



The Endless Adventure

Roger Hicks

THE ENDLESS ADVENTURE

ROGER HICKS

You bring me news
Of a door that opens at the end of a corridor,
Sunlight and singing; when I had felt sure
That every corridor only led to another,
Or to a blank wall.

T. S. ELIOT *The Family Reunion*



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LETTERS TO PARSI

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Many of the passages in this book are from existing writings and the pages that follow are in the nature of an anthology. I am indebted to the publishers concerned for their permission to include extracts, in some cases long ones. Specific acknowledgement is given in the footnotes.

R. O. H.

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CONTENTS

	Page
FOREWORD	5
1 MEN OF GOD	7
2 HOW A YOUNG MAN FOUND FAITH	16
3 HOW A GIRL CHANGED HISTORY	36
4 HOW TO GET GOING	55
5 CHRIST CRUCIFIED FOR THE WORLD	63
6 WHAT GOD REQUIRES OF US	71
7 THE PROGRAMME OF CHRISTIANITY	81
8 HOW TO KNOW THE WILL OF GOD	90
9 REVIVAL, REVOLUTION, RENAISSANCE	95
10 THE WAR OF IDEAS	102
11 CHRIST AND THE MODERN ATHEIST	108
12 WHAT YOUTH SAY	118
13 THE BIBLE AND THE HISTORICAL PROBLEM OF OUR TIME	123
14 A STUDY BASED ON LETTERS TO YOUNG CHURCHES	140
15 FRANCIS OF ASSISI SPEAKS TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY	163
16 CHRIST AS THE VOICE OF THE ABSOLUTE	170
INDEX	176

1

Men of God

Neither the technological process that is forcing East and West together, nor the insurgence of the nationalist forces that is tearing them apart, can save the modern world from destruction. Salvation can only come through some power capable of creating a spiritual unity which will transcend and comprehend the material unity of the new world order.

CHRISTOPHER DAWSON¹

THIS IS A BOOK for those who want to find the life Christ offers. It deals, not with the parody that is sometimes put before us, but with the real thing. Only on this basis can we assess the relevance of Christ for the world and for ourselves and hope that a generation which has rejected the authority of parents and of the past may yet accept the authority of God.

The most disturbing part of a section of modern writing and teaching is its pettiness and man-centredness. Men look for the bread of life and are given a stone. They seek an idea big enough to end exploitation of men by men and powerful enough to outbid the Bomb. They want to find the right plan for their lives. They are offered instead excuses for self-indulgence and self-expression – as if self-indulgence had not already brought enough unhappiness into the world.

One thing is certain: a revolution in the character of man himself is needed.

That Christ can and does bring such a revolutionary change in the hearts and character of men is the theme of this book. It shows how this change came to men whose

¹ *The Revolt of Asia* by Christopher Dawson (Sheed & Ward).

themselves' but by being new men in Christ Jesus. It naturally brought them a 'morality of involvement and discovery'. *Thy will be done in earth* was for them not a stoic bowing to fate or a routine prayer, but a revolutionary programme.

* * *

Augustine was a brilliant young intellectual, thoroughly defeated by impurity. The story is told in this book of how he came to find freedom and faith and of how God transformed his motives, character and conduct. 'He was,' the historian Christopher Dawson says, 'to a far greater degree than any emperor or barbarian war-lord, a maker of history and a builder of the bridge that was to lead from the old world to the new.'

We need his like today.

Augustine found that licence did not bring liberty or happiness.

If we are to have strength and purpose as a people we need to find the answer Augustine found. The downward sliding standards of our age can only be halted and reversed at the place where Augustine found change. Only a Passion can drive out a passion. Only those who have found a Power stronger than their own lusts are set free to remake the world.

Joan of Arc had a mission. It did not occur to her to keep her experience of God to herself. Her mission and her experience were inextricably entangled. It would have seemed madness to her to think that her private life did not affect her public life.

Joan's experience of God became real to her in terms of the world, the surroundings and the teachings she knew. The New Moralists are right in saying that to grapple with the problems of modern secularism we need to rethink in the present age the meaning and message of Christ. If God is as real to us as He was to Joan that will not be so difficult. He brings fresh answers to overripe problems.

The full use of heart, mind and will to find and follow God's strategy and tactics for dealing with this world, and the comradeship of those likewise engaged in that

adventure, would quickly replace the boring emphasis on personal adventures with sex.

If Joan had lived today God would not have called her to free France from the English but He might have called her to free all men from exploitation by other men. And Joan would have responded, no doubt, with a faith, expectation and obedience that overcame man-made difficulties.

The passion of a Joan or of a lot of little Joans is needed today to see that an adequate number of houses are built for the homeless. The materials are there, the land is there, the manpower is there. Only the selfishness and folly of man stand in the way. Such passion would not rest content with the human wisdom that, for example, permits the United States to pay a million dollars a day to store surplus food while half the world goes hungry.

Is not our task today to see that all around the world every last person has enough food, shelter, work and an all-out purpose to live for? A faith and a morality that seeks to achieve less than that is surely less than Christian.

The passion of a Joan would soon drive out the dirt, vice and violence from radio and television programmes, as once the English were driven out of France. In their place we would see fulfilled the pledge inscribed in the entrance hall of the B.B.C. — 'This temple of the arts and muses is dedicated to Almighty God by the first Governors of Broadcasting. It is their prayer that . . . all things hostile to peace and purity may be banished from this house, and that the people inclining their ear to whatsoever things are beautiful, and honest, and of good report, may tread the path of wisdom, and uprightness.'

A nation with the spirit of a Saint Joan would not allow one half of the world to go on possessing only one tenth of its real income.

We need to revise our idea of Christian piety and of a Church militant. Celsus, who was born in the second century, said the first bishops were the kind of men you would choose to capture a band of brigands. Joan of Arc would have been at home with them.

died in 1961. Those who have read *Frank Buchman's Secret*¹ will know that that secret was Christ. From the time at Keswick in 1908 when the old Christian truths he had been taught all his life were unravelled for him by an experience of the Cross, Christ possessed him and was his Master. He could truly say:

'He walks with me and He talks with me and He tells me I am His own.'

Buchman did what great Christians have done down the ages. He took that experience out to others, out to the whole world, and in doing so understood for himself more and more of the way and the will of God.

In 1916 he was telling a group of men and women who did not fully understand what he was saying, 'I want you to live for continents. I want you to think for continents.'

In 1938, walking in the woods of Freudenstadt in the Black Forest, a further step in God's plan was revealed to him: 'Moral and spiritual rearmament, moral and spiritual rearmament. The next great movement in the world will be a movement of moral rearmament for all nations.'

The remaining years of Buchman's life were spent in enlisting men and women of all nations to see that that plan was resolutely carried out.

Paul's letters are the earliest documents of the Christian church that have come down to us. Like other parts of the Bible, they have been used to try and prove almost everything. All selections must in some sense be discriminatory but it is hoped that the extracts from *Letters to Young Churches* given in this book present a rounded enough picture to see what Paul taught.

It is not necessary to grasp all that the Bible says, to begin putting into practice the things we do grasp. Mark Twain said it was not the things he did not understand in the Bible that troubled him but the things he did understand.

The best way to find out what Christ taught is to read the Gospels. Books about the Bible have not the same authority

¹ By Peter Howard (Heinemann 1961).

as the Bible itself. Christ promised that as we obey the Holy Spirit He will be our Teacher.

The first Christians have been described as 'utterly fearless, ridiculously happy and always getting into trouble'. When Paul had been three weeks in Thessalonica it was said of him and the few friends with him, *These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.*

Cannot we so live and apply Christ's message to the whole of life that this is said of us too? Martin Luther King has rightly said: 'Any religion that professes to be concerned with the souls of men and yet is not concerned with the economic and social conditions that cripple them, is the kind that the Marxists describe as an opiate of the people.'¹

Management and labour will then no longer squabble about the size of their piece of the industrial cake but plan together how to make a bigger cake and feed a hungry world. Rachmanism will cease and fortunes will no longer be spent on night clubs while whole families crowd into a single room. Our children will be educated in how to live and not just how to make a living. We will face the coming age of automation, with its problems of work and leisure, with a clear purpose, a united spirit and unclouded wisdom.

It is said in Scripture: '*Nations that knew thee not shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God.*' Should not that be the aim of every patriot and every peace-maker?

The story of *Francis of Assisi* (1182-1226) has been told many times and it is not the intention to tell it again here. G. K. Chesterton says that through his inspiration, 'the servants of God who had been a besieged garrison became a marching army.'

In his book *The Message of Francis d'Assisi* H. F. B. Mackay writes: 'For us ordinary mortals Francis was the best mirror of Jesus Christ that there has ever been.'

In a later chapter we give Mackay's picture of Francis speaking to the twentieth century.

¹ *Strength to Love* by Martin Luther King (Hodder & Stoughton).

youths that my viciousness was less than theirs: I heard them boasting of their exploits, and the viler the exploits the louder the boasting: and I set about the same exploits not only for the pleasure of the act but for the pleasure of the boasting.

HE ENJOYS SINNING

I stole things which I already had in plenty and of better quality. Nor had I any desire to enjoy the things I stole, but only the stealing of them and the sin. There was a pear tree near our own vineyard, heavy with fruit, but fruit that was not particularly tempting either to look at or to taste. A group of young blackguards, and I among them, went out to knock down the pears and carry them off late one night, for it was our bad habit to carry on our games in the streets till very late. We carried off an immense load of pears, not to eat – for we barely tasted them before throwing them to the hogs. Our only pleasure in doing it was that it was forbidden.

HIS FIRST STEP TOWARDS GOD

I came to Carthage, where a cauldron of illicit loves leapt and boiled about me. Those of my occupations at that time which were held as reputable were directed towards the study of law, in which I meant to excel – and the less honest I was, the more famous I should be.

I was studying the books of eloquence: for in eloquence it was my ambition to shine, all from a damnable vain-gloriousness and for the satisfaction of human vanity. Following the normal order of study I had come to a book of one Cicero, whose tongue practically everyone admires, though not his heart. That particular book is called *Hortensius* and contains an exhortation to philosophy. Quite definitely it changed the direction of my mind, altered my prayers to You, O Lord, and gave me a new purpose and ambition. Suddenly all the vanity I had hoped in I saw as worthless, and with an incredible intensity of desire I longed after immortal wisdom. I had begun that journey upwards

by which I was to return to You.

How did I then burn, my God, how did I burn to wing upwards from earthly delights to You. The one thing that delighted me in Cicero's exhortation was that I should love, and seek, and win, and hold, and embrace, not this or that philosophical school but Wisdom itself, whatever it might be.

HE REFUSES TO BE A 'LITTLE ONE' AND IS MISLED

So I resolved to make some study of the Sacred Scriptures and find what kind of books they were. They seemed to me unworthy to be compared with the majesty of Cicero. My conceit was repelled by their simplicity, and I had not the mind to penetrate into their depths. They were indeed of a nature to grow in Your little ones. But I could not bear to be a little one; I was only swollen with pride, but to myself I seemed a very big man.

I fell in with a sect of men talking high-sounding nonsense, carnal and wordy men. They cried out, 'Truth, truth.' They were for ever uttering the word to me, but the thing was nowhere in them. It was all words – words spoken, words written in many huge tomes. All the same I swallowed them because I thought that they were Yourself. On such emptiness did I then feed and was not fed. Inevitably I was drawn to accept every kind of nonsense.

THE PRAYERS OF HIS MOTHER, MONICA

And You sent Your hand from above, and raised my soul out of that depth of darkness, because my mother, Your faithful one, wept to You for me more bitterly than mothers weep for the bodily deaths of their children. You heard her. What else could have been the cause of that dream by which You so comforted her that she consented to live with me and to eat at the same table in the house; which previously she had refused to do, because she shunned and detested the blasphemies of my error?

One other answer I remember You gave her in that time. You gave her another assurance by the mouth of Your

myself all the books of what are called the Liberal Arts that I was able to get hold of, since I remained the vile slave of evil desires? I enjoyed the books while not knowing Him from whom came whatever was true or certain in them.

GOD GUIDES HIM FIRST TO ROME, THEN TO AMBROSE IN MILAN

It was by Your action upon me that I was moved to go to Rome and teach there what I had taught in Carthage. You pricked me with such goads at Carthage as drove me out of it, and You set before me certain attractions by which I might be drawn to Rome – in either case using men who loved this life of death, one set doing lunatic things, the other promising vain things: and to reform my ways You secretly used their perversity and my own.

That night I stole away without my mother; she remained praying and weeping. And what was she praying for, O my God, with all those tears but that You should not allow me to sail! But You saw deeper and granted the essential of her prayer: You did not do what she was at that moment asking, that You might do the thing she was always asking.

Rome welcomed me with the scourge of bodily illness. My mother was far away and knew nothing of my illness, but she prayed on for me. You who are present everywhere heard her where she was and had compassion on me where I was, so that I recovered the health of my body, though still far from health in my sacrilegious heart.

I began diligently to set about that for which I had come to Rome, namely the teaching of Rhetoric. Then I learned that Rome had its drawbacks which I had not had to suffer in Africa. When therefore a message from Milan came to Rome, to the prefect, asking for a professor of Rhetoric for that city, I applied for the post, the prefect approved. So I came to Milan, to the bishop and devout servant of God, Ambrose, famed among the best men of the whole world. All unknowing I was brought by God to him, that knowing I should be brought by him to God.

HE BEGINS TO CATCH THE TRUTH FROM AMBROSE

That man of God received me as a father, and as a bishop welcomed my coming. I came to love him, not at first as a teacher of the truth, which I had utterly despaired of finding in Your Church, but for his kindness towards me. I did not take great heed to learn what he was saying but only to hear how he said it: that empty interest was all I now had since I despaired of men's finding the way to You. Yet along with the words, which I admired, there also came into my mind the subject matter, to which I attached no importance. I could not separate them.

And while I was opening my heart to learn how eloquently he spoke, I came to feel, though only gradually, how truly he spoke. I decided that I must leave the Manichees sect. I determined, then, to go on as a catechumen in the Catholic Church – the Church of my parents – and to remain in that state until some certain light should appear by which I might steer my course.

MONICA ARRIVES

By this time my mother had come to me, following me over sea and land with the courage of piety and relying upon You in all perils. For they were in danger from a storm, and she reassured even the sailors – by whom travellers newly ventured upon the deep are ordinarily reassured – promising them safe arrival because thus You had promised her in a vision.

She loved that man (Ambrose) as an angel of God because she had learned that it was by him that I had been brought so far as to the wavering state I was now in; though she took it for granted that I had to pass on my way from sickness to health, with some graver peril yet to come, analogous to what doctors call the crisis.

HE WONDERES WHAT GOES ON INSIDE AMBROSE

I regarded Ambrose as a lucky man by worldly standards to be held in honour by such important people; only his

ambition. Many great men, well worthy of our imitation, have given themselves to the pursuit of wisdom even though they had wives.'

THE PLAIN TRUTH

These things went through my mind, and the wind blew one way and then another, and tossed my heart this way and that. Time was passing and I delayed to turn to the Lord. From day to day I postponed life in You, but I did not postpone the death that daily I was dying in myself. I was in love with the idea of happiness, yet I feared it where it was, and fled away from it in my search for it. The plain truth is that I thought I should be impossibly miserable if I had to forego the embraces of a woman: and I did not think of Your mercy as a healing medicine for that weakness, because I had never tried it. I thought that continency was a matter of our own strength, and I knew that I had not the strength: for in my utter foolishness I did not know the word of Your Scripture that none can be continent unless You give it. And truly You would have given it if with groaning of spirit I had assailed Your ears and with settled faith had cast my care upon You.

HE FINDS A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE IS NO ANSWER TO LUST

Great effort was made to get me married. I proposed, the girl was promised me. She was still two years short of the age for marriage but I liked her and agreed to wait.

Meanwhile my sins multiplied. She with whom I had lived so long was torn from my side as a hindrance to my forthcoming marriage . . . I was unable to bear the delay of the two years which must pass before I was to get the girl I had asked for in marriage. In fact it was not really marriage that I wanted. I was simply a slave to lust. So I took another woman, not of course as a wife; and thus my soul's disease was nourished and kept alive as vigorously as ever, indeed worse than ever, that it might reach the realm of matrimony in the company of its ancient habit. Nor was the wound healed

that had been made by the cutting off of my former mistress. For there was first burning and bitter grief; and after that it festered, and as the pain grew duller it only grew more hopeless.

HIS MIND APPROACHES GOD

As a man, though so poor a man, I set myself to think of You as the supreme and sole and true God; and with all my heart I believed You incorruptible and inviolable and immutable, for though I did not see whence or how, yet I saw with utter certainty that what can be corrupted is lower than what cannot be corrupted, that the inviolable is beyond question better than the violable, and that what can suffer no change is better than what can be changed.

I now tried to discover new truths . . . I sought for the origin of evil. By now I had rejected the ridiculous prophesyings and blasphemous follies of the astrologers.

Yet with all the ebb and flow of my thought You did not let me be carried away from the faith by which I believed that You were, and that Your substance was unchangeable, and that You cared for men and would judge them; and that in Christ Your Son Our Lord, and in the Holy Scriptures which the authority of Your Catholic Church acknowledges, You had established the way of man's salvation unto that life which is to be after death. But with these truths held safe and inviolably rooted in my mind, I was still on fire with the question whence comes evil. What were the agonies, what the anguish of my heart in labour, O my God!

HE FINDS THE TRUTH IN GOD

Being admonished by all this to return to myself, I entered into my own depths, with You as guide . . . I knew that was far from Thee in the region of unlikeness, as if I heard Thy voice from on high: 'I am the food of grown men: grow and you shall eat Me. And you shall not change Me into yourself as bodily food, but unto Me you shall be changed.' And I said, 'Is truth then nothing at all, since

of my error – I told him that I had read certain books of the Platonists which had been translated into Latin by Victorinus, one-time professor of Rhetoric in Rome. To draw me on to the humility of Christ, hidden from the wise and revealed to little ones, Simplicianus began to speak of Victorinus himself whom he had known intimately when he was in Rome.

HIS TWO WILLS

Now when this man of Yours, Simplicianus, had told me the story of Victorinus, I was on fire to imitate him: which indeed was why he had told me. I longed for the same chance, but I was bound not with the iron of another's chains, but by my own iron will. The enemy held my will: and of it he made a chain and bound me. Because my will was perverse it changed to lust, and lust yielded to become habit, and habit not resisted became necessity. My two wills, one old, one new, one carnal, one spiritual, were in conflict and in their conflict wasted my soul.

HE IS CONVINCED HE SHOULD CHANGE BUT CONTINUES TO PUT IT OFF

I no longer had the excuse which I used to think I had for not yet forsaking the world and serving You, the excuse namely that I had no certain knowledge of the truth. By now I was quite certain; but I was still bound to earth and refused to take service in Your Army; I feared to be freed of all the things that impeded me, as strongly as I ought to have feared the being impeded by them.

I regarded it as settled that it would be better to give myself to Your love rather than to go on yielding to my own lust; but the first course delighted and convinced my mind, the second delighted my body and held it in bondage. For there was nothing I could reply when You called me: 'Wake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead: and Christ shall enlighten thee'; and whereas You showed me every evidence that Your words were true, there was simply

nothing I could answer save only laggard lazy words: 'Soon', 'Quite soon,' 'Give me just a little while.' But 'soon' and 'quite soon' did not mean any particular time; and 'just a little while' went on for a long while.

HE SEES HIMSELF AND IS HORRIFIED

You, O Lord, my Helper and my Redeemer, I shall tell and confess to Your name how You delivered me from the chain of that desire of the flesh which held me so bound, and the servitude of worldly things.

On a certain day there came to Alypius and me at our house one Ponticianus, a fellow countryman of ours. As it happened he noticed a book on a gaming table by which we were sitting. He picked it up, opened it, and found that it was the apostle Paul, which surprised him. I told him that I had given much care to these writings. Whereupon he began to tell the story of the Egyptian monk Antony. All three of us were filled with wonder, we because the deeds we were hearing were so great, and he because we had never heard them before.

He continued his discourse and we listened in absolute silence. You, Lord, while he was speaking, turned me back towards myself, taking me from behind my own back where I had put myself all the time that I preferred not to see myself. And You set me there before my own face that I might see how vile I was, how twisted and unclean and spotted and ulcerous. I saw myself and was horrified; but there was no way to flee from myself. If I tried to turn my gaze from myself, there was Ponticianus, telling what he was telling; and again You were setting me face to face with myself, forcing me upon my own sight, that I might see my iniquity and loathe it. I had known it, but I had pretended not to see it, had deliberately looked the other way and let it go from my mind.

HE PRAYS FOR CHASTITY 'BUT NOT YET'

But I in great worthlessness had begged You for chastity,

saying: 'Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet.' For I was afraid that You would hear my prayer too soon, and too soon would heal me from the disease of lust which I wanted satisfied rather than extinguished. But now the day was come when I stood naked in my own sight and my conscience accused me: 'Why is my voice not heard?'

I was in the grip of the most horrible and confounding shame, while Ponticianus was telling his story. He finished the tale and the business for which he had come; and he went his way, and I to myself.

I went off to the garden,¹ and Alypius close at my heels. I kept saying within myself: 'Let it be now, let it be now,' and by the mere words I had begun to move towards the resolution. I almost made it, yet I did not quite make it.

Those trifles of all trifles, and vanities of all vanities, my one-time mistresses, held me back, plucking at my garment of flesh and murmuring softly: 'Are you sending us away?' And 'From this moment shall this or that not be allowed you, now or for ever?'

HE SEES THE JOYS OF CONTINENCE

But by this time its voice was growing fainter. In the direction towards which I had turned my face and was quivering in fear of going, I could see the austere beauty of Continence, serene and indeed joyous but not evilly, honourably soliciting me to come to her and not to linger, stretching forth loving hands to receive and embrace me, hands full of multitudes of good examples. With her I saw such hosts of young men and maidens, a multitude of youth and of every age, grey widows and women grown old in virginity, and in them all Continence herself, not barren but the fruitful mother of children, her joys, by You, Lord, her Spouse. And she smiled upon me and her smile gave

¹This garden is at Casciago and is now part of the estate of Prince and Princess Castelbarco in whose family it has been for several centuries.

courage as if she were saying: 'Can you not do what these men have done, what these women have done? Or could men or women have done such in themselves, and not in the Lord their God? The Lord their God gave me to them. Why do you stand upon yourself and so not stand at all? Cast yourself upon Him and be not afraid; He will not draw away and let you fall. Cast yourself without Fear, He will receive you and heal you.'

STORM AND TEARS

Yet I was still ashamed, for I could still hear the murmuring of those vanities, and I still hung hesitant. And again it was as if she said: 'Stop your ears against your unclean members, that they may be mortified. They tell you of delights, but not of such delights as the law of the Lord your God tells.' This was the controversy raging in my heart, a controversy about myself against myself. And Alypius stayed by my side and waited in silence the issue of such agitation as he had never seen in me.

When my most searching scrutiny had drawn up all my vileness from the secret depths of my soul and heaped it in my heart's sight, a mighty storm arose in me, bringing a mighty rain of tears. That I might give way to my tears and lamentations, I rose from Alypius: for it struck me that solitude was more suited to the business of weeping. I went far enough from him to prevent his presence from being an embarrassment to me. So I felt, and he realised it. I suppose I had said something and the sound of my voice was heavy with tears. I arose, but he remained where we had been sitting, still in utter amazement. I flung myself down somehow under a certain fig tree and no longer tried to check my tears, which poured forth from my eyes in a flood, an acceptable sacrifice to Thee. And much I said not in these words but to this effect: 'And Thou, O Lord, how long? How long, Lord; wilt Thou be angry for ever? Remember not our former iniquities.' For I felt that I was still bound by

them. And I continued my miserable complaining, 'How long, how long shall I go on saying tomorrow and again tomorrow? Why not now, why not have an end to my uncleanness this very hour?'

HIS CHANGE

Such things I said, weeping in the most bitter sorrow of my heart. And suddenly I heard a voice from some nearby house, a boy's voice or a girl's voice, I do not know: but it was a sort of sing-song repeated again and again, 'Take and read, take and read.' I ceased weeping and immediately began to search my mind most carefully as to whether children were accustomed to chant these words in any kind of game, and I could not remember that I had ever heard any such thing.

Damming back the flood of my tears, I arose, interpreting the incident as quite certainly a divine command to open my book of Scripture and read the passage at which I should open. For it was part of what I had been told about Antony, that from the Gospel which he happened to be reading he had felt that he was being admonished as though what he read was spoken directly to himself: *Go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow me.* By this experience he had been in that instant converted to You.

So I was moved to return to the place where Alypius was sitting, for I had put down the Apostle's book there when I arose. I snatched it up, opened it and in silence read the passage upon which my eye first fell: *Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences.* (Romans xiii, 13.)

I had no wish to read further, and no need. For in that instant, with the very ending of the sentence, it was as though a light of utter confidence shone in all my heart, and

all the darkness of uncertainty vanished away. Then leaving my finger in the place or marking it by some other sign, I closed the book and in complete calm told the whole thing to Alypius and he smilingly told me what had been going on in himself, of which I knew nothing. He asked to see what I had read. I showed him, and he looked further than I had read. I had not known what followed. And this is what followed: *Now him that is weak in faith, take unto you.* He applied this to himself and told me so. And he was confirmed by this message, and with no troubled wavering gave himself to God's good-will and purpose – a purpose indeed most suited to his character, for in these matters he had been immeasurably better than I.

Then we went in to my mother and told her, to her great joy. We related how it had come about; she was filled with triumphant exultation, and praised You who are mighty beyond what we ask or conceive: for she saw that You had given her more than with all her pitiful weeping she had ever asked. For You converted me to Yourself so that I no longer sought a wife nor any of this world's promises, but stood upon that same rule of faith in which You had shown me to her so many years before. Thus You changed her mourning into joy, a joy far richer than she had thought to wish, a joy much dearer and purer than she had thought to find in grandchildren of my flesh.

By Your gift I had come totally not to will what I willed but to will what You willed.

How lovely I suddenly found it to be free from the loveliness of those vanities, so that now it was a joy to renounce what I had been so afraid to lose. For You cast them out of me, O true and supreme Loveliness, You cast them out of me and took their place in me.

Now my mind was free from the cares that had gnawed it, from aspiring and getting and weltering in filth and rubbing the scab of lust. And I talked with You as friends talk, my glory and my riches and my salvation, my Lord God.

3

How a Girl Changed History

JOAN OF ARC IS TOLD WHAT TO DO

In character and in circumstance Joan and Augustine were poles apart. Joan never learned to read or write, Augustine became the master-mind of his age, and the author of books that are still studied. Joan came from a simple village family, Augustine from a privileged city circle. Joan quickly accepted the truths of God that her mother showed her, Augustine resisted them long and stoutly. Joan from her youth dedicated herself to virginity and was full of simple trust, Augustine spent his youth in revels and in the grip of impurity and was full of intellectual doubts. Both learned to find and obey God's will and both altered the course of history.

Joan was born in 1412 in Domremy, a village on the borders of Champagne and Lorraine in a part of France that had not yet been over-run and occupied by the English. She accomplished a task which has no parallel in the world's history. In nine months she had fulfilled all her promises; she had freed Orleans, vanquished the English, and led the King to Rheims and crowned him.

Mark Twain writes of her as follows:

'When we reflect that her century was the brutalest, the wickedest, the rottenest in history since the darkest ages, we are lost in wonder at the miracle of such a product from such a soil. The contrast between her and her century is the contrast between day and night.

