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Religion and Human Nature

by

Rev. Dr. Joseph A. Daly

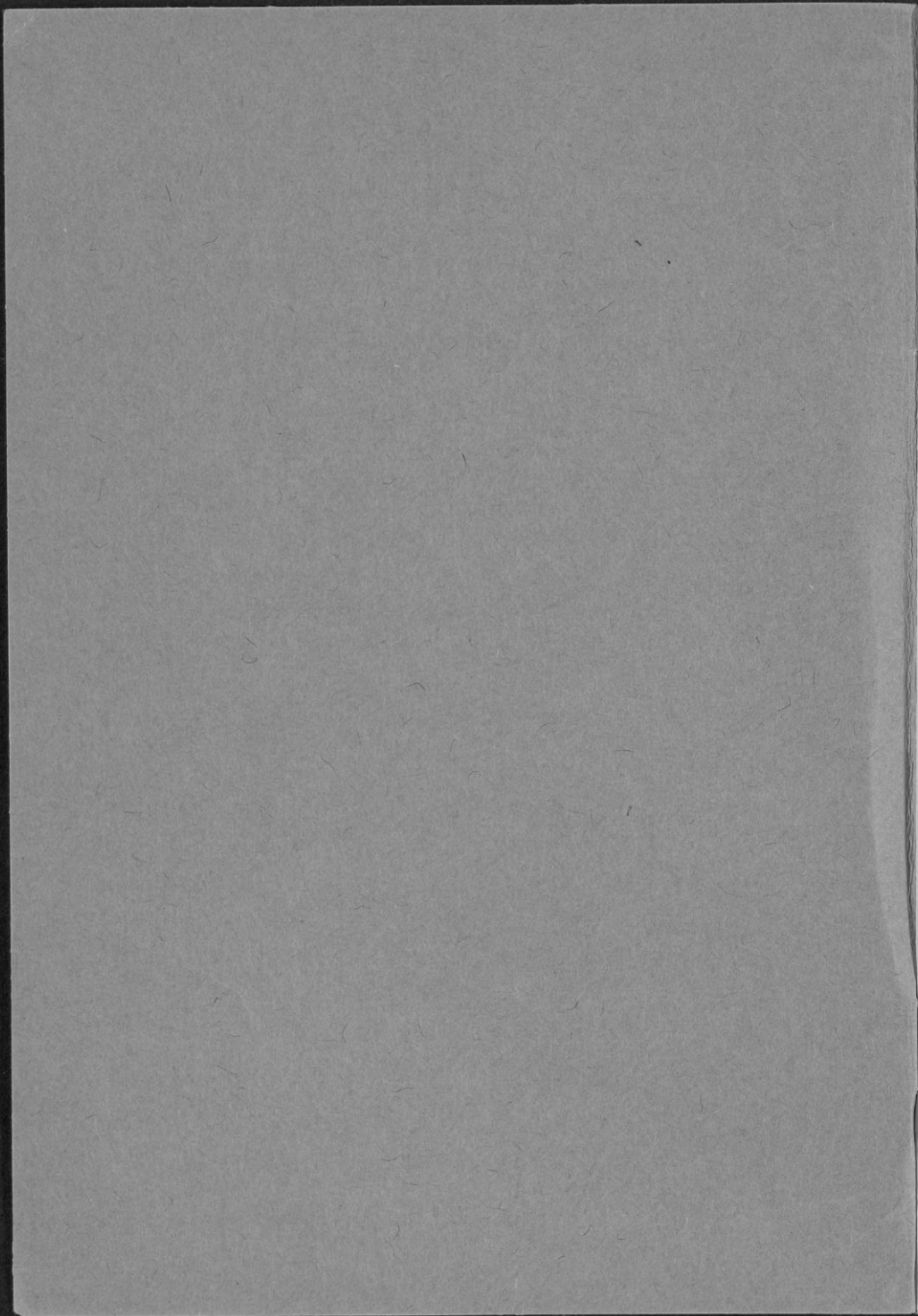
Four addresses delivered in the Catholic Hour, sponsored
by the National Council of Catholic Men, with the
cooperation of the National Broadcasting and its
Associate Stations

(On Sundays from August 7 to August 28, 1932)

- I. Our Lost Humanity.
- II. The Heart of Man.
- III. The Will of Man.
- IV. The Mind of Man.



National Council of Catholic Men
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✠ JOHN FRANCIS NOLL, D. D.,
Bishop of Fort Wayne

Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord

FOREWORD

In the secular thought of our day we find many curious attitudes towards Religion.

These range from the out and out skepticism of those who consider it a relic of the superstitions of the past to those who would accord it only the admiration due the ancient and venerable, as one would admire an old stained-glass window or the battered pillars of the Parthenon.

It has been the purpose of these addresses to show the intimate connection between religious truth and the higher aspirations of man's soul, to indicate the close correlation between reason and faith.

If they succeed in achieving this purpose in even a small degree, they will have more than amply repaid any effort spent in their formulation.

JOSEPH A. DALY.

DEDICATION
to W. F. H.
In Memoriam

Deacidified

OUR LOST HUMANITY

Address delivered on August 7, 1932

Over the horizon of our earthly lives there stretches endlessly the shadow of Time. Time, the destroyer, who dissolves in his invisible hands the monuments of human glory, who levels to the ground cities exultant with power and radiant with light. Time, the healer, who ministers with his ointment of years to the wounds of sorrow and disappointment. Time, the mocker, who puts to naught the things man sets his earthly store upon, who watches with curling lips as man in pride builds his tower to heaven, knowing that all too soon he will make that tower the dead symbol of a by-gone day. Under this ministry of Time it is given to each new generation to behold the passing of things which its forefathers cherished within their bosom, theories that sought to order the sky and sea and stars, plans of action which opened Utopian visions of a future to be.

