

Gillis, James M.
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The Life of The Soul

by

JAMES M. GILLIS, C. S. P.

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THE LIFE OF THE SOUL

by

Rev. James M. Gillis, C. S. P.,

Editor of The Catholic World.

Nine addresses delivered in the Catholic Hour, produced by the National Council of Catholic Men through the courtesy of the National Broadcasting Company and its associated stations.

(On Sundays from November 1 to December 27, 1936)

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IMPRIMATUR:

✠ JOHN FRANCIS NOLL, D. D.,

Bishop of Fort Wayne.

Decidified

DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF MY DEAR FRIEND AND
BROTHER IN RELIGION MONSIGNOR JOHN J.
BURKE OF THE PAULIST FATHERS. A MAN
OF GOD WHO IN THE MIDST OF MANY
CARES AND OF ABSORBING OCCUPA-
TIONS NEVER FAILED TO TEACH
AND TO PRACTICE THE
SPIRITUAL LIFE.

INTRODUCTION

Certain officials both of the National Council of Catholic Men and of the National Broadcasting Company, trained to judge the response to radio discourses, have informed me that the interest of the listening public in the talks here printed was unusual. Nothing could please a priest better than to know that the attention of the people can be held when he speaks to them of the life of the soul. In these days when war and politics and social science and economics seem to so many of paramount importance, it is comforting and encouraging to know that personal religion remains a matter of deep and vital interest.



RELIGION

Address delivered on November 1, 1936

The most ancient and elementary desire of the human heart is the desire for God. This passionate longing of man for God is not only ancient but aboriginal, not only deep-seated, but ineradicable. At certain times, and in some places, scepticism and materialism seem to prevail, but irreligion never really gets deep into the soul of the race. Religion always recurs, when artificial restraint is lifted, and if the restraint be prolonged, religion bursts forth with violence. It cannot be permanently suppressed, any more than a volcano can be smothered. Religion has been (as they say) "discredited" in every century and every generation. But the invidious task of driving out religion from men's hearts always has to be done over again. Man reverts invariably to what is natural to him. The most thorough, systematic attempt to wean man away from God is now in progress in Moscow and throughout Soviet Russia. But if the Bolshevik leaders had studied the history of revolutions, especially of religious revolutions, they would have shunned the absurdity of proscribing religion. They are but repeating the blunders of the past. Their only original contribution to the propaganda of atheism is a new slogan, "Religion is the opiate of the people." But religion is not to be slain with slogans. Nor can it be obliterated by governmental decrees, no matter how relentlessly and cruelly they may be enforced. If it were possible to destroy all churches, temples, and synagogues, and to massacre every priest and every minister of religion, religion would spring up again out of the soil, and out of the human heart. The earth will not

be rid of religion until it is rid of man. For man is incurably religious. Any one who, like Jesus Christ, "knows what is in man," is aware of what has been called, quite aptly, "the inveterate mysticism of the human heart."

It will be interesting therefore to consider the precise nature of this universal and indestructible phenomenon, religion. So let us ask the question, "What is Religion?" and let us come at our answer by means of a process of elimination.

There is a modern notion that the only safe and sane religion is morality—"morality touched with emotion," as Matthew Arnold used to say. To live clean, to work hard, to do good, to pay one's debts, to be a desirable citizen—and all that—is doubtless praiseworthy. But it is not religion. Ethical culture bears the same relation to religion as a marble statue bears to a creature of flesh and blood. All "natural religions" remain the playthings of little cliques of the *soi-disante elite*. Man, in the mass, will have nothing to do with them. He demands the supernatural, the mystical. True, this craving for the supernatural may open the door to superstition. But the human race has never been excessively chary of superstition. It will risk a little superstition rather than denature religion.

Nor is religion to be confounded with philosophy. Philosophy is the pursuit of Truth, perhaps we may say, the worship of Truth. Now Truth is God, and hence to worship Truth might seem the same as to worship God. But religion is more than philosophy. A man may philosophize for a lifetime, and scarcely experience one moment of religious feeling, or perform one act of religion.

There is (to mention but one difference) a sense

of certainty in religion that is wanting in philosophy. In pursuit of truth, the philosopher will follow one path for some distance, become perplexed, and retrace his steps, only to try another, and yet another road to his goal. But the religious man once he has found his road, holds to it, and as Chesterton has said of St. Joan of Arc, he "goes down it like a thunderbolt." To change the metaphor, the philosophical mind plays with truths, juggles truths, scrutinizes them, selects and rejects them, throws them down and picks them up again; but the religious man lays hold on Truth, and says to Truth, "I will not let Thee go." "O Truth, my God, make me one with Thee, in everlasting love," cries a Kempis. Has any philosopher loved truth so passionately?

Again, religion is not synonymous with theology. A man may be profoundly religious, and care but little for theology. In his impetuosity he may even utter words that seem to indicate disdain for theology. To quote again the author of the *Imitation of Christ*, "What signifies making a great dispute about hidden and obscure things. . . and what matter is it to us of genera or species. He to whom the Eternal Word speaketh is delivered from a multitude of opinions. What doth it profit thee to dispute learnedly of the Trinity, if thou be wanting in humility, and so be displeasing to the Trinity?" Evidently the gentle saint who wrote these words was a bit impatient with some professional theologians, if not with theology itself. But no one questions his being genuinely and deeply religious. Nor would even the most zealous champion of orthodoxy deny that religion pure and simple often exists in a soul innocent of theology. In fact, it is a familiar and favor-

ite thought in theological circles that the "old woman telling her beads under the pulpit" may love God, and be loved of God more than the learned Doctor of Divinity.

Religion, therefore, is not identical with morality, or philosophy, or theology. What then *is* religion?

Without attempting to give, at this moment, an adequate theological definition, let us say that primarily religion is the recognition of the fact that all creation is mysterious and points to an Ultimate and Eternal Mystery beyond this visible universe. The world in which we live is filled with mystery, and the sense of mystery is akin to the instinct of religion. I do not say that one who senses the mystery in the universe is necessarily religious. A poet or a philosopher may recognize the presence of mystery and yet not be professedly religious. But the poet, the artist, the musician, the philosopher, the scientist, the scholar, in fine all who seek after truth or beauty, are, knowingly or unknowingly, "searchers after God." If once they could but recognize that the all-pervading Mystery is personal, then the zeal of the scholar, the rapture and ecstasy of the artist and the poet, would become religious experiences. He is "not far from every one of us," says St. Paul, quoting a pagan poet. "In him we live, and move, and are." He is like the atmosphere, which we cannot see, but in which and by which we live. He is more. He is like some one close to us, but invisible. "Our eyes are held" that we cannot see Him. But we "seek the Lord if haply [we] may feel after Him and find Him."

Lovers of Truth and Beauty, however they may differ, or imagine that they differ one from another,

are all lovers of God. Some of them need to be warned in the words of St. Augustine, "seek what ye seek, but it is not where ye seek it." But whether they seek wisely or unwisely, in the true direction or in the false, they are all restless with the passion for God: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee."

Not only poets and other men of unusual talent, but all men (except those who have been quite degenerated by an artificial civilization) are aware of an elusive but ever-present Reality behind the things that appear. "We cannot see His form but we can see His shadow. We cannot hear His Voice, but we can hear His footfall." The nearness of the Unseen baffles us, provokes us, leads us on. The presence of mystery subdues us, chastens us, makes us tread softly wherever we go. All ground is Holy Ground. Every bush may, as we gaze at it, become a burning bush. The poet, or the prophet, or the saint, is merely one who sees a bit clearer than the rest of us, and who, seeing, has the gift of telling, at least to some extent, what he sees. The poet, perhaps above other men, is a seer. If he be no seer, he is no poet. If he be a seer indeed, he can see beauty and glory, not only in a sunset and a waterfall, or a snow-capped mountain, but in those things that to the unimaginative (that is, to those who cannot see the unseen) are prosaic and sordid. Wordsworth has the truth,

"There was a time when meadow, grove and stream,
The earth and every common sight,
To me did seem appavelled in celestial light."

I have seen not only paintings but mere etchings,

lines graven upon steel that made a spot in the slums as beautiful as the streets and squares of fairyland. Joseph Pennell has made us aware of the strange unexpected beauty of the Ghetto, of the filthy wharves and tumble-down rookeries under the piers of a bridge, of shanties built haphazard of odds and ends salvaged from a city dump.

You and I had called these things hideous. The artist enables us to see that even in the forlorn by-product of an ugly civilization beauty lies hidden and may be revealed, if one have the eye for it. The "realist" may protest, "I cannot see it." No, but if he could see it, he might become a Pennell, a Whistler, or even perhaps a Turner. We all remember the anecdote of the matter-of-fact fellow who, standing before a Turner masterpiece, said "I never saw a sunset like that!" and the retort of the artist who happened to hear him, "Don't you wish you could!"

The reason we don't see beauty in "every common sight" is that we haven't the eye—and what is more important—the soul of the artist. Or perhaps it is because we have been "unfaithful to the heavenly vision." Even the poets have to bewail, upon occasion, the loss of "angel faces" which they had "loved long since and lost awhile." Like Newman, Wordsworth laments "the things that I have seen I now can see no more." For "there hath passed away a glory from the earth." The poet grieves, for he knows that with the passing of the vision he has lost contact with Ultimate Reality. So if the universe ceases for us to be mystical, an intimation of immortality and eternity, it is because we have lost or have never possessed the seeing eye. Shakespeare could find "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones and good in

everything." And says a Kempis, "If only thy heart were right, every created thing would be to thee a mirror of life and a book of holy doctrine. There is no creature so little and so vile that it showeth not forth the goodness of God."

Pity therefore the poor Philistine whose only world is that of brick walls and cement roads, for whom the woods are only so much timber, and a mountain but a heap of slag, the ocean a dreary waste to be crossed if possible without being looked at; pity the dull-witted materialist to whom the stars in heaven are only globes of vapor in a state of ignition.

The religious man can say to such as these "I have a meat to eat that you know not of. I have a world to live in that you can never see; I have a secret source of joy that prevents my being crushed by what one of your own poets has called

"The heavy and insupportable weight
Of this weary and unintelligible world."

It is easy to say that the poet or the mystic reproduces visions that exist only in his own imagination. But the fact that we cannot see what he sees is no proof that it is not there. Even we see it after he sees it, for he makes us see it. The painter who puts on canvas, or the etcher who puts on paper, only the crass thing that strikes the carnal eye is no artist. He must make us see what the eye does not see. It is so with the poet. He must make us see what the "eye hath not seen," and hear what "ear hath not heard." Tennyson lamented, "I would that my tongue could utter the thoughts that arise in me." Every seer sees more than he can tell. St.

Paul, St. Teresa, all the prophets and poets and mystics, tell us much of the other world, and then complain that they can't even begin to tell us.

All the universe, then, is mystery. But even more, man is mystery. Human nature is more inscrutable than any visible or tangible object. They who deny the mystery in man can never have studied man. Properly understood, the heart and mind of man are a revelation of God. For man is made "in the image and likeness of God", and to know man is to begin to know God. Man is mystery more baffling than either the inanimate or the brute creation.

For that reason, the outstanding geniuses of the human race are not those who have studied the course of planets around the sun, not those who have spent long lives humped over books in libraries, with their be-spectacled eyes riveted on some "volume of forgotten lore"; not those who potter about in chemical laboratories scrutinizing the contents of test tubes, or peering through the lenses of a microscope to spy upon the antics of wriggling bacilli; not those who ensconce themselves in a cage in the heart of the jungle to catch upon a phonographic disk the sounds that they are pleased to call the speech of monkeys—not these are the superlatively great men of our race, but those who have by intuition the uncanny power of penetrating flesh and blood, of reading the revelation that has been written on the "fleshly tables of the heart," and then of revealing man to himself. The sacred Scriptures are as much a revelation of man as they are of God.

Men used to say, "Philosophy is the handmaid of religion." Men will say, in centuries to come, "Science is the coadjutor of religion." The scientist, like

the theologian, is trying to penetrate the veil that separates the seen from the unseen, the known from the unknown. And every time the scientist sees something beyond, he also sees, in the selfsame flash of light, that the unknown world is vaster and more marvelous than he had hitherto imagined. I wonder that scientists, at work in their laboratories or their observatories, do not collapse to their knees, and bow their heads in silent adoration of the vast Unseen. Perhaps they do. Keats imagined that the astronomers and explorers felt the same mystic exaltation as the poets, "Then felt I like some watcher of the skies when a new planet swims into his ken." Is there not ecstasy and silent worship under the little domes of observatories, as under the big dome of heaven? And did not "stout Cortes and all his men, look at each other with a wild surmise, silent upon a peak in Darien"?

This is religion, and poetry, and science. They have all essentially the same Ultimate Object. We have no miracle in religion greater than the miracle of the rising and setting of the sun. The rotation of the earth upon its axis is as bewildering to the brain as the procession of the Son and the Holy Ghost from the Father. Electricity is as mysterious and as incomprehensible as the Blessed Eucharist. The origin of a human being, from the coalition of a couple of microscopic particles, which bear no more resemblance to a human body than an invisible mite of marble dust to the Venus de Milo, is so great a mystery that the Church insists that marriage is a matter of religion, a sacrament. All is holy, all is good, save sin—just as all is mystery. They that have caught a glimpse of these things have commenced to be religious.

