

# I Was a Pagan

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Originally published in 1934  
by Harper & Brothers

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## CHAPTER I

### THIS BUSINESS OF CHASING FALSE GODS *PAGANISM*

At twenty, life looked like a high adventure—intriguing and indecorous. At thirty, it looked like a high endeavor—socially and economically important. By forty, however, I grew highly dubious. Life seemed to have lost flavor on both counts. It was then that I met the Oxford Group.

At this time, I think, I would have described myself as “white, married and a Christian.” Actually I was somewhat tarnished and discolored, married in name only, and very much of a pagan. A pagan is a man who spends his time chasing false gods. And I had spent forty years of my time in chasing “Pleasure,” “Possessions,” “Power,” “Position” and “Applause.”

I now call these pagan goals my unfortunate five “P’s.” One or more of them seems to have played a part in my life for as long as I am able to remember. My very first ambition, for example, was to be the captain of a tug boat. This, I believed, would enable me to cruise about the harbor much as my fancy pleased me and it would bring not only pleasure but applause from all my friends.

Being a New Yorker, the tug-boat idol formulated in a Hudson River ferry which noble craft, in turn, gave birth to my next ambition. Tending the ferry-boat engines, I thought, must be rather an heroic and exciting job, and I decided to become an engineer.

How I ever passed examinations for an engineering institute I do not know. Once there, however, I discovered that engineering was less a matter of heroics than of mathematics, for which I happened to possess a singular distaste. Long hours over the drafting board were equally tedious. A draught of beer was much more to my liking so that, when Christmas vacation came around, I found myself some fifty-eight hours behind in mechanical drawing. From then on I became more intimate with bar-keepers than with my professors, and cheerfully flunked out with seven conditions out of a possible eight.

After several months, futilely spent at a business college, my father grew impatient and faced me with the question of what I really wanted to do in life. I thought it all over, trying to be honest, and decided that I really wanted to write.

My next misadventure was to attend a leading School of Journalism—then in its first year. They offered a most liberal education covering a wide range of subjects, on the theory, I believe, that a newspaper man should know a little bit of everything. This scattering of knowledge eventually “scattered me all over the lot.” There was no course in college to weave these strands together in a new and connected philosophy

of life. I came to the conclusion then that life was going to be nothing but a jolly struggle for existence—a survival of the fittest and devil take the hindmost.

Very well, I thought, if life is going to be a struggle, I will show them *how* to struggle. I will land on the top of a pile of money with a bigger and better home than my neighbors, with membership in more exclusive golf clubs and ownership of more resplendent automobiles. Possessions thus hooked up with pleasure, applause, power and position and became one of my five pagan gods.

To clinch my decision, the editor of one of the New York dailies came up and made the student journalists a speech. “Boys,” he said, “if I had to do it again I would go into the business end of a newspaper. Outside of Arthur Brisbane, who makes more money than the President of the United States, we of the editorial staff are lucky to draw \$5,000 or \$6,000 a year.” To my recently acquired eyes of avarice these meager figures held no lure. I let go my former aim for a position in the literary world and sought a position in an advertising agency.

That was twenty years ago. I have been an advertising agent ever since and have spent many weary hours writing what people paid me to write instead of what I wanted to say. I hope I may be forgiven for some of the things that I wrote—for the girls I led to believe that a lost lover could be recaptured through a drop of judiciously placed perfume—for the bad bargains I pressed on unsuspecting people as good buys—for forcing on the public countless non-essential articles that have helped to swamp their lives—and for many other forms of shoddy thinking and shabby writing which I considered just “part of the game.”

At the time, however, I regarded all of this as high adventure—as part of life’s exciting contest to outwit the other fellow and come out on top of the heap. I came out on top fast enough—in fact, a little bit too fast for my own good. I had held my first job for scarcely two weeks when the boss offered me a contract at a rising scale of salary which turned old-timers in the office green with envy. That rather turned my head. I was showing them *how* to struggle from the very first gun, and I soon—*too* soon—had all the possessions most any single man could want.

This early rise in fortune turned me early to possession of a wife. A wife, I felt, should prove a great convenience around the house. I had been much annoyed by the fact that my parents went away for the summer. Having become a working man I could no longer accompany them and found it most irritating in their absence to run out of soap. I also wanted to be able to throw wide open cocktail parties in my own home instead of having to sneak out for a drink. At one and the same time I was tired of seeing too much of women I could not respect and not enough of girls I really liked. Besides, for the sixth or seventh time in my philandering existence, I fell seriously in love.

Marriage thus became a new adventure to me—an adventure in devising and demanding comforts that I had not found in the midst of a somewhat strait-laced and old-fashioned family—an adventure in the freedom of doing what I jolly well

pleased behind the doors of my own home.

Drinking also seemed like an adventure at that time. Playing the drums or leading the orchestra at a cabaret, delivering a drunken lecture on temperance from the bar of a night club, arguing with the doorman who didn't want you to carry off the box trees from in front of his establishment, waking up the neighbors as you came home with the milkman—these somehow seemed to make up for the slightly flat flavor I was beginning to find in the “adventure” of business and the growing lack of zest I experienced in the new “adventure” of the home.

Where once, however, alcohol appeared to “make lights brighter, music sweeter, colors fairer, women more beautiful and men more companionable,” I began to find that I had to drink not simply to heighten the pleasure of lights and music and the companionship of men and women but in order to stand for them at all. I began to get my first suspicions that something must be out of gear in the commonly accepted scheme of things. A friend of mine recalls that when he and his family stood up in church and sang “Like a mighty army moves the church of God,” he—even as a child—could see that there was something wrong with that picture. And I, even as a tyro among business men, benedicts and drunks, began to feel there might be something wrong with plunging along year after year simply to pile up as many possessions as possible, to possess a wife of whom I was growing steadily more neglectful, and to possess a thirst which gradually was ripening into insatiability. Was there going to be nothing to look forward to except, perhaps, the making of still more money, the acquisition of still more wives—perhaps some other fellow's or, perhaps, another of my own—the whole engulfed in the drinking of still more liquor? I began to feel, in short, that the pagan aims and purposes did not and could not represent complete success in life.

I tried to figure out that really to succeed in life a man should succeed not only in business—not only in marriage—not only in holding his liquor—but in doing something with *himself*. He should, let us say, develop in character. I felt that my character possessed many negative attributes such as fear, anger, revenge and pride, and that it also held many positive potentialities such as poise, good nature, sympathy and understanding. I tried to make a chart of these things, showing which qualities fell on the positive side and which on the negative. This was accompanied by a scoring system through which one could measure progress in developing the positive side of personality. As an old tutor of mine once said, however, “My boy, never try to write anything till after you are forty. You won't know what life is all about till then.” He was right. I soon gave up my effort and I turned to see if, in actual practice, there was not something more worth while I could do with my business, my home, and my drinking.

I began, for instance, to look upon the advertising business not just in its selfish aspects—as a jolly racket through which one could make a rather large amount of money rather easily—but in its social aspects as a “necessary link in the mighty

chain of American merchandising.” The industrial machine tool, I could see, had multiplied the efforts of the individual worker and given rise to mass production. Advertising, I declared, was the machine tool necessary to multiply the efforts of the modern salesman and enable him to move this mass of goods through the modern channels of distribution. It did not occur to me, however, just why it was necessary either to make or to move this “mass” of goods or what, if anything, that did for human beings?

The home I began to look upon not simply as a comfortable, free-drinking and legalized love nest but as an “institution”—a “bulwark” in the eddies of a free-thinking society. I began to think it a duty that “we of the better and more intelligent classes” should bear larger quantities of children to offset the influx of uneducated immigrants. It did not occur to me that a self-centered snob might prove no safer for the future of civilization and my particular brand of society than a self-centered communist.

Even drinking I began to socialize, idealize and ennoble. Life, I argued, is unnaturally strained at best. Like an over trained football team we go stale in sticking to the same old round and we become “emotionally repressed and nervously over stimulated.” To relieve this strain we need to go on a good party, dance on some restaurant table or kick a policeman who isn’t looking. I elevated my periodic debauches to the status of a social safety valve and more. The approach to a man’s inner and finer thoughts, I declared, comes only with the breaking through of his reserve, and five or six slugs of whisky are necessary to release his flow of soul. I represented alcohol in other words, as necessary not only to the stability of society but to its uplift.

Unless one is a hopeless moron, however, one cannot live long under a pretence like this. One cannot go on indefinitely gilding the cabbages of life and pretending they are lilies. Another ten years or so and I was ready to admit that the home was nothing but an overstuffed barracks, representing a great waste and duplication of effort in its support, pandering to a man’s pride and little else, and enslaving him all day in the struggle for money so that he might sleep there at night and paint it at least as frequently as his next-door neighbor.