It is the unhappy privilege of the grim age in which we live to witness more than its share of the twilight of the half gods of theory. As a result of the furious tempo at which modern life progresses it is our lot to behold not merely the downfall of ambitious dreams from the past, but also the tottering of structures whose glittering newness proclaims them to be the product of our own day.

In the economic life of the nation plans which promised for a while to promote a newer and better day have proved under the pressure of trying times to be poor and inadequate supports. The song of Machine Prosperity which sung itself through the



whirring of wheels and the clanking of levers has faded into an empty unbroken silence. Likewise in the domestic life of America, viewing the unsettled conditions existing in so many families, one must doubt whether the cure-all of Divorce has produced the millennium of which it had been proclaimed the forerunner.

If we were to attempt an explanation for the failure of such plans to achieve their ends, we would find at least one cause in the fact that any plan which concerns itself with human beings must first be grounded in knowledge of human nature, its strength and its weakness. To expect any plan which affects human life to operate with the remorseless efficiency of a mechanical or chemical law is to foredoom it to failure.

However evident this dehumanizing process may be in the sphere of economics or social life, it is far clearer when we come to consider man's personal beliefs about himself and the world about him. For it is here that we behold how wide the chasm is that divides the world of theory from the world of reality; the world of theory that, like the mountains of the moon, is frozen into an unyielding stillness, the world of reality that is filled with the warm rush of human feeling, thought and aspiration.

With that naive faith born of the spectacle of material progress, humanity has often turned to its men of research for a philosophy by which it might live, a faith to which it might cling. And some, turning from their contemplations of the far-flung spaces of the stars, told us of man, an insignificant manifestation of life on a minor planet that is itself swallowed up in an immensity of light-years.

Others, studying the various grades of living things, gave us the message that man was a way-step in the evolution of the god contained in nature. How confused and bewildering it all became! In one case man's humanity became lost in the whirl of the forces of the universe, in the second it was transmuted into the blind gropings of a demi-god. In one concept the world was ever too great for him, in the other the force of which he was an expression was greater than the world. Yet in neither one did his individual thoughts, personality or yearnings find any sheltering haven, nowhere in these cosmic canvases was there a reasonable place for you or me or any one particular human being. Following the pale lanterns of scientific theory, man found himself in one case only a form of living matter, in the other an aspect of a life-force; in neither did he find himself a human being.

It is not remarkable, therefore, that discovering the gap between theory and reality so impossible to bridge, many have fallen into an attitude in which their own questionings are stilled with the narcotic of indifferentism. Yet there is in such an attitude a confession of defeat that does not rest easy with our nature. To adopt it man must needs close his eyes to much of the wonder of the world about him, and shut off the promptings within that offer the clue to the meaning of life, that move him towards the restoration of a humanity lost in the mists of theory.

My friends, it is the purpose of these talks to look at human nature in the light of that one element which alone can make intelligible the manifold and complex characteristics that human nature

possesses; that element which leads us from bewildered questioning to peaceful understanding, which unites those final and ultimate realities, the Soul and God. This element we call Religion.

The strength of the enduring ties of reason and instinct which bind together religion and human nature may be realized both from a consideration of the facts of man's external physical life and a moment's study of those beliefs concerning themselves, which are common to all men.

In man's external life purpose and design proclaim themselves unceasingly in the intricacy and beauty of his physical structure. Consider the miracle of procreation: The tiny cell within the womb of the mother unraveling its manifold patterns in such a purposeful and orderly fashion, weaving the structure which shall some day be a human infant. How is it possible to ascribe to chance or to some blind force such a magnificent purposeful process?

How evident also is this purpose in the many ways by which the human body protects itself. Should we but cut our finger, the blood flows for a while, then a protecting cover is laid over the wound and underneath this covering the process of regeneration is carried on till the wound is healed. Is this the chance discovery of a fumbling natural force or rather the product of an intelligent Creator?

Mark also the beautiful adaptation of our sense organs to the types of stimulation which they are directed to receive. We walk into bright sunlight and the pupil of the eye is closed to a fine point that we may preserve clear vision. We pass into darkness and that same pupil widens, bringing all

available light to the sensitive retina in order that we may see.

Consider the infinitely complicated and coordinated adjustments of nerve and tendon and muscle which are required in such a simple act as walking; or again, the manifold changes by which the body adapts itself to heat or cold in the atmosphere about it.

These things are all so much part of our physical life that it is rarely we give to them any special attention. Yet were we to try to explain them in terms of material laws, in terms of physical machinery, we could discover much of the external ways in which they operate, but nothing of the force which causes this operation. No examination of the matter of a germ cell has ever disclosed the reason why it undergoes such a rhythmic and progressive division. The mystery of life lies beyond the domain of test-tube and microscope, beyond the explanations of the sciences which ponder the secrets of the physical universe.

The more man contemplates this purpose that everywhere shows itself in his physical life, the more must he realize that this purpose does not end with his bodily organism. For are we to believe that the wisdom which so artfully moulded the various bodily structures to their proper ends, has made no provision for the spirit which animates that fleshly tabernacle?

How ghastly the concept that the power which created the organ of vision through which there pass the rich colorings of nature, the golden sunlight, the blue of the sea and the white radiance of the moon, that power which created the portals of

the ear which open wide to the loveliness of music, the song of birds and the soft whisper of leaves in the summer breeze—that this same power should have condemned to a futile and purposeless existence the one for whom these organs were designed as avenues to the world outside himself!

How much more rational and consoling the doctrine of Religion that God the Creator brought us into being and through His grace is aiding us to work out our salvation in time to achieve an unending happiness in eternity.

