutely unique place in the history and the working of religion in the world.

Dr. Robert William Dale thought his way through the heart of the problem in the days when the searching methods of modern criticism were becoming common in England. He laid down three principles which are still potent. The first was that the portrait of Christ in the Gospels is self-authenticating. However it got there it is the one portrait of a life supremely gifted with the power of ethical and spiritual seizure, with the capacity to hold the mind and the conscience of men. The second assertion of Dr. Dale was that when a man surrenders to the leadership and the command of the Master whom the Gospels portray a remarkable thing happens. The Christ of history becomes the Christ of experience. He ceases to be the Christ in a book and becomes the Christ in our lives. Martin Luther once said, "If some one should knock at the door of my heart and say, 'Who dwells there?' I would not reply, 'Martin Luther dwells here,' I would reply, 'Jesus Christ dwells here.'" The surrender to the Christ in the Gospels means the discovery of the Christ in experience. The third principle upon which Dr. Dale insisted was the fashion in which the knowledge of

men is capable of social confirmation. He brilliantly illustrated the way in which even the most ordinary kind of knowledge comes to complete assurance through social confirmation. And applying this principle to the Christian religion he brought forth the multitude of men whom no man can number, the multitude of human beings living and dead who have found their personal problems solved and their lives transformed by means of contact with the organizing and interpreting and sustaining energies which come forth from the personality of Jesus Christ. Later on in this series of lectures it will become evident that we wish to make our own appeal to the functioning power of the great Christian facts and truths. Just at the moment what we wish to do is to call attention to the fashion in which every one of Dr. Dale's principles is an appeal to experience. Sometimes it is an appeal to the experience of the individual. Sometimes it is an appeal to the reinforcing power of the experience of the group. But all the while it is clear that the religion which becomes mastering to Dr. Dale is a religion which can prove itself upon the field of achievement. What it can do proves the quality of what it is. The book which can secure a unique place in the thought and life of Dr. Dale must meet the same test. You must judge it by what comes out of it. By its fruit you must know it. The supremely productive book is the supremely mastering book. In the only sense in which the words have practical meaning the productive is the authoritative. In the struggles of experience religion must be put to the test. It is a

question of the survival of the fittest. And it is the vital test which enables us to know what religion is fit to survive.

It is possible to lift at this point a very searching question. What sort of beliefs are really productive? Are they beliefs which have to do with a method of living and a noble program of human relationships? Are they beliefs about the nature and activity of God, the nature and activity of man and an ultimate goal for human life? Or are they both kinds of beliefs joined together in a sort of passionate organism of conviction? Is religion a method of life? Does it include a view of the universe and a view of God? Is it an experience which requires the ministry of every sort of truth? Or is it an activity based upon a dream of brotherhood and not needing to ask any very widely ranging questions about the nature of man and the nature of God?

These questions have never been more actual and real than they are to-day. And they come to a head in the most penetrating question which men of our time are asking, namely, can you retain a powerful and adequate religion without believing in a personal God? It is in the light of this question, which is the essential question in the mind of many an eager and truth-seeking student, that we must approach our discussion of the belief regarding God which is productive and which is capable of vindicating itself in the strange and seething life of our time.

It is only fair that we should consider the psychology of this question as well as its logic. When we understand the reason why a question is lifted it is

often true that we have a new insight into the nature of the question itself.

Francis Bacon in one of his brilliant pieces of criticism of the inadequate methods of men who deal in the matters of the mind and its relation to the facts of life, complains of those who "like spiders, spin out their own webs." One recognizes at once the type of mental activity which is full of motion and energy but which fails to achieve any actual contact with the reality of things. The student of theology must very frankly admit that there has been no end of theological activity which makes just this impression upon the investigating mind. There are plenty of alert and shrewd distinctions, there is the process of a wonderfully brilliant dialectic, there is constant evidence of genuine mental power. But somehow all of it seems apart from any real experience of life. You go forth on long and perilous flights of speculation, and when they are completed you have the dizzy sense of height still with you, but it would be hard to tell in any practical and concrete way of any important result of the difficult journey. Of course there are times when this appearance of complete aloofness from life is the result of our inadequate apprehension of the nature and the relationships of the process of thought which we so lightly and easily condemned. But too often the difficulty has been that the theological thinker himself has quite gotten away from any real issue, continuing, to go back to Bacon's figure, to spin out his own web. There has been so much of this barren thinking and it has been accompanied so often by a

hard and dogmatic assertiveness that it is not surprising that a definite and sharp reaction has made itself felt. There have been men who made thinking about the nature of God a substitute for facing the practical responsibility of doing the will of God. And over against them men of ethical passion have sometimes insisted that the important matter is to do the will of a righteous deity and not to have theories about Him. The next step has not been hard. The type of man has arisen who has declared that God we do not know, but duty we do understand. And it has been easy to come to the place where religion was interpreted as a working passion for human brotherhood, with no particular need of a deity as more than a rhetorical decoration. So emerges the very practical question: Is God necessary to religion?

The answer is a matter of the most strategic significance. The truth is that all the insistence that Christianity is a program and not a philosophy, a way of doing things and not a way of thinking about things is based upon a fundamental fallacy. This is the belief that after you have discarded the Christian view of God you can retain the Christian code of morals. There is the most simple and naïve belief in certain quarters that there is something self-protecting and self-authenticating about the Christian program, so that you can keep its sanctions clear and its behests imperative whatever your belief or lack of belief about the fundamental matters of the universe. Now as a matter of personal and individual psychology to be sure it is often true that a particular man keeps his Christian ethics after he has lost his Chris-

tian beliefs. And this man is always to be considered with the most friendly and sympathetic understanding. The Church must recognize the difficulty of his problem and the perplexities involved in his whole situation and it must treat him with that hearty and tender brotherliness which itself will be an element in the solution of his problem.

In a transitional period like ours there are sure to be multitudes of men who pass through this experience, and the Christian leader proves his right to be called a pastor of men's minds by the understanding and welcoming friendliness which he shows to all such men. But after all they are dwelling in a half-way house. And this will become evident either to them or to their intellectual progeny. In the long run one must believe more or one must believe less. In the last analysis the only way to keep Christian morals is to keep the Christian God. Friedrich Nietzsche felt a deep enough scorn for men like Herbert Spencer, who tried to crown an impersonal world with the adopted glory of an ethic which was the gift of the most nobly personal of religions. Nietzsche was sure that he represented the real logic of the movement. Many nineteenth century men had attacked the philosophy of Christianity without any thought of loosening the hold of its ethics. Nietzsche boldly and powerfully declared that with one discarded the other must go too. His insight was clear enough. If you accept his premises there is something inevitable about his conclusions providing you are robust and daring enough to accept the challenge and fearlessly follow where they lead.

All this is illustrated in a modern story, characterized by that quick and penetrating psychological insight, which one has learned to expect from certain contemporary novelists. The story has to do with a father and a daughter. The father is a keen-minded worker in fields demanding the most exact knowledge and the most close and careful thought. He has worked out a philosophy of life in connection with his technical activities. He has ceased to believe in personality. He believes only in mechanical and mathematical forces. He reduces all experiences which seem personal to impersonal terms. But he has kept a conscience which is the product of another and different view of life and its relationships. He is splendidly honest. He is nobly self-controlled. And he is finely unselfish. It is a strange day in his life when he discovers that his daughter, who is familiar with his technical activities and has a certain expertness in respect of some of them, has used her knowledge in order in the most skillful fashion to administer poison to a person whom she desires to have removed from the world. When the father expostulates with the daughter he finds her beyond the reach of his sense of horror and shame. She tells him very frankly that if he chooses to maintain ethical distinctions which really have no place in his view of the world and of life, that is quite his own affair. But as for her, she has accepted that view of life as a series of mechanical and impersonal reactions, which he has taught her. She is simply following it to its logical conclusions. Of course there is no place for a code of morals in such a view. There is no place for



responsibility in such a view. What he calls murder is simply an event in the natural order and there is no real place for praise or blame. All this seems shocking enough. But the truth is that in the long run if you insist on having an impersonal universe there will arise a generation which will insist upon going the whole logical length of the conclusions implicit in such a view. If you are going to keep ethics as a permanent part of the life of man you must keep the foundation in an assured conviction regarding a personal and righteous God.

Now there is a philosophical dialectic by which this position can be amply justified. And there is a method by which it can be built into a view which does ample justice to every essential element in the scientific situation. Close analysis will make it clear that the belief in the uniformity of nature is itself an act of faith, and that at last the world with which the scientist deals requires a theistic basis for its orderliness, just as the world with which the student of ethics deals requires a theistic basis for its continuance. But all this is aside from the method and the approach of this particular series of lectures. We are discussing the productive beliefs. And we are pointing out the necessity of a certain view of God if all those sanctions which we call ethical are to maintain their place in the life of the world. Our whole point is that life itself will demand those beliefs which are necessary to its fullest and amplest functioning, and we already see that a belief in God has a notable place upon this basis of judgment.

We are now ready for a question which will carry

us into the heart of our discussion. The question may be put in this form: What is that view of God which is most potential for men living under the conditions and pressures and experiences of this world in process of reconstruction after the great war?

“Our sons have shown us God,” cries Mr. Britling. The tense and terrible struggles of the days of war, the hours of waiting and the hours of anxiety, and the last dreadful pang of bereavement have brought the keen and self-conscious and half-flippant man of letters to a place where he has a new and mastering knowledge of contact with the great master of life. What sort of a God is it who commands a man’s whole life in such an hour? We are not consulting Mr. Wells’ agile mind for an answer to this question. We are consulting Mr. Britling’s profound experience for a guide. Suppose we put the whole matter in another way. Here is a boy in the trenches at the very front with No Man’s Land before him. The night is fantastically illuminated by star-shells and by all the strange and lurid lights of war. In the midst of all the noise, at the heart of all the bright tumult, the boy three thousand miles from home finds himself thinking. What sort of God will master and hold his allegiance in that hour, when stripped of make-believe and subterfuge he confronts the very reality of things? Here is a world the whole sensitive surface of whose life is trembling with responsive readiness for all simple and true and authentic impressions after its far thrown agony of war. What sort of a God will write his name on the

very fibre of the age's life and leave it as the deepest and most potent impression?

When we approach the matter in any such fashion as this it is clear at once that a static, immovable God, sitting alone in the solemn splendours of his own perfections will not move the age in which we live. And it is equally evident that a God suspended at the end of a syllogism, or a remote and bewildering deity found at the end of some intricate and winding path of dialectic will not master the minds, and quicken the hearts, and compel the consciences of the men and women alive to-day. If we cannot find a God who will meet us at the most intense and real spot in our own experience, if we cannot find a God who can parallel our experiences with experiences of his own which for all their high and commanding quality make him comprehensible to us, and make us comprehensible to him, we cannot find a God at all. A First Cause is an immensely interesting goal of a certain process of thought. But a First Cause is simply unable to do for us that which we supremely need, if he is simply a First Cause and nothing more.

What is that aspect of human life which is most deeply characteristic and defining? What is that aspect of contemporary experience which has burned itself most deeply into the minds and hearts of men? The answer to one question is the answer to the other. The strange deep central experience in life which rouses us to fear and question and hope is just this. Life is an adventure. We have sailed from a mysterious port. We are passing through a succession

of bewildering experiences. We move toward a far-off goal of our desire. Life is an adventure. It is full of risks. You must gather all your daring, and all your faith and all your hope in order to live at all. And just this very demand in clearest and sharpest perspective has been the characteristic of contemporary life. The two million boys who went to France, the boys in camps at home, the fathers and mothers spending their vitality in vicarious giving, all these represent a great adventure. It is an adventure of faith. It takes great risks in the name of an ideal. It goes forth with dauntless decision to do the thing which must be done, whatever the cost. The very nature of life is moral adventure. And supremely the very nature of contemporary life has been moral adventure.

And so it comes to pass that the only God who can speak with compulsion to our time, or to any time deeply conscious of the sharp realities of human experience, is a God who knows moral adventure as a personal experience. He must be a moral adventurer too. The tender serenities which are sweetly expressed in the thought of a God across the endless calm of whose divine life there never blows a breath of tempest have their own place in life. But in the storm-tossed world where we live we can only worship a God like some cedar of Lebanon, through whose branches the impetuous storms have blown, and which has held fast and steady in spite of all the storms. Only a storm God can hear the prayers of men and women who have to live in the storm.

When we look back upon our Christian heritage from the standpoint of this conception we are fairly startled at the riches which confront us. One of these days somebody will have to write a book about the unsuspected implications of the Christian religion. And when the book is adequately written it will expand itself into a library. Molière's famous character was thunderstruck to find that all his life he had been speaking prose without knowing it. We are almost equally astonished when we discover that we have had a great masterful adventurous God all the while, and yet we have spent a good deal of our time saying perfectly incidental and perfectly innocuous things about Him. Was it Lowell who once said that there was dynamite in the New Testament if anybody should ever happen to discover it? There is surely dynamite in the Christian thought of God. It is simply full of potential explosiveness.

We meet the adventurous God, first, when we think of creation. The more you think of it the more astonishing creation is. And, of course, I am not now referring to any of the Middle Age puzzles as to the making of everything out of nothing. Nobody has a receipt for creation. So we may as well let that aspect of the subject pass. The wonderful thing about creation is the making of people. There is nothing especially exciting about making a tree. The tree can never defy you. There is nothing especially dramatic about making a stone. The stone is helpless in your hands. But the minute you make a person you have made a possible foe. A person can love back. He can also hate back. And when you have a world

full of persons you are in danger of a world-wide mutiny. The method of creation does not change all this. You can have all the millenniums you need for the most dignified unfolding of implicit potencies. The fact remains that when personality emerges and self-conscious will has come to be, the curtain is ready to rise upon a scene packed with thrills. The God who took all the risks of creation was the most amazing adventurer of whom we can conceive.

A sculptor is in a sense an adventurer. He puts his very soul into the marble. But a father is more of an adventurer, for he is responsible for the existence of a being who may break his heart. The Great Father God ran the risk of infinite heart-break for the sake of the hope of infinite loving companionship. He took risks which are so vast and so far-reaching that they are simply beyond the range of our thought.

Now the moment you begin to think of the God of creation in this fashion He begins to come within the range of sympathetic understanding. In our own small way we have had experiences which are parallel to this. We can find a platform upon which to stand in order to speak to such a God. And it is a mistake to call this sort of thinking anthropomorphic. That is getting the actual situation upside down. The things we have been saying have their real connection with that flash of Biblical insight in which it is said that God created man in His own image. The Divine Adventurer put the heart of adventure into the children of men. And so when they sense the quality of His adventure it awakens echoes of experiences and of desires in their own hearts. What

life is in a small way to them, it is in an infinitely large and far-reaching way to Him. Even the boy in the trenches can find a point of contact with a God whose creation of man was the most amazing and daring adventure, a God whose every relation with man has involved the taking of infinite risks.

When we begin to think of providence in the terms of the belief in an adventurous God a flood of human interest is thrown upon the whole subject. Alice in Wonderland had a most adventurous time trying to play a game of croquet. The mallets were alive. The balls were alive. And the arches were alive. Sometimes when she went to strike a ball it would quietly move out of the way. Sometimes when a ball was driven in the direction of an arch the arch would move to another part of the croquet ground. Sometimes the mallet would begin to sulk and refuse to hit the ball. Alice felt that under such circumstances it was very hard to play a successful game. Just that problem we meet in life all the while. We are playing a game where all the mallets and balls and arches are alive. What an intricate and bewildering matter it leads life to be. If people were only like the figures which you put on a page, and which stay there in the most accommodating fashion, or like the books which never get tired of being on your library shelf, how wonderfully life would be simplified. Now this difficulty which is acute enough for us, God meets in an infinitely more acute fashion. We have to get something done in spite of a few groups of wilful men and women. God has to get everything done in spite of all the wilful and confused men and

women there are in all the world. The practical functioning of God's providential activity is an adventure which grows more daring and bewildering the more we think of it.

At this point it is possible that we may be met by some advocate of the theology of mathematical logic armed with a serious objection. He reminds us that while it is quite true that such a conception of God as that which we are advocating would have immense power to fasten itself upon men's minds, there are reasons for saying that such a conception is impossible. He reminds us that we seem to have forgotten all about the divine foreknowledge.

For the moment this objection may seem very impressive. But very quickly we are likely to see that one difficulty with this sort of argument is just that it proves too much. If you go through the life of God treating all of His attributes in this hard and absolute fashion the result is that you make any sort of real experience impossible to the Divine Being. When perfection by being loyal to some aspects of formal definition becomes so strangely attenuated a thing that it leaves God incapable of having real experiences it has actually led to a conception of an imperfect God. When we allow God to be caught in the chains of His own attributes we have really become the victims of our own words. Many a philosophy of the Absolute has come to shipwreck in just this fashion.

What we must say amounts to this. God's omniscience is not a theoretical quality. It is just the knowledge which is possible to a perfect and per-



fectly functioning being. It is the knowledge which is connected with an infinite capacity for experience. It is not the knowledge which is connected with an infinite incapacity for experience. And in the very nature of the case his knowledge of the future is an ethical thing full of the adventure of faith. Just as Jesus' knowledge of His own person and of His mission was the constant adventure of a daring faith, so God's knowledge of the future is not a hard and mechanical thing. It is the perpetual adventure of His whole life reaching out in the faith which is the expression of His character to grasp the future. In other words, there is always a splendid element of risk even in foreknowledge. In its own way it resembles the faith of a patriot in his country and the faith of a prophet in his message. If it is true that man is justified by faith it is also true that in this profound and wonderful sense God is justified by faith.

Now all of this may involve speculative difficulties to a certain type of mind. But it touches experience at every point. And we are not trying to satisfy the formal logician. We are trying to satisfy the hungry life which is crying out for a vital God, whose experiences strike a note of reality and authenticity in human life.

And this leads us to say that the God we can worship must have infinite range in the emotional as well as in the intellectual realm. That eternal calm perpetually undisturbed by the tearing, torturing surprises of human life which some thinkers would ascribe to the Deity is surely not characteristic of

the God of whom the Old and New Testaments tell. When Hosea shows us God as a husband broken hearted over the ways of a false wife, he uses perhaps the most daring figure in the Old Testament. And with a fearlessness which startles the reader of his words he pictures the passionate pain of the God to whom Israel has been untrue. And the New Testament gives us a sudden glimpse of the Spirit of God as eternally groaning with the weight of human tragedy and bearing in the divine life the burden of constant suffering over human sin and pain. There is a fullness of life in the realm of feeling reflected in the Biblical interpretation of God which we have never quite dared to face in all its implications. It means at least that God has gone the whole adventurous way of getting under the entire emotional burden of human life. All of this, of course, comes to a supreme expression in the incarnation. Of this we shall speak in a closer fashion in a later lecture. Just now we will content ourselves by calling to mind the fact that the God of whom the Bible tells could not be content to be an infinite spectator, not even a friendly and sympathetic spectator. He could not keep out of the tragedy. He could not see suffering and remain away from the place where men suffered wounds. He came into the world. He bent under its burden of selfishness and brutality and woe. The adventurous God came where the way was hardest. He came where the battle seemed lost. He broke his way into human life filled with the passionate purpose of a great rescue.

It is evident at once that whatever speculative

problems may be raised this is the sort of a God men in this dreadfully pressed and burdened world can worship. He has not kept away from the battle-line. He has come where the fighting is fiercest. He is with men to the very end of their hard and difficult way.

But if we would feel the full impact of the appeal of all this we must attempt to press a little deeper into its meaning for God's own life. And the thing which saves such an endeavour from presumption is the very fact that if we are to come to any living and transforming relation to God so that He sweeps into our lives with the power of a great and saving energy it must be because we have looked into His own heart and have found there the thing which masters ours forever.

The world into which God came in all the adventurous eagerness of the incarnation was a world torn and broken by a hard and remorseless evil, a sodden brutishness, and a coarse waywardness, that might easily have seemed to justify the belief that the whole experiment of creation had been a failure. But it was this very world in which God would not lose faith. It was this very world in which He persisted in believing. It was this very world into whose dark and soiled and treacherous life He came breaking in all the glory of a great faith and all the joyous anticipation of a great love. It was such a chivalrous and high-hearted adventure as makes the very genius of knightliness transfigure into some fine super-knightliness the very character of the God we see revealed in Jesus Christ.

But the adventure goes farther. There is nothing so terrible but that God must feel the weight of it. There is nothing so slimy and black in its beastliness but God must feel the ugly and clammy pressure of it as it reaches out after His own life. And so the Incarnate Christ bares His life to every blast of temptation and opens His heart to every wound of selfish sin. And at last on the cross it breaks His heart. He keeps His own stainless, loving, winsome purity. But He lets sin do the worst it can to Him. And while His body hangs upon a visible cross His spirit is crucified upon an invisible cross of infinite pain. It is in this sense that He tasted death for every man. And when the meaning of this gets into a human mind and searches a human conscience and winds its way about a human heart, the moral and spiritual splendour of it, the high and tragic and suffering adventure of it, works with a cutting and healing surgery upon the life of man. We see the heart of God in the adventure of redemption.

Then there is the adventure of God's constant and immanent activity in the world. Many men have believed in a God infinitely far. The Platonic philosophy when it slipped into the thinking of Christian men helped them to feel that there must be an infinite gulf between the perfect God and imperfect men. Conscience emphasized the moral gulf. Metaphysics emphasized the ontological gulf. And so God became a remote splendour beheld from afar to many a Christian. We live in better days in this regard. The air is full of gracious and beautiful reminders like that of one of the greatest of the Victorian sing-

ers that God is nearer to us than our breathing and closer than hands or feet. But much as we have all received from the brooding thought of seers about the immanent God, we have hardly come to apprehend the meaning of the daily and nightly adventure of God's presence in the world.

We do not need to turn Pantheists in order to have a deep and fruitful conception of God's presence in the world. We do not need to be caught in the inarticulate confusions of the ancient hylozoism in order to come to a real apprehension of what it means that God is the source of all that is vital in the world. God is more than the world. But the world has no existence for a single moment apart from His instant and present power. God is vastly more than the vital principle moving with mysterious might through all things. But there is nothing vital anywhere which does not owe its existence and its very quality to His immediate activity. If His potent will were to be absent for an instant all the vast wonder of creation would cease to be. His instantly present activity is seen in the blooming of the flower, in the leaves and the fruit of the tree, in the far flight of the bird, in the whole amazing vital expression of living things in the world. The immanent actively present God accounts for them all. We have at least passed from the eighteenth century deistic conception that God made the universe, set it going, and then departed from it, leaving it to run on and on like a vast clock. We know that the God who made the world is the constant and perpetual and intimate presence whose activity is the explanation of its life.

When you come to the existence of men and women in the world a new and curiously difficult problem emerges. If their very breathing is made possible by an act of the immanent God, if their very life is a perpetual gift from Him, then we must lift our minds to the height of a divine patience which gives men powers in the very instant when men are misusing those very powers and thwarting the will of God in the world. When a man makes his life one long tale of hard and cruel selfishness he is at every moment misusing a vital energy which at that very moment God is giving to him. He takes a gift warm with the touch of God and soils it with his own hard self-will. When a man sinks into vice and wallows in depths of beastliness he is prostituting a vitality which at that very time is coming to him fresh from the pure hand of God. When a man breaks out in furious profanity he is using the very strength which God is giving him at that instant to hurl back defiance into His face. When God made free persons to live in the world He made creatures who could use His constant and marvellous gift of life, His perpetual creation which keeps men alive in the world, the intimate and wonderful gift of His immanent presence, in soiling and defiling ways, a deadly and dastardly prostitution of the noblest gifts just as they come with the breath of God upon them.

You cannot solve the problem of such amazing and noble patience in the terms of any thought of a static God. You can only understand it as you think of the Master of Life as a great adventurer taking infinite risks in the name of a moral and spiritual response

for which He hopes and in which He deeply believes. For man is capable of turning the nearness of the immanent God into something infinitely more wonderful than the constant power which supports his life. He can rise from the nearness of physical dependence into the nearness of moral and spiritual fellowship. Bishop Francis J. McConnell has worked out the distinction in his finely wrought little volume, "The Diviner Immanence." God gives to all men that immanent activity which presents them with life and enables them to function in the world. That other gift of His presence in moral and spiritual fellowship they must appreciate, they must accept, they must receive. And it is the possibility and the actuality of this second and ethically deeper kind of immanence which justifies the whole experiment. But the very realization of these things startles us. That divine faith which takes all the risks of so tremendous an experiment bewilders us. That infinite and patient hopefulness which unwearied and undismayed moves its way through the entanglement of human personalities, and believes and hopes and expects a great ethical and spiritual outcome astonishes us. That torn and wounded heart of God which throbs with its age-long pain over the passionate sin of men shocks us into a new and acute consciousness as to the wonder of God's love and the remorseless tragedy of evil. The perpetual adventure of the immanent God in His age-long presence in the world awes and holds us with an inescapable power.

One thing at least is perfectly clear. A man can keep on living if he has such a God as this. However

hard the blows which life strikes, however tense and terrible the experiences through which he must pass, he knows that the Master of Life understands his pang through the infinite passion of His own pain. However hard the strain of suspense and waiting, however cruel the vicissitudes of life, he knows that the experience of strained and difficult adventure is not something foreign to God. It is something in which God participates. At the battle front such a God is real and high and mighty and commanding and is potently and gloriously present. In the longest hour of the commonplace round of the tense succession of events with no power to feed the spirit and no power to rouse the heart, such a God lifts the whole experience into a meaning unknown before, and calms and steadies the spirit for the difficult demand of the colourless days. When a man bites into life and gets the full amazing taste of it, the glory and the pain, the tragedy and the splendour, until its trembling vitalities move like quicksilver in his veins, such a God can come with an authentic touch of reality more potent than his most vivid experience, more mastering than his most electric consciousness of the meaning of life. Such a God is with you all the way through. You can never come to a place where you cannot find Him, because He has always been there before you came.

Over against this living and pulsing God put the static deity of mere academic contemplation. Over against this warmly vital deity put a mechanical universe of precise and eternally reacting forces with no flash of higher consciousness and no capacity for



the understanding of passion or pain. The very contrast makes it clear that the whole nature of man demands with all the energy of its deepest and most defining qualities that high adventurous deity whose experience matches and infinitely transcends the whole range of the experience of man, and yet whose life is in constant touch with every quivering aspect of human need.

The Bible is rich in the consciousness that the God whose word it speaks is such a deity as this. The Old Testament prophets speak in God's name words which flame with every quality of human feeling and burn with all the passion of an infinitely rich life. The New Testament flings into our minds the vision of a God who could not be silent in Heaven, but broke the stillness of the ages in an outburst of joy: "My Beloved Son!" The quick intuition of one mind fed by the very richness of that new life which the New Testament expressed, pressed its way back in daring thought regarding the age-long agony of God's pain over sin and wrote of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Breathing through the very pages of the Old Testament and the New, swelling in the power of the fierce words of Amos, sobbing in the pang of Hosea's pain, supremely alive in the whole experience of Jesus as He opened every part of His life to the full impact of experience; singing and weeping, hoping and believing, this thought of a God moving His painful and adventurous and at last triumphant course through all the ways of human life, is the deep and essential note of the Bible.

