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THIS MYSTERIOUS HUMAN NATURE

by

Rev. James M. Gillis, C. S. P.,
Editor of the Catholic World.

Five addresses delivered in the Catholic Hour,
sponsored by the National Council of Catholic
Men, with the cooperation of the National
Broadcasting Company and its Asso-
ciated Stations.

(On Sundays from Nov. 19 to Dec. 17, 1933)

- I. "So Like An Angel . . . This Quin-
tessence of Dust."
- II. "Masters of Destiny . . . Slaves of
Circumstance."
- III. "Flesh Against Spirit . . . Spirit
Against Flesh."
- IV. Children of God . . . and Rebels.
- V. The Everlasting Mercy: "He
Knoweth Our Frame."



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✠ JOHN FRANCIS NOLL, D. D.,

Bishop of Fort Wayne

DEDICATION

To all those who by introspection
have learned the truth of the
poet's saying, "The proper study
of Mankind is Man."

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

"Know thyself!" said Socrates, and the implication is that if we know ourselves we know all that is to be known. As Christians we may accept the wisdom of the original maxim without committing ourselves to the possible implication. Thanks to Divine Revelation, as well as to enlightened reason, we know not only man but God. We hold not so much with Socrates as with Augustine who cried, *Noverim me, noverim Te*: "May I know myself, O God, as a step toward knowing Thee!"

The study of the heart and mind of man is more profitable, as well as more interesting than the study of all the rest of the universe. The geologist digs into the earth to discover the revelation written in the rocks; the astronomer searches the skies, and he too learns some of the Divine Secrets. But he who probes deep into the human heart and soars high in the realm of the human spirit becomes wiser than he who studies either the heavens or the earth.

In the hope that these brief fragmentary addresses may serve as an invitation to the scrutiny of human nature, they are now offered in print to those who heard them "over the air" and who may now perhaps care to consider them again.

“SO LIKE AN ANGEL . . . THIS QUINTESSENCE OF DUST”

(Address delivered November 19, 1933)

Some three years ago, the illustrious physicist, Sir James Jeans, wrote a fascinating little volume *The Mysterious Universe*. It was, in effect, a rejection of the dogmatism of some of his forbears in science, and a demonstration of the fact that the world in which we live and the myriad worlds that surround and, as it were, engulf our little world, remain, after the last analysis, a prodigious puzzle, unexplained and perhaps forever unexplainable, baffling, bewildering, elusive, incomprehensible and, as one might say, impossible and incredible.

Every one of my hearers will remember—probably every one has read Ernst Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*, that appeared first in Germany, was translated into all the principal languages, seized upon and taken for authentic by the millions who read what is called “popular science,” prefer it diluted and don't care if it is distorted. Haeckel was somewhat of a scientist, but much more a propagandist, a showman and to a degree a confessed charlatan. He claimed that the riddle of the universe was at long last explained, its secret captured, brought to hand, dissected, analyzed, and the findings recorded and catalogued. Materialism, monism, atheism, was the answer to the riddle.

But now, a generation later, the secret has escaped again, the riddle is more puzzling than ever, the mystery is deeper and wider and no one dares any more to dogmatize. Only one thing is certain: the trend of the better scientific thought is away from materialism; atheism hides its diminished head; science tends more and more to agree with religion that the universe is infinitely mysterious.



It seems to me, therefore, that the stage is now set for the entrance of a psychologist as capable in his line as Jeans or Eddington or Millikan or Einstein in theirs—a psychologist who shall demonstrate and illuminate the fact that not only the universe but *man* is mysterious; that the riddle of the human mind is more puzzling, the secret of the human heart more elusive, than the mystery of the inanimate universe. The riddle, the enigma, the mystery *par excellence* is MAN.

Not that the heart and mind and soul of man remained unstudied; human nature has been scrutinized, probed, analyzed, a thousand times more intimately, more shrewdly, more persistently, than the heavens or the earth or the elements. Before man developed any special interest in the stars above his head or the earth beneath his feet, or in what lay hidden hundreds of fathoms deep beneath the surface of the sea, he was immensely curious about himself: he was digging and delving into his own heart, making desperate attempts to explain himself to himself. Poetry came into the world long, long before science; and poetry is largely an attempt to explore and to interpret the mystery of man. So too drama and fiction, which, as it were, take man out of himself, parade himself before his own eyes across a stage or through the pages of a book so that he may see himself as others see him; and philosophy which, as the first and greatest of human sages has said, is comprised in the phrase, "Know Thyself!" Sometimes I incline to the suspicion that Socrates spoke that adage, tongue in cheek. "Know Thyself!" As if any man could! Another genius in the difficult, delicate art of self-analysis, St. Augustine, added a note, "O God, make me to know myself:

make me to know Thee." There is a catch even in that prayer. I can hardly know myself any more than I can know God. If I could but know myself I might know God. Only God can fully know man. Of Jesus Christ it is written, "He knew what was in man; He needed not that any man should tell Him", but Christ was God as well as man and it is in His capacity as God that He knows man. The biographer of Napoleon Bonaparte quotes his hero as saying, "All my life I have studied men. I know men". But the obvious fact is that Napoleon did *not* know men—or if he knew *men* he did not know *man*. If he had known man he would not have died beaten, disgraced, and in exile. Shakespeare—the myriad-minded Shakespeare—probably knew man better than any other poet or dramatist or philosopher. Certainly he made a life study of man; he tracked every emotion and mood and thought and passion of man to its secret lair in the human heart, dragged it out, incarnated it in man or woman, king, peasant, soldier, student, lover, clown, clothed it in ermine, or fustian, or in mourner's weeds, and made it "strut and fret its hour upon the stage." If ever a man revealed ourselves to ourselves, it was that all but omniscient Shakespeare. But even he was compelled in the end to confess that he couldn't solve the riddle of man. Witness the famous monologue, "What a piece of work is man!", continuing, "How like an angel!", but concluding, "This quintessence of dust!"