They have commenced to be religious. But it cannot be said that they have attained to the fullness of religion. The object of divine worship cannot be blank bewildering mystery. The object of worship is a Person, God. Religion is not merely awe and adoration. It is love and possession of the Beloved. "What therefore you worship, without knowing it, (the Unknown God), that I preach to you," says St. Paul. And the declaration is that God has indeed come very close to us. God has become incarnate, in the Person of Jesus Christ. The last word of Revelation is "The Word was made Flesh." God, the infinite Mystery, has become visible and tangible. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled. . . we declare unto you," says the Apostle, St. John.

Man, therefore, begins with a sense of awe in the presence of all-pervading mystery, rises to a knowledge that the Mystery is God; comes to know that God is not a mere Force or a Presence, but a Person. He reaches out to that Person, demanding union. The union is achieved. Man and God are united. This is Religion.

PRAYER

Address delivered on November 8, 1936

William James in an epoch-making volume, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, which might have been titled in the modern mode "A Psychologist Looks at Religion", wrote "We hear in these days of scientific enlightenment a great deal of discussion about the efficacy of *Prayer*. Many reasons are given us why we should *not* pray. Others give reasons why we *should* pray. Very little is said of the reason we *do* pray. The reason is simple: We pray because we cannot help praying."

The famous scholar arrived at that conviction from a study of the human mind. He could have reached the same conclusion by a study of human history. All men pray. They have always prayed. They pray not because they have been taught to pray, or commanded to pray, but because they are "made that way."

I say all men pray. Let me make a reservation: all who are genuinely *human* pray. Nowadays we have become familiar with the phrase "The Penalties of Civilization". Doctors of psychology who study the mind and doctors of medicine who minister to the body, tell us that cancer, for example, is a penalty of civilization, and tuberculosis, and cardiac weakness, and venereal disease, and insanity. Civilization is of course in general a boon, but we pay a terrible price for it. One of its evil consequences is to dehumanize us. I once heard the president of an enormous state university advising the students to be religious. "Any one" he declared, "who is not religious is degenerate". Strong word, but not too

strong. A man who has ceased to pray, who has been dissuaded from prayer, who has been shamed away from prayer has ceased in that degree to be a man. Man, as man, prays.

In front of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston there is a particularly striking equestrian statue of an all-but-naked Indian sitting on his horse with arms outstretched, head held aloft, and eyes apparently attempting to pierce the heavens. Oddly enough his attitude—except of course the horse—is that of the early Christians frescoed upon the walls of the Catacombs. But who taught the savage to pray? No one but nature. No one but his own heart and his own instincts. Again: the Arab in the desert dismounts from his camel, spreads his prayer-rug upon the sands, turns to the rising or the setting sun and prays. If you ask him “Why”, he will not attempt an intricate theological explanation, but will probably echo “Why? Why do I eat? Why do I sleep? Why do I breathe? Why does the water gush up in the oasis? Why does the sun climb to the top of the sky and slip down again to the horizon? Why does the wind blow dunes in the sands of the desert?” The untutored Arab, speaking in that fashion, will not know it, but he is exemplifying an axiom of Scholastic Philosophy *Agere sequitur esse*, “Our actions flow from our nature”. Birds fly, horses gallop, fish swim, serpents crawl. And for the same reason man prays. It is his nature.

William James speaks of “these days of scientific enlightenment.” I think I detect in his use of the phrase a little pinch of the salt of sarcasm. To hear some men talk you might imagine that there is no other name under heaven whereby men may be saved than the name of “Science”, Omniscient,

Omnipotent "Science"! But in these days of bombing planes, mustard gas, and bacteriological warfare, the dreadful fact is beginning to dawn upon our minds that instead of saving us, science may ruin us. It certainly will if we permit science to supplant nature, smother nature, suffocate nature. "Before Abraham was made, I am", says Jesus. "Before Science was made I am", says Nature, "I was here before Science and I will be here after Science." When science—arrogant science—has done its worst to destroy humanity, it will destroy itself, but Nature will remain.

I would not convey the impression that only the uncivilized, those who are called "children of nature", pray. It is possible to develop the intelligence and yet to remain wholly human. The wisest man that ever lived—in heathendom—Socrates, prayed upon occasion for twenty-four hours on end. The orator Demosthenes, whose mental powers much more than his vocal gifts account for his unsurpassed eloquence, commenced all his speeches with a prayer. Pericles, leader of the Athenian State at the very apogee of its glory prayed. Epictetus, who shares with Seneca and Marcus Aurelius a reputation as one of the chief sages of the Greco-Roman world, has a sentence that is almost word for word identical with one of Thomas a Kempis. "When thou hast shut thy door and darkened thy room", says Epictetus, "think not that thou art alone, for God is with thee." "Enter into thy chamber", says a Kempis, "close the door behind thee and call to thee Jesus thy beloved."

You may find in the ruins of ancient civilization in Mexico and Peru graffiti, pictures cut with steel upon stone, of Aztecs and Incas in the attitude of

prayer. Even in Buddhism, sometimes said to be a religion without a God, there is prayer, endless prayer, one might almost say excessive prayer. I have seen in a motion picture travelogue young Japanese women praying before a statue of Buddha, holding the palms of their hands together like a communicant approaching the altar-rail in the Catholic Church.

Enough! We need not cover the globe and summon every race of mankind to bear witness to the universal practice of prayer. Suffice it to say that prayer is as old as man and as extensive as human life on this globe. True, there are certain persons of a curiously arrogant mental type to whom the testimony of all mankind means nothing. Unmindful of Edmund Burke's familiar warning not to launch an indictment against a whole nation, they do not hesitate to press an indictment against the entire human race. "If all men pray", they declare with a fool's self-satisfaction, "all men are superstitious". But is there any superstition more extravagant or more offensive than that of the man who says, "All men are fools and I alone am wise"?

All men pray. But I have not said they all pray wisely and well. I have not said they all pray to the One True God. They may pray to a stick or a stone, the sun, the moon, the stars, to a hideously graven, grotesquely painted image of a demon, to a sacred bull, a crocodile, a cat, a white monkey. Men have been known so vile as to worship a woman. Rudyard Kipling speaks of the fool "who makes his prayer to a rag and a bone and a hank o' hair". Many a man has said to a woman: "You are my deity; I will leave wife and family for you. I will go with you to the ends of the earth: yes to hell."

And that is the type of man who says "I never pray". I have known of a man whose creed was "No God, no Soul, no future life", stealing out to a graveyard day after day, and when asked to explain his apparently morbid action saying, "I kneel at my wife's grave and whisper my thoughts to her". No God to pray to but he must pray to something, so he prays to dust and ashes.

I repeat: so long as a vestige of humanity remains in a man, he must pray, to God, to man, to woman, to inanimate nature, to a sunset, to a mountain (the northwest Indians speak of Rainier as "the Mountain that was God"), to a painting or a poem or a symphony, to art, to science, to demons, to *something*. In certain particularly pathological cases, for example Nabuchodonosor and Napoleon, where vanity becomes colossal and sanity breaks down under the impact of repeated adulation, a man comes to consider himself as a kind of God. This, of course, is the last infirmity of what may once have been a noble mind.

But rightly directed prayer is the unburdening of the heart of all mankind to God, it is a sigh welling up from the unfathomed depths of the soul, flinging itself from the lips of all the race; it is a great universal cry, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee". One might as well attempt to clamp a metal cap upon the crater of a volcano, or stuff his fist into the mouth of a geyser, as to attempt to prevent a human being from pouring out his heart and soul to God.

None the less, the attempt is made, especially in these "scientific" skeptical days, and I think it not unreasonable to suspect that hence comes the ap-

palling increase in mental disease, and in the unexpected outbursts of violent passion recorded more and more frequently upon the front page of the newspapers. It was a great preacher Lacordaire who said, and I suppose others have said it after him, that prayer saves us from going mad. Psychologists of the newer schools explain that mental diseases and passionate outbursts are the result of the repression of the natural instincts, and they recommend us to "release the inhibitions". They are half way right. Their mistake is in forgetting that our natural instincts are not all carnal: we have also irresistible spiritual aspirations. "Release the inhibitions"? Yes, release the inhibitions laid upon the *spirit* of man, inhibitions of shame, and false education, inhibitions arising from flip-pant ridicule by the *intelligentsia* who have dehumanized themselves quite as much, though in a different way, as the gigolos and the lounge-lizards, and who having made themselves less than completely human with pseudo-science and perverted philosophy, seem to take it as an affront that young men and women as yet unspoiled should worship God. And so, in self justification, they do their utmost with the Voltairean weapon of ridicule or with the Satanical argument "There is no God. You pray to yourself. You are the only God."

They think they know much. They think they know all. But what they don't know is that human nature is more fundamental than science or philosophy, more irrepressible than the fires at the heart of the earth, or the typhoons, hurricanes, tornadoes, tidal waves that from time to time lash the sea to madness and devastate the land.

Leave a man alone and he will be religious; cease

to repress his spiritual emotions and he will give them vent in prayer. Tell him he must not pray and you shut him up in a sphere of brass. He will beat upon the walls of his prison until his hands are broken and bloody; he will cry out in desperation until his strength wanes and he can cry no more; he will end with insanity unless you permit him what William James used to call "a healthy minded religion".

These expressions may seem to smack of extravagance. I am aware of it. And I dare say some will think them melodramatic. But I am convinced that no expression can exaggerate the evil of the suppression of the religious instinct, the paralysis of the impulse to pray. A terrible fact confronts us in this modern day of super-civilization. Physicians, psychologists, moralists, social workers, statesmen are worried over the prodigious increase in pathological phenomena. Every humane person desires ardently that these ills that beset humanity be cured. But before they can be cured, they must be made good. Almost all the new psychologies emphasize the abnormal, and I think in that they are right. But they are wrong if they think that an unhealthy mind can necessarily be cured by tinkering with the body. Mental disease calls for a mental cure. And they work in the dark who do not see that irreligion is a mental disease. They persist in looking upon man as a creature compacted of flesh and blood, bone and sinew, nerves and blood vessels and ductless glands, physical and chemical elements. Man is all that indeed, but he is principally something more. What makes him man is spirit, soul. Deny that, deal with man as if soul did not exist and you shall never cure him. Blind yourself to the

fact that man is man, deny that human nature has spiritual as well as carnal instincts, deal with man as you deal with a beast, and you will destroy man. Recognize his spiritual aspirations, encourage them, provide them with their natural outlet, that is to say have recourse to religion and prayer, and you will save man, the individual man and the race of men.

MYSTICISM

Address delivered on November 15, 1936

I once happened to sit in at an impromptu discussion between two clergymen on the question: "Is there an exoteric and an esoteric Christianity?" It sounds forbidding, and almost any one who found himself trapped, so to speak, in the room with the two reverend debaters, might well have made some excuse to leave, or even to have rushed away without formality from an argument on such a seemingly impractical subject. However, I held my ground and listened, and was glad in the event that I hadn't been frightened off by a couple of high-sounding Greek words.

For after all, what they were getting at was simple: is Christianity, like Buddhism, a system of secrets, getting more and more mysterious as one goes further along; or like Freemasonry in which the neophyte with the first three degrees knows little or nothing of the awful cryptic knowledge communicated gradually as one progresses to the thirty-second and the thirty-third degrees?

That is to say, is the rank outsider kept totally ignorant of the true nature of—now let us say specifically—Catholicism? Is the novice who has received mere initiation by baptism uninformed of the hidden and, to use the debaters' word, "esoteric" truths revealed only to the elect, the past masters of the craft?

Catholics, I know will laugh at the question, but let me say simply and sincerely for the benefit of those who know our religion only from the outside, that we have no secrets, no cryptic knowledge, no

esoteric doctrine. Nothing is concealed from the neophyte, nothing is kept back from the proselyte. Even the "penny catechism," as it used to be called, tells all our doctrines and our practices. The six year old child who has memorized his Sunday School lesson knows the content of Catholicism as well as the professor of Dogmatic or Moral Theology in a Catholic university. We do not dole out the sacred treasures of the Faith little by little; we make no distinction between the initiated and the elect. "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel", says St. Paul. He meant the whole Gospel. Our priests are not "yogi", we do not surround ourselves with an atmosphere of fictitious mystery. We do not assemble in a dim light breathing an atmosphere saturated with narcotizing fumes of Oriental incense to perform some pretentious pseudo-mystical rite. We look into no crystal globes, we do not deliberately induce a trance, emerging painfully, and indeed with signs of extreme agony, to communicate a lot of esoteric tosh that bewilders the client, as the enigmatic utterances of the Delphic Oracle bewildered its consultants of old. To speak simply, we consider all that sort of thing as "the bunk", superstition, fraud, a "racket", and in some cases an incentive to sexual abnormalities.

No, we have none of this dangerous wicked nonsense in Catholicism. Our religion is simple. We glory in the fact that our Faith is that of the common people. We do not demand extraordinary intellectual power or a capacity for high mystical experience of those who worship at our altars. We do not delude converts with the promise of supernatural ecstasies, raptures, visions. We are content if they say their prayers, attend Holy Mass, worship

God in their own measure, and keep the Commandments.