The reasonableness of this belief, its firm basis in reality become further evident when we turn to man's inner life, to those convictions which each one of us cherishes about himself.

We are part of the human race; all of us are bound together by a community of nature, a solidarity that unites us in bonds of thought and feeling and aspiration that move backward to the dead and forward to the unborn. Yet if by some devious and magic summation, we were to gather together the varicolored stories of countless lives, blending man's struggle toward the stars and his groveling in the mire, we could not say to any one man, "Behold the complete and perfect representation of your own life." For passing beyond the troubled flow of human tides, there rises in each human heart the unconquerable conviction of its own individuality. It matters not where, in what level of society that heart may beat. "I live, I breathe, I strive, I think, I have accomplished, I have won, I have lost"—these phrases signify the inner conviction that in some way an individual, a personality, has made the world a little different by its presence.

Yet in the cold inflexible theories which are proffered as explanations of human life, there is no place for this deep-seated belief of man. Its very presence is a mockery and its end a hideous frustration. For what matters an individual life in a world dominated by the mechanics of stellar space, or what value the strivings of a single spirit as an evolving Life-Force moves heedlessly to its fruition?

No—if man is to resolve into an orderly and rational picture the manifold elements which present themselves to his mind, if he is still to trust the reality and truth of what pulses within him, he must be led irresistibly to God the Creator, and to Religion, the link which unites him to that Creator. For when man gropes vaguely for an intelligence behind the order which he beholds, he need not lift his eyes far to behold God. When he recoils from an existence as a purposeless spawn of nature and strives to read design into his life, he has already come close to the Providence of God—that Providence which in its inscrutable depths has ordained a happiness which man can freely achieve.

So it is that Religion is the means by which his lost humanity can be restored to man. It is his key to reality—to the fullness and completeness of living.

The more fully the mysteries of Christian teaching are grasped, the more real and vital becomes the life of man. The far stretches of the universe no longer dwarf him into insignificance when he realizes that the Designer of that universe ennobled humanity by taking to Himself a human nature. That other concept which would melt him into an expression of a god in evolution becomes a meaningless

speculation before the knowledge that man's salvation is obtained not by man becoming God in some incredible deification, but rather by God becoming man in a Flesh and Blood Incarnation.

Oh, my friends, for all of us life stretches out in many varying outlines. The vibrant medium through which my voice comes to you passes through city and farm land, over lives that are consecrated to many different types of endeavor and striving. Yet far separated as we are, we all face the same inevitable problems. Our lives are bounded by the same finalities of birth and death. Ever over us are heard the incessant drum beats of mortality that, like some dispassionate observer, proclaim unceasingly the passing of the years. Then, as once to all men, Death comes to us. The wings of the dark angel resound faintly, the light we have loved fades before our eyes—the swift rush of grains of sand through the hour glass falls unheedingly on ears closed forever to song and story.

The rest, we are told—the rest is silence. Silence, indeed, but shall it be the silence of the tomb or the great silence that is before the throne of God?

For a last moment let me present a picture. High above the harbor of Rio de Janeiro on a granite cliff called Corcovado, stands a statue of Christ the Redeemer. The dawn rising out of the eastern waters crimsons it with glory. The sunset fading behind the hills throws into embracing silhouette the outstretched arms. Far out to sea searching eyes behold its majesty, and gray ships steer their course into its protecting shadow. When the bosom of the ocean is troubled and the mists gather, when lightning illumines the sky with its fitful glare, the

weary gaze of the mariner beholds afar off arms raised in embrace and benediction, and guides his course thereby safe to the harbor's breast and the harbor's eyes.

My friends, it is no new thought to present to you Life as a journey—a journey that begins when the first small cry of the infant is heard— a journey that ends with the dull sound of earth falling upon the unheeding sanctuary of the grave. Yet the comparison still holds. This choice I leave with you for that journey's end. A nameless harbor on an unknown shore which theory suggests, or rather a harbor in which the God-Man draws to Himself through seas of doubt and mists of theory the souls of all mankind.

THE HEART OF MAN

Address delivered on August 14, 1932

Many years have passed since medical research ended the belief that the heart was the source of the emotions. It had been the notion of bygone days that in some mysterious way, joy and sorrow, love and hate, mingled with its beating; that within its red pavilions there stirred the mighty elemental forces that urge man in his ways.

Today with our greater knowledge, we know that the heart is but a physical organ, a sturdy device for sending to the body cells the oxygen which they need. But there is a curious appropriateness and truth in the fact that the heart has lingered on in our poetry, art, and even ordinary speech as a symbol of the emotions, for just as the chambers of the heart in their rhythmic throbbing send coursing through the body the red blood that is its life, so, too, do the emotions with their infinite variety and cheering warmth give evidence of the inexhaustible vitality and restless surging of the spirit of man.

Yet in what strange ways do they affect the human spirit! Along what tortuous channels do they cause the stream of life within us to wend its way. Language itself becomes a sorry and imperfect vehicle when it endeavors to disclose the shifting tides of emotion and feeling. How poorly do the greatest eloquence and skillfulness of phrase make their approach to the great realities within us, such realities as joy and sorrow, sympathy and compassion.

As one writer has put it, "It is only when we attempt to assuage another's pain, that we realize

with what strange incomprehensible creatures we share the light of the sun and the sheen of the stars." For how inadequate and fumbling do the conventional expressions of sympathy appear before the spectacle of another's great woe.

Even in our own emotional life, how difficult it is to understand the why and wherefore of the changes that trouble the surface of the soul. Yet there is nothing in our consciousness which stands out with greater vividness and with more startling clarity than the swift play of emotion within us. For the emotions are the colors which give to the picture of human life the rich variety and shading which grace even the seemingly ordinary existence.