Then, too, despite my early rise in business, I also went through early losses, and the business prospect soon dwindled into the certainty that I was not going to be able to accumulate a fortune enabling me to retire within twenty years. As for the social and economic value of the advertising profession, I could see that it had degenerated into nothing but an effort to stretch markets and to stretch them again and again in the utterly selfish, utterly childish and utterly hopeless belief that we could make and keep them big enough to soak up all the junk our manufacturers wanted to pour into them. My work, in other words, lost all color as a gay and exciting adventure in the romantic struggle of life. It was stripped of all false pretence as a valuable and necessary instrument of modern distribution. It became rather an unpleasant means of keeping myself in golf clubs and cars and an occupation in which I might

escape from other thoughts and obligations. Religion has been called an escape. So has alcohol. But make no mistake. They are nothing as compared with work. Work—especially in those countless *needless* hours—is the universal escape from thought and from facing the reality of living.

Drink too, of course, is an escape—an escape from work or lack of it—and I finally was ready to admit it. My home, in other words, became something to escape *from*. My office became something to escape *into*. My alcohol became the alley of escape I chose when both home and office got so unspeakably upon my nerves that I turned to cocktails as knock-out drops in order to forget the whole sorry business.

I had reached that crisis in life when we question the value of all human effort. John Stuart Mill once said, “Suppose all your objects in life were realized; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to could be completely effected at this very instant: would this be a great joy and happiness to you?” And with John Stuart Mill I had to answer “No!” As far as my selfish interests were concerned all of the pleasures, possessions, powers, positions and applause I ever achieved had turned to dust in my fingers. Looking into the lives of other self-ruined “successes”—men who had pushed along these avenues much farther than I had—I could still see nothing to want. Gilding these efforts and achievements with the pretext that I was reviving American industry, upholding the American home or drinking to withstand the onslaughts on American freedom, added nothing to my satisfaction. And, if the truth must be known, it added nothing to the satisfaction of the other fellow.

In the modern world, in short, I had found and could find no sign whatever of a satisfying answer to the question—“Is this *all* there is to living?” And I found no greater satisfaction in the social, political or economic ideas and ideals of modern thinkers. In an impressive symposium entitled “Living Philosophies,” for example, Theodore Dreiser wrote that, “I catch no meaning at all from all I have seen and I pass quite as I came, confused and dismayed.” James Truslow Adams admitted that he was “floundering in a dismal swamp.” Albert Einstein was certain only that “Man is here for the sake of other men.” And, in a book of his own, so keen an analyst as Walter Lippmann could offer no better prescription than the advice of Confucius “to follow what the heart desires without transgressing what is right.”

This inability to see what we were living for—this lack of knowledge and confusion on the part of individuals—was clearly reflected in the confusion of the larger world. I looked not only into my own life and into the lives of other men but into life as a whole and saw that *many* lives as blind and selfish as my own had fused to make up a self-ruined world. It was a world “inflexible in the face of fact.” Parents in that world were wondering what lay ahead for their children. Children, as they looked at the fruitless and befuddled lives of their parents, wondered what lay ahead for themselves. Husbands and wives, poisoned by the live-your-own-life theory and an exaggerated sense of self, were drawing ever more sharply apart and it seemed

almost as if half the married couples that we knew were either in the throes, or on the verge, of a divorce. Business relationships were based on the principle, not of earning one's daily bread, but of snatching as much bread as possible out of the mouth of some other fellow. And it was a shocking mess that business men had made of business. Newspaper editors, politicians, reformers and trouble makers of all types hurled in thousands of crack-potted schemes to make the confusion worse. We were led every way by the "destructive cross currents of idealism," and men, torn by internal conflict to a point of hair-trigger temper, took vindictive potshots at almost everything in sight.

All of this, I felt, was because so many "self-made" men—actually self-ruined like myself—had spent their lives as I had in chasing false gods. And when, in 1929 the stock market went down and all five of my false gods rose up and deserted in one body, I determined to seek the *real* meaning and purpose of life before I again took up the business of living. If my old aims of pleasure, possessions, power, position and applause could be won and permanently held by no man—if all of these supposed friends could so easily be put to rout by a mere business panic—if *all desire for these aims ended with their fulfillment and they became no longer desirable*—if their pursuit by hundreds of other men for hundreds of years had resulted only in chaos come again—what gods of a more faithful nature and enduring value *could* one live for? What are we here for? Where do we go from here? I determined to answer these perplexing questions once for all and I sat down to think it through and write a book.

## CHAPTER II

### THIS BUSINESS OF THINKING THINGS OUT *PHILOSOPHY*

There must, I figured, as I wrote my book, be *some* purpose in living. “But *why?*” as a man once asked me. “Why can’t we just live along without *any* purpose?” “Maybe you can,” I replied, “but I couldn’t. If I thought that never again could I possibly squeeze any kind of fun or satisfaction out of life for myself—if I thought that never again could I be of any help whatever to my family or to any other people—if, failing fun for myself or help for others, I thought that I could in no way serve some process of nature or some God that stands above self and society, I would lose no time in jumping out of the window. If I live for *any* of these things—in the hope of getting a little more fun—in the hope of being a little more help—or in the hope of serving some higher purpose which I do not understand—I would, whether I admitted it or not, be living for a purpose.”

If I guessed at the wrong purpose, as I had in my own life, I would, of course, miss most of the fun, prove of mighty little use in the world and, probably, fail entirely to render any higher service. And, if men as a whole were equally bad guessers, the world as a whole would miss out in exactly the same way.

Education, as I wrote, for instance, is or should be a preparation for the business of living. And if nobody knows what that business really is, none of us have a chance either to give or get a worth-while education. If, again, we do not know what we are living for when we get married, we cannot be expected to make a very wise choice of our life partner. In choosing or pursuing a business or vocation we are likely to make just as serious mistakes while, in the larger affairs of economy, politics, sociology and religion, people must continue in a complex muddle unless some definite idea of what they are living for can be found and applied to give these various affairs a purpose and direction.

Belief in and desire for the five unfortunate “P’s,” for instance, was the plan which I and most of the world had been following. It is a plan—a “design for living”—in which, as Jay Franklin suggests, “Our job is to have as pleasant a time as possible, to enjoy life to the full, to experience as much as we can, and to take our pleasure as we find it, because trouble will find us anyhow.” With no further purpose or aim this plan must be described as “Egoism.” And since egoism had left me and most other people that I know with a great big unfilled gap in our lives—since century after century and generation after generation it had brought the world to recurring states of chaos—was it not likely that some other untried or less-tried plan would prove to be the right one?

Was it not possible, for instance, that—as Einstein suggests—man is here only to help other men? Was it not possible that I, as an individual, was headed nowhere

but that the human race was going to work out? If so, nothing that I did mattered except as it contributed to the progress of society. Here was a plan with some sort of socialism or communism as its goal—a plan where the individual sacrifices self-interest for the good of the whole—a plan which, reduced to one word, I will refer to as “Humanism.”

Again it seemed possible that the ecclesiastics might be right and that there might be some kind of an all-powerful God Who created man for some purpose of His own. In that case our only real purpose in life would be to obey the will of God wherever that might lead and for whatever known or unknown purpose. At the age of fifteen I had acknowledged this sort of a belief in God. I had done so because my Sunday school teacher was a successful Wall Street man whom I admired and I was ready to say that I subscribed to anything that he did. I enjoyed thereafter a sort of pink glow of self-approval which lasted for about three days and which formed the total of my “religious” experience. I was willing to admit, however, that there might be something in this plan which, from now on, I will describe as “Theism.”

There might, of course, be other ways to live and other things to live for. But these three seemed most likely and, in my book, I decided that the third or “Theistic” scheme seemed most likely of all. We were living to serve God.

So far, I had read no reference books on these or related subjects. I did not want either past or current opinion to intrude on what I thought was an original line of research. At this stage, however, I decided to check up and I found my reasoning supported at almost every turn by philosophical thought.

I found, in fact, that, through out the ages, philosophy followed far enough had led and could lead only to God. Plato with his speculative theory of ideas, Aristotle with his logic, Descartes with his ontology, Spinoza with his world of eternal verities, Berkeley with his idealism, Hegel with his trinity and the great V. C. Kitchen with his neo-pragmatism had but come to the same ultimate conclusion. And so had modern thought, following a break from God found only in the early socialistic and scientific philosophies.

In the evolutionary theory of my college days, for instance, nature had been cruel, and blind and red of tooth and claw. I found, however, that to-day such beliefs had largely given way to the emergent evolution of Alexander, the creative evolution of Bergson or the cosmic evolution of Boodin. All admitted or presupposed the likelihood of the creative work of God. Even in pure science, among leaders such as Millikan, Eddington and Jeans, I found acceptance of such likelihood. Millikan, for instance, said that scientists were now almost universally agreed that nature was, at bottom, benevolent. And he added that the practical teaching of modern science was extraordinarily like the preaching of Jesus. This view certainly would set up soul growth as the prime objective of existence. The trend was reaffirmed by biologists who, in the person of Dr. Henry Fairfield Osborn, stated that evolution was unquestionably proceeding in moral directions. Still other scientists stated that there was unquestionably a force in the universe working to produce or modify human

personality and many did not hesitate to call this force the “power of God.”