'She was truthful when lying was the common speech of

men; she was honest when honesty was become a lost virtue; she was a keeper of promises when the keeping of a promise was expected of no one; she gave her great mind to great thoughts and a great purpose when other great minds wasted themselves upon petty fancies or upon poor ambitions; she was modest and fine and delicate when to be loud and coarse might be said to be universal; she was full of pity when merciless cruelty was the rule; she was steadfast when stability was unknown, and honourable in an age which had forgotten what honour was; she was a rock of convictions in a time when men believed in nothing and scoffed at things; she was unfailingly true in an age that was false to the core; she maintained her personal dignity unimpaired in an age of fawnings and servilities; she was of dauntless courage when hope and courage had perished in the hearts of her nation; she was spotlessly pure in mind and body when society in the highest places was foul in both – she was all these things in an age when crime was the common business of lords and princes, and when the highest personages in Christendom were able to astonish even that infamous era and make it stand aghast at the spectacle of their atrocious lives, black with unimaginable treacheries, butcheries, and bestialities.

‘She was perhaps the only entirely unselfish person whose name has a place in profane history. No vestige or suggestion of self-seeking can be found in any word or deed of hers. When she had rescued her King from his vagabondage, and set his crown upon his head, she was offered rewards and honours, but she refused them all, and would take nothing. All she would take for herself – if the King would grant it – was leave to go back to her village home, and tend her sheep again, and feel her mother’s arms about her, and be her housemaid and helper. The selfishness of this unspoiled general of victorious armies, companion of princes, and idol of an applauding and grateful nation, reached but that far and no farther.’

Sir Winston Churchill says she 'was a being so uplifted from the ordinary run of mankind that she finds no equal in a thousand years . . . she embodied the natural goodness and valour of the human race in unexampled perfection. Unconquerable courage, infinite compassion, the virtue of the simple, the wisdom of the just, shone forth in her.'¹

Commenting on this the *Catholic Herald* writes:

'Yes, Sir Winston, all that; but then it is only one-tenth of the whole story, and the main question remains: by whose power? Was it her own? Or was it God's?

'Joan's answer was plain: "All that I have done I have done not of my own will but because God has ordered it."

'The answer of Bishop Cauchon, her judge, was plain: Joan was a heretic, a whore and a witch. The answer of the Church is: Joan is a saint.'

There is an almost unique mass of evidence about Joan of Arc for, during her lifetime and immediately after her death, three separate investigations regarding her person, her spiritual experiences and her faith were instituted.

Joan was no starry-eyed idealist. She faced the facts as they were but had the added plus of what God made clear to her. When He let her know His plan she trusted Him.

This outline of Joan's life is taken from Mark Twain's account of the Personal Recollections of her page and secretary, Sieur Louis de Conte. It tells how God made His will clear to her through her Voices and what happened when she obeyed.

* * *

Joan's page and secretary outlined the division of the country, its bankruptcy, the power of foolish favourites, the fecklessness of the king and his refusal to fight. 'The case of France is desperate; it is hopeless.'

'Joan,' he asked, 'with these fatal figures before you, have you any hope for France – really and actually?'

'Hope,' she replied, 'oh, more than that! France will win

¹ *A History of the English Speaking Peoples* by W. S. Churchill, Vol. I, Book 3, Chapter IV (Cassell).

her freedom and keep it. Do not doubt it. France will rise again, You shall see.'

'Rise? With this burden of English armies on her back?'

'She will cast it off; she will trample it under foot.'

'Without soldiers to fight with?'

'The drums will summon them. They will answer, and they will march.'

'March to the rear as usual?'

'No, to the front – ever to the front – always to the front. You shall see.'

'And the pauper king?'

'He will mount his throne – he will wear his crown.'

'Well of a truth, this makes one's head dizzy. Why, if I could believe that in thirty years from now the English domination would be broken and the French monarch's head find itself hooped with the real crown of sovereignty...'

'Both will have happened before two years are sped.'

'Indeed? And who is going to perform all these sublime impossibilities?'

'God.'

It was a reverent low note, but it rang clear.

JOAN IS TOLD HER MISSION

Joan first heard her Voices when she was thirteen.

'They are very clear to me – my Voices; that is what I call them to myself.'

'Joan, what do they tell you?'

'All manner of things – about France, I mean.'

'What things have they been used to tell you?'

She sighed and said: 'Disasters – only disasters, and misfortunes, and humiliations. There was naught else to foretell.'

'They spoke of them to you *beforehand*?'

'Yes. So that I knew what was going to happen before it happened. It made me grave – as you saw. It could not be otherwise. But always there was a word of hope, too. More

than that; France was to be rescued, and made great and free again. But how and by whom – that was not told. Not until today.’

‘But today I know. God has chosen the meanest of His creatures for this work; and by His command, and in His protection, and by His strength, not mine, I am to lead His armies, and win back France, and set the crown upon the head of His servant that is Dauphin and shall be King! . . . I am enlisted, I will not turn back, God helping me, till the English grip is loosed from the throat of France. My voices have never told me lies, they have not lied today. They say I am to go to Robert de Baudricourt, Governor of Vaucoulers, and he will give me men-at-arms for escort and send me to the King. A year from now a blow will be struck which will be the beginning of the end, and the end will follow swiftly.’

JOAN BEGINS HER MISSION

Joan’s first attempt met with rebuff. She reached Robert de Baudricourt and he sent her packing.

‘Hark ye! Take this mad child home and whip her soundly. That is the best cure for her ailment.’

The village considered that Joan had disgraced it with her grotesque performances and ridiculous failure, but her purpose was not in the least shaken. On 5th January, 1429, Joan announced: ‘The time is come. My Voices are not vague now, but clear, and they have told me what to do. In two months I shall be with the Dauphin.’

Joan set out on her journey. At once the tidings spread that a young girl was come who was appointed of God to save France. A prophecy of Merlin’s, more than eight hundred years old, was called to mind, which said that in a far future time France would be lost by a woman and restored by a woman. France was now, for the first time, lost – and by a woman, Isabel of Bavaria, her base Queen; doubtless this fair and pure young girl was commissioned of Heaven to complete the prophecy.

This time the burning conviction of her faith and the proven evidence of the validity of her Voices convinced Robert de Baudricourt and he provided her with an escort for her eleven-day ride through enemy occupied territory.

JOAN MEETS THE DAUPHIN

In spite of a trick played by the Dauphin who made a relative sit on the throne while he took a place amongst the three hundred courtiers, Joan picked him out at once. She told him:

'I am called Joan the Maid, and am sent to say that the King of Heaven wills that you be crowned and consecrated in your good city of Rheims, and be thereafter Lieutenant of the Lord of Heaven, who is King of France. And He willeth also that you set me at my appointed work and give me men-at-arms. For then will I raise the siege of Orleans and break the English power.'

JOAN IS EXAMINED

The King was convinced that Joan's Voices came from God for she revealed to him things known only to God and himself. But the authorities had their doubts and demanded that Joan be examined.

Every day the commission of Bishops came and questioned Joan about her Voices and her mission, and then went to the King with their report. They finally concluded they could not tell whether Joan was or was not sent by God and recommended that the case be put into the hands of the learned and illustrious doctors of the University of Poitiers.

Seventeen, she was – seventeen, and all alone on her bench by herself; yet she was not afraid, but faced that great company of erudite doctors of law and theology. One day they harried and pestered her with arguments, reasonings, objections and other windy and wordy trivialities, gathered out of the works of this and that and the other great theo-

logical authority, until at last her patience vanished, and she turned upon them sharply and said:

'I don't know A from B; but I know this: that I am come by command of the Lord of Heaven to deliver Orleans from the English power and crown the King at Rheims, and the matters ye are puttering over are of no consequence!'

These grave men, accustomed to weigh every strange and questionable thing, and cautiously consider it, and turn it about this way and that and still doubt it, one and all surrendered and said: 'This child is sent by God.' She carried her judges with her without a dissenting voice.

'It is found, and is hereby declared, that Joan of Arc, called the Maid, is a good Christian and a good Catholic; that there is nothing in her person or her words contrary to the faith; and that the King may and ought to accept the succour she offers; for to repel it would be to offend the Holy Spirit, and render him unworthy of the aid of God.'

JOAN'S SWORD

Joan's Voices had told her that there was an ancient sword hidden somewhere behind the altar of St Catherine's Church at Fierbois, and she sent De Metz to get it. The priests knew of no such sword, but a search was made, and sure enough it was found in that place, buried a little way under the ground.

JOAN'S VOICES COMMAND

Joan was now given the dignity of the title of General-in-Chief of the Armies of France. Her inspiration led the army on to victory. Soon her first objective was achieved and the siege of Orleans was raised. Joan then urged an advance on to Rheims that the Dauphin might be crowned, but she came up against delay and resistance. One day when the King was in Council Joan threw herself at his feet and said:

'Noble Dauphin, prithee hold no more of these long and numerous councils, but come, and come quickly, to Rheims and receive your crown.'

Christophe d'Harcourt asked:

'Is it your Voices that command you to say that to the King?'

'Yes, and urgently.'

'Then will you not tell us in the King's presence in what way the Voices communicate with you?'

It was another sly attempt to trap Joan into indiscreet admissions and dangerous pretensions. But nothing came of it. Joan's answer was simple and straightforward, and the smooth Bishop was not able to find any fault with it. She said that when she met with people who doubted the truth of her mission she went aside and prayed, complaining of the distrust of these, and then the comforting Voices were heard at her ear saying, soft and low, 'Go forward, Daughter of God, and I will help thee.' Then she added, 'When I hear that, the joy in my heart, oh, it is insupportable.'

JOAN'S ACCOMPLISHMENT

Joan's military triumphs continued. In the Battle of Patay she defeated the proud English and France was on her way to be free.

Let us look back a little, and consider certain strange and impressive facts. The Hundred Years' War began in 1337. Crecy, Poitiers and Agincourt had left France a wreck, a ruin, a desolation. The half of it belonged to England, with none to dispute or deny the truth; the other half belonged to nobody – in three months would be flying the English flag; the French King was making ready to throw away his crown and flee beyond the seas.

Now came the ignorant country maid out of her remote village and confronted this hoary war, this all-consuming conflagration that had swept the land for three generations. Then began the briefest and most amazing campaign that is recorded in history. In seven weeks it was finished. In seven weeks she hopelessly crippled that gigantic war that was

ninety-one years old. At Orleans she struck it a staggering blow; on the field of Patay she broke its back.

THE CORONATION

The triumphant entry into Rheims soon followed and Joan was at the King's side during the Coronation with her Standard in her hand. She was like one transfigured, so divine was the joy that shone in her face as she sank on her knees at the King's feet and looked up at him through her tears. Her lips were quivering, and her words came soft and low and broken:

'Now, O gentle King, is the pleasure of God accomplished according to His command that you should come to Rheims and receive the crown that belongeth of right to you, and under none other. My work which was given me to do is finished; give me your peace, and let me go back to my mother, who is old and poor and hath need of me.'

JOAN OBEYS THE KING

Joan was too valuable to let go. The King reflected on it and sent her a message. He had consulted his other generals and was obliged to ask her to remain at the head of the army and withdraw her resignation. Also, would she come immediately and attend a council of war. Deep disappointment clouded her face for just one moment and no more and she was ready for duty.

To Joan there was only one possible course -- to march upon Paris. She was soon to camp at Saint Denis, under the walls of Paris, but the King dallied and delayed, failed to keep any of his promises or to send her help. He even made a new truce and agreed to go back to the Loire whence he had come.

Now came her Voices again. They said, 'Remain at St Denis.' There was no explanation. They did not say why. That was the Voice of God; it took precedence of the command of the King; Joan resolved to stay. But force was used and Joan had to submit -- because she was wounded

and helpless. The army, sad and spiritless, turned its face toward the Loire, and marched – without music!

JOAN CAPTURED

There were skirmishes. Joan resolved to go to the help of Compiègne, which was being besieged by the Duke of Burgundy. There was a counter-attack. She was seized by her cape, dragged from her horse and taken prisoner. The date was May 29th, 1430.

JOAN TRIED

Joan was sold to the English, chained, imprisoned and put upon her trial. The end in aim was not justice, but to put her to death. Much of the questioning was concerning her Voices. The purpose was to trick her into heedless sayings that could indicate that the Voices had sometimes given her evil advice – hence that they had come from Satan. To have dealings with the devil – well, that would send her to the stake in brief order, and that was the deliberate end and aim of this trial.

‘When did you first hear these Voices?’

‘I was thirteen when I first heard a Voice coming from God to help me to live well. I was frightened. It came at mid-day, in my father’s garden in the summer.’

‘Had you been fasting?’

‘Yes.’

‘The day before?’

‘No.’

‘From which direction did it come?’

‘From the right – from toward the church.’

‘Did it come with a bright light?’

‘Oh, indeed, yes. It was brilliant. When I came into France I often heard the Voices very loud.’

‘What did the Voice sound like?’

‘It was a noble Voice, and I thought it was sent to me from God. The third time I heard it I recognised it as being an angel’s.’

'You could easily understand it?'

'Quite easily. It was always clear.'

'What advice did it give you as to the salvation of your soul?'

'It told me to live rightly, and be regular in attendance upon the services of the Church. And it told me I must go to France.'

'In what species of form did the Voice appear?'

'As to that, I will not tell you.'

'Did your Voice seek you often?'

'Yes, twice or three times a week, saying, "Leave your village and go to France".'

'Did your father know about your departure?'

'No. The Voice said, "Go to France"; therefore I could not abide at home any longer.'

'What else did it say?'

'That I should raise the siege of Orleans.'

'Was that all?'

'No, I was to go to Vaucoulers, and Robert de Baudricourt would give me soldiers to go with me to France; and I answered, saying that I was a poor girl who did not know how to ride, neither how to fight.'

And so it went on – and on. She told them how in the present the Voices were coming to her every day, that they gave her good advice, and told her to answer boldly and God would help her.

Her conviction could not be shaken.

'I believe wholly – as wholly as I believe the Christian faith and that God has redeemed us from the fires of hell, that God speaks to me by that Voice.'

'Without the grace of God I can do nothing.'

They continued to try and trap her. She was asked:

'Are you in a state of Grace?'

There was no hope, no way out of the dilemma; for whether she said yes or whether she said no, it would be all the same – a disastrous answer, for the Scriptures had said

one *cannot know* this thing. An eyewitness describes the scene: Joan looked out upon these hungering faces with innocent untroubled eyes, and then humbly and gently she brought out that immortal answer which brushed the formidable snare away as it had been but a cobweb:

'If I be not in a state of Grace, I pray God to place me in it; if I be in it, I pray God keep me so.'

Ah, you will never see an effect like that; no not while you live. For a space there was the silence of the grave. Men looked wondering into each other's faces, and some were awed and crossed themselves; Lefevre muttered: 'It was beyond the wisdom of man to devise that answer. *Whence* come this child's amazing inspirations?'

Day after day Joan was questioned about her Voices – about the past and the present. She, too, volunteered prophecies about the future, and history showed that they were fulfilled.

FURTHER TRIALS

Cauchon, who was managing the trial, realised that he was making no progress. He now dismissed all the judges but a handful, whom he selected himself, and began a secret trial. Again Joan's answers to tricky or obscure questions came with the clarity and compelling sense of the Inner Voice.

Cauchon next drew up 66 articles and before a dozen carefully selected judges began a new trial. It was decided that Joan should be required to answer squarely to every article, and that if she refused she should be considered *convicted*. The same ground was covered again. Doubt was further cast upon the authenticity of Joan's mission because of the ignorance and simplicity of the messenger chosen. Joan replied:

'It is the prerogative of Our Lord to choose His instruments where He will.'

Again no definite result was produced. So Cauchon now appointed a commission to reduce the substance of the 66

articles to 12 as a basis for the new attempt. Joan was not to be intimidated. She let them know: 'I will not say otherwise than I have said already; and if I saw the fire before me I would say it again!' Cauchon produced the instruments of torture and executioners standing ready and burst out: 'There is the rack, and there are its ministers! You will reveal all, now, or be put to the torture. Speak!'

Then Joan made that great answer, which will live for ever: made it without fuss or bravado, and yet how fine and noble was the sound of it:

'I will tell you nothing more than I have told you; no, not even if you tear the limbs from my body. And even if in my pain I *did* say something otherwise, I would always say afterwards that it was the torture that spoke and not I.' Cauchon ordered Joan back to her dungeon.

Toward the end of a ten-day interval the University of Paris found Joan guilty on all counts. A court of fifty judges now announced her guilty of heresy, sorcery, and all the other terrible crimes set forth in the Twelve Articles.

JOAN ABJURES

The stake was prepared, the faggots ready. The notables were in attendance to show their loyalty to England and, with the crowds, to see the burning. But there was one further step to be taken. Joan had somehow or other to be made to acknowledge that her Voices had deceived. She and the King and the lawyers of Poitiers would then be discredited and her judges justified in the eyes of the world.

Joan was shown a written form and asked urgently to abjure.

'Abjure? What is abjure?' she asked. She did not know the word.

'I appeal to the Church universal whether I ought to abjure or not.'

Joan's strength was all spent. She stood looking about her in a bewildered way a moment, then slowly she sank to her

knees, and bowed her head and said, 'I submit.'

Quickly a long paper of many pages was substituted for the short six lines that had been read to her, a secretary of the King of England guided her hand with his own, and wrote her name – Jehanne.

Perpetual imprisonment was substituted for the death sentence and Joan was taken back to the prison from which she had come.

JOAN IS BURNT

That had happened on Thursday morning and on Sunday the cry went up:

'Joan of Arc has relapsed! The witch's time has come.' Joan had resumed male attire, an offence that made her recantation ineffective and her death certain. In one way or another she had been forced to do so by the soldiers guarding her.

Cauchon asked her if her Voices had spoken to her since Thursday – and he reminded her of her abjuration.

'Yes,' she answered, 'my voices told me I did very wrong to confess that what I had done was not well.' Then she sighed, and said with simplicity, 'But it was the fear of the fire that made me do so.'

'Do you believe that your Voices are St Marguerite and St Catherine?'

'Yes – and that they come from God.'

'Yet you denied them on the scaffold?'

Then she made direct and clear affirmation that she had never had any intention to deny them; and that 'If she had made some retractions and revocations on the scaffold it was from fear of the fire, and was a violation of truth.'

The final preparations were swiftly made. The cart used only for felons took her to the place of her death. Joan asked for a cross. None was able to furnish one. But an English soldier broke a stick in two and crossed the pieces and tied them together, and this cross he gave her, moved to it by the

good heart that was in him; and she kissed it and put it to her bosom. Then a consecrated cross was brought her from the church near by; and this one also she kissed, and pressed it to her bosom with rapture, and then kissed it again and again, covering it with tears and pouring out her gratitude to God and the saints.

She climbed up the cruel steps to the face of the stake, with the friar Isambard at her side. The fire was lit. She heard the flames crackling below her, and immediately distress for a fellow creature who was in danger took possession of her. It was the friar Isambard. She had given him her cross and begged him to raise it toward her face and let her eyes rest in hope and consolation upon it till she entered into the peace of God. She made him go out from the danger of the fire. Then she was satisfied, and said:

‘Now keep it always in my sight until the end.’

At last a mercifully swift tide of flame burst upward, and none saw that face any more nor that form, and the voice was still.

* * *

In 1456, after examining a multitude of witnesses who had known Joan, a papal tribunal cleared her character and stated:

‘The previous trial and sentence were manifestly tainted with fraud, calumny, injustice, contradiction and error, in fact and in law, and the proceedings were therefore null and valueless.’

* * *

A biographer writes:

‘We want to know what made Joan what she was, what she herself was. Patriotism does not explain her life and still less would the love of adventure. We can trace the beginnings of her mission back to her visions, to the Voices she heard, but these would not have come to anything had Joan been a different woman, less dynamic, less gifted and above all less ready to do at all costs whatever God expected

from her. This last she owed to the Christian teaching she had been given at home by a good and intelligent mother.

'Visions are not sanctity nor do they make a saint, but it takes a good Christian if not a saint to translate them into action against overwhelming odds and overwhelming opposition. She would never have left her parents had she not become absolutely certain that in doing so she was obeying God's clear commands. Later on, one of her favourite sayings was "God first served", and it was this maxim that she frequently quoted to her judges to qualify her answers. When she exchanged her woman's dress for male attire, when she told the captains to give battle, or urged the King to go and be crowned at Rheims – this against the opposition of all his counsellors – she was certain she was only passing on to them God's orders. Hence her insistence, her authority, her forcefulness, hence also her magnetic powers of persuasion.

'For its full development, her holiness needed the fiery ordeal of contradiction, adversity and bitter suffering. These followed swiftly on her five weeks of victories. After the triumphal march to Rheims she found herself suddenly put aside, neglected, discredited. She had been the most celebrated woman in Christendom, and in a moment the King to whom she had given back his kingdom made her feel that she had become an embarrassing burden, a reproach and a nuisance. The following year she was captured, imprisoned, condemned, and put to death, without even a protest from King Charles, and in all these events she saw the will of God and accepted them as such. "Prends tout en gré", she often said ("accept it all willingly"). To a sneering question of one of the judges about her capture, she gave quietly this admirable answer: 'I think that since it has pleased our Lord that I should be taken, it is best it should be so.'¹

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¹ *Saint Joan – The Woman and the Saint* by Etienne Robo (Sands and Co.).

It was quite natural to Joan that God should make His will clear to her through the saints whose images she saw daily in her little church and whose history and exploits were part of her earliest teaching. They were more real to her than any Hollywood creations to a modern teenager and yet greater heroines. Youth needs heroes. Debunk the great men and women of history, substitute impersonal trends and social currents and youth will manufacture their own heroes – be they rockers, mods or Beatles.

This need for God's wisdom and direction has been felt by those who tackled the biggest problems of their day. Men and women who sought and found God's Plan influenced the world around them.

Those who did most for humanity in 19th century England – such determined fighters as Wilberforce, Shaftesbury, Florence Nightingale, Keir Hardie – were conscious of God's leading and sustaining power.

Keir Hardie, pioneer fighter for the working man, said: 'It is the Christianity of Christ which took me into the movement and drove me on in it.'

Bready's *England Before and After Wesley* shows the almost unbelievable transformation in the manners and morals, in the character and conditions, of England through the life of John Wesley. The rationalist historian, Lecky, says it is scarcely an exaggeration to call his conversion 'an epoch in English history.'¹

'These profound social results,' Garth Lean writes, 'were not achieved through a self-conscious "social pro-

¹ It is sometimes forgotten today how deeply the English Trade Union Movement was rooted in the renewed faith in Christ that Wesley brought. Lloyd George said: 'The movement which improved the conditions of the working classes, in wages, in hours of labour, and otherwise, found most of its best officers and non-commissioned officers, in men trained in the institutions which were the result of Methodism.'

Continental labour leaders were dumbfounded when in 1910 in Lille 260 English Trade Union leaders, representing 500,000 English workmen, carried in the procession banners which read: 'We proclaim the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.' 'Jesus Christ Leads and Inspires Us.'

gramme", like that which some clergy of various denominations cultivate today. Wesley was not a political priest who, having lost the power to change men, sets out to denounce other peoples or alter some secular programme. Yet his social aim was a conscious one. It was the natural result of his passionately experienced faith – of what, today, we might call his ideology. For it is not true that ideologies are always materialistic or opposed to Christian faith. The materialistic ideologies of this and every age are substitutes men find when they cease to live their faith, with the passion, discipline and thoughtful strategy which Jesus demonstrated and which the greatest of His followers have exemplified ever since. Wesley lived his Christianity in such a way that it possessed him totally and permeated every part of life, first for himself and then for thousands of others.¹

Abraham Lincoln, who freed America from slavery and kept the States united, heard no Voices but he could say: 'If it were not for my firm belief in an over-ruling Providence, it would be difficult for me in the midst of such complications of affairs to keep my reason in its seat. I have so many evidences of God's direction that I cannot doubt this power comes from above. I am satisfied that when the Almighty wants me to do or not to do any particular thing, He finds a way of letting me know it.'

How God lets men know what He does or does not want them to do has been taught by men of God down the ages. Francis de Sales (1567–1622) said he needed every morning to listen to God for an hour except when he was very busy. Then he needed two hours. He showed the way: 'I keep pencil and paper by my bedside and write down the thoughts which come to me from God, thus composing a spiritual nosegay for my day.' And again: 'God requires a faithful fulfilment of the meanest trifles given us to do, rather than the most ardent aspiration to things to which we are not called.'

Vincent de Paul (1576–1660), who had been captured by Barbary pirates and sold as a slave in Tunis, pioneered

¹ *John Wesley, Anglican* by Garth Lean (Blandford Press, 1964).

the then unknown road of caring for the most needy. The institutions he founded have flourished till today. He had the same conviction as Joan of Arc—that one should do just what God directed, neither more nor less: ‘The Devil has a trick of urging good servants to do more than they can that they may be unfitted to do anything. The spirit of God leads us to do as much as we can do reasonably, that we may continue and persevere in it. When this is your method of working you will be working according to the Sprit of God.’

He underlined the importance of the dedication to God of the early morning thoughts, a dedication that gave strength and merit to every action of the day. ‘That is why Satan does his utmost to turn us from thinking of God directly we wake.’ And he added: ‘We must look straight ahead without calculations in what we do and let His hand guide us.’

A hundred years ago Le Père Gratry (1805–1872) told clearly the truths the modern world so urgently needs to know. He wrote:

‘The world does not change because you do not change. But the world can change if you change.

‘How can you change? By listening to God. For God is always speaking, just as the sun is always shining.

‘In the morning before the distractions and problems of the day you can listen to God.

‘How can you listen? Here is the answer: you write it down. Write it down so that you can listen better and you can remember His words.’

Joan chose to be governed by God and freed her country from the rule of tyrants. To maintain our freedom and extend freedom throughout the world we need to make the same choice today and say, *Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth*. In the next chapter we shall see how a modern, successful author, journalist and sportsman, whose change is having a far-reaching effect around the world, first learned to listen to God.

4

How to Get Going

PETER HOWARD PLAYED rugby football for Oxford against Cambridge and was captain of England. He was one of the British Bobsleigh team that broke the world record at the world's championship at Cortina d'Ampezzo (1939). He was a successful journalist, among the highest paid and most feared in Fleet Street. At the height of his success he ran slap into something bigger than he knew and met the challenge of God (in whom he did not believe) to his whole way and values of life.

Since that day all Peter Howard's talents and all his energy have been devoted to revolutionary ends. He has written books that have sold over five million copies and a series of plays that have been produced around the world and put him in the foremost rank of modern dramatists.

He has taken no profit from these writings for himself.

In these plays Peter Howard has wrestled with the problem of how to present Christ to a sceptical age and to a world where half the population is under 21. Can the theatre be the place where the relevance of God and the challenge and answer He brings reach the modern man? Is there a way of doing this with the highest professional skill and the most stimulating entertainment so that men's minds are convinced, their horizons extended and their hearts opened?

In 1964 one of Peter Howard's plays, *Through the Garden Wall*, after its run at the Westminster Theatre, London, was presented by a top professional cast throughout Italy. It is a forward-looking play in which God is not talked about but by the end of the play it is realised that He has been at work. All the seats at two performances in Rome were

bought by members of the Communist party and left-wing groups. A lively discussion followed. Could it be that Karl Marx had been wrong and that it was a false image of God that he had rejected and that in reality God, after all, did exist?

In 1964 he addressed a joint session of the Massachusetts Senate and House of Representatives. For the first time in the history of that ancient democratic forum the proceedings were televised. The President of the Massachusetts Senate referred to Mr Howard as 'one of the most outstanding and dedicated men in the world' and added, 'It is a dedication possessed of tremendous contagion.' 'By your work,' he added, 'the dawn of a new era is not far off.'