Nevertheless Catholicism is a religion of mysticism. Any religion that is more than a system of philosophical thought, more than an interpretation of life, more than a moral code, *must* be mystical. For after all, what is religion but contact with the other world? Cardinal Manning in his little classic on the Priesthood, says that the priest saying Mass "stands upon the shore of the eternal world". As a matter of fact, both priest and people do more than that; they attempt to cross the boundaries of the eternal world. Most of us can do so only in thought, in desire, in aspiration. But saints have succeeded where we have failed, they have gone on where we have halted. Religion rightly understood is not a dull dogged prosaic uninspired manner of life, though Puritans and Pharisees and formalists have made it seem so. Religion is adventure, the kind of adventure that even the boldest *conquistadores* never dared attempt. We marvel at the courage of such soldiers and explorers as Cortes—"Stout Cortes", Keats calls him—and Pizarro and de Soto, who landed with a company of men upon the shores of a vast continent (perhaps they didn't dream just how vast it was), burning their ships behind them, setting forth undaunted to penetrate dense jungles, slashing for themselves a path through the dense tangle of the virgin wilderness, fording treacherous streams, themselves and their horses heavy with armor and other impedimenta; climbing mountains, crossing merciless deserts, risking ambushes, fighting savages every foot of the way, bogging down in malarial swamps, suffering hunger and thirst; their numbers decimated with fever in malarial bayous;

yet pressing on a thousand miles and more, in from the sea coast. Yes, these were heroes, but their valor is not to be compared with that of the saint-adventurers after God, explorers of a *terra incognita*. These *conquistadores* of the supernatural life have undergone such a preparation for the grand adventure, such an *askesis*, as makes us cowardly mortals shudder; they flagellated and macerated the flesh, inflicted upon themselves pitiable punishments; deliberately they hungered and thirsted; the flame of holy desire burned sometimes so fiercely in their hearts that they were compelled to run out of doors and bare their breasts to the winter air; they flung themselves naked into brambles; they mortified relentlessly the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. Even to read of the austerities of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Peter of Alcantara, St. Lydwine of Schiedam and a host of others, makes our blood run cold, and perhaps we are tempted to say "These are mad, these that crucify themselves, these that cry *aut pati aut mori*, If I cannot suffer I prefer to die". But as one writer on mysticism has said—I quote him because his testimony is that of a non-Catholic and he cannot be suspected of prejudice in favor of the saints—"these gaunt and *outré* saints, with their grotesque and tragic self-stultifications, succeeded where a broader, saner way of life has failed. Their life has a tang, a salt sting, which ours lacks. Can we mention representatives of a more reasonable and genial Christianity who have subjugated the world as these did? . . . Even today they conquer where we fail, and carry citadels that resist our every onslaught. Men and women who never darken church doors and barely hang on to the outmost fringe of

Christian society are stirred by the flaming ardor of St. Theresa, touched and purified by the dewy self-communings of Blessed Angela of Foligno and awed by the spiritual magnificence of St. Catherine of Siena." *

But let us make no mistake. It was not the aim of the mystic saints to conquer this world or to win the hearts of otherwise insensate men and women. What they aimed at was the other world. He Whom they sought to win, shall I dare say conquer, was God. They scourged their bodies not like the fakirs of India who seem to believe in punishment for punishment's sake, not to be seen of men and be called holy. They lacerated the flesh that the spirit might escape. The soul within them felt smothered and suffocated by the heavy, torpid beastly importunities of the body, its craving for physical comfort, indolence, and carnal satisfaction. They were not content, like the indecisive, mooning, brooding vacillating Prince Hamlet to cry "O that this too too solid flesh would melt!" They whipped it, they lashed and bruised it, they burned it up with the fire of love, and when the flesh had been conquered the soul burst forth and went winging its flight up to the very battlements of heaven.

Compared with these adventurers—these *conquistadores* of the sky—Stout Cortes and his men, Pizzaro, de Soto and all your Magellans, your Balboas, and your Captain Cooks, are stay-at-homes, sit-by-the-fire armchair explorers. The mystic saints indeed have climbed their mountains—symbolic mountains higher and more rugged than mountains of sand and stone and ice—they too have ford-

* E. Herman, *The Meaning and Value of Mysticism*. London. James Clarke. 2nd ed. June 1916. p. 179.

ed raging torrents; ventured into quagmires and quicksands; they have cut their way through thickly tangled jungles; they have trod the burning sands of fiery deserts; they have endured fevers, they have slain dragons, they have fought bare-handed not with savages but with demons; yes, they have grappled with God as Jacob wrestled with the angel; and like Jacob they have cried "I will not let Thee go until Thou Bless Me," or with the Beloved in the Canticle of Canticles "I have found Him Whom my soul loveth, I have held Him and I will not let Him go". "O God", they say, "I have crossed Thy moats, climbed Thy battlements, beaten down the barriers that protect Thee. I have conquered devils, I have wrestled with angels, I have made my way to Thy Presence, I have snatched away the veil of Mystery that shields Thy face from mortal gaze, I have stolen a glimpse of Thy beatific Countenance. 'No man can see God and live?' Well, if death be the penalty for snatching a glimpse of Thy Face, O God, I am happy to die. Why must my earthly sojourning be prolonged? Oh, that this mortal could put on immortality. Oh, that this corruption could be clothed with incorruption!"

But they have not died. By some strange miracle they have returned to this nether world. "From that bourne no traveller returns"? Well, these travellers, these adventurers, these intruders into the kingdom of bliss have returned, though with agonizing reluctance. And the mystic reports to his earth-bound brethren "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the mind of man to conceive what things God hath in store for them that love Him." "I know such a man", says St. Paul (speaking cryptically), "I know such a man (whether in

the body, or out of the body, I know not: God knoweth) : that he was caught up into paradise, and heard secret words, which it is not granted to man to utter." And, in consequence, he the most practical and unsentimental of men, he the last man to indulge in day-dreams, he the man of action *par excellence*, exclaims: I desire to die—"To me to die is gain".

Now I know that all these mystic rhapsodies are dismissed by dogmatists as "hallucinations". For certain arrogant persons are convinced that nothing can be true unless they understand and approve it, nothing can happen unless they themselves have experienced it. They have never read, or reading they have not understood, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamed of in your philosophy". They really don't deserve an answer. They are like those unfortunates who, themselves tone-deaf, seeing enthusiasts go mad over music, cry "Fools! Lunatics! Pretenders!" Or like the man who confessed that when people talked of the songs of birds, he always had thought they were indulging in poetic license. Because of some constitutional imperfection *his* ears had never detected the fact that birds sing. And there is, of course, the story of the color-blind realist who had never seen a Turner sunset. Poor souls! the chief joys of life are denied them, they have eyes and they see not, ears and they hear not. They have no mystic sense. In a word, they lack soul; and so they make bold to declare dogmatically that nothing exists but what can be touched, handled, weighed, measured.

But none the less the universal phenomenon of mysticism continues. As Evelyn Underhill says "We meet mystics in the east and the west; in the ancient, mediaeval, and modern worlds. Their one pas-

sion appears to be the prosecution of a certain spiritual and intangible quest: the finding of a 'way out' or a 'way back' to some desirable state in which alone they can satisfy their craving for absolute truth. This quest, for them, has constituted the whole meaning of life. They have made for it without effort sacrifices which have appeared enormous to other men: and it is an indirect testimony to its objective actuality, that whatever the place or period in which they have arisen, their aims, doctrines and methods have been substantially the same. Their experience, therefore, forms a body of evidence, curiously self-consistent and often mutually explanatory, which must be taken into account before we can add up the sum of the energies and potentialities of the human spirit, or reasonably speculate on its relations to the unknown world which lies outside the boundaries of sense".

But that passage is a kind of argument. And I feel about argument for mysticism what Dr. Samuel Johnson exclaimed in his blunt way when Boswell asked him what argument he would use in favor of prayer, "Argument, Sir! There *is* no argument. Prayer needs no argument." But I will go so far as to call attention to the one obvious fact, obvious but forgotten, that mystical experiences, like miracles, should not be dismissed without investigation at least in this "scientific" age. Time was when men like David Hume could declare that no evidence—however complete—could prove a miracle. But now the tune of the skeptics has changed. They admit the facts but question the explanation. At the grotto of Lourdes many skeptical investigators have been witness to the fact that the lame walk, the blind see, the deaf hear; that poor bodies almost disinte-

grating with tuberculosis are instantaneously and completely healed. But they say "Miracle? Miracle? We cannot admit miracle! The phenomena evidently occur. But we have no explanation. Still we shun the word *miracle*."

Just so with mystical facts. They used to be dismissed as hallucination, suggestion, auto-hypnosis. But now that some of the most capable psychologists have been constrained to admit the facts, no one, unless he confesses himself hopelessly unscientific, is free to dismiss the subject or to utter confident denials without investigation. Before telescopes were invented any fool could deny the mountains on the moon or the rings around Saturn. But it would be a curiously psychopathic individual who would now say "All those who use telescopes are victims of auto-hypnosis". When St. Catherine of Siena in ecstasy was elevated from the ground and seemed to be insensible to her surroundings, certain irreverent spectators passed a plank between her body and the floor, and stuck knives into her to see if the trance were real. The test was rough and cruel; but it was more scientific than the denial by an ignoramus of phenomena he has never taken the pains to investigate.

But I apologize. Argument is really out of place. Let us close not with argument but with affirmation. There have been on this earth and there are today men and women who by crucifixion of the flesh and discipline of the soul have fitted themselves for strange and wonderful spiritual experiences, raptures, ecstasies, visions, not merely after the fashion of poets, artists, composers and other men of genius, but supernatural experiences quite transcending the native powers of man. Some of these mystics have

been so frequently lifted up to the supernal world as to have their existence there rather than here. The heavy sod to which our leaden feet are fastened is to them comparatively unreal. Reality is elsewhere. Reality is God. And they have plunged into that Reality so often that it seems their home. They have explored a realm into which we have no power to enter. They have made discoveries that to us are, though not incredible, incomprehensible. They have gone in quest of God and they have found Him. They have snatched a few minutes of Eternal Life even before bodily death. It behooves us not to deny their experience, still less to ridicule it, but to contemplate with awe and reverence the holy daring of those who have fared forth, in the flesh or out of the flesh, into a region that we know only by hearsay and by faith, a region that we shall have to die to conquer.

SELF-DISCIPLINE

Address delivered on November 22, 1936

It is a curious fact—so curious as to seem incredible—that when Christianity first appeared the pagans denounced the gentle harmless followers of Jesus as “*inimici humani generis*”, “enemies of the human race”. Mark you! not merely enemies of Caesar, of the Empire, of the Greco-Roman civilization, but of the *human race*—haters of mankind! The accusation was, of course, preposterous. We naturally ask “What can the heathen have had in mind?” Christians were never misanthropes, pessimists, cynics, like Diogenes or Zeno or Cato, or like the modern Schopenhauer. They did not believe, like the Buddhists who came later, that existence is a curse and that the only happiness is to cease to exist. No, ours is a religion of optimism: “Gospel” means “good news”. What then was in the back of the head of the heathen when they made that perverse accusation “Enemies of the human race?”

What really irked them was the simple fact that the Christians didn't approve of drunkenness and other forms of debauchery, especially when practised under the pretext of religion. To us nowadays the incredible thing is that pagans often went into their temples not to pray but to indulge in obscene orgies which they offered to the gods as an expression of religious adoration. Bacchus was the god of drunkenness; a Bacchanal was a riot of drunkenness in the dark. You may read it in Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis*. And indeed there was worse than drunkenness. The inseparable companion of Bacchus was Venus, as they called the goddess of lust in Rome.

or Isis in Egypt, or Diana at Ephesus. Bad as we are today we have no parallel to such mad desecration of religion: to us the idea of combining worship with prostitution and of calling shameless women priestesses is so repugnant as to be unthinkable.

But to resume: what the Greco-Romans, the Egyptians and the Ephesians had in mind when they called the followers of Jesus haters of the human race was that the Christians preached and practised self-control, and believed religion impossible without virtue and virtue impossible without the subjugation of passion.

I say we have nothing like a religion of licentiousness nowadays. But we have half a dozen philosophies, some of them ostensibly "scientific"—magic word "Scientific"—which recommend a periodical explosion if not a constant indulgence of animal passion. The theory is that the release of passion is necessary to the health of body and mind. We have it in philosophy, and in poetry, and in that kind of poetry which is philosophy. "Seize pleasure as it flies". "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may", "Eat, Drink and be Merry"; or as Omar Khayyam says, "To drink wine and to make merry, such is my scheme of life; to pay no heed to heretic or devotee such is my creed".

. "some there are who tell
Of one who threatens he will toss to hell
The luckless pots he marred in making—Pish!
He's a good fellow, and 'twill all be well".

In those days as in ours there were some who believed in a "good God and a good time". George Sand goes so far as to resurrect the ancient paganism. She says, through the mouth of one of the

characters in her novel *Lelia*, "Anacreon has written my liturgy; I have taken antiquity as my model, the goddesses of Greece for my divinities. To keep me from despair I practice the religion of pleasure".