Philosophy both past and present, in short, seemed to support my finding that we were living primarily to develop a personality or soul in the life school God provides for such a purpose. And this being so, I had not only been bungling life but had made an even worse guess about it than I first supposed. Life was intended to grow souls, not fortunes—to make character, not whoopee—to gain depth of understanding, not eminence in business or social circles—to seek the will of God, not the praise of the public. I certainly had been living the wrong way to accomplish these results. Well, it would be different now. Knowing what I was living for, I at last could begin to do something about it. And I, at last, could begin to do something for other people. After reading my book, in fact, I was sure that the burdened world could immediately arise from its ashes. Proudly, therefore, I wrapped my manuscript up and carried it to a publisher.

This publisher, happily for me, was a personal friend. He broke the news to me quite gently. “This part—this ‘Life and Why,’” he said, “is fine as far as it goes. Now write the second part and call it ‘Life and *How*.’”

“But ‘Life and Why’ is the whole book,” I protested. “What more does anyone need to know when he has learned what he is living for?”

“What,” he replied, “is the use of telling anyone *why* they are living, if you cannot tell them *how* to live that way!”

With indignation I carried the manuscript home again and sought consolation by taking the matter up with my chief drinking pal and with my business partner. They, however, gave me small comfort. “What,” said one, “do you *mean* by growing a soul?” “And,” said the other, “how do you *grow* it?”

Impatient with such petty minds I laid the book at last before my old professor of philosophy. He furnished some balm for my wounds. “In your own mind,” he said, “you have been thinking along the lines of some half-dozen of the leading living philosophers. But, to sharpen up your thought, try taking the high spots and boiling them down into short, helpful articles with particular attention to the application of your philosophy as a guide to self-management in business, at home and in all other departments of practical everyday living.”

I followed his advice but nothing happened. I wrote, in fact, a whole series of short articles on “What Else Can We Do in Education?”; “What Else Can We Do for Business?”; “What Else Can We Do about Marriage?”; “What Else Can We Do to Snap Out of the Depression?” and, finally, “What Else Can We Do to be Happy?” I tried, as I wrote, to show just how the knowledge that we are living to grow souls could and should affect our happiness. I tried to show how such a viewpoint should and would affect our relations at home, revise the conduct of our business, revolutionize the methods and aims of education, solve the world’s economic problems, straighten out our crooked politics, give new direction to ineffective forms of social service and put new life into dying religion. But *still* nothing happened. My articles came back from the magazines just as my book came back from the publisher. People, apparently, did

not appreciate this sort of work or—and a horrible suspicion began to dawn—perhaps my writing did not really help them.

Then the full truth burst upon me. My new philosophy not only failed to help others but failed to help me. Despite my new assurance that I was living to grow a soul, I continued to live much as I had always lived—much as in the days when, in my ignorance, I believed that I was living to grow a fortune, a family and a thirst. There was actually no difference in my daily conduct. And I wasn't any different as a man. Despite my fine article on "What Else Can We Do to be Happy?" I myself was actually no happier than I had been before. I was, if any-thing, even more discontented. Despite the recognition that marriage was a relationship for helping men, women and their children grow in soul, no new growth (excepting out of last year's clothes) could be noted in any member of my family. I found no new attitude and obtained no new results in business. I began to read no different type of book and made no change in my self-prescribed and somewhat casual course in late-life education. I voted the Republican ticket and hoped for the best as usual. I was just as helpless about helping other people as I always had been. This living for God's service should, finally, have somehow awakened a new interest in church but I found myself continuing to play golf or sleeping off a Saturday-night hangover on Sunday morning. There was no stirring in my soul. My new philosophy of life, in short, did not seem to show itself at all in any new way of living.

I then looked back once more at Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza and the rest. They had held a somewhat similar philosophy. Yet they too had failed to produce any real change in themselves. And, while they were vastly more successful in presenting their philosophies to the whole of mankind, they too had somehow failed to change the world. Men always, it seemed, had been frustrated in their aims whether they believed they were living to grow a soul and planned to promote that end or whether, as in my case, they had simply given way to self-indulgence. Regardless of its various philosophies, moreover, the world had continued to run into wars, vice crusades, business depressions, dictatorships and disarmament conferences.

Had I then known what I now know, I might have seen that my entire philosophical fiasco was, at bottom, nothing but a further assertion of egoism parading under a mask of altruism. It was just another form of self-service disguised as a sort of a religious social-service—a desire to show off—a pretence that I was living and thinking nobly used to hide the ignoble way that I really thought and lived—an attempt to convert the world to my way of thinking in order that I, unperturbed and undisturbed, might continue with my own way of living. My "philosophical allegiance to God and consideration for society, in short was nothing but a subtle form of self-protection.

I might also have seen that, even if it *were* possible to think and reason disinterestedly, philosophy, at best, could be nothing more than a point of view about life. And a point of view does not, never has, and never can substitute for a *point of contact* with the power that makes philosophy *applicable to living*.

## CHAPTER III

### THIS BUSINESS OF MEANING WELL AND DOING BADLY *MORALS*

There comes a time to almost every man when he seems to die inside, and that time came to me, I think, when I found that this—my best guess about life—served neither me nor the other fellow any better than my first guess. I want to tell you that things looked pretty black to me right then. There seemed nothing much to do but go back to my dreary round of escapes from the home into the office and from the office into the speakeasy. I intended, of course, to go right on living. I would eat breakfast every morning as usual, suffering, also as usual, from my regular hangover. I would go to the office, as usual, play bridge when sober enough in the evenings, or interested enough, and let off steam between times on a party with the boys. I might even try an occasional but unenthusiastic fling at revising my book, though I felt that anything I wrote now would be just a lot of clap-trap—just a juggling of words—a building of illusions which had no place in the drab reality of life.

Then, through reading Herbert F. Standing's book—"Spirit in Evolution"—a wholly new idea occurred to me. I had figured out three 'plans—the egoistic, humanistic, and theistic. I had thought that, in deciding on the third of these—in deciding to do good and devote a larger portion of my life to service—I actually was following that plan and serving God. Standing's book, however, suggested that to be *spiritual* one had to be far more than just *well-meaning and intelligent*.

I had always thought that "serving God" meant doing the best I knew in using the talents God gave me. And that was what I called "being creative in life." My talents, I believed, were analytical, philosophical and literary.

As I read through Standing's book, however, it occurred to me that soul qualities are not, after all, *mental* qualities. They are *moral* qualities. A big man spiritually is not made up, like a big man materially, of bank presidencies, directorships, influence, dominance and social prestige. He is not made up, like an intellectual giant, of doctors' degrees and learned societies. He is made up of the simple moral qualities of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. And he does not grow more honest or more pure through increasing *knowledge* of what is honest and pure. He does not "get that way" through his intellect at all. Nor through his physical prowess and achievements.

All the material possessions I had ever acquired, for example, and all the intellectual knowledge I had ever gathered had not added a single cubit to my stature *morally*. In fact, if anything, I had grown through the years *more* dishonest, *more* impure,

*more* selfish and *more* unloving than ever. The more I thought about it, therefore, the more I began to suspect that, before I could do anything to help other people—something would have to be done about it—*inside of me*.

But what?

I recalled the words of my publisher—”Write that second part—called ‘Life and How.’” And I recalled the words of my partner—”How do you *grow* a soul?”

Well—how?

It was here that Standing’s book helped me again. We grow physically, as he suggested, by *response* to a physical environment. And as the body adapts itself to use or survive its surroundings it grows not only in size, but evolves or changes in general character and quality.

The mind, I could see, would grow and evolve—not in response to its physical surroundings, but in response to an altogether different kind of environment—the environment of ideas in which it would find a sort of intellectual “food, air and exercise. And since this physical environment and this intellectual or psychological environment seemed to have no effect whatever on the growth of morality, I figured that—to grow morally—I would have to get in touch with some kind of moral environment, some set of conditions, some atmosphere of goodness, or some moral force which would feed, stimulate and exercise the honesty, purity, love and unselfishness in a man.

These qualities, as I well know, did not grow through self-indulgence. They did not grow through thinking. I could neither learn them nor teach them. But somehow, if they grew in me and became a part of me, I might pass them along to others by example, or a sort of a contagion—as one gives the measles.

They would not grow, as I now realized, however, unless I could lay hold of some kind of spiritual environment or moral form of “food, air and exercise. And I did not know where to turn. While I was all too familiar with my physical environment or world of comforts, and was becoming more and more familiar with my psychological environment or world of ideas, I had never in all my life bumped up against any spiritual environment or world of goodness. If such a thing existed, it had never come within my ken. I had never sensed it in any way.

I knew, of course, that there may be the sudden emergence of something altogether new, novel and unique in nature—some species of plant or animal, let us say, which is not a hybrid of past forms—which did not grow, but just “emerged.” It just “pops” ‘into existence, as Professor Lovejoy explains, who then goes on to say he has abundant reason to believe that “there have occurred genuine new births in time, a sheer increase, diversification and enrichment of the sum of things already there.” This emergence or new birth has unquestionably taken place, not only in physical form but in the realm of man’s consciousness.