And there, as near as any man has hit upon it, is the solution of the riddle, the "angel", the "paragon", "infinite in reason", "in form and moving express and admirable", is after all dust and quintessence of dust! Man is a mystery because he is a bundle

of contradictions. "Richard Yea and Nay" was one of the nicknames of Coeur de Lion. But every man is Yea and Nay. Angel and beast, sublime, debased, pure spirit tangled up in obscene flesh, courageous and cowardly, wise, stupid, gross, grovelling, sordid, earthy; noble, high-minded, afire with spiritual ambition, angelic, more than angelic—"Have I not said ye are Gods?"—a clod and a star; a worm and a lion; lion? say rather tiger; tiger? yes and hyena, jackal; the stuff of which heroes are made, and dung under the feet; cruel and kind; builder of hospitals and of torture chambers, good Samaritan and grand inquisitor, giving his life for his friend, yea even for his enemy, but selfish as Satan; loyal as Peter or Paul, treacherous as Judas; quick to take fire and rush into battle at the call of the clarion to right any wrong, real or imagined; but slow, lethargic, sluggish, tolerant of long-standing corruption, shrugging the shoulders or even winking the eye at injustice; impetuous enthusiast, and bloodless stoic; a furious fighter when caught in "the fell clutch of circumstance," and yet "serene, indifferent to fate"; generous, chivalrous, Quixotic, idealistic; sordid, mercenary, materialistic; angel and beast did I say? Angel and devil! the devils were angels; man, superman, yellow dog and no man at all; child of God, heir to the kingdom of heaven, but a denier of God, skeptical, atheist; having indeed a home and a Father in heaven but preferring the fleshpots of earth; self-exiled, sitting on the dung heap, consorting with swine, too dispirited to arise and go to his Father; but again leaping up, donning the armor of God, battling his way through legions of devils, storming the ramparts of the skies, thundering at the gates, taking the kingdom of heaven

by storm, shouting that tremendous challenge, "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates": as who should say, "O God, command that the gate be opened, or I will break it down"; and that is the man—the very same man who puts his head in his hands and cries, "God be merciful to me, a sinner. I am weak and in labors from my youth. Mine enemies are camped about me and they are stronger than I."

Curious, mad, incredible, contradiction: man! an utterly insoluble riddle, unbelievable, impossible combination of hero and coward, beast and devil and God! Some one attempting to define God (God, you know, cannot be defined) called Him "the hidden synthesis of irreconcilables". There is a hint of truth in that, though it is, as it stands, theologically inaccurate, but though it be not true of God, it does seem to be true of *man*; he is indeed a synthesis of irreconcilables; in him the flesh and the spirit are at war, and not only flesh and spirit but devils and angels. What wonder that the gentle 'a Kempis, after saying—"this shall puzzle thee," and "that shall puzzle thee", adds, "But most of all thou shalt often be a puzzle to thyself." What wonder, too, if the poets, though they penetrate flesh and blood and see into the heart, confess in the end that they cannot fathom man, and that the dramatists who take the world but as the world, a stage where every man must play a part, observe man as he makes his exit and his entrance, watch him strut his brief hour, but as the curtain rings down, leave us with the despondent reflection, "Life is a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing."

Shakespeare gave it up. Dante gnashed his teeth

at it all. Italy with its feuds and internecine battles, its conflicts between Guelphs and Ghibellines, was a symbol of the conflict of savagery with civilization, heaven and hell, God and Satan in every human heart. Do I say Shakespeare? and Dante? Even David the divinely inspired prophet was bewildered: "What is man?" cries he, and under inspiration answers himself: "Man is a little lower than the angels. Thou hast crowned him, O God, with glory and honor. Thou hast set him over all the works of Thy hands"; but in the same book, almost in the same psalm, he confesses ruefully, "man when he was in honour did not understand; he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them. This way of theirs is a stumbling block to them . . . They are laid in hell like sheep: death shall feed upon them."

There in a word is the heart of the paradox, the center and core of the anomaly of man. Heaven and hell are in the heart. God and Satan are tearing at each other; as the Easter Hymn has it: *Mors et vita duello conflixere mirando*. Life and death are at grips in horrendous conflict. The heart and soul of man is a battleground of Titans, supernatural Titans. And what is worse—if anything can be worse than the conflict of God and Satan—is that man is at odds with himself as to which side he shall take. Sometimes loyal, he stands with God, sometimes treacherous he finds himself fighting or following the fight on the side of Satan. Alternately, or even simultaneously, he is good and bad, saint, sinner, animal, angel, hero, coward, slave, soldier, victim and victor, winning, losing, pathetic, tragic, but in the end let us hope, triumphant—this is man!

“MASTERS OF DESTINY . . . SLAVES OF CIRCUMSTANCE”

(Address delivered November 26, 1933)

Recalling for just one moment the main idea of last week's discourse—at this time and place—the idea that man is a bewildering compound of beast and angel, of animal passions and divine aspirations, we find ourselves face to face with the importunate question—what can man do about it? Is he destined to be, for all his life, torn cruelly between conflicting forces? Must he be forever the passive, innocent victim in a warfare of Titans, like the helpless peasant whose poor little farm happens to lie in the path of devastating armies, and who can only cry aloud in vain to a heaven that seems not to care? Is man a pitiable object crushed under the heel of a remorseless deity that goes stalking up and down the world, a super-monster like King Kong of the films, more hideous than the ape that committed the murders in the Rue Morgue? Is man to be a sort of lion in the arena entangled in a net, stabbed again and again with barbs and javelins, as it were “stings and arrows of outrageous fortune,” only to provide gory delight for legions of devils looking on? Or if that be too heroic a fate for contemptible man, is he only a rat in a corner, teased and tortured by a cat; or an insect crushed between the thumb and finger of one who is either irritated or merely amused: “As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods; they kill us for their sport”; or, to use a more desperate, though often it would seem a more appropriate simile, is man like a captured and disarmed rebel placed upon the rack, disjoined and all but dismembered, finally flung

into a dungeon, with no vent for his anguish except shrieks that no man's ears can hear, and ineffectual beatings with bloody fists upon granite walls?