If an approach is to be made toward an understanding of the emotions, we must separate these genuine well-springs of action from the artificial attitudes which have risen with regard to them. One of these attitudes would make emotion an end in itself. It would destroy the purpose behind the higher emotions and substitute for them a mawkish sentimentality. In this situation the emotions are placed on tap, thrown into activity with little or no reason only to fade out after a purposeless and futile tempest of the spirit. Shallow, insincere, dying almost with the moment that gave them birth, they mean little save as an emotional debauch in which the individual achieves a certain amount of satisfaction from the exhibition. For in such displays there is neither honesty nor truth.

This type of emotionalism would exhaust itself in an orgy of pity for human misfortune and distress, without ever taking a single step which might

alleviate that distress. Fundamentally it is sympathy without charity, pity without love.

Still another attitude towards the emotions is to be found in the life of today, the attitude of sophistication. Too often this is a product of jaded appetites, in which, the emotions having lost their freshness and vigor through over-exercise, either actual or theoretical, the attempt is made to label genuine emotions with the tag of commonness or vulgarity. By some strange twist of reasoning this sophisticated attitude is supposed to be an advance over the normal mentality, and jaded tastes, by an obscure process of glorification, are made the basis of intellectual superiority. In over-refinement of this sort there is too often a streak of degeneracy.

Yet these two false concepts of our emotional life should not blind us to the power and purpose behind these strivings of the spirit of man. They are the driving forces behind the most fundamental human activities. Like electricity, if they are permitted spasmodic and frantic discharge their lightning leaves in its wake a trail of destruction. And like that same electricity when harnessed and controlled by the directing switchboard of the will, they bring beauty, utility and accomplishment to the life of man.

Since the emotions play such a prominent part in our makeup it naturally follows that no system of philosophy, no explanation of the meaning of human life, no code of conduct or scheme of ethics can possibly affect in a large measure the life of man, unless it provides for the aspirations of his heart. For we know all too well how difficult it is to make real in our lives ideas clothed only with the dispas-

sionate garment of reason, whose inexorable logic arouses within us no answering flame.

My friends, it is one of the marks of the divine character of Christianity that within its ample sanctuaries, there is room not alone for man's intellect and will—but also for his instincts and emotions. For the Divine wisdom of the Redeemer, comprehending this great need of man, provided a place for the human heart both in the example of His own life, and in the life of His Church.

As our eyes move over the tapestry of the Saviour's life that unveils itself through the pages of the New Testament, we behold how endlessly the bright threads of His infinite compassion run through its fabric. His first miracle was performed at Mary's wish that the simple joys of the Wedding Feast at Cana might not be disturbed. The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes arising out of solicitude for those who had come to hear him. That pathetic funeral procession outside the city of Naim, the widowed mother's tears that moved Him to mercy and restored her son to life. The awesome silence of the temple broken only by the inarticulate sobbing of the woman taken in adultery. The stern self-righteous faces of her accusers. The finger of the Lord inexorably writing on the ground what dread and secret thing. And one by one they slip away. His words of merciful inquiry, "Hath no man condemned thee?" Her broken answer, "No man, Lord." Then the forgiving voice, "Neither will I condemn thee. Go and sin no more." What boundlessly beautiful sympathy and tenderness are here depicted!

As the miracles which the Saviour wrought to

comfort the hearts of others show forth His Divinity, so do the moments in which He Himself was deeply moved portray His Humanity. With righteous anger He drove the money-changers and hawkers from the precincts of the Temple; the great longing in His Soul swept into tears as He looked down upon Jerusalem, the city He loved; He wept again at the tomb of Lazarus, His friend. There was the anguish of that bitter cry which long ago echoed amongst the olive trees of Gethsemani: "Father, if it be possible, let this Chalice pass from me"; and more terrible than this, the words that came from the altar of the Cross: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Could there be any greater testimony of the infinite love which God lavishes upon man than the fact that in taking to Himself a human nature, He shared in the sorrows and joys which like troubled winds sweep restlessly through the great halls of man's inner life.

The life of the Church, reflecting as always the life of her Founder, shows forth this same understanding and compassion. She who continues the work of Christ on earth exhibits the same human sympathy and Divine affection. No cold philosophic detachment from human aspirations is hers, but a deep warm realization that men must be drawn to God through the channels of their own imperfect nature.

Her work it is to raise the natural to the supernatural, the earthly to the heavenly, the life of the sinner to the life of the saint. Yet as her finger points upward to the horizon of eternity, her eyes are ever watchfully fixed on the pathways of time. How wise, how truthful and how Christ-like are her

ways in dealing with human emotions can be understood if we consider for a moment but three of these—Sorrow, Wonder and Love.

There are those who come to her in tears and trouble as long ago that funeral procession came forth from Naim. The relentless hand of death has rested upon one whom they loved. There is in their hearts the anguish of loss. Then the voice of the Church is heard repeating the words of Her Master: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live: and every one that liveth and believeth in me, shall not die forever."

What a blessed and comforting promise of life in eternity!

There are those who come to her with hearts overladen with their burden of sin. Sickened, disgusted, and life-weary, weighted down with the realization of their own folly and weakness, they bring their tired and harassed souls to the merciful ministry of the confessional. For even in our own day there are being enacted once more the merciful stories of the Good Thief on the Cross and of Mary of Magdala, to whom many sins were forgiven because she loved much.

As through her sacramental repositories of grace she ministers to the souls of men during life, so does her remembrance endure after death, and her prayers and the offering of the Sacrifice of the Mass reach across the boundaries of eternity in supplication before the throne of God. Such is the consoling realization which strengthens the soul in the last hours of that struggle which knows only one end.