I, in my own career, seemed to have passed through two stages. First, I was conscious only of self and self-desire—reaching out instinctively for whatever I

wanted in my physical environment, and not caring what that did to other people and the world. Then

I began to think of what I ought to do for myself and others. Progressing from a sense of instinct to a sense of duty, I had reached, in my book, the intellectual or socially-conscious stage. I then found myself reaching for a still higher stage of consciousness. And since the emergent evolutionist, Alexander, says that “Deity is the next quality to the highest we know,” I believed that the thing I was reaching for might be no less than a consciousness of God.

But how was I to achieve this consciousness and form contact with the force that might help me grow a soul? Becoming aware of a spiritual environment, if any such thing existed, and getting in touch with God as a means of growing in soul, should, I felt, fall within the province of the Church. And, although I had never gained anything from the Church but that brief glow of self-approval the time I was baptized, I thought I might find something in religious literature. Here and there, as in the writings of G. A. Studdert Kennedy, I *did* run across passages which made me feel that the writer *was* in touch with some moral-creating force, inspiration or environment I did not know. But nowhere did I find any understandable suggestion which told me how I, too, might get in touch with this same force and experience the things that these occasionally inspired writers wrote of.

I could, of course, understand, as Edward S. Woods suggested, that a man might be no more able to create his own spiritual or moral life than “he is able to bring himself into the world at will.” I could see, as Drummond wrote, that, just as it is something outside the thermometer which produces a change in the thermometer, so it must be “something outside the soul of man that produces a moral change upon him.” I began, in other words, to see where the humanists might be wrong. Professor Irving Babbitt, for example, had said that man is vile by nature and must make *himself* behave. But my excursion into religious literature, not to mention my experience with broken New Year resolutions, began to show me that self-management as a corrective of behavior was entirely inadequate. There must indeed be some other environment or force, and I must find it if I wanted to gain any real and lasting satisfaction for myself in life or do anything creative in the world.

Still, however, these books did not say just what I was to do to form contact with that power and, much as I disliked and mistrusted them as a class, I decided at last to have it out in person with some intelligent minister. I selected one I believed to be spiritual by nature and who was, I felt, entirely sincere.

“What,” I asked this preacher, “do you think that we are living for?” To my pleased surprise he said he believed that we are living to grow a soul. There seemed to be real promise here. But when I put the question my professor, my partner, my pal and my publisher had thrown back at me—when I asked *how* you grow a soul—he, too, threw back the question. “Well,” he said, “How *do* you? If you could write a book on ‘How to Grow a Soul,’ it would be snapped up by every minister I know.” I had,

therefore, to add another “P”—the pastor—to the publisher, professor, partner and pal who had failed to furnish a solution to my problem. And I felt as though I had run against still another blockade of “Five P’s.”

With my groping unanswered, I decided that the Church, with all its protest of modern knowledge and method, had not really risen from its ashes in the Dark Ages. The answer it held, if answer there be, might lie buried somewhere in the foundation of the Church, but, to me, it certainly did not appear in the twentieth century superstructure. I decided, therefore, to go back in history, and back, not simply to the beginnings of the Christian Church, but back to the beginnings of morality. I wanted to see if, throughout the ages, I could find *any* moralist, religious or otherwise, who had known, used and could convey to me the secret of *applying* his philosophy in the actual business of living.

A professor of philosophy from England once told me that for years he lectured upon morals to people all of whom were going to pieces morally under his very nose. His were moral words which brought no moral action. He was lecturing to people who, however well they might *mean*, were still *doing* badly. That fitted my own case exactly and, in fact, it seemed to characterize my entire age. Where then could I find a religion or philosophy that worked and what was the secret of its workings?

Beginning with one Ptah-hotep, an Egyptian moralist who lived some five thousand years before Christ and whose precepts appear in what is known as the “Oldest Book in the World,” I found a knowledge of right and wrong and a set of rules for moral conduct practically as complete as any that we know to-day. But I found no record that any of the ancient Egyptians, including Ptah-hotep himself, were *practicing* these precepts. His words, as far as I could judge, had no more effect on his hearers than those of the lecturer on morals mentioned above, and no more consequences in the course of world events than my own unpublished articles. People in those days, as now, were meaning well and doing badly. Through the history of all the moralists, in fact, I found a singular lack of moral application. J. N. Larned seemed to sum up the whole story when he said, “. . .the knowledge of good and evil has been complete in the world from the beginnings of history, and . . .mankind has had nothing to learn since but the application of it.”

Here and there in history, of course, I could trace a partial application of morality. This was true, for instance, in the case of Abraham, Moses, Confucius, Buddha, Mohammed, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. Among them all, however, as I was now obliged to admit, there was but one—Jesus of Nazareth—who had lived out His philosophy perfectly and completely. Lie alone meant well and *did* well in all departments of living. He alone sowed moral seed which had a universal rather than a limited spread. He alone was able to impart to His disciples the secret of application and the same power that He Himself possessed. But still I could not quite make out just what this secret or this power *was*. Was it the God-consciousness or contact

with a spiritual environment that I had now begun to grope for? Or was it simply a tremendous Personality coupled with an applied psychology beyond any known to-day? In either case, *how* did Jesus develop this personality or psychology? And how did He give His disciples the same command of power? Commentaries on the New Testament failed to say.

Tracing back the moralists, in short, I found a few partial appliers and one perfect and complete Applier. Yet nowhere could I seem to find just how this application was performed. If the Christian Church anywhere had preserved Christ's secret of forming contact with God as a source of developing moral qualities of soul, they had by now pretty well concealed it, so far as I was concerned.

I was not, however, ready to admit that the state of "consciousness" I sought did not exist just because nobody had shown me how to find it. Christ Himself had stated that it was not an *easy* "way" to find, and I began to cast about for other means of "seeking."

## CHAPTER IV

### THIS BUSINESS OF “MAKING CHARACTER” *SCIENCE*

Finding that schools of philosophy offered nothing but an endless merry-go-round of sterile thinking and futile debate, feeling that the Church had either ceased to have an effective message or had lost the art of passing it on, I—like so many of this age—turned to the school of science.

Scientifically, I knew that, on the physical level, the body has to absorb violet rays in order to grow. On the psychological level the growing mind has to take m rays, let us say, from a student’s reading-lamp. To grow morally and thus really begin to live in my third, or theistic, scheme of life, I felt that I needed some kind of a spiritual ray to stimulate my dormant soul. It was clear that this spiritual light was *not* shining into my soul. Science, I thought, might show me why.

It occurred to me, for instance, that sunlight could not penetrate a dense body—that the rays from a student’s light could not penetrate a dense mind—and that, perhaps, a spiritual “light” (if any such thing existed) could not penetrate a dense *character*. My pagan nature was, perhaps, too coarse—too sullied, selfish and sinful—to be sensitive to any spiritual environment—or to let the “light of truth” shine through. I could “see” more, I believed, if, somehow, I could clear myself up, much as I would clean a dirty window. And even though, like Drummond’s thermometer, I might have to rely on some outside force to send my moral mercury up to the new level, I would still, I thought, have to undertake a course in self-improvement—I would still have to clean the glass—before those rays of outside force could reach me.

Here, I was sure, science could be of great help to me, for scientific books on “self-improvement” could be counted by the score.

The first step in clearing oneself up, I thought, and especially in clearing up society, was to clean up one’s physical surroundings. If a man were born into an atmosphere of cleanliness, fresh air and loving, intelligent care, all other things being equal, he should have a better chance to develop refinement and clear moral vision than if his seed had fallen in the filth, neglect and darkness of the slums. Sociological control of the environment supplemented, if possible, by eugenic control of the seed itself, would be the first requirements in my scientific course of soul-culture.

The growing principle as well, I believed, should be strongly stimulated, and this stimulation, I decided, could come through the inspiration received from good books, good schools, good churches and good men. Especially essential seemed the inspiration of example—the example of some full-grown soul we could look and work towards as we move along the line of growth. As the books on “How to Succeed” would say, “Set a goal—desire it with all your heart—work towards it

with all your energy,” I would have to have a definite goal to desire and work for, and, despite my previous disdain for churchmen, I felt that the moral-scientists could well borrow their example and set up the goal of Jesus Christ.

I next considered the separate steps by which I must refine my nature in order to grow in the direction of a Christ-like character. This called, as I could see, for a very considerable stride—from a nature ruled to a large degree, as mine was, by lusts, and selfishness, and jealousies and hates, to a nature lighted up by love and charity and kindness. Despite the emergent possibilities of evolution this new character, I felt, represented too big a jump to “pop” into existence full-born. It called rather for an evolution by slow and gradual stages. I had heard, of course, of “overnight conversions,” but I did not think that such sudden leaps from slime to the sublime were likely to endure. And even if they did, I was quite sure that transformations of this kind must be the result of a long warming up before the boiling-point was reached.