What was it that started off the far-reaching change in the aims and fruits of Peter Howard's life? The story is told here in his own words of his first meeting with that superforce and directing power that he came to know as God.¹

* * *

How to get in touch with the superforce, the super-passion, the super-wisdom of a new spirit and make it real in our own lives? That is the question many ask.

It takes me back to that luncheon in the Temple, where I first made contact with this dynamic power myself.

At that time talk about God was to me just a bore. I felt freer and easier without it. The most amusing and intelligent people I knew were not interested in it. Most of them had no belief in God. Nor had I.

So, proud and gay, I strode forward to meet the adventure of my life. The earth was my goblet and I planned to drain it dry.

That day at luncheon in the Temple, my neighbour told me he believed in God.

I told him I did not.

He asked me, 'Why not?'

¹ See *Ideas Have Legs* (Frederick Muller) and *Three Views of Christianity* (Victor Gollancz).

For some reason, I found it difficult (I, so slick of the tongue that I could hold my own with cabinet ministers) to provide a cogent answer to that simple enquiry.

I swallowed a mouthful of food to take time for reflection. Then I said to him, 'Well, why do you believe in Him?'

This man replied, 'It is as foolish to argue about whether there is a God as it is to stand looking at an electric-light switch and arguing whether if you turn it the light will go on. One fellow says it will. The other says it will not. The end of the argument is to turn the switch and see.'

I asked this man what he meant. He told me that the way to see whether God was there was to put Him to the proof. He declared that God would talk to each person who was ready to listen and obey.

I said this sounded far-fetched to me. But as I looked at this man, I knew he believed what he told me. He was living at a swifter pace than I, and he had in his eyes a peace I longed for but never had grasped.

When I told him again that I did not believe in God, he smiled and said, 'In that case, you won't mind listening to Him, will you? For you won't expect to hear anything anyway.'

He suggested to me that, as an experiment, I should take four separate sheets of paper. Then write at the head of each sheet one of the four absolute standards Christ preached in His sermon on the Mount - Absolute Honesty, Absolute Purity, Absolute Unselfishness and Absolute Love. And that I should ask God to show me where I fell short of them and to write down, holding nothing back, the thoughts God gave me about myself on each of these four standards.

'You may think the thoughts God gives you are ordinary thoughts,' he said to me, 'but be honest about them.'

And he told me the story of the countryman. This old fellow, it seems, had a conscience that troubled him. At last he went to a farmer and said, 'Master, I'm sorry. I stole a rope from you a while back.' His master forgave him and the

countryman went away. But he still had no peace of mind. For he had not told the farmer that there was a cow at the end of the rope when he stole it.

I was living in my club in Northumberland Avenue at this time. Next morning, in a cynical spirit, curious but without belief, I sat up in bed and made the experiment this man suggested.

Do you remember the tale of the small errand boy who stood outside the Tradesmen's Entrance? On it was a notice: 'Beware of the Dog.' The small boy said loudly to himself several times, 'There ain't nothin' there. Garn, I tell you, there ain't nothin' there.'

Then, looking cheerful and cocky, he walked through the door.

But he lost the seat of his breeches just the same.

I walked through the gate not believing God was there. That did not affect His situation in the slightest.

On that morning in my club God spoke to me, as He speaks to every person who is not too proud to listen to Him.

At that moment my mind was illuminated. I began to see the truth – the sort of man I was, the sort of man God wanted me to be.

Some of the things I wrote I had known deep down in me for a long time, and had taken care to keep them in the depths if they showed signs of coming to the surface. Others I had never suspected.

But here is the amazing part of the affair. Some of the things I wrote down that morning on those sheets of paper were habits, both of thought and deed and word, which I had known for a long time were wrong. Yet I enjoyed them.

From time to time I had taken a resolution to cut one or another of them out of my life – and after a day or so they returned. Now God told me they had to end. And I knew I could not do it.

I went to meet the man who had spoken to me at luncheon in the Temple. I told him where I stood.

He said to me, 'God will transform your nature – but only if you let Him. If you put right all you can put right, God will put right the rest.'

He said I must take the simple decision whether I would let God run my life for me or not. He added in matter-of-fact tones that it was like a transfer of property – that if I meant to do it, I had better tell God so on my knees and ask for His help.

I went back to my little top-storey room in Northumberland Avenue. I read again through those four sheets of paper with the orders which someone, call Him God or what you will, had put into my mind so luminously that morning. I thought to myself, 'Well, try anything once. If it doesn't work out, nobody need know. There's no harm done.' Yet just the same there was that in me which said that if I did, even in the secrecy of my own clubroom, what my friend suggested, things would never be the same with me again.

In that little top-storey room in Northumberland Avenue I got down on my knees. And I prayed something like this: 'God, or whoever you are, if you are there, I will do what you tell me if you'll give me the strength to do it. But I can't do these things unless you help me.'

Then I began to act on the instructions and thoughts which were written down on those four sheets of paper. I started putting right what I could of the wrongs I had done to others.

There was five pounds which I had 'forgotten' to pay to the fellow who used to rub me down before Varsity matches at Oxford.

There was a much larger sum to restore to the Board of Education, who had partly financed my Oxford career in order that I should become a schoolmaster – which did not subsequently work out.

Then there were apologies – to Doë, my wife, to my young brother and to people in the office. I went to my wife and was honest with her. She said to me, 'Peter, I am meant, I

believe, to love you as you are, but to fight for you as you are meant to be.' This seemed to me then, and it has seemed since, to be the secret of Christian relationship with every other person and with our country and the world – to love people and nations as they are, but to lay down our lives to help them become what they are meant to be.

I had to say to a good many folk what Abraham Lincoln said publicly to one of his generals: 'You are right. I was wrong. I am sorry.'

These were elementary moral steps. Faith in Jesus Christ was not yet a reality in my heart. But there soon came the time when God began to talk to me about parts of my character and areas of my life over which I had no control and about which I felt helpless and hopeless. It was then that my friends in Moral Re-Armament talked to me about the power of Jesus Christ to do in, for, through, with and by me things that I never could do myself. Christ met me at the points of my own deepest need, when I was honest about them.

I saw clearly that only Christ could forgive, but only I could restore.

But I knew that if I did not fulfil my side of the contract, I could not expect God to step in and perform the miracle.

From that day habits went out of my life which I had believed were with me until I died.

To me the clinching evidence of God is the fact which I know from my own experience daily and constantly renewed, that there is a power available from outside ourselves to turn us into the sort of people all of us long to be – to give us a plan for our living beyond the limits of our human ambitions and desires, and to offer us the strength, wisdom and grace to live that plan.

From that moment in that tiny room in my club when for the first time in my life I decided to give God a chance, if He were there, to talk to me, to be really honest with myself about the things He said to me, my life had been transformed.

Do I mean that from that instant I became perfect? Of course not. Far from it. I stumble and grope my way along the thorny, narrow path which is marked by the bloodstained footprints of history. There are plenty of falls and many difficulties. Paul and Bunyan and many others wrote about that journey, charting the road for us ordinary men.

But I say this. Since I began to listen to God I have been given a new pace and purpose which puts the difficulties which once loomed so grey and grim into a fresh perspective.

It is an exhilarating experience to be granted a sense of destiny, to be offered a distinctive place in a great and growing army marching under God to remake the world. Yet each of us can have it.

Since the day I made a start I have listened every morning, and many times in every day, and have never known God silent. This would have amazed me if you had told me about it some years ago. Yet it is simple enough. There is no mystery about it.

Throughout history men and women of every age have experienced the direction of God. Cromwell, Washington, Drake, Livingstone, Nightingale – for all of them it was the factor which added colour and courage to life. Abraham Lincoln listened to God at a time of crisis, and preserved a nation's unity.

And we do not need to be great statesmen like Abraham Lincoln before we can accept our share in the leadership of the new world order. For the ordinary man is the man of the future. It will be the ordinary men and women of many nations, empowered by a new force, a new passion, a new wisdom, who will provide the leadership to remake the world.

It seems to me to be the challenge and task of Christians today not just to proclaim an answer, but to live in such a way that the hungry in Asia and Africa, the hate-filled in the nations of the East, the selfish and greedy and power-drunken in the nations of the West, see a hope walking on

two feet across the earth and lived in the lives of millions of men. That is the answer that in personal relationships Christians can bring and must bring to the second half of the Twentieth Century.

That is the destiny and tradition of true democracy which blossoms into glory, not under the leadership of towering individuals, but by the direction of inspired teams.

A determined minority of ordinary men and women, God-filled nobodies, will turn the tide of history.

Christ Crucified for the World

A sermon by the Most Rev. Michael Ramsey, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, preached at St Aldate's Church, Oxford, on 27th January, 1963.¹

They loved the glory of man more than the glory of God.

ST. JOHN 12. 43

WE ARE TO THINK about the crucifixion of Jesus, and how it is the great Christian symbol, and how it bears upon you and your life. To see this we need to step back just a little. Why is it that you exist at all and what is the purpose of your existence? You belong to a universe created by God and utterly dependent upon its Maker. You and other human beings, however, differ from the rest of the visible creation, in that you are created in God's own image, after God's own likeness, and that is the stupendous thing about you. In spite of the line that distinguishes creator, who is God, and creature, who is you, there is in you a wonderful likeness to God, in that you have the power to think, to reflect, to remember, to know good and evil, to love, and to be free. And the upshot of this resemblance between you and God is this, that you exist in order to have the closest fellowship with Him possible. He made you as longing that you, in that unique individuality of your own, which God cares for so greatly, should come to be with Him for ever in the closest fellowship. God cares for you as much as all that, and when we talk about His love, we mean that He cares for every one of us as much as all that. But what is this fellowship with

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God? It is a word that in this context we must use carefully, because there is fellowship and fellowship; and the fellowship with God, for which He made us, is a relationship in which we obey Him, and love Him, and know Him, and come to be wonderfully closely united with Him; and yet all the while, just because He is God and the creator, we know in increasing depth our dependence upon Him and our humility before Him. This relationship to God, which is the thing that non-religious man finds it so very hard to fathom, is described in the Bible by the word 'glorifying' God.

Glorify and *glory* are great words of the Bible and, when they are used to describe you and God, they mean this, that you are designed to become more and more like God, in union with Him, reflecting His character; and yet the more you grow in that, the more you realise your total dependence on Him in awe and humility. It is a friendship interpenetrated with the awe of humble dependence. That is what glorifying God means, and that is the meaning of you, as you are sitting there. It is also the meaning and significance of all the life in our world: man and man, race and race, peoples and nations not exploiting one another, but serving one another and using all the world's resources in the brotherly service of one another, and all the while in deep dependence upon God, in gratitude to Him, homage before Him and, ultimately, the closest union with Him possible that goes on for ever and ever in heaven, which is always the context of our brief existence on this planet.

But what has happened? The catastrophe – call it what you will, call it the fall, or sin, or pride, or egotism – is the deep estrangement between the human race and its creator whereby man, including you and certainly including me, has chosen to put himself and his own pride in the place of God. This is what happens when you make yourself the centre of your circumference in all respects. That is what has happened to human history and to every human civilization. Progress

is indeed real, and spiritual and moral achievements in the human race are real, because that divine image in man has never been effaced; but yet it is true of every civilization, and equally true of you as an individual, that your very moral successes become frustrated by your pride that makes you pleased with yourself. So that your last state is little better than the first, when you do get on, just a little bit; and it is substituting the glory of man for the glory of God that is the root of the terrible predicament in which our humanity now is.

The answer comes from God Himself, and I think that a week ago, in this church, the answer was being spoken about – Bethlehem. When the human race fails to give itself to God as God designed, God's answer is to come and give Himself to the human race, in utter selfless selfgiving. Or, when the human race fails to serve God as God designed, God's answer is to come Himself, and serve the human race to the uttermost, as we see this in the Christmas scene. We see this in scene after scene of our Lord's life. We see this very signally in a scene like the foot-washing in the upper room, where Jesus, serving the Apostles by washing them, is the very picture of God serving our human race by coming to wash us, and it is this that St John calls the Glory. 'The Word became flesh and we beheld His glory.'

The human race, as represented by the Jewish population in Palestine in immediate proximity to Jesus, did not welcome this, and disliked it very much. There were many physical and indeed moral benefits which Jesus brought, as an enlightened teacher and reformer, which were for a while welcomed and admired, but a deep clash took place, and St John, probing into the diagnosis of this more deeply than the earlier evangelists, describes the clash as the clash between human glory, which is pride and self-defensiveness, the boosting of the ego and the boosting of the system, with the divine glory, which is the glory of utter self-effacing love, stripping itself and coming in self-effacing service. And so

St John diagnoses it: 'They loved the glory of man more than the glory of God.'

That made the crucifixion inevitable. It is just impossible that the very glory of God in its essence, and the glory of man in its representative concentration, could inhabit the few square miles of Palestine, or any part of the globe, without there being irreconcilable conflict. The one is bound to try to destroy the other. They are mutually intolerant forces. The crucifixion was inevitable and the crucifixion was the human plot of the glory of man, through certain representative figures, to destroy the divine glory in Jesus, which it could not tolerate. But because the divine glory is in its very essence love and sacrifice, the scene designed for its destruction was transformed into the scene of its victory, not only over the evil immediately concentrated against it in that momentous hour of history, but against all the evil in the world for all time.

Now what about you? First, look at the scene on Calvary as something which is indeed timeless. It is timeless because Jesus is divine, and timeless because all that happens is representative of all history, including your own. Look at the scene. There they are, putting Jesus to death in this most cruel manner. And who are they? The representatives of the world's ordinary life. The Pharisees: religious leaders interested in morality but unable to face the supreme challenge of Christ's call to sacrifice. The priests: good men protecting a national system in its national independent security that they cared for so much. Judas: jealous and greedy for money. Pilate: a statesman temporising and compromising on principle, and resorting to certain, quite respectable and yet wrong, subterfuges. The soldiers who crucified Jesus: men carrying out their duty, but just without sensitivity or imagination. And where are you in this scene? You remember the words of the hymn: 'Those cruel nails, Lord Jesus, were driven in by me.' If you look at the things that happened in the crucifixion and the things that you do,

at first sight there does not seem to be any resemblance; but if you look at the things that happened in the crucifixion and compare them with your states of mind, and heart and soul and will, on lots of occasions, then the comparison is very deadly indeed. For instance, they said: 'Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him.' When you sin it means that your own beastly little selfish will is enthroned in the citadel of your own pride, and the will of God is just to be done away! They cried: 'Not this man, but Barabbas' – wanting to retain Barabbas in the community and to get rid of Jesus – just preferring the second rate, or third rate, or fourth rate, in preference to that which is perfect. And whenever you deliberately choose the imperfect and reject the perfect, wanting to be rid of one and to retain the other in your actions or your thoughts, then the resemblance comes home. And then they blindfolded Jesus and struck at Him and jeered at Him, and when I say to myself that, of course I can sin because just now no one is seeing, no one is watching and it does not really matter, I am joining in that wicked blindfolding of Jesus. The picture comes home, and Calvary is the scene in which the glory of our pride, the glory of oneself in its wilfulness, is seen up against the glory of God, and it is there judged. 'Now is the judgment of this world.' We are ourselves judged, and that is what happens first, and that is *something*; and if nothing more were to happen than that it would be a very good thing indeed, for right it is that we should be judged and should not think that we escape the judgment.

But then second, after the judgment, there comes the actual victory over us of Christ's glory in the cross. How does that happen? That happens first through our contrition and God's forgiveness of us, and I think that logical analysis does little to understand, but a deep instinct in all of us does very much to understand how God's forgiveness and the cross go together. God shows us on His side the overwhelming generosity that is in Him, coupled with His

implacable condemnation and judgment of our sin, and we, kneeling before Him confessing our sinfulness, confessing that we put the glory of man before the glory of God, face up to the pain of God's condemnation and, at the selfsame moment, the generosity of God's love reaching out to us to restore us.

But from forgiveness wonderful things follow, and I want to speak just a word or two about them. In the great prayer in the 17th chapter of St John, on the night before the crucifixions, Jesus used these words – He said in the prayer: 'Father, the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given to them' – to the disciples; and that means that the glory, which is the essence of the divine self-giving love and the essence of Christ in His passion and resurrection, is to be not only something for us to gaze upon at a supreme moment in history, and then to remember, and to read about, but it is also to be something *inside* us: 'The glory I have given to them.' And it is the desire of Christ, who died for you, to give this glory to you. Christ's glory in you. The divine glory in you.

Now—*how*? First we must realise that Jesus is for all time contemporary: the risen, living Jesus is an ever present fact, and He lives, though victorious, as the Jesus who was once crucified, the marks of Calvary are ever upon Him and we can never look to Him rejoicing in His present Lordship without again and again facing the shame and ingratitude of Calvary. The living Jesus is the ever crucified one, and it is with Him that we ever have to do. But when we have to do with Him, and He has to do with us, *He imparts His own self to us*. The Holy Spirit given by Jesus is called by St Peter the Spirit of glory – the Spirit which produces in us that victorious self-giving that is the essence of the passion and resurrection. This is the significance of the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. The broken body and the outpoured blood of Jesus are given to be our food, given to be that by which we are nourished, on which and by which we live and move

as Christians, Calvary and Easter somehow becoming part and parcel of our lives within. But then you ask: 'This sounds tremendous mystic language, it sounds all right in church at the altar steps and so on, but what does it mean when we carry it away?' It means things that are utterly real and practical and tested again and again in Christian lives, and specially in the lives of saintly men and women down the ages.

Let me mention just three practical ways in which this great matter really does come to pass in Christian lives, and I cannot but doubt has already come to pass in yours. First, the Christian, as he goes about serving God and serving the world, and trying to meet the world's tragic needs, does so as one who has been humbled again and again by God's forgiveness of him. The humility of having been forgiven, it is that that gives quality to the Christian life all through. It is terribly difficult to love other people without being possessive about them. It is terribly difficult to serve other people without being rather 'bossy' towards them; and so it is that philanthropy comes so often to be corrupted by pride. But Christian philanthropy is marked through and through by the humility of one who knows himself, not once but time and time again, to be forgiven by the wounds of the Crucified.

And the second mark of the Christian life is this, that it can see and use Christ's victory over suffering by transforming it. We all try to remove suffering from the world. We try to alleviate suffering, but it is the mark of a Christian that he has the power for himself to accept suffering and to see it transformed and made creative by sympathy and love and sacrifice. The Christian knows something of how those words, suffering and glory, go together; and so the Christian is marked by a heightened sensitivity towards the world's trials, bearing things more and feeling things more keenly than others; and yet within that sensitivity he brings on to the scene a kind of heavenly serenity, that the wordly mind

is not able to create or to fathom.

And a third mark of the Christian life is this, that within that life there is being fought out again, perhaps all unnoticed, the battle of Good Friday. Within our souls there is raging a conflict – the Good Friday conflict – the conflict between the glory of man and the glory of God. The glory of man dies very hard; but a Christian is one in whom this self-centredness and pride is, through whatever humiliation and pain, being de-throned. This process can never be a self-conscious thing. Self-consciousness in religion is the very devil. Self-consciousness in religion can be really the very denial of what the Christian life is meant to be, because after all self-consciousness is just one form and aspect of self-centredness, and the Christian life is marked by the forgetfulness of self, in the service of God and the service of man. Thus it is that the glory of man is dethroned, and human life is brought nearer to that end for which God created us in His own image, after His own likeness.

6

What God Requires of Us

In the last chapter we saw what God has done for us; in this, under the guidance of another Archbishop, we examine what God requires of us.

Fénelon's charm, wit and message made him a figure of note at the worldly and brilliant court of Louis XIV. Jealousies and intrigues brought about his expulsion and he retired to the diocese of Cambrai of which he was Archbishop. There he learned more of his own nature and motives and of the loving ways of God.

The heart of Fénelon's message is that each one of us has to choose between doing his own will and the will of God. He shows those who decide for God how to listen to Him and find His guidance.

Fénelon shows how out of the commitment to live under God's orders there comes a totally fresh quality of life that cuts across the world's values and introduces us, even now, into God's kingdom.

The following passages are taken in the main from Fénelon's *Letters to Men and Women*.¹

- 1 WHAT GOD REQUIRES OF US
 - a That we belong to God
 - b That we take four steps
 - i Give our will to God
 - ii Open our heart
 - iii Listen to God
 - iv Accept correction from men.

¹ Peter Owen 1957. Translation by D. Stanford.

- 2 DANGERS AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM
 - a* Bargaining with God
 - b* Being proud, judging or knowing best
 - c* Being satisfied
 - d* Being depressed
 - e* Being in a hurry
 - f* Being ambitious
 - g* Being self- and not God-centred
 - h* Being touchy.
- 3 WHAT LIES BEHIND OUR DOUBTS, ARGUMENTS AND EXCUSES
- 4 WHAT LIES BEHIND OUR SUFFERING
- 5 HOW TO FIND OUT WHAT TO DO
 - a* Carry the Cross
 - b* Hearken to the Master.

1 WHAT GOD REQUIRES OF US

a THAT WE BELONG TO GOD

God would have children who love His Goodness, not slaves who serve Him only through fear of His Power. They who love Him will, as a natural result, do all that love prompts. Is it possible to love God heartily, and yet passionately to love that world which is His enemy, and which He has so severely condemned in His Gospel? Can a man really love God, and yet fear to know Him, lest he should be obliged to do more to please Him?

What does He ask of you save to be happy? Have you not realised that one is happy in loving Him?

Christian perfection is not the harsh, wearisome constraint which you imagine. It requires us to belong to God with our whole heart, and when once that is the case, whatever we do for Him becomes easy. They who are God's are always happy so long as they keep an undivided will, desiring only what He desires and willing to do whatever He requires.

Do you want the consolation which God can give, or God

Himself? If it is the first, then you do not love God for His Own Sake, but for yours; and in this case you deserve nothing at His Hands.

b THAT WE TAKE FOUR STEPS

i Give our will to God

It does not always depend on you to feel, but it does always depend on you to will . . . Would you only love God when He fills you with conscious delight through His love? If so, it would be your own pleasure that you loved while fancying that you love God.

What God requires of us is a will no longer divided between Him and any creature.

True prayer is not a matter of sense or imagination but of the mind and will.

ii Open our heart

Do not shut up your heart. It is not merely that you cannot do what is required of you, so straitened is your heart; but yet more, you do not want to be able to do it; you do not wish to have your heart enlarged; you are afraid lest it should be done. How can you expect grace to win entrance into a heart so resolutely closed to it? All that I would ask of you is to acquiesce calmly and in a spirit of faith, and not give ear to your own suggestions.

Real love does not know what it is to falter in obedience.

iii Listen to God

Listen rather less to your own thoughts, so as to be able to listen more to God. I venture to promise, that if you are thus faithful to your own inward light on every occasion, you will soon feel relief in your work, be more able to satisfy your neighbours, and at the same time walk much more truly in your vocation.

You will only reach the source of evil by frequently withdrawing yourself into an interior silence. Such a silence of simple prayer would calm that actively argumentative

mind, and soon God's Spirit would cast out all your speculation and discursiveness.

You would learn to look at each matter from a simple, clear point of view; you would speak as you think; you would say what you have to say in two words, instead of taking so many means to convince men. You would be less burdened, less excited, less distracted, freer, more easy, more methodical, though without effort more decided, both on your own behalf and your neighbour's.

This silence, which would greatly tend to expedite external matters of business, would accustom you to do even your business in a spirit of prayer. Everything would be made easier to you.

When you meditate, think that it is Jesus Christ Who is about to speak with you, and that concerning the most important of all concerns. Listen to Him accordingly. Read but a little at once, and meditate much upon the truths you read. See how far and how earnestly you follow them. Ask Jesus Christ to speak to your innermost heart, and then teach you what the book sets before you externally. If you find any severe condemnation of some one of your faults, thank God for this merciful and unsparing rebuke and pray Him yet further to correct you.

iv Accept correction from men

A truth told to us is harder to bear than a hundred which we tell ourselves. We are apt to be less humiliated by the latter than self-satisfied at our wisdom in discerning them.

I entreat you more than ever not to spare any of my faults. Even should you think you detect such as do not really exist, it will not be a great misfortune. If your admonitions wound me, it will show you have touched a tender place, and so you will do me service in exercising my humility, and accustoming me to bear reproof. I need humiliation more than most men, by reason of my naturally proud character, and because God requires a more absolute death to all pride

in me. I greatly need this honesty, and I trust that so far from disuniting us, it will draw us closer together.

2 DANGERS AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM

a BARGAINING WITH GOD

There is but one way of loving God, which knows no bargaining with Him, but accepts His every inspiration with a free, generous heart.

If you really look into the state of things between God and your soul, you will find there are certain limits beyond which you refuse to go in offering yourself to Him. People often hover around such reservations, making believe not to see them, for fear of self-reproach – guarding them as the apple of the eye. If one were to break down one of these reservations, you would be touched to the quick, and inexhaustible in your reasons for self-justification – a very sure proof of the life of the evil. The more you shrink from giving up any such reserve point, the more certain it is that it needs to be given up. If you were not fast bound by it, you would not make so many efforts to convince yourself that you are free.

Do not bargain with God with a view to what will cost you least and bring you in most comfort. Seek only self-denial and the Cross. Love and live by love alone. Let Love do whatsoever He will to root out self-love.

b BEING PROUD, JUDGING OR KNOWING BEST

The proud wisdom of men is unworthy to enter into the counsels of God. Instead of sitting in judgement on God, let Him judge you, and confess that you greatly need His ruling.

Argument is a great waste of strength. Humble your mind rather than uphold your opinion even when it is right.

c BEING SATISFIED

Nothing can be more perilous to salvation, more unworthy both of God and of ourselves, or more damaging to our comfort of heart than to rest satisfied as we are. Life is

given us expressly that we may march boldly on towards our heavenly Home; the world fleets by like a treacherous shadow and eternity reaches forth to us.

d BEING DEPRESSED

Nothing has a surer tendency to disperse the dark cloud of depression than simplicity and lowliness in laying bare one's troubles, however little to one's credit it may be so to do, and seeking comfort and light from some worthy servant of God.

A trustful glance, a silent movement of the heart towards Him will renew your strength; and though you may often feel as if your soul was downcast and numb, whatever God calls you to do, He will give you power and courage to perform. That is the daily bread which we ask continually, and which will never fail us; for our Heavenly Father, so far from ever overlooking us, is always watching to find an open heart into which He may freely pour the torrents of His Grace.

e BEING IN A HURRY

God opens our eyes by letting us realise our own weakness and evil in endless falls . . . We would fain be consumed at once by the flames of pure love, but so speedy a process would cost us nothing, and it is in very selfishness that we seek to attain perfection so cheaply and so fast.

Why do we rebel against our prolonged trials? Because of self-love; and it is that very self-love that God proposes to destroy, for so long as we cleave to self His work is not achieved.

In our restless activity we erect ourselves into a providence as inefficient as that of God would be effectual.

f BEING AMBITIOUS

Men are always seeking to do some great thing, to be conspicuous in religion as of old in things of the world, which now they have forsaken. Why? Because they crave distinction; under all circumstances. But the humble man

seeks no distinction; praise or blame are alike to him . . . They who are full of Him cannot consciously humble or lower themselves, for they feel beneath all possible abasement. They are not hurt or humbled by any contempt or blame, neither are they exalted by any praise they may receive. They believe that no one ever humbled himself below what he really is save the Word in His Incarnation; therefore Holy Scripture says of Him that He 'emptied' Himself, which it says of no earthly creature.

g BEING SELF- AND NOT GOD-CENTRED

Almost all who aim at serving God do so more or less for their own sake. They want to win, not to lose; to be comforted, not to suffer; to possess, not to be despoiled; to increase, not to diminish. Yet all the while our whole interior progress consists in losing, sacrificing, decreasing, humbling, and stripping self even of God's Own Gifts, so as to be wholly His.