To be sure this is only one of the important things which must be said about God and His relation to human life. But it is not too much to say that this represents the burning point of contact between our age and the Almighty. It is not too much to say that as we move along such lines as this we are finding the way in which the thought of God is to get a new grip upon the life of our age. The experience of contact with this sort of God completely authenticates and validates the claims of religion. It does more. It solves the problem of human life.

LECTURE II  
THE INVADING EVIL



## LECTURE II

### THE INVADING EVIL

**T**HERE is something wonderfully alluring about optimism. There is something splendidly contagious about gladness. There is a practically propelling power about that confident and gay and hearty enthusiasm for life which plans for success and expects success and smiles at obstacles. When that brilliant philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz, whose personal life was a long story of distinguished achievement, reached the conclusion that everything is for the best in the best possible of worlds he struck a chord which was to vibrate all through eighteenth century optimism. Deism believed in an absent God and a self-sufficient man. The benevolent despots of the eighteenth century had a buoyant confidence as to the new ideals and the new institutions which they were to bring into the life of the world. The sun was shining brightly. The long day of achievement lay ahead. The world was to be made over after the fashion of the mind's and heart's desire. A great deal of this resilient confidence went down in the shuddering horrors of the French Revolution. A man like Wordsworth never lived in the same splendour-lit world again after the worst days in France. And the shrewd, cynical era

of Metternich did much to send to its grave the emerging glad idealisms of the first half of the nineteenth century.

Then with slow but sure momentum the friendly joyous hopefulness of the dreamers began to come to the ascendancy again. Notable reforms were achieved. If this was not the best possible world it was clearly in process of being made a very much better world. The Victorian hopefulness bloomed everywhere. And after the arrival of the twentieth century many people who were inclined to speak scornfully of the mid-Victorian idealism cherished more of it in their hearts than they knew. The carefully polished bright shining optimism of the first decade and more of the twentieth century had a quality all of its own. Success became a creed. Confidence became a professional asset. One brilliant university president in America proved to his own satisfaction and to the satisfaction of his friends and admirers that there could never be another war. To be sure there was social unrest. But even the extreme social radicals had the most naïve and confident belief in their capacity to remould the world after the fashion of their dreams. However different men were in other regards most of them were alike in their instinctive response to the widely diffused belief that we had emerged. The dark and hideous things were to be no more. Man had definitely parted company with the ape.

Then came nineteen fourteen. The earth trembled. The preliminary tremor became a terrible and continued shaking of the very foundations of things.

Year after year went on. All the resources of civilization were mobilized for such a conflict as the imagination of man had never conceived. The depths of the sea saw new and strange sights as the coiling monsters of the deep moved in their treacherous way among them. The sky itself became the citadel of war. The heavens became a hell of conflict. And with remorseless cruelty every resource of modern science was brought to bear on the work of destruction. The men who would have destroyed all that makes life have deep and noble meaning led the way. The men who fought to preserve the great sanctities of life were driven to fight them with their own fire. And the hardest and most disillusioning fact about it all was that the very country most proud of its civilization, most conscious of its achievements in every realm of scholarship and philosophy, of science and of art, was the land which plunged the world into this cruel chaos of conflict. The old optimism it seemed was struck lifeless. The old gay confidence seemed to have disappeared forever. To be sure the very years of conflict brought their own amazing story of moral and spiritual victory. The sacrifices which men and women were willing to make in order to save civilization, the flaming idealism which swept many a young soldier past all the brutalities of the conflict in a singing splendour of commitment to the great cause, the fashion in which a new and noble spirit moved through the Allied peoples giving even common men at times a sense of nearness to apocalyptic visions, the sustained and noble and enduring courage which gave and gave and gave with broken

heart but with lighted eye and with illuminated soul: all these things told a story of reinforced idealism, of infinite moral and spiritual values rescued from the wreck of war.

But none of these things were like the old optimism. There was a new honesty. There was a new and frank facing of ugly facts. There was all that deep and solemn seriousness which came from the understanding that in every Allied country there was an inner ethical and spiritual conflict. Each land had to be saved from the subtle menace represented by the emerging of the very spirit against which the war had been fought. When peace came and the first days of glorious and world-wide relief had passed those multitudinous and disillusioning facts which always come to light in the wake of a great war began to appear. And the unlovely by-products of the great endeavour became painfully evident. Some men began to be tempted to cast away that passionate belief in the high meaning of the whole enterprise which had held them steady during the worst days of the conflict. Russia seemed an anti-climax to all the hopes of freedom. Ugly voices prophesying social disintegration began to be heard in every land. Strong and sober men began to feel the very structure of orderly life trembling beneath their feet. Issues began to be clouded in many minds. The surest and the bravest found a noble way in which to rescue a permanent passion from the hour of reaction. The wisest leaders kept their eyes surely fixed upon the essential things and did not lose their poise or their belief in the eternal value of the thing which



had been achieved and was to be fitted into the very structure of the world's life. But even they had come to understand that the philosophy of the invincibility of the friendly smile has been hopelessly discredited. Even they had a new and penetrating sense of evil to be mastered and kept under as well as of good to be maintained. The glory of life had not departed. But the tragedy of life was very clear in their minds and in their hearts. The bright lights were still burning. But there was a new consciousness of the dangerous foes who would like to put them out.

In a world whose moral enthusiasms and whose moral ideals have gone through such a period of stern testing as that which we have described the man of to-day must attempt to work out his own analysis of the problem of evil among men. It is by no means an academic process. It is an attempt to see the ethical experience of the race in such a fashion as to be able to function adequately in just the sort of world in which we live. It is clear that a superficial optimism which has never dared to face the hard and cruel facts leaves a man helpless in such a time as ours. It is clear that a despairing misanthropy which has seen the evil and nothing but the evil brings a man to a place where he is without inspiration, without any sure basis of hope, and without that propelling energy which will enable him to live fruitfully with eyes of expectation turned toward the future. Can we be entirely honest without coming to a place of despair? Can we retain a noble optimism without ignoring the difficult facts and becoming

superficial? These questions are very insistent in the practical demand which they make to-day.

There is a very significant history of men's failure to deal adequately with this problem. In fact, as bad as the situation seems without any philosophy which attempts to guide us through it, there is the disconcerting possibility of having a philosophy which makes the whole problem more acute, more black and hopeless than it was when we simply felt that we did not know what to say about it.

The old Persian Dualism represents this attitude of mind very well. The problem of evil is felt with an acute and hard persistence. There is no attempt to escape from it by calling black white. The thinkers who moulded this interpretation looked squarely at the fact of the presence of dark and disintegrating evil in the world. Then they made a great mistake. They explained this evil by getting it into the very nature of things, so that it was an inherent part of the universal life. They even allowed it to climb its hideous way into the life of the Deity, so that there was a god of evil as well as a god of good and the two were perpetually struggling in the vast spaces of the world. There is a sort of cosmic splendour in such a conception. But it dignifies evil and it tends to cut the edge from that sharp sense of personal responsibility which is the hope of moral advancement in the world. The Manichæan philosophy, which for a while held Augustine captive, belongs to that class of interpretations which beginning with a sort of fine ethical realism end by making the problem more difficult than it was in the beginning. The ascetic

view which sees in matter and the material life something which is essentially and necessarily evil commits the fatal mistake of giving a natural instead of an ethical explanation of evil, and so of striking a blow at the validity of the moral life itself. If evil is structural in the life of the world then men are victims and the talk about responsibility seems aside from the mark.

This view of evil, as an essential and inevitable part of life, has a way of running underground for a long time and then appearing again in the full light of day. You can find it in some dim and strange and far-off religion. You can find it in some recent interpretation of biological theory. You can find it in some wonderfully clever bit of literary art. Mrs. Humphrey Ward once wrote a narrative, "The Story of Bessie Costrell." It was the grim and relentless tale of the disintegration of a life. There was no light anywhere. Step by step the tragedy unfolded with remorseless precision. All the while you felt more and more deeply that it was all as sure as fate. The bad thing had to be bad. There was no real possibility of contrary choice. Evil was not a terrible thing freely chosen. It was an awful fate from which there was no escape.

Now we must be willing to face very frankly the limits in practical working of this boasted possession of personal freedom. We can never forget the bitter cry of Jacob Riis after he had studied the life of the little children in the slums of New York: "These children are not born into the world. They are damned into the world." We must be ready with

unhesitating candour to deal with all these hard and confusing facts of human life and its struggle. But we need to be clear from the start that unless we can find a way to root the problem of evil in the will, unless we can take it at last to that deep and solemn place where motives are born and decisions are made, unless we can trail it along its ugly path to the place where a free man accepts it or rejects it, we have no right to talk of moral responsibility, and there is no such thing as a real and commanding ethical sanction in the life of man. The weakness of even very noble forms of Calvinism has often been just at this point. There has been a wonderfully astute treatment of the logic of evil. But there has not been a frank inspection of the psychological consequences of the particular interpretation which was being offered to men. As a result the very existence of any legitimate kind of responsibility was sacrificed. Sometimes there was an attempt to avoid this by means of the most subtle and brilliant sort of dialectic. But when it was all honestly analyzed one had to admit that for all the fine phrases man was left in a state of condemnation for that which he could by no means help. When we go over the entire ground we must admit that there are aspects of the situation which are discussed with a genuine realism by those theories which seem to do least justice to the presence of personal freedom and of the responsibility which freedom involves. The question then takes this form, Is there any fashion of doing justice to all the facts and yet of putting personal and uncoerced choice at the center of every human life?

In our modern dealing with the problem we say a great deal about heredity and a great deal about environment. And we do wisely enough, for these factors are most significant. But the question we must insist on lifting has to do with whether these factors, important as they are, do really probe to the heart of the matter. Is evil something which is forced upon us from without? Is it something which without ever asking our permission arises from within? Or is there a capacity for creative action at the center of every human life which makes our attitude toward good and evil in the profoundest sense our own? Are we as to the deepest meaning of our own personality stronger than environment, mightier than heredity? In this deep and potent sense are we the captain of our souls? Are we the architects of fate?

The whole question is of course complicated by the fact that we are a part of a vast social organism. One man living alone on a desert island represents one sort of problem. But the moment the man Friday appears qualities emerge in Robinson Crusoe which that lonely worthy never knew that he possessed until this particular social relationship called them forth. Is it possible to think of ethics in the terms of social solidarity and yet deal with unflinching fairness with the individual? Is it possible to follow all the coiling ways of the individual ethical reaction and yet see in true perspective all the ethical significance of the group? If we try with Protagoras to measure things from the standpoint of the individual man, making him the measure of all our judgments, will we ever be able to be fair to all the com-

plex and varied social entanglements? If we try with Plato in his Republic to build all our thoughts of men about their relation to the ideal state will we not inevitably be unfair to the individual? When we watch the complete serenity with which Plato thinks of the exposure of weak and unlikely infants in the name of the robust health of the state the outlook along this path does not seem to be particularly reassuring. When we think of the complete ethical and spiritual anarchy which will follow an attenuated individualism which goes the full length of its most demanding logic, we do not feel drawn to this path.

With this piling of one difficulty upon another we may have come dangerously near to producing a state of mind which is ready to think of the whole problem as insoluble. But we must go back to the experience of life as distinct from the thought about life, and at once we will find that despite these bewildering difficulties the sense of right and wrong of freedom and of responsibility does persist in the race, and is able to function in such a fashion as to produce wonderful examples of physical and moral and spiritual heroism. Whatever the difficulties of interpretation the ethical sanction does persist, and it does the most constant and difficult and amazing amount of work in the world. In the light of this actual and successful and age-long activity we come to have new courage as we approach the task of attempting to be fair to all the facts and yet to secure a view of personality and its relation to evil which will be the basis of a gripping and masterful ethic for men.

On a beautiful summer day, seated in a pleasure

craft on some such fine body of water as Puget Sound, the world seems a place of amazing charm and loveliness. The great snow cone of Mount Rainier rises into the sky on one side and on the other you can see the shining summits of the Olympics. The sun dances gayly in the water. The air is full of a certain caressing friendliness. On the heights not far from you are the splendid forms of the Douglas fir trees, and the summer wealth of growing things calls to you from above. It is good to be alive. It is a wonderful world in which you live. At such a time if you deliberately turn your thought to the strange and defiling mass of evil in the world there is something almost unbelievable about it. Your mind has been cleansed and sharpened by the pure beauty of the day, and you see evil in all its undisguised hideousness against that background of wholesomeness and beauty. It stabs you with a sudden power to wound. It is something which has no right to be in the world. It is something you hate. It is something you would like to destroy. In an entirely different background the same thought came to many a boy in France. With the instruments of death all about him, with the sounds of destruction in his ears, with the strange and defiling sights of war holding his eyes, there came a sudden sense of astonishment that such things could happen in the world. Human evil on this vast and organized scale seemed a preposterous and unbelievable thing. His eyes cleansed by the daily cruel experience of war saw life with a simple directness which made evil stand out in its inherent blackness.

So in peace, or in war, the sense of life's evil tragedy can come home to a man. If he is of a carefully thoughtful and contemplative type of mind as he pursues his meditations the evils which invade human life will tend to classify themselves, and through a process of analysis the whole subject will begin to appear in new and clearer relations.

It is said that when the Congo River empties into the sea it carries a stream of black into the ocean for eight miles. That river which we call the past is continually emptying a dark mass of evil into the present. It would be a wonderful thing if we could all begin at the start of things. But we simply cannot do that. We cannot live our lives apart from the fact that men have been hating and deceiving and sinking into dark ways of vice and murdering and violating all the high sanctities for thousands of years. The cumulative energy of it has gotten into the life of the world. The good of the past too pushes its way into the present. And so it comes to pass that ancient life is still fighting its old battles on the arena of the life of men who are in the world to-day.

There is a great deal which we do not know about heredity. But it is clear that our ancestors are alive in us far more than we ordinarily realize. James Lane Allen has a story of a young man who stood before the family portraits in his home. He was thinking particularly of two men at whom he was gazing. One was a man of austere and sterling character. The other was a gay and zestful devourer of all which allures the passionate taste. Each of these men was



an ancestor of the young fellow who stood moodily looking upon their pictures. As he stood there he knew that those two old men were fighting inside him. They had gotten into his blood. And there they fought for the boy years and years after they were dead. The only difficulty with this illustration is that it does not go far enough. Not two men but whole companies of men and women are fighting in all of us. Old selfishness tries to peer out at the world through our eyes. Old indulgences try to get some fresh and satisfying sensation through our bodies. The past is alive in us. Its poison is in our blood.

Oliver Wendell Holmes used to say, in his clever way, that if he wanted to do anything with a young man he would like to begin with his grandfather. Really the genial New England man of letters was very modest. To begin with, a man's grandfather is not going very far back. A man might well ask for more than that. In fact, when you begin to think where you would really like to begin centuries are apt to seem incidental. One would like to go back of the first strain of physical taint, one would like to go back of the first ancestor who represented a defiant and evil temper, one would like to go back of the first man who made desire and not duty the captain of his life, one would like to anticipate the beginning of conscious evil and the beginnings of the perversion of noble forces to ignoble uses, then if one could move down the long trail of the years and stand guard at the door of the life, all its meaning might be different. In any event we have to admit that many of the

clouds we trail as we come into the world represent anything but glory. Evil has become bone of the race's bone. Evil has become flesh of its flesh. And all this past writhing and inarticulate is pressing against the bars of the will, seeking expression and activity and gratification in the lives of the men and the women who are alive in the world to-day. So the evil of the past invades the present through heredity.

More than this the past has left many tangible remains. There is that monumental mass of literature which has been preserved to us from other days. There is that product of the artistic mind which in various forms survives while the ages pass. Then there are all sorts of other survivals, from stately architecture down to domestic utensils. Now there is no doubt in the world that much of this represents a priceless heritage. The passionless, perfect harmony of Greek art at its best, the winged aspiration of that Gothic architecture which burned with longing for the heights of moral and spiritual achievement, the kingly harmony of words set to the music of exquisite expression in many a tongue, the poise and the steadiness of Roman law, the summoning inspiration of many an ancient biography: all these are part of the treasure of the world. It is painful to think of our poverty were we to lose them out of our lives.

But this is not all of the story. And we must be honest enough to think of the rest of the story. When the ashes which had covered Pompeii for many a century were taken away, it was as if the past had

suddenly become contemporaneous. And with all the knowledge which we welcome in that uncovered long-buried town, there is some knowledge which we receive with loathing. Signs that tempted men to ways of slimy evil centuries ago have been uncovered in all their unblushing hideousness and so the old serpents hiss in the modern world. To be entirely familiar with the literature of any people is to go through the experience of reading some things which trail their way like poison through the mind. There is more than exquisite and stately beauty in the classics. They make immortal the vices as well as the virtues of antiquity. And so the hot and lawless blood of two thousand years ago calls to the hot and lawless blood of to-day. History itself is a temptation as well as an inspiration. It has great tales to tell. Sometimes we pause in wonder hardly daring to believe that humanity could have risen to such heights. The glory of self-control, the radiance of unselfish love, the high splendour of self-sacrifice, how they shine on the living pages of those books by whose magic we commune with the past.

But more than that. What a cumulative tale of evil and treachery and beastliness history has to tell. Age after age the old vices emerge. Age after age the old hard selfishnesses dominate the minds of men and send forth their hands in cruel deeds. To be an expert in history is to become expert in the knowledge of the kinds of evil things which men have done in the world. Innocence betrayed, weakness exploited, strength misused for evil purposes. How history reeks with the tales of it all. The past has churches,

The past has cathedrals. The past has noble buildings it is an inspiration to behold. And this same past unfolds its story in many a place it is a tragedy to remember. The voices which speak from other ages are some of them splendidly noble. And some of them still vibrate with the shame of hectic desires which burned themselves out long ago.

Custom is a monarch who rules more men than ever bent abjectly before any fiercely powerful tyrant. And custom represents the cumulative habits of all the past. Sometimes it is splendidly and nobly good. Much of the finest thinking of men, and many of the finest characteristics of men have been crystallized into custom and so have been perpetuated in the life of the world. China has built its life about that reverence for those who have gone before which keeps a sunset splendour about old age and those who have passed into the ageless silence of the dead. The English-speaking peoples have put into custom and then into law an increasing consciousness of the significance and the value of the individual man whatever his station. In multitudinous ways we are guarded and guided by customs which are the outgrowth of old deep insights into the meaning and the relationships of life. But it is not simply good which is preserved by custom. Never a hoary evil but keeps its clutch upon the minds of men through some venerable custom which gives some sort of respectability to a habit which in itself would be frowned out of sight. Never an ancient vice but slyly creeps into the life of men through some old way of life which leaves an opening for its entrance. More than the feet of

Chinese women have been bound intolerably by the bands of habit which have come down through the years. Evils which could be conquered without much difficulty get behind the strength of long-maintained and practiced ways and when we go to fight them we find that the soft flesh of our ideal is tearing itself against hard stone. Custom is a bank from which old evils go forth for new circulation as well as a repository of ancient good.

In all these ways the undying wrong of the past presses its ugly way into contemporary life. In all these fashions the armies of evil mobilize their forces and march in upon us from other days.

The present itself is full of evils of its own. There is nothing more wonderful about the life of any age than its social institutions. They represent the race's genius for organization. They represent the capacity of men to live together, to think together, and to work together for the great ends of life. Blot these institutions out of existence and human life would drift back into anarchy. They form the steel framework of civilization itself. But valuable as are the social institutions by which we live they are not an unmixed good. There are dark and evil things which become through their influence structural in the very life of men.<sup>1</sup> But the important matter from the standpoint of our discussion is that it was an organized evil. It was so deeply a part of the whole life of various countries that serious and earnest men were sometimes unable to see how life could go on

<sup>1</sup>The highly articulated traffic in intoxicating liquors has become such an institution.

without it.<sup>1</sup> Men found themselves a part of a highly articulated and thoroughly organized life really in large measure built upon it. So it was in the Athens of the fifth century B. C. And so it has been in many another land in many another age. The men born into each period of the world's life have found that some contemporary institutions poisoned the spirit of that age at its very source. We are beginning to deal in genuine and earnest seriousness with the problems connected with the industrial and economic organization of the world to-day. And no one who studies with an open mind the present organization will deny that remedies must be sought and found for terrible and fatal flaws in the heart of the system itself. Evil invades the world through many an institution which seems part of the essential fabric of civilization.

The present gives a wide and constant opportunity for the impact of that evil which comes from the vivid personal magnetism of evil people. There is an ancient story of a slave girl who took poison into her system, a little at a time, then a little more and a little more. At last her whole organism became so full of poison that at her very breath flowers would wither. As a symbol this old story is very significant. There are many people in the world who are breathing out poison all the while. They contaminate the atmosphere wherever they are. They are vigorous people. They have red blood and sturdy strength. They make alluring anything to which they give themselves. And they have given themselves to evil.

<sup>1</sup>In some countries and in certain ages slavery has been such an institution.

With a sort of sweeping magnificence they brush aside the ethical distinctions which we have been holding dear. To speak of right and wrong in their presence seems a sort of impertinence. And all the while they spread the contagion of their own brilliant essential evil. They are the sales agents of iniquity in the world.

Life itself has hard and cruel ways of pressing upon us. The present day seems to ask of us more than we can do. It seems to require of us more than we can be. The whole complicated matter of living brings such insistent requirements upon us that we fairly stagger under the weight of it all. Then there comes the dangerous and alluring suggestion of short cuts. There may be no royal road to geometry. But very often we are tempted to think that there is a short cut to prosperity and success. We watch the people who have not been checked by restraints as binding as those which have held us, and as we see them far on in the race we are tempted to feel that too great a regard to matters of character is a liability and not an asset in the tense and difficult business of living. The very swift and driving movement of the world in which we live seems to rub out our sense of moral distinctions and leave us with the bare and brutal realities of the struggle for survival, for standing room and living room in the world. To be sure there are quick turns in experience when we come to know that life is on the side of goodness and not on the side of evil. When we take a long enough look and a poised enough survey we know that the moral law is written in the very nature of things.

But too often before we have made this discovery we are all entangled in ways of evil. So through the past and the present wrong invades the world.

The problem, however, is even more complicated than we have yet realized. Browning wrote in "Pauline," "I seemed myself the foe from which I fled." When we come to close and understanding contact with our own natures we are dismayed to find that there is a certain strange capacity to respond to evil which is a part of their structure. The very possession of a body subjects us to temptation. The very possession of a mind involves certain subtle and difficult experiences of temptation. And the delicate organism of the interior life of the spirit has foes of its own. When the monks of the Middle Ages fled away from the temptations of the wicked world they were surprised to find that they carried their temptations with them. They had merely succeeded in changing their form without altering their fundamental significance. To have a body and a mind means that sooner or later the time will come when the temptation is felt to put the lower in the place of the higher.

To possess a complicated and involved instrument for the seeking and the finding and the declaring of truth means that around some corner of experience will come the suggestion to use this wonderful instrument for ends lower than the highest. The very throb of the personal life with its sharp self-consciousness and its vivid sense of values centering in one flaming spot of feeling has as a part of its inherent quality the possibility of misuse. Personality is



capable of the noblest selflessness. It is also capable of the most ignoble selfishness. So it comes to pass that involved in the very physical and mental and personal structure of human life are the most varied doors through which the invading evil may make its way. To possess a human organism is to have an amazing instrument for goodness. It is also to have an amazing instrument for sinning.

An analysis like this is likely to leave the sky seeming to be very dark. That there is darkness involved no honest man would deny. And there are those who are tempted to say that that weird and terrible poem of Lord Byron, "Darkness," in which he describes the tragedy which came when the sun went out and all the fire in the world at last came to an end would be an accurate picture of the situation. We do not believe that this is true. We believe that it is perfectly possible to do justice to all the facts without being plunged into complete misanthropy and pessimism.

Here we must make a distinction which is fundamental for our whole discussion. This has to do with the difference between sin and evil. All sin is evil but all evil is not sin. John Wesley put the matter with almost blunt straightforwardness when he declared that sin is voluntary violation of known law. Now there is something splendidly fair to the specific individual in such a definition. But it is evident that it does not cover a great deal of the wrong in the world. A man gets entangled in the mesh of evil which invades his life from the past. He gets entangled in the mesh of evil which invades his life from the present. And much of this happens with-

out representing any intention on his part. Much of it happens without his realizing that he is being caught in a net of evil at all. Now all of the wrong things which a man does as a result of heredity and environment without realizing that they are wrong represent a most sad and terrible tragedy. But they do not involve personal responsibility. They do not involve guilt. And in the direct and close and personal sense it is not fair to call them sin. If you do call them sin then it is necessary to make a distinction between that racial entanglement of sin for which a man is not responsible, and the choice of wrong in the clear knowledge that it is wrong. The one may be called racial sin and the other personal sin if one insists upon using the same word in both cases. But it seems better to make the distinction in the form with which we began this paragraph, and to call that wrong which a man does not deliberately choose, evil, and that wrong which he does deliberately choose, sin.

There are two practical and pressing problems in the world then. One has to do with that evil which follows men without their choosing it. The other has to do with that evil which they deliberately give a place in their lives. At the very outset it is clear that an immense amount of the evil in the world has completely lost contact with a responsible and deliberate source. Much of the evil which invades our lives from the past may be so classified. And much of the evil which invades our lives from the present answers to the same description.

In the fifth century before Christ, Socrates made

virtue synonymous with knowledge, and vice synonymous with ignorance. He believed that no man would ever do a thing which he completely and thoroughly understood to be evil. Without stopping to test the validity of this position for the moment, we may readily admit that there is a great quantity of evil in the world which does come from ignorance. There is a substantial weight of wrong which will vanish before the light of knowledge. Now it is very clear that in relation to all the forms of evil which can be so classified, there is one great need. That need is education. That need is knowledge. If a man has done wrong things because he did not know that they were wrong, the very immediate and the very practical demand is that he shall be informed in unmistakable and convincing fashion just where the wrong lies.

When one thinks of the pitiful cry which has gone up from multitudes of youths who have been caught in some coil of evil habit of whose meaning and consequences they had absolutely no knowledge the importance of the sort of ethical education of which we are speaking is clearly evident. All the while there is need for the most searching analysis of the moral meaning and the moral results of the habits of life which characterize the men and women who are making the adventure of existence. And there is need that the results of this analysis be put in the clearest and most convincing and effective form, and then that they be given the very widest publicity possible. Then it is necessary that those institutions which make vice easy and virtue hard shall be fought

with remorseless and relentless antagonism. Simply knowledge is not enough if a man is caught in a network of social forces whose pressure upon him is constant and bears away his resistance with steady and cumulative power. Here the reformers find their charter. And right glorious and right productive is their work.