This whole process, I believed, could be greatly aided and speeded up by our modern knowledge of psychology. The “laws of association” would help us to catch a Christ-like character while “sublimation of the libido” into higher and more creative activities

—elimination of my baser desires through “the expulsive power of a higher affection”—these and other methods of applied psychology would aid in the climb from mere selfish consciousness, through the stage of social-consciousness, and up to the sublime God-consciousness of a man in the Spirit, which might prove to be the most real one of all.

My whole scheme, in short, reduced itself to the following formula: I was to raise myself, and the rest of the world with me, from the existing and chaotic state of (1) egoism, through the higher but equally futile plan of (2) humanism, and into the highest and only creative plan of (3) theism, passing, as we went, through the three evolutionary stages of (1) self-consciousness, (2) social-consciousness, and (3) God-consciousness. This clarification, evolution or growth would be accomplished by: (1) preparation through eugenic control of stock and social control of environment; (2) stimulation through books, schools, churches, men, and especially through the high example of Jesus of Nazareth; (3) progress from present stages through gradual evolutionary steps; (4) acceleration through the methods of applied psychology. It seemed, on the whole a sensible and effective programme. The great mind of a certain V. C. Kitchen, advertising man, I thought, was now attaining something where the comparatively feeble minds of philosophers, ecelesiasts and scientists had failed.

After a little reflection, however, the plan did not seem quite so excellent. It would take many years and far more than my paltry powers to convince the world that it should adopt eugenic and sociological control. Such “remote control” might benefit my great-great-grandchildren, but could scarcely be used to help *me* apply my philosophy of life.

When, moreover, I came to apply the stimulating influence of Christ's example nothing more resulted than before. The fact that I knew Jesus to be honest and loving and unselfish and pure did not make *me* honest or loving or unselfish or pure. The truth is that, deep down, I did not even *want* to be. I could not, therefore, follow the advice of the success books. While I had "set a goal," I did *not* "desire it with all my heart," and, failing this, I could not "work towards it with all my energy." Jesus' moral and spiritual qualities were admirable—very admirable indeed—but the only things I seemed to desire with all my heart were to be left largely alone, to find plenty of cocktails when I got home at night and, somehow, to fall heir to about twenty million dollars.

How could I grow from these desires into Jesus' way of rising above material matters? Through my gradual evolutionary steps, of course? But what were the *next* steps that I should take? Dante, describing the progress of a pilgrim soul, wrote, that to such a soul, at first, small goods seem great. "Wherefore, he continues, "we see children desire exceedingly an apple; and then, proceeding further, desire a little bird; and further still a beautiful dress; and then a horse; and then a woman; and then riches, not great, and then greater, and then as great as can be. And this happens because in none of these does she find what she is seeking, and trusts to find it further on..." These, indeed, are evolutionary steps. And that, indeed, has been my own soul's evolutionary history. But, having chased my pleasure, and possessions, and power, and position, and applause, in none of which had I found what I was seeking, and then seeming to see a greater good in philosophy, and then in the possibilities of the church, and then in science, and still not finding what I sought, what *should* my next step be?

There was still, of course, a further step in science. I had, as yet, applied no psychology, and men, said psychologists, *could* sublimate their desires and expel their baser aims through the power of a higher affection. But that was just the point. I saw no *further* affection towards which I could turn.

Recently, for instance, a friend of mine went through a psychological cure for drinking. It did not last, and the psychologist excused himself by saying that his patient did not really *want* to stop drinking. He had tried to interest the drinker in hobbies—golf, stamp-collecting, and what not. This was on the theory, I suppose, that desire to do right can be strengthened if the sufferer is led into some other form of self-expression associated with a new pleasure-experience. Turn the experience of abstinence into fun and a psychologist can make us want it. But try to convince a man whose fun is alcoholic, and who finds expression in dancing on a table, that he will find greater fun in going dry combined with stamp-collecting, and, as in the case of the friend I mention, you will find that he very soon falls off the wagon. In his whole bag of tricks the non-Christian psychologist has no "high affection" to compare with the alcoholic's love for alcohol, nor, in most cases, with the ordinary man's plain love of self. Even if psychologists could and should learn the laws by which desires are shaped, unless they found a way to put their subjects

in conscious touch with God they would still lack the genius to change the pagan's deep conviction that "it's no fun to be good."

I, as I now could see, had been making the same mistake. I had been telling people that they were living to grow a soul without elevating this growth into the position of a "higher affection" and making them really *want* to grow. I had been trying to offer the public a cure for educational failure, marriage difficulties, business troubles, social injustice, political corruption and religious ineffectiveness without first selling readers on the idea of wanting to take the cure. As an advertising man I should have known much better than that. "Arouse desire" is the first commandment of our trade. I had, of course, done what I could to arouse this desire. I had written an entire book of what we call "reason-why copy." I had presented all the reasons I could think of to prove that people really *are* living to grow a soul and will find no true success in life at anything else. But since I myself did not know how to put them in touch with God's approval, I could not infect them with the *pleasure* of this act. Since I myself, moreover, did not know the pleasure of God's approval, I myself did not look forward to being good with any great zest. I could see, at last, that on my whole' proposition I had failed really to convince myself. I could see that growing a soul in God's service was something that I *ought* to live for. But it was not, as yet, what I *wanted* to live for and that, I felt, was why I could not find or take my next evolutionary step.

Science says that we evolve by adaption to environment. But it does not say just how you adapt yourself to an environment with which you have never come in touch. And, if such exists, it does not say how you get in touch with a spiritual environment. As yet, in short, science seems to have confined itself to a study of the world of form. It has not begun to explore in the world of significance. It has not evolved a science of the spirit, though many scientists believe that some day they *must* and *will* find the existence of a spiritual domain.

Thomas A. Edison said before his death for instance, that he believed we had gone ahead about as far as we could materially without taking time to catch up spiritually. And, as Charles Steinmetz declared: "Spiritual power in the twentieth century is as dormant as was electrical power when Franklin flew his famous kite... The next great discoveries will lie in the domain of the spiritual."

Science may make these discoveries in the spiritual domain. The scientific discovery and application of spiritual power at some dim and distant date may benefit my children's children's children. Like the adoption of eugenic or sociological control of birth and environment, however, that could scarcely come to pass in time to start me growing my own soul. It would not fit me in this life to apply my own philosophy of living. And I had just begun to see that, until I myself was straightened around—until I had solved the problems of my own life—there was really nothing I could do to unravel the tangles of the other fellow.

## CHAPTER V

### THIS BUSINESS OF THE SUPERNATURAL *METAPHYSICS*

Science had promised some future excursion into the spiritual domain. But present results—however thin and shadowy—seemed more inviting than a mere promise of future discovery. “Dubious whispers” from “another world” intrigued me vastly more than the utter silence which appeared to reign in *this* world of sterile philosophy, stand-offish science and stuffy religion. And to get into touch with this “other world” I began experiments in that form of motor automatism known as the “Ouija Board.”

Do not, however, misunderstand me. The very genuine discovery, the complete and satisfactory solution to life’s problems that I have hinted at throughout these early chapters is not and never was a Ouija Board. In fact I would advise my readers to let this eccentric toy strictly alone.

Most of the “messages” that I obtained with this device were utter nonsense. And, when occasionally they were more coherent, the “advice” imparted was no more helpful to me than the strictly human advice I sometimes asked for and then proceeded to disregard. On one occasion, for example, what was supposedly the spirit of my maternal grandmother “advised” me that, since my father’s death, I had not been sufficiently attentive to my mother and that she needed my comfort and love. I realized that this was so and did nothing about it. I continued to be just as aloof, disinterested and embarrassed in her presence as I had always been—and just as ashamed to let her know that I, the son of a Women’s Christian Temperance Union treasurer, had started drinking without her knowledge or consent at the tender age of about fifteen. When, however, I received spiritual advice and *power* of the kind I am going to describe throughout the balance of this book, I knew exactly what to do about my mother, and I *did* it. And I was brought closely into her affections for the first time in many years. I am now, in other words, receiving supernatural aid—not through a nonsensical Ouija Board nor any other spiritualistic “instrument”—but through God-consciousness—through direct personal contact with the third environment—the spiritual environment I had so long been seeking.

I had previously failed to receive this aid for the very simple reason that I had been trying to supply all the power myself—even after I learned that power for moral growth would have to come from the outside. I believed that the Lord helps those who help themselves. I was keen on self-management—a self determinist—the captain of my own soul (if not of a tugboat). *And there is the real secret of all human difficulty.*

Since I now know the answer to these difficulties, and did before I slipped the first sheet of this book into my typewriter, you may ask why I have taken five chapters

just to recount my failures. It is because other people—people by the million—are making those same mistakes and going through the same failures over and over again. They think they have found the answer to life, as I did, when they, too, have chased and momentarily caught up with pleasure or possessions or some other of the five false “P’s.” Perhaps, passing by this unsatisfactory stage of immature development, they have sought, as I did, the sterile comfort of philosophy. Perhaps then, as I did, they have faced the dreary prospect of an unwanted morality or tried to force a stodgy ethical culture on a reluctant humanity. Perhaps, again, they have lived, with me, in that fool’s paradise which believes that science can do *anything*—little witting, as Robert H. Lowie says, that “Scientists are led astray by tradition, by timidity, and by the unchecked play of fancy and emotions” just like other people. Perhaps, with all this “thinking,” they too have formed a beautiful ideal of what might happen for themselves, and especially for society, could their particular philosophy, or system of ethics or theory of science be applied to the uplift of humanity as a whole. Perhaps they have slaved in some branch of world improvement while harboring the lurking fear that their sacrifice is futile. Undoubtedly, at some time, they have regarded mankind as a fine, upstanding, self-determining body, able to work out its own salvation, once it got rid of the superstition of “religion” and other out-dated “traditions,” and began to live “under the rule of reason.”