I hope that with these grim fancies I do not merely conjure up recollections of old-fashioned melodrama with its mock-heroics, and pseudo-horrors; for I assure you that all those ghastly figures or worse have been used in the most dignified of all drama—the Greek—to depict the plight of hapless man in the grip of fate. In the supremest dramatic creation of all time, Oedipus the king is hopelessly enmeshed in a tangle of tragic circumstances, cruelly buffeted, and finally destroyed by malevolent “unseen powers.”

For the Greek dramatists, who with the Greek poets and philosophers represent the highest attainment of the human intellect unassisted by divine revelation, were fatalists and pessimists just as truly as the Orientals. In all pagan thought, Chinese, Japanese, Persian, Indian, Assyrian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman—man had never a chance. He was the plaything of fate, a puppet dancing as the gods pulled the strings; against man the cards were always stacked and the dice loaded; he could not win. His life on earth was a comedy for the gods, who as it were, sat peering over the ramparts of heaven to watch the ridiculous show. Comic to the gods, tragic to himself—this was another of the contradictions and anomalies, perhaps the cruellest of all in human life. Strange to say, you find that idea—that scheme of things, that philosophy of life not only in ancient Greek drama but in modern English fiction. Thomas Hardy, generally held to be the ablest, most powerful and most profound creative mind

amongst modern novelists, punishes his men and women—in particular Jude the Obscure and Tess of the D'Urbervilles—as remorselessly as Sophocles deals with Oedipus or Homer with Agamemnon. Aristotle, one of the three persons in the trinity of Greek philosophy (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle), said that God is no more concerned with the fate of man than a king seated upon a golden throne amongst his worshipful courtiers is concerned about the fate of the fowl in the royal barnyard. Even so, the ancient Greek sage who thought of Zeus as merely indifferent was kinder than the modern English novelist, for Thomas Hardy thinks that God (Whom by the way he calls sardonically “president of the immortals”) toys with his creatures, worries them, tortures them, piles misfortunes upon them, and only when he has had his fill of pleasure in the sufferings of men and women, kills them off and buries them under their accumulated tragedies.

Other moderns with the pagan outlook have been as contemptuous of man and as blasphemous towards God as Thomas Hardy. They love to dilate upon the helplessness of man in the face—not now of the gods, for they have routed the gods—but in the face of implacable Nature. They bestir their pens and their tongues to describe man—poor man, impotent, contemptible, pathetic, insignificant, a speck of dust resting insecurely upon this earth, here today and blown into space tomorrow; an infinitesimal microbe in the diseased body of human society, of no more importance in the scheme of things, says Haeckel, than the “microscopic infusoria,” a bug in the ooze of a stagnant pond. Bertrand Russell, always perverse, waxes eloquent in a word picture of the insignificance of man as a

particle of dust lost in the midst of a limitless universe of solar systems:

“Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; all the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system; and the whole temple of Man’s achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the *débris* of a universe in ruins.”

Even the humorists when their fun goes bitter and sour, turn against man, heap contumely upon him, castigate him, ridicule him, not now with good nature but with savage cynicism, fling caustic poison in his face. Mark Twain, for example, in his later years, years of disillusion and desperate unbelief, continually referred to “this mangy human nature,” venting his scorn especially upon man’s “moral sense” (spoken with a sneer)! The author of *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, *The Mysterious Stranger*, and *What is Man?* was more bitter against man than Voltaire at his worst.

In general all who have abandoned, or who have never known the merciful God of our Sacred Scriptures—all heathen, be they savage or civilized—grow cynical and satirical about human nature.

Even in the flamboyantly rhetorical poem “Invictus” of W. E. Henley, often quoted, in fact so often that it has gone stale; the poem wherein he speaks of his “unconquerable soul” and proclaims, as it seems to me with suspicious emphasis, “I am the

master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul," he uses the phrase, "Whatever gods there be." Obviously the expression smacks of paganism, and perhaps Henley thought himself somewhat of a pagan, but if he had read his Greco-Roman literature and drama to better effect, he would have remembered that no pagan dared stand in the face of his gods and proclaim himself master of his fate and captain of his soul. The noblest of the pagans considered themselves pawns in the hands of the gods, pushed about here and there upon the chess board in the game of the Olympians and when the game was over, cleaned off the board with a sweep of the arm of the god. Occasionally in pagan literature there is an heroic symbol of independence like that of Ajax defying the lightning, just as we have in Shakespeare's King Lear (a pagan by the way), ranting against the storm; but these are only exceptions—instances of blasphemy induced by madness. Pagans, one and all, Oriental and Occidental, were fatalists.

Only in our own Bible do we find man really master of his own fate, dictator of his own destiny and captain of his own soul. There is no more stirring sentence in the Scriptures—and may I venture to say, no more dramatic utterance in pagan literature—than the charge, one might almost say the challenge of God to man in the book of Deuteronomy, "I call heaven and earth to witness this day that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Choose therefore . . . !"