As she cares for men in their hours of sorrow,

so does she appeal to their sense of wonder, their sense of the beautiful. She does this not out of a pagan desire of stimulating the senses, but rather of using the beauty of earthly things to bring men to a knowledge of the Supreme Beauty of God.

The lovely texture and colors of her vestments, the candles which burn themselves in sacrificial adoration upon her altars, the incense whose perfumed smoke drifts upward to heaven, the music of voice and organ which dedicates this purest of the arts to the Creator of all Beauty, the lofty arches of her Cathedrals, which protectingly enshrine the miracle of the Eucharist—all these are but instruments through which the Church makes her appeal to the heart of man, that this atmosphere of reverence and devotion should arouse in him a fervent realization of the great truths present before him.

Through all phases of her devotional life runs this great purpose. When she places statues of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints in her Churches, it is not because these creations of plaster or marble, however artistically beautiful, possess any power in themselves, it is not to create a new idolatry, but rather that these representations may arouse within us the virtues which shone forth in the lives of the originals. Her appeal to man's sense of beauty moves ever beyond the realms of sense.

But in no place is the divine wisdom which guides the Church in her ways so evident as when she deals with the great emotion of love. To all men equally she preaches the great doctrine of the necessity of love of God and of neighbor. To all men equally she preaches the evil of unrestrained passion. But she neither permits the first admonition to remain a

vague and general counsel with no relation to real life, nor does she fail to offer the spiritual means by which unruly nature may be brought under control. With joy in her heart she consecrates the love of man and woman in the Sacrament of Marriage. To others she offers the means of consecrating their lives to a broader supernatural purpose, for the honor of God, the good of neighbor, and their own personal sanctification.

Out of this teaching what fine and beautiful lives have come—lives whose nobility and sacrifice command the reverent admiration of even those of no religious belief. Francis of Assisi distributing his goods to the poor, and singing the praise of all created things. Vincent de Paul, whose love for the lowly and the abandoned, finds echo today in the Societies named after him. Father Damien sacrificing his life for the lepers on the dread island of Molokai. These are but a few of those around whom dwells an aureole of glory.

But why confine ourselves to the past? Now at this hour in which my voice comes to you, this high ideal is working out to the glory of God and the benefit of the human race. If I may give but one example—in many hospitals the Sisters of our religious orders are ministering unselfishly to the needs of the sick and suffering, not in the expectation of earthly reward, but in the endeavor to realize the fullness of the teachings of Christ in their own lives.

My friends, from these considerations we can realize how the aspirations of man's heart can be perfected by religion. Here we find no shallow sentimentality which never flows over into kindly,

ennobling and humanitarian action. For religion, when it taps the deep founts of man's spirit directs its flow into fields which produce abundant harvest. Here we find no barren sophistication but the kindly and beneficent understanding which looks upon human nature with clear eyes but which finds far more to love than to despise. For man in finding religion, finds his way to the Author of his body, his mind and his heart. He finds his way to God.

THE WILL OF MAN

Address delivered on August 21, 1932

The story of man's life is one that is filled with astounding contradictions. It envisions scenes of magnificent and breathtaking aspirations and effort; it narrates episodes which are filled with cruelty and bestiality. Indeed, so different are the characteristics displayed, it is sometimes difficult to believe that such varying actions were performed by members of the same species. Gentleness, compassion and charity go hand in hand with viciousness, hatred and lust.

Both emerge equally from the stronghold of man's will, for it is that imperious faculty of man's spirit which launches into external expression the good and the evil, the beautiful and the ugly. How strange and mystic is this power of Will that man possesses. Out of the wreckage of many a broken and useless past, it has raised up Saints. From the heights of sanctity it has dragged men down into the mire. Its ability to change the course of life sets man apart from all things. It distinguishes him from the animal world, the rhythms of whose life move endlessly along the same well-ordered pathways.

Increase in knowledge of the physical world and power over natural forces only augment its capacity for evil as well as good. For when that knowledge is applied to making the earth a better place to live in, the will which makes that knowledge real, works for the good of mankind.

But when the will uses that knowledge and power to execute more promptly and effectively the dictates of hate, humanity is the sufferer. The same science

whose researches have added to the security and comfort of modern life has provided instruments of destruction by which that life can be wiped out. The same knowledge of the law which can bring justice to the oppressed and downtrodden, can also block justice and win freedom for the undeserving. The same comprehension of the mechanics of industry and business which can bring prosperity and employment to large numbers, can also under the lashing whip of greed, deprive thousands of the means of livelihood.

So, as we ponder over the complex life of humanity, we become aware of the tremendous part that is played by the will of man. Here is the battleground of our inner life, on whose psychic plains are waged those giant struggles which determine the course of human life.

Here we find that deathless aspiration, that never-ending search after happiness which ever urges man onward, that desperate craving for the good which triumphs over sorrow and disappointment, over frustration and defeat. Ever so often it seems to have achieved its quest, ever so often the limited goods of fame or fortune or success lull its efforts into quiescence, then the mists lift, new horizons unveil themselves and the will moves onward in its relentless pilgrimage.

If this aspiration could dominate the will to the exclusion of all other things how beautiful human life would be, how peaceful would be even our earthly existence. But we know all too well that the army of unruly passions ever throws its battalions against the walls of the spirit, and all too often they carry its ramparts before them. Hatred, lust and greed

ride mockingly through the gates, and in the shadows our lost ideals flee sorrowfully from the chambers of the soul. Long ago in bitter realization of this fact, the Apostle Paul wrote the understanding words: "For the good which I will, I do not; but the evil which I will not, that I do." And in our day and age, how many human hearts re-echo this cry of poignant realization.