Perhaps, in briefer outline, the reader is still living in the cramping confines of a self-centered egoistical Plan No. 1. Perhaps he has moved on into the larger, but still narrow and abortive, socially-centered, humanistic Plan No. 2. Perhaps, again, he is still leading nothing but a Church-centered life, fondly imagining that he has attained the God-conscious “life abundant” of theistic Plan No. 3. Perhaps, in short, still groping his way through these dark places, he is still trying futilely, as I was, to solve not only his own personal and family problems but the problems of the whole world by means of a totally inadequate vision and insufficient power.

I would like, in such cases, to rescue him from unavoidable frustration and inevitable failure in life—just as, through the witness of the Oxford Group, God has rescued me. And I would like to introduce him to this disciplined army of life-changers who first gave my life real meaning and direction.

I, excepting for my one brief baptismal glow, had never had a real religious experience in my life. And yet, as I soon found, I *had* to have religious experience before the veil lifted from my eyes and allowed me to see the supra-sensible light of the spiritual domain. I had, in other words, actually to *become* God-conscious before I could see what lay behind my previous failure to do so. I had to gain supernatural insight before I could see the true nature of my own and other men’s natural mistakes. The Oxford Group, however, has a most natural way of introducing one to the supernatural and, in their skillful hands, God’s miracle of changing lives seemed no more *unnatural* than the many natural or physical phenomena we are accustomed to observe.

With this change—but not before—could I see the reason for my former failures.

It was as if I had stepped all at once from the ordinary world of three dimensions into a fourth-dimensional sphere.

It is difficult to describe such matters to those who have not yet gained spiritual insight, just as it would be difficult to explain colors to a man who is color blind. Moral blindness is much the same thing, and it is a blindness which clears away only when you become sensitive to the light of the spiritual realm.

In ordinary terms, therefore, I can only say that I had been unable to see light because I stood in my own way. I had, as you may remember, suspected that there might be some supra-sensible kind of spiritual light, just as there were ultra-violet rays of sunlight and invisible beams of knowledge which flow into our minds. I now found that this was so and found, also as I suspected, that the coarseness of my own nature obscured this light to a degree which made me unable to “see” it. Powerful as is this light of God, man’s own shadow will blot it out of consciousness. I had buried my nose so deeply in my own coat collar and was so eminently conscious of my own desires in life that I could not, at the same time, be conscious of anything else. When later I occupied my mind with the troubles of the world, these did not, by any means, squeeze out my self-absorption. They simply added to absorption as a whole—absorption away from God. A burning candle is not seen in a room already illuminated. And God cannot be heard in a mind busy with other and coarser matters.

I also had been wrong in thinking that I would have to emerge from my self-absorbed state by slow and gradual evolutionary degrees. Despite my former suspicion of “sudden conversions,” I found that a man had simply to step out of his own light to become immediately and keenly conscious of the presence of God. As W. Elsworth Lamson says of St. Paul: “He did not climb by any laborious Platonic stairway to the heights whereon God stood. *He was there.*” I, too, *was there.* As the emergent evolutionists might say, I “emerged” into God-consciousness all at once and, as another member of the Oxford Group has said, “There could be no question of it. I knew that God was there.”

I seemed, in other words, to reach a “critical point” in sensibility. On the one side was self and social-consciousness and moral blindness. On the other side stood God-consciousness and moral vision. And I passed from one to the other as suddenly and definitely as water brought to the critical point passes into steam. Even the steps which lead up to this leap do not seem to be evolutionary or progressive steps in the usual sense of the word. Evolution commonly denotes a process of organization, of accretion and of building up. It is a filling up with new and additional things brought together and organized in the mind and body. My spiritual growth, however, and especially that sudden leap into God’s light, seemed to result from an entirely opposite process. It was a process of breaking-down—of disorganization—of emptying out—a matter of deflation in my own self-esteem until self-approval and concern for the approval of others had shrunk to a point where I was willing to step entirely aside and give God a chance to shine.

I do not mean that, with this sudden emergence, I suddenly became perfect in character nor rose to any real height of spiritual understanding. A spiritual babe has to grow spiritually after he is born just as any other babe has to grow. I mean only that such birth can and does take place suddenly. One moment I was blind. The next I could see.

This sudden stepping out of the darkness is difficult—and particularly difficult for a man who does not realize that he is blind to start with. Blind fish who swim in subterranean caves cannot imagine such a thing as sunlight. Neither could the wholly selfish “blind” man I am about to describe.

This portrait of a man was drawn by his wife—not built up from her own opinions of him—but derived from the things which he himself has said that he likes, or hates, or cannot stand. She simply took down notes of his own utterances which ran somewhat as follows:

HE HATES:

Prohibition.

Marriage.

The routine of his existence.

Responsibility.

Duty to his family.

Drunken parties (for other people; with his own gang they are grand).

Having to live with his wife.

HE CANNOT STAND:

Crooners.

Religion of any kind.

Having to visit his mother.

Sitting still—resting in bed.

Censure of any kind—particularly of himself.

Selfishness in others—though not in himself.

Unkindness—also in others, but not in himself.

Restraint of any kind.

Moral “movies.”

HE LIKES:

Shorts.

Liquor for himself, when and as desired.

Freedom to do as he pleases.

The world—as he is having it.

Himself, as he is.

Being let alone to go to hell in his own way, which he describes as just wanting others to be “tolerant” towards him.

Admiration from others—especially other women. Having his own way in all things—he could not imagine giving up self-will.

This man is so vividly conscious of these likes, aversions and dislikes that he literally cannot *become* conscious of any outside attitude. They make so much “noises” within him that he cannot hear any other “voice.” If his wife, for instance, should resent his attention to other ladies, he cannot possibly grasp that point of view. He puts it down as “intolerance” towards him and is totally unconscious of her real needs and feeling in that matter. When selfishness stands between a man and his wife to such an impassable degree—when he is so insensible to the needs and wishes of a person he sees every day—how can he be sensitive to the needs and wishes of a God he has never seen and will not even admit?

I have given an extreme case, you may say. Well, read over this list again and see how many of these likes, dislikes and hates you yourself may possess. This *crass* form, moreover, is by no means the only form of selfishness. There are many subtler ones.

I know, for instance, a sweet old lady full of what some people call “good works.” Described as a saint, she was to me a devil in disguise for, year after year, her “good works” in my behalf consisted in telling me what a clever chap I was, when what I needed to be told was that I was a conceited ass. I remember that she kept telling another woman what a splendid wife and mother she was, when this splendid “wife and mother” was selfishly doing more to ruin her husband and spoil her children than almost any woman I have ever met.

This liking to be nice to other people so that they will like you may be an unconscious form of selfishness. But it is selfishness nevertheless, and a form of selfishness which lets the other fellow down far more than would a blunt assertion of indifference. In my own case, in fact, I found that self crept into almost everything, whether subtly and subconsciously or whether in crass defiance of good taste and other people. And whether insidious or gross, this selfishness had as surely shut me off from a true consciousness of God.

Not only that, but self-interest—even under the guise of social benevolence—had been dragging me further and further back towards the brute. Even when I had set myself a high ideal and purpose, my life was almost entirely lacking in moral effort. And when, as the Rev. Dr. Bernard Iddings Bell has said, “...the moral endeavor slackens, then an epoch ends, a civilization goes to pieces, and men, subsiding once more to levels essentially animal, carry out their task of mutual self-destruction.” Moral endeavor slackens, I know, as soon as self-interest quickens, and that, I think, is what has brought the modern world into the sorriest plight it has ever known.

How, then, does one reverse this process? How did I accomplish self-deflation instead of continuing the advancement of self-interest?

Since this is a chapter about metaphysics, I might as well say that I believe the forerunners of science—the alchemists of old—had a better grasp of this problem

than do many of our modern scientists. It is said that these alchemists were mystics who were not merely trying to turn lead into gold. They realized the glorious results that might be attained through the transmutation of man's soul into spiritualized gold. They thought this could be done by "an awakening of the inner conscience" which, in order to achieve this *magnum opus*, must first be free from all ambition, hypocrisy and vice, and from all faults such as arrogance, boldness, pride, luxury, world vanity, oppression of the poor and similar iniquities. I once put this down as a simple minded superstition. But now I know, from personal experience, that the alchemists were *right*.