Before their attacks many an entrenched and powerfully fortified evil has gone down. Their eyes are everywhere. They see the lad working in the mine under conditions which will inevitably wear away his physical vitality and almost inevitably will wear away his moral powers of resistance. They see the inroads of that commercialized vice which invests in evil and draws dividends from the vices which poison society. They invade prisons where the lack of exercise, the lack of sunshine, and the lack of fresh air deplete the bodily vitality and leave the victim a prey to disease and abnormal vice. They go wherever the present organization of life makes robust bodies and clean minds difficult, and they lift their battle cry. They enter the factories and all the busy hives of industry and demand that every place where men work shall be a place without that contagion of inevitable physical and moral evil which threatens the very future of the race. They demand a living wage, for they know that poverty is the most successful sort of breeder of crime. They are the knight errants who do brave battle with all the entrenched evils in the world. It is impossible to speak too highly of their services. We all owe more to their dauntless, fearless warfare than we know.

These two forces of education and reform are among the mightiest influences working among us to make for a better world. And where the root of the evil is ignorance or slavery to an environment so powerful that it chains those who are a part of it, the work done by the educator and the reformer is not only noble. It is also the final and adequate work which is required.

Before we go farther let us admit with the utmost and heartiest candour that if all the evil which is due to ignorance and to the hard pressure of environment were taken out of human life we would live in a changed world. The work of the educator is often very quiet. Sometimes it seems entirely hidden. But he is doing more than we understand to make the world safe for humanity. He is doing more than we know to banish the dark and treacherous evils which infest the world. Sometimes we grow weary of the reformer. Sometimes we wish that he would stop shouting "Wolf! Wolf!" perpetually in our ears. Why all this din? Why all this confusion? Is there not some way to silence this fanatical shouter so that we may have some real serenity and peace? The reformer usually does get on our nerves, before he succeeds in getting his case on our consciences. But when we look at the matter in a large and honest way, we have to confess that our irritation was not especially creditable either to our insight or to our serious purpose to improve the world. When we are most impatient and when he seems most hectic and full of unpoised wrath the reformer is often fighting our own battles and doing a real piece of work to-

ward preventing the world from becoming a place which will fall down upon our heads. In the last years of his life, if he is not worn out by his passion and by our carelessness, we praise him. After he has died we raise monuments to him. If the salt of the earth keeps its savour the reformer deserves a large share of praise.

When all this is said with the most eager sincerity it remains to be added that there is something which educators and reformers are not able to do. When we have analyzed all the powerful ways in which ignorant evil and the evil which comes from the inroads of bad environment have been fought and are being fought and may be fought, it is necessary to add that there is an evil whose problem we have not yet touched. And it is the most difficult and menacing of all. When we have dealt with ignorant evil we must face evil which is not ignorant. And when we have triumphed over that environment which crushes goodness we must meet that evil whose source is nearer and more intimate than the most powerful pressure from without. Going back to the distinction we made a little earlier, having discussed the fashion in which it is possible to deal with evil, we must now discover what sort of a problem it is we have to meet when we come to the matter of personal sin.

Here is a boy who has been brought up in an evil environment. His whole personality seems wrapped about with the sordid and ugly things which have come to him through a foul heredity and a loathsome set of surroundings. For a long time all this has no

particular relation to the boy's own choice. It comes in from without and fairly overwhelms him. But at last a day comes when he begins to get some hint of the meaning of it all. He gets a quick flashing glimpse of his life as it looks from the outside. And now a very extraordinary thing happens. The moment the boy gets some notion of the sort of tangle it is in which he finds himself, he must take sides. He may take sides with all this evil. He may take sides against it. But he must choose. And in that choice he is master. No outside force determines what he will do. At this point he is master of his fate. At this point he is the captain of his soul. He is not responsible for the evil which wraps itself about his life. But the moment he discovers that there is evil he is responsible for the attitude he takes toward it.

Now, in such a situation, he may turn with loathing from everything which he realizes is wrong. And though it fights hard for a place in his life he may maintain a constant and heroic attitude of protest and defiance of that which he knows is evil. On the other hand, he may deliberately ally himself with the evil which he finds moving through his life. He may choose it. He may decide to make it the sort of thing for which he seeks and the sort of thing for which he cares. And the moment he decides for the evil which he knows to be evil he has ceased to be a victim and has become a participant in personal sin. Now the whole ethical situation of his life has changed. There is a creative center of conscious evil established in his life. And that wrong bent of

his will deliberately chosen represents a hard and cruel fact of the most far-reaching character.

Education is useless in dealing with this problem. If you educate this boy you simply make him more refined and skillful and dangerous in his deliberate evil. The reformer cannot reach the strategic point of difficulty in this problem. This sort of boy will corrupt an environment as fast as the reformer banishes evil things from its area. Here we come upon the really vital matter in the whole situation as regards the invading evil. The evil which invades a particular age through the doors of the past and through wrong institutions and through bad environment can be fought with wonderful success as long as it has not become a matter of personal choice in the age where the battle is being fought. But this is just what is happening all the while. Men are establishing personal centers for the creation of evil in their own lives. They are doing this not because of the pressure of environment or heredity but as a free and potent personal act. And this perpetual creative personal reinforcement of evil is the darkest problem of life. It is the real problem of personal sin.

When we look at the matter with entire candour we discover that we have all had experience in relation to both kinds of wrong. We know the touch of that wrong which does not represent personal desire or will or purpose. After getting involved in this sort of wrong we have cried out: "I never meant that. I did not understand it. I see now for the first time what it all means. If I had had more



knowledge or if I had had a better environment that wrong would never have gotten a place in my life." But we also have had experience with another kind of wrong. As we look back upon it we are forced to admit that we knew perfectly well that it was wrong. We were thoroughly aware that we were moving out upon an evil way. And we did not care. We wanted the thing. We decided that we would have it. And we put all other considerations quite out of our minds. We lifted desire to the place which belongs to duty. We deliberately ignored the cautious behests of our better nature and with passionate intensity did the thing we wanted to do regardless of the consequences. In some part of our lives we all know what it is to be the victim of evil which presses upon us without asking our consent. And in some part of our lives we all know what it is with our eyes open to choose the thing which is wrong.

In many lives this deliberate choice of wrong becomes a potent and masterful and commanding thing. The really vital and effective part of the personality is its allegiance to evil. It welcomes evil from the past. It welcomes evil from the present. It delights in following the evils made possible through the misuse of the structural relationships of the body of the mind and of the will. It is imperial in wrong. As Robert Browning expresses it through the lips of one of the characters of "Pippa Passes," it is "magnificent in sin." This giving of the very genius of the personality to the conscious following of evil, this making of every power of the life a partner of the work of a new creative center of evil in the world, is

the tragic and startling spectacle which confronts us when we look with absolute candour upon the facts of life. This personal commitment to evil deliberately chosen is entirely compatible with the greatest refinement and the most exquisite taste. The Italy of the Renaissance gives us many conspicuous examples of noble taste united to ethical wickedness. And it is not necessary for us to go far in our complicated and highly articulated life to find the man who has made the most complete mental discipline and the most fastidious culture the abject servant of a consciousnessless duplicity, the slave of a hard and scornful selfishness. Jesus found it very much harder to deal with the highly trained and self-consciously superior sinner than to meet the needs of the outcast. The problem of the evil which moves out upon the world invading its every avenue of life from the personal center of the deliberate choice of wrong is the fundamental ethical problem of the experience of human life.

It is clearly evident that the solution of this problem requires a transformed will. It is clear that the dealing with this tragic phenomenon requires the transforming of the center of deliberate evil choice in a personal life into a center for the determined and persistent choice of good. Before this task reform and education stand helpless. They are splendid allies. But they are not equal to the main attack. Can the adventurous God Himself break into human life in some such bewilderingly dynamic fashion that He cuts His way through the seared and irresponsive surface of the hardened conscience to some center of

quicken response? Does the Christian religion possess some commanding secret by means of which an evil will may be transformed and a creative center of evil in a human life may be changed into a creative center of good? These questions inevitable now must be met and answered in the lectures which are to follow. In the meantime it is clear that we have a possible approach to religion through the deep and essential quality of the ethical need of men. There is a tremendous work for religion to do providing religion is able to do it.

We have travelled a long and confusing and perplexing way in this attempt to see in some sort of coherent relationship what is the real meaning of the human experience of evil in the world. The questions involved are difficult and intricate enough. And of course there are many aspects of the problem fairly bristling with the differences of opinion which have characterized the thinking of earnest men. As we come to the close of this lecture let us apply the practical test to the analysis we have offered. Let us ask ourselves how it meets the outreach of a mind tense with the shock of life's cruel and difficult experiences. Let us ask what effect it will have upon a mind which accepts it as at least a working hypothesis regarding these things.

Here is a man under the pressure of the hard days of war through which we have just passed. He is confronted by a strange confusion of good and evil, of courage and brutality, of nobility and shameless wrong. He is trying to find his way through all this tangle of experience and observation. He wants to

be fair to all the facts. He wants to be fair to all the people. And it seems an almost hopeless task. Now if he sees clearly the difference between personal sin and the racial entanglement of evil, it will come as a great light upon his path. He will be able to be patient and full of a noble charity, without losing moral vigour or the sharpness of his ethical sense. He will see that every man has two problems. He will see that every nation has two problems. The one has to do with unintentional and ignorant evil. The other has to do with deliberate and purposeful acceptance of the worst instead of the best. The facts of contemporary life require just such a distinction. The facts of his own life require just such a distinction. If you hold merely the view of ignorant, ethical confusion as accounting for all the evil in the world you simply ignore the ugliest and most cruel facts of psychology.

If Socrates could have made as careful a study of the will as he made of the processes of the mind he would never have fallen into the confusion of making all evil synonymous with ignorance. The soldier knows that there is an evil in the world which you can never account for merely in the terms of a confused mind. He also knows perfectly well that there are evils in the world for which you can account in just that way. On the other hand, if you view all wrong as the result of direct and conscious intent on the part of the people in whose lives the wrong has appeared you are doing an injustice to no end of people in the most manifold relations. There is ignorant wrong-doing. There is intentional wrong-

doing. And you must include them both in any interpretation which is to do justice to the facts. In the light of both the man who has been under the stress of these stern days feels that he can find his way feeling the full pressure of the moral demand that he shall follow the highest he can know and being sure that there is a fair play in the universe which will distinguish between the deliberate wrong and the confused and ignorant participation in evil. The various aspects of ethical experience can all be treated with honest directness on the basis of such a thought about the wrong which is in the world.

For the man who goes forth to the tasks of life with such a view of evil as we have outlined, there is preserved a sharp sense of the nature of things in their own relations as good and evil, quite apart from the appraisal of the mind which comes into contact with them. Because this is true an earnest man will desire by the most complete and adequate methods of education to sharpen and clarify his knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. Because so much ignorant evil is entangled in the structure of the world and so many people are innocently caught in the evil of bad institutions he will be eager to do all he can to further the cause of legitimate reform. He will be glad to fight under any banner which leads against the entrenched evils in the world. And all the while he will know that a changed environment does not mean the solution of the deepest human problem. He will remember, with solemn seriousness, that it is possible for a man to form a center of creative evil in his own life. He will know that

the will bent to deliberate wrong represents the real and central problem of the world. He will remorselessly study his own life that he may discover and root out this profoundest seed of evil. He will live and work and fight in the light of a full and frank knowledge of the nature of that devastating personal evil, that conscious choice of wrong, which is the remorseless foe of all that makes for the good of the human race. He will realize that with all the ignorant wrong-doing among men there is a sense in which the citadel is never entered until a man consciously unlocks the door from within. It is this surrender he fears. It is this surrender he hates. It is this surrender he fights against with all his force.

Gilbert K. Chesterton somewhere refers in his audacious way to "that blessed doctrine of original sin." We would not for a moment claim such a benediction for the view we have been discussing. There is a sense in which any interpretation of evil must be dolorous and painful reading if one is at all honest in dealing with the facts. But there is also a notable sense in which one can go forth to meet life's testing demands with a clearer eye and a surer courage when one has looked frankly and definitely into the very nature of that wrong with which we have to contend. In this fashion at least we dare to believe that there is a gleam of light shining upon us as we close this discussion. After all a correct diagnosis is the first step on the road to a cure.

LECTURE III  
THE IMPERIAL PERSONALITY





## LECTURE III

### THE IMPERIAL PERSONALITY

**I**F a man is to know other people he must begin by knowing himself. We only understand the experience of other people through experiences of our own. The mind does not offer a blank surface upon which new experiences are written. It comes to new experiences and new ideas and new relationships with a cluster of memories through which these are interpreted. It is only by means of intellectual and emotional and ethical sympathy that we ever come to understand anything or anybody. And in the last analysis it is not too much to say that we can never understand a person whom we do not love. The insight of devotion makes a thousand things plain and clear which otherwise would be beyond the reach of our understanding. There are some people whom we can only understand as we approach them with the memory of the deepest sort of ethical and spiritual struggle in our own lives. If our lives are superficial in these things the lives of the men and women of mighty moral and spiritual intensity seem overwrought. From our lower level of living we wonder why they are so torn and tortured by things in their lives which we take for granted with a shrug in our own. It is only when we are willing to get

into the greatest sort of moral fight that we can understand the ethical heroes of the world.

All this has particular significance in respect of the portrait of Christ which is painted in the Gospels. Of course no one can really see it without being moved by it. When Jesus walked the earth no man ever met Him and was quite the same man again. There was a summons and a challenge to which he had to take an attitude. If he opened his life to the impression he became a better man. If he closed his life to the impression he became a worse man. This same gift of seizure is in the Gospels. When a man actually reads them with the eyes of his mind open he feels a demand and an outreach toward his own life. Instinctively he opens his mind more widely or closes it more tightly. There is a call for decision lurking in the background of every page of the Gospels. But while all this is true it is also true that if a man would really come to some profound and understanding relation to the Figure moving so majestically through the Gospels, he must come from some deep and intimate contact with his own life's problem, he must come with the wounds of his own moral fight fresh upon him, and he must allow his own struggle to interpret for him what he sees as the great Master walks before his eyes.

The notion that any man anywhere and in any condition of mind can understand the potent and mysterious personality of whom the Gospels tell is a piece of intellectual and ethical confusion. There is something about that face which may well arrest a man anywhere. There is something about those

words which may well echo and reëcho in the most careless heart. But the insight which reaches the place of understanding is the insight which comes from a life drawn by struggle and a heart which has been pressed upon heavily by pain. A man does not have to bring goodness to the Gospels in order to understand them. He does have to bring the love of goodness. A man does not have to bring high moral attainment to the Master in order truly to apprehend Him. He does have to bring the outreach of a hungry life. He does need to bring the painful insight of moral battle. He does need to bring that sad candour which comes from a close and honest facing of the meaning of his moral defeat.

“ I see the ideal all the time. But I simply cannot realize it,” cried a great thinker. It is this passionate longing for the distant and summoning ideal. It is this wistful pain in the consciousness of defeat. It is this tragic pull of an unrealized aspiration which will enable a man to approach the Gospel figure in such a fashion as to sense his real meaning for the life of the world. The man who has been brave enough to face the meaning of his own defeat is ready to see the meaning of the victory of Jesus.

For this is just the profound and ineffaceable impression which the Christ of the Gospels makes upon you. When you approach the figure which masters the New Testament with your own life tense with the sense of struggle and heavy with the sense of failure, you feel at once that this life faced the same problems. There are the same elements of pressure, the same weights of evil circumstance, and yet here

you find no sense of failure, but simply a wonderful quality of achievement. All that triumph in life which we do not know how to secure Jesus wrested from hostile circumstance. When we come to analyze our own lives we find that one of the deepest sources of pained and unhappy discontent is our utter incapacity to harmonize the forces of our own inner life. Victor Hugo wrote: "I feel two natures struggling within me." We really wish the problem could be as simple as that. We feel about a hundred different natures struggling within us. Matthew Arnold was feeling this problem when he wrote of the men of the nineteenth century, "of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives. And each half lives a hundred different lives." So many voices are all the while calling us from within. So many forces are making themselves articulate in our inner life. We feel like a great ship with plenty of sailors and plenty of passengers, but with no captain. Each of the sailors has a will of his own. They keep doing things which do not fit together. They keep doing things which contradict each other. We have plenty of wills but no will.

Our lives represent a wonderful collection of unclassified materials. They represent a mighty assembling of undisciplined and unmastered forces. All our outer difficulties pale before this sense of inner futility. We would like to come each of us to be the secure and masterful captain of his own soul. But that is just what we are unable to do. We cannot unify the forces of our own life and mould them into harmonious expression. And when from

this analysis we look at the practical functioning of the personality of Jesus as it shows itself in the Gospels we discover that this very thing which we so long to do and which we find it so impossible to do, is exactly the thing which He did. All the while He gives you the sense that He is the captain of His own soul. Every force of His life is at the command of His own high spirit. He is free from inner anarchy. He holds the reins of government securely in His hands. There is the most perfect play of all the energies of His inner life, every one moving in harmonious expression of the deep mastering purpose of His life. With sad and wistful eyes we look upon this spectacle of inner harmony moving out with sure and easy strength in noble and unselfish deeds.

As we think about it all with closer and more definite scrutiny, we make some important discoveries about the poise of Jesus. There is a poise which is the poise of indifference. There is a quiet which is the stillness of worn-out passion. There is a steadiness which comes from being irresponsive to the summons and the allurements of life. Very quickly we come to understand that this is not the poise of Jesus. He did not feel less than other men. He felt more than other men. He exposed a larger area of sensitive responsive surface to the impression which life makes than did any other man. He was a sort of human æolian harp through which every wind of life blew. And there was a response from the instrument for every gentle zephyr and for the fierce driving tempest. He did not save Himself from life. He met the full impact of the whole ex-

perience. And His own spirit was wonderfully intense and masterful. He cared deeply. He loved deeply. His quiet was the stillness and the steadiness of integrated passions. It was not the poise of integrated indifferences. He possessed to the full the artistic temperament. And that meant that every summons of life spoke to Him with unusual appeal. All this glowing energy of vivid response He unified and mastered so that it became the still strength of a great vitality. His stillness was never the stillness of death.

In this fashion He made perfection itself a new sort of experience. Quite too often men have thought of the ideal life in a merely negative way. Perfection has meant freedom from sin, and nothing more. Jesus Himself dealt with this conception with biting irony in His little parable of the man with an empty life. He was free from the devil which had possessed him. But that was all. No good had come in to take the place of the evil. He was empty. And at last a whole group of devils rejoicing in finding so inviting a home took complete possession of him. The stainless life of Jesus at once became a positive and potent thing. He had cast out evil passion through the presence of good passion. His life is amazingly and bewilderingly full. He never gives you the sense of the cold correctness of unkindled and unawakened precision. All the richness and surging energy in life which men have sought by sinning He sought and found by refusing to sin.

For just at this point we come upon a matter of the most fundamental moment. His stainlessness

was the result of battle. It was not something which came as a matter of course. His perfection was the hard and difficult victory of one beset by a multitude of ceaselessly vigilant foes. He felt the whole outreach of temptation. He was not merely tempted as we are. He was tempted more than we are. He exposed a finer and more responsive organism to the appeal of temptation than has any other man in all the world. As we move into our own way of lonely struggle there comes to us a strange sense of near and understanding sympathy as we realize that He travelled along all that dark and difficult way and that He moved through terrible and winding paths of tense and testing struggle which we will never know. To Jesus Himself it was a matter of the utmost importance that His disciples should realize His oneness with them in feeling the subtle and alluring calls to which a man must not surrender. And so it came to pass that He told them the story of His experience of temptation phrasing His narrative in a vivid and telling imagery which carried His story home to their hearts. He had been meeting destiny where the great souls of the world have always met it—in struggle alone.

Most men meet life's concrete times of crisis without preparation and themselves feel like half-amazed spectators at some of the things which happen. The great men of the spirit fight their supreme fights in the silent places of their own life, and so the outer time of testing finds them ready. Jesus had spent days and days and days in the lonely propelling of His thought into the future and the meeting of the

significance of His mission. His body carried along on the high enthusiasm of His spiritual exaltation and swept into the splendour of His high vision did not at first feel the need of food. But at last the inevitable hour of reaction came. Days of fasting had left their mark upon Him. And He looked about in sharp and cutting consciousness that He hungered. His body seemed organized into one intense and mastering cry for food. His whole physical nature rose up in wrath at the long days of abstinence. Such concentrated physical desire as most men have never known swept over Him wave upon wave. It seemed as if nothing in the world was so significant as hunger. It seemed as if nothing in the world was so desirable as food. But He was alone in the desert. There were stones all about Him. But there was no bread. Then in a quick and decisive flash, came a potent thought. Strange powers lurked in His personality. Nature itself would be His servant. Let Him send forth one commanding word and change these hard stones into bread which could satisfy His hunger. At the very thought He could see the stones replaced by the bread for which He longed. But another thought came to Him. He was to be the master of the body and not its slave. He was to conquer physical desire. He was not to surrender to it. All down the long and weary years men had sold their character at the command of the body. He was to show them a better way. And His power when it was used was to be used for others and not for Himself. For other men He could flame forth a



fiery energy which nature swiftly obeyed. But for Himself He must meet life as other men met it. He must not claim resources which they could not possess. All the while the voice of the body was calling. All the while the passion of hunger was pulsing madly in His breast. All the while every voice of physical need was crying out for food. Resolutely He put the temptation aside. God's righteous will is food for the soul, and food for the body is not to be compared with that. Not by bread alone but by God's will would He live. And so with imperial strength He turned from all the surging outcry of His hungry body. He proved Himself stronger than physical desire.

The mind itself may be a source of the most deadly temptations. And the more active and full of resilient responsiveness a mind is, the more dangerous will be the temptations of which it is the vehicle. Jesus possessed a mind whose quick play and wonderful penetration amazed all who knew Him. And its activity was accompanied by a brightly winged imagination which turned into pictures His clear and telling thoughts. With this equipment He had been thinking over His mission. He was God's messenger to the world. He was the coming one who was to do for men that which most needed to be done. He was to set up the reign of God in the world which God had made. But how was it to be done? There was vast evil in the world. There were powers of darkness which must be overthrown. How could He establish the perfect reign in an imperfect world?

Like a great panorama a splendid picture swept before Him. He was another Alexander and the world was at His feet. Flashing swords were un-sheathed from the scabbard at His command and evil was conquered. He knew that He possessed powers which could organize an irresistible force to move upon any foe. He knew that He possessed personal qualities which could capture and hold a position of command. Alexander had conquered the world for himself. Why should not the one who was to set up God's kingdom capture the world for righteousness? He saw in vision the high towers of His world ruling capital. He saw in vision a world organized to do His righteous will. It was a fair dream, and it glowed with infinite allurements before His mind. But deep in His heart there stirred a vague unrest. Then it became a clear and dominant thought. There would come a day when the world would be given new laws. There would come a day of world-wide organization about the principles which He would proclaim. But that was not His work. He had to do something deeper. He had to do something harder. A world-wide victory based upon the external surrender of unmastered hearts could never satisfy him. Men had to be made over on the inside before the world could be made over on the outside. The citadel of the evil will in the individual life must be captured before the endeavour to capture the external citadels of dominant evil in the world. Men's souls must be won before it became a profoundly significant thing to capture their bodies. And the one who did this deepest thing must do it by shedding

his own blood rather than by shedding the blood of others. You can overthrow a civilization with an army. You can only overthrow a heart by self-sacrifice.

So another picture unfolded before His eyes. This picture revealed a lonely sufferer paying the last price of hard and costly suffering to break his way into the hearts of men. It revealed a life baring its heart to the lightnings in order that love and righteousness and all the deep and holy things might come to full and mastering expression in the world. Strange and mysterious secrets of those realities having to do with the most sacred and far-reaching personal experiences were in the eyes of this suffering figure. He was alone. But he staggered on bearing the moral and spiritual future of the world. Jesus did not hesitate. He cast out of His mind the figure of the conquering hero. He opened His mind to the figure of the suffering servant. The mind had done its best to tempt Him. He refused to bend in worship before that picture of external glory. He committed Himself to the invisible realities of the spirit. He surrendered His life to the way of pain.

Through all the tenseness and pressure of the conflict His nerves had held steady. Now it seemed as if they were ready to snap. With a sudden inrush of tremendous power His overwrought nerves began to cry aloud. Something of that conflict most of the highly organized and sensitively responsive natures of the world have known. But the full tragedy of it all suddenly came to Jesus. And with the release of the pain of mutinous nerves came that which ac-

companies the experience in so deadly a way. He seemed about to lose grip upon Himself. The wall between the steady and the abnormal, between the sane and the wild, mad thought suddenly became very thin. In a flash it seemed that Jesus was on the pinnacle of the temple. He was accosted by an abnormal thought. Why not put His Messiahship to the test? Why not leap from the pinnacle of the temple and let an angel catch Him ere He fell to the ground? That would indeed validate His mighty office. He stood quivering on the edge of the complete disruption of His faculties in an anarchy of mad nerves. And in that hour of strange temptation to submit to the call of the abnormal He did not falter. He walked with complete steadiness among the live wires of His madly rebellious nerves. He quelled them into silence. He steadied them into quiet. He was master in the very hour when it seemed that reason itself might be tottering under the strain of His days of conflict. He was spent and weary. But he had conquered.

These typical temptations do not exhaust the experience of Jesus with ethical conflict. His whole life had its tale of battle and its story of victory. The very quality of His personality and the very nature of His work shut Him out from some things which are open to other men. And the heartiness of His response to all human experience and His eagerness about all genuine and wholesome human relationships made Him especially open to the significance of those aspects of experience which were denied to Him. With all His winged idealism He had a

shrewd practical sense of values. Sir William Robertson Nicoll has called attention to the frequency with which He discussed matters connected with money. But His own life by the very definition of its meaning for the world had no place for those honest and skillful activities which mean so much to the wise and prudent man. It was always an adventure of friendly teaching which never built a place for itself in the structure of contemporary society. How keenly Jesus Himself felt this is shown in His poignant words: "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath no place to lay his head." As men gave back hate for His love, and as the sky grew dark about Him with approaching storm the strain of pain and temptation grew greater. And when He retreated to some quiet place with His own disciples in order to escape the hatred which dogged His steps and followed every word and every deed in order to criticize Him, even in the friendly seclusion with His chosen disciples, He heard the hiss of the serpent. He became increasingly aware that one of His own disciples was untrue to Him and had a selfish, angry, hating heart back of his smooth and plausible tongue and his hearty, friendly eyes.

What it cost Jesus to live with this poison of falseness among His own disciples none of us can really apprehend. The whole atmosphere was clouded by the presence of this one man. But patiently and tenderly and with quiet strong dignity Jesus endured it all. As the struggle grew more intense some inner spiritual energy grew more and more

compelling. He did not fail. In the garden of Gethsemane you stand reverently near with covered face as the fiery trial of temptation becomes almost more than nature can endure. And on the Cross itself you know that the spiritual conflict is a more terrible thing than the physical agony. Only with the triumphant shout: "It is finished," is the temptation over, is the final victory won. The garment of His perfection is cleansed and brightened by tears and its richest colour glows with the red of blood. So out of titanic struggle did He achieve that glowing, winsome, perfectly attractive life which has captured the mind and the conscience and the imagination of men.