The unending strife which is portrayed in these words has ever troubled the minds of philosophers and men of thought. Some would close their eyes to the darker side of the picture, and concentrating on man's aspirations would picture a future happy day in which reason and will are to triumph over selfish passion and desire. This idealism has much to commend it, it is graced with a certain nobility—but it fails in its disregard of past and present realities, and in its over-dependence on the healing powers of time alone.

There are still others who fall back into a kind of cynical resignation, which regards the dominance of the lower side of man's nature as an inevitable part of life. Taking away from man the ability to direct his actions, they would view him as a powerless puppet moving frantically to the promptings of natural forces.

One view is the gospel of over-sanguine hope, the other is a credo of despair.

My friends, it is the purpose of these talks to show that religion is the sole key to the mysteries which surround human nature, the one philosophy which can give a reasonable explanation for the facts of man's inner life, and the one code of action by which man's faculties can achieve the high purposes

towards which they strive. Nowhere is this more evident than in the problem of the struggle between good and evil for the domination of man's will.

In the story of man's Fall, long ago in the dawn of human history, lies the reason for the turbulent conflicts which harass us today. Before that unhappy hour Adam living the life of grace knew nothing of this war of the flesh against the spirit, for there had been given to him as a privilege that harmony of the spirit in which his natural tendencies were under the control of reason, and reason itself was submissive to God.

But when our first parents came forth from Eden they brought with them a dread heritage for all generations to come, a heritage of sickness and death for the body, a heritage of conflict and unremitting warfare for the soul. Even though the Sacrifice of the God-Man on the Cross redeemed us from the consequences of that sin, even though the life-giving waters of baptism wash out our hereditary taint, it remains for man to continue to face the struggle of the lower against the higher nature.

Such was the origin of the contradictions which we behold in human nature. But as in her dogmatic teaching the Church supplies the explanation for man's present state, so in her moral teaching does she uphold the beauty of his aspirations, and provide the means by which these aspirations can be realized. She waits for no procession of years to perfect human nature; it is her task to perfect the souls of those living.

In the study of the progress of civilization it cannot be denied that the advance we have made over the generations of the past must be credited to the

influence of the teachings of Christianity. In the degree to which the principles of the Sermon on the Mount are able to influence the public life of nations, to that degree will the lives of those nations be more blest.

Yet it would be the gravest kind of mistake to reduce the Church to a species of social influence or civilizing force. It is the work of religion not so much to deal with men as races or nations or groups, but rather with men as individuals. It is because of its ability to influence and direct the life of individuals that Christianity is able to influence the life of society as a whole. To each man torn between aspiration and unruly craving the Church brings its rich treasury of spiritual aids.

In the first place Christian philosophy makes reasonable and necessary the leading of a good life. It presents our earthly existence as a preparation for the illimitable life of eternity. It places before man his great responsibility to use the talents which have been given him to merit reward from God. To eyes and hands preoccupied with the things of earth, it points out how all too quickly these pass away. It preaches the beauty of sacrifice and the glory of character possessed by those who have conquered their lower nature. It gives to morality the sanction and authority which it alone can provide.

For from what other source can right conduct draw its support? From the laws of man? Even where these are effective, how many crimes lie beyond the limits of the statutes. From duty to society? What a feeble appeal this has when the call of self-interest is heard, when the fierce glow of avarice or hatred smoulders in the heart, and the

injustices which society itself sometimes inflicts are visible before the eyes. Codes of ethics based on the trembling foundation of self-respect totter to the ground in the swift rush of the winds of life.

But the realities of Death and Judgment which loom over Christian thought give final rationality and authority to the precepts of the moral law. From them flow consolation to the good, courage to the faltering, comfort to the disheartened and warning to the vicious. Inexorably and unmistakably they show beyond the dictates of morality the ordaining power of God.

Moreover the picture of man which is revealed in the light of Christian Truth is one which is faithful to man's consciousness of himself. Here we behold no manikin or puppet driven blindly by forces outside his control, but a human being, an individual, moving onward to a great goal. Falling yet ever rising, stumbling only to recover, wandering off into tangled by-paths, yet ever groping backward to his destined road. In this picture there is no room for fatalistic or cynical resignation—there is room only for the magnificent struggle of man for the far reaches of heaven.

Again Christian teaching provides a positive exemplar of the perfect life in the life of Jesus Christ. For God was not content with merely setting an ideal of perfection before us, but sent His Only-Begotten Son to share our nature, and to present that ideal in a tangible and visible form. In all the different phases of his life, man looks ever for example. The child looks to the parents and mirrors their words and actions in his own life; the pupil either in the classroom or on the athletic field seeks

to imitate the instructor. So in the moral life of man, the example of Christ's life stands ever before us as an inspiration. Here we behold the perfect subordination of the passions to the will, here we behold that perfect obedience to the Will of the Father, which caused Him to endure the massive agony of Gethsemani, the cruelty of the scourging, and the shame of Calvary's Cross. Here is no indifferent deity immeasurably removed from interest in human affairs, but a God who in taking to Himself a human nature was willing to drink to the bitter dregs the cup of pain and suffering. With the realization of this sublime love and perfect sacrifice before it, the will should be drawn to imitation of the virtues which that Life displayed.

There is a last source of strength which the Church provides for man's weakness of will. Being purely spiritual it cannot be discerned through the gateways of the senses, yet its reality is as great as that of the Providence of God, of which it is a demonstration. On man's journey it is at once the strong arm which helps him to his feet, the lantern which illumines the path before him, the voice in his soul that warns of pitfall and precipice, the restraining hand that withholds him from the place of danger. It is called the grace of God.