I also know that these ambitions, hypocrisies and vices were not drained out when I transferred my belief in one plan or philosophy of life to another. They were not drained out by making New Year's resolutions and they were not disposed of by going to psychoanalysts or by going to church. They were drained out by stopping the *self-effort* to get rid of them—by letting God take hold to do the job, and by putting God first *in life*.

I had put God first in theory, yet still continued to mean well and do badly. That was because I was still trying to run my own life. I had not put Him first *in living*, but had kept my self-love uppermost and had built my scheme of things quite upside down.

When I turned things around, however, and put God at the head of the list—when I ceased struggling to pull myself *up* and stepped out of the way so that His light could shine *down* to me—when I let Him show me how to use the individuality He had given me to accomplish for myself, for humanity and for Him, the things He wanted me to accomplish—then, for the first time in forty years, things of consequence began to happen in my life.

I came, at that time, not only into consciousness of God but into usefulness for God. I was able to do, through God's help, what no man ever has been able or ever will be able to do for himself. I was able to supplement the all-important "Why" of life with the still more important "How" of living. I was able to begin really solving my own problems and, for the first time in my experience, was given the power to begin helping others. I no longer wished well to "myself alone."

This, however, is jumping ahead in my story. I want to take you from the occasion on which I first met the Oxford Group down to the time when, through this book, I first met you. It is a sort of "Pagan's Progress" which will show you how I and thousands of others have been led to the one great "emergence" in life which can solve either personal problems or the problems of an over-troubled world. It will show how, as we began to grow in this new life, we reached towards new heights of spiritual accomplishment and understanding.

## CHAPTER VI

### THIS BUSINESS OF THE OXFORD GROUP *APPLICATION*

Among the “P’s” I had turned to in life, it was my pal who came through in the pinch and put me on the track of five more “P’s”—the peace, plenty, purpose, progress, and new form of power I am finding in life now.

This pal, who was my room and drinking mate in college, had a brother. That brother, four or five years ago, had run off the track entirely. He had hooked up with some new-fangled religion and, as I understood, had become fanatic. Such a nice fellow, too!

My friend and I speculated over our highballs on the nature of this curious religion which the newspapers of that day referred to as “Buchmanism.” Its principal attraction, we had heard, was the “confession of sins.” Rumor had it, moreover, that these confessions were “shared” by sinners, and shamelessly gobbled up by an assortment of mixed guests at a so-called “house-party.”

I at once imagined a sort of exotic atmosphere—tiger-skin, firelight, bowls of roses. We tried to picture ourselves in such a session and there came to mind certain sins I *might* tell and others that I certainly would not.

We never, however, peeked behind the scenes of any of these “orgies” until one winter, when the Oxford Group held a dinner at the Hotel Plaza in New York. My friend’s brother did not invite me, which peeved me a bit. If they were trying to interest important people I felt that I was certainly one of their most likely prospects, and I told my friend I wished his brother would count me in the next time they held a “party” of that sort.

I will admit I felt more than a passing curiosity in the movement. I felt that they might have some “psychological” answer or some other stunt I could use in my book and, when an invitation finally came to attend an Oxford Group house-party at Briarcliff Lodge, N.Y., I was more than willing to run up there for the week-end.

Not knowing what it would be like, my friend and I, and another man, spent a couple of hours in a speakeasy which gave us a rollicking start. We also stowed some bottles in our bags and took a few “revivers” on the way to Briarcliff. By the time we sauntered into the dining-room we were quite perked up, though we soon discovered that, among the six hundred or so people there assembled, ours were probably the only fiery breaths.

Everybody, however, seemed to be having a wonderful time and they did not look at all like the anemic, chinless characters I had always associated with religious or non-drinking people. They were an astonishingly healthy and vivacious-looking lot, clear of skin and, what impressed me most, with a remarkably straightforward gaze

and a clarity and sparkle to the eye that I had rarely seen before in any company.

The company itself, I found, was made up of people of all kinds from various countries. A Chinese diplomat was there, an army officer from India and a count from Holland. The son of a Member of Parliament dined with the daughter of a pioneer statesman from South Africa. The rector of an Edinburgh church bore the same name and sat at the same table as an ex-leader in the Communist party in Scotland. A student of the Sorbonne broke bread with a former chaplain at Harvard. An Assistant-Secretary of Agriculture, a member of the former retinue of Kaiser Wilhelm, the pastor of a fashionable New York church, a family which had motored all the way from California, an actress, an ex-bootlegger, a banker, a member of the New York Stock Exchange, a stenographer and a lady doctor were a few of the others I happened to meet.

My own dinner companion was an ex-soldier, business man and big game hunter from South Africa. I was advertising for the world's foremost manufacturer of firearms at the time and my companion's familiarity with big game rifles formed a common bond between us. It seemed, however, incredible to me that a man of this agreeable personality and two-fisted character did not drink. A lady I once dined with had observed that it seemed to her that "all the really nice men drank." I thought so too and eventually screwed up my courage to ask this fellow why *he* didn't. He said simply that he "did not need it" and that he had "something else."

During the first evening, to be sure, my friends and I did not gain a very clear idea of what that "something else" might be. From the various speakers who took the platform we judged they seemed to be enjoying what they all described as a "new quality of life." In fact they *did* seem to have some unusual quality. There was that straightforward clarity of eye that I had noticed. There was a fellowship that was not of the back-slapping order. There was a spontaneous sparkle and zest—not of social banter nor of alcohol-stimulated wit, but of genuine joy that seemed to well up from inside. They seemed to possess some inner wine, and of the stimulants I knew they had no need indeed.

The first man to speak that evening had long been executive secretary of one of our best known universities. He was, I could see, an intellectual of the highest type and said that he had plumbed intellectual depths to the bottom but had found no answer to life. Then he had come upon "this something"—this "new quality of life"—and had begun to find an answer to all human problems. This man's experience set me thinking. His search had lasted much longer than mine and he had found, as I had, that the quest was barren of result. Yet he too had found "something else"—a something, whatever it was, that I myself very much wanted to find.

A little later in the evening another educational authority spoke. It was a lady this time—one who had been president of the National Education Association. Once, she said, when on the platform in Washington she had welcomed the President of the United States as her guest, she felt that the pinnacle of human achievement

had been reached. Yet now she knew that neither education nor top position in her profession had given her the real answer to life; nor, as she found, had legislation or organization work. Years as a lobbyist in Washington and Albany, and connection with or leadership in some forty-seven different organizations, had proved the futility of human effort along self-determined lines. At many points her experience coincided with mine. She too had that “something” that I wanted for myself.

There had been no tiger-skins or roses—no soft lights. There had not even been confession of the things that I called “sin”—nothing but a confession of inevitable failure under the old self-assertive ways of living and a declaration of glorious victory in this new God-empowered way of life.

I went to bed that night quite sober and with much to think about. I was still thinking the next morning and attended what these people called a “quiet time.” They said they were “listening to God.” I listened as attentively as any of the rest, I thought, but “heard” nothing—nothing at all. Gradually as I attended more quiet times, services and witness meetings, however, I began dimly to sense what these people were driving at. They claimed they had gained what I had been trying to gain—a consciousness of the spiritual environment—a direct contact with God.

On the afternoon we had arrived, someone showed me an article by the celebrated Michael Pupin, electrical wizard of Columbia University. Its sense, as I remember it, was that this great electrician believed the power of God to be an actuality—something as real in the universe as the power of electricity. Man, he said, had been able to gain control of his physical environment only by using forces external to himself. He used the power of heat or the power of electricity without which, let us say, he could not fly into the air. Man similarly, Pupin added, would not be able to go anywhere in moral fields or rise in the spiritual environment until he had learned to tap and use the supplementary power of God in some what the same way. The Oxford Group, it seemed to me, *had* tapped that power and were *using* it in the business of living with the dexterity of a spiritual Thomas Edison.

Finally I got down to the point of questioning them. “You,” they said in answer, “believe that there is *something* going on in space. You, from what you tell us of your book, believe that God has some kind of a plan and method for developing the personality or soul of human beings. You naturally, therefore believe that it is everyone’s duty to enter into conscious and direct co-operation with that plan. Rather than conflict with or kick against what is actually going on in the universe, you believe that people should enter consciously into the scheme of things and deliberately *try* to grow a soul. And yet you say you don’t know how to do it. You don’t know how to apply your beliefs. You don’t know how to get in touch with God.”

These indeed were my beliefs and these indeed were my difficulties.

“You believe there’s a plan,” they continued. “Did it never occur to you to get in touch with the Author of that plan, asking Him directly what His plan *is* and what

He wants you to *do* about it?"

No—I was forced to admit—nothing as simple as that ever had occurred to me. I had thought, from a casual survey of occult religions that, through a series of initiations, adaptations, or whatever you go through, one might somehow get in touch with a so-called “cosmic consciousness”—whatever that might be. And I had my own idea of exploring a “spiritual environment.” But the idea of getting directly in touch with God Himself—of asking Him questions and getting answers and directions for the conduct of my life—seemed to me an out-and-out absurdity.