Indeed so far have we reverted towards paganism that in every land and in all tongues there are rollicking drinking songs which glorify the fruit of the vine quite as fervently as Omar the Persian sybarite who wrote the *Rubaiyat*, making of drunkenness a social virtue. In all large colleges where youth congregate with the ostensible purpose of obtaining an education, over-indulgence in drink seems to be considered a peccadillo and bawdiness is taken merely as evidence that a boy is becoming a man. Lasciviousness indeed is no longer a part of religion but none the less there are temples in which the worship of wine, woman, and song is carried on night after night and almost till dawn. Have not the municipal authorities here in New York—and I dare say elsewhere—been obliged to enact an ordinance that night clubs where drunkenness is all but universal and where nakedness stalks unashamed, must be closed before daybreak for fear that honest workmen on their way to their heavy tasks may not be scandalized—or infuriated—by the sight of male and female revellers emerging from these modern shrines of Bacchus and Venus?

And any preacher or moralist who ventures to excoriate these modern heathens, any one who, like St. Paul who never minced words, dares upbraid them "whose god is their belly and whose glory is their shame" and to repeat the apostle's warning "Be not deceived, God is not mocked", that they who indulge in "fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury. . . drunkenness, revellings and such like

. . . shall not obtain the kingdom of God"; I say, if a modern apostle makes bold to repeat and apply the warnings of the ancient apostle, our latter day heathen, like the Greeks and Romans, will try to fasten upon him the libel "hater of mankind, enemy of the human race". St. John the Baptist, holiest of men, gaunt with fasting, his loins girt about with a leathern girdle, and a piece of camel's hair over his shoulders, his face unshaven, his hair unkempt, his manners uncouth, was held no more out of place in Herod's court in the presence of the dancing girl Salome and her vicious mother than any one who should appear in the name of God at a modern night club and warn the half-naked women on the stage or at the tables and their escorts that they are heathen engaged in reestablishing upon the earth, as far as in them lies, the worship of the filthy pagan deities. You know the epithets that would be flung in the face of any such modern apostle: "fanatic", "kill-joy", "zealot", "religious maniac", "puritan", "pharisee"! the present-day equivalent of the ancient *inimici humani generis*, "humanity-haters!"

But there is, I must confess, one new element in the modern resentment against any summons to self-denial, any protest against self-indulgence. Several new philosophies have been conveniently discovered to prove to men and women that surrender to passion is a biological and physiological necessity. Cardinal Newman, speaking of the power of conscience, declared that "no man sins without making an excuse to himself for his sin." In his day, a century ago, men used to invoke the maxim of Rousseau, *Sequere naturam*, "Follow nature". They meant, however, "follow half your nature", follow the animal in you, forget the human; obey the flesh,

ignore the spirit. In our own generation one man has said, seriously and solemnly as if he were enunciating an axiom of supreme ethical importance, "man has done himself great harm by forgetting that he is an animal". As I read the history of the race upon this globe I would never have accused man of neglecting the animal element in his composite. To me the calamity would seem to be that he has so often forgotten the other human half of him. But pseudo-philosophers and nowadays pseudo-scientists continue to place in man's mouth glib phrases wherewith he may justify surrender to his appetites and his lusts. The current idiom is now no longer "Follow nature", but "Release the inhibitions" meaning "Let yourself go. If you put an obstacle in the way of your instincts you will become morbid, morose, neurotic, perhaps insane. So in the name of psychology let yourself go! Release the inhibitions!"

That comfortable recommendation, though doubtless reassuring to the self-indulgent, is not altogether convincing to the true philosopher, not to say the moralist. Those who are not easily hypnotized by a word, even that potent word "Psychology", ask to know "which inhibitions are to be released." The inhibition that prevents striking and killing? The inhibition that forbids stealing? or lying? or treachery? or double-dealing? Or is there really only one inhibition they have in mind, the one that keeps us from doing unmentionable things? If so—and it *is* so—a man needs no Sigmund Freud to give him that immoral advice. The same suggestion was bandied about, passed from man to man—and oh, the crime of it—from man to boy centuries before the word "psychology" was coined.

As a matter of fact, the folly of self-indulgence, the need of self-discipline, needs no theological proof. A little knowledge of human nature will suffice. Human nature is good and bad, both. God created it good. But there must have been—there was—to borrow another phrase from Newman, “some aboriginal catastrophe”, some primitive derangement that set man forever at odds not only with God but with himself. Those who invoke “psychology” so confidently seem to forget the primary psychological fact of remorse after sin. They leave conscience, the most important phenomenon in human history, altogether unexplained.

Also they speak much of evolution and of civilization. But by some inexplicable hiatus in their logic they seem not to recognize that if man always “releases the inhibitions”, practices self-indulgence and refuses self-discipline, neither evolution nor civilization is possible. If we accept even for the sake of the argument, the hypothesis that man has evolved slowly and painfully from a mere brute to become *homo sapiens*, a true human, it must be evident that he has done so by breaking away from what was brutish in his nature and emphasizing, cultivating, developing the incipient and rudimentary elements in his constitution that tend to make him a man. We need no Christian revelation to teach us that simple fact. It may be deduced from logic and common sense. The better pagans knew it. Even those who maintain in the face of facts that man is in no essential distinct from the brute creation, should see the need of self-discipline. If you give a brute beast all that he craves and free him from all restraint, let him have his way in all things, he will tear you to pieces. So, if you satisfy the

animal cravings of man, you will smother the spirit and bring about a reversion of man through the savage to the beast. There used to be in Darwin's day much talk about "The Ascent of Man". But if we in these days reject self-discipline, our descendants will be writing of the Descent of Man. If we let ourselves go, we shall most assuredly go down; to release the inhibitions is to release the passions and if we release the passions we shall ruin the race and cancel the little civilization that has been achieved slowly, painfully, and with so much self-denial. Do as you please, live as you like, and in a century or two we shall be Hottentots and Cannibals. Civilization—what there is of it—is largely the product of repression. Rousseau and Hobbes and Locke understood that fact and it is the primary postulate of Sigmund Freud. But they all insist that we have paid a great price for civilization. They think we suffer from the repression of our beastly instincts. But some of us think that civilization is worth the price. If there be those who prefer barbarism or savagery or sheer animalism then they should know that the shortest and swiftest way to achieve that degeneracy is to "release the inhibitions."

Indeed here and there in the midst of civilized society there are men and women who are in effect already barbarians. A man may wear broadcloth and fine linen, feast sumptuously every day and have the outward manner of a gentleman, and yet be inwardly a true savage. A woman may be most expensively and exquisitely gowned, she may have the manner of a queen and the grace of a Greek goddess and yet be at heart only a beautiful barbarian. It isn't clothes, or the cut and quality of them that makes civilization, it isn't the complexion or the

lingo or the geographical location that makes barbarism. Men and women who pamper the flesh and are slaves to passion, even though they belong to the very inner circles of culture, are essentially barbarians. The mark of the barbarian is self-indulgence: the *sine qua non* of civilization is self-restraint.

Yes, self-restraint, self-control, makes the civilized human being; but one thing more is required to make the perfect man. When he has subjected passion to reason, he must subordinate both passion and reason to God. Then and only then does man fill his rightful place in creation. For man is no mere animal. Man is not even merely man. Man is a child of God; he does not and cannot be his whole self unless in him the rational conquers the animal and both the animal and the rational acknowledge their subjection to the Divine.

TEMPTATION

Address delivered on November 29, 1936

The most interesting and important fact in the history of any human soul, the most thrilling dramatic and indeed too often tragic fact is the fact of temptation.

All life is conflict; when there is no conflict life has ceased. It is in accordance with a law of our nature, therefore, that any kind of conflict thrills us, a footrace, a ski-jumping contest, a football match, a prizefight, a duel of gladiators to the death, a battle of airplanes high in the sky; celestial "navies" as Tennyson called them, "navies battling in the central blue," while armies in trenches and citizens on house-tops watch with a mingling of fascination and fear. Any kind of conflict stirs our blood, even the conflict of brute beasts, a bull fight, a dog fight, that extraordinary battle we have seen in a motion picture between a mongoose and a cobra, or that between a water-buffalo and a tiger somewhere in the jungle of Malay. Yes, we seem to have been born to fight: it is in our blood. But as we rise out of savagery to civilization we grow away from the cruder kind of conflict, that of brawn and blood; our fight becomes the inward, spiritual struggle that we call temptation. Beasts fight one another, savages fight one another. So they remain beasts and savages. But civilized man fights himself and fighting himself he makes himself man.

Temptation is the only really momentous event in human life. For after all what does it matter whether Artaphernes or Miltiades wins at Marathon; Caesar or Pompey at Pharsalia; Wellington

or Napoleon at Waterloo? What does it matter? Only one thing matters, the victory of the soul over the world, the flesh, and the devil. In the one case only Europe or Asia is at stake; in the other the outcome is heaven or hell. "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh cities", says King Solomon. Cities? Yes, continents! worlds! Alexander conquered two worlds, the east and the west, but his passions conquered him. Caesar was the most consistent victor of his day, or perhaps of any day, but he was a victim of the basest vices. So we write Alexander and Caesar down as tragic failures—a preposterous judgment perhaps to the irreligious, but not to those who have a sense of spiritual values. Warfare is the worst of evils not because it sends so many men out of the world, but because it sends so many souls unprepared before the Judgment Seat. After all it matters not much how swiftly or prematurely we go or in what agony, if we go prepared for our eternal destiny. Even the worldly-wise should understand that. Do they not say it is better for a man to die a hero at twenty than to linger on a slave, a coward, a failure, to be a hundred?

Temptation is not only a fact: it is a bewildering mystery. But it is better to deal with fact and let the mystery go. Some querulous low-spirited persons ask, "Why did God make me so? Why does He not save me in spite of myself? Why did He create me with the possibility of my everlasting ruin?" When Jesus said to Peter, "Satan hath desired to have thee," Peter might have cried out "Lord, slay Satan!" But Satan the tempter (Satan is Hebrew for adversary, persecutor, tempter), Satan is never slain. The tempter and the temptation remain till our last breath. Why? Shall we say "Why" in the

face of God? Shall we demand that God explain Himself? Justify, vindicate Himself? Is man too a God that he should interrogate God? "Shall the clay say to the potter, 'Why hast Thou made me so?'" We have no right and no power to snatch the secret from the mind of God. We don't know the why and the wherefore of temptation. But we can guess, for we have a hint in the Book of Job. We read in that superb epic, that masterpiece of literature and of philosophy, "The Lord said to Satan: 'Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a simple and upright man, and fearing God, and avoiding evil?'" As if He should say "Satan, *there is a man*. Try your mettle upon *him*. He will be a match for you." Perhaps God is like us (we are made to His image and likeness, so God must be like us) and so, perhaps He enjoys the sight of conflict. Therefore He points to Job and says to Satan "Have at him!" And presently Job, like that other valiant fighter, St. Paul, learns that "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places."

But conflict with demons is chiefly for the elect, champions, heroes, saints. They can grapple with the same adversary who tempted Christ Himself. As for those of us whom God cannot trust to conquer Satan, He asks us merely to subdue our own flesh and blood. Even that is no child's play. In fact that most valiant gladiator of the spiritual life, St. Paul after an agonizing experience with what seems to have been carnal temptation, cries out "I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind. . . Unhappy man that I am, who shall

deliver me from the body of this death?" Another giant of the spiritual life, St. Augustine, had the same struggle, even more bitter and much more prolonged. The history of it is written with superlative eloquence in his *Confessions*. One of the best editors of that immortal masterpiece bids us notice: "In the first place there *was* a moral struggle. That is the great fact of the book. Augustine went down into the very depths and came face to face with the dragon that dwells there, with the facts of the sensual nature in their barbarous simplicity. . . He was an intensely human man, strongly sensuous and keenly intelligent. The whole of his nature was at war. Reason could not control, desire would not obey."

The story of his struggle and his triumph is a classic as great as Shakespeare's Hamlet or Macbeth or King Lear, and of course more real. As a psychological revelation it is second only, if it be second, to the Epistles of St. Paul.

There is perhaps another reason why God permits temptation. It makes life intense, vivid, dramatic, life that otherwise would be dull and drab, flat, stale and unprofitable. All adventurers, explorers, conquerors have felt the need of something in life to stir the blood, to quicken the spirit, to keep aflame the tragic sense of life. The idea is in the *Ulysses* of Tennyson, as indeed in all literature (it is all literature). Ulysses grows weary of sitting "by this still hearth, among these barren crags" as king of

. "a savage race

That hoard and sleep and feed."

So he fares forth on his travels and adventures,

and though he confesses that he is not the man he used to be, nor are his companions, yet

. . . "That which we are, we are ;
One equal temper of heroic hearts
. . . strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

That spirit of adventure is the spirit in which one goes forth to do battle with temptation. And yet one does not "go forth"; one needs not go forth. One goes down into the heart, down into the depths of the soul. On a battle ground seen only by God and His angels the conflict wages, the outcome of which is of infinite and eternal importance. Surely there is drama in that, drama that is too often tragedy. Moral failure is tragedy. And the very possibility of failure, irreparable failure, makes the conflict no less than momentous.

I beg you to note that when I speak of the inward struggle, I do not mean merely the struggle of the spirit against the flesh. Even if the soul conquers the body, dominates the unruly passions, subdues the beast in man to the degree that its roaring becomes only an occasional gentle murmur, still temptation persists, only shifting its ground. When mind has conquered flesh, mind must conquer mind. St. Augustine, past master in the psychology of temptation, says, "Mind commands body and there is obedience; mind commands mind and there is rebellion." The most crucial experience of the soul is when its spiritual faculties engage in battle between themselves, the mind against the will, or even more agonizing, the will fighting the will in the one same man. This is the battle that tears the very heart to ribbons.