The words of Jesus are themselves a part of His life. With many men the life of speech and the life of activity are in hopeless conflict. But what He was came forth in splendid and adequate utterance in living words. His speech came from immediate insight and not from a process of dialectic. It was proclamation and not argument. It was the expression of insight and not a product of formal logic. It came out of life and it appealed to life. It came out of the very structural relationships and experiences of men and out of their most characteristic activities. This made it universally comprehensible. And this accounts in part for its universal appeal. Life itself becomes articulate in His speech. All this is accentuated by His habit of speaking from the eye and to the eye. It is remarkable how much of the teaching of Jesus consists of the painting of verbal pictures. You look at the picture and you

see it in all its bright, clear colours. Then right out of the picture there leaps a flaming truth which grasps your mind and commands your conscience and wins your heart. The parables come out of this same fundamentally vital attitude. A story is the nearest approach to life itself by means of words. And that is the reason why Jesus told so many stories. He was not interested in truth apart from living relationships, if there is any such thing as truth apart from living relationships. He was interested in truth as it looked out of men's eyes, as it glowed in their hearts, as it thrilled in their speech, as it dominated their activities. A generalization can give you the form of a truth. A parable can give you a truth in action. By means of the parables, too, Jesus made ethical and spiritual truth a very near and intimate thing.

There is always the danger that men will hear the exposition of truths with a great deal of respect, but that it will never occur to them to apply these truths to their lives. It was hardly possible to treat the teaching of Jesus in this fashion. Standing near a field where He could see a farmer planting seed, He talked of the kinds of ground until every hearer was forced to ask what kind of soil He was offering to the truth. In the presence of eager youths and maidens He spoke of the bridal feast and those who were ready for the glad festivities. In the presence of busy women He spoke of the thrifty housewife who searched for a lost coin until she found it, or of the behaviour of the yeast when it was put in the meal. In the presence of men who knew the perils of travel

He talked of an unfortunate man who fell among thieves and of the way in which other travellers treated him. In the presence of men who knew what it was to care for sheep He spoke with trembling, eager voice of a shepherd who ran risks to save his sheep. And in the presence of fathers and sons He told a tale of a wonderful father which seemed to let a new meaning into all of life. And all of these stories came out of His intimate relation to life, His quiet, constant observation, the insight which came from struggle and suffering and victory, and the love for people which desired to give to them the very best which He possessed. His teaching is a part of the very fabric of His life.

The wonderful deeds of Jesus must be seen as a part of the complete organism of His life. There was a time when there were people who believed in Jesus because they believed in His miracles. It is safe to say that the typical modern mind approaches His amazing deeds through the preliminary impression made by His character and His teaching. His power is a corollary of His character. His transcendent activities are the by-products of that personal supremacy which makes it possible for that to seem simple and real in Him which would be impossible in other men. To be sure at this point we are on the edge of many puzzling and baffling questions. Our whole conception of the functioning activities of the natural order and of the splendidly dependable uniformities of nature demand consideration. It is at least possible to say here as much as this. If the universe is merely a system of hard and fast



mechanical interactions there is no room for any real personality, and no room for any actual ethical experience. If we believe in a personal world at all the mathematical world of hard and fast interactions is a part of a totality which includes all the free and ranging personal experiences. The manner in which the personal and impersonal aspects of experience are related is of course beyond the range of our immediate discussion. But it is clear that if we have a God at all He must not be chained by the system He has made. It is clear that His laws are His uniform ways of doing things and that they come from His character and not from any inherent metaphysical necessity. And it is clear that while He will never break with uniformity unless there is a supreme ethical reason for so doing, when there is such a reason there is no ontological difficulty. All this being true the practical problem in connection with the transcendent activities of Jesus is essentially the problem of an ethical reason sufficient to justify such activities. Those to whom Jesus has made the supreme ethical and intellectual and spiritual appeal are not likely to have any difficult hesitations as to the far-reaching ethical relationships of His greatest deeds.

This brings us, of course, to the central matter: How is it possible to classify Jesus? Can we place Him in any existing class? Or must we find a new class for Him alone?

This matter is best approached through a study of the experience of the disciples. And at the outset we are struck by the fact that Jesus did not make any

dogmatic convictions about His person a condition of accepting men as His disciples. He did not say: "If you believe that I am the Son of God follow me and I will make you fishers of men." At the beginning it was enough that men should follow Him. At the beginning it was enough that they cared to be with Him. At the beginning it was enough that they accepted His practical leadership. At the beginning it was enough that they became His friends. A certain attitude toward His person was to be the result of companionship with Him and not a preliminary necessity. And when men came to live with Him and to travel about with Him, when they listened to His teaching and followed with eager eyes His wonderful works, He did not tell them who He was, He waited until they could tell Him who He was. He just allowed the whole tremendous impact of His personality to be felt by them. He let the full friendly majestic splendour of His life fall upon them.

So time passed. So they watched and listened and thought and grew. And at last a time of strategy came at Cæsarea Philippi. It was not a time of strategy because He felt that He could make a declaration. It was a time of strategy because He felt that He could ask a question. First He put it in indirect form: What were men saying in their attempts to account for Him? When this form of the question received its reply He became more direct: "Whom do you say that I am?" It was the one probing central question and He cared deeply about the answer. He did not care about a merely verbal

answer, but if He could get the right answer welling up from the experience of contact of these men with His life and from the impression which He had made upon them that would be a great achievement. We can almost see the disciples stumbling about trying to find a word which is big enough and potent enough to describe Him. There is the great old word prophet. It is a fine word. It is a word with a noble history. But you cannot get all of Jesus into that word. The word falls to pieces under the strain and lies broken before your eyes. There is the sacred old word priest. It too has a long history. It too has great memories of God's dealings with men. But the word priest is not great enough to contain all there is of Jesus. It falls apart under the pressure. It is only a broken fragment of a word in the presence of such a task. At last Peter finds a word. His face flushes with the glory of it as he cries: "Thou art the Christ the son of the living God." To find a great enough word to describe Jesus he had to call Him God.

Now of course Peter was not a philosopher. He was not a trained metaphysician. He was not a formal theologian. But it is safe to say that all that trained thinkers have ever affirmed of Jesus as a result of really vital and disciplined thinking was implicit in the eager words of Peter. But the important point about it all is this. The word which Peter spoke while the other disciples listened with eager approving faces, was not the result of formal speculation about Jesus. It was the sharpening into a sentence of telling words the whole impression

which Jesus had made upon His disciples. Now clear and cogent thinking can render a real service in relation to conceptions of this kind as they come fresh and warm from our deep experience. But the material must come from a deep and mastering personal contact. A formal acquiescence in ever so noble a formulation about the great matters of religion is a thing of small moment. And if men persist in this sort of formal assent as a substitute for vital contact, the whole thing becomes hopelessly unreal, until, at last, the very words which once dripped with the vitalities of a personal relation are hard and cold and lifeless.

A doctrine which is the flower of a personal experience is a beautiful and wonderful thing. A doctrine which is the intellectual substitute for a personal experience is like a perfectly articulated skeleton with no vital organs, no flesh, and no life. And the tremendously important thing about all this may be said in a sentence. Every man must come to his own grip upon the meaning of Christ's person through an experience of contact and friendship and growth and transformation just as did the disciples. You cannot enforce this sort of thing from without. It must be unfolded from within. And it must be the most perfectly simple and natural growth and not something which is put into the soil of a life as a flagstaff is put into the ground. Each man must come to the place where he has to hunt for a word great enough to describe what Christ is to him and in him and for him. And in the light of that approach through experience he will have a vital as

distinguished from a formal relation to the great theme.

The real approach then is through ethical experience. When a man sees the achievement of Jesus over against his own failure. When he feels the kindling and creative power of that life, and as he surrenders to the leadership of the master constantly discovers new and wonderful potencies coming from the one great life into his, he will come to the place where he must classify this great unique helper and friend and deliverer and master. It is only so approached that the high word about Jesus has robust and adequate authenticity.

The men of the Gospels moved toward a rudimentary theology then through their experience. And while we may not be able to feel that their thinking attained very complete or systematic form in the preliminary period of their ethical and spiritual apprenticeship, we are surely able to see the splendid strategy and the permanent significance of the method by which they were led. It begins to be very clear as we watch the process by which they came to vital and compelling views about Jesus that the really productive beliefs are not only those which function in experience, but are indeed also those which come out of experience. They are vital in their conception. And they are vital and fruitful in their action.

When Jesus dies there is something abnormally tragic about the distress of the disciples. It is not like an ordinary death. We are so aware that death is a necessary part of human experience that we think

of life instinctively partly in the terms of death. But when Jesus was crucified it was as if all that He stood for had perished from the earth. It was as if love and justice and righteousness had died with Him. And there is a curious thing about the impression it all makes. You have a strange feeling that He had no right to die. At least you have a feeling that He cannot stay dead. The life He lived propels itself forward. The whole impact of His personality so vital, so magnetic, so supremely powerful in all ethical and spiritual things, the unutterable dynamic which went out from Him: all these seem incompatible with death. You are not surprised when you hear the resurrection story. You would be surprised not to hear the resurrection story. The broken tomb seems natural for Him. It would seem unbelievable in any one else.

At the same time one must admit that belief in the resurrection must meet one great test. That is not the analysis of the resurrection stories though that analysis is legitimate enough. The real test is this: Has anything gone forth into the life of the world from this personality so unique and high and transforming that this tremendous influence in some genuine fashion validates the belief in the resurrection. There is no conceivable evidence which would cause us to believe in the resurrection of the vile emperor Nero. And the Christ of the twenty centuries must answer some questions which have the most direct relation to the Christ of the resurrection morning.

When we ask the question: Has the belief in Jesus

been a productive force in the life of the twenty centuries since He lived? we are fairly overwhelmed by the amount of significant material which lies waiting for our inspection. Within a century after His death His name had been carried along every Roman road in the great Empire. Men of all sorts of language and race and custom and temperament and personal quality had surrendered to His claims and were building their whole life about His leadership. When the vast resources of the Empire were called into action to crush out the movement men died with a transcendent enthusiasm as if the new relation had come to mean so much to them that death itself was incidental. Before four centuries had passed the religion which Jesus had founded had conquered all opposition and had become the official religion of the Roman Empire. The imperial eagle had become the symbol of an empire which acknowledged the lordship of Christ. And this had come to pass not through a series of magnificently victorious wars, but through the strange and mastering resistance which was willing to die but would not be false to the faith. It was simply impossible to kill Christians as fast as new adherents accepted the faith. Against every pressure of personal interest and hope of success in human relationships men clung to their faith in Jesus until at last in despair of crushing the movement the Empire surrendered to it.

And this amazing practical success was accompanied by a wonderful effect upon the various relationships of the men who became followers of the new religion. There were human inconsistencies

enough. There was folly and futility and falseness among them. But multitudes of people were quite made over as far as the whole ethical and social and spiritual quality of their life was concerned. In debauched and decadent cities men turned from alluring vices and lived with actual decency and noble self-control. When plagues came and multitudes were swept away the Christian population behaved with a quiet steadiness, a friendly solicitude for all who suffered, and an utterly unselfish willingness to take personal risks which bewildered and astonished their neighbours. Multitudes of men and women did live loving unselfish lives utterly at variance with their old habits. And when they were asked the secret of this they referred to the one imperial personality which had changed all the world for them.

When the Barbarian invasions came it was the Christian forces which tamed the Barbarians. The Roman Empire went down before the shock of the prolonged attack. But Christianity conquered the conquerors and at last made them into men of civilization. It was not a task suddenly accomplished. But it was a task which Christianity brought to a successful conclusion. And all the while Christianity had a way of setting itself against popular evils and abuses. Gladiatorial combats went down before the new spirit which Christianity had brought into the world. And when evils entered the Church there was some one ready sooner or later to protest in the name of the high and unselfish character of Jesus, and again and again the evil went down be-



fore the impact of this attack. When the mighty Mohammedan movement swept over the world it seemed for a time that it would be irresistible. But Constantinople barred the eastward gates and at last at the battle of Tours in 732 Charles Martel checked the western advance of the movement. And the inspiration to save the world from Mohammedan conquest centered in the thought of the contrast between the Cross and the crescent, between Mohammed and Christ. The Middle Ages saw many brutal and ugly things find their place in the life of the Church. But all the while the mastery of Jesus haunted men's minds. When Hildebrand dreamed his mistaken dream of a world organized about the human representative of Jesus he was inspired by a passionate loyalty to the reign of Christ. And all the power of the papal idea to seize men's minds rested back at last upon the thought that it represented the victory of Christ. The man of Galilee possessed the heart of Christendom. When the wonderful Franciscan revival of the thirteenth century swept out on its gay, glad, singing, unselfish way to renew the hearts of men it was the result of a fresh sense of contact with Jesus Christ. His word as men then interpreted it made a man a Franciscan. And all the lowly service, all the beneficent activity of the great revival go back to Jesus Himself for inspiration. When the Church descended to depths of humiliation and often to depths of degradation in the fourteenth century, it was the memory of the stainless Christ and His conception of unity and faithfulness among His followers which gave potency to the call for reform.

When the Great Schism came it was the body of Christ which was divided and the sense of that appalling tragedy made men feel that something must be done. Into the Church from His own high and holy personality has come a passion for righteousness which did not come to complete eclipse even in the darkest days. The institution founded by Jesus is almost unique in its capacity to produce profound and healing crises from within. Wiclif, Savonarola, and Hus are but indications of an undying spirit which Jesus has bequeathed to the Church and which made itself felt in the darkest days. The Reformation was a rediscovery of the fundamental vitalities of the Christian religion. It must be admitted that there was always the danger that Jesus would be lost in the involved system with which the medieval Church saw Him surrounded. The Reformation saw Him emerge and take His place of leadership unconfused by bewildering ecclesiastical relationships. And from the time of the Reformation, sometimes rapidly and sometimes more slowly the actual quality of the conceptions of Jesus has been making a place for itself in the world.

It is not too much to say that the very warp and woof of the ethical life of the contemporary man comes from Jesus. Even the man least friendly to the Church, even the man least responsive to the ministries of religion, cannot avoid looking upon multitudes of problems of right and wrong through the eyes of Jesus. This is true because the eyes of Jesus have become the eyes of civilization itself. And all the while, in ages bright and in ages dark,

individual lives have been moulded and refashioned by the influence of Jesus. A multitude which no man can number has found the way into purity and integrity and unselfishness and brotherly love through the power of the Man of Galilee. In the darkest ages He has produced white lives. And the brightest ages in the qualities of character and goodness have been bright because men opened their lives to His influence and allowed His spirit and His principles to become dominant in their relationships. As His spirit has entered more deeply into the lives of men institutions have felt the touch of His regal hand. Sometimes the fight has been long. But when it once becomes evident that a great institution is contrary to the will of Jesus you have heard the preliminary sentence of doom. Slavery went down before the spirit of Jesus. Every reform has received wings of power from Him. The great movement for making the lot of all workers fairer and more secure has a pressure back of it from the spirit of Jesus which many men have never realized. The movement for more democratic government has had an ally in the thought of every man as a possible son of God through the touch of Jesus Christ which has undermined slavish political conservatism and has hastened the coming of the new day. Wistful men are all the while comparing the visible world with the ideals of Jesus. And this perpetual contrast as men become more sharply conscious of it is a perpetual inspiration of movements to refashion human relationships after His desire. The fairest idealisms of the world become mastering to the thought of men

and move toward becoming actual in the lives of men through the perpetual influence of Jesus Christ.

And His influence is always felt in the direction of the conserving of the best in the old as well as the moving forward to possess the new. With His own splendid regard for every good thing in the past of His nation, with His unwillingness to break one sacred sanction which had ethical and spiritual vitality in it, He has infused a wise caution into that very daring and radical enthusiasm which He has created. In Jesus every true element in the conservative and every true element in the radical met together and lived in harmony and peace. And the impact of His influence upon the world tends to secure just that consummation in the world's life. He is the soul of the world's noble restlessness. He is the soul of the world's careful stability. And He is keeping both alive in potent and functioning fashion in the lives of men.

That which has come from the personality of Jesus into the world is of simply incalculable range and depth and power. And its ethical stimulus and its spiritual inspiration make it the very supreme potency for good among men. The later history of His influence is a most significant and potent confirmation of the resurrection stories. Not unworthily we can believe that the source of all this moral and spiritual power was able to break the chains of death. The imperial personality is never more imperial than as we see its impact upon succeeding generations of the most various sorts of people in the most widely scattered parts of the world.

There is an even more intimate contact with the personality of Jesus which we must consider if we would come into actual knowledge of the secret of His power. Some one has said that on the day of Pentecost Jesus walked out of men's memories into their hearts. He ceased to be merely the Christ of history and became the Christ of experience. He was no longer merely the Christ of a past activity. He was the Christ of a present and active power. Now there is no doubt in the world that to multitudes of people in the first century and since these words are a fairly accurate description of an actual experience. It may be objected that we have left the solid ground and have entered the uncertain and treacherous ground of mysticism. Fortunately the particular approach of these lectures at once disarms this criticism of any real relevancy. We are asking the question as to what beliefs have proved productive and what beliefs have it in them to prove productive. And so the question of the practical productiveness of the belief in the actual presence of the living Christ becomes a very simple and a very natural and a very proper question. Indeed, if we would deal fairly with all the data at our command we simply must ask this question. For as a matter of fact this belief is one of the most potent of which we know anything.

From the early days of persecution onward men were steadied and strengthened for the hardest times of testing and for the most difficult and even terrible experiences by the thought that Christ Himself was with them. Sometimes the belief burned more

brightly than at other times. And in some ages it was in clearer consciousness than in others. But on the whole it may be said that the Church was made brave and unflinching and confident and really dauntless by the belief that Christ was with it. And the individual Christian was lifted into a new quality of life because he believed that Christ Himself was with him in his hour of trial. There is a fine story about the time immediately preceding our own which illustrates this. Dr. Robert William Dale, the famous pastor of Carr's Lane Church in Birmingham, was one day at work upon an Easter sermon. He had just written the sentence: "Christ is alive." He stopped to look at it. He began walking to and fro in his study saying it over and over again. The thought possessed him. In sharp and poignant realization the conviction cut its way more and more deeply into his life that it was indeed true. Christ was not dead. He was alive. He was alive. Wave upon wave the realization of its meaning swept over the soul of the responsive preacher. And what began as the experience of an illuminated moment settled down into the very heart of his being and became one of the central structural certainties of his life. From that day he announced an Easter hymn every Sunday in Carr's Lane Church. He said that he was determined that at least one congregation in England should know that Christ is alive. His powerful book, "The Living Christ and the Four Gospels," translates the experience into its larger significance and expresses it in profound practical and philosophical relationships.

The story of the triumphs of Christianity in the world is to a far larger degree than most people realize a story of the inspiration coming from a sense of contact with the Christ who is alive and present and actually powerful in the lives of all His followers. The great missionaries have endured hardship and persecution and illness and all the manifold difficulties of their lot because they have been convinced that though far from home and the civilization which meant all the world to them and all the sacred sanctions of religion as they express themselves in a mature Christian civilization, they were not absent from Christ. He was with them. He was their companion. He was their guide. He was their friend. And with singing hearts and kindled eyes and vibrant vital voices they went on with their work in the joy of His presence. For actual functioning power in the lives of men this conception stands out as ethically and spiritually one of the most mighty known among men. Livingstone knelt alone in the heart of Africa when he died. But in his own thought he was not alone. The one thing which eternally mattered was his assurance that the living Christ was with him. And of that the story of his inner life as his letters tell it leaves no doubt. The belief that Christ never calls a missionary to go where He does not go before to prepare the way is one of the most high and sacred assets of the missionary enterprise.

There is a wonderfully organic quality about all these things we have been saying about the imperial personality. What He was, what He did, what He

said, the flaming glory of the resurrection, the age long impact of His personality upon the unfolding life of the world, the high and commanding experience of Christ as perpetually alive and perpetually present constitute an organism of belief every part of which fits into every other part, and all of which together constitute our full impression of Him. It is the one of whom we can make all these affirmations who is indeed possessed of the most far-reaching and regal power. And all of this is really seen in its vital meaning as we approach it through the experience of individual men and of the world. This personality has functioned and is functioning more potently than any other in all the range of our knowledge.

To those who have felt the potency and reality of what has been said so far there is another thing which must be said in order to complete the necessary statements about Jesus. He is not apart from this age. He is of this age. He belongs to its life. He is indeed, as has well been said, every man's contemporary. But it is particularly significant from the standpoint of the men now in the world that He is their contemporary. The Christ of the ages? Yes. But most of all from our standpoint the Christ of To-day. To many a man in the trenches everything was changed by this discovery. The dim and exquisite Christ of his churchly vision became the torn and wounded Christ with him in the smoke of battle, in the torturing tenseness of every hard and painful experience. In the front lines they found Him. Over the top they found Him. At the lonely



listening post they found Him. Wherever they were called to go He was their companion. And of this group of men to whom the whole experience was a revelation of the nearness of the mighty master, there were those not a few who came to feel with deep and assured conviction that He is doing something in the midst of all the blackness and cruelty and barbarity of war. They came to feel that the whole far flung battle line had an invisible Captain and that that Captain was Christ. They came to feel that through the war and after the war there were great things which He was to do in the world. This conviction made them willing to die. This same conviction made them ready to live. It put light into their eyes. It put courage into their hearts. It put meaning into the passing days.

The productive power of such a belief is evident at once. It makes the ground solid under a man's feet. It gives him the deepest and most sacred sort of cause for which to fight. It gives him a future to which to look forward. It makes even a grim and sordid and cruel world a spot where the flowers are ready to bloom and where better days are coming. The man who had been tempted to think of life as a tale told by an idiot and signifying nothing, comes to think of it as a great conflict with God in the battle, with the living Christ as the leader, and with the worst and hardest days as bursting with possibilities of good for the time which is to come. There were men who had no such belief. There were men who had no such inspiration. We are not talking of them. We are speaking of the productive power to

those who possess it of a belief in the mighty Christ at work at a great task in the world to-day. The sense of partnership in a noble endeavour is one of the finest experiences which can come to men. The sense of partnership in a desperate and surpassingly difficult task is shot through with the splendour of the sacrificial commitment which the task requires. The sense of partnership with the Son of God in the remaking of the world has power in it to pull forth every hidden energy and every slumbering potency of a man's life.

Over against the world with Jesus in it, you can place a world from which He has forever departed. You can think your way out into a world where no man has ever felt the challenge of His teaching and no man has ever felt the compulsion of His personality. You can create for your own mind a world which He has never shamed into unselfishness and a world which He has never inspired to loving brotherhood. You can piece together for your own thought the structure of a world whose life age after age has never been mellowed and deepened and heightened by the pressure of His spirit upon it. You can call together through the strength of your own mind a civilization to which He has not given eyes of justice and hands of service and a heart of pity. You can formulate for your own satisfaction a world beneath whose surface of passion and pain and cruelty there is moving no mighty invisible presence of a living Christ to bring good out of evil and hope out of fear and joy out of sorrow and the best from the worst. You can imagine all of these things. And when you

have gazed at the picture until you can tolerate it no longer you can come back to this world where we live. It has its brutal evils. It has its inane futilities. It has its long-drawn tragedies. But it is a world rimmed with gold for all that. It is a world with rainbows moving about it in spite of the evil and the pain. And the saving glorious thing about this world is seen in its full meaning in the light of the imperial personality of Jesus Christ.

In the very nature of the whole case one more thing must be said. The test of this interpretation must be found not in its consideration by a lonely meditative mind. The analytic processes of formal logic cannot reach this high realm. There is one test which is adequate. There is one test alone which can be safely applied. That is the laboratory test. All the facts and all the experiences and all the principles which we have covered should be ample basis for the adventure of personal experiment. Each man must try the thing out for himself. Each woman must try the thing through for herself. In the actual laboratory of life we must give the imperial personality the opportunity of functioning in our lives. Then description will be changed to experience. And thought will be changed to action. And speculation will be changed to appropriation. The final strength of the imperial personality lies just in the fact that He never fails when you make the laboratory test.



## LECTURE IV

### THE VITAL MEANING OF THE CROSS



## LECTURE IV

### THE VITAL MEANING OF THE CROSS

**A**N age without a cross can never understand the Cross. An age with a Golgotha of its own can begin to understand the Calvary of Christ. An age which has staggered up its own hill of pain to be crucified can better know the meaning of that agony of long ago. John Oxenham's memorable poem in which he tells how an English soldier from a cross to which the Germans had nailed him looked into the eyes of the One who had hung upon that other Cross and looking found all things in heaven and earth forever changed for him, is full of meaning for the reader who brings to the story a responsive and understanding heart. The four years of the world war did many amazing and terrible and wonderful things in the life of men. And one of the greatest of them all was the preparing of the world for a new understanding of Calvary.

When people have an invisible cross in their hearts it is not so difficult for them to come to some real and telling contact with the Cross which bore its tragic burden on the Green Hill far away so long ago. The little wooden crosses in France all represent hidden crosses in human hearts somewhere. There are fathers and mothers and sweethearts and friends

who go about their tasks in what may seem to be very much the same old way. But all the while they are bearing about the cross which no eye can see—the cross which corresponds to some wooden cross on Flanders fields. These men and women young and old have new eyes of the spirit. They have eyes which have been cleansed by pain, and eyes which have been given clear and noble vision by the lonely hours of grief. When they are asked to follow along the way of sorrow through which Jesus passed it is not a new and strange way where all the sights are unfamiliar and all the experiences are foreign to anything which they have ever known. They too have moved wearily and with slow and suffering steps along a way of sorrow. There is a quality about His way which gives them a sense of awakened memory. With a little gleam of surprise they feel a touch of companionship with Him, that deep and unforgettable companionship of a common experience of pain.

For the time at least we have been delivered from that superficial optimism which so bitterly disliked to look upon any hard experiences or to admit the presence of any unlovely thing in the world. The very unconscious hardness of its abounding enthusiasm wounded many a sensitive heart in the old days when the creed of shouting optimism made slaves of us all. Sooner or later it is inevitable that we would have seen the folly and the self-deception involved in the gay refusal to admit the presence of dark and malignant evil in the world. But what might have come very slowly did come very quickly. Our smug and



complacent optimisms went down before the blast of the war and they are as though they had never been. A new spirit of ethical honesty has gone over all the world. In this mood of chastened candour, in this attitude of humble consciousness of the evil of life, we look upon the Cross with a capacity to see there what was invisible to us before. We begin to realize the meaning of the great old words: "Deep calling unto deep."

To the investigator who cares about discovering what are the productive beliefs it is clear that the war has revealed the lack of productiveness in certain interpretations of life and action which before the world-wide cataclysm seemed to many people entirely adequate. Some of the sermons preached before the war seem curiously light-hearted now. Some of the theologies announced confidently before the war now suggest the substitution of one delightful summer afternoon for all the wild contrasts of the whole year. We know now that the Christian year consists of more than one summer day. We know that it includes the deadliest cold of winter as well as the heat of summer. The friendly and easy confidence that human nature was coming to a perennial bloom of unselfishness which fell so lightly from some clerical lips expressed in mellifluous phrases and warm with the speakers' academic assurance, seems curiously remote now. From deeds that smite we have come to feel the weight and power and sincerity of words that smite. A religion which is as honest as the worst facts of life, a religion which is as passionately earnest as the great Hebrew prophets,

a religion which is as stern as righteousness and as tender as love, is sure to have a welcome and a responsive hearing from men and women who themselves have had a new baptism in sincerity.