God has not left man alone in his struggle, but from His Throne of Mercy has lavished upon him sustaining grace. When man fights the cause of virtue, he wages no solitary battle, for the power of God is with him.

My friends, we hear much today of the necessity of character training. Educators, legislative bodies, crime prevention bureaus and penologists have been

increasingly audible in their demands for better methods of training the young for good citizenship. From the considerations I have placed before you, is there not good reason to assume some connection between the growth of alarming conditions in our social life, and the minimizing of the religious element in the training of the child? When ethics and morality are removed from their foundations in the truth of religion, they become frail frameworks for the social structure.

The will of man needs desperately the rationalizing sanction and the supernatural grace which religion provides. The lives of all of us are bounded by the great finalities of Birth and Death. These are the frame which holds in its embrace the canvas of our earthly existence. But it is given to neither Birth nor Death to dictate what picture that canvas shall show forth.

In the great studios of life each day the will of man dips its brush into the oils of good and evil and with swift unerring strokes makes clearer the design, more vivid the coloring in the picture called "Portrait of a Soul". As the days go on we who watch may see the patterns change, may behold beauty and loveliness fade, or else out of a mask of evil the precious outlines of a newborn nobility gradually emerge.

Then as the hours pass relentlessly, there comes an end to labor, the hand of the artist is stilled, and the sombre curtains of death hide the portrait forever from the eyes of men. But, oh my friends, what portrait of your soul and mine will be unveiled before the eyes of God?

THE MIND OF MAN

Address delivered on August 28, 1932

It all happened long ago. The silence of the Eastern night was broken by the sound of camel bells. The long road endlessly moved to the horizon like a tapering silver ribbon. The cool wind from the sea breathed gratefully over the tired faces of the travelers.

Out of the East they came, three old men and wise, their eyes filled with the lore of the ages, their faces set in consecrated purpose. What strange mission was it that brought them far from the luxury of their royal homes? What burning within the breast moved them irresistibly to that long and arduous journey.

In the sky there shone a bright star, one solitary radiant body that filled the night with glory. As the eyes of the Wise Men lifted to the firmament, the weariness faded from their faces, and was replaced by a look of exaltation.

We know the end of the story, my friends. Each cycle of the years brings it once more before our vision. The rude stable, the pale, adoring face of the Virgin Mother, the shepherds summoned by the song of the angels, the Child lying in the manger—All-Beauty, All-Goodness, All-Truth.

It happened long ago, yet endlessly repeating itself, it happens today, and ever stretches its symbolic portent into the years that are to be. For the story of that quest, that tale of high adventure, retraces itself unremittingly in human life. The Wise Men following the star like a pre-ordained destiny,

followed ever after a vision of truth, and at their journey's end found Truth—Incarnate.

So does the mind of man, ever-seeking, quest after Truth. But all too often this journey is guided by no clear star; all too often its progress is made through darkness, the echo of its groping steps, striking against the barriers of time, filters back emptily upon the listening-posts of the spirit, all too often the real end of that journey fades away and is replaced by a vain and treacherous mirage.

Yet always the quest goes on. It expresses itself in that compulsion by which man is driven to explore the mysteries of the physical universe. Beneath the microscope his tiring eyes search within the make-up of living things; at the eye-piece of giant lenses he views the expanse of far constellations; with the measuring-rod of mathematics, he estimates the far spaces of the stars—always to know, to realize, to understand.

The Mind of Man—how strangely does it contrast with his body! The physical organism develops, comes to maturity and settles down to a process of disintegration. The swift and harmonious play of muscles beneath a bronzed skin will cease with the passing of years, the lovely bloom of youth will fade with the days that relentlessly pass. With some amusement, and with more than a little sympathy we look back upon the pathetic search of those who throughout the ages have striven wearily after a Fountain of Youth. How vain their hope; how useless their enterprise.

But in contrast to the limited life which is the lot of man's body, the life of his mind stretches to what far-flung heights. The bones of poets and

thinkers of the past have long since been resolved into dust, but through the magic of the printed page their souls still breathe a deathless message of beauty and inspiration.

The fingers that moved laboriously inscribing curious crooked symbols upon paper, have long since been free from effort, but today when, through the voice of string and brass, these symbols come to radiant life as the mighty works of Beethoven and Wagner, the giant souls of the great composers are with us in majestic re-incarnation.

Thus it is that the mind of man lifts him from the flow and remorseless progression of the stream of physical life around him. But in its own existence—there is no ending to its quest after Truth.

Yet in our modern day it is sometimes difficult to discern truth. We live in an age in which values have become obscured, in which the superficial is too often accepted as the reality, and when the moment of disillusionment comes, too often there is heard once more the bitter cynicism of the words of Pilate, "What is Truth?"

It is inevitable that any mind which seeks to answer the great problem which life sets before it should be led to consider the truths of Religion. We can wonder at the lack of wisdom displayed by those who would destroy religion in their failure to realize this fact. For only in religion is there any satisfactory answer to the great questionings which trouble the minds of men. Contrary to what some would have us believe there is no opposition between faith and reason—there is only opposition between faith and false reasoning. Right reason demonstrates the foundations of faith, and right reason

aided by the illuminating power of grace leads to faith.

Man looks forth upon the world, beholds the orderly and rhythmic movements of the stars; he marks the cycle of the seasons so perfectly adapted to the needs of earth, the succession of night and day which sets apart a time for work and rest, he beholds the miracle of spring, the rich blossoming of the flowers and the spreading of the lacy patterns of the leaves. And beholding such evidence of power and wisdom his reason leads him to a First Cause of all things, God the Creator.