Now some there are, or may be, to whom all this sounds melodramatic, overemphatic, hysterical. They say they know not what can be the meaning of all these "heroics"; they cannot surmise what St. Paul and St. Augustine were speaking of. As for their own spiritual life it is serene, placid, unruffled. There are no hurricanes and typhoons in their hearts, they are unaware of any monsters lurking in the deep caverns of their souls. In fact they know of no deep caverns in the soul. For them all is on the surface, and all thereon is sweetness and sunshine. I know not whether to congratulate such souls as these or to commiserate them. If they have had their battle, if it is over and done, if as the poet says

"Like the Catholic man [they have] mightily won
God out of knowledge, good out of pain
Sight out of blindness and purity out of stain",

Sight out of blindness and purity out of stain",
if they have come out of conflict into abiding interior peace; and if all their struggles are so far in the past as to be quite forgotten, let them thank God—but watch and beware!

If on the other hand they have not now and never have had any profound, shattering, blasting, terrifying soul-experiences, I confess I know not what to make of them. Such immunity would seem to be the prerogative of angels rather than of men, the lot of the blessed in heaven rather than of militant humans here below. To most men it would seem that to any one with red blood in his arteries, an easily irritated nervous system, a vivid imagination and a sensitive moral constitution, temptation is in-

evitable. Inevitable and, if I may say so, desirable, first as an evidence of one's being wholly human, and secondly as a means for winning heaven and not having it thrown at one as a gift.

The interior battle is not the only battle. The outside world around about us swarms with our enemies, knowingly or inadvertently doing their worst to drag us down. The world is one vast conspiracy against virtue. "The whole world," says St. John, "is seated in iniquity." On the right hand and on the left countless millions of our fellow men are as they say "taking the world as they find it", enjoying it without let or hindrance, strangers to all scruples of conscience. They have an elastic standard of virtue, they preach and they practice the doctrine of compromise, a *via media* in morals; "Be good, but not too good", *ne quid nimis*; as the French lady said *Catholique mais pas fanatique*. In place of an ethical system they hold to a few brief axioms, such as "Whatever is, is right", "What the millions do cannot be wrong", "God will not damn a multitude"; they ridicule what they are pleased to call "Puritanism", they cannot tolerate what seems to them extremism; in a word, the sum of their philosophy is "We are in the world, let us take what it has to offer." *Dum vivimus vivamus*. What they really mean is that sin—what we call sin—is not tragic but incidental, unavoidable, nothing to worry about; it has not and cannot have everlasting consequences; and as for temptation which we take so seriously, they quote with a wry smile one of Oscar Wilde's epigrams, "The easiest way to conquer temptation is to yield to it".

Now we meet these people day after day, walk with them, talk with them, eat and drink with them,

buy from them, sell to them, take our pleasures—most of our pleasures—side by side with them; and yet by our Christian profession we are bound to loathe and repudiate—not them, but their view of life. For the spirit that animates them is the spirit of the world, and, says our Lord, “if the world hate you, know ye that it hath hated me before you”; and St. James, “Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, becometh an enemy of God”.

However, the story of temptation is not all tragic, it is in many cases triumphant. “One of the greatest sensations of life,” says Dr. MacLaren, “follows a temptation resisted and overcome. The victorious knight of God when he has passed through the ordeal is led to the end of the arena where unseen hands loosen his heavy helmet, strip off his blood stained armor and hold the cup of sacramental wine to his lips.”

If I may pursue that excellent thought of the Scotch dominie, there is no great glory to God, no particular joy in heaven, when one who has had no spiritual combat comes creeping quietly into heaven. But when a warrior of the moral life, victor in many a furious fight, draws nigh to the heavenly kingdom, the angels on the ramparts shout to the keepers of the gates “Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates”, for if it be not now the King of Glory Himself who enters in, it is at least a hero from the army of the King of Glory, and all the streets of the heavenly Jerusalem resound with acclamation. The conqueror approaches the throne, makes his obeisance, and rises to receive from his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, the kiss of Everlasting Peace.

SIN

Address delivered on December 6, 1936

In the first talk of this series I had occasion to refer to the preposterous theory that religion was invented by priests. I use the word "preposterous" not loosely as a big word with a kind of smashing sound, not even in its secondary sense as "irrational," "foolish," "nonsensical," "ridiculous", but in its primary and most exact sense. A statement is preposterous if it puts first what should be last or last what should be first; if, as we say colloquially, it puts the cart before the horse. Now the truth is not that priests created religion, but that religion created priests. Those who say that priests produced the universal and everlasting phenomenon of religion do us too much honor. We are not God. Only God can make something out of nothing.

Religion now and always is a vast and wonderful reality, and to attribute it to priestcraft would be quite as absurd as to say that an architect could build the pyramids or the Parthenon, or the Taj Mahal, or the whole vast assemblage of the skyscrapers of New York out of big chunks of blue sky. Priests and prophets and patriarchs have the same relation to religion that architects have to buildings; they must have something to work on. You cannot make temples and domes, mosques and minarets, cathedrals and skyscrapers out of airy nothing. Neither can you construct religion in the heart of man unless the materials are there before you commence to work. So! religion came first; priests came second. To say that priests came before religion is preposterous.

Now today, coming to the subject "Sin," I must first get rid of the equally preposterous notion that the concept of sin is a product of priestcraft. There always was and there is now in all men in whom natural instinct has not been perverted or uprooted a consciousness of right and wrong. When a man does right he is at peace with himself; when he does wrong he feels remorse, a sentiment quite different from any other human emotion. A man born blind does not blame himself. He may blame his parents, he may curse his fate, he may blaspheme God; but he doesn't find fault with himself for being blind. But he does find fault with himself if he does what he knows to be wrong. You may tell him he is a fool, an ignoramus, a superstitious lout; you may quote him some very learned philosophers who say there is no right and no wrong; you may remind him of certain modern religions and up-to-the-moment psychologies that deny the fact of sin. But you don't really deceive him, even though he would like to be deceived. He may not know "B" from a bull's foot, or a hawk from a handsaw, but he knows that bad is not good, and wrong is not right. And by the same token, he knows the difference between a sin and an accident or a misfortune. Only if you twist him and turn him round and round in the maze of some complicated, new-fangled psychological system; only if you bewilder him with a fantastic philosophy, will you rid him of his conviction that sin is sin and that if he commits sin he is guilty. You may din into his ears "There is no sin, there is no sin!", but unless you hypnotize him and paralyze his reason, he will answer "No sin? Then no good, no bad, no right, no wrong. Black is white. Night is day. And the devil is God!"

It has been said that every sin begins with a lie. Satan lied to Adam and Eve: "You shall be as gods"; and from that day to this a lie seems to be involved in every form of sin. The diplomat, about to launch a war, prepares the way with "propaganda," that is to say with a deliberate campaign of plausible lying. The "malefactor of great wealth" cheats the government, cheats his competitors, cheats the public, cheats his partners, cheats his own soul; and what is cheating but a form of lying? The profligate, as a preliminary to the seduction of an innocent girl, lies to her, and lies again, tangles her up in a network of lies, criss-crosses her with lies as with the strands of a spider's web.

But suffice it to quote, in support of the idea that all sin involves lying, our Savior Who said "Satan is a liar and the father of liars."

Now the first Satanic lie is that sin makes us happy. In the long history of the human race no one ever achieved happiness by sin. Pleasure? Momentary satisfaction? Yes, as in the case of carnal sin. But the pleasure flees swiftly and pain ensues. "Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence," says St. James, "being drawn away and allured. Then when concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. But sin, when it is completed, begetteth death." Outside the Scriptures there is the testimony of one who spoke out of his heart, out of his life: "I was beloved. I attained my wish, the bondage of clandestine fruition, and proudly riveted round myself the chain of woe; then was I scourged with the red hot iron rods of jealousy, suspicion, fears, angers and quarrels." And he cries out "O my God, with what gall Thou didst embitter that cup of sweetness!" The passage is from the book

called *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, but it might equally well be entitled the Confessions of Every Man. Those who sin against the Sixth Commandment commence with what they call in their delusion "love"; they proceed to dislike, disgust, hatred, sometimes even to murder or suicide or both. The cup of sin is drugged, not with a soporific, but with poison. Disease is in that cup, and anguish and death. As with carnal sin, so with avarice, ambition, greed. Sin lures the soul only to mock at it. Sin is the Dead Sea Apple that flatters the eye but in the mouth is dust and ashes.

All this is not the pietistic imagining of a sanctimonious parson. You may read it in a masterpiece of literature that contains the essential experience of one of the most worldly men that ever lived, Goethe's *Faust*. The theme of that philosophical poem is that the devil is a trickster and a liar. Mephistopheles who is Satan, the embodiment of Sin, promises Faust joy in the seduction and possession of Marguerite. The sin completed, he laughs at Faust, stabs his victim's soul with anguish upon anguish, and in the end crushes him with the realization of his responsibility for the drowning of Marguerite's child, the murder of her brother, and her own madness and death. Those who don't read the Sacred Scriptures, the supreme human document from which all literature has been borrowed, may perhaps accept from Augustine or from Goethe what they disdain to learn from St. James, or St. Paul, or from Jesus Christ.

For those to whom *Faust* is known only as a classic, too philosophical and too formidable a vehicle for the conveyance of human experience, there is in Tom Moore's "Lalla Rookh" (a facile, lilting,

swift-running piece of verse) the episode of the Veiled Prophet of Khorassan. This "prophet", perhaps legendary, perhaps historical, perhaps a combination of both, was a rebel, an impostor, a charlatan. He claimed to have been in previous incarnations Adam, Noe, Abraham, Moses. For his last appearance upon earth he assumed the name of Hakim ben Allah, Hakim Son of God; and as such he demanded divine worship. He wore habitually a veil of silver gauze to prevent, as he said, the beauty and the shining glory of his face from blinding those who looked upon him. As Tom Moore puts it:

. . . . "O'er his features hung
The veil, the silver veil, which he had flung
In mercy there, to hide from mortal sight
His dazzling brow, till man could bear its light."

He entices into his harem the beautiful virgin Zuleika, promising entrance into Paradise as the reward of her submission. Being defeated in battle, he leaps into a vat of corrosive poison, but not until he has unveiled himself, showing a face "maimed and monstrous," unnaturally and diabolically hideous. He cries:

"Here—judge if hell, with all its power to
damn,
Can add one curse to the foul thing I am.'
He raised the veil; the maid turned slowly
round.
Look'd at him, shrieked, and sunk upon the
ground."

The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan like Mephistopheles is a symbolic figure of Sin. Sin is a rebel

against God, an impostor, a magician. Veiled, it is thought to be beautiful. It promises joy, it allures, entrances, captivates. In the end it unveils and is found hideous as hell.

The Race has been sinning now for several thousands of years; men and women with endless pathetic repetition have tried every sin known to nature, and, exhausting nature, have invented sins revolting to nature. Kings and other lordly sybarites have offered rich rewards—as Herod said, even “half of my kingdom”—to those who could devise new sins or new methods of extracting pleasure from old sins. But no man has ever found, except for the briefest and most tantalizing moment, what he sought in sin. Sin is Illusion. “Wine is a mocker” says the wise man. Yes and lust is a mocker; illgotten wealth is a mocker, and power and empire and fame and all that violates Goodness and Truth and Justice and Purity.

Furthermore sin is slavery. The sinner declares, in fact to impress others and to reassure himself he vociferates, “Am I not free? May I not do with my freedom what I will? Stand aside Priest and Preacher! Out of my way, Father, Mother, Wife, Friend! My will is my own. Yes, and what you call my soul, that too is my own. And shall I not do what I will with my own? If there is misery ahead, it will be *my* misery. If there is a hell, it will be *my* hell. Leave me alone. I will go my way. I am free!”

Boldly spoken! It smacks of the heroic. The poor fool probably imagines it sounds magnificent, like something in a play of Shakespeare or of Sophocles. He fancies himself Brutus or Coriolanus or Oedipus Rex.

But of course it is only rodomontade. Man is, in a sense, "free" to defy God, just as he is free to stick a dagger into his heart or shoot a bullet into his brain. But it's a mad kind of freedom, and if when he cries "I am free," he means "I have a *right*," he is worse than mad, he is blasphemous. No one has a right to do wrong. Right—ultimately and basically—*Right* is God. There can be no right to violate God.

However, that is by the way. The more important question is, what happens to that sinner, that blatant violent advocate of freedom? We need no Bible to answer that question, no literature whatsoever, no St. Augustine, no Faust, no Veiled Prophet of Khorassan. All we need is experience, the testimony of our eyes and our ears, perhaps, sad to say, the testimony of our own hearts. He who sins in the name of freedom, becomes a slave. Sin is slavery, worse than that of the captives of the Pharaohs in Egypt or of Nabuchodonosor in Babylon. Epictetus the philosopher, though a slave, was one of the freest men that ever lived. There were gyves upon his wrists and ankles, but none upon his mind and soul. Christ as He stood before Pilate was bound but He was no slave. The slave was the man on the throne, the man who thought himself free. "Knowest Thou not," said Pontius Pilate, "that I have power to kill Thee and power to set Thee free?" But Pilate had no power to set himself free, or having the power could not, would not exercise it. He could lift a finger and his legionaries would slaughter the mob howling in the courtyard of the pretorium, but he could not kill the demons in his own heart.