There in one sentence you have the essence of the Jewish and Christian theology about man's place in the universe, man's importance in the scheme of things. With us, man is no microbe, no microscopic bacillus, no speck of dust upon the

chariot of time, no grain of sand lost in an illimitable universe; no mechanical robot, a cunning simulacrum, an imitation of true man; nor is human nature a mangy, measly thing to be pitied and despised and reviled. By virtue of the free will granted him by his Maker, man is like a little god upon the earth. Within his soul he has the grace—also a gift from his Maker—the power to combat and to vanquish all the evil elements in his nature. He is a free and responsible agent. His destiny is eternal and it is in his own hands. He needs not be always downcast, with eyes fixed upon the ground; he must not think of his God as an Oriental despot before whom he must forever cringe and cower. One of the rubrics in the Catholic liturgy teaches us to look square at the Sacred Host at the moment of Consecration and of Benediction. There is meaning in that rubric, as in all our acts of external worship. Face to face we look at God, we thank Him that He has not made us mere beasts or automatons but human beings; we confess to Him that without Him we are nothing and can do nothing; but we borrow the words of one of His most upstanding saints—the apostle Paul—“I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me.” We are not slaves or dogs—nor for that matter apes. We are men, free agents of our own salvation; we are children of God. The Christian doctrine of the dignity of man is summed up in one daring phrase of St. John, “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God.”

Let heathens and pagans, ancient and modern, emphasize if they will the debasement of human nature. We who have thrown off heathenism and

paganism, while not denying our meaner nature, glory in the fact that God hath lifted us up from the dung heap and placed us amongst the princes of creation, even amongst the angels of heaven.

“FLESH AGAINST SPIRIT . . . SPIRIT AGAINST FLESH”

(Address delivered December 3, 1933)

Without one moment's delay after the announcing of that text, "Flesh against Spirit, Spirit against Flesh," I feel that I must explain that in the Catholic system of morals, the flesh is not considered essentially evil. We have never taught the Puritanical doctrine of the total depravity of human nature, nor yet the total depravity of the human body. On the contrary, we hold it heresy to say—as the Manichees did—that the soul is from God and the body from the devil, the soul divine and the body diabolical. The human body is God's creation, and—as it comes from the hand of its Maker—a beautiful and wonderful piece of work. To malign the body, therefore, even though it be done to exalt the soul, is to cast suspicion upon the wisdom of God, Who made both body and soul.

Many moralists, Christian and pre-Christian, over-impressed with the fact the body is of the earth earthy, corruptible and in certain circumstances repulsive, have in their impatience and disgust belabored it with contemptuous epithets—"base," "vile," "beastly," "filthy," "swinish," "apelike," and what not; while saluting the soul as "holy," "heavenly," "angelic," "divine." Even so sane a philosopher as Plato spoke of the soul as a godlike thing imprisoned in a dungeon of clay, the body.

There is indeed some explanation, if not excuse, for this invidious comparison; when man submits himself to the slavery of the flesh, he can become very nasty; but it is unfair none the less to place the blame upon poor brother ass, as St. Francis used to refer affectionately to the body. For after all,

the body is what the soul makes it. Wickedness or viciousness must be in the mind before it can be reflected in the flesh. "As a man thinks, so is he," is not a New Thought maxim; it is very old, as old as the book of Proverbs—it dates back at least to Solomon. And what is more, it is the word of God.

Let there then be no misunderstanding: it is the soul that sins. "From the heart," says Jesus, "come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies"; and "these are the things that defile a man." Now the "heart" in that sentence means the will, which is not a bodily but a spiritual faculty.

So much by way of precaution. But while keeping that warning in mind, we shall have to admit that it is partly the dual nature in man, flesh and spirit, animal and angel, that makes life a perpetual conflict, interesting, exciting, dramatic, too often tragic. Job says, "the life of a man upon this earth is a warfare," and, we may add, the most cruel warfare is that of man with himself. He need not go faring forth like a knight errant into the wide world to find an enemy. His most dangerous enemy is in his own heart. If any man knew that, it was St. Augustine. With the hot blood of Africa in his veins, an inheritance from lascivious Phenicia, passionate, libidinous, "in love with love," as he himself says, and like the other "fast" young men of his set, ashamed to be outdone in amatory escapades, he lived as a youth a life of hectic sensuality. But he was not wholly vicious—no man is, or can be. The good in him battled with the bad. "He 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 sim-

plicity." So says one of his translators; what he says of himself makes a masterpiece, *The Confessions*, which comes to a climax in the famous *Tolle Lege* passage in which is recorded, as he says, "the debate that raged in my heart, myself battling against myself."

No man has lived life to the full until he knows what that battle means. Sybarites, voluptuaries, profligates, prate about knowing life and squeezing out of it the last drop of human experience. But they know not life. Life is battle: they know only surrender and retreat. Not soldiers but malingerers, they are adept only in the coward's devices for dodging the battle. They capitulate before the fight commences. They run up the white flag before a shot has been fired. They excuse their cowardice and cover their retreat with some such cynical epigram as that of the unhappy degenerate, Oscar Wilde, who said, "the best way to overcome temptation is to yield to it." Such as these do not experience life. The terror and the joy of battle they have never felt. Their life experience is incomplete, often merely inchoate.

Now, strange to say, there are those who ought to know man and man's life, whose trade it is to study the human heart, discover and reveal its emotions, its passions, its hopes, ambitions, struggles, victories, defeats, either in fiction or in the drama, but who seem to have lost sight of the central fact of human nature, the fact of dualism in the composite that is man, and the consequent inevitable and incessant battle between flesh and spirit.

Certain novelists, biographers, dramatists following some predominant psychology instead of probing their own heart, or any one else's, make

light of carnal sin, and seem inclined to think that resistance to temptation makes a man ridiculous. Sin, we are supposed to believe, is no longer sin; it is to be laughed at, rather than reprobated. One ultra-modern, for example, has written, "The extravagances of passion, the ebullitions of youth and the vagaries of pleasure are no longer frowned down by a sour-visaged public opinion, but encouraged as if necessary, condoned as the dramatic play of natural forces and as welcome additions to the gayety of nations."