Nor can it be said that the men of science who strive to discover the innermost makeup of the universe have any better explanation to offer. For only recently one of the most eminent physicists, in explaining the nature of the material universe expressed his thoughts in these words:

"The tendency of modern physics is to resolve the whole material universe into waves and nothing but waves. These waves are of two kinds: bottled-up waves, which we call matter, and unbottled waves which we call radiation or light.

"These concepts reduce the universe to a world of light, potential or existent, so that the whole story of its creation can be told with perfect accuracy and completeness in the six words: 'God said—"Let there be light."'"

Again when man turns from a contemplation of the world about him he finds the shifting tides of thought and feeling in his own consciousness, he views the great differences between the operations of the physical organs of sense and the mental states which arise as a result of those operations, he real-

izes that complex as the human brain may be there is no corner of its winding gray labyrinths which can be said to be the resting place of a thought, an ideal, a hope or an aspiration.

Yet these are more real and nearer to us than all things in the outside world. Is it not logical that man be led to believe that they are but the expressions of that spirit within him called the soul, that bright flame infused by God into his physical framework to endow it with the gift of life?

Again when man is confronted, as must inevitably happen, with the reality of death, when he realizes that as time takes its toll, there will come to him a cessation of struggle, that within the cradling embrace of the earth, his body must undergo dissolution, what does his intelligence prompt him to believe?

There are those who would proclaim that death is nothingness, a return into silence, the extinguishing of a candle burning for a brief moment in the mansion of life. To them life itself is without meaning—a moment of striving, and then an end which is not the passing of a spirit, but only the disintegration of the flesh. How poorly does this accord with man's beliefs about himself! Today we live, breathe, experience sorrow and joy, love and are loved, aspire towards ideals of charity and goodness, cry out against oppression and injustice—tomorrow all these are gone—life was but a vain beating of fragile wings in the measureless stretches of the life of the world. If this were true, what a miserable and mocking travesty would be the life of man!

In other phases of his life man beholds every instinct correlated with the means for its satisfaction.

The need of his body for nourishment finds the organs of digestion prepared to transform food from its original state into a form in which it can be assimilated—the need of oxygen by the cells of his physical frame is cared for by the heart, the lungs, and the blood.

Yet if death is for him the closing of a book that is never again to be opened, the highest needs and aspirations of his being must forever go unsatisfied, his desire for happiness which is so poorly realized here on earth must forever remain frustrate. Is there in such a concept the logic and reason which would appeal to the mind of man?

“Alas for him who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marbles play;
Who hath not learned in hours of faith
The truth to flesh and sense unknown
That Life is ever Lord of death,
And Love can never lose its own.”

The very imperfections which man beholds in the life around him only sharpen and intensify his desire for a more perfect world—the imperfections of a life in which the undeserving receive reward, and merit often goes without recognition, in which the unscrupulous are sometimes the recipients of the world's honors. For the final satisfaction of such conditions, man's sense of justice cries out for life beyond the grave. Nor are these notions rooted in sentimental aspiration, or overweening hope; they are imbedded in the firm earth of reason.

Thus does the searching mind of man come to three fundamental truths of religion: God—the Soul—Immortality. For religion is the door through which man passes to the fullness of comprehension.

All human life is a straining from the imperfect to the more perfect. From the pale beauty of the things of earth, man's heart reaches out to a Beauty that is perfect and complete; from a dimly grasped ideal of goodness, man's will aspires to a Goodness which is serene and all powerful; from a faintly glimpsed vision of truth, man's mind seeks ever the comprehension of an eternal and everlasting Truth.

Only through faith can he begin to realize his aspiration. Faith places the glory of consecration upon the faculties of man; it opens a pathway through the tangled brush that would hinder his progress; a bright incandescent star in the heavens, it guides him ever on toward eternal horizons; under its beneficent light pattern and design become visible in the chaotic elements of our existence.

Nowhere else is there an explanation of the meaning of life nor a justification for those instincts which we have considered. Without faith, man is confronted with a world of energy, an energy which has blindly flung him into existence in this day and hour and which will just as blindly annihilate him when the time comes.

Unknowing, unfeeling, unrealizing, it provides no place for the mysteriously begotten aspirations of his spirit. For where are goodness, beauty, and truth to be found in the endless swirl of the forces of nature? Material force not only does not produce these things but is alike indifferent to good and evil, beauty and ugliness, truth and falsehood.

Does the hurricane spare the storm-tossed vessel? Is the sunset conscious of its own beauty? Is the bosom of the violin moved to joy and sorrow by the lovely sound it breathes forth?

But if the only reality in the Universe be the energy which we behold in material things, then man's reason is a lie and his aspirations but a fitful and deceptive dream begotten of a chemical ferment in the matter of his brain. Of what value then nobility of soul or idealism of character? Of what value human hope? Of what value human love?

My friends, it is difficult to believe that such is the case. Even if it were true that the concepts of religion were an illusion—which they are not—even if it were true that charity and justice were but dreams—which they are not—even if life forever closed with the coming of death—which it does not—it would still be at least more noble and beautiful and satisfying to make these the foundations for our lives than to submit ourselves to the remorseless operations of a mechanistic universe.

But for us, as for the generations of the past, and for the host of human beings yet to be, the star of faith, the star of a great trust and confidence still lights the way. So long as our eyes remain fixed upon its rays, we may go our way unafraid, undaunted.

There has come to us out of the Middle Ages the story of the Quest of the Holy Grail, the cup used by the Saviour at the Last Supper. Many knights went forth from the court of Arthur, journeying afar in their pilgrimage. Only three who were pure of heart achieved that Quest and beheld the Grail.

All of us today are engaged in a Second Quest of the Grail which is eternal life. Oh, Father in Heaven, help us to mould our lives that we come to Thee, Who alone can satisfy the yearnings of our Souls!

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