A man is free when his soul is free. He is a

slave when his will is in chains. The day comes when the sinner wishes to be free. The adulterer wishes he could send his consort to some far corner of this world, or even into the other world. The "crimes of passion" of which we read every day in the newspapers are due to the fact that only murder can free the sinner, and then he is not free. The man who has accumulated wealth unjustly longs to be free of the sting of his conscience. He would give away his treasures, burn them up, drop them into the sea. But no, there's the wife, the sons and daughters in college; there is social standing, prestige, and what he calls cynically his "reputation." So he goes on to the end. "The rich man died and was buried in hell," says Jesus, in the parable of Dives and Lazarus. He was buried in hell because his riches didn't belong to him and he couldn't get rid of them.

Sin is not only folly and slavery. To the Christian, sin is treachery. We who believe in God and Christ and yet commit sin are not rebels. We are not decent enough to be rebels. We are slimy traitors like Judas. We call Jesus Lord and Master; we sit at table with Him; we tell Him we love Him. But as He said at the Last Supper, "he that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, he shall betray me"; "he that eateth bread with me, shall lift up his heel against me". When He said "Judas dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?", He spoke not alone to the treacherous apostle but to all of us who make acts of faith in Him, protest in prayer that we love Him and would die for Him, but none the less take part with those who crucify Him. "He that sinneth crucifieth the Son of God."

Sin is violence done to God. Sin if it could would

obliterate God. Good is God. Sin is the negation of Good and of God.

It takes a philosopher, perhaps a mystic, to understand that Truth and Beauty and Good and Purity are God. Not many men are philosophers; still fewer are mystics. For the generality of mankind there is need of a visible, dramatic, spectacular demonstration of the fact that sin is the murder of God. Hence the crucifixion at Jerusalem, at the crossroads of the world, the focal point where east meets west, at a moment when men from every nation under heaven were gathered. Parthians and Medes and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt—and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians—all were at the pretorium of Pilate, all saw the Victim of Sin marking His footprints in blood along the *Via Dolorosa*, as He went to be crucified at Calvary. Over the Cross of Christ the Son of God there was an inscription *Jesus Nazarenus, Rex Judaeorum*, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. But for those who had eyes to see, there was another inscription written not by the hand of man but by God: "*Peccatum Hoc Fecit*," "Sin hath done this."

THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Address delivered on December 13, 1936

“The Presence of God” is a fascinating topic, but not easy to treat in a free and familiar style. I cannot promise to make this discourse entertaining, but I shall do my best to get along without philosophical and theological words. And I confess at the outset that there is a certain class of persons to whom I am not equipped to speak. They are the *dilettanti* who affect an interest in the spiritual life because there is in them a strain of the sentimental which they mistake for piety. They are not really *devotees* in the original true sense of the word. They are rather sippers and tasters. To them religion is a pastime, a recreation, a temporary enthusiasm, an antidote to ennui.

To such as these I do not address myself today. For we come today to a subject that is not honey-sweet and cannot be sipped on the wing. We face the difficult but important question: How shall we realize the Presence of God?

First let us avoid the mistake of expecting too much. Our God is a hidden God. Unlike the idols of the heathen He cannot be seen, touched, handled—I had almost said handled as children and certain adults of delayed mentality fondle a doll, perhaps we may say a holy doll. Our God is invisible, intangible. Not that He hides Himself capriciously, provokingly, though sometimes when we are baffled in our attempt to see Him or imagine Him, we are tempted to cry out “O God, my God, stand forth; and let Thy humble worshippers look upon Thee; draw the veil that conceals Thy countenance from these mortal

eyes." But no! there comes no apparition. There cannot be an apparition of God as He is. A symbol? A sign? Yes perhaps, on occasion. The burning bush, the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. But the bush, the cloud, the fire is not God, any more than a spoken word is the man who speaks it. "No man hath seen God at any time," says the Scripture. God is a Spirit and these eyes of ours cannot see Spirit. They cannot even see the more tenuous forms of matter. The air in which we live and move and have our being we never see, still less can our eyes discern and separate from one another the component parts of the atmosphere, oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen. We are resigned to the fact that the atmosphere is by its very nature invisible. We must likewise be resigned to the fact that God by His very nature is invisible. We live by Faith and not by sight. We see now through a glass darkly. When this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall we see God face to face.

Sometimes indeed, in a moment of spiritual exaltation when there is deep silence in the heart, when as St. Augustine has said "the tumult of the flesh is hushed; hushed the shadows of earth, sea, sky; hushed the heavens and the soul itself so that it passes beyond itself and thinks not of itself; when all dreams are hushed and all sensuous revelations, and every tongue and every symbol"; then it has happened that favored souls have heard God speak "not by any fleshly tongue nor by an angel's voice, nor in the thunder nor in any similitude but in His own Voice without any intermediary at all; they reach out and with one flash of thought touch the Eternal Wisdom". * Augustine and his mother en-

* Confessions of St. Augustine, Book IX, Chap. X, adapted.

joyed that mystical moment, but it was only for a moment. And he says "Suppose this endured, and all far inferior modes of vision were taken away and this alone were to ravish the beholder, and absorb him and plunge him in mystic joy, might not eternal life be like this moment of comprehension. . .? Is not this the meaning of 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord'?"

Such supernal experiences are not necessarily imagination, hallucination, hysteria. No one has the right to call them delusion because they have not happened in his own life, any more than he would be warranted in denying the fourth dimension because he can see and understand only three. The tyro in mathematics confesses that when Einstein, Millikan, and others speak of the fourth dimension they are beyond his depth. So, the tyro in psychology should be willing to admit that when William James and Hugo Munsterberg speak of "the hidden powers of men" they have something real in mind. Not that I mean to say that by the discovery of certain undetected psychical forces, and the deliberate cultivation of them, man can learn to pierce the barrier between this world and the other and see God. No, that way lies madness; they who promise supernatural visions as a reward of ascetical exercises or the repetition of some abracadabra, are charlatans. At their door may justly be laid the responsibility for much religious insanity.

On the other hand I must not be understood to say that Catholics who practise assiduously what we call "the spiritual life," are forbidden to long for, to desire, to encourage something akin to the mystical vision of God. Sainly persons with a view of cleansing the heart of all earthly dross undergo a rigor-

ous penitential discipline; they shut their eyes and ears to all sights and sounds that stain the soul or distract the mind from the contemplation of the divine; they learn after prolonged practice to pray not with words or even with thoughts but by fixing the gaze of the soul upon God; they achieve what is called in our theology "natural" contemplation (as distinguished from the purely supernatural or miraculous which is a free gift of God). They cultivate solitude; in deep silence—a silence like that of which St. Augustine speaks, silence not merely of the lips but silence of the emotions and of the mind—they place themselves in a receptive attitude and we have reason to believe that upon occasion their souls have been enthralled and the beating of their hearts all but stopped by an intense realization of the Presence of God. It lasts perhaps but a moment. They are quickly back to earth again and they say, with a modification of the words of Jacob. "Indeed the Lord is in this place—and I *knew* it."

Sometimes even those of us who are habitually engulfed in an atmosphere of worldly activities, if we can but steal away and be alone in some solitude, deep in a dense wood, on a lonely mountain peak; or perhaps hidden away unsuspected in the very point of the prow of a liner in mid-ocean, gazing in the dead of the night all round about upon the deep, or up into the heavens, fixedly and with rapt attention as if we would pierce the fathomless depths of the sea or penetrate to the heart of the stars and steal their secret; sometimes I say we may feel, or imagine that we feel, the nearness of God. We reach out our hands as if to touch Him with our fingers' tips; we try to silence even the soft murmur of the blood in our veins in the expectation of hearing some

gentlest whisper of the Divine Voice. After such an experience we may have such faith in its reality that not all the skeptics and cynics in the world can shake our confidence. How should they know? How should any man know? "Who knoweth the mind of a man save the spirit of the man that is in him?" "*Secretum meum mihi*", "my secret is mine own". And who but a rash and sacrilegious intruder can claim to probe into the depths of my consciousness and expose what he is pleased to call my "delusion"? The man who pretends to read the hearts of other men probably has never looked deeply into his own. If he had, he would know that in the heart of every man lies impenetrable mystery. The human heart is only less incomprehensible than the nature of God, and what happens in the depth of the heart of one man is not to be rashly, still less scornfully, judged by another man. And if for one fleeting moment God has deigned to lift a corner of the veil that hides His Being from my mortal eyes, how insufferable must be the impertinence of some stranger to my soul if he claims to know that God has not come to me and that my being startled and enthralled by a realization of His Presence was only a superstition!

If after what seems to have been a heavenly visitation a man's life is so deeply changed, his character so divinely transformed, his spirit so subdued and chastened, his heart so humbled that those who know him best, shall we say in particular his father confessor or spiritual director, are compelled to say "This is the change of the right hand of the Most High", and if this spiritual betterment persists, I think we have a right to believe that the mystical experience was authentic.

However, all that is casual. What we seek is a

more nearly permanent realization of the Presence of God. To this end we may do well to consider what saints and philosophers have said of the nature of God's Presence. God, they explain, is both transcendent and immanent. Formidable words! But we have in one of our most familiar hymns a beautiful and understandable translation of those big words into little ones: "Out beyond the shining of the farthest star, Thou art ever dwelling infinitely far." *That* is the transcendence of God. And now the Immanence: "Yet the hearts of children hold what worlds cannot." By His Nature God is as far above our minds as the stars in the sky and the infinite spaces beyond the stars are high above our heads. And yet God is as near to us as the heart that beats within our breasts, the blood in our veins, the breath in our lungs. "Closer art Thou than breathing, nearer than hands or feet." Or to quote the classic utterance of St. Paul to the Athenians, God is "not far from every one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being".

Some thirty years ago when "Modernism" (inaccurately so-called) burst upon the theological world, a celebrated clergyman narrated with gusto his discovery that God is immanent. I wondered at the time if he had never read St. Paul. "Immanent" is only a philosophical word for "abiding within". Had the clergyman spent the greater part of his life ignorant of the primary truth of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?

Poets and religious writers have tried to express by means of simile and metaphor, what philosophers and theologians find it so difficult to convey in abstract terms. In fact St. Paul quotes to the Athe-

nians one of their own poets. Perhaps poetic or imaginative language will help us too. Well then: we are in God as the fish is in the sea and the bird in the air. God is our element, indispensable to our life. In Him we live; out of Him we die. We say God is Life-Giver. That is true but only partly true. *La vraie vérité* as the French say, the true truth is that God is not Life-Giver but that God is Life. Out of that Life we cannot live. The fish cannot live in the air, the bird cannot fly in a vacuum. Man cannot live out of Life. Life is God.

Again: we are in God as light is in the atmosphere. At high noon all the world is flooded with the light of the sun. We cannot tell which is air and which the light. The light is in the air and the air is in the light. With equal intimacy we are in God and God is in us. But as the axiom says, "Every comparison is lame." You may take away the light of the atmosphere and the atmosphere remains: but if you take away the Light of Life, Life passes away with it. To speak more correctly still, God is Light and God is Life. When God goes (if God could go) Light and Life would go with Him. Men deny God, but they couldn't even deny God if there were no God. The denial of God affirms God. I could neither affirm nor deny, I could neither think nor speak, and you who listen could neither hear nor judge, out of God. Out of God, do I say? There is no such place as "Out-of-God." Even if a man could lock himself in some projectile and shoot himself through the air and into empty space he would still be in God. When we say that God is "everywhere" we mean that He is even in empty space. "Whither shall I go from thy spirit?" cries the Psalmist "or whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend into heaven, thou art

there: if I descend into hell, thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there also shall thy hand lead me: and thy right hand shall hold me. And I said: Perhaps darkness shall cover me: and night shall be my light in my pleasures. But darkness shall not be dark to thee and night shall be light as the day: the darkness thereof, and the light thereof are alike *to thee.*"

At the time when that bit of superb poetry was written—3000 years ago—men had little knowledge of the actual nature of physical reality. Their analogies were taken from the sun, the moon, the stars, day and night, light and darkness. But with modern science came the theory of a substance called the ether, supposed to penetrate and permeate earth and sea and sky. In this medium radio waves, as some explain, pass with the speed of light even through mountains of granite. Correct or incorrect from the point of view of most recent physical science, the ether may be taken as another symbol of God. St. Bernard says *Deus non adest sed inest*, "God is not present *to* the world, He is present *in* it;" or as an ancient poet has put it: "Cleave the wood and thou shalt find Me; raise the stone and there am I." God does not hover or brood like a cloud about a mountain. The whole Being of God pierces and penetrates the mountain. Yes, and every grain of sand or stone *in* the mountain. Yes, and every molecule and atom in the most microscopic particle of that sand and stone. God is about and above and within all things that are in the heavens or on the earth and in the water upon the earth. He is wrapped in the convolutions of the brain of man; He is woven and interwoven in every fibre and sinew

of the human frame; He is in the body more intimately than its own very soul.