We move continually in a vicious circle round self, only thinking of God in connection with ourselves, and making no progress in self-renunciation, lowering our pride, or attaining simplicity. Why is it that the vessel does not make way? Is the wind wanting? No wise: the Spirit of Grace blows upon it, but the vessel is bound by invisible anchors in the depths of the sea. The fault is not God's; it is wholly ours. If we will search thoroughly, we shall soon see the hidden bonds which detain us. The point in which we least mistrust ourselves is precisely that which needs most mistrust.

h BEING TOUCHY

We are exposed on all sides by reason of the sensitiveness of passion and the jealousy of pride. No peace is to be looked for within when we are at the mercy of a mass of greedy, insatiable longings, and when we are nothing can satisfy that 'me' which is so keen and so touchy as to whatever concerns it. Hence in our dealings with others we are like a

bed-ridden invalid, who cannot be touched without screaming; the mere tip of a finger seems to scarify it.

If you thought of nothing save God and His Glory, you would be as keen and sensitive to other's losses as to your own. But it is the 'I' which makes you so keen and sensitive. You want God as well as man to be always satisfied with yourself in all your dealings with God.

3 WHAT LIES BEHIND OUR DOUBTS, ARGUMENTS AND EXCUSES

Doubt is the trouble of a soul left to itself, which wants to see what God hides from it, and out of self-love seeks impossible securities.

You shrink from bearing a yoke, and that is the real leaven of the incredulity you hold up to yourself . . . People exaggerate their doubts to themselves in order to be dispensed from action, from sacrificing a worthless independence to which self clings jealously.

What do you expect? That He should work miracles to convince you? No miracle would conquer this irresolution of a self-love which fears to be sacrificed. What do you want? Never-ending arguments, while all the time you know in your conscience what God's claims are? Arguments will never heal the wound in your heart. You argue not in order to come to a conclusion and act, but that you may have more excuse for doubting and delay.

4 WHAT LIES BEHIND OUR SUFFERING

There is never any peace for those who resist God.

All sensitiveness springs from self-love; we only suffer because we have so much will. If we wished for nothing save God's Will, we should be perpetually satisfied, and everything else would be as unpalatable as black bread offered to a man who had just had a luxurious meal. If we were contented with what is God's Will at the actual moment, we should not stretch our inquisitive longings into the

future. God will do His Will; He will not do ours, but He will do perfectly right.

What right have we to complain? We suffer from an excessive attachment to the creature – above all, to self. God orders a series of events which detach us gradually from the first, and finally from the last also. The operation is painful, but our corruption makes it needful, and therefore it is we suffer keenly.

From the moment you give up self-will, and seek absolutely nothing but what He wills, you will be free from all your restless activity and forecasting; there will be nothing to conceal, and nothing to bring about . . . Once give yourself up to God, and you will be at rest, and filled with the joys of His Holy Spirit.

5 HOW TO FIND OUT WHAT TO DO

a CARRY THE CROSS

As to painful or humiliating thoughts, whether concerning your faults or your temporal affairs, treat them as the sensitiveness of self-love; our pain at all these things is more humiliating than the things themselves. Put all together, the trouble and your perplexity at it, and carry the cross without trying to alter it one way or the other. Directly that you bear it thus, in simple trust of God, you will be at rest, and your cross will become light.

All the crosses God sends you in order to bend your back have not yet conquered your pride. It will only be by dint of yielding in silence before God that you will become softened by grace.

b HEARKEN TO THE MASTER

You must often silence yourself, in order to hearken to the Master speaking within, and teaching you all His truths. He often speaks to those who listen faithfully; and when we do not hear His secret, familiar Voice within, it is a proof that we do not hush ourselves duly to hearken.

His Voice is no foreign accent. God is in the soul, as the

soul is in the body – a something which we cannot distinguish from ourselves, yet which we are conscious is leading. The silence by which we hear His Voice is a trustful dependence, a recalling whenever we are conscious of wandering from Him.

Nor must we stop short in ascertaining what the general Will of God is. We must seek to know His will in detail; what pleases Him best; what is the most perfect way. We only act as reasonable beings in so far as we consult God's Will and shape ours to it. There is no other light to follow.

We need very diligent faithfulness to God in the smallest things . . . The smallest things become great when God requires them of us.

I am not dictating what you should do. God will Himself make plain to you according to your needs, so long as you hearken inwardly to Him, and despise holding that which is despicable. Do whatever you will, only love God, and let His Love, revived in your heart, be your guide.

The Programme of Christianity

HENRY DRUMMOND, his biographer tells us, lived in the maturity of his powers during the last quarter of the nineteenth century – a time when men's minds and morals were in ferment. 'The full impact of the truth that was in Darwin was rapidly being felt far beyond the narrow scientific area of its first dominance, under the sledge-hammer blows of a Huxley or the more overwhelming torrent of the Spencerian philosophy.'

Drummond had a developed interest in Natural Science and lectured on geology and botany in Glasgow where he had a professor's chair.

He talked to the youth in particular and made them think. He cleansed the student life at Edinburgh University. It was said that his addresses 'gripped men and changed their lives not for a day but for all time'.

He was never shocked. 'No story of failure daunted or surprised him. For everyone he had a message of hope; and, while the warm friend of a chosen circle and acutely responsive to their kindness, he did not seem to lean upon his friends.'

His influence went far beyond Britain. 'Perhaps no living writer has been so eagerly followed and so keenly discussed on the Continent and in America.'

For Drummond religion was extremely practical, far-reaching and down to earth. He wrote:

'Men repudiate Christ's religion because they think it a small and limited thing, a scheme with no large human interests to commend it to this great social age . . .

'The contribution of Christianity to the joy of living,

perhaps even to the joy of *thinking*, is unspeakable. The joyful life is the life of the larger mission, the disinterested life, the life of the overflow from self, the 'more abundant life' which comes from following Christ. And the joy of thinking is the larger thinking, the thinking of the man who holds in his hand some Programme for Humanity.'

And again:

'To move among the people on the common street; to meet them in the market-place on equal terms; to bear the burdens of society and relieve its needs; to carry on the multitudinous activities of the City – social, commercial, political, philanthropic – in Christ's spirit and for His ends: this is the religion of the Son of Man.'

Henry Drummond's addresses on *The Programme of Christianity* and *How to Know the Will of God*, slightly abridged, in this and the next chapter, are as fresh and relevant to-day as when they were first given.

THE PROGRAMME OF CHRISTIANITY

'What does God do all day?' once asked a little boy. One could wish that more grown-up people would ask so very real a question. Unfortunately, most of us are not even boys in religious intelligence, but only very unthinking children. It no more occurs to us that God is engaged in any particular work in the world than it occurs to a little child that its father does anything except be its father. Its father may be a Cabinet Minister absorbed in the nation's work or an inventor deep in schemes for the world's good; but to this master-egoist he is father, and nothing more. Childhood, whether in the physical or moral world, is the great self-centred period of life; and a personal God who satisfies personal ends is all that for a long time many a Christian understands.

But as clearly as there comes to the growing child a knowledge of its father's part in the world, and a sense of

what real life means, there must come to every Christian whose growth is true some richer sense of the meaning of Christianity and a larger view of Christ's purpose for mankind. To miss this is to miss the whole splendour and glory of Christ's religion. Next to losing the sense of a personal Christ, the worst evil that can befall a Christian is to have no sense of anything else. To grow up in complacent belief that God has no business in this great groaning world of human beings except to attend to a few saved souls is the negation of all religion. The first great epoch in a Christian's life, after the awe and wonder of its dawn, is when there breaks into his mind some sense that Christ has a purpose for mankind, a purpose beyond him and his needs, beyond the churches and their creeds, beyond Heaven and its saints – a purpose which embraces every man and woman born, every kindred and nation formed, which regards not their spiritual good alone but their welfare in every part, their progress, their health, their work, their wages, their happiness in this present world.

What, then, does Christ do all day? By what further conception shall we augment the selfish view of why Christ lived and died?

I shall mislead no one, I hope, if I say – for I wish to put the social side of Christianity in its strongest light – that Christ did not come into the world to give men religion. He never mentioned the word religion. Religion was in the world before Christ came, and it lives today in a million souls who have never heard His name. *What God does all day* is not to sit waiting in churches for people to come and worship Him. It is true that God is in churches and in all kinds of churches, and is found by many in churches more immediately than anywhere else. It is also true that while Christ did not give men religion, He gave a new direction to the religious aspiration bursting forth then and now and always from the whole world's heart. But it was His purpose to enlist these aspirations on behalf of some definite practical

good. The religious people of those days did nothing with their religion except attend to its observances. Even the priest, after he had been to the temple, thought his work was done; when he met the wounded man he passed by on the other side. Christ reversed this – tried to reverse it, for He is only now beginning to succeed. The tendency of the religious of all time has been to care more for religion than for humanity; Christ cared more for humanity than for religion – rather His care for humanity was the chief expression of His religion. He was not indifferent to observances, but the practices of the people bulked in His thoughts before the practices of the Church.

It has been pointed out as a blemish on the allegory of Bunyan that the Pilgrim never *did* anything, anything but save his soul. The remark is scarcely fair, for the allegory is designedly the story of a soul in a single relation; and, besides, he did do a little. But the warning may well be weighed. The Pilgrim's one thought, his work by day, his dream by night, was *escape*. He took a little part in the world through which he passed. He was a *Pilgrim* travelling through it; his business was to get through safe. Whatever this is, it is not Christianity. Christ's conception of Christianity was heavens removed from that of a man setting out from the City of Destruction to save his soul. It was rather that of a man dwelling amidst the Destruction of the City and planning escapes for the souls of others – escapes not to the other world, but to purity and peace and righteousness in this. In reality Christ never said, 'Save your soul'. It is a mistranslation which says that. What He said was, 'Save your life.' And this not because the first thing is nothing, but only because it is so very great a thing that only the second can accomplish it. But the new word altruism – the translation of 'love thy neighbour as thyself' – is slowly finding its way into current Christian speech. The People's Progress, not less than the Pilgrim's Progress, is daily becoming a graver concern to the Church. A popular

theology with unselfishness as part at least of its root, a theology which appeals no longer to fear, but to the generous heart in man, has already dawned, and more clearly than ever men are beginning to see what Christ really came into this world to do.

What Christ came here for was to make a better world. The world in which we live is an unfinished world. It is not wise, it is not happy, it is not pure, it is not good – it is not even sanitary. Humanity is little more than raw material. Almost everything has yet to be done to it. Before the days of geology people thought the earth was finished. It is by no means finished. The work of Creation is going on. Before the spectroscope, men thought the universe was finished. We know now it is just beginning. And this teeming universe of men in which we live has almost its finer colour and beauty yet to take. Christ came to complete it. The fires of its passions were not yet cool; their heat had to be transformed into finer energies. The ideals for its future were all to shape, the forces to realise them were not yet born. The poison of its sins had met no antidote, the gloom of its doubt no light, the weight of its sorrow no rest. These the Saviour of the world, the Light of men, would do and be. This, roughly, was His scheme.

Now this was a prodigious task – to recreate the world. How was it to be done? God's way of making worlds is to make them make themselves. When He made the earth He made a rough ball of matter and supplied it with a multitude of tools to mould it into form – the raindrop to carve it, the glacier to smooth it, the river to nourish it, the flower to adorn it. God works always with agents and this is our way when we want any great thing done, and this was Christ's way when He undertook the finishing of Humanity. He had a vast intractable mass of matter to deal with, and He required a multitude of tools. Christ's tools were men. Hence His first business in the world was to make a collection of men. In other words, He founded a Society.

It is a somewhat startling thought – it will not be misunderstood – that Christ probably did not save many people while He was here. Many an evangelist, in that direction, has done much more. He never intended to finish the world single-handed, but announced from the first that others would not only take part, but do ‘greater things’ than He. For amazing as was the attention that He was able to give individuals, this was not the whole aim He had in view. His immediate work was to enlist men in His enterprise, to rally them into a great company or Society for the carrying out of His plans.

The name by which this Society was known was *The Kingdom of God*. Christ did not coin this name; it was an old expression, and good men had always hoped and prayed that some such Society would be born in their midst. But it was never either defined or set agoing in earnest until Christ made its realization the passion of His life. . . .

Nothing truer was ever said of this Kingdom than that ‘It cometh without observation’. Its first discovery, therefore, comes to the Christian with all the force of a revelation. The sense of belonging to such a Society transforms life. It is the difference between being a solitary knight tilting single-handed, and often defeated, at whatever enemy one chances to meet on one’s little acre of life, and the *feel* of belonging to a mighty army marching throughout all time to certain victory. This note of universality given to even the humblest work we do, this sense of comradeship, this link with history, this thought of a definite campaign, this promise of success, is the possession of every obscurest unit in the Kingdom of God. . . .

Study the social evolution of humanity, the spread of righteousness, the amelioration of life, the freeing of slaves, the elevation of women, the purification of religion, and ask what these can be if not the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth. For it is precisely through the movements of nations and the lives of men that this Kingdom comes.

Christ might have done all this work Himself, with His own hands. But He did not. The crowning wonder of His scheme is that He entrusted it to *men*. It is the supreme glory of humanity that the machinery for its redemption should have been placed within itself. I think the saddest thing in Christ's life was that after founding a Society with aims so glorious He had to go away and leave it.

But in reality He did not leave it. The old theory that God made the world, made it as an inventor would make a machine, and then stood looking on to see it work, has passed away. God is no longer a remote spectator of the natural world, but immanent in it, pervading matter by His present Spirit, and ordering it by His will. So Christ is immanent in men. His work is to move the hearts and inspire the lives of men, and through such hearts to move and reach the world. Men, only men, can carry out this work. . . .

Men, then, are the only means God's Spirit has of accomplishing His purpose. What men? You. Is it worth doing, or is it not? Is it worthwhile joining Christ's Society, or is it not? What do *you* do all day? What is your personal stake in the coming of the Kingdom of Christ on earth? You are not interested in religion, you tell me; you do not care for your 'soul'. It was not about your religion I ventured to ask, still less about your soul. That you have no religion, that you do not care for your soul, does not absolve you from caring for the world in which you live. But you do not believe in this church, you reply, or accept this doctrine, or that. Christ does not, in the first instance, ask your thoughts, but your work. No man has a right to postpone his *life* for the sake of his thoughts. Why? Because this is a real world, not a *think* world. Treat it as a real world – act. Think by all means, but think of what is actual, of what like the stern world is, of how much even you, creedless and churchless, could do to make it better. The thing to be anxious about is not to be right with man, but with mankind. And, so far as

I know, there is nothing so on all fours with mankind as Christianity.

There are versions of Christianity, it is true, which no self-respecting mind can do other than disown – versions so hard, so narrow, so unreal, so super-theological, that practical men can find in them neither outlet for their lives nor resting-places for their thoughts. With these we have nothing to do. With these Christ had nothing to do – except to oppose them with every word and act of His life. It too seldom occurs to those who repudiate Christianity because of its narrowness or its unpracticalness, its sanctimoniousness or its dullness, that these were the very things which Christ strove against and unweariedly condemned. It was the one risk of His religion being given to the common people – an inevitable risk which He took without reserve – that its infinite lustre should be tarnished in the fingering of the crowd or have its great truths narrowed into mean and unworthy moulds as they passed from lip to lip. But though the crowd is the object of Christianity, it is not its custodian. Deal with the Founder of this great Commonwealth Himself. Any man of honest purpose who will take the trouble to inquire at first hand what Christianity really is, will find it a thing he cannot get away from. Without either argument or pressure, by the mere practicalness of its aims and the pathos of its compassions, it forces its august claim upon every serious life.

He who joins this Society finds himself in a large place. The Kingdom of God is a Society of the best men, working for the best ends, according to the best methods. Its membership is a multitude whom no man can number; its methods are as various as human nature; its field is the world. It is a Commonwealth, yet it honours a King; it is a Social Brotherhood, but it acknowledges the Fatherhood of God. Though not a Philosophy the world turns to it for light; though not Political it is the incubator of all great laws. It is more human than the State, for it deals with

deeper needs; more Catholic than the Church, for it includes whom the Church rejects. It is a Propaganda yet it works not by agitation but by ideals. It is a Religion, yet it holds the worship of God to be mainly the service of man. Though not a Scientific Society its watchword is Evolution; though not an Ethic it possesses the Sermon on the Mount. This mysterious Society owns no wealth but distributes fortunes. It has no members' roll for no one could make it. Its entry-money is nothing; its subscription, all you have. The Society meets and it never adjourns. Its law is one word – loyalty; its Gospel one message – love. Verily 'Whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.'

The Programme for the other life is not out yet. For this world, for these faculties, for his one short life, I know nothing that is offered to man to compare with membership in the Kingdom of God. Among the mysteries which compass the world beyond, none is greater than how there can be in store for man a work more wonderful, a life more God-like than this. If you know anything better, live for it; if not, in the name of God and of Humanity, carry out Christ's plan.

How to Know the Will of God

An address (abridged) by Henry Drummond

If there is one thing more than another which is more personal to the Christian – more singularly his than God's love or God's interest – one thing which is a finer symbol of God's love and interest, it is the knowledge of God's will – the private knowledge of God's will. And this is more personal, just inasmuch as it is more private. My private portion of God's love is only a private *share* in God's love – only a part – the same in quality and kind as all the rest of God's love, which all the others get from God. But God's will is a thing for myself. There is a will of God for me which is willed for no one else besides. It is not a share in the universal will, in the same sense as I have a share in the universal love. It is a particular will for me, different from the will He has for any one else – a private will – a will which no one else knows about, which no one can know about, but me.

To be sure, as we have seen before, God had likewise a universal will for me and every man. In the Ten Commandments, in conscience, in the beatitudes of Christ, God tells all the world His will. There is no secret about this part, it is as universal as His love. It is the will on which the character of every man is to be formed and conformed to God's.

But there is a will for career as well as for character. There is a will for *where* – in what place, viz. in this town or another town – I am to become like God as well as *that* I am to become like God. There is a will for where I am to be,

and what I am to be, and what I am to do to-morrow. There is a will for what scheme I am to take up, and what work I am to do for Christ, and what business arrangements to make, and what money to give away. There is God's private will for me, for every step I take, for the path of life along which He points my way: God's will for my career.

If I have God's will in my character, my life may become great and good. It may be useful and honourable, and even a monument of the sanctifying power of God. But it will only be a life. However great and pure it be, it can be no more than a life. And it ought to be a mission. There should be no such thing as a Christian life, each life should be a mission.

God has a life-plan for every human life . . . the Creator had a thought for you and me . . . It was a thought of what we were to be, of what we might become, of what He would have us do with our days and years, our influence and our lives. But we all had the terrible power to evade this thought, and shape our lives from another thought, from another will, if we chose. The bud could only become a flower, and the star revolve in the orbit God had fixed. But it was man's prerogative to choose his path, his duty to choose it in God. But the Divine right to choose at all has always seemed more to him than his duty to choose in God, so, for the most part, he has taken his life from God, and cut his career for himself.

It comes to pass, therefore, that there are two great classes of people in the world of Christians today.

- (1) Those who have God's will in their character;
- (2) Those who have God's will likewise in their career.

The first are in the world to live. They have a *life*. The second are in the world to minister. They have a *mission*.

Now those who belong to the first class, those who are simply living in the world and growing character, however finely they may be developing their character, cannot understand too plainly that they are not fulfilling God's will.

They are really outside a great part of God's will altogether. They understand the universal part, they are moulded by it, and their lives as lives are in some sense noble and true. But they miss the private part, the secret whispering of God in the ear, the constant message from earth to heaven. 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?' They never have the secret joy of asking a question like this, the wonderful sense in asking it, of being in the counsels of God, the overpowering thought that God has taken notice of you, and your question – that He will let you do something, something peculiar, personal, private, which no one else has been given to do – this thought which gives life for God its true sublimity, and makes a perpetual sacrament of all its common things. Life to them is at the best a bare and selfish thing, for the truest springs of action are never moved at all; and the strangest thing in human history, the bounding of the career from step to step, from circumstance to circumstance, from tragedy to tragedy, is unexplained and unrelated, and hangs, a perpetual mystery, over life.

The great reason possibly why so few have thought of taking God into their career is that so few have really taken God into their life. No one ever thinks of having God in his career, or need think, until his life is fully moulded into God's. And no one will succeed in knowing even what God in his career can mean till he knows what it is to have God in the secret chambers of his heart. It requires a well-kept life to know the will of God, and none but the Christlike in character can know the Christlike in career.

... Every day, indeed, and many times a day, the question rises in a hundred practical forms. 'What is the will of God for me?' What is the will of God for me today, just now, for the next step, for this arrangement and for that, and this amusement, and this projected work for Christ? For all these he feels he must consult the will of God; and that God has a will for him in all such things, and that it must be possible somehow to know what that will is, is not only a

matter of hope, but a point in his doctrine and creed.

Now without stopping to vindicate the reasonableness of such expectations as these, it may simply be affirmed as a matter of fact that there are a number of instruments for finding out the will of God. One of them is a very great instrument, so far surpassing all the rest in accuracy that there may be said to be but one which has never been known to fail. The others are smaller and clumsier, much less delicate, indeed, and often fail. They often fail to come within sight of the will of God at all, and are so far astray at other times as to mistake some other thing for it. Still they are instruments, and notwithstanding their defect, have a value by themselves, and when the greater instrument employs their humbler powers to second its attempts, they immediately become as keen and as unerring as itself.

The most important of these minor instruments is *Reason*, and although it is a minor instrument, it is great enough in many a case to reveal the secret will of God. God is taking your life and character through a certain process, for example. He is running your career along a certain chain of events. And sometimes the light which He is showing you stops, and you have to pick your way for a few steps by the dimmer light of thought. But it is God's will for you to use this thought, and to elevate it through regions of consecration, into faith, and to walk by this light till the clearer beam from His will comes back again.

Another of these instruments is *Experience*. There are many paths in life which we all tread more than once. God's light was by us when we walked them first, and lit a beacon here and there along the way. But the next time He sent our feet along that path He knew the side-lights should be burning still, and let us walk alone.

And then there is *Circumstance*. God closes things in around us till our alternatives are all reduced to one. That one, if we must act, is probably the will of God just then.

And then there are the *Advice of others* – an important

element at least – and the *Welfare of others*, and the *Example to others*, and the many other facts and principles which make up the moral man, which, if not strong enough always to discover what God's will is, are not too feeble oftentimes to determine what it is *not*.

Even the best of these instruments, however, has but little power in its own hands. The ultimate appeal is always to the one great Instrument, which uses them in turn as it requires, and which supplements their discoveries, or even supplants them if it choose by its own superior light, and might, and right. It is like some great glass that can sweep the skies in the darkest night and trace the motions of the furthest stars, while all the rest can but see a faint uncertain light piercing for a moment here and there the clouds which lie between.

And this great instrument for finding out God's will, this instrument which can penetrate where reason cannot go, where observation has not been before, and memory is helpless, and the guiding hand of circumstance has failed, has a name which is seldom associated with any end so great, a name which every child may understand, even as the stupendous instrument itself with all its mighty powers is sometimes moved by infant hands when others have tried in vain.

The name of the instrument is *Obedience*. Obedience, as it is sometimes expressed, is the organ of spiritual knowledge. As the eye is the organ of physical sight; the mind, of intellectual sight; so the organ of spiritual vision is this strange power, Obedience.

This is one of the great discoveries the Bible has made to the world. It is purely a Bible thought. Philosophy never conceived a truth so simple and yet so sublime. And, although it was known in Old Testament times, and expressed in Old Testament books, it was reserved for Jesus Christ to make the full discovery to the world, and add to His teaching another of the profoundest truths which have come from heaven to earth – that the mysteries of the Father's will are hid in this word 'obey'.

Revival, Revolution, Renaissance

NOT LONG before Frank Buchman died, a younger man who wanted to help him in his work took tea to his room. The few words that the older man said to the younger show the way to the values modern man needs. Buchman said, 'If you are going to work around here, you please start living by the Cross and not by rules. You know what that means? Well, we will discuss it together.

'Do you trust the God you serve? Feel He is absolutely reliable? Absolutely reliable? You have got to get to the place where you prefer Him above all men and things.

'“Lovest thou me more than these?” He said that. Can you answer, “Yes”?’

'My boy, that is where you have to get to. Without Him, don't cross the threshold. With Him, travel the world. It is true: “He walks with me and He talks with me and He tells me I am His own.” You ever have that sense? You should. It is your birthright.

'I advise you: make absolute honesty your policy. Don't think avoiding sin is the goal of life. Some do, and a damn dull job they make of it. You have got to have a true sense of direction in which you go all out. Do you have it? What is your speed? What is the fastest you have driven in a car? If you are moving fast, the dirt does not stick. Ever notice? Same with sin.

'Are you smothered with miracles? You ought to be. They are not rationed, you know.

'Your heart has got to come alive. I do not feel a heart-beat in you. You need a blood-transfusion. Plasma. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” It is life-giving stuff.

'He gave blood – pints of it, for you to restore you to life. Do you let Him lead? What does lead you? You have got to get to the place where you prefer Him above all men and things. Shed every secondary motive.

'I streamlined my life long ago: "Make and keep me pure within." Pure within. "No heart is pure that is not passionate".'

Buchman said later to a friend of his, 'I hate not to be militant. If I am not militant, I so easily become critical.'¹

Frank Buchman was always at grips with history. It was his effectiveness in throwing the light of Christ's answer on the dark affairs of this world that brought upon him the virulent opposition of those who preferred darkness to light.

REVIVAL, REVOLUTION, RENAISSANCE

A speech given by Dr Frank Buchman on 16 August 1938 at Visby, Sweden.²

TODAY WE WANT to forge a united battlefront. The clear issue is whether we are guided by God or not. It is not whether we are clever. It is not what nation we belong to. We meet here today as Christians and we meet as guided people, and our final source of authority is God's plan.

I hope that by the time I finish some of you will have made a decision. We have come here with different objectives. First, some of the people have come here hoping to be changed. That is very good, very necessary. Some of you come here with the hope that you will learn to change others. That, too, is very necessary.

But the danger is that some of you want to stop there. I am tremendously interested in a third point – how to save a crumbling civilisation. That is the thing that interests me. But then I want a fourth thing. I want to reach the millions of the world.

¹ *Britain and the Beast* by Peter Howard (Heinemann).

² *Remaking the World* (Blandford Press).

All these things ought naturally to follow each other. If you are changed, you naturally want to change other people. The next thing is you want to save civilisation. Then you want to reach the millions out there. It is a natural programme.

But sin comes along. I don't know if you believe in it or not, but it is here. Don't spend the rest of the day arguing if it exists or not. That is what some of you would like to do. You would miss the whole point. We are not here to argue; we are here for constructive planning and action.

I know what some of you would like out of the Oxford Group¹—a nice comfortable awakening; you would call it a revival. A nice armchair religion. That is the thinking of some people. But if we stopped there, I should be sorry. If you stop there, I am your enemy unless I warn you. A person who has that conception today is not adequately thinking and planning to save the millions.

I am not interested, nor do I think it adequate, if we are going to begin just to start another revival. Whatever thoughtful statesman you talk to will tell you that every country needs a moral and spiritual awakening. That is the absolutely fundamental essential. But revival is only one level of thought. To stop there is inferior thinking. Unless we call for something bigger than that we are done for.