It is in such an attitude as this that we must approach the study of that dire tragedy which is at once the darkest spot in the history of man and the greatest creator of ethical optimism which has influenced the lives of men. With all the new honesty of a torn and broken age we must look upon this age-old tragedy and think once more of its meaning for those who dwell upon the earth.

The first thing which comes home to us as we go over the Gospel records is just the human appeal of the unflinching bravery of it all. Here was a man who bared His life to the tempest. Here was a man who went the whole length of loyalty to His own conception of the meaning of His life. Death confronted Him. He looked straight into the eyes of death. He was a young man. He had known only a few years in this mysterious and amazing world. His blood moved with the full energy of youth and health. His very body was full of the protest which youth ever makes against death. And yet He died. He chose to die. He persisted in a course of action which made His death inevitable. How many a lonely and homesick boy in France must have felt some sudden thrill of encouragement as opening his khaki Testament he found the story of that other young man whose dauntless, chivalrous courage did not count the cost but entered the valley of the shadows trailing His youth after Him like a torn garment. In your

own hour of supreme need to find that your religion gives you a man, a man of age like unto your own, who also was called where life is a lonely memory and death is the great monarch, to make this discovery was to see in religion something so gloriously near and real and helpful, that its very meaning was sharpened by a new poignant power. Whatever else Calvary means it begins by meaning that life itself was incidental when the demand of a great ideal came sweeping across it, to the most gifted and most responsive young man who ever lived in the world.

It is easy to make religion a matter of ritual. And ritual which is the expression of noble truth may have a fine and gracious ministry. It is easy to think of religion as a practical program. And when that program challenges men to service and shames them from sloth and selfishness it is a notable and glorious thing. But to find in the heart of religion a human experience. To find there a trembling and eager young man full of the love of life, and yet ready without hesitation to sacrifice life, full of the sense of the wonderful allurements of men and women and nature and all the vivid things of the world, and yet turning His back upon everything but the stern call of His destiny, to find Him fighting His way into victory and struggling His way into the strength which death could not daunt, is to have religion speak to a young man in war time in words so near and intimate that they seem the telling aloud of his own struggle in a fashion whose victory is beyond his hopes and yet creates in him hope and courage and power. There may be many things about Christianity which

remained mysterious to the boys in the front trenches. But Calvary spoke to them in a deep and never-to-be-forgotten voice. At this point religion met them where they lived. At this point religion met them where they died.

When one has felt the courage which speaks from Calvary at once he goes on to feel the hope which moves triumphantly right through the whole experience of agony. Jesus deliberately followed a course of action which He knew would eventuate in His death. He might have planned His life in such a way as to avoid the whole experience. He did not do this. He included death in His plan for life. In the deepest possible sense He could say: "I have a rendezvous with death." And this means that He felt that it was worth His while to die. It means that He looked out hopefully upon the future of men and believed that His death would elicit such an ethical and spiritual response as to justify all its cost in tragic struggle and pain. He showed His belief in the response of human nature to His work in the most astonishing way, when He held fast to His task and included death in His task. This was not because He had a dreamy and poetic view of human nature which had never faced the ugly facts of life. He knew what was in the heart of man. He knew what was in the mind of man. He knew what came forth in the life of man. And in spite of His familiarity with human folly, and falseness, and wickedness He cherished a heart of hope. He believed the future would justify the risk He took in venturing life itself upon the altar of the world's good.

There is a quality about this faith of Jesus which arrests our attention and seizes upon our hearts. We know all too well how often disillusionment comes with knowledge, and pessimistic gloom in the wake of an experience of the full pressure of the evil of human life. Sometimes we have a haunting fear that brave and candid knowledge would make cynics of us all. Then we come to this life with all its abandon of moral and spiritual adventure. We see men giving back hate for love, and conspiracy and malignant cruelty for gracious and self-forgetful service. We are almost afraid to look into His face after all that. We are afraid that He too will have lost hope. We are afraid that we will find lines of bitter and misanthropic disillusionment. Then at last we gain courage and look into the face marred more than any face of man. It is indeed full of lines of suffering. It is indeed drawn with agony. It is indeed a face which tells the story of a broken heart. But the strange miracle of it all is that the hope maintains itself right through the heart-break. There is not the faintest quality of cynicism. There is no suggestion of bitter pessimism. Instead there is the glory of an immortal hope. When life has done the worst it can do to Jesus He still believes. He cherishes an unconquerable hope. And that hope moves out from Him to make its way into the hearts of sad and pressed and tempted men in all the world.

But there is something beneath the courage. And there is something beneath the hope. He was heroic enough to die. He was so full of hope that death seemed the open door to achievement. He believed

that men who would not listen to the eloquence of His life would be mastered by the silent eloquence of His death. But the thing which floods it all with a glory like a purple red sunset on a mountain is this: He loved men so much that He really wanted to make the greatest possible sacrifice for them. In the last analysis it was not the Roman power which crucified Jesus. And it was not Jewish hatred hounding the Romans on. It was the passion of love in the heart of Jesus which fastened Him to the Cross. It was a love which would not let Him go anywhere except to Calvary. Now there is one discovery which keeps brightness in the darkest places of the world. Whenever one human being finds that another human being loves him enough to suffer for him it changes the whole spirit and quality of the experience of life. The days had seemed intolerable, but love transfigures them. If some one cares enough for you to bear his life to the hard impact of pain for your sake, it gives you the strength of ten and after the darkest night it sets the white glow of morning playing about the eastern hills. Slimy and foul places of battle were made into spots bright with a sort of apocalyptic glory because in them a soldier found in his pal a willingness to go to lengths of self-forgetful risk and suffering for him which bathed friendship in a transcendent radiance. That chum may be buried in France to-day. But before he was swept out of life in the tempest of war he put into action the meaning of the high love of a man for his friend. And the friend who thinks of him to-day wistfully waits for some power which will tune life to the lofty key of

that experience. He finds just this on a cross where a Man died long ago and dying set a new standard of love for all mankind. The soldier is almost startled to find that the greatest thing which came to him in France is waiting for him now on Calvary. The same impetuous love. The same recklessly self-giving devotion. The same marvel of loyalty which plunges into pain and never counts the cost.

So the man of to-day finds an immediate point of contact with Jesus. Just at the moment when in the midst of all the unlovely cynicism of the early days of reconstruction he is wondering if in the days of peace he will ever again hear sounded that high and awful note of glorious and passionate sacrifice, he meets the supreme sacrifice of history, a deed which speaks with direct and summoning power to the lonely man who feared that the world had never again for him the thrill of a supreme experience.

All these things can come to a man who believes that Jesus was the most splendidly comradely and self-forgetful man in all the world, but who asks no difficult questions about His person. Catholic and Jew, Protestant and secular man of the world, all of them can find this immediate and vital connection with the Man who included a cross in the plan of His life so many years ago. And they who approach Him so must feel the contagion of His flaming personality in its hour of sacrifice. He makes some things wonderfully easier. He makes some things amazingly harder. There is something inevitably productive about such a death. It sets a new standard which somehow it is very difficult to ignore. It is as if you

suddenly see the heart of life's meaning and you can never be contented to have it mean any less.

There are many men to whom this contact with the supremest of the sons of men is the only possible contact to-day. About ultimate and difficult questions they are in such a state of entanglement that if they must wait until they can make tremendous credal assertions about Jesus before they come to actual relationship with Him they will never receive anything gripping and potent from Him at all. It is important that we should understand their dilemma, and it is important that we should appreciate their perplexity and their need. It is extremely important that we should allow the Jesus who lived among men and who died upon the cross to meet them where He can speak to them, and to secure their friendly allegiance at the point where they are able to sense the potency of His appeal. If we try to insist that Jesus shall mean nothing to a man until He can mean the sort of thing He means to the most clear-eyed and understanding saint we are taking an attitude of which the Master would not for a moment approve. A real connection is the beginning of all sorts of wonderful things. And we have no ground of complaint if the connection is just simple and direct and honest with the true outreach of an earnest life behind it. It is a great and fine thing that in these days of searching of mind and of intellectual confusion there is a real touch of the life of Jesus upon human life which is possible quite apart from credal assertions and all the vast articulations of theology. Indeed, it may be that the contact will make necessary the the-



ology. We must not insist that the theology shall precede the contact. The death of Christ speaks in its own immediate and authentic eloquence. The man who reads the Gospel story with open mind and open heart cannot fail to feel its power. And it is astonishing the fashion in which it will begin at once to produce results in the really responsive life. The courage and the hope and the love of that death have an immediate and compelling and imperative appeal.

The travelling physician in Robert Browning's deeply understanding poem, "Karshish," is a most interesting personality. He rather seems to belong to the modern world than to the world in which Jesus lived. In him we see the scientific spirit shrewdly and accurately observing and remembering and classifying. We see the tendency to push past the incidental to the essential. We see the impatience with superstition and make-believe. And this man is confronted by a phenomenon which he is at a loss to classify. He has been talking with one Lazarus regarding whom the strangest conceivable sort of story is being told. At first he is inclined to take the whole narrative with a scornfully disbelieving mind. But somehow the story hangs together with a strange air of veracity. And somehow the man himself seems to forbid the thought of deception. Piece by piece the travelling physician puts the elements of the story together. At last he has a complete picture. It dazzles him. It amazes him. It startles him. But out of all the impossible strangeness emerges a figure speaking to men with the voice of God. From the depths of his heart you feel his wonder at the thought that it

may be that God has become articulate in human life. Perhaps the All Great is the All Loving too. This story if it were true would make it so.

We have spoken of the wonderful contribution which the death of Jesus can make to the life of a man who is moved by its moral and spiritual splendour without ever lifting Jesus from the human world where we meet Him. If Jesus was just a man He has this power to seize and hold the mind and the conscience of other men. But what if He was more than man? What if Peter's confession does represent however vaguely and dimly some reality? What if Jesus was in actual and amazing and effective fashion God in human life? Would it make any difference in the meaning of His death for the world? Would it increase in any definite fashion its power to function in the world? We are discussing the productive beliefs. Would the belief in Jesus be more productive in the life of men if they felt with certainty that He was God in human life? Has it been so? Can it be so? Will it be so in the future?

We must move towards our attempt to reply to these questions with one assertion. However much more than man Jesus was He was in actual and genuine fashion a real man. And no belief that we come to have about Him must rob us of His true humanity. Mary wept because she thought that they had taken away her Lord. We would weep almost as much if we thought they had taken away our comrade. No one who is true to the manifold evidence in the Gospels can for a moment rest in an interpretation of Jesus which sacrifices the reality of His human life,

the reality of His human struggle and the reality of His human victory. If He was God in human life He *was God in human life*. If He was God become man He *was God become man*. There was no seeming and make-believe and pious pretense about this human experience. It was actual with a sincerity and candour and definiteness which were thoroughgoing. But suppose that it was God who thus broke His way into human life. Suppose it was God who looked out of human eyes, and spoke with a human voice, and held out human hands, and struggled and worked and hoped and feared as a man. We are not lifting the question as to how such a thing could be possible. We are not trying to find a recipe for the incarnation. The man who could invent a formula for the incarnation would cease to be a man and would become God. And in any event we are testing this belief by its functioning power and not by a theological or philosophical analysis of its contents. Suppose that God, having His own divine secret of the fashion in which it could be done, did get into human life. Suppose He worked as a man. Suppose He lived as a man. Suppose He loved as a man. Suppose He flung Himself upon the Cross in a passionate endeavour to save men from themselves by the power and the glory of His sacrifice. If all these things were true would it make any difference in the appeal of Calvary? Would it effect profoundly the capacity of the Cross to speak to the world?

At once we must say that it would make this difference. Calvary would be more than the revelation of the love of a good man for other men. It would

become the revelation of the love of God for men. It would not prove merely that a good man was willing to be hurt for other men. It would prove that God was willing to be hurt for men. It would prove that God was willing to die for men. It would prove that the universe itself is on the side of love. It would prove that God is not merely an infinite spectator looking upon human passion and pain from afar. It would prove that God is a participant, that He has Himself bent under the burden of the worst life can do to men, that He has felt the lash of circumstance, the cut of malignant hatred, and that He has been wounded unto death by the hard and inscrutable forces of selfishness in the world.

As a matter of fact it is very difficult to see how we can continue to worship a God who is just a distant observer of human pain. If there is a God with no mark of a wound upon Him. If there is a God whose infinite serenity is untouched by all the bitter woe of men and women in the world. If there is a distant and exquisite splendour of divine and unruffled glory whose inner security has never been invaded by all the deadly pain of human life. If there is a God without a scar He can never win our hearts. He can never command our love. He can never draw us with the marvellous allurements of a divine self-sacrifice. He can awe us by the thought of His power. But He cannot hold us with eager respect for His character. Love which avoids the burden of those in pain is not true love. Goodness which does not come to the rescue of hard-pressed weakness is not real goodness. If God keeps to His infinite far-

off home while the war between good and evil is being fought out with terrible suffering and hard-pressed courage, then He is not a God we can worship. He is an infinite slacker, who resists every call of noble chivalry. If Jesus is God in human life then God's own character is vindicated. God's own love is made convincingly real. We can go on living with some sort of deep possession of our spirits in this world so full of pain if God Himself has been hurt. But the universe itself seems to mock us if we are asked to worship a God whose heart bears no mark of deadly wound.

After all, however little he may put it into sharply expressed thought, the boy on the battle-field and the boy who has returned from the war and all the men and women of this torn and confused age do want tremendously to know what God is like. It is splendid to have good people in the world. But what kind of a God is back of the world? If you have a God who was the world's most daring volunteer in the most audacious struggle of history how it quickens every noble purpose, how it stirs and deepens every high consecration. If the boy far from home can worship a God who has been far from home it simply makes everything different. And if he can realize that a virile, forth-going love which scorned to count the cost brought God Himself into human life, then the world can never be a hopeless spot again.

We have already more than suggested that if Jesus was God in human life then Calvary is not merely a revelation of human courage. It is a revelation of

the courage of God. We must believe that God never asks anything of us which does not characterize His own life. Now there is just one way by which the courage of God can be made completely clear to men. And that is by His coming into human life, under the fierce fire of temptation and hardship and suffering which beats upon humanity, and then letting life do the very worst it can to Him. All the courage of all the hard campaigns of the world shrinks before the spectacle of that daring which prompts God to take all the risks of human life and human death. Many a soldier before his hour of fierce and terrible testing has held in his heart an anxious question which he never put into words: Would he prove ready in the hour of hard onslaught? Would he have a heart of courage, and a hand of boldness when the great demand came? If such a soldier with his secret torturing question comes to realize that God Himself refused to remain where there was no tremor of uncertainty and no terrible pressure of demand, but broke His way into the pain and hot cruel conflict of life ready for wounds, and ready for death, the whole universe becomes a friendly and homelike place. There may be terrible fighting. But God is on his side. And it is a great comrade God, who knows all about the demand and the strain and the danger. He did not keep away from the trenches. He did not avoid the front line. He went over the top. He moved across No Man's Land in the rush of the charge. And He died as He stormed the defenses of the foe. A God as brave as that gives ethics an absolutely new meaning in the life of men.

Then if it was God in human life who died upon the Cross we come to have an absolutely new basis for faith. It is a fine experience to come across men who believe in humanity. It is good to believe that the greatest and the best man who ever lived believed in humanity. It was a splendid leap of faith. It rouses us. It inspires us. But after all men may be mistaken. Men have been mistaken. Good men have been mistaken. And if the men of faith have made a mistake what a wildly hopeless world it is in which we live. You have mounting human dreams. You have aspiring human hopes. But life laughs at them all at last. Life turns in contemptuous scorn from these impractical idealisms. At least in moments of doubt and fear these thoughts will suggest themselves. And the torturing ugly knowledge of the evils of the world will perpetually tend to baffle our faith. On the other hand if we can know that God believed deeply enough in the capacity of humanity to go all the length of passionate pain represented by His life of humiliation in the world and His death upon the Cross, we have a new platform of faith upon which to stand. If God believes in humanity our doubts are discounted. If God has faith in humanity our misanthropies and our cynicisms are discredited.

God has no illusions. No evil deed of all the wicked and brutal and slimy deeds which have stained the life of mankind has ever been perpetrated without His knowledge. No evil word of all the false and treacherous and cruel and hating words which have scattered the hurt of wrong in the world has

ever been spoken without His apprehension. More than this He has known the heart of every person who has ever lived in this earth. He has followed all the winding and shameful pathway of all the evil thoughts which men and women have cherished without ever framing them in speech or sending them forth as dark and corroding deeds. He knows all about humanity. And if in spite of all His perfect and expert knowledge of the evil in the human heart and on human lips and in human actions He still believes in humanity there is simply no standing-room left for shattering and fundamental doubt regarding the capacity of mankind for good. God has faith in men. God believes in their response to what He does for them. He believes they are worth all the daring, suffering adventure of the Incarnation. He believes they are worth all the sorrowful doom of the Cross. When a man comes to his hour of most bitter personal disillusionment; when he can no longer believe in himself, in the presence of the Cross where the Son of God risked death for men, he begins to doubt his doubt of himself and to find a way of faith once more possible.

If God believes that you are worth Calvary you cannot quite completely doubt yourself. When a man passes through his most painful experience of the falseness and treachery of other men and the sun seems shrouded in the black cloud of human faithlessness, if he comes into the presence of the Cross and hears the Son of God say: "Father forgive them," it comes to him in spite of all his furious and angry disappointment that beneath the falseness,



away in remote corners of the personality there is latent and potential good to which it is possible to speak and from which one may hope for a response. In such men as these God believed. For such men as these Christ died. And a humble hope is born again in the human heart. In spite of a man's knowledge of his own worst self and in spite of the worst which he knows of other people faith triumphs over doubt and misanthropy and gloom. God believes in men and that is the charter of human faith.

It is very clear then that the belief that God in human life met the shock of death upon the Cross changes and deepens and strengthens the power of the Cross to grip and transform the lives of men in a way to which words can do scant justice. And it is clear that the new and practical functioning power which comes to the Cross through this belief touches men just at a point which is of the most strategic significance and where there is the most imperative need. Calvary transforms God from a remote and dim ethical and spiritual splendour into a present and mastering and potent reality when you come to understand that it is God Himself you meet upon the Cross. This is not a matter of barren theological dialectic. It is a matter of the most vital and immediate importance. It brings religion down from the clouds because it brings God down from Heaven. For the most difficult and the most fundamental problem of religion lies not at the point of making the thought of God intellectually significant. It is a much deeper thing than that. It has to do with the matter of making the thought of God near and intimate and

gripping and practically masterful. "The thought of God took hold on him," cried Arthur O'Shaughnessy in that effective poem, "St. John the Baptist."

And that is just the difficulty. How is it possible to make the thought of God take hold on men? How is it possible to make God an experience and not merely a great idea? How is it possible to bring God within the reach of every-day men? Now the thought of the Incarnation when it has seized the mind and the conscience and the heart does this. And the Incarnation speaks its deepest and most compelling and mastering word at the Cross. It is not too much to say that the Cross as the death of God incarnate is the only thing which can keep religion alive and authentic as the race advances and becomes more highly articulated in all the relationships of its life. Less than this will be too thin to meet the requirements of the turbulent and urgent experiences of men. A God who can break His way into human life on a passionate, brave quest of suffering rescue is the only God who can gain and hold the mastery of men. Only a God who has lived our life and who has died our death can do for us all that we need to have done.

Is there any other step which we ought to take in the attempt to appreciate the productive power of the Cross? It may seem that there is none. It may seem that any other step will plunge us into unreality and artificiality. It may seem that we are on the edge of a great danger to which many men have succumbed. We may be reminded that there were centuries when multitudes of Christians be-

lieved that the death of Christ was a ransom paid to the devil and we may be scornfully reminded that such a belief is only and entirely unethial. We may have called to our attention hard and commercial theories of the meaning of the Cross which ring with a metallic sound as they speak in terms that smack of commercial exchange. And we may be told that all this endeavour to speak of Christ's death in the terms of mathematical equivalence will always offend the sound and wholesome ethical sense of men. We may be informed that God's own character has been affronted and He has been interpreted as a sort of infinite and bloodthirsty tyrant in the terms of some expressions regarding the meaning of the Cross. And we may be advised with sage kindness to avoid the regions where such danger lies. We have no desire to risk ethical sincerity for the sake of theological foolhardiness. And we have the least possible desire to attempt to make respectable any conception of the Cross which has a hard and cruel seed of error at its heart or which is a piece of lifeless mechanism. But we are not quite clear that the practical question is so easy and so simple as it seems to some of those who see no root of reality anywhere in those views of Christ's death which assert that He did something for God as well as something for men.

It is a very interesting fact that that open-minded and daring theologian, Horace Bushnell, who put the heart of his intellectual life into the noblest attempt to interpret the work of Christ in the terms of its effect upon man came at last to believe that in a very notable and far-reaching sense it also did something

for God. We are not particularly concerned here with his daring suggestion regarding self-propitiation, though his suggestion that it is always easier to forgive a foe after you have voluntarily suffered for that foe is full of fertility. We are interested in the fact that the American mind which probably represented a combination of open intellectual hospitality and fearless ethical enthusiasm and profound spiritual insight unequalled in the country to which he belonged did come to feel as he moved along the path of real and vital experience that you have not said the last word about the Cross until you have come to understand that it had a mission in respect of God as well as a mission in respect of man.

At this point we may be met by the question: Suppose all this is true, what does it have to do with the productive power of the Cross in human life? It may have much to do with it in every way. For it may be true that an understanding of these very relationships will release from the Cross new and potent moral and spiritual forces upon the lives of men.

Perhaps we can best approach the matter in this way. There is a sense in which it is a question whether a passionately earnest man can allow God to forgive him. Of course we must avoid all merely neurotic and overwrought psychological states in respect of the evil in the human heart and in human life. But we must not make the mistake of calling everything which makes us personally uncomfortable neurotic. And we must not escape any real ethical issue by calling the feeling it arouses overwrought and unwholesome. Some men have a way of escap-

ing into physiological psychology whenever their conscience becomes painfully active. If we successfully avoid the two extremes it still seems clear that the moment we face moral issues with genuine clarity the question of how a spotless God can have anything to do with a spotted humanity is one of extreme difficulty. And if we have come to any ample vision of the meaning of moral things we can understand the type of heroic struggler who said that he wanted actual contact with God, but if that contact would soil the life of God he would rather do without it. And the question does not concern itself with a delicate and effeminate deity not robust enough to come in contact with the vigour of human evil. It does concern itself with a vision of the nature of evil so clear and solemn in its apprehension that it knows that it can never be taken as a matter of course with God, that His antagonism to the very principle of evil must be perpetual, and that the moral integrity of the universe must be protected whatever happens to individual men. We could not continue to worship a God who treated His own conscience lightly.

Now it must be frankly admitted that in a world of mechanical and mathematical relationships there could be no forgiveness. The laws of that world would move on in unhesitating and perpetual precision and there would be no changing them and there would be no interfering with the method of their action. But in a personal world, in a world of personal relationships, the question does not have to do with the satisfying of a hard and fast law. It has to do with meeting the ethical requirements of living

beings in a world above the sanctions of mechanical interactions.

Now in a world of personal relationships you are dealing with realities of experience and not with formulas. The questions are lifted from the realm of formal logic into the realm of psychology. This itself is a tremendous gain, for it makes it possible to treat every question in the light of its vital relationships in experience and not in relation to its mechanical connections in a mathematical formula. The question ceases to have the rigid form, How can you reconcile the righteousness and the love of God? It takes the more intimate and genuine form, How can a God who is righteousness alive and love alive mediate these two powerful passions when He is confronted by the problem of the coiling and hissing and poisonous evil in human life? And even this question must be deepened. We must not think of God apart from the infinite richness and variety of His life. And we must understand that every burning passion of His infinite life is part of a complete and wonderful organism of reality. It is not any one attribute of God. It is not any one aspect of God. It is the totality of God in rich and mastering experience with men which must be satisfied. His passion of love would be as little at rest as His passion of justice with any dealing with men which did not keep all profound ethical interests amply protected. It is against this complete and ample organism of divine life that sin beats itself. And when we understand this we begin also to understand that evil can never be a thing to be taken as a matter of course to God. It is an inner

tragedy as it beats against His life. There is a flash of insight into all this in the New Testament phrase about the lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The tragedy of sin is not merely in the existence of a bad man. It is in the existence of a broken-hearted God.

One of the profoundest services of that vigorous thinker, Herman Lotze, was to bring clearly before our minds the truth that personality itself is action. The insight of some contemporary thinkers has brought us to understand more clearly that the hour of illuminated activity in the personal life is the hour of certainty. In the very nature of things every personality whatever the range of its life cannot be satisfied until the deepest meaning of that life is put into action. Now even the beginnings of insight into the relations of a personal being to a world of vivid and concrete experience make it clear that God can never rest in relation to any deep actuality of experience until His whole attitude toward that experience, the reaction of His total nature to that experience, is put into action. And when you come to the disintegrating and shattering experience of sin in human life it was an ethical necessity for God to find a way to get into action the whole bearing of His deep and manifold life toward that blighting tragedy. A static God, if you can conceive of a static God, might not have such an inner necessity. But a God whose very nature is infinite and perfect action is sure to find this necessity absolutely imperative.

When you approach the Cross as the deed of God in human life, and as you approach the Cross keep clear

in your mind the necessities of which we have just been speaking, certain matters of transcendent meaning at once become clear. In this passionate deed of divine rescue you have God Himself in action. There have been many places where a part of God was expressed and many ways in which aspects of God's life have become articulate. In the Cross you have the total ethical and spiritual life of God in action. All the rich and potent passion of that perfect life at last gets itself expressed in matchless fullness in the very field of concrete and actual experience. This is no matter of brilliant and far-flung ideas. It is no matter of ecstatic vision. It is as definite and concrete and real as experience can ever be. It is God on the field of history. It is all of God on the field of history. The white flaming fire of His righteousness plays with high ethical splendour about that deed of lonely suffering. The winsome, tender, beautiful outreach of His love glows like a golden daybreak even in the hour of darkness. And more than this. A thousand rich and potent aspects of the relation of God to man and man's defiling evil, and man's struggle and man's hope are lifted from the realm of noble thought, and become a passion of intense action in the Cross. The infinite personality has found a deed which expresses the very essence of His whole relation to man and sin. The necessity of personality to get its deepest meaning into action has been satisfied.

And this very profound satisfaction of the personal necessities of the life of God is at the same time the perfect protection of all ethical relationships in a personal world. The forgiveness which speaks



from the Cross is not the evasion of conscience. It is the expression of conscience. Righteousness is more regal than any merely punitive action on the part of God could ever have made it. The nature of God as ethical love, the structure of the universe as built upon ethical love and depending at last on the sanctions of ethical love, the deep and essential moral and spiritual integrities of the universe are placed where they are beyond attack. Forgiveness itself becomes the supreme expression of the total ethical life of God.