Note, I beg you, the never failing insincerity of those who apologize for sins of the flesh. They will not call things by their right names; in place of the honest blunt words of the Bible, they slide off into euphemisms: "Extravagance of passion"; "ebullition of youth," "vagary of pleasure." And as for the "dramatic play of natural forces," have these degenerate practitioners of the novelist's and dramatist's art never learned from Sophocles and Aeschylus and Shakespeare and Goethe, from Dickens and George Eliot and Dumas and Hugo, that the "dramatic play of natural forces" is possible only if temptation is real and sin no laughing matter? If nothing is either good or evil and if the conflict of good and evil is not stupendous, you can write no great drama, you can make no poetry, nothing but light and facile verse; if human struggle and human character are of no moment, there will be henceforth no important fiction, nor, I am inclined to believe, any profound music. Why then talk of "the dramatic play of natural forces"?

Observe also that insidious expression, "sour-visaged public opinion." It is one of the tricks of the trade of the immoralists to affix the note of

puritanism or Phariseeism upon any man or any group that ventures to disapprove of adultery or any other form of illicit carnal intercourse. A clever device but contemptible because unfair. Not all who frown upon sex-sins are hypocrites and fanatics. "Thou shalt not!" was not invented by Puritans. And He was no Pharisee Who said, "Not one jot or tittle of the (moral) law shall pass away. It hath been said of old, Thou shalt not commit adultery but I say to you that whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart." Jesus Christ was no "sour-visage."

But the apologists for immorality have gone further and said worse things. I have seen a particularly perverse declaration to this effect: "Not when flesh triumphs over spirit, but when spirit triumphs over flesh, *that* is sin." A wicked and adulterous generation turns the truth upside down to make an epigram and to glorify lust.

Others still, who go about heaven and earth to find excuses for sex-sin, have seized upon a very dubious psychology which recommends that we "release the inhibitions," by which the man-in-the-street understands, "Yield to temptation because it is unhealthy to frustrate passion." But if you refuse to be tricked by a catchy phrase and demand to know which inhibitions, which passions shall we release? The passion of anger, or of hate? even murderous hate? The passions of greed? of gluttony? If you pursue the question far enough, you will discover that the only passion for which they advocate entire unrestraint is the passion of carnal lust. But there is no more reason to release the inhibition against lust than to release the inhibition against hate or

greed or envy or jealousy or drunkenness or any other evil tendency.

The deliberate murderers who the other day dragged a couple of criminals from jail and lynched them, felt, I suppose, that their own inhibitions should be released. Their blood was up, their hatred at white heat and if it had been smothered it might have torn them asunder. So they released their inhibitions with murder. And the governor who virtually promised the murderers immunity and all but invited them to commit more murders, may live to learn that when he fosters blood-lust he is playing with a fire—a volcanic fire that may overwhelm him and his state and the whole nation. This is no time for an executive to violate his oath and join in the battle against law and order.

Likewise they that mouth the plausible phrase, "Release the inhibitions", will discover sooner or later that to give free rein to passion—any passion—is to precipitate a return to savagery, or even a collapse into degeneracy.

I have remarked, incidentally, that without inner conflict there is nothing interesting or dramatic in human life. But sometimes it would seem that the conflict involves a suspense and an excitement that are almost unbearable. The tragic truth is that a man while fighting himself may turn traitor to himself, and that at the very hottest and most crucial moment of a battle. We all carry about in our heart a Judas: or rather every man is his own Judas. Again and again I have spoken in these discourses of the contradictions in man's nature, but if you will know the most frightful of all contradictions I will dare it: every man is at once a Jesus and a Judas, "I live, now not I," says St. Paul, "Christ liveth in

me," and many a man, including St. Paul, has felt at times, "I live, now not I, Satan liveth in me." Christ may have come to us and taken up His abode within us, perhaps driving out seven devils before taking possession, but at one unwary look or gesture, or as the consequence of one unholy thought flashing across the mind with the speed of light, Satan, ejected from the soul, but lurking ever nigh, may return and fiercely dispute the domination of the divine Guest of the soul, and before the demon is routed again, a man whose heart is the battlefield of fiends and angels may feel that he has endured not only the blows of battle but the tortures of hell.

At any moment the trumpet may sound the alarm. The soldier must leap to his feet and fight for his life. For his life! for his soul! And what a fight that is, in which if we conquer, we receive not a mere indemnity, not a province or a kingdom, but eternal salvation; and if we are vanquished, we pay the penalty not with disgrace and discomfiture or monetary tribute, but with eternal perdition. There is drama! there is life! Flesh battling against spirit and spirit against flesh for an infinite reward or an everlasting death.

One word more. We learned in the World War that fighting is not romantic or picturesque but a dirty ugly bloody business. So of the spiritual warfare. It is not always pretty or poetic. Going down into the depths of one's own heart, in the dark so to speak, to grapple with wild beasts of passion is not glamorous. But when we return out of those black and bloody caves of our lower nature, victorious over our brute passions, we shall feel the truth of the words of 'a Kempis, "Eternal Life is worth this—and more!"

CHILDREN OF GOD . . . AND REBELS!

(Address delivered December 10, 1933)

Opponents of the Christian religion are endlessly ingenious in discovering or inventing objections against our faith and our system of worship. And one of their most plausible criticisms is that we undervalue human nature. We call ourselves "miserable sinners," we bow our head in shame and repentance. We cry "Lord-a-mercy!" We strike our breast, making the triple invocation, "Lord, I am not worthy!" We bend the knee before we even venture into a pew in the church; when we say our prayers, we assume the attitude of a suppliant; on occasion we even prostrate ourselves wholly, all but touching the ground with our forehead; we observe penitential seasons during which we repeatedly chant the *Miserere*, "Have Mercy!" and the *De Profundis*, "Out of the Depths!" And once a year for three successive nights we perform a solemn ceremony built upon the Lamentations of Jeremias sung to a rhythm more poignant than that to be heard at the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem.