The next step is revolution. It is uncomfortable. A lot of Christians don't like the word. It scares them. It makes them goose-fleshy. That's where some of your critics come from — goose-fleshy Christians with armchair Christianity.

Begin to work out how many still go to church and ask why the church today is not reaching one hundred per cent of the people. I know revolution makes people uncomfortable. I am not here to make you comfortable, and I am not here to make you like me. What the Oxford Group will give

¹ Before he launched the call to Moral Re-Armament, Dr Buchman and his associates were known as The Oxford Group.

this and every nation is a spiritual revolution.

But some of you are not thinking this way. Some of the cleverest people in the world are thinking along the line of destructive revolution, and they are already at work. May I say a very strong word to you this morning? I find here the same sort of inflammable matter that made Spain possible. Unless we and others see the bigger vision of spiritual revolution, the other may be possible.

Think of the uncomfortableness of that kind of revolution. We are met in a ruined church. How many churches are in ruins in Spain today? That is revolution – very uncomfortable. The point is this. Are the Christians going to build a Christian philosophy that will move Europe? Are you the kind of Christians that can build that revolution? Is that the New Testament? Is that Christian? Is that the sort of thing you are going to do? Is that your programme? Is that your policy?

If you are not going on that battlefield, I wish you well. I am not going to quarrel with you or criticise you. You do exactly what you like in the way you like. That's your idea of democracy.

I don't say it's true democracy, but it's the popular practice of democracy. For an increasing number of citizens in democratic states are now unwilling to acknowledge in speech and action those inner authorities on which the life of democracy depends. Each man has his own plan. It's so wonderful each to have his own plan. It's such freedom, such liberty! Everyone does as he pleases. But not in the Oxford Group. There you have true democracy. You don't do as you please, you do as God guides. You do God's plan.

I cannot go into all the qualities necessary for a revolutionary this morning. There were some people in the Acts and the Gospels who gave everything. There were others who did not give everything. Even in a revolution some people want an amount of padding around them. I want to

ask you this morning whether you want to be that kind of a revolutionary. If so, there may be a comfortable place for you behind the lines. But somewhere on the battlefield we will have the real revolutionaries.

There is a third stage – renaissance. The rebirth of a people, individuals and the rebirth of a nation. I know what you may say. Illusion. Illusion. Illusion. Insanity. What is the insanity? Where is it?

Can we have this rebirth of a man and nation? Some people do not like the idea of nations reborn, or of reaching the millions. They deride such a programme by calling it ‘publicity’. Read the Old Testament. Look at Isaiah 52. You can begin at the sixth verse. Let me read the seventh to you: ‘How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation.’ Does it say ‘publish’ there? There is publicity. It is amazing how many Christian people and otherwise clever people are put off by a thing like this. You mustn’t get publicity when you want to build something! All the publicity must be for destruction – or must it?

Take the word ‘Gospel’. Gospel means ‘good news’, front-page news. But people object if it gets on the front page. One critic objected. He started a clever phrase. His criticism got wide publicity. Do you know why he started this clever phrase? Why do people do these things? Why might I do such a thing? If I don’t want someone to meet my needs, I put up a nice barricade, a nice smoke-screen. Now that man’s clever phrase has gone over this country like a poison gas and the average man hasn’t had on his gas mask.

Do you see it? The man who started that clever phrase is defeated in his own life. That’s the enemy. It may be a very amiable enemy, but it is all the more dangerous. He is going to keep thousands of people from getting the real thing. People are going to sit back in their cells of defeat and you will never get at them. You will never heal their lives.

People are shy and hesitant and fear criticism. Criticism is uncomfortable. I know that. It was like a dagger through my heart when I was first attacked. I suffered. I know what it means. But if you are a real revolutionary, you always maintain perspective, no matter what people say about you. No matter how stones come, you go straight ahead. Stones of criticism are so bracing – they just set you up for the day.

I thank God tremendously for what has been done in this place, for all the preparations you have made, for all the difficulties you have overcome. Grateful for all that, but let's remember there is still sin in the camp. And that sin may be inferior thinking.

You will do well today to read the fifty-first psalm. It is a tremendous human experience. And then read in the New Testament about the Cross of Christ. You will never, never, never come into this experience until you know the Cross of Christ. Some of you have heard about it, Sunday by Sunday, but it's not an experience. If it were experience, you would not shrink from anything.

I am going to promise you one thing. I am not turning back. I am not turning back, no matter who does, no matter what it is going to cost. I do not want you to come along just because I am here – that isn't it. That would be a poor revolution. That would be a poor fellowship. Let us for a moment see a picture of the Cross of Christ, and let me say, if you join in this great crusade, you will get the way of the Cross. I am not going to lure you by hopes of material success. I am not going to lure you by saying you are going to be heroes. I am not going to lure you, although I believe that these lands can give a pattern of how to live. It is a personal experience of the Cross. It is not I, but Christ. It is not I at the head, but Christ who leads.

There are meetings this afternoon – the lawyers, the educationalists. These are important, but there is another more important. Cancel all others if you must for this one – the meeting between God and yourself. The biggest thing

this afternoon for you may be to go off alone and decide whether you are going to be one of these fellow-revolutionaries, where you are going to stand on this battlefield. I am not going to ask you to make a decision right now. The thing you have got to decide is between you and God. Do it alone. Write it down if you want to. It is a deed, like the transfer of property – so you turn over your life to God, for full and complete direction as a fellow-revolutionary.

Then you are going to be free. Then you are going to have true democracy because you are free. That's my challenge to you.

10

The War of Ideas

As the last war progressed, Frank Buchman, foreseeing that victory in the war would not end the conflict, set out to train the new type of leadership democracy needed. MRA training centres, from 1940 onwards, drew together thousands from many countries. Mackinac was early described (*Grand Rapids Herald*, 10 September, 1944) as 'A Laboratory for a New World'. The following informal address was given by Dr Buchman at the opening of the MRA Training Centre there in July, 1943.¹

* * *

TODAY I WANT TO TALK about great forces at work in the world. Sixty and more years ago you didn't hear much about the Communist Party. To begin with there was one man – Karl Marx. Then for a long time only a small group. Eventually world conditions made it possible for Karl Marx to do his work – and Communism is the result.

Think what Russia means in the world today. How large is it? One-sixth of the earth. I remember a time when the Czar couldn't ride unless he had every six feet a man watching him. Even if it was a railway journey of a thousand miles, he always had men posted along the way. It was all part of what helped produce the thing called Communism.

A little while ago the world didn't think much about it. It didn't affect us. We had not come into contact with it. Occasionally there would be a flare-up. Then during the last war there was more and more discontent. There was

¹ *Remaking the World* (Blandford Press).

revolution. And the Communist Party came to power.

Today the Russians are doing pretty well. America is doing a lot for them because just now they seem to be a decisive factor in dealing with Germany, and because they may have a controlling interest in the future.

Now that is one picture. Give it a nice gold frame. Put in as much red as you want. But when you have done that, you haven't done with Communism because it is a tremendous force. Think of the number of people in this country who have been swung by it, who have gone part way and are 'leftist' in their thinking. We are going to meet it all the time.

Now take another force. When did we begin to hear about Fascism? 1921-1922. Again there was a man - Mussolini. I remember when I was in Italy, at Milan. *Viva i Comunisti* was written all over the walls. Soon you saw, *Viva il Duce*, also on the walls - and Mussolini arose as an opposing force to Communism. He marched on Rome. He put himself in power and a Fascist force came into being. For a while there was a growing sense of stability and prosperity. People said, 'Good! Mussolini has come. Fascism has come. The trains are on time. There are no beggars in the streets. We have "good order".'

But today where is Mussolini? Where is Italy? And where is the 'order'?

In those days, back in the 'twenties, Germany was at its lowest ebb. Many had no food - nothing. I remember men of large means taking a hard-boiled egg in their pocket and bringing it out for lunch. For years there was danger of collapse and incipient revolution. The youth were completely out of hand, delinquent, roving the country, with crimes of violence and theft everywhere.

Then along came a man called Hitler who had very definite ideas. He wrote them in a book when he was in prison. When he came out there were mobs, disorders and massacres. The Austrian became a citizen of the German Reich. There was no order in Germany. But this juggernaut comes along and

gives seeming order. More and more he took a place in the world. So the German people said 'Hallelujah!' and *Heil Hitler!* You know the rest of the story.

So we have Communism and Fascism, two world forces. And where do they come from? From Materialism which is the mother of all the 'isms'. It is the spirit of anti-Christ which breeds corruption, anarchy and revolution. It undermines our homes, it sets class against class, it divides the nation. Materialism is Democracy's greatest enemy.

These then were the forces which threatened to dominate the world.

In 1938 the guidance came to me – 'Moral Re-Armament', a movement where the moral and spiritual would have the emphasis. The need of the age is the moral and the spiritual. Our task was to bring back these realities to nations that needed them. We initiated this thinking in London's East Ham Town Hall. We took it to the nations. MRA was born that year.

Communism and Fascism are built on a *negative* something – on divisive materialism and confusion. Wherever Moral Re-Armament goes, there springs up a *positive* message. Its aim is to restore God to leadership as the directing force in the life of the nation. Let me recall what I said in Philadelphia on my birthday:

'Moral Re-Armament creates the qualities that make democracy function. It is simple, non-partisan, non-sectarian, non-political. It gives to every man the inner discipline he needs and the inner liberty he desires. It calls out and combines the moral and spiritual responsibility of individuals for their immediate sphere of action.

'It builds for democracy an unshakeable framework of actively selfless and self-giving citizens, whose determination to bring unity cannot be altered by any beckoning of personal advantage and who know how to pass along to others their panic-proof experience of the guidance of God.'

America must discover her rightful ideology. It springs from her Christian heritage and is her only adequate answer

in the battle against materialism and all the other 'isms'. But America does not hate materialism. Think of America destroying herself with the very force that she condemns in others. The battle of the ideologies was the granite of the Old and New Testaments. So many people today instead of giving the granite, give the sugar – and so we never cure materialism.

MRA first of all goes straight to the fundamental problem – it recognises sin. Sin is the disease. Jesus Christ is the cure. The result is a miracle. You come to a training centre like this. You may say, 'Oh, I don't like to hear sin mentioned.' Well, that's too bad. It ought to be mentioned, but it ought to be enough just to give a quick picture of it and then move on. And you ought to be so sensitive that you respond immediately and change – and that's one more miracle. That ought to happen today, just as in the old days your grandparents used to go to church on Wednesday night, because they liked a good rugged sermon on sin. That's fine if you have time enough for it – and possibly you need to take time. Make sure there is no minimum emphasis on sin. Make it maximum. But then quickly make the adjustment. Change, unite, fight. That is the natural sequence.

You will find here the old fundamental truths – but you get them with a mighty, moving crescendo. MRA restores absolute standards in a day when selfishness and expediency are the common practice of men and nations. Take the four absolutes – honesty, purity, unselfishness, love. Perhaps some of you do not put much stock in them any more. But to arm a people you must give them these simple basic standards.

Take honesty for a start. What do you find in the nation? What about men who have been dishonest, say in war contracts? Graft and the Black Market keep a lot of people busy all the time and cost millions of dollars. In the old days nobody said a good word for dishonesty. Now the successful chiseller seems almost at a premium.

Take purity. You may say that it is just a personal matter.

But what is happening to the nation? They tell you that in some war plants impurity is so common that it is even organised among the workers, and especially among the subversive groups who use it as a weapon. They know that when people's morals are confused their thinking becomes confused. People say, 'That's too bad', and keep on going to church on Sunday, but nothing happens. Too few try to bring a great, cleansing force to the nation. What is going to happen to a nation when nobody brings a cure any more? Broken homes, unstable children, the decay of culture, the seeding plot of revolution.

As far as unselfishness and love go, people don't pretend to be unselfish, and they don't expect to be loving.

People have written off the four standards as part of the horse-and-buggy days. So, naturally, they are the last thing they have in mind for nations. That is why you have the condition there is in the world today. Now if you can get people who will live up to these absolutes and stand for them, then you have a force, a creative something in the community with a strength that nothing will gainsay.

You must have that emphasis on morals plus the saving power of Jesus Christ. Then you experience the dynamic which is almost forgotten – the Holy Spirit, that gives the guided answer and tells you exactly what to do as a clear direct call from God.

That's the programme for the Church today. I believe with all my heart in the Church, the Church aflame, on fire with revolution. We haven't begun to experience the spiritual revolution we need. You need revolution, and then when you come into the clear light of God's Presence, you will experience a glorious renaissance. You will come to see what Christ means this old world to be.

It's one thing to know these realities. But there's a further thing, and that is to make them national.

The trouble with some of you is that you are so idealistic that your hopes never come to pass, even in your own

families. That was the trouble with the League of Nations. People were so 'League-minded' they failed to do the thing the League most needed – the spadework with individuals that brings change. There was something left out of the League and that was – God. The League was never God-arched.

Everybody's job is to find the God-arched master-plan. Then we would have a master-plan not only for us, but for post-war Europe. The trouble is, we let the statesmen do all our thinking for us – and then we call it democracy!

Take the great modern cities you come from. You complain of this subversive leader and that one. Yet it is the selfishness of everyone that makes possible the subversive leader. The whole problem is that you endure a thing rather than cure it. You would rather pay than pray. You would rather go on with your confusion, your grumbling, your complaints, than change and have an answer.

The battle for America is the battle for the mind of America. A nation's thinking is in ruins before a nation is in ruins. And America's thinking is in ruins.

People get confused as to whether it is a question of being Rightist or Leftist. But the one thing we really need is to be guided by God's Holy Spirit. That is the Force we ought to study. Then we will have a clear light that ends confusion. The Holy Spirit will teach us how to think and live, and provide a working basis for our national service.

America doesn't have much of her great moral heritage left. Just think, if we fail to give emphasis to a moral climate, where will our democracy go? Some of us have been so busy looking after our own affairs that we have forgotten to look after the nation. Unless America recovers her rightful ideology nothing but chaos awaits us. Our destiny is to obey the guidance of God.

The true battle-line in the world today is not between class and class, not between race and race. The battle is between Christ and anti-Christ.

Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.

Christ and the Modern Atheist

THE FOLLOWING STORY illustrates how the experience of Christ was brought to those who did not believe in Him or in God. It illustrates, too, the inadequacy of bringing faith to individuals without bringing it to the leaders and masses of a nation, for the men and women of this story are now behind the Iron Curtain, where, for the time being, another ideology has won the day. Not only men but nations, if they would not be ruled by tyrants, must choose to be governed by God. This is a story of a nation that started too late.

In his speech 'Revival, Revolution, Renaissance', Dr Frank Buchman outlined four necessary steps: how to change, how to change others, how to save a crumbling civilisation and how to reach the millions of the world.

Whether one is seeking to find the experience of change, to bring change to others or to put before whole nations the same challenge, it is the Holy Spirit that shows the way step by step.

There is no rule that can be followed, though the same fundamental truths repeat themselves. There is the rising dissatisfaction with the present as new hope grows with the evidence of God's power at work; there is the kicking out of the stung conscience as the challenge to personal involvement and the giving up of a comfortable life is heard in the call, 'Follow Me'; there is the increasing knowledge of God, His forgiveness, strength and guidance as the fight for absolute standards is taken up; there is the united moving with others committed to obedience to God in the great living that gives all.

* * *

'It is no use bringing them,' said Dr Stoyan Gavrilovitch, the Yugoslavian representative at the League of Nations in Geneva. 'It is no use bringing them,' he repeated, 'Jews and Arabs are brothers compared with Yugoslavs and Bulgarians.' 'But these are changed Bulgarians,' the Englishman persisted. 'Don't be silly,' was the reply, 'that is an impossibility.'

Nevertheless a few days later the Minister and his colleague received a group of Bulgarians and heard their story of how God had become real in their lives. One, who had until recently been an anarchist and had taken part in the blowing up of a portion of the University, told of his reconciliation with society. All told how bitterness, hatred and plans for revenge against Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey had been replaced by the vision of a plan that would unite the Balkans, so that Yugoslav, Macedonian, Greek, Turk and Bulgarian, bound together in the experience of change, would together build a world of justice and fair play.

The Minister's response to their apology for the past and to their commitment to the future was to advance across the room and give to each the kiss of peace. He telephoned to his Government in Belgrade saying that these men must be received there on their way home to tell of this new revolution they were pioneering, 'the most hopeful news we have ever had.'

Then came the war. The Minister, then representing his country in South Africa, met the Englishman there and related how by following his own newly-found experience of listening to God he got his wife and child out of Yugoslavia on what turned out to be the last train before the Occupation and how, later, he had himself managed to escape.

The story starts with the return to Bulgaria of the Englishman who had recently spent a week-end in Sofia, the capital, with Dr Frank Buchman and his friends. He went back there simply and only because in his time of listening prayer God clearly said to him, 'Go back to Bulgaria. Go back to Bulgaria.' He was met at the airport by his one friend in the country, Cyril, a Government clerk. Cyril was pleased to see him but, knowing the Englishman's convictions, told him plainly that if he wished to win people he

must on no account mention 'God' as it was against the psychological background of the country.

The Englishman asked Cyril to go to the University (at that time it was the only one in the country) and invite the dozen or so students studying English to visit him in his hotel. They came and the Englishman asked them to tell him something about their country and of its aims and hopes.

For three evenings they told him (often several speaking at the same time) of 600 years' domination by the Turk, of Bulgaria's attaining freedom in 1878, of her need to get back the Dobruja and of her devotion today to science and progress. At last they asked him what he thought of Bulgaria.

'A very wonderful and beautiful country,' he said, 'but I think you need one thing.'

'What is that?'

'Your freedom.'

Then with noise and enthusiasm they expounded to him again how in 1878 the Turk had been driven out and freedom obtained.

'But I am talking of the Turk inside you. How about hatred, jealousy, anger, fear, all that brings division, are you free from that?'

'No, of course not. But that is human nature and you can't do anything about human nature.'

'You can't. But God can.'

Then there was a hullabalu. Still gesticulating and talking and obviously angry they left the room. Only Cyril remained.

'I told you not to mention God,' Cyril said. 'If you won't believe me listen to the Director of Statistics. This gentleman told how after the First World War 80 per cent of the teachers had been trained in the Soviet and had come back and taught the youth that their country was backward and poor because they believed and listened to the priests with their old-fashioned nonsense and out-of-date morals. They led the youth to believe that, as patriots, they were not to allow God or the Bible to be mentioned but that they must be scientific and modern and lead their country to a priest-free, religion-free future.'

What to do next? Fortunately there is (or was) a habit in

Sofia of walking slowly up and down the main street in the evening and there the Englishman met his friends again, invited them to coffee and promised not to make the same gaffe.

A few evenings later they were all re-assembled together. 'Last time I'm afraid I made a bad mistake,' said the Englishman. 'I hear that you are all keen scientists. I don't want to make the same kind of mistake again, so I'd like to be sure that I know what a Bulgarian scientist is like. Is he a man who says, "I know everything, there is no truth undisclosed to me, I am a Bulgarian scientist"? Or is he a man who is always listening to new evidence, always willing, if there is enough evidence, to make new experiments and, if the experiment works, to incorporate his new knowledge into his thinking?'

Yes, that last was it – a Bulgarian scientist was very open-minded, very fair, always looking for new truth, always ready to experiment.

The Englishman then told them story after story, fact after fact, of how hatred and fear, division and frustration were taken out of people's lives and of how men's new nature enabled them to tackle effectively together family, social and national problems that had seemed helpless and hopeless.

After a time the Englishman said, 'Now I have given you a lot of evidence. Perhaps I am lying, perhaps what I have said is true. Do you not think the time has come for an experiment?'

Immediately several became uncomfortable. They forgot they were scientists and tried ridicule. 'We are very intellectual in Bulgaria,' they said, 'we can't accept anything until it is proved. Where is this God of yours? Is he in your left-hand pocket, is he in your right-hand pocket? Has he got a beard?' And they tried to encourage themselves with their own raucous laughter.

'What nonsense you talk,' replied the Englishman. 'We come into this room and it is dark. Someone says, "Switch on the light." I don't hear you saying, "We don't believe in electricity, nobody has shown it to us. Is it in your left-hand pocket, is it in your right-hand pocket? Has it got a beard?"'

'Or take that wireless over there. I say, "Turn the knob and you'll hear someone talking in London." Do you Bulgarians reply, "What nonsense! Who in London can shout loud enough to be heard in Bulgaria? Where is this wireless of yours? Is it in your left-hand pocket, etc.?"'

They laughed. The Englishman then invited those who wanted to make the experiment to come next time and he would show them how they could do it together. He explained its simple terms. First and foremost the experiment had to be made absolutely or not at all. You could not test the law of gravity by almost letting something fall, or make contact with electric power by nearly putting down the switch. This experiment meant scientific obedience. Every day for a month each would listen, unhurriedly, to the deepest thing he knew inside himself and would carry out the thoughts that seemed to him to be right – whether they seemed to be to his personal advantage or not. All agreed that what was absolutely honest, absolutely pure, absolutely unselfish and absolutely loving was likely to be right – provided that each could decide in his heart for himself what *was* absolutely honest, pure, unselfish and loving.

Then everybody agreed to write down the thoughts that came. There was no difficulty about that. It seemed to all a common-sense precaution so that nothing of value should be forgotten and the thoughts could be tested at leisure to see if they were in accordance with the standards and ticked off when they had been done.

Soon a dozen pens were moving over the notebooks that had been provided. One student stood up. 'I stop,' he said, 'this is too pricking.' And he left the room. The others wrote on. After some ten minutes the Englishman said, 'Now off you go and do what has to be done. Some may like to discuss what they have in mind first.'

Finally only Pirin was left. He was a Macedonian revolutionary. He had had a toy gun ever since he could remember and a real one since boyhood. He had come to the University to start a secret revolutionary cell.

'I should have liked to have done the thought that has come to me, but I must not,' he said.

'Why not?'

'It is not absolutely honest.'

'Yes, but what is the thought?'

'My brother and I have had a big quarrel and we have not spoken to each other for years. Now I get the thought, "Go to your brother and apologise." I cannot do that for it was all my brother's fault and if I apologised he would think it was my fault and that wouldn't be honest, would it?'

'Can you think of five per cent that was your fault?'

'Yes, perhaps five per cent was my fault.'

'Well, go and apologise for the five per cent and forget the ninety-five per cent.'

Off he went. A day or two later he came back, his face all smiles.

'It was wonderful,' he said. 'We are now good friends again. On the way I did think of another fifty per cent that was my fault. It was really only a very small quarrel. I didn't need any God to tell me to put it right.'

'Pirin, Pirin, we are conducting a scientific experiment. For a month we are going to collect the evidence and only after that examine its source.'

Then the two listened to see what should be done next. Pirin soon broke the silence.

'This time I can help you. I thought of the insurance company I have been cheating. I can show you how to make money the same way.'

The Englishman evidently did not look enthusiastic.

'I know what you'd say,' Pirin went on, after a silent pause. 'You'd tell me to go and be honest about it and give the money back. I suppose if you did that in England they'd pat you on the back and say "what a good boy". Here they'd blow a whistle for a policeman and you'd be in gaol. So you want me to go to gaol, do you?'

The Englishman, who had not said a word till then, but who knew how quickly a stung conscience accuses the other person, just smiled. He asked Pirin what he thought he should do on the basis of the experiment they were making and the decision to carry out what was right, at any cost. Pirin went to the insurance company and came back

surprised and pleased at the response he had got. The agent had seemed fascinated by the idea of fighting to make a country honest by being honest yourself. There had been no talk of gaol and he clearly felt it would be a good thing for the insurance world as well as for the country if this kind of thing multiplied.

One evening when the Englishman arrived at a coffee party his friends were giving, there was even more noise than usual and more people speaking at once.

'Make Pirin see sense,' one said. It turned out that Pirin in a time of quiet had had the thought to stop sleeping with the girls. 'Tell him he is wrong,' they said, 'that we have bodies to use them, that it is unnatural not to do so, all kinds of trouble will follow if boys and girls do not sleep together.'

'This is a very interesting question,' the Englishman replied. 'Didn't we agree at the beginning of our experiment that each person would decide what was absolutely pure and right for himself? Of one thing I am sure. Nobody is free who cannot stop such things, nobody is free who is in the grip of any sex habit. When you are free not to do it you'll know whether you should or not.'

Pirin was left alone to go his new way and the rest still followed their old customs.

One morning a little later the Hotel Manager came to the Englishman's room. 'There is a Bulgarian woman student downstairs wanting to see you,' he said. 'She seems to be rather angry,' he added. She was. Her complaint was that the Englishman was upsetting the way of life of the country, the boys were no longer behaving with the girls as they used to and she wanted to know why.

The Englishman told her, as best he could, the kind of country he saw Bulgaria could be: strong, clean and free, a bridge-builder among the nations. The choice before every woman was whether to help the men to live so that they could be true patriots spending themselves for their country, or to live for themselves, their sex, their comfort or career. He told her the experiment they were making in listening for direction. She went off, with books to read, seemingly unconvinced.

A few days later she returned. This time she was carrying an immense ledger.

'I will tell you what has been happening to me,' she said. 'As I left last time I thought, "What nonsense that man talks", but then I said to myself, "He must believe in it for he lent me those books without even taking my name and address and I could have just kept them." So I began to read one of them and I decided I would try this listening. A clear thought came to me: "Go upstairs and apologise to your sister." I knew I had done wrong to her, but I couldn't face risking my authority as elder sister. I had never apologised to her. But I did it.

'Next morning I was awakened early. A Voice said to me: "Go to the Church." I didn't know what it meant. I never go to Church – except perhaps at Christmas and Easter. When I got there the Voice said: "Kneel down. Give your life to Me. I have work for you to do in Bulgaria." I obeyed.

'When I got home many thoughts were coming to me. I seized the first book I saw. It was this ledger. And I wrote them down. Here they are.'

Then she read a God-given outline of what this meant for Bulgaria, of how the women must back up the men and fight alongside them in an altogether new way. She removed her lip-stick, it was no longer part of what she stood for. She and a girl friend began planning for the University. Soon all Pirin's friends had followed his lead. Boys and girls sleeping together now seemed old-fashioned and it was dropped without argument, it had no part in their new programme.

The month was up. The time had come for the evidence to be examined. Experiences were pooled and many questions asked.

'This, whatever-it-is that guides us, knows all about us,' said one. 'A damned sight too much,' added another. 'It's more than rules or absolute standards,' said a third. 'It's personal to each of us – "Marin do that, Pirin stop doing that."'

And then they agreed that it was powerful. 'Why we've all stopped doing things we thought were just part of us and we could not get away from, and we've begun doing things of which we did not think we were capable.'

Then they felt that there was a Plan bigger than themselves, bigger than they could imagine and they were beginning to discover their part in it. 'Here we are, a dozen of us. Now we'd all trust each other with our lives. A month ago we didn't trust each other at all. We've got the basis for building a united nation and we've already taken some steps on the way.'

The Englishman took his courage in his hands. 'Have you ever thought of God being like that?' he asked, 'Personal, Powerful, with a Plan?' 'Well, if He's like that and not an old man with a beard who says "No",' was the reply, 'we want to know more about Him and to obey Him.'

A few days later the Englishman had a frightening thought in his time of listening: 'Teach them the Bible.' So when they were next all together he told them he thought they should read the New Testament together. Objections were loud and unanimous. 'That old-fashioned book. It's all superstitions. Not for us.'

'How many of you have ever read the New Testament?' Silence.

'Is it more scientific to reject a book without examining it for yourself or to examine it yourself?'

So they agreed that next time they came together they would read the New Testament, and Onjan, on the score that his mother had a Bible, was deputed to buy a dozen New Testaments.