One more simile: that of the iron and the fire. A bar of iron is plunged into a furnace of fire. The iron presently takes on the nature of the fire; the fire penetrates the iron, is fused into the iron so deeply that the eye cannot detect which is fire and which is iron. Curiously, St. Teresa says that in a certain exalted mystical state her soul seemed so swallowed up in God that she could not tell which was her soul and which was God. But in truth God is so fused with our soul, not merely in some mystical state but here, now, on this earth, in this room, in your room, that the two, the soul and God are, to any eye except that of God Himself, indistinguishable and inseparable.

Often we say "God is at my fingers' ends, on the tip of my tongue, in my heart, in the blood stream, in the bone and in the marrow of the bone." But He is in reality closer than all these. Our whole being, body and soul, is swallowed up in the Absolute Being which is God. We are steeped in God, saturated with God. We are as close to God as the dye in the wool, as the color in the rose.

But let us give over the attempt to imagine or to describe the indwelling of God in the universe and in the human soul. And let us close with a practical application of a truth that we cannot entirely comprehend. Why not? Do we not make constant use of that mysterious force, or substance, or whatever it may be, that we call electricity, without knowing what it is? Well then, practising the Presence of God without being able to grasp it entirely, let us in prayer not lift up our eyes to the heavens as if God were there and not here. Let us not attempt to fling

our voice to distant Arcturus or Betelgeuse, or even to some presumable black empty space beyond the remotest star. Remember St. Paul, "God is not far from every one of us." Remember St. Augustine who says in his *Soliloquies*, "I was wandering like a lost sheep, searching outside of myself for that which was within. I ran through all the streets and squares of this great city, the world, searching for Thee, O my God, and I found Thee not, because I sought Thee wrongly. Thou wert within me and I sought Thee without, Thou wert near me and I sought afar off". *

A realization that God is near, so near that not even the nearness of the light to the air, of the blazing iron to the fire, or the soul to the body, can serve as an apt comparison—this realization will transform the spiritual life from dull dreary duty to ecstatic joy. To know and to feel that God is closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet, is to possess even on this earth some faint foreshadowing of the bliss of heaven.

* *Soliloquies*, c. XXXI.

THE DESTINY OF THE SOUL: HEAVEN

Address delivered on December 20, 1936

The Christian creed is a series of magnificent affirmations. Much modern philosophy on the other hand consists largely of questions, doubts, contradictions, denials. The difference is vastly significant. Christ reveals, Anti-christ denies. Satan is defined "the spirit who denies". Worse still perhaps is the attitude of the agnostic who denies that he denies. "I neither affirm nor deny," he says. But not to affirm is in effect to deny. If a man refuses to affirm that there is a God, he may as well deny that there is a God. If he dares not say that he has a soul, he is as one who has no soul. If confronted with the vital question of life after death he wavers and says "Perhaps! perhaps not!" he confesses the futility of his philosophy and indeed the insufficiency of all philosophy. Philosophy is thought; religion is life. We cannot live life on a "perhaps". Chesterton has said "The human mind is an instrument for arriving at conclusions; if it reaches no conclusions, something is wrong with the instrument." The primary purpose of the human mind is to understand life. If it fails in its first function, it is as they say of so many things in Soviet Russia, "Kapoot", out of order, broken down. In the slang of our own country there is an expression: "He doesn't know what it is all about." The phrase carries the imputation of inefficiency, incompetence, stupidity. Yet there are philosophers who proclaim with much satisfaction that they don't know what life means, what we are doing on this earth, whence we come or whither we go. They have not advanced beyond the Persian

philosopher poet of the twelfth century, Omar Khayyam, who sums up the agnostic creed in a quatrain:

“Into this universe, and *why* not knowing,
Nor whence, like water willy-nilly flowing;
And out of it, as wind along the waste
I know not whither, willy-nilly blowing.”

Modern agnostics glory in this creed of nescience, that is to say in the admission of complete mental frustration. If the human race were to accept that negative creed we should all go mad like prisoners confined in a deep dungeon with no ray of light and not even an inkling of the reason for their incarceration.

But *our* Master Philosopher, Jesus Christ, speaks with no “ifs” and “ans”. He reveals, declares, proclaims, “For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth. . . I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” St. Paul in the midst of the philosophers on the Areopagus—degenerate logic-choppers not wise enough to recognize that the glory of Socrates and Plato and Aristotle had departed—declares boldly “I found an altar also, on which was written *To the unknown God*. What therefore you worship without knowing it, that I preach to you”—an echo of what Jesus had said to the Pharisees, “You have not known him, but I know him”.

So in our catechism questions and answers come clear, sharp, sure as a rifle shot and its echo. “Who made you?” “God!” “What is man?” “A creature composed of body and soul.” “Why did God make you?” “To know Him and love Him and

serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him forever in the next."

Now, the previous discourses in this series were, in a way, an exposition of the duty of serving and loving God. Today, by your leave, we come to consider the consequence of the love and the service of God—eternal happiness, heaven.

Remaining in the mood of affirmation, I shall not argue, or debate, or prove or demonstrate; I shall simply declare. Not—most assuredly—not in my own name. Who am I that I should assume omniscience and infallibility? If I had only my own wisdom to rely upon I should be silent, for shame. The Catholic priest challenged for the evidence of the tremendous truth of life after death does not say "It seems to me", or "my opinion is," or "according to my philosophy." No, but "Thus sayeth the Lord." When God speaks man must say "Amen!" "Credo!"

Now concerning the resurrection of the dead: we have from the mouth of Jesus not a guess, a hope, a surmise, but a magnificent compelling proclamation. Martha, sister to Lazarus, at her brother's grave says to Jesus: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. Jesus saith to her: Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith to him: I know that he shall rise again, in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said to her: 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 for ever. Believest thou this? She saith to him: Yea, Lord, I have believed that thou art Christ the Son of the living God, who art come into this world."

That passage is a classic of literature and of religion. It is also one of the magnificent affirmations

of which I have spoken; no reasoning, no doubt, no suspicion of hesitancy, no condescension to the difficulty of the doctrine, but a declaration, majestic as a pronouncement from Sinai.

By contrast perhaps I may quote—though some may feel it almost sacrilegious to do so—a passage from the notorious modern agnostic, Robert E. Ingersoll, who was, as all my hearers must know, a violent and scornful antagonist of revealed religion. Endowed by his Maker with unusual eloquence, he used it to scoff at the Church, the Bible, the Creed, the entire Christian tradition. But on the occasion of the burial of a beloved brother he pronounced a eulogy in which occurs this passage:

“Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of a wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word; but in the night of death hope sees a star and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing. He who sleeps here, when dying, mistaking the approach of death for the return of health, whispered with his latest breath, ‘I am better now.’ Let us believe, in spite of doubts and dogmas and tears and fears that these dear words are true of all the countless dead.”

Now mark the difference between the agnostic who has no basis for his belief but his own intuitions, and the Christian who relies upon the authority of the Son of God. When a Catholic priest stands at an open grave, he repeats not a carefully prepared oratorical discourse of his own—it would be an intrusion and a profanation to speak mere human words at so sacred a moment—but the words of Jesus to Martha at the tomb of Lazarus: “I am the

resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live: and every one who liveth, and believeth in me, shall not die forever." Reassured by that divine proclamation, the priest prays: "May the Angels lead thee into Paradise; may the martyrs receive thee at thy coming, and take thee to Jerusalem the holy city. May the choirs of the angels receive thee and mayest thou, with the once poor Lazarus, have rest everlasting."

St. Paul, undaunted by the skepticism of his day concerning life beyond the grave, faces the question squarely and answers not with argument but once again with bold triumphant affirmation. In fact he flings in the face of heathen and of weak-kneed Christians what amounts to a challenge: "Now if Christ be preached, that he arose again from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again. And if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God: because we have given testimony against God, that he hath raised up Christ; whom he hath not raised up if the dead rise not again. For if the dead rise not again, neither is Christ risen again. . . If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now Christ is risen from the dead. . ."

In the days of Christ, skepticism had invaded even the priestly caste, the sect of Sadducees. They denied or doubted the future life. But doing so they had forgotten their own Bible. A thousand years before Jesus the patriarch Job declared "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall

rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God."

As a counterpart and explanation of that precise and specific prophecy we need the words of St. Paul—now here again is a classic text: "Flesh and blood cannot possess the kingdom of God: neither shall corruption possess incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall all indeed rise again: but we shall not all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible: and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality. And when this mortal hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: *Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?*"

I think that will suffice as evidence of what I have called so often the magnificent affirmations of the Christian religion concerning the continuation of human life beyond the grave.

If any one demands to know what that life shall be like, we do not pretend to be able to say. St. Paul quotes the prophet Isaias: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." A mole burrowing in the ground cannot imagine the life of an eagle soaring above the mountain tops; a miner, if there be any such, born, living, working, dying a thousand feet below the surface of the earth is only bewildered if you expatiate to him upon green trees, flowers in the meadows, running brooks, fruit orchards, mountain peaks and the starlit sky; he knows not what you say, his

eye hath not seen, his ear hath not heard, it hath not entered his mind to conceive it. The unborn child hidden in the darkness of its mother's womb cannot know the freedom, the breadth, the sweep of life, life physical, intellectual, social, such as we experience. And we in turn, living on this earth, this prison, this deep dark mine, this narrow womb of mortal life, cannot conceive the kind of life enjoyed by those who dwell in heaven.

All we can do is to make some kind of picture of eternal life by negating the disadvantages of this life. In *this* life we labor and are weary, in *that* life we shall have rest; in *this* life we see in part and know in part, in *that* life we shall know even as we are known; in *this* life we are forever at war, war with ourselves and with all about us: in *that* life we shall have peace. One of the prayers of the Mass speaks of heaven as *locus refrigerii lucis et pacis*, a place of rest and light and peace. In another prayer the Church speaks of *this* life as a "vale of tears"; but in *that* life, says the Apocalypse "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away". Also in the *Salve Regina*, the "Hail Holy Queen"—one of the most beautiful and touching of all prayers—we are called "*exules filii Hevae*" "exiled children of Eve", and indeed the word "exile" best describes our state. We are not at home here, we are strangers in a strange land: we lament with the children of Israel carried captive into a heathen land, "Upon the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept; when we remembered Sion: On the willows in the midst thereof we hung up our instruments. For there they that led us into captivity re-

quired of us the words of songs. And they that carried us away, said: Sing ye to us a hymn of the songs of Sion. How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten. Let my tongue cleave to my jaws, if I do not remember thee: if I make not Jerusalem the beginning of my joy." Upon that exquisite brief lyric poem we Christians, carrying further the thought of our Jewish forbears, have composed a hymn: "Jerusalem, my happy home, when shall I come to thee? When shall my sorrows have an end? Thy joys when shall I see?"

Indeed the notion of exile runs through much of our hymnody and a great deal of our liturgy. When we arrive at the heavenly city—please God—we shall experience the joy of the weary, famished, thirst-ridden and all but despondent wayfarer across some burning desert, some Death Valley, when his eye falls upon green groves, his ear catches the tinkle of rippling streams, and he knows, this time he knows, that it is no mirage but reality, the Ultimate Reality, the Enduring Reality, Paradise and God.

If any one should say that we only delude ourselves with a fancy that on a day our exile shall be ended, that there is no green grass, there are no trees laden with fruit and streams tumbling down in a riot of joy from resplendent mountain peaks beyond the end of the desert, if any one should laugh and mock at us because we believe in heaven after earth as the wayfarer believes in green groves beyond the yellow sand, we can only retort to him that he not only contradicts the deepest and surest vaticinations of the heart of man and that he is therefore inhuman, but that he gives the lie to God,

and that therein he blasphemes. To contradict the human race and to disagree with God is a bold procedure on the part of any man who admits in the next breath that he has no evidence but what he manufactures within the narrow walls of his own skull. If we do not rise from the dead, we who believe that we shall are truly the most miserable of men: but so too is all mankind miserable. In that case, life has no meaning, virtue no recompense, vice no punishment. If there be no heaven, this earth is hell.

But, as I have said, we who believe in God and in Jesus Christ as the Word of God do not argue about eternal life. We declare it, proclaim it, and in doing so we stand not only with God and Christ, but with the whole race of man. Regardless of those who with the characteristic Pharisiatism of intellectuals trust in themselves as wiser than the rest of men, doubt or deny the word of God, reject the intuitions of the human soul, and mock at the hunger and thirst for eternal happiness in every human heart; we unfurl the banner of our faith full in the face of death. We shout our battle cry, *Christus Vivit*, Christ liveth; and our proclamation, the last of our magnificent affirmations. Listen to it: "We would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that you be not sorrowful, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again: even so them who have slept through Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you in the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them who have slept. For the Lord himself shall come down from heaven with commandment, and with the voice of an arch-

angel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead who are in Christ, shall rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, shall be taken up together with them in the clouds to meet Christ, into the air, and so shall we be always with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort ye one another with these words."

CHRISTMAS

Address delivered on December 27, 1936

Glory to the new-born King! The familiar salutation is from one of our popular hymns; it is sung with gusto by millions of devout Christians during the Christmas season. But I wonder if none of those who sing it or hear it will stop to ask "Why do we call Him *King?*" Kings are not born in stables. At their entrance into the world they are surrounded by physicians and nurses and privileged noble attendants. The solemn event of childbirth is supervised by a master of ceremonies, the Lord High Chamberlain, with dozens of servants at his beck and nod so that nothing may be left undone to make the accouchement of the queen-mother easy and successful.