All this, we are told, is unworthy of human dignity, and subtly demoralizing.

"Get up off your knees," they tell us. "Lift your forehead from the dust. Shake the ashes off your head. Stand erect. Look the world in the eye. Tell yourself you're as good as any man and better than most. Yes, look your *God* in the face. Deal with Him on a basis of equality. Stop cringing, stop wailing. Rid yourself of the inferiority complex."

Those of my hearers who have patiently followed this series of talks from the beginning will

not need be told my reply to that formidable indictment. My theme has been throughout that our human nature is a mass of contradictions and our conduct, following our nature, must therefore be paradoxical. Those who launch these objections and accusations against our belief and our practice have fallen into what I am accustomed to call the "either-or" fallacy. They think we must *either* do this *or* do that, when the truth is we must *both* do this *and* do that. They cannot understand that in virtue of our divided nature, *sometimes* we must bury our face in the dust and at *other times* look our God in the eye: one moment at the Communion rail we thump our breast and cry, "Lord, I am not worthy," but the very next instant we pray, "Lord, come into my heart and make me one with Thee." On certain days at certain services we chant *Miserere* but on another day we shout *Alleluia*. Unreasonable? Contradictory? Not to those who understand the complexity of human nature, the conflict in the heart of man. Only to those who think of man as all one sort of thing and nothing of another sort, all angel and no animal, or all animal and no angel, will our faith or our practice seem bewildering.

Truly the Christian religion is a tissue of paradoxes. And the greatest paradox of all, if I may say so with infinite reverence, is Christ Himself. "I am a worm and no man," said He, and yet with a whip of cords and with the more stinging lash of His wrath He drove the money-changers from the temple. "Turn the other cheek," said He, but when the servant of the high priest smote Him on the face, He said with superb self-possession, "If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil. But

if good, why smitest thou me?" "He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, not opening His mouth," but His silence made King Herod squirm upon his throne, and put Pontius Pilate at a disadvantage. When Pilate finally persuaded Jesus to speak, by the device of putting Him under oath: "I adjure Thee by the Living God that Thou tell us if Thou be the Son of God," our Savior replied in one brief magnificent word, "Thou sayest it." And when the governor attempting to start an argument—imagine the Roman pontentate offering to argue with the Galilean peasant—"Dost Thou not know that I have power to crucify Thee and power to let Thee go?" Jesus made the quiet but definitive reply, "Thou should'st have no power if it were not given thee by God."

There can be no doubt as to Who was the Master in that brief exchange: The Pale Galilean already had conquered. He had overpowered Pilate with a word, as He had withered Herod with a glance. If Pilate and Herod are in hell, I imagine the essence of their agony must be in the look of the eyes of Jesus, burning eternally into their souls. And yet it was only the look of a Lamb.

As with Christ, so with all true Christians. When St. Barbara the Roman virgin was taken to a lupanar to be corrupted before being tortured and killed, the mistress of that place of shame reported to the judge, "We can do nothing with her. You might as well command these stone walls to flow like water as to change the resolution of that obstinate girl."

The martyrs led into the Arena, kissed the hands of their jailers and executioners, but when called upon in the presence of some scores of

thousands of spectators to put a pinch of incense in the burning brazier before the statue of Jupiter or Venus or the Emperor, they laughed in the face of the judge and spat upon the idols. The omnipotence of Rome meant nothing to them: they were not overawed; the howling of the blood-thirsty mob completely encircling them could not intimidate them. They had indeed burrowed underground into the Catacombs, they were in consequence despised as *gens lucifuga*, a people that fled the light; they were driven out like rats or moles blinking into the sunlight: although they did seem an ignoble and despicable lot, the proper butt for the contempt of the mob; but once in the arena faced with instruments of torture and death, or with famishing wild beasts, they took on instinctively a dignity like that of their Master Who had so quietly and so surely manifested His superiority over Herod and Pilate.

So is it with all the lesser martyrs who have inherited something of the serene fortitude of Jesus and His immediate followers. If a man be a true Christian, he is an aristocrat and a king even though he be held as a slave or reputed a criminal. You may grind his face into the earth, ply the lash upon his shoulders until he lies prostrate in a pool of his own blood, you may put the gyves upon his wrists and ankles, and rivet him with a chain to a rock in the depths of a dungeon but, thanks to the independence of his soul, he will pray and sing and make merry in his heart: he will recreate his spirit with visions of paradise, enjoy ineffable colloquy with God; He will speak with God and God will speak with him. Those who have read and absorbed the truest of all romances, the most thrilling of all

dramas, the lives of the saints, will know that I am not now permitting myself a rhetorical fling, but that I am narrating baldly and without imagination a fact that has been verified a hundred thousand times and more in our history—the paradoxical fact that the meek and humble Christian who seems so contemptible in the eyes of the proud, and who indeed confesses before God and man that he *is* contemptible, none the less possesses in the unsounded depths of his soul something of the superb dignity, the divine majesty of the poor Palestinian carpenter's Son who destroyed King Herod's assurance with a look and demoralized Pontius Pilate with a word.