The Englishman asked them to read the tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles – the story of Cornelius and Peter. Their reactions were unexpected:

'You say all this happened nearly two thousand years ago?' 'Yes.'

'Then why should we read it when the same thing has been happening to all of us this month?'

Then they were asked to examine more closely the source and the direction Cornelius had and the source of the direction Peter had. They decided that with Peter it was the voice of a friend he recognised and addressed as 'Lord'. It was clearly someone he greatly trusted as he broke the social and religious custom of a life-time to be obedient. He must have been sure of that voice and very sure of his friend.

'Whom did Peter think it was?' They did not know.

'It was Jesus,' the Englishman told them. 'Would it be a good thing if we read more of the relationship between the two while Jesus was still on earth?'

They agreed and were asked to read straight through St Mark's Gospel and to see how far this Jesus had lived out the four absolute standards they were trying to live and what it was that gave Peter such confidence in Him.

When they re-assembled a few days later they had all read the story. 'He did very well,' was the general feeling, 'better by far than any of us.' They were moved. Some began to wonder if it was this Jesus who talked to Peter who was beginning to talk to them.

The Englishman asked: 'When a person lived as well as that, was what he said about himself likely to be true or false?'

'True.'

'Would you like to read what he did say about himself?'

'Most certainly.' And so they went on to study St John's Gospel.

At this point the Englishman had to leave Bulgaria. He had been there nearly three months.

Letters began to follow him. The group had visited Plodiv, the second city of the country, and taken the answer there. They had raised the money, raised their voices and raised a mighty response. A nationally-known poet had enlisted and had already used his pen to give out the new truth he had found and seen for the country. They told how, as a sign of gratitude to the country that had brought them this answer, the second language in the University magazine had been changed to English.

The next letter said that more money had been raised and that they were coming to be part of the World Assembly in Interlaken, Switzerland. The letter was signed 'Your friends in Christ'.

From Interlaken they went down to see the Yugoslav delegate in Geneva and had a triumphant time in Belgrade on the way home. Then came the war and the Iron Curtain. The rest is silence.

12

What Youth Say

GOOD parents sometimes wonder why it is that they have bad children. In this chapter youth speak out and speak for themselves. An attempt is made to bridge the ever-widening gap between the generations.

The cause of juvenile delinquency is not chiefly to be sought in the young. Abdication of leadership, of authority, of morals, the preoccupation with sex, the chase for money and the neglect of homes, and above all futility of purpose, do not lie primarily at their door. Youth suffer from the fecklessness and faithlessness of an older generation and not unnaturally and quite rightly strike out on their own.

The cure for teenage thuggery begins with adult unselfishness. Older people cannot expect youth to accept standards of morality which they themselves disregard or deny.

The response of youth to the challenge, when it is given to them, of a dynamic, wide-visioned, God-arched programme that calls out the best in them is, the world around, one of the most heartening factors of today. Only where and when such leadership is not given do youth become a problem.

In May, 1964, the Home Secretary, Mr Henry Brooke, spoke of 'a wave of law-breaking among the young which has been sweeping over most countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain. No one', he said, 'knows for certain the causes of it or the answer to it.'

In the following Open Letter, signed by a number of young men and women and published in the *Daily Express*, May 14, 1964, an answer and a challenge is given to Mr Brooke.

* * *

Dear Mr Brooke,

Here is an answer to your questions about youth. You want 10,000 more policemen to deal with the problem. Why not enlist 20 million youth of Britain in revolution?

You say you do not know the cause or cure of boredom that creates a Clacton. We can tell you why many of us are bored and how to cure it.

Our generation was born into a welfare world. We are handed everything on a plate. We are given education, money, leisure to do what we please.

Yet we are bored. For we have no aim. We have the world at our feet but no path to tread.

We are bored with Tories who offer to build schools and houses, to fill our pockets and stomachs, but leave hearts and minds empty of consistent belief or goal.

We are bored with Socialists who only promise more of the same thing, and seem preoccupied with class attitudes that are already fading when Beatles dine with Royalty and debs operate petrol pumps.

We are bored with Communists who offer us brotherhood based on hate while their own camp is divided.

We are bored with Clergy who press us to fill pews on Sunday, but don't have guts to speak out against those determined to destroy the conscience and character of our generation.

We are bored with those who through films, T.V. and books suggest sex is the great god we must worship. We bow down to it and find pregnant schoolgirls, venereal disease, illegitimate children, broken homes, and frustration that can lead to suicide.

Your generation once spoke of patriotism, moral standards and Almighty God. It seems to us that few of you have lived as if they existed. There has been no rugged resistance against the undermining of such values in the modern world. Too many seem to condone the lowering of standards in their own ranks which they condemn in the

ranks of youth. Some of high positions seem to be men whose private opinions and lives increase confusion about what is right and wrong.

In your lifetime, out of the Christian West, have come two world wars, fascism, Hitlerism and the same toleration of social and economic injustice that provided Karl Marx with his theories and Lenin and Stalin with their passion. Because of that, many of us have come to connect patriotism and God with those very things. Is this what you want us to believe?

All of us would respect your generation more if they showed some consistent belief (whether we shared it or not) and lived it, instead of pretending to be 'with it' and offering a soft line of life in sex and security that they think will win our favour.

We want to learn great lessons from the past. But we are not so much interested in the past as in the future. That is where we will have to live.

We cannot remember the 'thirties when some people suffered so much. We cannot remember the 'forties when the whole nation was geared to victory and recovery.

We are living in the 'sixties and mean to enjoy life despite the gloom of economic and political prospects. Youth today is bent on a world of its own choosing, free from old fears and full of fun and fulfilment.

If some of us take to drugs, drink and violence, out of frustration with the present, it is a sign of intensity of search for that new future.

You, yourself, have noted that delinquency is a global problem. East and West, Left and Right, rich and poor, suffer alike. We refuse to accept your comfortable theory that since the problem is global we are not so bad.

We believe the problem has a global cure. We are all young. We represent hundreds of thousands of others who have committed their lives to the moral re-armament of society in Britain and the world.

In India the 28 year-old grandson of the Mahatma, Rajmohan Gandhi, is leading a 'revolution of national character'. Gandhi says, 'Corruption and division within the country are an open invitation to aggression.' Now hundreds of students in every major city are paying back unpaid railway fares and getting honest about cheating in exams. 'We complain about corruption in our leaders,' they say, 'but if you want to clean India, you must have clean hands yourself.' 'India, not China', says Gandhi, 'must become the most dynamic nation in Asia.' And his maternal grandfather, Rajagopalachari, first Governor-General after Independence, says of Gandhi's work, 'It is a miracle and a revolution.'

In Japan, students who rioted and looted in the streets of Tokyo have changed. They are now being asked by military and political leaders to train Olympic athletes and stewards in morale and character.

In the Americas, Latin Americans, some of whom were amongst those students who stoned Vice-President Nixon in Peru, are working together with white and black North Americans 'in revolt against the gutlessness of good Americans who lack the courage to explode the corruption existing in all levels of our society.' They have called a 'Conference for Tomorrow's America' this summer.

Today half the world is under 21 years of age. This potential in youth is a far greater asset than any bomb or rocket. Are mods off their rockers, or are the foundations of modern life rocking almost to the point of collapse? You cannot build tomorrow's Britain so well without us. We cannot do it so well without you. We would like to do it together.

It's cheap to sneer, as some do, at the Commonwealth as a farce not a force in the modern world. Who made it so? Who will offer a new goal and aim to British youth and people? Britain's finest hour lies ahead if we show the world humbly and hopefully how a country in the 20th Century is meant to live.

Many of us are going to vote for the first time in the autumn. The way to capture new voters (maybe old voters too) is to tell us what the aims of this country are, and give us a purpose big enough for all to play our part.

Our revolution is a do-it-yourself revolution. It means that every one of us works to put right the things that are wrong around him. We have no time to be bored. We are going to change society by changing men and will seek God's idea of how to do it. We base our new society on absolute moral standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. They are objective standards in a scientific age. We are not likely to become a nation of saints, but we can all be different.

We are building a core of committed men and women who will not rest until government is honest, homes are pure, industries are unselfish, and our nation is united. We invite all young people of guts to join us. It takes sweat and sacrifice, but it is the most fascinating, adventurous and satisfying way we know.

This is the revolution that will capture mods, rockers, purple heart addicts, beatniks, squares and all others of our generation you find difficult. It is the biggest task in history and we want to take it on together. Isn't that what we all were born for?

There is no age-limit, Mr Brooke. So come along. And bring your colleagues with you.

The Bible and the Historical Problem of our Time¹

A study by C. H. Dodd, Professor Emeritus of Divinity in the University of Cambridge¹

'HISTORY,' said Mr Henry Ford, 'is bunk,' blurting out, with a refreshing candour, what many people no doubt think. It is however a significant fact that those movements of our time which have shown the greatest power to inspire men to action on the grand scale, for good or evil, have taken the form of interpretations of history.

German National Socialism, for example, based itself on an interpretation of history through the conceptions of race and *Volkstum* ('nationality' – but the meaning of the German word is both wider and narrower). The Nazi creed is now discredited, but the wide and compelling influence which it exerted is a portent we ought not to forget – especially since there are kindred doctrines abroad in other countries which may yet raise their head. What was there in this wild and monstrous creed, which made it sweep like a prairie fire through the German people? What was there in it to impel them to action upon a scale which has proved catastrophic to the whole of Europe? There are no doubt more answers than one to that question. National Socialism was a complex phenomenon. But one side of its appeal at least could not be overlooked by anyone who happened to be in touch with Germans during the years between the

¹ From *The Bible Today* by C. H. Dodd (C.U.P.).

Weimar revolution and Hitler's seizure of power in 1933. It offered them a task defined by an understanding of their history.

A whole generation of young Germans had emerged from the last war humiliated, despairing and cynical. There seemed nothing to live for. Life had no meaning. Then Hitler and his followers told them that on the contrary they were living in the crucial moment of the historic destiny of the German people. The vast and turbulent centuries of European history, since the days when Arminius defeated the legions of Augustus in the Teutoburgerwald, were filled with the story of the shaping and growth of the German *Volk*; their training and discipline, through victory and disaster, to be the ultimate *Herrenvolk*. And now the moment had come. Hitler boasted that his achievement would determine the course of history for a thousand years; and they believed him. In understanding (as they thought) the meaning of their national history, and linking their own action to its agelong movement, they found their lives dignified by being absorbed in a larger purpose. They were convinced that they were making history – and they very nearly did make it to their own pattern. At least, there was here an interpretation of history which proved itself dynamic.

On the other hand, we have the Marxist interpretation of history as a 'dialectical' process, determined by economic factors; a process which takes form in our time as the final class-war between bourgeoisie and proletariat with their respective 'ideologies'. The Marxist treatment of past history is bold and imaginative, and even if it is one-sided, it brought into clear light factors which all historians now acknowledge to have been of real importance. But to the devout Marxist this interpretation of the past is no mere academic theory. It provides the one sufficient key to the understanding of the present, and assures the future; for upon Marxist premises the victory of the proletariat is a foregone conclusion. This interpretation of history has given

to large numbers of people a quite new sense of meaning in their own lives, and stirred them to action under the conviction that their action is along the line of vast historical forces moving irresistibly to a goal. That this conviction is an effective one for good or ill is proved by the immense advance of Communism in our time.

In both these contemporary movements we observe that the driving force is not simply the idea as such, but the persuasion that the idea embodies itself in history as a concrete, living process. The Marxist, like the Nazi, is persuaded that he knows what the historical process is 'up to'. In his communist 'cell', like the Nazi in his 'storm-troop', he feels himself to be in the place where history is being made, and he makes it – to whatever ultimate effect.

It can scarcely be said that the 'Western democracies' have anything comparable.¹ They have some vaguely conceived principles on the one hand, and on the other hand some clearly defined, immediate, practical objectives; but there is no general sense that these principles and objectives are of the essential stuff of history. Recently the veteran Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce has offered us a possible basis for an historical 'ideology' in his dictum that history is the history of liberty. But that remains on the academic level.

The fact is that in this country at least we cherish the deepest suspicion of all large historical generalisations. A recent historian, the late H. A. L. Fisher, summed up his view of history in these words: 'Men wiser and more learned than I have discerned in history a plot, a rhythm, a pre-determined pattern. These harmonies are concealed from me. I can see only one emergency following upon another as wave follows upon wave; only one great fact, with respect to which, since it is unique, there can be no generalisations;

¹ Perhaps the nearest thing to a democratic 'ideology' was the 'philosophic radicalism' of the nineteenth century, combined with the 'Whig' interpretation of history; but it has no contemporary significance.

only one safe rule for the historian: that he should recognise in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforeseen.¹

Such a view is undoubtedly congenial to our British temper. Did I say we had no 'ideology'? Possibly the interpretation of history as 'one emergency following upon another' is in fact the 'ideology' corresponding to our favourite practice of 'muddling through' – sometimes dignified by the name of 'practical opportunism'.

But I do not believe we can afford to leave the matter there. In these last years history has burst into our private lives with devastating effect. The violence of the impact is bewildering to anyone who does not understand that the forces of contemporary history have behind them the accumulated weight of a long past, which we can no longer ignore. There is no escape. It is now clear to every thinking man that his own life and death depend on historical factors operating on the large scale.

The problem of history has become the most urgent problem of our time. We stand at the end of an era. How are our lives to be directed so that the new shape of things may be a worth-while enterprise of the spirit of man, and not a drift or a collapse? What is the meaning that history holds, to which our lives are to conform? The 'ideologies' give their answers; for Marxism and National Socialism alike are interpretations of history which seek to give significance to contemporary life. I believe that we have in the Bible an interpretation of history which goes deeper than either, and comprehends important and relevant facts which both of them ignore. How then does the biblical view of history interpret our contemporary situation?

Certain broad principles for the interpretation of history we may set down at once.

1. God is sovereign over history, which serves His will and

¹ *History of Europe*, Preface, p.v. (Arnold).

works out His purpose. This is presupposed all through.

2. On the other hand, the Bible lends no support to any theory which demands that the course of history should be fixed beforehand.

This needs some consideration, because there is a widespread misconception that the prophetic books are a kind of glorified 'Old Moore's Almanac', plotting out the future in cryptograms. Ingenious persons devote time and trouble, which they might well have spent on cross-word puzzles, in the attempt to discover the 'key to prophecy', just as others try to predict coming events from the measurements of the Great Pyramid. All such attempts presuppose that the course of events is so fixed that the apparent influence of human choice is an illusion. It is impossible to attribute such a view to the biblical writers.

The prophets certainly did forecast coming events. What then, did they intend by such forecasts? They were primarily concerned with the immediate situation which faced them. In this situation they distinguished two elements: the constant element, which was the purpose of God, and the variable element, which was human action. They insisted that God must be thought of as a perfectly self-consistent Being, whose action in history discloses the immutable principles of justice, mercy and truth. To enforce this view, they dwelt much upon the 'mighty works' of God in the past. They then applied the lessons of the past to the understanding of the present. In doing so, they frequently formed 'intelligent anticipations' of the immediate consequences of actions then in process.

It must be observed that such anticipations are *conditional* (whether the condition is expressed or not). Prophetic predictions in general fall within such a formula as '*Except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish.*'¹ In the tale of Jonah there is a vivid picture of a prophet's chagrin when his

¹ Luke xiii, 5.

prediction fell through because people did repent.¹ It may have been drawn from life. A prophet may on occasion have forgotten that his forecasts were conditional, and imagined himself a soothsayer. But the true intention of prophetic predictions is not to unveil an inevitable future, but to alter the variable element in the present situation – the action of men – in relation to the constant element – the will of God – and so to alter the resultant situation.

Such predictions are ordinarily at short range. The prophets do not write imaginary history covering centuries of the future, like Mr Shaw in *Back to Methuselah*, or Mr Wells in his scientific and philosophical romances. Their interest in the remoter future is confined to the one certainty of the ultimate triumph of the purpose of God. This triumph they may exhibit in dramatic form – a gathering of nations in the Valley of Decision, or a Battle of Armageddon. But they have no interest in ‘dim aeonian periods’ which may intervene. By a characteristic ‘foreshortening’, the End is always ‘round the corner’. The *certainty* of the divine Event is translated into *imminence* in time.

Thus the biblical interpretation of history conforms to H. A. L. Fisher’s ‘one safe rule for the historian: that he should recognise in the development of human destinies the play of the contingent and the unforeseen.’

3. This is because the Bible contemplates man as morally responsible within the framework of the divine purpose. ‘See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil . . . Therefore choose!’² That the choice is real, and has real consequences in history, is a biblical postulate.

Thus the Bible, while it affirms with complete confidence that history fulfils the purpose of God, encourages a sober agnosticism about the actual unfolding of that purpose in the future course of events.

If therefore we are looking to the Bible for guidance

¹ Jonah iii–iv.

² Deuteronomy xxx, 15, 19.

towards an understanding of our own place in history, we shall not expect anything in the way of prediction. We are not to know how things are going to turn out. There is no promise of security, or plenty, or peace in our time, or the victory of this programme or that; any more than there is certainty that the 'end of the world', or of our civilisation, is inevitably impending. 'It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority.'¹

But what we may learn is the meaning of our present situation; that is, what God is saying to us in it. We have recognised in the Bible a passage of history punctuated by a series of crises in which the Word of God came to men, and visibly altered the course of events. Through this series of crises a meaning gradually emerged, which made sense of the whole. This meaning was ultimately clarified and confirmed by a final event in which 'the Word was made flesh', that is, was completely embodied in a Person and in His relations with the total historical situation. Looking backwards, we can see in the earlier crises 'foreshadowings' of the final event, in the sense that the emergent meaning was partially expressed in them, to be 'fulfilled' when the climax of the series was reached. In a somewhat similar sense, subsequent crises in history, including that of our own time, may be seen as 'aftershadowings' of the crisis provoked and shaped by the coming of Jesus Christ in the first century. So regarded, the events of our time will fall within the series in which the Word of God is spoken to men, and they will disclose their meaning to us. There are whole tracts of history which seem to us to be almost entirely meaningless. It is a possibility which cannot be excluded that the events of our time may end in a similar meaningless chaos. Even so, we may continue to trust that divine providence is over all history – as the author of the Book of Daniel believed that 'the Most High ruleth in the

¹ Acts i, 7.

kingdom of men',¹ at a time when all the facts seemed against such a belief. But historically the belief established itself only where a sufficient number of those who participated in the course of events heard God speaking in it and responded.² Only upon the same terms is history likely to disclose its meaning to us now.

How then are we to read the Word of God in the complex realities of our present situation? I would not for a moment suggest that a faith instructed by the Bible is any substitute for a knowledge of the facts of economics, politics, history, psychology and the natural sciences which enter into the total situation – in any case as much of such knowledge as we can get. There is no substitute for honest thinking about the facts. But the specious facts (of the order I have indicated) do not exhaust the total reality with which we have to deal. The impact of these facts upon our minds, with the resultant meaning they bear for us, depends upon our response to more fundamental realities which are intermingled with the ostensible factors (of politics, economics and the rest) but are never fully covered by them. It is to our apprehension of these deeper realities that the Bible speaks.

We may best discover what it says about the present crisis in history by trying to trace in our present situation the pattern which we have discerned in the creative crises of the past, and particularly in the crisis of the Gospels. For the Word of God, while it is adapted to different historical levels, and did not come in exactly the same terms to Abraham and Moses, to Jeremiah and to the first Christians, is nevertheless found always to conform to one general pattern. In this pattern we have distinguished two complementary aspects; one negative, the other positive.

1. The impact of the Word of God upon an historical

¹ Daniel iv, 17, 25.

² A 'sufficient number' in this sense may be a small minority. In Israel in the eighth century B.C. it was a mere 'remnant'; in the first century A.D. it was even smaller. But it sufficed.

situation, as represented in the Bible, has, first, the negative effect of denying false values expressed in the situation as it has developed historically. The biblical term for this negative effect is 'judgement'. Judgement is often embodied outwardly in the form of historical disasters, which are the consequences of wrong attitudes, policies and actions. No doubt such disasters always have causes which can be expressed in terms of biological, political, or economic factors. But the Bible isolates for emphasis the factor of *morale*, in the largest sense.

Take for example the story of the Fall of the Kingdom of Judah before the advance of Babylon. It could be told as the tragic last stand of a little nation, foredoomed by its geographical position, slowly ground down under the pressure of two great empires, and finally brought to utter ruin by superior military strength. But as the long-drawn struggle emerges from the pages of prophecy, it discloses a squalid collapse of *morale*, the issue of a spiritual process of degeneration. This degeneration came about through repeated refusals of a moral challenge offered by the prophets. That is the central motive of the story. The disastrous events of the Babylonian conquest appear as a dramatisation of the deeper disaster of spiritual and moral collapse. This is the manner of God's Word of judgement. It is a denial of the values which people had pursued in opposition to the truth as it was set before them.

Still clearer is the manner of divine judgement in the story of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which is the theme of the Gospels. It has sometimes been told in modern times as an episode in the struggle between Roman imperialism and Jewish nationalism; or between the cosmopolitan, secular 'ideology' of Graeco-Roman civilisation and the religious isolationism of the Jews. It has been told, alternatively, as an episode in the emergence of the 'proletariate' of ancient society and its collision with the ruling class. If some such interpretation is adopted, then the various actors in the

tragedy may claim more or less justification for their actions. So indeed they can, upon that level; for there is a real measure of truth in such renderings of the story. But confronted with the Gospels, these interpretations are seen to be superficial. The central issue is Jesus Christ's offer of a moral challenge, and its refusal by His contemporaries. That is why the story comes to have the aspect of a judgement-scene, in which sentence is passed upon a series of typical figures, not unlike ourselves. It is passed, not chiefly in words, but by the part which individuals take in the action of the drama. The moral choices made by Pilate, Caiaphas and the priests, the scribes and Pharisees, the mob, Judas the traitor and the well-meaning but unstable disciples, are quite clear-cut, and are seen to be organically related to the tragic *dénouement*. History pillories them.

Thus an approach from the biblical standpoint to our present situation will discern in it the factor of *morale* in the largest sense. Outwardly, we face the collapse of the social order over a large part of what was the civilized world – a collapse which involves all of us more or less. Inwardly, it is the collapse of the moral standards of Christendom. Just as in Israel spiritual decline was intimately related to persistent recalcitrance to the moral and spiritual ideals of the prophets, so our generation has suffered from appreciating high ideals and then denying them in practice. Probably there has never been a period when moral idealism in the political sphere touched a higher level, or commanded more intelligence in planning, or achieved more effective publicity. Yet the events – or in other words the corporate actions and reactions of the European nations – have denied such ideal values with a disastrous thoroughness. It seems to be a rule that ideals once enunciated, and accepted on the level of sentiment, become destructive if they are not put into action. To have seen the better and embraced the worse does not leave one in the same position as at first; it means moral decline – and that is the story of the European community in

recent times. No doubt other explanations of our calamities may be adduced, with some measure of truth in most of them. But in comparison with the biblical explanation they are superficial. Fundamentally, the meaning of our present predicament is God's judgement upon our way of life.

History has been defined as a record of the crimes, vices and follies of mankind. We are in no position to quarrel with the definition. But if there is no more to be said, then history remains a meaningless chaos. If, however, it is clear that God, who stands above history, and yet communicates with us in history, passes judgement upon the situation, then there is introduced into the chaos an element of moral valuation. It makes us *responsible*, and to accept responsibility is the first step to a cure.

To accept responsibility, I say. It is easy to put responsibility upon other people: to stage trials of our former enemies, or to condemn them in our own minds. But that is not to take the matter with full seriousness. We shall get at the truth of our present situation only by exposing *ourselves* to the judgement of God in it. A clear-sighted self-criticism is called for. I am not referring to the practice of self-examination, or introspection, as it is commonly recommended: a practice which is often extremely salutary and may also be harmful. I mean an effort to recognize our own behaviour as contributory to the corporate actions and reactions which have brought us to this pass, and to assess it by given moral standards.

For the standards are *given*, not thought up out of our own minds (always exposed as they are to prejudice in our own cause). In the Old Testament the prophets do not simply denounce the conduct of their people. They define with precision the particular tendencies in corporate life which are leading to disaster, because they are an affront to the Law of God – to the principles upon which the moral structure of the universe rests. These definitions are a series of shots, all hitting the target, and coming nearer and nearer

to the centre. The New Testament finally hits the mark. An intelligent reading of the Gospels leaves us in no possible doubt what are the precise values which lie under condemnation as having a direct relation to the catastrophe of the crucifixion. It requires no inordinate effort of the imagination to see ourselves in the place of Pilate, Caiaphas, the Pharisees, the mob, the traitor and the unfaithful disciples; and such an effort is an effective way towards self-criticism of the kind which is most relevant. I will leave it at that, only observing that the severest condemnation falls, paradoxically enough, upon those who, as individuals, were probably the most virtuous and intelligent of the lot: those who 'trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others.'¹

2. We turn from the negative to the positive. Beyond judgement lies renewal. Indeed judgement, as we have seen, is properly no more than a secondary effect of the Word of God, which in its first intention is creative. In God the highest degree of creativity is combined with the highest degree of benevolence, or goodwill, towards all His creatures. Encountering evil in human life, His Word necessarily reacts in judgement; but not as though that were the goal of His intervention in the process. The evil once recognized and judged becomes a point of departure for some new and original kind of good. Consequently, it is just when all seems irreparably lost that the renewing power of God makes itself felt. The hopeless calamity of the crucifixion was reversed in the resurrection of Christ; as when Israel was completely broken, and not only broken but discredited, a new stage in its history began, like a resurrection from the dead. God 'calls the things that are not as if they were',² and always in the service of an endless goodwill.

This is what is meant by the forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness is not simply a device for easing the burdened conscience (though it has that effect). It is more like 'an inexhaustible

¹ Luke xviii, 9.

² Romans iv, 17.

capacity for new growth, embedded in the plastic foundations of the universe.¹ Or rather, it is a creative act of the living God, which does not simply pass over the wreckage of past failures, but transforms and utilizes it. If we may put it so, the very wickedness of man gives God a new chance of creation. (That is why evil is bound to be overcome in the end, because its worst efforts call forth a more than countervailing power creative of good.) Forgiveness, then, is the power for a fresh start at the moment of deepest despair, 'according to the energy of the might of His strength, which He put into effect in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.'² Nor is it a purely individual matter, though it becomes real in becoming personal. It is an active force in history.

In our present situation, therefore, we have this ground of hope: that over and above all the ostensible factors at work there is an over-ruling factor which is the creative goodwill of God; and to this we cannot assign any necessary limits. When we survey the immanent possibilities of the situation, we must confess that the outlook is not promising. Much is said about the 'new world' for which we must plan, but the genuinely new factors upon which any plan must depend are not obvious. The more clear-sighted speak with a notable lack of assurance about what lies ahead. But we are not confined to the immanent possibilities of the situation. There is a further possibility; that creative energies from beyond history may enter into it and alter the whole prospect. God creates by His Word, 'calling the things that are not as if they were'. In our present crisis, it may be, He is calling to something which does not exist in us, but will come into existence at His Word.

¹ I owe this quotation, if my memory served me aright, to Mr Winston Churchill – I mean, of course, the other Winston Churchill, the American novelist.

² Ephesians i, 19–20. Paul puts in every word he can think of that means effectual power.

Here is something that we cannot plan. The initiative lies with God, who is speaking in the circumstances of our time to those who can hear. His Word awaits a response. The only admissible response from man to his Maker is obedience. The line of behaviour called for by obedience to God in the present circumstances, in its particulars, is left to our conscience, fortified by all the knowledge of relevant facts that we can get, and by honest thinking about them. But our thinking must be directed, and our conscience informed, upon principles which are given in God's self-revelation in Christ, and in the relation between God and man there set up. The Gospels are our guide.