The man to whom these things become vital has simply pressed one step farther in that relation to God which makes every step in the light of living relationships and no step at all in the light of a merely mechanical theory. It is the soul of God which is revealed to him. The Cross itself comes to have a moral decisiveness and a moral power unknown before. That agony of spirit when Jesus allowed the full and terrible consciousness of what sin meant to the world and at the most poignant moment of the experience was shrouded in darkness and cried aloud for the Father who seemed lost in the blackness of evil; that brave identification of Himself with men until in simple and true spiritual fashion He bent under the burden of the whole weight of human evil; that willingness to go the whole length of suffering pain in order to fling into life itself, in order to make real in active deed all that wrong means as it recoils from the white consciousness of God; all these things open new vistas of real and sympathetic and vital experience. Sin can never have the same allurements again to a man who has come to any real apprehen-

sion of what it cost the Son of God upon the Cross. These matters all have to do with the vitalities of personal experience. None of them have anything to do with the rigidities of commercial exchange. It is the conscience of God we are meeting. It is the heart of God we are coming to know. It is God Himself who is becoming completely and transformingly articulate in the great deed upon the Cross.

We know now that He actually did risk everything. We understand now that the spiritual passion of the Cross was infinitely beyond the hurt of physical pain. We know now that God held back from nothing. We know now that He went the full length to get into man's life, to bear his insufferable burden, to stagger up the slopes of pain and death as He rescued men from themselves. This sort of a God completely masters us. This sort of God wins such allegiance as we did not know we had it in us to give forth. We give ourselves to Him. We are His forever. We will follow Him on any battle-field. We will not turn back from anything when He says "Go forward." We know what Paul meant when he said: "I can do all things." The Cross as the complete expression of God in action transforms us at the very moment when it satisfies the deepest necessities of the divine life.

The strategy of the series of conceptions which we have been outlining lies in these features: First, In a sense they are not so much conceptions as experiences, and just because they represent the reaction of the responsive life in the presence of the great vitalities of the Cross rather than merely the move-

ment of the dialectically inclined mind in the presence of the Cross they have a certain power of seizure. Such beliefs about the Cross seem very much more a part of life itself than a part of a mental interpretation of life. They have the promise of productivity just because of this intimate and penetrating relation to experience. Second, The Cross, as we have been viewing it, has power to meet and speak to a man at whatever point he finds himself in personal experience. It does not wait for him to have certain well-defined views about the person of Christ before it begins to speak to him. If he is a real man sincere in the midst of life's struggle at once the Cross speaks to him in the terms of his immediate experience. And as he advances in clearness of thought and fullness of theological apprehension the message of the Cross becomes more and more potent until it becomes the point of a new relation to God, and a new relation to men, and a new relation to all the ultimate sanctions of experience. And at every step in the intellectual advance theology itself is kept warm and human and sharply ethical by being kept in the closest contact with the actualities of human struggle and the essential and structural relations of personality. Third, The Cross, as it appears in this series of conceptions, is quite thoroughly freed from that ethical confusion and hard mechanism which so often leave us with the feeling that what ought to be the most ethical point in religion is the most ethically confusing, and what ought to be the most deeply vital has become the most rigidly mechanical. There is no attempt to force the issue. There is simply the

attempt to be completely loyal to the deepest and most defining facts of experience.

A journey such as we have taken if it is merely a process of far-reaching ratiocination may be unprofitable enough. But if we take our own warm and palpitating and eager hearts with us every step of the way, if we insist on testing every forward movement by the necessities of our own struggling out-reaching life, if all our work is illuminated by a mind cleansed through moral struggle and a will ready to apply the test of action, then we will feel the full meaning of the goal which we finally attain. For such a journey as a matter of ethical experience and not merely a matter of philosophical mountain climbing will give us a vivid and mastering experience of a God of ethical love which will release all the potential energies of our own nature in glad allegiance. It will give us a sense of all the ethical relationships which is sharp with passion and pain and noble with the most commanding self-control. It will give us a relation to men glorified by the new vision of the possibilities of men which we have received at the Cross. It will give us a hope for the future as bright as that high optimism which prompted God to give Calvary to the world. For practical functioning power and for capacity to be nobly productive in the lives of men the Cross becomes the supremely dynamic event in history.

One of the interesting things which this whole analysis does for us as we pursue its implications is to throw light upon some matters which had seemed curiously confusing. We begin to view the whole

matter of interpretations of the Cross in the light of their relation to the personal experiences of men rather than in the light of their logical contents alone. We begin to study the psychology of certain doctrines and not merely their logic. At once this enables us to view such crude beliefs as that regarding Christ's death as a ransom to Satan from a fresh angle. We begin to see that the experience back of this curious view was more significant than the view itself. In an age not given to close introspection and not gifted with sharp powers of ethical analysis, it became evident to earnest men that their experience of contact with the Cross was an experience of deliverance from the evil which had dominated their experience. They seized upon the thought forms nearest at hand in order to express what had occurred in their inner lives. These thought forms offered them the idea of a ransom to Satan and they seized upon it with little critical inspection. What they really got from the view was that the Son of God had done for them what they could never have done for themselves. And it was this central matter, in which we would quite agree with them, which was really important and not the crude form in which they expressed it.

Later, when deep and rich-souled men tried to express their sense of debt to the God who had spoken to them from the Cross they found themselves surrounded by the institutions of Feudalism. Anselm's "Cur Deus Homo" has the mark of a feudal environment upon it all the while. And so with those figures of commercial exchange which for some of us have

endangered the seizing power of the whole doctrine of the Cross. There is no need of denying that crudeness of thinking has done vast harm in making the Cross difficult of acceptance for minds sharply sensitive to ethical fair play. But it is tremendously important to realize that they were often offended by something which did indeed logically belong to the position which they attacked and yet something which had not been at all in the thought of those who were unfortunate enough to use the thought form which later caused offense. Psychologically they were just trying to find effective methods in which to say that the Cross was a necessity to God as He moved out to forgive man and also a necessity to man as forgiveness became ethically productive in his life. If we will be courageous enough to press back of the surface of many a crude bit of thinking to the experience which was half 'blindly groping for a method of expression we will often be surprised to find that although the mental form which was finally chosen contains much which offends us, the experience back of it is one which speaks straight to our hearts and to which we can reach out welcoming hands.

To try to interpret the theories of the Cross apart from men's experience in the presence of the Cross is to move in a course of brilliantly aggressive dialectic in which we demolish imaginary foes. We first create giants and then we slay them. And often nobody would be more surprised at the strange things we find in the theories than the men who originated them. On the other hand, if we turn from verbal

criticism and move with vital sympathy we shall indeed find much to correct. But we shall also find that the human heart in the presence of the Cross has made its way with surprising success in the terms of varied thought forms. And we shall find that in many a theory whose form is repulsive some earnest man was just trying to say that the Cross did satisfy both the conscience of God and the conscience of man.

This thing ought to be said as we close this lecture. Whatever our view of Christ the Cross is productive if we listen and look with really sincere and responsive lives. But if we look about among the passing ages to find what leaders were most productive, and if we try to see when Christian men and women were most resiliently alive, we shall find that those to whom the Cross cut the deepest in sharp ethical surgery and those who felt most deeply what a great thing it did for God and so what a transformingly ethical thing it did for men, have been those who have released the most productive moral and spiritual and social energies among the men of their time. Any sincere contact with the Cross will be productive. But the vital power of the Cross appears most completely and most potently when we view it in the light of the highest view of Christ and the most masterful view of what it did for God and His relation to all the ethical sanctions which lie back of personal life.

The path to the Cross through experience continues to promise most for life and for thought as well. Along this pathway we come to an actual renaissance of religion and an actual reinterpretation of life.





LECTURE V

THE INFINITE NEAR-  
NESS OF GOD



## LECTURE V

### THE INFINITE NEARNESS OF GOD

ONE of the most searching and testing questions which can be asked about the relation of man to God can be phrased in this fashion: Is there any such thing as an absolute religion in the world? There are many methods which may be used in the attempt to answer this question. We will approach it from the standpoint which is fundamental in these lectures and so we will phrase it in this way: Is there any religion which has been and is so completely productive in the world that from the standpoint of practical functioning power it is not too much to call it an absolute religion? We are all ready to admit with much heartiness the presence of golden gleams of truth in the great ethnic religions. We are ready to study them with a new sympathy and with a new and friendly understanding of the best elements which they contain. But when we come to examine them in just this fashion, we find it necessary to add after we have spoken our words of heartiest appreciation, that Confucianism is a telling code of ethics rather than a religion, that Buddhism and Brahmanism are based upon the surrender of personality rather than on the realization of personality, that Mohammedanism has no will but

the will of God, and that it has a code of morals which debauches even Heaven.

The more you study the ethnic religions the less possible does it become to regard any one of them as capable of satisfying and completing the outreach of the really growing and advancing moral and spiritual life of the world. And all too often they contain elements which would lead to the complete disintegration of anything like a really noble and ethical civilization. When we turn to Christianity at first the situation seems much more encouraging. It is clear as we analyze the constitution of human nature, and the constituent elements of Christianity that they fit together. It is clear that Christianity is related to the structural needs of men as is no other religion. If by an absolute religion you mean a religion whose inherent and defining qualities correspond to the essential aspects of human need we begin to feel that you can call Christianity an absolute religion. All our study of the functioning power of Christianity in the previous lectures of this series but emphasizes this fact.

But the situation is not so simple and it is not so easy as at first sight appears. There is a series of facts which may well seem very disconcerting when we turn our eyes upon them. Let us begin with the fact that the vast majority of people who have lived in the world have never heard of Jesus Christ. Untold multitudes of them lived and struggled and died before He had appeared among men. But even since His wonderful life and all the matchless splendour of His achievement most of the people who have been

born into the world and have made their way through the vicissitudes of this human existence have never heard of His name. But let us press the matter more closely. Let us enter those lands which are called Christian. In the great Christian countries of the world we know that there are multitudes who have no adequate or vital understanding of that wonderful life and death whose glory has brought such brightness to the world. In any Christian country there are untold numbers of people who have never heard of Christ in any profound or real way. They have heard His name. But to hear of Him in any adequate sense is not merely to hear His name. It is to come to some real apprehension of the quality of His personality and of the meaning of His life.

When we put the matter in this way we are forced to admit that every city in every Christian land has its hordes of people who have never heard of Jesus Christ. Let us press the matter even more closely. We know that vast numbers of people at some time in their lives have had some quick and penetrating experience of understanding of the appeal and the power and the summoning authority of Jesus Christ. But we must sadly admit that all too many of these, like the rich young man who went away sorrowful, have quite failed to put Him in command of their lives. Sometimes in hours of quiet and introspection they remember with a sort of dim wistfulness the hour when the Man of Galilee became real and masterful and infinitely alluring. But it is a far-off, hazy memory. The experience did not succeed in making for itself any place of mastery in their lives.

Now is it possible to call a religion absolute when the majority of the people who have lived in the world have never heard of it, when the majority of those who have formally heard of it have never understood it, and when multitudes of those who have understood it have quite refused to take it seriously? It is evident at once that such questions are very penetrating, very difficult and very perplexing.

To be sure, something may be said if we choose to adopt a line of defense which begins by emphasizing the significance of human freedom. We may be reminded that the quality of a medicine is not discredited if a man refuses to take it and so remains ill. You have to judge of a remedy by what it does for those who use it and not by what it fails to do for those who throw it away. Man is a free person in a free world. If he turns from the one religion which would give him completion and peace and the power of potent activity, you must not blame the religion for his recalcitrant spirit. You cannot say that a key is a failure if a man refuses to put it into a lock. In that case the weakness is in the man and not in the key. It may be an absolutely perfect key for that lock, but if the man refuses to put it in the lock, it simply has no opportunity to function. And the folly and futility of the situation must be placed where they belong in the life of the man and not in the inadequacy of the key. Now it is necessary to admit that there seems to be something of real importance in this way of looking at the matter as long as you are discussing men and women who have had a real and adequate opportunity to come into contact

with the personality and the power of Jesus Christ, who have heard of Him in that deep and genuine sense of coming to apprehend the call of His spotless and loving life and the outreach of His strong and friendly arms. When such men and women as these deliberately turn from all which He offers it seems quite fair to say that if they are not healed in the midst of life's ethical ills it is because they have refused to take the medicine. If they have not entered the temple of religion it is because they have refused to put the key which they possessed into the lock. There is much tragedy in their after experience. But there is nothing about it which militates against the assurance with which the most careful thinker can call Christianity an absolute religion.

But, unfortunately, these men and women do not exhaust the elements of the problem. What about the men who have never possessed the key and therefore have had no opportunity to use it? What of the people who have never had the medicine and therefore have had no opportunity to refuse to use it? You cannot blame a man for failing to turn a key which he does not possess. You cannot blame a woman for failing to take medicine which has never come into her possession. Now we cannot deny that the majority of people who have inhabited this world have never had an opportunity to make any personal choice in respect of the claims of Jesus Christ. They could not believe on Him of whom they had never heard. In what sense can you call a religion absolute which has never come into conscious connection with the majority of people who have lived in the world?

Gladly admitting that Christianity possessed just the secret which all these multitudes needed, what are we going to do with the fact that they never had an opportunity to accept it?

The more we study this situation the more its necessities are seen to crystallize into one very definite demand. If Christianity is to be regarded as the absolute religion, there must be some actual and decisive fashion in which the Christian God has had access to the inner life of all the people who have never heard of Jesus Christ as well as just this sort of access to those who know the compulsion of Christianity as an historic religion. The immanence of God must mean the presence of God in every human life at the exact point of its most critical struggle and its most far-reaching decision. The Holy Spirit, to use the intimately Christian vernacular, must mediate the deepest ethical and spiritual life of the whole race, under the terms of all the bewildering variety of custom and thought and feeling and religion.

It will be worth our while to take a careful and analytical survey of that thought of the immanence of God which answers to the necessities of the case, and to see something of its relation to the whole problem of human life and struggle. In doing this we will be following to some of its ultimate meanings that New Testament suggestion expressed in the words regarding the light which lighteth every man coming into the world.

We will begin with a simple but far-reaching assertion. The God whom we worship through Jesus Christ has been in the world always. It is not merely



that He made the world, though this is a part of the whole and wonderfully articulated reality of the situation. From the standpoint of our present approach the matter in emphasis is this. God is the constantly and immediately present personal companion of every human being who has ever lived in the world. He has always been nearer than breathing and closer than hands or feet. To live in the world at all is to have a definite and prolonged contact with the God who is infinitely near to us all. Now the strategic thing about this nearness in relation to unfolding and developing human life lies just in the fact that God does not come in a hard or mechanical way, forcing His entrance into the life. He enters so quietly and so simply that it is quite possible for human beings to have no suspicion that He is there. He always assumes the point of view of the man or woman in whose life He is working. He comes within the circle of their heredity. He comes within the circle of their environment. He comes within the circle of all those intimate and personal things which make the individual life just what it is. It is all done with such wonderful and self-effacing assumption of the very quality of the personal life in which He is working that His voice seems but the deepest voice of the nature of the human being whose life He is so profoundly touching.

The immense effectiveness of all this lies in the fact that it enables God to mediate the deepest life of every human being. If He demanded a certain intellectual standard then it would only be possible for Him to work in lives which conformed to that stand-

ard. If He demanded the meeting of any external test of any kind only a part of the human race could meet it. But just because He adjusts Himself to every conceivable limitation of race and custom and thought and feeling and assumes the actual quality of each life in which He works, it is possible for Him to work with conviction and authenticity in every human life. Very often we are unconvinced by a very eloquent speech because the speaker is all the while assuming things which we are not willing to grant. He never captures us because he never comes near enough to us. In the deep and far-reaching work of which we are speaking God gains the preliminary advantage of a perfect strategy by means of speaking to each individual life in the terms of its own thought, its own experience and its own struggle.

What is it which this voice speaks forth in the interior of every human life in the world? The answer to this question is a matter of the most striking significance. This potent inner voice perpetually presses every human being in all the world toward the doing of the things which he believes are good and away from doing the things which he believes to be evil. It is a sort of inner ethical ally continually advocating the judgments of a man's best self, and discounting the judgments of his worst self. It is perpetually encouraging a man to make a fight for the things which have commended themselves to his judgment as good, and against the things which have seemed in his judgment to be evil. It is an insistent voice. It is a masterful voice. It is a

voice which speaks from so deep a place in a man's life that it seems to be the voice of his own best self. It is the voice of conscience. It is the voice of the immanent God. And every moral fight is made in relation to the word of command which this voice speaks. And every moral victory comes from following its behests.

Now this work of God is as vast and diversified as the human race itself. It goes on in the midst of the most naïve and simple forms of barbarous worship. It goes on in the midst of the complex sanctions of the most highly evolved and intricately articulated of the ethnic religions. Everywhere that men live, and everywhere that men have lived this quiet penetrating voice has entered into the holy of holies of the individual spirit to speak of the best in the terms of that very unfolding life. It is infinitely sympathetic. It is infinitely understanding. But it is quite definitely unflinching in making the demand that the call of the good be heeded and the call of evil be refused.

The wonderful patience and the deft psychological adjustment of this world-wide work of the infinite God in His immanent relations is illustrated by the fashion in which His demand in every life is adjusted by the nicest scale of measurement to the actual, thought and mental and moral outlook of each individual. This is what makes it all so wonderfully fair. No man is asked to be loyal to the insight which would have come to another man in another set of experiences. No man is asked to act upon a set of principles which in his state of development he would

find it impossible to comprehend. Each man is met just where he is living. Each man is met just where he is thinking. Each man is met at just that spot of glowing light where his own mind dealing with his own experience sees something that is good, and something that is evil. And in exactly this situation he is asked to be loyal to the good and to spurn the evil. From this standpoint we can understand the distinction which Jesus made in respect of sin against Himself and sin against the Holy Spirit. A man might sin against Jesus because he did not understand Him, because he had never felt the compelling authenticity of His claims. But when a man sins against the Holy Spirit he is turning from that deep voice which rises from the very heart of his own experience. To turn from Jesus may be the result of misconception. To turn from the voice which in the depths of our own soul calls us to do the thing we know is good and to refuse to do what we know is evil is to court the most fundamental ethical and spiritual disaster.

When we have once come to apprehend the meaning of this far-flung, world-wide work of the immanent God, we will develop a new feeling about all life. We will have a new courage and a new hope and a new patience and a new quiet assurance. Knowing that God is everywhere at work we will have a new sense of the sacredness of human life, and a new sense of the meaning of moral and spiritual struggle. And the knowledge of that infinite and friendly sympathy which causes the immanent God to meet every man and woman and child upon the very plane where the life of that individual is

being lived will give us a new understanding of the spirit and the method in which the most penetrating work among men must be done.

We must not think of any nation then as godless, in the sense that God is not working there. We must not think of any people as without the presence and the activity and the help of that friendly God in whom indeed we all live and move and have our being. For it is indeed true that He is not far apart from any one of us. You can get through the world and miss its culture. You can get through the world and miss its wealth. You can go through the world and miss manifold experiences and relationships. You cannot go through the world and miss God.

But this is only the first assertion which it is necessary to make about the immanent God. Immediately there is more to follow. For sooner or later God working from within does a most astonishing thing in every human life. He forces each man to come to the place where he must definitely decide for or against the best which he knows. He does not bring a man to the place where he must decide for or against the best which somebody else knows. He does not force him to decide for or against a ready made standard which God Himself offers in its completeness and perfection. Moving within the forms of the man's own thought and feeling and experience He makes it necessary for him to take sides with the best he finds in his own nature, or with the worst which he finds there. In this hour of tremendous strategy a man is not asked what he believes? That is a very important question in many relations but

in this precise situation it does not go deeply enough. A man is asked the one fundamental and searching question. And this is the question: Underneath all your beliefs, underneath all of your activities, what do you actually mean in life? What is your fundamental intention in respect of life? What is your deepest and most mastering motive?

Men may think correctly and be fundamentally false. Men may be responsible for many noble actions with selfish and evil motives back of them all. But what a man means as to life is the really telling and defining matter. It actually expresses the character of the man. It is and it deserves to be a matter of destiny. And the great and actively present God grasping a man in His own supreme strength holds him to the necessity of decision. He does not force him to decide in some particular way. But He does make it imperative that the man use his prerogative of decision. And if under the pressure the man uses all the force of his personality to avoid decision, he only does this by so definite and masterful a choice that this in itself commits him to a scornful repudiation of the deepest moral and spiritual demand which expresses itself in his own nature. We must keep sharply in mind that all this does not have to do with some hard and fast demand brought to him from without. It has to do with a demand which arises and takes its form in the closest connection with the very structure of his individual life and the actual quality of his experience. And if the man is in such a situation through evil environment or through unhappy heredity that the very functioning

power of his will is depleted the immanent God protects the validity of his personal life by making him capable of clear cut decision. The sovereignty of God comes to one of its most wonderful forms of expression in just the fashion in which He reinforces depleted personalities and makes them capable of the great decision. This reinforcement does not rob a man of freedom. It secures his freedom. It saves him from those forces which would make him incapable of choice, but it does not prescribe the direction in which his choice shall move.

The literature of the world is full of examples of the fashion in which men have come to critical moments and have opened their lives to the potency of a power of inner strength which came within their reach and so went forward to deeds of which they themselves would have deemed their spirits incapable. There are invisible moral and spiritual reinforcements within reach of us all. But the decisively important matter is just the fashion in which every human being who lives to maturity finds some sort of fundamental choice inevitable. You cannot escape from the necessity of that choice any more than Jonah in the fine Old Testament parable could escape from God by journeying off to the other side of the world.

Here then is an ethical crisis and an ethical outcome as widely diffused as the existence of the human race on this planet. It can come in the terms of any one of the ethnic religions. It can come where there is no formal religion at all. It comes in the very terms of a man's own life. It rises from

the very nature of his personal experiences. It does not come with an external pressure from without. It expresses its sanctions from within, and it does this with the most complete and detailed adjustment to the quality of his own individuality. The crisis comes in an infinite variety of ways. It has the greatest difference in form. But at heart it is always the same. And the heart of it is the necessity that every man decide for or against the best he knows.

A savage in the jungles may fight his way through this crisis in the terms of some of the sanctions of the tribal customs. A lad in the slums of a great city may meet it as he discharges to the full his sense of obligation to be loyal to his gang. A Confucianist in all the involved relationships of his life may move through the crisis in a new apprehension of what is involved in loyal reverence for his ancestors. A professional criminal whose whole life has been lived apart from the summons of the normal demands of civilization may come to the place where the deepest and highest meaning of his life is expressed in taking the most desperate risks in order to be completely faithful to a pal. The Mohammedan soldier in many an age has found the thing of which we are speaking in an abandonment of his whole personality to deeds of courage in behalf of the Crescent. A tortured ascetic has found it in deliberately following his way of cruel pain because this represented the highest summons of which his life had felt the power. A zestful Old Testament legalist found it in obedience to that law which he made his meditation day and



night. Benedict found it in a monastic life. St. Francis found it in a life of singing, tender, self-forgetful service. The Crusader found it in fighting the Infidel. The Saracen soldier found it in fighting the Crusader. The reformer finds it in a life given over to the expression of his social passion. The patriot finds it in self-giving for his country. And all of these vastly diversified experiences have this in common. Each man comes to the place where his highest and most commanding ideal summons him. And each man decides to follow the summons. And the immanent God is the perpetually active agent in pressing men into the place where they must take a final and definite attitude toward the very best they know.

The deepest tragedy of life is involved in a man's failure to rise to this great test. In respect of him we may indeed use the words of Dante, he has been guilty of the great refusal. And the perilous thing about the deliberate turning from the most mastering ethical ideal which speaks in one's own life is just this. It is a part of the process of the death of good in the human soul. You can fail to be loyal to another man's ideal without this danger exactly because it does not represent the deepest thing in your own soul. But when a man deliberately repudiates the one deepest sense of moral sanction and summons in his own life he has begun to cut the nerve of reality in his personality. The process which sets in leads to the decay of interest in all moral and spiritual things. It leads to an incapacity to respond to any ethical summons. It is the dis-

integration of the ethical fiber of the manhood. And in its last analysis it is unforgivable in the very literal sense that it is incapable of desiring forgiveness. It is godless in the sense that it has become incapable of responding to the experience of fellowship with God. It is lost in the very dreadful sense that it can never want to be found. Moral distinctions at last cease to have any meaning for the life. It is capable of pain. But it is not capable of regret. It is capable of suffering. It is not capable of that ethically productive suffering which leads to repentance. It is not so much that it goes to hell as that it becomes hell. For once the old Persian poet so often wrong was exactly right.

“I sent my soul into the invisible  
Some letter of that after life to spell.  
And by and by my soul returned to me  
And whispered, ‘I myself am heaven and hell.’”

In other words, the dark ethical tragedy of life must not for one moment be said to consist in the failure to accept a creed of whose meaning a man may not have had the slightest comprehension. The test on which eternity hangs cannot for a moment be said to be a man's personal attitude toward a personality of whom he has never heard. The basis on which the really far-reaching issues are decided for all the race can never be the attitude of all men toward some ecclesiastical system of whose very existence most of them are ignorant. But there is a perfectly fair test. There is a perfectly honest test. There is a perfectly right test. What has a man done

with his own deepest sense of duty? What has he done with the ideal which compelled him from within? What has he done with that good of which he has heard and whose meaning and implications he knows right well? Has he decided to be loyal to the best he knows? Has he decided to spurn with angry scorn the best he knows? The immanent God Himself presses home these questions. And upon the answer hang the most far-reaching matters of personal destiny.

Now let us follow the advancing way of the man who decides to answer the ethical call. Let us see what happens to the man who decides to follow the best he knows. Let us walk in the steps of that pilgrim of the ideal who hears the call from the heights and rises gladly to obey. The moment a man decides with all his mind and with all his heart to take the moral demands of his own nature seriously a most extraordinary thing happens. The immanent God at once begins to expand the circle of a man's ethical apprehensions. As fast as he does the things which he knows are good he discovers more things which are good. To paraphrase the deft words of Samuel Crothers: "As fast as he lives up to his light more lights are turned on." The way grows brighter all the while. But it becomes too painfully bright. It becomes dazzling. It becomes burning. Fire may be a comfortable thing, but not conflagration. The more the man goes forth in ardent and eager activity on the quest of loyal obedience to his ideal the more that ideal demands, until at last it seems that he will be completely crushed by the burden which he is

bearing. He believes that there is a spot where the ideal touches the real. And he goes forth to search for it. He believes that the rainbow touches the earth somewhere and he goes forth to find that spot. But the faster he travels and the more weary his feet, the farther off is the goal of his ideal. He simply cannot catch up with his dream of what he ought to be. He cannot capture his dream of his own manhood. To use the word of that penetrating ethical thinker, Dr. Olin A. Curtis, there is a merciless expansion of the moral task. The immanent God drives a man out on more and more perilous ethical adventures. And always the man comes home weary and footsore and with a strange sense of ethical restlessness in his heart. His work is too difficult for him. He has attempted an impossible endeavour. The way frowns steep and impassable above him. And his heart is faint. His will is depleted of power.