The Christian doctrine of the freedom of man's will, fortified by Divine Grace, leads us even further. With no desire to be melodramatic, indeed with the conscious purpose of avoiding flamboyant oratory, I say with all soberness that our religion teaches us to look not only man in the eye, but to look the devil in the eye. We bend the knee, but not to man; we cringe and cower in the dust but not before Satan. We kneel to God, we prostrate ourselves before God, we cry our lamentations and our *misereres* into the ears of God, but we are not awed by men or by devils. In the presence of pompous self-important powerful men we only laugh—poor puppets strutting their short hour clothed with the rags of a little brief authority. As for the evil one—before him we take on a supernatural confidence. We believe that he has power, but we know that against him we have greater power, even the omnipotence of God. We remember that when Satan took Our Lord up to the pinnacle of the temple to tempt Him, all he could say in the end was, "Cast Thyself down!" And we have caught the truth behind that symbol. Sat-

an cannot cast any man down. Only man himself can damn himself. At the last moment of even the most violent temptation, the spirit of evil must stand aside and say, "Do it yourself. Damn your own soul. I cannot cast you down." Even Satan has his limitations. We know that: we recognize that we are independent even of the prince of evil. He cannot put us in hell, but we can send him back to hell.

The freedom wherewith God our Creator has endowed us carries us far, I have said. But we must not shrink from the last conclusion. God has made us independent even of Himself. He could coerce us, but He has declared that He never will. So, it is possible for man to defy not only man, not only Satan, but God. Man may stand in the face of God and cry, "Non Serviam": "I will not serve Thee!" Just as a nation may put a weapon in the hands of the citizen and expect him to fight in defense of his country; and the citizen may turn rebel and use the weapon against his country; so it is possible and more than possible, an actual fact, that the creature may use the endowments of God to dishonor God. This freedom is a wonderful gift, a divine prerogative, but it remains a perilous privilege. Even so, God has evidently thought it better that we should have it than not have it. There is a risk in bestowing upon man something that makes him like God. But God, Who wished us to be His children and therefore made us to His Own image and likeness, takes the chance, so to speak, of our turning rebels and traitors against Him.

This too, like all the other contradictions in our nature, makes life interesting, dramatic, fateful. But every true man, trusted with a great responsi-

bility will rise to great heights. *Noblesse Oblige*. Since God has trusted us, shall we not assure Him with all earnestness that His trust is not misplaced and that He will not rue the decision to create us free? We shall be sons of God and not rebels.

THE EVERLASTING MERCY: "HE KNOWETH OUR FRAME"

(Address delivered December 17, 1933)

The most pathetic fact in the history of religion is that man has so often made a monster of his God. It was a skeptic, Voltaire I think, who first flung this jibe into the face of poor misguided humanity: "You tell us," he said, "that man is made to the image and likeness of God. The truth, on the contrary, is that God is made to the image and likeness of man." That taunt, though it humiliates and mortifies us to confess it—is terribly true. Indeed more than *that* is true. Man made God not only to the image and likeness of man but to the image and likeness of the worst of men. For some thousands of years God was conceived as a sort of greater and more powerful king. And while it is true that a king might be—rarely—wise and kind and very human (too human perhaps like Solomon), or even a self-confessed sinner and humble penitent (like David), or a generous, sympathetic lover of justice (like Haroun al Raschid), more often he was like the Pharaohs of Egypt or Dionysus of Syracuse, wilful, despotic, inhumanly cruel, moody, capricious, passing swiftly and unaccountably from expansive geniality to wild irrational rage.

Even when a king was not violent or vindictive, he was aloof, unapproachable, sacrosanct, beyond human contact and of course beyond reproof. The magnificent episode in the first book of Kings in which the prophet Nathan confronts and confounds King David, and in which—more miraculously still—the king accepts the prophet's rebuke, is a rare if not solitary case in which the perilous action of ad-

monishing a king was not followed immediately by torture and death.

In Babylon and Egypt and Persia, the king was held to be the light of heaven, the glory of the world, the apotheosis of might and majesty; his subjects grovelled before him; they were proud to be his abject slaves; they thrilled with joy if he but condescended to place his sacred foot upon their necks; and they made it their boast that they were nothing but dust beneath his feet. Oriental literature is filled with such sycophantic expressions, absurdly extravagant exaltation of the king and corresponding abasement of the subject. When King Saul, under the influence of an evil spirit, attempted to transfix David to the wall with a spear, that mad act of intended murder was taken as merely one of the royal prerogatives. The king could do no wrong.

Now unfortunately when man, poor man, attempted to make a mental picture of his God, too often he imagined Him only as a superlative despot. With a pathetic perversity he invested his God with the uglier and more cruel traits of kings rather than with their occasional gentleness and kindness and pity.

There was for example Moloch, god of the Phenicians, for whom his suppliants built a huge iron effigy, heated it white hot and then flung into its arms infants snatched from their mothers' breasts. John Milton speaks poetically but accurately of "Moloch, horrid king besmeared with blood of human sacrifice and parent's tears." And there was Baal, the chief god of Tyre and Sidon, to whom were sacrificed the flower of each family, the innocent boy or the incorrupt maiden burned as a holocaust upon the altar. Even in beautiful lovely

Greece there was the very ancient god "Aidoneus, predecessor of Zeus, the king of the realm of shadows, the dark inexorable mighty Lord," and his consort Persephone, "murderess, death-goddess, destroyer of all living."

So we might continue through the long dismal catalogue of mythological deities, but it would be only increasingly painful to do so: suffice it to say that in all heathendom, early or late, there was in only one great city, Athens, an altar to a god or goddess of pity and before that altar there were no worshippers. The predominant and universal idea seems to have been that God was ferocious, or at the very best indifferent, quite beyond mercy or pity.

Only in Judaea was there a nobler and pleasanter concept of the Deity, and even there, the prophets, inspired exponents of a purer theology, found it difficult and at times impossible to draw the people away from the worship of cruel and lascivious gods and goddesses. "Cruel and lascivious"—there doubtless is the explanation: the people, driven by a sadistic impulse, were content to have the gods cruel, so long as they were to be worshipped with obscene orgies. One of the prophets, Elias, driven almost mad because the people went "fornicating," as he says, "after strange gods," cried out in desperation, "How long do you halt between two ways? If Baal be God, serve Baal, but if the Lord be God, serve the Lord." As though to say, "Immolate your babes, sacrifice your sons and daughters, lacerate yourselves, leap into the flames, ye mad devotees of vice and cruelty. I preach you a merciful God and you will have none of Him, the priests of Baal preach you a demoniacal god and you go madly after him."