To take one particular example, consider the significance of the Gospel precepts about forgiveness for the historical problem of our time. If our one ground of hope is God's forgiveness of the evil resident in the present situation, then it follows by inexorable logic that our response must include forgiveness of our enemies. By forgiveness I do not mean a warm sentimentality that muffles real wrongs. God's forgiveness, we have seen, is creative action for the renewal of human life wasted by evil, in full view of the reality of the evil, but with steady goodwill towards those who have done the evil. Human forgiveness is an attempt to imitate the divine, within our human limitations. That is, it is constructive action, based upon persistent goodwill, and directed towards 'overcoming evil with good'.¹ It is difficult, but it need not be either complicated or abstruse. 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him'² is not a bad beginning. However difficult, the demand is clear. 'If you do not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive your misdeeds.'³ This is no arbitrary ruling. It lies in the nature of the case. The creative goodwill of God, which means the possibility of a fresh start out of this fearful mess, becomes effective as it meets with the

¹ Romans xii, 21.

² Romans xii, 20.

³ Matthew vi, 15.

right response from men and finds expression in their action.

Here then is the basis of the 'transfiguration' of the situation which is called for by the present crisis. It is, let me repeat, a real concrete possibility here and now. The place where history is made is the place of encounter between God and man, where the Word of God is heard and man responds in obedience. Such is the purport of the whole biblical history. That history is alive in the Church, which was brought into being by it, and continually witnesses to it. In our time history is being made in the Church.

Not many years ago such a statement would have been met with a smile of incredulity. At this moment anyone who should dismiss the claim out of hand would show himself ignorant of what has been happening during the dark years all over Europe. The Church has been in many countries the sole effective custodian of values that were in danger of perishing from the earth. Divided as it is, the Church has spoken with one voice upon certain ultimate principles, whether the voice was that of an Orthodox metropolitan of Athens, a cardinal archbishop of Munich, or a Lutheran primate of Norway; an Anglican archbishop or a Roman Pope – or of many less conspicuous but not less faithful witnesses, some of whom paid dearly for their witness. There was no other voice that spoke with the like clarity and consistency.

Not only so, there was, in many countries, no other available centre for a community-life independent of perverted 'ideologies', and having promise for the future; and this corporate life expressed itself in common action. Most people knew something of the part played in Norway by Bishop Berggrav and his clergy, and the school-teachers who followed his lead. In Holland the Church inflexibly resisted orders of the usurping government which were contrary to the Law of God. In France an unheard-of unity of witness between catholics and protestants gave inspiration to a bewildered people. In Germany there was a similar

agreement of the two communions, unprecedented since the Reformation, in protest against iniquities and in succour of the oppressed. Since the close of the war we have learnt unsuspected facts about the persistence and weight of the 'church-opposition' in Germany – the only effective opposition there was, by general admission, even though it largely failed of immediate results.¹

Whether these and similar activities of the Church in many countries will lead (as they might well do) to a new orientation of affairs we do not yet know. But in such actions we see the biblical history coming alive, with its perpetually recurrent themes: the recognition and acceptance of a divine judgement upon our common sin; the acknowledgement of a power to remake human life; and the characteristic response, after the pattern of Christ and His apostles: 'We ought to obey God rather than men'.² We have, therefore, grounds for believing that history is being made in the Church. If so, it is not because the Church has a superior plan for reconstruction; or because its clergy speak with authority upon political or economic questions; or because its members are exceptionally virtuous or intelligent. It is because the Church, however low it falls, bears the indelible marks of its origin. It cannot help itself. It is bound to repeat in its services words and actions which recall the great divine Event out of which it arose; and these have proved their power, even in its worst periods, to shake men with the sense that they are confronted by God in His judgement and His mercy, and to drive them to a decision.

Through seeing the process at work in a concrete institution we understand how contemporary history falls into the context of the history which is revelation. We have

¹ Recently it has been reported that a representative body of the German Evangelical Church has made a courageous statement acknowledging not only Germany's guilt, but also the Church's own share in that guilt, despite its efforts and its loyal witness to the truth.

² Acts v, 29.

been too 'subjective' and individualist in our understanding of the Christian faith. The Bible deals all through with the conception of a *people* of God, which is the point of application of God's creative Word, and the place where history is made through man's response to it. Read in the light of that conception, and in the context of an actual community playing its part in the drama of our time, it becomes acutely relevant to our contemporary problem.

A Study Based on Letters to Young Churches

IN HIS ESSAY in *Three Views of Christianity*¹ Peter Howard tells the following story:

‘A Christian friend of mine journeyed to meet one of the rulers of the Kremlin in Moscow. He was astonished to see a New Testament on the desk of this Russian. He thought it had been put there so that he should think that this man had a faith in God.

‘Instead, the Russian banged the book with his fist, and said, “I have read here about Paul. He was a revolutionary. He turned things upside down wherever he went. He challenged everybody. He was out to change the world. Some loved him. Some hated him. Finally they killed him. Where do you find Christians like that today? If Christians had lived like that, the history of the last hundred years would have been different. The dark side of our revolution would have been needless.”

‘My friend was struck by the fact that the other man was disappointed at having to believe Christianity was a sham. The Russian was both sad and glad that he had found nothing in Christianity to match the passion and force of bloody revolution.’

What happened to Paul and how he obtained his inside knowledge is told in the Acts of the Apostles. His experience

¹ Victor Gollancz.

of life was different from that of his armchair critics. So was his experience of Christ. So were the results God achieved through him. Gibbon, no friend of Christianity, wrote in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 'Paul has done more to promote the idea of freedom and liberty than any man who set foot on western soil.'

The following study of the experience of the Christian life is taken from *Letters to Young Churches*¹. Several of these letters were written by Paul and all were written to real people, who were a small minority fighting a life and death battle for a mighty Empire. Both Peter and Paul gave their lives. Paul graphically describes what he went through:

'I have worked harder than any of them. I have served more prison sentences! I have been beaten times without number. I have faced death again and again. I have been beaten the regulation thirty-nine stripes by the Jews five times. I have been beaten with rods three times. I have been stoned once. I have been shipwrecked three times. I have been twenty-four hours in the open sea. In my travels I have been in constant danger from rivers and floods, from bandits, from my own countrymen, and from pagans. I have faced danger in city streets, danger in the desert, danger on the high seas, danger among false Christians. I have known exhaustion, pain, long vigils, hunger and thirst, doing without meals, cold and lack of clothing. Apart from all external trials I have the daily burden of responsibility for all the churches. Do you think anyone is weak without my feeling his weakness? Does anyone have his faith upset without my longing to restore him?' (2 *Corinthians xi*, 16).

These letters were written for people who had already made a start, for Paul had founded and visited many of these cells. In the Acts of the Apostles we can read of his times with them. He knew their needs and wrote to meet them.

In a typical passage Paul calls to mind the teaching he had already given. He writes:

¹ *Letters to Young Churches* by J. B. Phillips (Geoffrey Bles).

'Now, my brothers, I want to speak about the Gospel which I have previously preached to you, which you accepted, in which you are at present standing, and by which, if you remain faithful to the message I gave you, your salvation is being worked out – unless, of course, your faith had no meaning behind it at all. For I passed on to you Corinthians first of all the message I had myself received – that Christ died for our sins, as the Scriptures said He would; that He was buried and rose again on the third day, again as the Scriptures foretold. He was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve, and subsequently He was seen simultaneously by over five hundred Christians, of whom the majority are still alive, though some have since died. He was then seen by James, then by all the Messengers. And last of all, as if to one born abnormally late, He appeared to me!' (1 *Corinthians* xv, 1).

Throughout everything that Paul writes runs his ceaseless passion to remake men. That is his commitment and his target. He tells the Colossians: 'We warn everyone we meet and we teach everyone we can all that we know about Him, so that, if possible, we may bring every man up to his full maturity in Christ. This is what I am working at all the time, with all the strength that God gives me.' This is our purpose, too, in making a study of what he and others wrote. Every word, except the headings, comes straight out of the Bible – out of J. B. Phillips' translation of the New Testament Epistles entitled *Letters to Young Churches*.

FINDING THE LIFE

THE OUTLINE

1 GOD'S PLAN

- a* For all creation
- b* For all human history
- c* For all men
- d* For you

2 WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US

- a* He has redeemed us

- b* He has loved us
- c* He has shared His life with us
- d* He has taken us as His sons and heirs
- e* He has planned for us
- f* He has established His Church

3 THE BATTLE WE FIGHT

- a* In the universe
- b* In human nature

4 CHANGE

- a* Decision
- b* The end of the old and the beginning of the new
- c* God's gift

5 THE FRUITS OF CHANGE

- a* Guidance and clear thinking
- b* Power in our lives
- c* Suffering, hardship and want turned into triumph
- d* Faith – trust in God

6 HOW TO LIVE THE ANSWER

- a* The realisation of sin
- b* Repentance and forgiveness
- c* A quality of life: i. Commitment
 - ii. Absolute standards
 - iii. Faith
- d* Care for other people
- e* Keep Christ central
- f* Move as one
- g* Pray

7 WARNINGS

- a* Being impure
- b* Being ambitious
- c* Being popular
- d* Being clever
- e* Being right
- f* Being critical
- g* Being untrusting
- h* Being greedy

8 PROMISES

- a The divine 'Yes'
- b Your anxiety and His care
- c Your temptation and His way out
- d Everything we need
- e Eternal life

1

GOD'S PLAN

When I think of the greatness of this great Plan I fall on my knees before God the Father. *Ephesus iii. 14*¹

a FOR ALL CREATION

Through the Son God made the whole universe, and to the Son He has ordained that all creation shall ultimately belong. *Jewish Christians i. 1*

The hope is that in the end the whole of created life will be rescued from the tyranny of change and decay, and have its share in that magnificent liberty which can only belong to the children of God! *Rome viii. 18*

b FOR ALL HUMAN HISTORY

God has allowed us to know the secret of His Plan, and it is this: He purposes in His sovereign will that all human history shall be consummated in Christ, that everything that exists in Heaven or earth shall find its perfection and fulfilment in Him. And here is the staggering thing – that in all which will one day belong to Him we have been promised a share. *Ephesus i. 3*

Christ's reign will and must continue until every enemy has been conquered. *1 Corinth xv. 20*

c FOR ALL MEN

His purpose is that all men should be saved and come to realise the truth. *1 Timothy i. 18*

¹ References are given as in Phillips' translation, not by the particular verse but by the section in which they occur.

He allowed me to understand His Secret by giving me a direct revelation . . . This Secret was hidden to past generations of mankind, but it has now, by the Spirit, been made plain . . . It is simply this: that the Gentiles, who were previously excluded from God's Agreements, are to be . . . equal partners in God's Promise given by Christ through the Gospel.

Ephesus iii. 1

In this new man of God's design there is no distinction between Greek and Hebrew, Jew or Gentile, foreigner or savage, slave or free man. Christ is all that matters for Christ lives in them all.

Colossae iii. 1

d FOR YOU

God has planned to give a vision of the full wonder and splendour of His secret Plan for the sons of men. And this secret is simply this: Christ *in you*! Yes, Christ *in you* bringing with Him the hope of all the glorious things to come.

Colossae i. 23

Before the foundation of the world He chose us to become, in Christ, His holy and blameless children living within His constant care.

Ephesus i. 3

The magnificent future God has planned for us.

Rome viii. 18

2

WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US

God is the Answer to our deepest longings.

1 Corinth vi. 12

a HE HAS REDEEMED US

You have been 'ransomed' from the futile way of living passed on to you by your fathers' traditions, not with some money payment of transient value, but by the costly shedding of blood. The price was in fact the life-blood of Christ, the unblemished and unstained Lamb of Sacrifice.

1 Peter i. 13

Christ suffered for you . . . He personally bore our

sins in His own body on the Cross so that we might be dead to sin and be alive to all that is good. It was the suffering that He bore that has healed you. You had wandered away like so many sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.

1 Peter i. 18

We see real love, not in the fact that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to make personal atonement for our sins.

1 John iv. 7

If, while we were His enemies, Christ reconciled us to God by *dying for us*, surely now that we are reconciled we may be perfectly certain of our salvation through His *living in us*.

Rome v. 1

It is through the Son, at the cost of His own blood, that we are redeemed, freely forgiven through that full and generous grace which has overflowed into our lives and opened our eyes to the truth.

Ephesus i. 3

b HE HAS LOVED US

The proof of God's amazing love is this: that it was *while we were sinners* that Christ died for us.

Rome v. 1

God is love.

1 John iv. 7

c HE HAS SHARED HIS LIFE WITH US AND FORGIVEN US

You, who were spiritually dead because of your sins . . . God has now made to share in the very life of Christ! He has forgiven you all your sins: Christ has utterly wiped out the damning evidence of broken laws and commandments which always hung over our heads, and has completely annulled it by nailing it over His own head on the Cross.

Colossae ii. 11

d HE HAS TAKEN US AS HIS SONS AND HEIRS

It is because you really are His sons that God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts to cry 'Father, dear Father'. You, my brother, are not a

servant any longer; you are a *son*, and if you are a son, then you are certainly an heir of God through Christ. *Galatia iii. 23*

Consider the incredible love that the Father has shown us in allowing us to be called 'children of God'—and that is not just what we are called, but what we *are*. *1 John ii. 29*

You have been adopted into the very family circle of God and you can say with a full heart, 'Father, my Father.' *Rome viii. 14*

e HE HAS PLANNED FOR US

We know that God not only loves you but has selected you for a special purpose.

Now the power that has planned this experience for us is God, and He has given us His spirit as a guarantee of its truth. This makes us confident, whatever happens. *2 Corinth v. 5*

f HE HAS ESTABLISHED HIS CHURCH

God has placed everything under the power of Christ and has set Him up as Head of everything for the Church. For the Church is His Body, and in that Body lives fully the whole wide universe.

Ephesus i. 15

Nobody ever hates or neglects his own body, he feeds it and looks after it. And that is what Christ does for His Body, the Church. And we are all members of that Body, we are His flesh and blood!

Ephesus v. 22

. . . the complex wisdom of God's plan being worked out through the Church, in conformity to that timeless Purpose which He centred in Jesus, our Lord. *Ephesus iii. 1*

3

THE BATTLE WE FIGHT

The battle we are fighting is on the spiritual level.

2 Corinth x. 1

a IN THE UNIVERSE

Our battle is to bring down every deceptive fantasy and every imposing defence that men erect against the true knowledge of God. *2 Corinth x. 1*

Our fight is not against any physical enemy: it is against organisations and powers that are spiritual. We are up against the unseen power that controls this dark world, and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil. *Ephesus vi. 10*

b IN HUMAN NATURE

My own behaviour baffles me . . . I often find that I have the will to do good, but not the power. That is, I don't accomplish the good I set out to do, and the evil I don't really want to do I find I am always doing . . . It is an agonising situation, and who on earth can set me free from the clutches of my own sinful nature? *Rome vii. 14*

4

CHANGE

I leave the past behind and with hands outstretched to whatever lies ahead I go straight for the goal. *Phillipi iii. 4*

a DECISION

You *belong* to the power you choose to obey. *Rome vi. 15*

Even Christ did not choose His own pleasure. *Rome iv. 1*

Don't, I beg you, merely hear the message but put it into practice. *James i. 19*

b THE END OF THE OLD AND THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW

If a man is in Christ he becomes a new person altogether—the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new. *2 Corinth v. 11*

God . . . has lifted us right out of the old life to take our place with Him in Christ. *Ephesus ii. 1*

You have finished with the old man and all he did and have begun life as the new man, who is out to learn what he ought to be, according to the plan of God. *Colossae iii. 1*

Let us never forget that our old selves died with Him on the Cross that the tyranny of sin over us might be broken. *Rome vi. 1*

How changed are my ambitions! *Philippi iii. 4*

What happens now to the pride of achievement? There is no more room for it . . . the whole matter is now on a different plane—believing instead of achieving. *Rome iii. 27*

What you learned was to fling off the dirty clothes of the old way of living, which were rotted through and through with lust's illusions, and, with yourselves mentally and spiritually re-made, to put on the clean fresh clothes of the new life which was made by God's design for righteousness and the holiness which is no illusion. *Ephesus iv. 17*

My present life is not that of the old 'I', but the living Christ within me. *Galatia ii. 11*

If . . . you cut the nerve of your instinctive actions by obeying the Spirit, you are on the way to real living. *Rome viii. 9*

c GOD'S GIFT

When the kindness of God our Saviour and His love towards men appeared, He saved us—not by virtue of any moral achievement of ours, but by the cleansing power of a new birth and the moral renewal of the Holy Spirit, which He gave us so generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour. *Titus iii. 1*

Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God remould your minds from within. *Rome xii. 1*

His gifts are made that Christians might be properly equipped for their service. *Ephesus iv. 7*

5

THE FRUITS OF CHANGE

It is important that we go forward in the light of such truth as we have ourselves attained to.

Philippi iii. 15

As, therefore, God's picked representatives of the new humanity, purified and beloved of God Himself, be merciful in action, kindly in heart, humble in mind. *Colossae iii. 12*

a GUIDANCE AND CLEAR THINKING

Thanks be to God who leads us, wherever we are . . .

2 Corinth ii. 12

If . . . any of you does not know how to meet any particular problem he has only to ask God. *James i. 2*

If our lives are centred in the Spirit, let us be guided by the Spirit. *Galatia v. 16*

You know that the Spirit teaches you in everything. *1 John ii. 21*

All who follow the leading of God's Spirit are God's own sons. *Rome viii. 14*

Incredible as it may sound, we who are spiritual have the very thoughts of Christ! *1 Corinth ii. 13*

The spiritual man . . . has an insight into the meaning of everything. *1 Corinth ii. 13*

These words are still being said for our ears to hear:
'Today if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts.'
Jewish Christians iii. 7

b POWER IN OUR LIVES

The Christ you have to deal with is not a weak person outside you, but a tremendous power inside you. *2 Corinth xii. 19*

Once the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead lives within you He will, by that same Spirit, bring to your whole being new strength and vitality. *Rome viii. 9*

It is God Who is at work within you, giving you the will and the power to achieve His purpose. *Philippi ii. 12*

I am ready for anything through the strength of the One Who lives within me. *Philippi iv. 10*

We receive whatever we ask for, because we are obeying His orders and following His plans. His orders are that we should put our trust in the Name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another—as we used to hear Him say in person. *1 John iii. 19*

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power and love and a sound mind. *2 Timothy i. 3*

Be strong—not in yourselves but in the Lord, in the power of His boundless resource. *Ephesus vi. 10*

... to Him Who by His power within us is able to do far more than we ever dare to ask or imagine. *Ephesus iii. 14*

The outward man does indeed suffer wear and tear, but every day the inward man receives fresh strength. *2 Corinth iv. 15*

c SUFFERING, HARDSHIP AND WANT TRANSFORMED INTO TRIUMPH

Persecution is inevitable for those who are determined to live really Christian lives. *2 Timothy iii. 10*

You are given, in this battle, the privilege not merely of believing in Christ but also of suffering for His sake. *Philippi i. 12*

We can be full of joy here and now even in our trials and troubles. *Rome v. 1*

There were times I begged the Lord for it to leave me, but His reply has been, 'My grace is enough for

you: for where there is weakness, My power is shown the more completely.' *2 Corinth xii. 1*

The more we share Christ's suffering the more we are able to give of His encouragement. *2 Corinth i. 3*

Although accepting the message meant bitter persecution, yet you experienced the joy of the Holy Spirit. *1 Thessalonica i. 2*

We believe now that we had this experience of coming to the end of our tether that we might learn to trust, not in ourselves, but in God who can raise the dead. *2 Corinth i. 8*

God corrects us all our days for our own benefit, to teach us His holiness. *Jewish Christians xii. 4*

Their joy and the fact of their being down to their last penny themselves, produced a magnificent concern for other people. *2 Corinth viii. 1*

The sorrow which God uses means a change of heart and leads to salvation—it is the world's sorrow that is such a deadly thing. *2 Corinth vii. 2*

The preaching of the Cross is, I know, nonsense to those who are involved in this dying world, but to us who are being saved from that death it is nothing less than the power of God. *1 Corinth i. 13*

d FAITH—TRUST IN GOD

Faith means putting our full confidence in the things we hope for, it means being certain of things we cannot see. *Jewish Christians x. 32*

It is after all only by faith that our minds accept as a fact that the whole scheme of time and space was designed by God—that the world which we can see is operating on principles that are invisible. *Jewish Christians x. 32*

It is believing *in the heart* that makes a man righteous before God, and it is stating his belief by *his own mouth* that confirms his salvation. *Rome x. 1*

He refused to allow any distrust of a definite pronouncement of God to make him waver. He drew strength from his faith, and, while giving the glory to God, remained absolutely convinced that God was able to implement His own promise.

Rome iv. 19

I know the One in Whom I have placed my confidence, and I am perfectly certain that the work He has committed to me is safe in His Hands until that Day.

2 Timothy i. 3

6

HOW TO LIVE THE ANSWER

The great thing is to obey the orders of Almighty God.

1 Corinth vii. 12

Whatever happens, make sure that your everyday life is worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

Philippi i. 12

a THE REALISATION OF SIN

Everyone has sinned, everyone is falling short of the beauty of God's plan.

Rome iii. 21

If we are silly enough to refuse to admit that we are sinners, then we live in a world of illusion and truth becomes a stranger to us.

1 John i. 5

If we take up the attitude, 'We have not sinned,' we flatly deny God's diagnosis of our condition and cut ourselves off from what He has to say to us.

1 John i. 5

Realise that you have sinned and get your hands clean again. Realise that you have been disloyal and get your hearts made true once more.

James iv. 7

You should get into the habit of admitting your sins to each other, and praying for each other.

James v. 13

You should be deeply sorry . . . You will have to feel very small in the sight of God before He will set you on your feet once more.

James iv. 7

b REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS

If we freely admit that we have sinned, we find God utterly reliable and straightforward – He forgives our sins and makes us thoroughly clean from all that is evil.

1 John i. 5

c A QUALITY OF LIFE**(i) Commitment**

Like men rescued from certain death, put yourselves in God's hands as weapons of good for His own purposes.

Rome vi. 1

Let us be Christ's men from head to foot, and give no chances to the flesh to have its fling.

Rome xiii. 11

(ii) Absolute standards

We even fight to capture every thought until it acknowledges the authority of Christ.

2 Corinth x. 1

Honesty

Our great desire is to lead a life that is completely honest.

Jewish Christians xiii. 18

Purity

The calling of God is not to impurity but to the most thorough purity . . . The Spirit God gives us is called the *Holy Spirit*.

1 Thessalonica iv. 1

Live your whole life in the Spirit and you will not satisfy the desires of your lower nature.

Galatia v. 16

God's plan is to make you holy, and that entails first of all a clean cut with sexual immorality – every one of you should learn to control his body, keeping it pure and treating it with respect, and never regarding it as an instrument for self-gratification . . . You cannot break this rule without in some way cheating your fellow men.

1 Thessalonica iv. 1

Unselfishness

For though I am no man's slave, yet I have made myself everyone's slave, that I might win more men to Christ.

1 Corinth ix. 16

Love

This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience – it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive; it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance . . .

1 *Corinth xiii.* 1

Let everything that you do be done in love.

1 *Corinth xvi.* 13

Now that you have, by obeying the truth, made your souls clean enough for a genuine love of your fellows, see that you do love each other fervently and from the heart.

1 *Peter i.* 22

Real love means obeying the Father's orders. 2 *John i.* 4

The test of the genuineness of our love for God's family lies in this question – do we love God Himself and do we obey His commands? 1 *John v.* 1

(iii) Faith

Above all be sure that you take Faith as your shield.

Ephesus vi. 10

Just as you received Christ, so go on living in Him – in simple faith.

Colossae ii. 4

Don't worry over anything whatever. *Philippi iv.* 2

Help each other to stand firm in the faith every day.

Jewish Christians iii. 7

Our hope is that your growing faith will mean the expansion of our sphere of action. 2 *Corinth x.* 13

d CARE FOR OTHER PEOPLE

Our message has been engraved not in stone, but in living men and women.

2 *Corinth iii.* 1

I myself try to adapt myself to all men without considering my own advantage but *their* advantage, that if possible they may be saved. 1 *Corinth x.* 23

He gives us comfort in our trials so that we in

turn may be able to give the same sort of strong sympathy to others in theirs. *2 Corinth i. 3*

I can endure all these things for the sake of those whom God is calling, so that they too may receive the salvation of Jesus Christ. *2 Timothy ii. 1*

Open your hearts to one another as Christ has opened His heart to you, and God will be glorified. *Rome xv. 1*

Let us have real warm affection for one another as between brothers, and a willingness to let the other man have the credit. *Rome xii. 9*

Carry each other's burdens and so live out the law of Christ. *Galatia vi. 1*

e KEEP CHRIST CENTRAL

The very spring of our actions is the love of Christ. *2 Corinth v. 11*

The rising of Christ from the dead is the very heart of our message. *1 Corinth xv. 12*

Let Christ Himself be your example . . . He humbled Himself by living a life of utter obedience, even to the extent of dying, *and the death He died was the death of a common criminal.* *Philippi ii. 5*

Delight yourselves in the Lord . . . you will find it a great safeguard to your souls. *Philippi ii. 19*

Think constantly of Him enduring all that sinful men could say against Him and you will not lose your purpose or your courage. *Jewish Christians xii. 1*

I want you to think of the Special Messenger and High Priest of our faith, Christ Jesus. See Him as faithful to the charge God gave him. *Jewish Christians iii. 1*

We have no superhuman High Priest to whom our weaknesses are unintelligible – He himself has shared fully in all our experience of temptation, except that He never sinned. *Jewish Christians iv. 14*

Let us run the race that we have to run with patience, our eyes fixed on Jesus the Source and the Goal of our faith. *Jewish Christians xii. 1*

The teaching I gave you was given me personally by God himself, and it was this: the Lord Jesus, in the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread and when He had given thanks He broke it and said, 'Take, eat, this is My Body which is being broken for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.' Similarly, when supper was ended, He took the cup saying, 'This cup is the New Agreement in My Blood: do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' *1 Corinth xi. 23*

The Gospel is centred in God's Son. *Rome i. 1*

Remember always, as the centre of everything, Jesus Christ. *2 Timothy ii. 1*

f MOVE AS ONE

Now you are together the Body of Christ, and individually you are members of Him. *1 Corinth xii. 12*

Now I do beg you, my brothers, by all that Christ means to you, to speak with one voice, and not allow yourselves to be split up into parties. All together you should be achieving a unity in thought and judgement. *1 Corinth i. 10*

Share the happiness of those who are happy, and the sorrow of those who are sad. *Rome xii. 9*

We who have strong faith ought to shoulder the burden of the doubts and qualms of others and not just go our own sweet way. *Rome xv. 1*

Make it your aim to be at one in the Spirit, and you will inevitably be at peace with one another. *Ephesus iv. 1*

g PRAY

Pray at all times with every kind of spiritual prayer, keeping alert and persistent as you pray for all Christ's men and women. *Ephesus vi. 10*

If any of you is in trouble let him pray. *James v. 13*

Always maintain the habit of prayer: be both alert and thankful as you pray. *Colossae iv. 2*

Be happy in your faith at all times. Never stop praying. Be thankful, whatever the circumstances may be. *1 Thessalonica v. 12*

Tremendous power is made available through a good man's earnest prayer. *James v. 13*

Don't worry over anything whatever; tell God every detail of your needs in earnest and thankful prayer. *Philippi iv. 2*

7

WARNINGS

Be sure that you do not refuse to hear the Voice of God! *Jewish Christians xii. 18*

Beware that none of you becomes deaf and blind to God through the delusive glamour of sin. *Jewish Christians iii. 7*

You must try to appreciate both the kindness and the strict justice of God. *Rome xi. 17*

a BEING IMPURE

Don't be under any illusion – neither the impure, the idolater or the adulterer; neither the effeminate, the pervert or the thief; neither the swindler, the drunkard, the foul-mouthed or the rapacious shall have any share in the Kingdom of God. *And such men, remember, were some of you!* *1 Corinth vi. 1*

Avoid sexual looseness like the plague! *1 Corinth vi. 12*

Keep clear of the desires of your lower natures for they are always at war with your souls. *1 Corinth ii. 11*

b BEING AMBITIOUS

Let us not be ambitious for our own reputations, for that only means making each other jealous. *Galatia v. 16*

Make it your ambition to have no ambition.