This experience brings to a man's life the knowledge of the strangest ethical dilemma of which this world knows. We may express it in this way. If a man repudiates his moral ideal his very soul of ethical manhood is disintegrated. If he accepts his moral ideal he finds that he is committed to a work beyond his powers, and at last he confronts sharp and bitter and cold despair. For the moment it seems as if either way ends in a blind alley. For the moment it seems as if either way brings hopelessness at last.

Now, to be sure, a great many people never follow this process to its stern and relentless conclusion.

Many men are serious and earnest in a series of spasmodic endeavours. They never learn the meaning of paying the full price of devotion to the moral demand. Many men sense the ugly quality of the experience of the man who drinks the whole cup and with a shrewd practical sagacity they refuse to go so far as that. They invent for themselves a sort of conventional ethical code which demands a certain amount of loyalty but which is kept easily within the reach of actual human achievement. They regard the men who go the whole length of the fight as rather hectic individuals. And at last they come to feel that these heroes of the moral fight are raising artificial issues. They themselves have passed out of the range of those high and mastering demands that fairly seem to tear the soul apart, and they do not see why any one else should be troubled by them. Then there are those who become so engrossed with some practical program that they escape from the most searching inner experiences. They do much good in the world in a wholesome human way. And their practical endeavours take the place of that dizzy mountain climbing where men have the most startling and significant ethical adventures. Sometimes they are tempted to be rather complacent as they think of the way in which they have substituted a vigorous and healthful activity for a dangerous and unwholesome introspection.

But the real moral heroes refuse to stop at any pleasant half-way houses. Even when they are most busy about practical tasks they feel the lure of the heights of ethical attainment. The passion for per-

fection calls to them. The gleam of the ideal glows and burns before them. And like Merlin they follow the gleam. Even when within and without there is most strangeness and confusion and the presence of all the voices of gloom and of despair, like Browning's famous character they press on. "Childe Roland to the dark tower came and a great blast he blew." The men who have shaken the world in its times of supreme ethical and spiritual crisis have been characterized by this sort of struggle with a mastering ideal. Paul knew all its pangs. Augustine knew the torture of its failures. Luther fought its battles in the Augustinian monastery. Wesley pursued the quest in wearisome ways and through sad and difficult days. It is rather the fashion for easy-going teachers in an age which shrinks from the pain of the supremest moral passion to suggest that these experiences do not set the standard for human life. It is indeed true that more than one road leads to the City of God. And we are not attempting to prescribe a path which every man must take in mathematical fashion. But it does not seem too much to say that the possibility of this struggle is structural in human nature and that the leaders who have done the most to propel humanity toward a better future have passed through it. It is simply true of all of us that our moral ideals ask of us more than we can do. And if we are daring enough to follow them the whole length of loyalty we come to a place where our very peace seems about to be slain forever by the high ideals which we have put upon the throne of our lives. What is the meaning

of this strange situation which is potential in every human life and which the immanent God forces into acute consciousness in those who go the complete length of passionate moral commitment?

When once we look at the matter with discerning and alert candour it is evident that this whole experience must be a matter of disciplinary preparation on the way to that experience which retains the ethical passion in the very terms of an appropriation of spiritual peace.

St. Augustine really put the heart of the matter in one penetrating sentence when he said: "O God, Thou hast made us for Thyself and our souls are restless until they find rest in Thee." The most wonderful thing which God has done for man is to make him incomplete until his incompleteness is supplemented by the divine completeness. There is no high destiny for a creature which is easily satisfied. There is no great and far-reaching future for a form of life which speedily and thoroughly rounds out the circle of its desire, its hopes and its aspiration. The very tragic dilemma involved in the fact that when a man tries to live up to his ideals they at once begin to outrun him is really the most splendid and the most hopeful thing about mankind. There is then a call in human life which human resources cannot satisfy. There is an outreach in the human spirit which the potencies of human personality cannot realize. The very structure of man's nature is a promise. The very character of human personality is a prophecy. The promise is that somehow, somewhere the human shall be supplemented by that

which will satisfy its need. The prophecy is that God Himself will meet in some deep and notable way the life in which He has planted such an infinite outreach, such a call for that which this human experience of life can never give. The fact that a man's moral life demands what he can never accomplish means that in some fashion it must be met by a divine help which will lift incapacity into some serene quiet of spiritual strength.

Now in the terms of any one of the ethnic religions it is possible for a man in the midst of his conflict with the infinite demand of his own ethical life over against the very limited fashion in which he can satisfy that demand to come to some dim sense that the thing which is significant about his own life is not his achievement so much as his attitude. "All that the world's course thumb and finger failed to plumb." "Thoughts hardly to be packed into a narrow act." The fact that he pushes out in loyalty toward the highest even if the highest is beyond his reach has vast significance to that realm of reality which his deepest consciousness puts at the heart of the universe. It is not that he would use these words to describe the experience. But he has an experience which we can use these words not inadequately to describe. Not the failure of his achievement, but the desperate sincerity of his endeavour, will count and count mightily somewhere in the universe. It is the present immanent God who gives him this experience and as he responds to it and trusts it and builds his hope upon it, in some genuine way this man who has never come into contact



with the vitalities of Christianity is justified by faith.

In other words, anywhere in the world any man can come to a personal choice and a venture on the kind of a universe which will take account of that choice. And these experiences have an ethical quality which is related in the most fundamental and actual way to the experience of the evangelical Christian in conversion. It is from this point of view that we are able to come to some sort of apprehension of the ethical process by means of which a man who has never heard of Christ solves his personal problem. John Wesley was large-minded enough to see that there must be some fashion in which the heathen could have a genuine opportunity in respect of salvation. When we understand that the immanent God brings the moral life to a climax of necessary decision in every human being who is capable of rational choice, and then is ready to whisper a word of hope into that life, we begin to see that those moral and spiritual processes which take a particular form in historical Christianity are in some germinal and real fashion within the reach of human beings everywhere.

Now we must lift the question which has to do with the relation of this vast and world-wide work of the immanent God to the sanctions and to the experiences which come to full expression in historic Christianity.

The first thing of which we must take account is this: The whole of the Old and New Testament history and the quality of ethical struggle and re-

ligious peace reflected therein lift into clearness of experience and fullness of expression just those relationships which we have described as belonging to human life everywhere. The struggle of Paul to satisfy his religious ideal and his final leap of faith in the mastering and saving Christ represents the classical and complete expression of just that quality of struggle and dissatisfaction and then the outreach of trust and the faith that intention will be the important matter in testing the meaning of a man's life somewhere in the universe, which we found characteristic of the structure of human life. The contrast between the law and the Gospel throws this race-wide experience into clear perspective. When Peter expresses his dissatisfaction with the law and his satisfaction with the Gospel you have an expression in concrete form of a thing which has come out in all sorts of ways in human life, only here again it has received classic and unique expression. When under the terms of a terribly stern legalism a man wonders if the gift of his first born will satisfy God and a prophet of insight cries out: "What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God," you have an immortal expression of another aspect of the world-wide struggle of which we have been speaking. In other words, the world-wide process of moral and spiritual experience comes to full articulation in the Old Testament and the New.

It is most important to see clearly into another aspect of the problem. The God who is revealed in the Old Testament and the New is just the God

capable of that world-wide work of infinite and immanent sympathy and of sternly strong ethical and spiritual meaning which we have been describing. Only a God who is righteousness alive and love alive would ever go out on such an adventure of intimate inner activity in the lives of men. And only the Old Testament experience of religion and the New Testament experience of religion give us any knowledge of such a God. The gods of the ethnic religions are simply incapable of performing such a task. It is beyond the scope of their character. And so the wonderful, inner experience of which we have been speaking finds no connection with an historical religion whose quality corresponds to its own meaning until it comes to Christianity. Then the inner experience and the historic religion fit together as a hand fits in a glove. The God who is revealed in Jesus Christ could do just this thing. The God revealed in Jesus Christ is loving enough to desire to do just this thing. The God revealed in Jesus Christ is of that deep and unsearchable righteousness which would put just such a structural capacity for ethical struggle into men, and would guide them along a path of restless moral ambition whose light glows summoningly before them all the while. In other words, the constitution of men and women everywhere and the characteristic and defining struggles of their lives exactly correspond to that interpretation of life which we find in the literature collected in the book we call the Bible.

We have already seen how the voices which speak in the Bible now and again flash forth conceptions

which have implicit in them the necessity for just such a world-wide and immanent work of God as we have described. If He is the light of every man who comes into the world that illumination must be brought within the reach of men in some such way as that which we have outlined. If He is no respecter of persons but regards the men of every land and every religion, then He must have some actual contact with men in the crises of their lives. When Jonah finds unselfish heathen of finer type of life than a selfish prophet, one is not far from the thought that God must have some real contact with these men. When Jesus sees multitudes in the day of Judgment wondering at their happy fate because they had never seen Him in need only to learn that every ministry to human need is ministry to Him, we have a light flashed out on far and dark places of human life and activity and struggle, and we see men who have never heard of Christ relating themselves to some of the deepest matters of practical religion. It is not far from this thought to the thought of the immanent God at work in their lives. To Jesus the sheep not of this fold were His sheep also. To Paul the moral voice was a testimony for God in every age and in every land. The view of a work of God in the world as wide and as varied as the lives lived on the planet is imperative if we are to give actuality and authenticity to the Biblical conception of the love of God. If God is love in some genuine fashion these things must be true. "He is not far apart from any one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being."

At this point we come to a matter of whose importance it would be difficult to speak too vigorously. This has to do with the fashion in which the truths brought to explicit expression in the Christian religion when apprehended in their historic form enable God to do for men what it was not possible to do before. The very wonder of His sympathetic understanding immanent work in the lives of men involves certain definite limitations. Just because He works from within a man's life taking the form of his own thoughts and experiences and activities and his confused prejudices, it is necessary for Him to accept the limitations imposed by all these things. The man is led to follow the best he knows. But the ethical poverty of his environment, the whole quality of his life may make that best a very poor best indeed. And it may even happen in all the hard and terrible confusion of the world that this best is caught up in a tangle of evil which is misunderstood as good. When the Hindoo mother gathered up all her energies for her supreme act of devotion in offering her babe to the river, there was supreme consecration and devotion but what pitiable and tragic moral confusion. So there must emerge in our thought as we study these things a consciousness of the demand that life move toward a place where the moral and spiritual decisions shall be lifted above the clutter of confused racial and tribal and individual life into the clarity of views of life and God and destiny, which correspond to the inherent nobility of the process itself.

And this is just what happens in Christianity.

Here the struggle is fought out in the terms of a clean and clear code of ethics. All the dim and varied outreaches after moral victory are sharpened into the decisive and fundamental moral demands of the ten commandments. The moral fight is waged about issues essentially worthy. And when the life comes to that torn and confused sense of incapacity to organize its own forces into anything like completion and peace, there comes into view the winsome and wise and masterful and stainless and loving figure of Jesus Christ. He is the law made human. He is the law turned into a friend. He is the law with loving eyes and tender heart. He can see all the intentions as well as all the achievements. One of the difficulties about an impersonal law is that it can never include all the efforts in its account. But a loving friend can consider all the efforts as well as all the successes.

When a man whose ethical life is sensitively awake comes into contact with Jesus Christ he has two conflicting experiences. One is an up-gushing of eager friendliness in his heart. He wants to cry out, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest." The other is a sense of unworthiness in the presence of that stainless life: "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man." The whole experience greatly deepens all his sense of moral values. For very soon he begins to see all matters of right and wrong through the eyes of Jesus Christ. There is a deepening comfort in the friendliness of Jesus. It is as if the ten commandments had suddenly taken a human body and came walking toward you with a friendly

smile and with outstretched hand. And all the while there is a consciousness of a tragic moral need only in part articulate but very deep and very real. Then comes the Cross. It is not merely a green hill far away. It is an experience which is vivid and real and consciously present. And in the presence of that deed of suffering love, the responsive human life is itself swept by storms of suffering love. You cannot express what happens in precise and accurate formulas. But you can know that in that hour in strange and amazed devotion you come to the place where you understand your own relation to the character of God. And that apprehension of what God is like speaks to the whole circle of your nature and all its meanings. Like a cleansing stream it carries away the clogging consciousness of the weight of a hundred evils. You have found a God whose towering righteousness reaches infinitely above anything which you have ever imagined. You have found a God whose love lifts you and saves you from yourself and reorganizes your whole life about a new center of unselfish love. Your personal problem is solved. Your moral problem is solved. You have found the supplement to your own weakness in the divine strength. You have found a forgiveness as tender as it is ethical, as stern and lofty as it is full of love. You have found the basis in experience for a new life glad and spontaneous and free, joyously going forth to do the will of God in the world.

All this experience of contact with the truths of historic Christianity is of course mediated by the presence of the same immanent God who works

through the ethical experiences of men everywhere. Only now He is working on material which expresses His own deepest intention, instead of on material which limits the nature of the work and the nature of the outcome. God can cleanse men's motives in the terms of any religion. He can lift their activities to the standard which He desires only in the terms of the historic revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. All that is done dimly and vaguely and prophetically in the terms of human life everywhere is done fully and adequately and with all its wonderful cluster of implications in the terms of the functioning of the historic Christian religion in the world.

This man of sensitive and responsive soul of whose life we have been speaking finds new energizing as he comes to the resurrection of Jesus. It lives in his life. It is warm and triumphant in his spirit. It is the expression on the field of history of the very thing which is deepest in his own experience of victory through Christ. Jesus becomes to him the living Christ. And Christianity becomes the religion of the activity of the living Christ in the world. Death itself becomes incidental. Life is real. Life is present. Life is victorious. Life stretches away beyond the grave in endless vistas of expanding opportunity. It is a life which begins here. It is a life which comes to have the deepest and richest content here. It is life of such a quality as God worked into it and upon it, and it is only natural for it to go on forever. And this personal experience of immortality is mediated by the immanent God who



has spoken in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

All of these experiences inevitably seek a social expression. The love for God becomes the love for the men whom He loves and for whom Christ was willing to die. The upreach after God expresses itself also in the outreach after men. There is a noble and passionate discontent with everything in human life which does not correspond to the high and loving will of God. And so the new life begins to express itself in all the practical activities of brotherhood and service. It goes forth to remake the world after the fashion of the will of God and the needs of men. The immanent God is the greatest ally of the social reformer, as the historic Christ is the greatest inspirer of a belief in justice and brotherhood in the relations of men.

Now in what fashion may we say that such a religion so functioning deserves to be called an absolute religion? The answer comes naturally and speaks at every step in the very terms of human experience. In the first place, Christianity may be rightly called the absolute religion because it alone brings a message so profoundly related to the very structure of humanity that when it is accepted and followed the problem of human life is solved. In the second place, Christianity may be called the absolute religion because it is the one religion which gives us a God who by virtue of His very character and power is able to relate Himself, and does relate Himself to every human life in all the world. With an infinite tender sympathy He has met every human being who has

ever lived on this planet, He has spoken from within His own life in the terms of His own experience, and He has firmly and inevitably pressed that life toward a decision for or against the best of which that life was capable of conceiving. He is not merely the God of the men and women who consciously worship Christ. He is the God of all the men and women in the world, whatever the religion under the terms of which they meet their moral and spiritual problem. Thirdly, Christianity may be called the absolute religion because while any man anywhere can work out his personal probation in the terms of this ethnic activity of the immanent God the great and fully articulated and amply expressed relationships of God to men and of men with each other only become possible under the terms of the spread of historic Christianity in the world. Its conception of God, its conception of man, its conception of human relationships, its revelation of a God whose very quality is love and righteousness in action, its creation in man of an experience of conscious peace and power as the human is supplemented by the divine, as the God who wrought the great deed on Calvary becomes a living experience in man's heart, its going forth to make a new civilization—all these things spell out the practical and functioning supremacy of Christianity in the world.

In what sense have we the right to say that such beliefs about the infinite nearness of God to all men and of His work among them have a particular quality of productiveness? In the first place it is evident that such a thought of God makes religion

clearly a part of every life and finds for every man an actual point of contact with God. And this it does in such a way as to be just to the fundamental ethical sanctions. It gives a real ethical struggle, a real ethical opportunity and a real personal quality to the life of all men. It gives them all an opportunity to accept. And it gives them all an opportunity to reject. And this it does not in the terms of some artificially applied standard brought in from without. It brings on the battle with every man in the very terms of the best which that man knows. The fairness of such a view must go far to commend it and to commend the religion of which it is a part. The experiences of millions of soldiers on the battlefields of Europe in the last four years have made it evident enough in the terms of contemporary experience that God is doing tremendous work among men apart from the actual and conscious connections of ecclesiastical life and apart from conscious thought about the historic Christ. The interpretation which we have given does justice to all these experiences. It also opens the way for insight into the fact that all the other work of the immanent God comes to full flower and complete expression when the life is consciously connected with the potent and regenerating work of Jesus Christ in the world. It speaks in the terms of human experience. It speaks in the terms of the deepest and most poignant experience of the times in which we are living. And it does justice to the manifold and varied experiences of men in the realm of morals and religion, while it comes to a climax of significance in its appreciation of the

towering personality and the transforming work of Jesus Christ. Only the God whom we see in the face of Christ can be the infinitely near friend and patient companion of every human spirit. That restless feeling so charged with inner disquiet that splendid as is Christianity it does not touch all men and it does not touch all noble human experiences, vanishes before the thought of the infinitely near God who is part of the constant experience of men everywhere. Such a belief about God releases all our confident joyous hope, calls forth our glad allegiance, and sends us forth to be the best and to do the most in the world.

LECTURE VI

THE SOCIAL LIFE  
OF GOD



## LECTURE VI

### THE SOCIAL LIFE OF GOD

**E**VERY age has its own approach to theology. In the eleventh century men were thinking in the terms of Feudalism. And so it came to pass that when Anselm wrote "Cur Deus Homo" he based his interpretation upon Feudal conceptions. In our own time the pervasive mastering experience is the social passion. The world is dreaming of brotherhood as it never dreamed of brotherhood before. It has a new and powerful determination to make brotherhood actual in the lives of men. It has an impatience with social injustice, and a determination to right the wrongs which blight human life, which give it a distinctive character. It deeply intends to make the very structure of civilization the support of brotherhood and not in any sense its foe. Man's inhumanity to man is to cease, and society is to become a noble mother to us all. It is to cease to be a mighty power of exploitation.

No one can have the slightest contact with the essential movements of thought and action in our time without coming into contact with this urgent, masterful passion for social betterment. It gleams in men's eyes. It gives a vibrant intensity to their voices. It beats in their hearts. It moves along

their fingers, inspiring them to unselfish deeds. John Ruskin used to say that the cruelest man living would put on sackcloth and ashes if he really saw the world as it is. Multitudes of men and women in our time have dared to look out upon life and to see the world as it is. As a matter of fact they have not put on sackcloth and ashes. They have made a solemn vow. They have entered upon a great crusade. They have gone forth to strive and struggle and work and plan and achieve, all the while bringing the world a little nearer to their desire of brotherhood. They have invaded all the places where women and children have laboured. They have turned on the light in order that all the world may see. They have gone wherever homes and factories are unsanitary. They have collected all the ugly and hurtful facts. Then they have hurled those facts into the consciousness of the general public. The general public has not always wanted to be informed. But there has been no opportunity for choice. The facts were not to be evaded. They were not to be avoided. The men and women with the passion for a fair and genuine opportunity for men and women everywhere have studied the problems of wages and hours of work and their relation to wholesome and healthful living and human efficiency. The results of these studies have been spread broadcast. We have not been allowed to sit in our homes in comfort. The wan pathetic figure of the child in the mine, the bent and broken form of the woman engaged in labour for which she was entirely unfitted, the disheartened face of the man re-



ceiving after the hardest toil a wage inadequate for his needs and the needs of his family—all these have been kept before our minds. We have not been allowed to forget. And more and more deeply has grown the conviction that these things must cease.

This spirit has expressed itself in no end of effective reforms in many of the nations of the world. It has led to old-age pensions. It has led to pensions for those workers who are ill. It has been the force behind laws as to child labour and the work of women in industries demanding physical powers and endurance of an unusual character. It has expressed itself in legislation regarding the buildings where men must live and the buildings where men must work. It has dealt with matters of sanitation in the profoundest and most far-reaching way. Everywhere we see the results of this vigilant and powerful spirit working to make the world a better place for all the men and women and little children who live in it.

One of the most disconcerting and unhappy aspects of the struggle which came to many men and women during the war was connected with the slowness with which many men and women of the noblest passion saw that the conflict had to do with something for which they really cared. They had been accustomed to think of wars as the method by which the exploiting classes furthered their cruel work. Many of the men and women of social passion had become enthusiastic advocates of the pacifist position. And so when the war came it left them cold. The

keenest and wisest of them did not make this mistake. They saw that everything which the social passion holds dear was at stake in the war. They saw that the cause of the Allies represented the hope of industrial democracy as well as the hope of political democracy in the world. They had not become so preoccupied with one noble passion that they had no eyes for its larger relationships and for all the other structural elements of civilization which must be conserved if the hope of brotherhood is to make any real headway in the world. Then the war itself brought to the place of conscious meaning a vast amount of social hope and consecration which was not in any definite way connected with the movement for social reconstruction which had been making its way in the world.

Millions of men and women who had not thought much about these things awoke with a shock after the rape of Belgium. And as the issue became clearer and clearer they saw the darkness which threatened to engulf the world and for the sake of the oppressed in every land, for the sake of the children yet unborn, they became ready to make the uttermost sacrifice. Many a soldier who would not have been suspected of cherishing particularly altruistic thoughts, kept at the bottom of his heart as his deepest inspiration the belief that he was giving himself for the making of a better world. The rarer and more responsive spirits as they came to see the meaning of the international struggle gave themselves to it with an abandon of consecration, with a high and self-forgetful passion, which will be im-

mortal in the memory of the world. The whole world began to dream of brotherhood. The whole world began to dream of the new day. The whole world began to feel that the war was to have a great outcome, that better times lay ahead. In various forms, in various types of expression the social passion began to sweep over the world.

Of course it took some strange and terrible forms. Of course the evil-minded and the vicious attempted to exploit it. Of course some people, as the wine of new-found liberty went to their head, found themselves unable to distinguish between evil and good. Of course the sudden flashing of blinding light in some lands which had been dark as midnight has had cruel and tragic effect. Russia has been finding an undisciplined and unmastered freedom itself a kind of terrible nightmare, itself a kind of tyranny. But wisely and unwisely interpreted, nobly and ignobly expressed, the new spirit moved over the world. It is moving so to-day. It is a spirit of power. It is a spirit of overwhelming passion and potency. It must be interpreted. It must be chastened and guided. But it must also be heeded. By it the Peace Conference will be judged. By it we will all be judged. In spite of all the confusion and the turmoil and the misapprehension, God's voice is in the social passion and that voice must be heard. The forces which have been released are not to be chained again by tyrants. The forces which have been released are not to be exploited by selfish and impractical and unethical demagogues. The forces which have been released are to enter into life deeply and

powerfully. And they are to be so interpreted and guided that they will be able to renew the life of the world.

We all feel this new air blowing upon our faces. Some of us love it. Some of us hate it. Some of us rejoice in it. Some of us are afraid of it. And we all need to feel that there is always possible tragedy in the release of such great human forces. They may be terrifically and destructively used. But there is always glory in the release of great human forces. They may be nobly, and wisely, and productively used for the good of all mankind. In any event for good or for evil—for great good we believe—the social passion is far and away the most potent and dynamic thing in the life of the world to-day.

Now there is a profound question which the philosopher can ask regarding the social passion. There is a deeply probing and far-reaching inquiry which the theologian can pursue regarding the whole passionate and noble dream of ideal human relationships. What is the basis of this restless longing for brotherhood? What is the source of this outreaching and expanding ideal of happier human relationships? Is the whole wonderful enthusiasm a passing wave of emotion? Or does it have some deep and structural relation to the very nature of things? If we get back to the last and ultimate reality in the universe will we find a basis and a justification for the social passion there?

At first this may seem to be rather an idle and academic question. It may seem that it has to do

with processes of remote and ethereal speculation which have little relation to the actual and practical life of men under the heavy and burdening pressures of the modern world. The study of all the manifold relationships of the industrial revolution which began before the end of the eighteenth century may seem to be a matter of the utmost importance to the man who is interested in the practical functioning of brotherhood in the world. The study of the nature of God in order to see if we can find an actual basis for all the social ideal as it works out among men may seem entirely beside the mark. A little close and critical thinking, however, makes it very clear that the very greatest danger to which the social passion is subjected is just the danger which comes from the suggestion that it is all very beautiful and very noble and very fine, but that it is an entirely impractical and visionary thing. We may be told that it is quite natural for young men who have never had much experience of the actual vicissitudes of life to give themselves with an abandon of enthusiasm to the fight for an achieved brotherhood in the world. But we may be reminded sagely that they will grow older and that the disillusioning experiences of the advancing years will give them a practical poise based upon the apprehension that shimmering sunlit dreams must be tested by the hard stern facts of a very real if a very unlovely world. Now as long as our enthusiasms last we may smile with superior and lofty optimism at such critical suggestions. But the difficulty is that these suggestions come not only from consciously hostile opponents of

our position. In a sense they come up from life itself. Even if nobody takes the time to call us visionaries a long succession of painful and humiliating experiences is likely to put just that word into our own minds.

If you could keep the sharpness of your original classifications life would be a good deal simplified. Perhaps you begin with a very definite view. On the one side you have an exploiting capital. On the other you have an oppressed and downtrodden labour. You idealize one group. You absolutely condemn the other group. In your zestful and passionate enthusiasm you reach the place where any argument which includes the facing of facts unfavourable to any labour groups seems to you inspired and dangerous, a part of a subtle and skillful propaganda for the further enslavement of the workers. On the other hand any argument which sees that there are some aspects of the problem in relation to which capital has something of value to say, indicates a willingness to bend and scrape before the exploiting group. With some such attitude as this a clean cut fine young man goes into the conflict. There seems to be a good deal to justify his original position. He does find hard and evil and heartless exploitation. He does find heroic and noble aspiration for a better and more unfettered world on the part of the labouring group. But as time goes on other and disconcerting facts begin to knock at the door of his mind. His original conception of the unadulterated idealism of the labouring group finds itself confronted by many practical difficulties. The

exploitation of labouring groups by labour leaders, and all the fashion in which one group is willing to accept gains at the expense of another tend to confuse the issue. It is not by any means that this sort of thing is universal, but there is so much of it that the case loses its sharp distinctness.

Then, gradually, it becomes necessary to admit that there is a problem raised by a very human tendency to get the largest possible remuneration for the very least possible expenditure of labour and energy. The widespread conception of a necessary class war leads workers to regard the employing group as foes to be outwitted by any possible method rather than as allies to whom careful and faithful co-operation is to be given. A long and careful observation is likely to convince a man that the law of selfishness is operative with a tremendous efficiency in each group. At least it becomes clear that an exchange of groups in the place of leadership, so that the workers rather than the trained organizers would be in power would simply mean a change of masters and would not mean the coming of an ideal age. The study of the situation in Russia illustrates the difficulty with which we retain our assured optimism as we watch the functioning of a revolutionary workers' group in actual process of exercising its power.