But in their more moderate moments, the prophets, forgetting their exasperation, sang of the one true merciful God in such lyric strains and with such authentic theology as has never been surpassed.

In the 102d Psalm (103d King James), for example, we find this magnificent bit of inspired literature:

“The Lord is compassionate and merciful: long-suffering and plenteous in mercy.

“He will not always be angry: nor will he threaten for ever.

“He hath not dealt with us according to our sins: nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

“For according to the height of the heaven above the earth, he hath strengthened his mercy towards them that fear him.

“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our iniquities from us.

“As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him.

“For he knoweth our frame: he remembereth that we are dust.

“Man’s days are as grass, as the flower of the field so shall he flourish.

“For the spirit shall pass in him, and he shall not be: and he shall know his place no more.

“But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting even unto everlasting . . .”

There are scores of similarly beautiful lyrics to the merciful God in the pages of the Bible.

But after all, ours is not the religion of a book, even though the book be written by the spirit of God, illuminating the mind and directing the pen of saints and prophets. Our religion is not a book but a life. Christ is our Book; in Him we read;

from Him we learn not only what we are to think of man but how we are to conceive of God. God, we have often said, cannot be defined; that is, it is beyond man to circumscribe God with a definition. God is beyond definition, description, comprehension. But—and here is one of the multitudinous paradoxes of our faith (where truth is sublime, paradox is inevitable), though man cannot define God, or describe God, or comprehend God, man has *seen* God. Here is the essence of Christianity; the heart and soul of our religion, the body and blood and bones and sinews, the spinal cord as it were, from which the efferent nerves go forth and to which the afferent nerves return—here in one stupendous fact is the Christian religion. God has walked this earth in the Person of Jesus Christ.

I have ventured to call Him the Book wherein, above all else, we read when we wish to know what God is like. We who are not saints and mystics, we who are but amateur theologians, are balked and baffled if we dip into the Areopagite or into the sublime *Secunda Secundae* of Aquinas the Angelic Doctor, we promptly become bewildered over the high mysticism of John of the Cross or Teresa of Avila trying to tell us what they themselves protest can never be told, the Nature of God. But we all can read in the Book that is Jesus Christ. We may dip into *that* book for one moment and come away with a flash of inspiration; or we may read in that Book by day and by night for a lifetime, without exhausting its wisdom; we see that it soars high and digs deep; we are aware that there are in it infinite strata of meanings beneath the surface, but none the less we recognize that *that* is a book we can read and understand, the Book Jesus Christ.

And at the head of that Book it is written in letters of gold that can never grow dim, "God so *loved* the world that He gave His only begotten Son."

And there is the note sounded as it were afar off by the Psalmist and the prophets, but pealing out boldly in Christ; the majestic revelation is this: God is no monster, no Moloch, Baal, Zeus, no thundering Jupiter; God is a Baby on a cradle of straw in a stable; God is a winsome Boy flitting like a ray of sunshine from the kitchen of His maiden mother Mary to the carpenter shop of His foster father Joseph; God is a Youth Who strayed away from the hand of His mother, led by childish curiosity—so it might seem—into the center of the circle of long bearded doctors of the law, asking astounding questions and giving amazing answers; God is a benevolent Master sitting not on a professorial bench in a university but on a rock in the middle of a field or on the gunwale of a boat drawn up close to the shore, or in the shade of the porch of Solomon's temple, not lecturing pompously after the manner of the learned, but discoursing easily and sweetly about the birds of the air and the lillies of the field, and the fig tree that sends forth its blossoms when summer is nigh; and about the woman, who having ten groats lost one and swept the house until she found it; and of other such insignificant infinite matters; of the house that was built upon a rock and stood when the rain fell and the floods came and the winds blew; and about letting a man have your cloak after he has sued you in court and taken away your coat; about the eye that is the light of the body and how if your eye be single, the whole body will be lightsome, and if your eye be evil, even the light that is within thee shall be darkness (that

last, by the way, one of the simple sayings that has both a surface meaning and a meaning that is as deep as the heart of the universe).

God is the One Who loved to be with the children of men and went about doing good among them; Who laid His hand upon the eyes of a man born blind and gave him sight so that he leaped to his feet and gave glory to his Creator; Who was not afraid to touch a leper, having no dread of contamination and still less of ceremonial rabbinical uncleanness; Who saved a woman taken in adultery and put to shame those who were about to stone her; Who defended the Magdalen and rebuked the Pharisee at his own table for being critical and skeptical about the woman's repentance; God—to put an end to the endless litany of beautiful deeds—God is the One Who said, "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends"; and then laid down His life for friends and enemies.

My friends, have you read these incidents and rehearsed them until they are written indelibly on the fleshly tablets of your heart and have you yet failed to see the deep meaning of them? These are not merely so many evidences that Jesus the son of Mary was a gentle man and a most lovable personality. These manifold instances accumulate to make one revelation of the fact that God—our God—is no hideous monster, no fitful, capricious, irritable, Oriental despot, no ogre demanding the slaughter of infants as if he craved the odor and the taste of innocent blood; no tyrant easily offended; no implacable destroyer.

Our God is not in the image of the worst of men but of the best, Jesus—"He that seeth Me, seeth the Father," said Christ our Lord. And he that seeth

the Son of God seeth Love and Pity and Mercy and Patience. This is your God, this and no other. *Ecce Homo!* said Pontius Pilate, "Behold the Man." And that is all that Pilate could see—the man. We see more. *Ecce Deus*, Behold your God!

CARDINAL HAYES STATES AIM 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.

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