1 Thessalonica iv. 1

c BEING POPULAR

If I were trying to win human approval I should never be Christ's servant. *Galatia i. 6*

Your former companions may think it very queer that you will no longer join with them in their riotous excesses, and accordingly say all sorts of unpleasant things about you. Don't worry; they are the ones who will have to explain their behaviour before the One Who is prepared to judge all men.

1 Peter iv. 1

These men . . . want to present a pleasing front to the world and they want to avoid being persecuted for the Cross of Christ. *Galatia vi. 11*

You have been redeemed, at tremendous cost; don't therefore sell yourselves as slaves to men!

1 Corinth vii. 12

d BEING CLEVER

If any man among you thinks himself one of the world's clever ones, let him discard his cleverness that he may learn to be truly wise. For this world's cleverness is stupidity to God. *1 Corinth iii. 16*

Remember that there are men who have plenty to say but have no knowledge of God. *1 Corinth iv 29*

While knowledge may make a man look big, it is only love that can make him grow to his full stature. For whatever a man may know, he still has a lot to learn, but if he loves God, he is opening his whole life to the Spirit of God. *1 Corinth viii. 1*

Be careful that nobody spoils your faith through intellectualism or high-sounding nonsense. *Colossae ii. 4*

The man who is so 'advanced' that he is not content with what Christ taught, has in fact no God. *2 John i. 9*

e BEING RIGHT

All the time they are going about trying to prove

their own righteousness they have the wrong attitude to receive His. *Rome x. 1*

Don't become set in your own opinions. *Rome xii. 9*

Has not God made the wisdom of this world look foolish? *1 Corinth i. 19*

Let the man who feels sure of his standing today be careful that he does not fall tomorrow. *1 Corinth x. 1*

f BEING CRITICAL

At whatever point you condemn others you automatically condemn yourself. *Rome ii. 1*

After all, who are you to criticise the servant of somebody else, especially when that Somebody Else is God? *Rome xiv. 1*

How can you then be so silly as to imagine that you are your neighbour's Judge? *James iv. 11*

Let us therefore stop turning critical eyes on one another. If we must be critical, let us be critical of our own conduct. *Rome xiv. 13*

If you are angry, be sure that it is not out of wounded pride or bad temper. *Ephesus iv. 17*

Be careful that none of you fails to respond to the grace which God gives, for if he does there can very easily spring up in him a bitter spirit which is not only bad in itself but can also poison the lives of many others. *Jewish Christians xii. 14*

Why, then, criticise your brother's actions, why try to make him look small? We shall all be judged one day, not by each other's standards or even our own, but by the standard of Christ. *Rome xiv. 5*

g BEING UNTRUSTING

It is all too plain that it was refusal to trust God that prevented those men from entering His Rest. *Jewish Christians iii. 7*

You should therefore be most careful, my brothers, that there should not be in any of you that wicked-

ness of heart which refuses to trust, and deserts the cause of the living God. *Jewish Christians iii. 7*

Come back to your senses, and don't dabble in sinful doubts. *1 Corinth iv. 29*

h BEING GREEDY

Loving money leads to all kinds of evil, and some men in the struggle to be rich have lost their faith and caused themselves untold agonies of mind. *1 Timothy vi. 3*

Tell those who are rich . . . their security should be invested in the life to come. *1 Timothy vi. 17*

There are many, of whom I have told you before and tell you again now, even with tears, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ. These men are heading for utter destruction – their God is their own appetite. *Philippi iii. 15*

8

PROMISES

Once they are made, God does not withdraw His gifts or His calling. *Rome xi. 25*

a THE DIVINE 'YES'

Jesus Christ, the Son of God . . . is Himself no doubtful quantity. He is the divine 'Yes'. Every promise of God finds its affirmative in Him. *2 Corinth i. 15*

Jesus Christ is always the same, yesterday, today and for ever. *Jewish Christians xiii*

He will keep you steadfast in the faith to the end. *1 Corinth i. 1*

He Who calls you is utterly faithful and He will finish what He has set out to do. *1 Thessalonica v. 19*

b YOUR ANXIETY AND HIS CARE

You can rest the weight of all your anxieties upon Him, for you are always in His care. *1 Peter v. 5*

c YOUR TEMPTATION AND HIS WAY OUT

No temptation has come your way that is too hard for flesh and blood to bear. But God can be trusted not to allow you to suffer any temptation beyond your powers of endurance. He will see to it that every temptation has a way out, so that it will never be impossible for you to bear it. *1 Corinth x. 13*

If we really are living in the same light in which He eternally exists, then we have true fellowship with each other, and the blood which He shed for us keeps us clean from any and every sin. *1 John i. 5*

d EVERYTHING YOU NEED

My God will supply all that you need from His glorious resources in Christ Jesus. *Philippi iv. 20*

If God is for us, who can be against us? He Who did not shield His Own Son but gave Him up for us all – can we not trust such a God to give us, with Him, everything else that we need? *Rome viii. 31*

e ETERNAL LIFE

Christ has completely abolished death, and has now, through the Gospel, opened to us men the shining possibilities of the life that is eternal. *2 Timothy i. 3*

His free gift is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Rome vi. 15*

In life or death we are in the hands of God. Christ lived and died that He might be the Lord in both life and death. *Rome xiv. 5*

At present all we see is the baffling reflection of reality; we are like men looking at a landscape in a small mirror. The time will come when we shall see reality whole and face to face. *1 Corinth xiii. 9*

As members of a sinful race all men die; as members of the Christ of God shall all men be raised to life. *1 Corinth xv. 20*

Francis of Assisi Speaks to the Twentieth Century

Francis of Assisi would probably have been surprised if he had been told that his life altered the course of history. Although that is what happened he did not plan it that way. A biographer says: 'Francis lived through all his actions long before their meaning became clear to him; he walked along the paths before he knew about their goal.'

He knew how to deal with his mistakes. He did not allow his pride to weigh him down or take him out of the battle. 'For him penitence was the beginning of a new life, and not a thing to make him hang his head. His unspeakable gaiety flowed from the certainty of his redemption, and he considered it, with genial insight, as one of his best weapons against the wiles of the Devil.'

Francis was truly a man who was governed by God. His life was directed by God. On the writing of his Rule he said: 'It is God who dictated it to me.' Another word God spoke to him became the core of his life and his message: 'I have placed My living gospel in your heart. Who loves Me follows Me, lives My word.'

* * *

Prebendary Mackay imagines Francis speaking to the twentieth century about our own needs and those of our shattered world.¹

'God's world, my children, is a very beautiful world, and human society, notwithstanding its imperfections and

¹From *The Message of Francis d'Assisi* by H. F. B. Mackay (Mowbrays)

failings, can give much happiness.

'The lives of these English boys and girls of yours in their beautiful schools and colleges is a well-ordered life, and healthy and happy in a limited way. But no clear ideal of life is set before them, and their horizon is bounded by the happy present, while your happy young people are surrounded by much that is terribly unhealthy and unhappy, the knowledge of which is shut away from them. Although there was much violence and much sickness in our cities of the thirteenth century, we never imagined such terrible conditions of life as I see in your vast cities of the twentieth century; above all you people are living without the consolation of any conscious faith in God. In my day when the feudal lords oppressed the people, and hunger and sickness and war brought them suffering, the Church, while she sought to protect them and help them, opened to them the vision of another world, "the Kingdom where all the saints rejoice with Christ". This vision your multitude has lost.

'There is a strong call today then for the strong and happy to come to the rescue of the weak and unhappy. Before they can do this they must know what weakness and unhappiness are themselves. Nearly all young people go through a secret crisis; there comes a moment when they find that things are not so simple and happy as they seem. New yearnings awaken in them which they do not know how to gratify.

'This came to me at the Porta Nuova when I found that the light had died out of the things I had loved.

'When this happens in the lives of your young people all will depend upon their seeing that the source of their happiness is not *in things*, but has spoken to them *through things*.

'If they do not see this they will fling themselves on the earthly things out of which the light has died, and try to get their satisfaction out of matter.

'But if they can see this they will begin to seek the

spiritual element in life which is their real love, and if they do that diligently, pursue it until they capture it, and clasp it, they will find that the secret of what they have loved in nature and in youthful life is a Person, and that that Person is Love.

'Indeed it seems to me that your whole world today bears a likeness to seeking, restless, disenchanted, questioning youth, for an age is coming to birth. This is the meaning of the noisy gaiety of today, its foolish distractions and excitements, all this is *Quest*, *Quest*, but *Quest* going the wrong way; and this is the meaning of the strange cults and theories of today, its eager trust in psycho-analysis, its drama and its fiction obsessed by sex, its music and its paintings seeking on the surface of things for new modes of expression. This too is all *Quest*, and perhaps an inevitable moment in the *Quest*. Be patient with it, as my faithful friend was patient with me. How much of your life today reminds me of those sad and weary days when I tramped the hills with my faithful friend, and poured out all my complaint. Your poor world is scattered in a hundred directions on the stony hills with its back to all the churches, groping and searching in the darkness. Let me try to point the way. It is not yet the way of service. If your age flings itself upon plans for the recovery of the spiritual sense and for the service of men, it will fail miserably.

'The age which is being born must also be born again, and an age is reborn only in so far as the individuals which compose it are. I found that rebirth meant two things. I had a hindrance which barred me off from a life of purely unselfish love, it was a horror of unloveliness which was expressed to me by leprosy, and with that barrier I had to be utterly brutal, I smashed it down into ten thousand pieces, and that brought me to my second need, a loneliness and darkness which were complete. In the heart of this I found our Lord. I found him to be without me, for he spoke to me from the crucifix at St Damian's, and I found him to be

within me, for ever after he was always in the centre of my heart and life and, there enthroned, he showed me the whole world in relation to himself, and I began to love it in a new way as the creation and the love of him who was the centre of my heart and life.

'This is my message to the twentieth century. Do not rest until you have smashed every hindrance within you to a life of purely unselfish love; do not rest until you have got yourself face to face with Christ; do not rest until, at any cost, you have made Jesus Christ your own, and that means discovering that the secret of life is in being the servant of Christ among your brethren.

'I began by making a great mistake about this. I thought to serve Christ with my father's money. You cannot do that. You cannot do that, your inventions, your civilisation, your culture, they cannot do this work for you. Our Lord refuses them all except in so far as you yourself embody them. *You must give yourself*, that must be your intention from the first, what it involves you will presently discover. I was wrong when I offered my father's money, but I was right when I thought I was to begin my work as a stonemason, repairing the tumble-down churches about me. You too, of the twentieth century, must begin your new life in the spirit of manual labour, handling shapeless stones and rebuilding with them the falling things you see around you. When I look back on my life on earth I see that all that came after hung on those three years of manual work, rebuilding St Damian's, St Peter's and St Mary's. I see that carrying those stones and being content to carry them for the love of Jesus with no prospect of ever doing anything else for him, united me more closely to Jesus than aught else, and that if I had died then I should still be where I am now. You will do nothing if you begin reconstruction in the rôle of architect, you will do nothing unless you begin as labourers, you must carry and lay the stones, leaving it to God to plan.

'The most crying need of the twentieth century is the

reunion of Christendom. I could not have done my work today because there is no common mind among Christians by which my message could be received; but you will get no further with that great work until you are restoring faith and holiness in those among whom you live. Here is your St Damian's, on the walls of which you must work as the fellow labourers of God. Work out what Christian fellowship means, mark where and why it is not attained in the society to which you belong.

'But be sure as you face your task that no surface movement of yours can help the twentieth century. It waits for a new movement of the Spirit of God coming from behind things.

'You cannot mend this world of yours with care and skill as you would mend a broken cup.

'The advance for which you pray can only come through a spiritual upheaval which will make the boundaries of today valueless, which will hurl people pell-mell together, so that they find themselves forced to remake and rebuild.

'Great troubles will attend this divine upheaval, they must not frighten you. We suffered many in our movement long ago, but that only meant it was working against the tendencies of a fallen world which needed its message.

'And remember you go out not to seek man, there is no such being as Man, there are only men, each called of God; each free to obey, or refuse; each unique; you go out to seek men and you go out to bring them not Christianity, there is no such thing as Christianity, it is a word coined to deceive you, you go out to bring them Christ.

'But remember if your movement is to be one with ours it must be passionate as a love tale, and like the love song in the Canticles, "terrible as an army with banners." You have seen a movement of hate incomparable for size and horror in human history. Its horror drew out all that was chivalrous in the best of men and women. Why should not that chivalry enroll itself under the Rider on the White Horse,

and go forth conquering and to conquer, robed in fair linen white and clean? Why not now a movement of love incomparable for size and glory in human history?

'You are doing nothing big enough. This is my charge against the twentieth century.

'There is much love of Christ and desire for Christ in the world today, but nowhere is it concentrated into a terrific instrument smashing through the obstacles. God has not forsaken his world, the great powers that sent my brethren through the world are all ranged up waiting to come through again, but God has given men free will, and he cannot impose a new era upon them, they must help to make the link with the powers who wait. Somebody must smash through, and liberate the Divine powers into the world.

'And the hammer is the Cross.

'I preached our Lord to the world, and I ruled the brethren that he gathered round me, but after a while He unfolded to me the lot he had all the while prepared for me. It was to be crucified with him for my brethren's sake. That is your lot if you are to be imitators of me, even as I also was of Christ.

'The twentieth century waits for a sign. There can never be another sign of redemption than that which has been given.

'If you will go into the sacristy of the church at Assisi they will show you the letter I wrote at the end to my brother Leo.

'Look at the symbol with which I close it.

'I have drawn a hill shaped like a skull bearing a Cross which fills the horizon. It is a Cross which has no head piece or title. *It is a Cross shaped like a hammer.*

'But remember you and your world cannot take it and wield it unless you bear five wounds, in hands and feet and side.'

THE PRAYER OF ST FRANCIS

Lord, make me the instrument of Your peace.
Where there is hatred may I bring love;
Where there is malice may I bring pardon;
Where there is discord may I bring harmony;
Where there is error may I bring truth;
Where there is doubt may I bring faith;
Where there is despair may I bring hope;
Where there is darkness may I bring Your light;
Where there is sadness may I bring joy.

O, Master, may I seek not so much to be comforted as to
comfort,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love,
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in losing our lives that we shall find them,
It is in forgiving that we shall be forgiven,
It is in dying that we shall rise up to eternal life.

Christ as the Voice of the Absolute

THE CALL OF CHRIST is still to absolute standards – indeed standards that are not absolute are no standards at all. The American philosopher ‘William Ernest Hocking’ has written:

‘If the standard which reports the true measure of our performance is not held in its full simplicity and force, the result will be the replacement of the true standard with something “fairly good”. This is the new idolatry . . . willing like its ancestor to make a god of the best it has so far achieved.

‘It is part of the strange shallowness of recent Western life that it should be deemed a conceit to recognise an absolute, and a humility to consider all standards relative, whereas it is precisely the reverse: it is only the absolute that duly rebukes our pride. And only a religion setting an absolute standard for the heart as well as for the will can carry the permanent cure for spiritual arrogance, while remaining – at whatever stage of our moral journey – still in advance. That religion, again under whatever name, is in its nature the Only Way.’¹

The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Professor James S. Stewart, preaching in an Anglican Church in Birmingham, May 3, 1964, said:

‘There are sub-Christian standards of culture, the false and boring sophistication of sex, the glamourising of what

¹ *The Coming World Civilization* by William Ernest Hocking (George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1958).

is meretricious and unworthy. Many moral issues are being bedevilled by the view that standards are relative and not absolute. You have all this glib talk about constructing a hierarchy of moral values with charity at the top and chastity some way down the list. The fact is that the moral values of truth, beauty and goodness are not to be tampered with by society and democracy.¹

Preaching on the same day in Great St Mary's Church, Cambridge, the Bishop of Coventry, Dr Cuthbert Bardsley, said: 'There is a sternness about our Lord's teaching which is ignored or forgotten at our peril . . . Remove the cutting edge from the Gospel; remove the absolute demands from the teaching of the Lord, and you have removed the last preventative defence from the conscience of those who desire to sin.

'It has only to be rumoured that it is not always sinful to have premarital sexual relationships or to have a mistress and immediately everybody thinks that he is the one exception.'

That same week the Archbishop of Westminster, Dr Heenan, on behalf of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy of England and Wales, stated: 'the Church while free to revise her own positive laws has no power of any kind to alter the laws of God'. His statement went on to say: 'What may appear to be difficult for weak human nature is possible by the help of God's grace. Grace is real and powerful.'

Absolute standards apply to more than personal change. Horizons must always be wider than that. We need an aim big enough to shape the way we live. Tolerance of evil needs to become a passionate pursuit of good.

A Chinese diplomat was explaining recently why Christianity was not wanted in China. He said: 'I was brought up in a Christian school. So were many of the modern leaders of China. The Christians were mostly sincere. Not all of them, but most of them. But they were largely concerned with personal salvation and filling churches.

¹ The Scottish *Daily Mail*, May 4, 1964.

I and my friends were concerned with China. We wanted to care for the homes of the people, the work of the people, the food of the people, the future of the nation. Our aims were bigger than the Christian aims. They had not a chance.'

Personal salvation is essential. But when it becomes a finishing post instead of a starting gate, nations are betrayed. Aims, however sincere, that keep anyone out or that concern themselves only with individuals, are too small for our times. They will miss the challenge of the century.

Henry Drummond put it this way: 'Next to losing the sense of a personal Christ, the worst evil that can befall a Christian is to have no sense of anything else.'

Christ is for all men everywhere. He is the Light that lighteth every man, the fulfilment of Truth that is partially known.

Brooke Foss Westcott, one-time Bishop of Durham, long ago told this truth in his commentary on Christ's words *I am the Way, the Truth and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.* (John xiv, 6.) He wrote:

'The last words which at first sight seem to narrow the magnificent prospect on which we are allowed to look, do in fact only define it. They do not set limits for the access to the Father, but give us a wider view of the action of Christ.

'They carry light into the dark ages and dark places of the earth. They tell us that wherever there is heroic self-surrender, wherever there is devoted study of the ways and works even of the unknown God, wherever there is a heart yearning towards the undiscovered glories of a spiritual world, there is Christ: there is Christ, though we see Him not, and His name is not named, and where Christ is, there is the approach to a loving Father.'

Archbishop William Temple wrote:

'All that is noble in the non-Christian systems of thought, conduct or worship is the work of Christ upon them and within them. By the word of God – that is to say by Jesus Christ – Isaiah and Plato, and Zoroaster and Buddha, and Confucius conceived and uttered such truths as they declared.

There is only one divine light; and every man in his measure is enlightened by it.'

William Ernest Hocking wrote:

'With the invasion of the spirit of modernity into all crannies of the planet, religion by group-belonging becomes less and less possible to the man who thinks; and the man who thinks tends to become everyman.

'There is no stronger endorsement of the lasting significance of the message emanating from Galilee than the fact that in moving forward past modernity we arrive at a better comprehension of its changeless demands. For the claims of the absolute and the perfect are not afflicted with age. In this sense it can be said that wherever man journeys, Christ as the voice of the absolute has been there before him!

'The Christian will not be concerned that the total outlook slowly emerging bear his name. He will be mindful that his Master in one parable likened the kingdom of God to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened – the hidden anonymity a favourable condition for its work. The time is ripe for that radical reconception of which we have spoken, whereby the concept of the Christ is extended to include that unbound Spirit who stands and has stood at the door of every man, and who, in various guises, still appears to him who opens, both as an impersonal word and as a personal presence.'¹

The Roman Catholic writer, R. C. Zaehner, Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford University, writing 'from a viewpoint that is uncompromisingly Christian' says:

'Today it would be utterly unrealistic, uncatholic in the widest sense of that word, and absurd to persist in confining ourselves to the legacy of the Graeco – Roman world alone. Since Christianity claims to be a universal faith, it can only

¹ *The Coming World Civilization.*

survive by showing that it can assimilate not only what is digestible to the Christian constitution in Plato and Aristotle, but also whatever in Oriental religion seems to point the way to Christ . . . He did not preclude the possibility that the faith He was to found should be as much a fulfilment of the religions that had preceded Him in distant Asian lands as it was of the religion in which He had been brought up.¹

In this modern age, which has rejected the authorities of the past, Protestant theologians are asking what is the essential fact in Christianity. Rudolph Bultmann's answer has been summed up thus:

'It is not some event in the past or some hope for the future. It is the challenge of Christ to the individual person here and now. What matters is not what happened long ago in Palestine but what happens to me in the living present. Christ stands in every man's way and issues his challenge to all alike. Christianity is no question of a dogmatic creed or an ethical system. It is the challenge of Christ and the response to it of the individual personality.'²

Paul Tillich asks, 'Where does Christianity find its criteria?' He says:

'There is only one point from which the criteria can be derived and only one way to approach this point. The point is the event on which Christianity is based, and the way is the participation in the continuing spiritual power of this event, which is the appearance and reception of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ, a symbol which stands for the decisive self-manifestation in human history of the source and aim of all being. This is the point from which the criteria must be taken.

'The way to this point is through participation, but how

¹ *At Sundry Times* by R. C. Zaehner (Faber & Faber).

² *The Minds Behind the New Theology* by Bishop J. W. C. Wand (Mowbrays).

can one participate in an event of the past? Certainly not by historical knowledge, although we must listen to the witness to what happened; certainly not by acceptance of a tradition, although only through tradition can one be in living contact with the past; certainly not by subjecting oneself to authorities past or present, although there is no spiritual life without an actual (but not principal) dependence on authorities. Participation in an event of the past is only possible if one is grasped by the spiritual power of this event and through it is enabled to evaluate the witnesses, the traditions and the authorities in which the same spiritual power was and is effective.¹

How to bring about this participation in those who do not believe is, indeed, the real question. More than a change in language or a different set of symbols is required.

Valid religious experience which has power to change a person, a home, an industry, a nation – experience such as has been given in this book – is what is needed.

As a modern thinker² has said: 'We must rethink and relive our whole conception of religious experience. Much, admittedly, has not been valid experience. Oftentimes it has been religious invalidism – a crass, insipid, dull, tepid, unimaginative maladaptation of what ought to be great life-giving, nation-forming experiences. It has been a warped conception, marred by moral twists. Due to our spiritually poverty-stricken lives, we even glibly admit that business and politics do not mix with religion.

'We have been so long on the low levels of religious experience that we cannot readily grasp what an Alpine range of experience could be ours if all our thinking, acting and planning were God-controlled and not man-controlled. We need a whole new creative force let loose in the world.'

To find this Alpine range and explore until every last need of mankind is met is the Endless Adventure.

¹ *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* by Paul Tillich (Columbia University Press, 1963).

² Dr Frank N. D. Buchman, *Remaking the World* (Blandford Press).

INDEX

- At Sundry Times*, 174
 Augustine, 10, 16-35, 36
 Berggrav, Bishop, 137
 Bible, The Holy, 8, 14-15, 19, 34-5, 99, 105, 110, 116-17, 123-39, 140-62
Bible Today, The, 123-39
 Bready, J., 52
Britain and the Beast, 96
 Brooke, Henry, 118-22
 Buchman, F. N. D., 13, 95-107, 108, 109, 175
 Buddha, 172
 Bultmann, R., 174
 Canterbury, Archbishop of, 9, 63-70
Catholic Herald, 38
 Celsus, 11
 Chesterton, G. K., 15
Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, 175
 Churchill, Winston, 38
 Cicero, 18-19
Coming World Civilization, The, 170, 173
Confessions of St. Augustine, 16-35
 Confucius, 172
 Coventry, The Bishop of, 171
 Croce, Benedetto, 125
 Darwin, Charles, 12, 81
 Dawson, Christopher, 7, 10
Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, 141
 Dodd, C. H., 123-39
 Drummond, Henry, 12-13, 81-94, 172
 Eliot, T. S., 9
England Before and After Wesley, 52
 Fénelon, Archbishop, 12, 71-80
 Fisher, H. A. L., 125, 128
 Ford, Henry, 123
 Francis de Sales, 53
 Francis of Assisi, 15, 163-9
Frank Buchman's Secret, 14
 Gandhi, Rajmohan, 121
 Gavrilovitch, S., 109
 Gibbon, Edward, 141
 Grand Rapids *Herald*, 102
 Gratry, Le Père, 54
 Hardie, Keir, 52
History of the English Speaking Peoples, A, 38
 Hitler, A., Hitlerism, 103-4, 120, 123-5
 Hocking, W. E., 170, 173
Hortentius, 18
How to Know the Will of God, 82, 90-4
 Howard, Peter, 55-62, 140
Ideas Have Legs, 56
 Isaiah, 172
 Joan of Arc, 10-11, 36-52, 54
John Wesley, Anglican, 53
 King, Martin Luther, 15
 Lean, Garth, 52-3
 Lecky, W. E. H., 52
Letters to Men and Women, 12, 71-80
Letters to Young Churches, 14, 140-62
 Lewis, C. S., 8-9
 Lincoln, Abraham, 53, 60, 61
 Livingstone, David, 61
 Lloyd George, D., 52
 Mackay, H. F. B., 15, 163-8
 Marx, Karl, Marxists, 15, 56, 102-3, 120, 124-6
Message of Francis d'Assisi, The, 15, 163-8
Minds Behind the New Theology, The, 174
 Mussolini, B., 103
No New Morality, 8
 Paul, 14, 29, 140-62
 Phillips, J. B., 13, 14, 140-62
 Plato, 172
Programme of Christianity, The, 82
 Rajagopalachari, C., 121
Remaking the World, 96-101, 102-7, 175
Revolt of Asia, The, 7
 Rhymes, Canon, 8
 Robo, Etienne, 51
Saint Joan - the Woman and the Saint, 50-1
 Shaftesbury, 52
 Sheed, F. J., 16
 Stewart, James S., 170
 Temple, Archbishop William, 172-3
Three Views of Christianity, 56, 140
 Tillich, Paul, 174-5
 Twain, Mark, 14, 36-50
 Vincent de Paul, 53-4
 Wand, Bishop J. W. C., 174
 Wescott, Bishop Brooke Foss, 172
 Wesley, John, 52
 Westminster, The Archbishop of, 171
 Wilberforce, William, 52
 Zaehner, R. C., 173-4
 Zoroaster, 172

Half the world today is under 21. It is largely and rightly in revolt against the compromises and conventions of the older generation and the injustices permitted to remain in the world. But few have found the avenue down which to pour their energies, talents and hopes.

Lately we have heard a lot from some Christian leaders who have taken the Cross out of morality. But youth remains unsatisfied, while the nation and the world slide downhill.

It is high time that we should consider again what it is that Christ offers and requires. This book relates the experience, partly in their own words, of those who listened to Him and obeyed Him. It tells how men and women stood up to the iniquities and faithlessness of their time and made decisions that altered history.

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