It may be possible for some academic enthusiasts separated from Russia by thousands of miles to keep their hearty hopefulness. It seems pretty difficult for those on the ground who feel the tragedy of the anarchy not to lose courage. It may be claimed that the lack of education on the part of the masses in

Russia is accountable for the atrocities. In that case we may be reminded that the sickening deeds of Germany in the world war were not the result of a tremendous national ignorance. It is just this emerging of calculating and remorseless evil in every group, whatever its education or lack of education, whatever its wealth or lack of wealth, which makes it so hard for us to keep a firm hold upon our practical social idealism. It looks as if the facts are against us. The study of a Peace Congress like the Congress of Vienna at the close of the Napoleonic wars, or the examination of some aspects of the negotiations at the Conference at the close of the world war of our own time simply emphasize the difficulty which will come to candid and practical minds in respect of this matter of keeping a really hopeful social passion in the midst of the disillusioning facts of life.

As the years go by the problem is likely to become acute to the social worker. It is not pleasant to think of the ardent and eager spirits who have found the pressure too great and have come to feel that the task is hopeless. The settlement with all its friendly lights has tragedies enough of its own. When the sturdy boy to whom you have given such long and eager attention remorselessly deceives you and goes his own evil way, when the girl to whom you have given such hours of that self-forgetful friendliness which is your best offering becomes an evil influence right at the center of your little circle, you try to blame it all upon some hereditary taint, or some element in the environment which you have



been unable to master. But there are times when you suspect that these potent watchwords do not reach to the root of the matter. You have a glimpse into homes where the same tragedies follow the most careful training in families of a noble tradition, and a disheartening feeling that selfishness is more fundamental and more potent in human nature than any noble dream of brotherhood begins to work its way into your life. You begin to suspect that disintegrating selfishness can maintain itself in the best possible environment. You begin to wonder if the hope of brotherhood has any such structural place in life as you had believed. You know rich sinners against the social law of brotherhood. You know poor sinners against the social law of brotherhood. You know learned men who have violated its sanctions. You know ignorant men who scorn its behests. And as the years go on and you see the gay mockery with which many people of all classes regard your faithfulness to your vision of a world where each lives for the good of all the rest, you begin to feel a more and more potent pressure back of the question as to what place all this shining idealism actually has or can make for itself in the constitution of things. It is not merely that you are old and weary and ill, it is that year after year life itself has been fighting your hopes and your dreams. The erosion of the continuous days seems to prove that the structure of things is against you.

The problem emerges in its actual quality by this time. Glowing social idealism is a tremendously fine thing. But if it has a superficial foundation it is

likely to vanish away. Unless it is founded deeply upon facts and principles which can stand victoriously against all the disillusioning facts of the world it is likely to turn to a cynical misanthropy all the more morose and bitter because it comes in reaction from an idealism which had no sure and dependable and permanent basis. Many men of glowing radical enthusiasms became men of a somewhat scornful conservatism after the horrors of the French Revolution. Russia is to-day a menace to the social idealisms of the world. Whenever the prophets of a social reconstruction fail to base their labours deeply enough and soundly enough they are likely to be preparing for an hour of reaction in whose terrors all their dreams will be swept away. The powers of reaction would have been overthrown long ago if men of dauntless hopes had not promised unwisely, and released forces of whose meaning they had no real knowledge, and attempted to build their fabric in naïve ignorance of some of the most fundamental facts of human nature, and failed to base their whole philosophy of life upon a firm and permanent support. To rescue our social idealisms in an hour of world-wide reaction, to keep their bright light shining in an hour of far-flung disillusionment is one of the supreme tasks of our time.

The whole situation is infinitely complex and there are many things which are necessary in order to deal adequately with all of its aspects. There are a good many practical matters of method which go beyond the reach of this series of lectures. But one matter of fundamental significance is right before us in the

middle of the road. It is clear that if we can come to a conviction that the social passion is structural in the fundamental reality of the universe, if we can be assured that it is a reflection of something which belongs to the eternal life of God, then everything will be changed and there will be new light falling all about us. It is possible to trace the social dream back to the will of God. But if we do that we will always lack a needed inspiration. If the dream of unselfish brotherhood is something God willed for man without ever possessing it Himself then it can never have the mightiest sanction or the most powerful pressure in our own lives. If we can get it back of the will of God into the very nature of God then it will be secure for us forever. This may seem like a modern introduction of the old battle between the Thomists and the Scotists in the theology of the latter part of the Middle Ages. If that is true we will merely remark that a discussion which becomes densely verbal may after all have its rise in something very real and deeply significant. From the standpoint already indicated in our discussion of the Adventurous God it is very clear that what God meets in personal experience has a more fundamental grip than what God requires apart from His own experience—if there is anything which He requires in that way. And so we see that if the social passion is an eternal reality in God's own life it at once receives an absolutely new place in all our thought of human relationships. If there is a perfect social life in God then there is a fundamental and eternally victorious validity in the social dream. It is not an

idle vision. It is not a baseless hope. It is the summons to men that they make their life in time a reflection of that which is God's life in eternity.

As a matter of fact all this is said in so many words in one of the most striking passages of the New Testament. In the memorable intercessory prayer of Jesus which is recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel, the Master is praying for the disciples whom He is so soon to leave. He requests with the most profound and deep solicitude "That they may be one, even as we." And a little later in the same great prayer, He is speaking of all that vast company of those who shall become His followers in the future, and He prays "that they may all be one; even as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us." In a moment He recurs again to the same mastering and dominating idea, "that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one." Now if we are to give any sort of actuality to these words they must mean that the perfect life of the Father and the Son in the harmony of joyously self-forgetful love is to be the type for the life of that brotherhood of loving men which Jesus founded. He sees in the eternal life of God a pattern for the life of men in time. The Godhead is an eternity of mutual life in love, and the Church is to become a reflection of that kind of loving brotherhood.

From this standpoint let us look at the historic doctrine of the Trinity. We are not interested now in any process of scholastic dialectic, for or against it.

We are not interested in any subtle metaphysical aspect of the problem. We do want to know just this thing: Is there any practically functioning power in the view of God as triune when we apply that interpretation to the urgent necessities of our whole situation as respects the social passion? What would it mean for the social life of man if we believed in the social life in God?

Interpreted from this standpoint the historic view of the Trinity would mean that the life of God has included always the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, three actual persons bound together in the oneness of a perfect life, each perfectly loving the others, each giving Himself in eternal unselfish joy to the others, the very life of God being an eternal glory of sacrificial love. In a moment we shall be ready to speak of some of the problems connected with such a conception. Now, as we have said, we merely wish to lift the inquiry as to what would be the productive power of such a belief if we could hold it? The answer comes with a power and a momentum which fairly startles us. If the life of God is an eternal realization of all that we mean by a perfect social organism then the whole conception of society is lifted into new meaning and comes to participate in higher relationships. If the eternal experience of God is built about the actuality of unselfish love, if God Himself perpetually loses His life that He may find it, then it is true that unselfishness is not a soft and vague and impossible dream. It is more real than selfishness. It is more actual than all the hard self-assertiveness of which we know so

much. It is as real as the very structure of the universe. It is as real as the nature of God.

Love is not a merely biological product resulting from a curious process of abstracting some elements from what was originally a purely physical experience. Love is an echo in time of the most powerful voice in eternity. Love is an experience which assures us that we have indeed upon us the half effaced signature of God. Love is as strong as that life of God where it reigns eternally supreme. Hate is always on the way to destruction. Love is always on the way to the throne. Indeed, in the invisible splendours of the life of God, love is always on the throne. When Love fails in time we can always go back to its victory in eternity, and therefore we can always be sure of its victory at a later time. Disillusioning facts break upon us in vain. They all have to do with the transient and temporal life of man. We know that in the one realm which eternally matters unselfishness is regnant, love is triumphant, and therefore we are sure that the thing which is structural in the basal life of the universe must make itself felt more and more potently in the very world where we live. When people give back deception for friendliness, and betrayal for love, it is a sad and bitter experience, but it can never be a completely disheartening experience, for all the while we know that the very structure of the universe is on the side of the things to which they have been false.

We can afford to be patient. We can afford to wait. Time may seem to be against us. Eternity is on our side. In other words, we do not base our

optimism upon a superficial confidence in human nature. We base our confidence upon the very essential quality of the life of God. We know that people have been false. We know that in an environment offering the best sort of opportunity and the noblest stimulus some people will be false. We are not surprised when employers betray workers and workers betray employers. We are not surprised when Peace Conferences are soiled by emerging national and individual selfishnesses. All these things we understand. All these things we expect. And from the spectacle we look out to that eternal life of God which is perpetually based upon unselfish love. Here we find something solid and dependable. And in every bit of human unselfishness, in every human striving after brotherhood, in every human movement for a more orderly world, we see the expression on the field of this life of that which is the deepest verity in the life of all things. We believe, in spite of sad and heart-breaking experiences, in the triumph of brotherhood here, because we know that the brotherhood which reigns over the whole structure of things must at last come to reign in the life of man.

To be sure, we cannot hope to escape entirely from the hosts of the metaphysicians. And we have no desire to escape from the necessity of looking frankly at the metaphysical relationships of the position we have been investigating. For practical purposes as well as for speculative purposes a man needs a theory of reality. And from the standpoint of its productiveness we can examine a particular theory of

reality without going beyond the bounds which we have set for this course of lectures. When we approach the matter of a careful statement regarding the Trinity in the light of its ontological relations we need to keep one or two matters in mind. The first is that we have not the slightest intention of attempting to give a formula for the life of God conceived of as triune. The possessor of such a formula, if such a formula there be, by very means of its possession would have already transcended the limitations of this finite life. The man who attempted such a feat would reveal at once his complete incapacity to apprehend the true nature of the problem. The real problem is not to explain the inner life of God. It is to see what light a particular conception of the inner life of God will throw upon all other problems. The question we are facing is not that of explaining the Trinity. It is the matter of seeing whether the Trinity is a conception which can be used to explain everything else. In other words, we must think of the view of God as triune as we would think of a key.

Now the practical question about a key is as to whether it will fit the lock, and whether by means of it you can turn the lock and open the door. Life is a lock. The Trinity is offered as a key. Does it fit the lock? Will it open the door? When a man asks any other question about a key he simply reveals the fact that he has not understood the meaning of the problem or the significance of the key. To be sure a man might ask about the keyness of a key, about its significance quite apart from any lock. If



he did this he would be asking a purely verbal question as far as the functioning of the key, as a key, is concerned. It is conceivable that you might have a key which could also be used as a whistle. But that would not have anything to do with your understanding of its meaning as a key. There may be all sorts of transcendent relations of the divine life. But we are not concerned with them now. We are simply concerned to find what thought of the life of God will best relate itself to all the experience of existence and life. The thought of God into which all the facts of life and experience will most completely fit is the one to which we are committed as far as our thought in this world is concerned. And that is the only thought with which we can have significant connection at this time.

The other thing which we must keep in mind as we approach a careful statement about the Trinity is that it is possible to think a conception when you cannot make a picture of it. There are two kinds of thinking which are characteristic of us all. One has to do with that which goes on below our eyebrows. The other has to do with what goes on above our eyebrows. In the one case we make pictures. In the other we reach conceptions which it is not possible to visualize. A good many people do not do much thinking which is above their eyebrows. Practically all of their thinking consists of making mental pictures. When they say that they understand a thing they mean that they can make a picture of it in their minds. When they say that they cannot understand a thing they mean that they are unable to

make a picture of it. Now we want to say with the utmost frankness that we have not the slightest intention of trying to visualize the Trinity. We have not the most momentary thought that it is possible to make a mental picture of the Triune life of God. But while you cannot make a picture of the Trinity you can think clearly what is involved in the conception of the Trinity. And if we can understand from the start that we are seeking a clear and definite conception and not a picture which would reduce the life of God to the dimensions of sense we shall be saved from a good deal of confusion and from a good deal of misapprehension.

From this standpoint then what is involved in the thought of God as Triune? Perhaps we may express it in this way: The Christian thought of the Trinity involves the conception of one perfect and eternal divine life in which there are included three centers of consciousness and of will, all bound together in such a fashion that the existence of one involves the existence of the other two, and all united in the most perfect oneness of thought and feeling and decision. In other words, you have a divine life with ontological unity in the sense that one person of the Trinity only exists in and through the existence of the other two. And you have ethical unity in the sense that they always perfectly agree and, as some one has wisely said, the will of God is always one will twice reinforced. Here then you have a fundamental unity of life and intention and volition. You also have all the richness and fullness of life which comes from three centers of conscious percep-

tion and will. Now put in this fashion all of this is just about as interesting and compelling as a key without any suggestion as to the lock which it is to fit, and to turn, and to open. At once we must ask what would be the actual value of such a conception? What would it do for us? In what way would it be productive? What would be its pragmatic significance?

In replying to these questions we may say: First, such a conception does justice to the unity of the world and that vast harmonious system of things which has become familiar to us all through manifold studies in the physical sciences. There must be one will and one purpose and one plan in the universe which we know through ear and eye and the sense of touch, and all the long observations and classifications of the workers in the realm of physical science. Now such oneness of fundamental life as we have described, and such complete oneness of thought and of purpose and of activity as we have considered, absolutely corresponds to the oneness of the vast and far-reaching physical universe concerning which recent centuries have taught us so much.

But it is not only true that a certain unity in the fundamental reality is required by the uniformity of nature as we know it, we must at once add that this same thing is necessary as a basis for the intellectual and the moral life of the world. The basis of rationality must be in one type of mental life. If you can have types of mind in the world which in fundamental and structural ways differ from each other it is idle to talk about truth. And if you

have contradiction of purpose and will in the life of God it is idle to talk about any moral sanctions. There must be oneness of mental type and oneness of moral consciousness and moral purpose in the life of God if rationality and ethics have any dependable meaning. And these necessities are completely answered to in that view of the life of God which we have described.

But there is more of life than we have touched when we have spoken in the terms of the basis for the unity of the world order and of morality and of rationality. As we have already seen there is a fullness and variety which belongs to life, and we have a deep intuition that somehow the basis for this must be gotten into the life of God. The Greek polytheism represents this intuition gone mad. It proves too much. It gives such variety and diversity that there is no unity, there is nothing stable or dependable. Such a view of divine beings was sure to go down before the sense of the physical and moral and intellectual unity of the world. On the other hand a bare and rigid monotheism may seem beset by difficulties of just the opposite kind. It makes unity such an attenuated and barren thing that it leaves the world cold and hard. It simply fails to correspond to the wonderful richness and variety which belong to the world and life in the terms of our actual experience. Now as the very nature of the thought of God involves an endeavour by means of it to do justice to all the elements of experience we may surely say that a hard and mechanical monotheism needs to be reinforced and

enriched. It needs in fact to become such a living and glowing kind of monotheism as is made possible by the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

We have already seen how deep is the practical necessity that the social passion and the great and pervasive dream of human brotherhood shall find a secure basis in the very nature of God. Now let us see in a little more detail the fashion in which the view of the social life of God which we have been discussing does this very thing. We can see at once that the divine life which we have described involves in its very nature an eternal brotherhood in the life of the Deity. That in some deep sense the Father is fundamental to the life of the infinite divine organism we may readily admit. It must be added at once, that that whole organic life is possible only as three centers of personal consciousness perpetually exist. This means that the very life of God is an eternal unselfishness. The Father exists in and through the Son. The Son exists in and through the Father. And the Holy Spirit has the same relation to the other two. Here you have a social organism. Here you have an eternal brotherhood. Here you have all that life in perfect self-giving which is the final social ideal perfectly existing in the life of God. When we remember that the perpetual agreement in purpose, the perpetual harmony of love, is a matter of eternal loyalty and eternal choice, we begin to see how profoundly God is everything which He asks us to become.

As a matter of fact it is difficult to see how a man who faced the real outcome of denying the Trinity

could conserve the sanctions of Christian ethics. For if you think of God as an eternal lonely person existing in the splendid isolation of His own perfections, loving Himself forever, and yet perpetually asking men to forget themselves and to love each other, God is all the while asking men to do what He has never done, and He is making the supreme virtue of human life to consist in being as completely as possible unlike Him. He is making that which is good in Him bad in men. And He is making what is intolerable in men the very central matter in His own life. The truth is that only an eternally unselfish God can be the basis for Christian ethics. And the view of the social life of God which we have outlined is the only one under the terms of which it is possible to think of an eternally unselfish God. To press the matter a little farther it is not clear in what fashion we can give reality to the Biblical conception that God is love unless we have some such view of God's social life as that which we are following to some of its implications. Not to press the metaphysical aspects of the problem it is at least clear that a God with a rich and vivid social life such as that which the Christian conception of the Trinity makes possible can most simply and easily and naturally be thought of as a God of love.

What are some of the aspects of human life and experience which find themselves deeply explained and solidly placed in the very structure of the universe as we think of the social life of God?

Many treatises have been written about friendship. And the words of interpretation which come down

from dim far-off ages as well as those written in our time come from hearts glowing with a sense of the rare and noble fragrance which is shed upon human life by the experience of noble devotion from friend to friend. It is not too much to say that life has been literally transformed for many a man through his experience of friendship. And the contemporary expression of friendship on the battle-fields of Europe where men who were not at all articulate and did not have bright words to tell the story of their devotion to their comrades but expressed their deep and mastering friendships in immortal deeds of self-forgetful daring is one of the most notable aspects of the war when we approach it from the side of its deeper meaning and of the moral and spiritual forces which it released. This fine and rare and beautiful flower has bloomed in every land. It has enriched the lives of all peoples. What is the source of it? Where does it really come from? What basis does it have in the system of things? When we are able to reply that friendship is fundamental in the life of God the whole experience is lifted into a higher meaning. When we know that God has always been a friend, and that the devotion of person for person which is the basis of friendship is fundamental in the divine life, we come to realize that the universe itself is on the side of unselfish friendship. We see that the world was built for friends.

The deeper experiences of love are the most amazing and transforming and productive experiences of human life. The love which makes a human home, the flame of a man's devotion to a woman, and a

woman's devotion to a man, the unfathomable love of a mother, and the gripping devotion of a father, the whole interplay of joyously loyal affection in a family where each member pours out of a full heart an abundant gift of love, and each receives in return the richness of an abounding devotion—this rich and diversified light and heat of the home fires when they are kept nobly and brightly burning, is a thing before which we stand in solemn wonder, in deep and amazed awe. If goodness is kept alive in the world, if the pure and lofty things are winning a place in human life, how deep an influence for all these things goes forth from the home of clean and triumphant love. And once again we ask the question: Where does it come from? What is its source? Does it have a sure and sound basis in the structure of things? And quick and sure comes back the reply: All this is an expression in human life of what is eternally fundamental in the divine life. The home love is an eternal thing in the life and in the experience of God. Every human home of real and abiding affection is a little hint in time of the perpetual home life of God in the mutual love of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The sacredness of a home and all the far-flung influences of its affection sound in some finite way the note which is infinite in the life of God. So it comes to pass that the man who sins against the home is sinning against the fundamental life of the universe. The man who plays with love is playing with the most central and mastering reality in the life of the world.



The devotion a man comes to feel for the Church of God in the world, his desire that it shall be a true and unselfish brotherhood of friendly men, his desire that it shall have the oneness of a common purpose, and the richness of a common affection, is not merely a passing emotion. As we have already seen in the great prayer of Jesus the Master Himself based His ideal for the brotherhood of the Church, His conception of its unity and love, upon the already existing oneness, the already existing perfection in united life of the Godhead. The Church is perpetually to be seeking with a passion beyond the power of words to tell to represent in time that which God perfectly realizes in eternity.

The devotion of men to their community, to their commonwealth and to their state, is one of the fine and productive things about human life. A man is ready to pay a real price for the advancement of his community, he has a glowing and practical enthusiasm for the welfare of his commonwealth. And how astonishingly we have learned the fashion in which millions of young men in our own day have been ready to lay down their lives for the good of their country. The ability of a man to lose his consciousness of self in the consciousness of the challenge of the larger group and his privilege of loyalty to it, show us human nature in an aspect which is full of promise. And the basis of this perpetually outcropping tendency in man to find a cause larger than himself, to find a loyalty to something greater than his own personal life, is in the life of the universe itself the deepest thing. For

the life of God is a perpetual history of personality realizing itself through self-giving loyalty to other personality. The social ideal of the community, the social ideal of the commonwealth, and the social ideal of the nation have their basis in the life of God.

A new ideal and a new hope in respect of international relationships has come to the world in our time. The League of Nations has as its foundation the thought that the world is one world with common interests and that its life ought to be organized for the common good. The nations are not to be enemies constantly watching each other with suspicious eyes and perpetually preparing for inevitable and deadly struggle. They are to be friends about a common task and needing and securing each others' coöperation for the building into stable form of the fabric of the life of the world. It is a splendidly noble ideal. Our hearts thrill at the thought of it. But what is the basis of this sort of view of life? What support does it have in the very structure of things? Once again we must answer that if the life of God is unity in diversity, if the life of God is the eternally coöperative action of mutually loving persons in the unity of one life and one purpose, then the thought of life as one in spite of all its diversity is inevitable to men who come to understand the realities of existence. If God Himself represents an eternally unselfish social life, then the fundamental ideal of the League of Nations has a secure place in the life of the Deity. It is structural in the universe.

The Christian Church moves forward with one

great purpose in the world. It would conquer the world for Jesus Christ. It would master the world by the principles of His unselfish brotherhood. It would teach all men. It would make disciples of all nations. It would secure the reign of Christ and all that organic life in loving brotherhood for which He stands. What, for a last time we ask, is the basis for this sort of dream of world-wide brotherhood? What is the last and ultimate foundation of the missionary ideal? What is the justification of the Christian program for the whole world? And the answer is that the missionary hope is based upon the most fundamental experiences of the divine life. Does the world-wide messenger of the Gospel summon men to unselfishness? He does it in the name of a God whose perpetual life is an expression of unselfish love. Does He summon nations to a life of organic brotherhood? He does it in the name of a Deity who realizes in eternity all that He asks of men in time. The life of God is the pattern for the life of the world. And so the missionary program has its secure authentication in the very structure of the divine life.

From all this we see that if the deepest and richest and most productive and hopeful and outreaching experiences of men in all their most vital relationships are not to be entirely foreign to the life and experience of the Deity we must believe in the social life of God. And so believing we find that God touches us at every movement of life. He is no longer the distant refuge of formal thought. He is the most real influence in our lives. He draws near

to us in the splendour of a perfect experience of all that we long for and hope to be.

“The end of the exploration is the beginning of the enterprise,” said a great, modern, pioneer missionary. It is always true that a journey of mental exploration must be followed by the enterprise of life itself, if the exploring is in the profoundest sense productive. The test to which we must submit these studies in interpretation is the test of life. Does the view which we have advocated have the vigour and the power of practical and permanent inspiration in it? Will the men and women under the actual burdens of our tense and driven modern world find that such views of God and man and the tragedy of evil and the presence of God in human life and the wealth of God’s own experience of social life give them a lift and a potent pressure toward lofty living, a joy and a satisfaction in life which they did not know before? Is there ethical and spiritual power in the achievement of Christ on the Cross as we have seen that achievement unfold which will cut its way into the center of human life in renewing and transforming strength? Under the hot skies and in the winter’s cold, with the actual pressures of life all about us and upon us, fighting our way day by day we must find the answer to these questions in actual experience.

There are some matters, however, which it seems ought to be fairly clear. One is that only a God who can speak from experience can speak to experience. A distant and beatific being who at no point of nature or of life touches anything which in any

fashion parallels the burning intensity of our experience of life can never speak the mastering word to us. On the other hand a God whose own life is rich in social meaning, a God whose nature is perfect love and white and flaming righteousness, a God whose experience is full of audacious and daring adventure, a God who presses close to every life in His immanent activity, and came under the full burden of life in an actual human experience in the Incarnation, a God who went the whole terrible suffering length of Calvary that men might be rescued and a new life be made possible for the world, such a God speaks to us in a language we can understand and in a voice which masters our very hearts. We can pray to such a God for He knows our language and He knows our life. We can give ourselves to such a God for He calls to us from His own way of daring adventure and He speaks to us from His own hill of pain. He finds us in the midst of our struggles. He bends to meet us and feels the weight of our sins. He is one with us in order that we may be one with Him. Every word He speaks comes to us dripping with vitality. Through contact with such a Deity religion becomes the most resilient and vital thing in all the world.

From this point of view the Bible becomes that literature which gives us the vivid and mastering experiences through which God is made real to men. It is the supreme expression of men's experience in relation to God. And in it God becomes articulate, speaking forth in the warm and powerful voice of life itself. All of the Bible makes its contribution to

that wonderful achievement whereby God lives Himself into the life of men. The Bible speaks from a wealth of varied experiences. And all of its voices, all of its manifold books are to be interpreted by experience. Formal logic may easily go astray. But life calling to life, and life answering to life will not lose the way. God is ready to speak to the mind. He is ready to speak to the conscience. He is ready to speak to the will. He is ready to speak to that strange and evasive aspect of our nature which we call the emotional life. But most of all God is ready to speak to all of our life together in the terms of living experience. All there is of moral and spiritual meaning in the life of God pouring itself forth into the life of men on the very field of history—that is Christianity.

This approach to religion and to the truths of religion saves us from many things, and it brings to us the very undiluted riches of the religious life. We are not entangled in abstruse puzzles of formal logic. We come straight to the heart of the matter and find the living God in actual contact with the life of man. All that is incidental is brushed aside. We come at once into the presence of the bush which is burning but not consumed. The productive beliefs we find are those which speak from experience and which in turn create further and fuller and more mastering experience in the world.

To be sure there is no end of work left for the philosophic mind. But this has to do with the formulating and the interpreting of that which has already been completely authenticated on the field of

actual experience. Logic can be of rare service in the matter of classifying that which has become the very living inspiration of our life. But the logical forms in which the great truths are conveyed must always submit to the mastery of the truths they carry. Our systems must perpetually be the servants of the truths they bear to the world.

Life itself then speaks the first word. Life itself speaks the last word and it is because He is perpetually and triumphantly alive that God speaks the word which is both first and last.

It is such a God who looks upon us and upon whom we look as we see the face of Jesus Christ. It is such a God whom we hear as we listen to His speech. It is such a God who is made marvellously articulate in His life. It is such a God whose whole ethical and spiritual life is expressed in triumphant suffering love upon the Cross. It is such a God who stands triumphant among the Easter lilies. It is such a God who meets us every day in all the strange bewilderment of life with the vitalizing touch which makes all things new. It is such a God who spoke to men in the battle-fields of war and will speak to them in the subtler battle-fields of peace. The adventurous God has come to us in Jesus Christ and following Him we trace the far and wonderful ways where we apprehend the meaning of God for our lives and for the life of all the world. Following Him we go forth to remake the world after the fashion of the will of God.