But Mary, the mother of our new-born King, had no servants to wait on her, except the little group of awkward embarrassed shepherd folk, in from the fields, who stood ready to help in their clumsy way. There was no court physician, not even a midwife, except perhaps some peasant woman, none too skillful and none too clean of hand, who was suddenly pressed into service. As for milord Chamberlain, poor St. Joseph doubtless did his best to fill that position.

All in all it was a queer way of welcoming a king into the world, and a wretched place for a king to be born in, a hole in the rock, a kind of cave called by way of politeness a stable.

If you go to Versailles they show you a huge palace, and in the palace a particularly gorgeous room, its walls heavy with brocaded tapestries, and

there on a stately four-poster bed, rich with silk hangings, they explain that Marie Antoinette gave birth to the children of the king. Now that's something like a king's birthplace—not a dingy cavern reeking with the dirt of cows and sheep, and heated only with the breath of the beasts.

Strange predicament also for a queen—taken suddenly in travail, lying upon an impromptu bed of straw snatched from the animals' fodder for the emergency; no grand four-poster bed, no bed at all, not even a pallet; no silken curtains that could be drawn to provide a merciful privacy. Was there ever a Queen-Mother and a new-born King like Mary and Jesus, before their time or since?

And the home in which they lived! The King of England has Buckingham Palace, and Windsor Castle, and as if those two huge mansions were not enough, there is Balmoral (meaning "majestic dwelling") over the border in Scotland; and I dare say there are half a dozen other homes to which the king can repair by way of varying the monotony of regal life. But as for King Jesus, He lived for thirty years in a wretched little cottage in the hills, not much better than the grotto in which He was born. It wasn't even picturesque; there was nothing pretty about the poverty of Mary and her Child.

Real kings and queens, it is true, sometimes amuse themselves with a pretense of being poor peasants. At the Petit Trianon Marie Antoinette played the part of milkmaid. But it was only a masquerade, and when it was over she went back to the palace, the court, and the gay life. But simplicity and poverty were no game for Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. The master of the humble home and his foster Child were not play-acting at being carpen-

ters, and their poverty was no masquerade. They had no palace to which they might repair if they got tired of the cottage.

When Jesus finally left that little hut in the Galilean hills, He had no home whatever. It seems to have been His custom to sleep on the ground with only the olive trees above His head. For aught we know He may not have been welcome even there. It is possible that He was sometimes driven off like a vagabond by the landlord on whose property He had trespassed, as His mother had been driven away from the inns on her crucial night in Bethlehem. During all His public life He didn't know where He was to rest His head when night fell. He said so Himself, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Now kings don't go roaming around the countryside like that, sometimes having a meal and a bed and at other times having none. If Jesus was a king He certainly was the poorest king ever.

Stranger still, unlike most poor people, He had no interest in wealth. In the land where He lived it was customary for kings to exact tribute. But He could not become interested in that custom. When they showed Him the coin of the tribute, He asked "Whose image is this?" "Caesar's," they said. "Very well," said He in fact, "let Caesar have it." If Jesus was a king, why didn't He take that chance to say so? He might at least have said, "Caesar's image is stamped on this coin, and he lays claim to it, but by right it should be Mine. I am King of the Jews." But no, He showed infinite unconcern. Money was nothing to Him. Did any one ever see, did any one ever hear of such a king?

Besides money, kings have what goes with money

—power. They have armies. If a king has no army, or if, having an army, he is not sure of its loyalty, he will not be king for long. The people understand that. If the army deserts a king, the people laugh at him, mock him, spit in his face. Yesterday he could have had them whipped for a syllable of irreverence. Today they shout ribaldry in his ears. Yesterday he could have ordered their heads chopped off, today they put his head on the block. Yes, the army makes the king, and when the army quits him, he is done for.

Jesus had an army indeed, a ragtag and bob-tail army, poverty stricken people traipsing after Him, hoping He might work some magic with a few loaves of bread and give them all something to eat; unfortunate women who, somehow retaining woman's most characteristic gift, intuition, could see that this man was not like other men; sick people, lame and halt and blind, lepers emboldened to come out from the rocks and the tombs; yes, He had an army, sometimes as many as five thousand who seemed to have nothing better to do than to tramp after Him. But, of course, when trouble came, and the big men commenced to close in on Him, the poor nondescript army of Jesus just naturally melted away. "He looked for some one to have pity on him, and there was no man," the prophet had said. Jesus looked for some one to stand by Him and there was no man. How then did He ever come to be called King? Did they use the word to mock Him, and if so, why do we keep up the mockery? Why not drop the very memory of that travesty upon kingship.

Kings, furthermore, are fond of pomp. They have forerunners to clear the way for them. When a king rides forth through the town his gendarmes

search every home along the route beforehand. They prepare the way before him and make it safe. Whenever and wherever he appears there is a fanfare of trumpets, and when he passes, bugles blow and there is grand excitement.

But poor King Jesus had no retinue, no guard; if He passed through the narrow streets of Jerusalem, or any other Palestinian town, He had to jostle His way through the crowd, like any other insignificant poor man. And the last time He made His way through those mean, filthy little streets there certainly was no one to clear the way for Him. He stumbled and fell, and there was no one to rush to Him and help Him to His feet.

So, all in all—not to continue the contrasts—it does seem absurd to refer to Jesus Christ as a king. There could never have been any one less kingly.

Then why indeed, do we call Him King? There can be only one answer: He called Himself King. More than that—much more. As that precious little volume, *Ecce Homo*, says, Christ “laid claim, persistently and with the calmness of complete conviction to a dominion more transcendent, more universal, more complete than the most delirious votary of glory ever aspired to in his dreams.” Sir John Seelye, who wrote that eloquent sentence, had an immense admiration for Christ the Man, but could not see that He is God. Coming from such a one the statement is perhaps even more remarkable than if it had been written by an orthodox believer. God of course could carve out a kingdom for Himself by sheer miraculous power. But how could a mere man, and such a poor, helpless man as Jesus of Nazareth, achieve a transcendent and universal kingdom? The Gospels are packed thick with ano-

malies and paradoxes, but this is the maddest of all—that the poor, helpless, unsupported Nazarene peasant should aspire to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Not the least puzzling question in connection with this amazing ambition (if we may so speak) is, How did Christ ever happen to conceive it? Solomon never had such a vision of universal empire. At its greatest extent the Hebrew kingdom was only about 60 miles in width, and a little more than 200 in length. Immediately upon Solomon's death that small kingdom was broken in two, and by the days of Christ it was in four parts, one Roman Province under Pontius Pilate and three other tetrarchies under Herod, Philip, and Lysanias. As for Jesus, He knew by experience only the stretch of land between Nazareth and Jerusalem, a mere matter of some sixty miles. He had indeed been carried as a new-born babe into Egypt, but He had been carried back again before He was two years old. So naturally He knew nothing of the land of the Pharaohs. Acquainted only with the narrow limits of Palestine, how could He have so much as imagined the empire of the Caesars? And, after all, what was the extent of that empire? Scarcely wider from east to west than from New York to Denver, and not longer north and south than from Boston to Charleston, it reached scarcely one-twelfth of the way around the world in one direction, and not one-twentieth in the other. Even so, a Galilean peasant could no more visualize the length and breadth of the Roman Empire than a modern peasant in, let us say, Czecho-Slovakia can appreciate the size of the United States. Yet Jesus quietly commanded that His Kingdom should be proclaimed throughout the whole world to

every creature; and He predicted that heaven and earth should pass away before His universal kingdom should come to an end.

I say it is astounding that this vision of universal domination could have existed even as an idea in the mind of Christ. But the infinitely more amazing truth is that it actually has become an accomplished fact. It is a familiar statement that the Cross of Christ has been carried into lands that never saw the Roman Eagle. But that is a miserable understatement. The real fact is that the reign of Christ reaches to the ends of a world of whose size not even Alexander or Julius Caesar could have had any imagination. True, the reign of Christ is not totally undisturbed and undisputed. But it is incomparably more firm than any earthly kingdom or empire that has ever existed. However imperfect the dominance of Jesus may be, no one will deny that there are at this moment some hundreds of millions of men and women who would endure any kind of martyrdom, mental or physical, rather than renounce allegiance to Christ, their King.

And, more remarkable still, they give their allegiance to an Invisible King, "dead and gone" as men say, these nineteen centuries. I have drawn some contrasts between Christ and other kings, but the superlative contrast remains: when a king dies his reign is over. "The king is dead. Long live the king." No one gives allegiance to a dead king. No one now trembles at the name of Herod. No one offers incense before the statue of Caesar. And as for the Pharaohs, who preceded the Caesars, they are dug up out of their tombs only to be exhibited as curiosities in a museum. They are not otherwise of interest to the multitude.

But Jesus is a different kind of King. There must be today some five hundred millions who name themselves proudly "Christians," bend the knee to Him and call Him Lord and Master. And beyond these there are surely other hundreds of millions who venerate His memory. His doctrine and His Person are honored by the Buddhists, of whom there are some two hundred and fifty millions. Even Mohammedans call Him a saint and place Him as it were in their calendar. Atheists, agnostics, and other unbelievers are careful to explain that they dislike Christianity only because it has in their opinion, fallen away from its first fervor and has lost the pristine purity it enjoyed when it came fresh from Galilee. The blasphemer Nietzsche, who had reverence for almost nothing and for no one, complained that there has been only one Christian, the One who died on the Cross at Calvary. That bitter jibe is one to which we make no retort. We are content to have Jesus respected even if at the same moment we are despised. "He must increase, and I must diminish," said John the Baptist. St. Paul added that he was content to be ignored if only Christ reigned in the hearts of his hearers, and all we lesser Christians subscribe to the sentiment of St. John the Baptist and St. Paul.

And so, with Christians, Buddhists, Mohammedans, and the more dispassionate, fair-minded Jews, as well as unbelievers of all sorts and degrees, giving honor to Christ our King, nineteen hundred years after His death, we feel that His vision of universal domination is fairly well realized.

Pere Lagrange, in his introduction to the Gospel of St. Luke, has this interesting bit of historical information: In the year 9 before Christ, the Roman

proconsul Paulus Fabius Maximus published in the principal cities of Asia Minor a remarkable document addressed to the Greeks, in which he proposed that they should commence the year with the birthday of Augustus Caesar. "The day" (so runs the incredible pronouncement) "has given another aspect to the entire world, which would have been close to ruin if Caesar the delight of the human race had not been born. Therefore, every man may with justice consider that event as the beginning of his life and of his existence. From that day forward one has no reason to regret being born. No other day could have been a happier occasion for society and for the individual than that of the birth of Augustus Caesar."

And the Greeks made this reply: "The Divine Providence which rules the course of our life has given proof of his interest in us and his goodness, and has provided for us the greatest boon of our life in giving us so virtuous an emperor to be the benefactor of all mankind. Not only has Augustus Caesar surpassed all preceding benefactors of the race, but he leaves to posterity no hope of ever producing his equal. The birthday of this god has been for the world the beginning of all good."

Once more the contrast: the king born in the palace is forgotten, for who at this late date so much as knows the birthday of Augustus Caesar? But the birthday of the King Who was born in a stable is kept as a holy day throughout the world, a world in comparison with which the Roman Empire was only a province.

So, after all, Christ *is* King: compared with Him there has been and there shall be no other: an appro-

prate theme, I think, for reflection at Christmas time.

CARDINAL HAYES STATES AIMS OF THE CATHOLIC HOUR

(Extract from his address at the inaugural program in the studio of the National Broadcasting Company, New York City, March 2, 1930.)

Our congratulations and our gratitude are extended to the National Council of Catholic Men and its officials, and to all who, by their financial support, have made it possible to use this offer of the National Broadcasting Company. The heavy expense of managing and financing a weekly program, its musical numbers, its speakers, the subsequent answering of inquiries, must be met. . . .

This radio hour is for all the people of the United States. To our fellow-citizens, in this word of dedication, we wish to express a cordial greeting and, indeed, congratulations. For this radio hour is one of service to America, which certainly will listen in interestedly, and even sympathetically, I am sure, to the voice of the ancient Church with its historic background of all the centuries of the Christian era, and with its own notable contribution to the discovery, exploration, foundation and growth of our glorious country. . . .

Thus to voice before a vast public the Catholic Church is no light task. Our prayers will be with those who have that task in hand. We feel certain that it will have both the good will and the good wishes of the great majority of our countrymen. Surely, there is no true lover of our Country who does not eagerly hope for a less worldly, a less material, and a more spiritual standard among our people.

With good will, with kindness and with Christ-like sympathy for all, this work is inaugurated. So may it continue. So may it be fulfilled. This word of dedication voices, therefore, the hope that this radio hour may serve to make known, to explain with the charity of Christ, our faith, which we love even as we love Christ Himself. May it serve to make better understood that faith as it really is—a light revealing the pathway to heaven: a strength, and a power divine through Christ; pardoning our sins, elevating, consecrating our common every-day duties and joys, bringing not only justice but gladness and peace to our searching and questioning hearts.

CATHOLIC HOUR STATIONS

Alabama	Mobile	WALA	1380	ke
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