Yet these people said it could be done. They said they were doing it themselves and that was what gave them the power to *apply* beliefs and *carry out* the plan of God—a power that I did not have. They said, however, that I *could* have it—just as they did—if I would pay the same price—comply with the same conditions—and go through the same series of exceedingly simple steps.

First, they said, that I would have to make clean contact—much as in forming an electrical connection. In setting up aerials for the family radio I had scraped the ends of copper wire often enough to know that. To get my contact points clean, they said, I would have to face up to my sins, and “sin” they defined as anything which came between me and any other person or stood between me and God. Then they said I would have to surrender my will and make it subject to the will of God. I would have to give up entirely the old life of self-assertion and self-determination. There was, in other words, no use in clearing a telephone line to God if I was just going to sit back at my end of the wire and make up my own mind whether or not I wanted to do what He told me. They also said that, just as I would not trust a willful child with an automobile, God would not *trust* me with any of his dynamic spiritual power unless He *knew* that I was going to use it as Jesus Christ would use it—for purposes of absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness and absolute love.

Here were posers for me, and I promptly tried to dodge the issue. This, as I found later, is what nearly everybody tries to do. No sooner is a person faced with the challenge of being *absolutely honest* and owning up to the kind of person he really is—no sooner is he faced with the idea of giving up his own sweet will in life—than he ducks hastily for cover and hunts up an alibi of some kind.

At precisely this point, for instance, I have heard person after person who has been challenged start to *criticize* the Oxford Group. “They’ve no business to wash their dirty linen in public,” says one. “I wouldn’t share for anything,” says another, adding that *his* or *her* religion is “too sacred to wear upon my sleeve.”

I know these dodgers by now. I know them well. Particularly wiggly are those who protest that there are “other ways to find God,” such as “looking for God in others,” through “nature, beauty, truth and goodness”—through anything but that ugly necessity of looking oneself in the face and really *admitting* one’s sins to God and man.

There are also the conservative-minded to whom the entertainment of a new idea of any kind is literally an agony. There are those who come to Oxford Group meetings just out of curiosity and form an unjust conclusion from an inadequate contact. There are the misinformed people who don't know what it is all about and those who know only too well what it is about and are afraid they will be caught by it.

All in all they are a class who—whatever else they see—see clearly that the challenge to absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love is something that threatens their complacency in life, and something which is likely to destroy their self-approval. As a psychologist says, we will always stand at bay and fight to the bitter end to *retain* our self-approval. “We,” he goes on, “deny the accusation against us, we revile the accuser, we argue, we grow hot and red in anger, we bluff, we lie, to defend our reputation.

I, too, did all these things, or nearly all of them, when I first met the challenge of the group. I lied, for instance, by saying that I did not have any sins in particular. I might have had some in my younger days—but not now. Drinking and smoking I did not consider sin. As for impurity—I would not, of course, like all my actions published, nor would I care to I throw my thoughts on a screen where all might read.

Tell dirty stories—yes—funny ones. No harm in that. As for summer escapades with the family away—well, they were not as raw as they used to be and did not worry me at all. When, finally, it came to my business, social and amateur theatrical accomplishments—to my opinion of myself—to my brain and what I secretly considered was “intellectual giantism”—I felt I had good reason to be proud.

My conversations with the Group by now had simmered down to a two-man basis—in the lobby of the hotel. There were, as I have said, no tiger skins or shaded lights. There was no mixed company—not even a public confession. I was talking to one other man who, from his own story, had been as big a reprobate as I. And yet, as I talked, I stuck pretty closely to a rather hand-picked list of sins. I did not want to let him see the really nasty things inside of me—the things that I was most ashamed of. I did not want him to guess what a rotter I really had been and still was. And so I wound up by saying that my sins were not really troubling me at all. My real trouble, I glibly lied, was simply confusion—inability to see what we are living for—inability to solve both the “why” and “how” of life.

I also squirmed a bit, both openly and mentally about that other challenging requirement—the surrender of my will. If I promised to do whatever God told me to do—if He could tell me to do anything which I still did not quite believe—He might tell me to do something that I couldn't or jolly well did not *want* to do. If he told me to be *absolutely* honest, for example, that was clearly impossible in the advertising business. At least it would be most embarrassing, highly uncomfortable and probably unprofitable. God also, I thought, might lead me apart from my

family spiritually, geographically, or both. He might start me living on some higher spiritual plane, or send me to China as a missionary, while leaving my wife and children behind. I developed an unexpected fondness for my wife and children. If they were to be left behind or were on the road to hell, I, very nobly, would stay behind and go to hell with them.

Then, too, I argued to myself, God might tell me to stop drinking and smoking. There were, I knew, no rules about anything like this in the Oxford Group. You did not have to “stop” anything when you surrendered your life to God. But *after* that—God might *tell* you to stop. And if, at any time, I was called upon to quit my tobacco and alcohol, there would, I was sure, be no more fun for me in life.

I had known before that my difficulty in bungling my Plan No. 3 lay in not *wanting* to lead the good life. Here apparently were people who *did* want to. They, in some way I did not quite understand, *got fun out of being moral*. They must be different from me and the good life might, therefore, be all right for them. Probably they had never known any other kind of life. But—no, sir, not for me. Not if it came to giving up drinks and smokes. No, sir, not for me.

That was the general conclusion I came to after a week-end at Briarcliff. They were an unusual and interesting lot of people. And they had some sound ideas. The “quality of life” they talked about would be good for quite a lot of other people that I knew, but I was sure that it would make my own life even more uncomfortable than it was already and so I did not want it for myself. I wanted something I could turn to for solace. I wanted, in short, to keep on with my cocktails and all my other comforts. And, while my friend and I talked the matter over with surprising animation and with much greater agreement than had been usual of late, we also finished up our gin as we drove home that night.

CHAPTER VII  
THIS BUSINESS OF  
BEING REBORN IN LIFE  
*TRANSFORMATION*

It seems amazing that anyone whose life had grown as futile as mine should want to hang on to his fruitless pursuits and tasteless diversions. Doing what I wanted had never brought me any real fun, yet I thought that I would be a fool to give up these things. Despite what I had seen at Briarcliff, therefore, I decided that I, the great V. C. Kitchen, was a little different from other people and could continue to live *outside the laws of self-denial*.

I also had begun to suspect that, with all my acting and pretence, I was fooling comparatively few people. And whether I was fooling them or not I knew quite well that I was finding no real fellowship with them. Still, I reflected, what my wife did not know would not hurt her and it might prove very uncomfortable for me should she get wind of it. In my own family, as elsewhere, therefore, I—the self-sufficient V. C. Kitchen—would continue to live *outside the law of fellowship*.

At Briarcliff they had said that I must surrender my will, obeying God in all things, even if He told me to go to China, forsake my family, throw up my job or give up my friends. Clearly, however, I could not do that if I was going to go on doing what I wanted to do and pretending to be what I wanted people to think I was. I, the self-determining V. C. Kitchen, would continue to live *outside the law of obedience*.

I was fighting at that time, although I did not know it, to retain not only my “comfortless comforts” and the strong material affinities I had formed in life, but to keep some vestige of my self-approval and hold on to remnants of my pride. This battle, however, only lasted a few days. I had at last met people who had more than arguments to fight with. They had experience to offer—an experience that I myself could taste. And it proved to be a *pleasure*-experience which, I very soon discovered, made me *want* to live that kind of life.

A powerless philosophy, a dry and dusty ethics, a pleasureless psychology and the lower reaches of a still-intellectualized metaphysics had failed to pry me loose from the affinities I found in my lawless pagan world. They offered no “higher affection” which could lure me out of my old life. But when, through contact with the Oxford Group, I actually began to find some *satisfaction* in self-denial, when I actually found fellowship instead of shame in honest sharing and when, through obedience to a higher law, I gained my first knowledge of true freedom, there began that change of feeling which culminated in the change of my entire life.

This change commenced a few days after my return from the group house-party. My business took me to New Haven and, while on the train, I had ample time for reflection. It was then that I made my first experiments in self-denial.

The trip, for instance, was one I had always drowned in tobacco smoke, for I was an inveterate smoker and lit my pipe the first thing in the morning, putting it out the last thing at night. When, at times, I felt it threatening my heart and lungs, I had made the effort to cut down smoking. But that never lasted more than a few days and I had never succeeded in cutting it out. This time, however, I decided to see if the God the Oxford Group had talked about could and would assist me. I asked His help rather than attempt the thing myself and something unusual happened. I did not strike *ii* match all day and, to my surprise, felt no accompanying nervousness or discomfort.

It was the first time I had ever won a battle of this kind with what seemed to me an utter *lack* of struggle. I felt a strange sense of dependence on some power that was utterly dependable—a power within yet coming from outside myself—a power far stronger than I was. And even, as I tried to argue, if this power were only my “better self,” what a great relief it would always be to have that better self to depend on. There would be, in such a case, I thought, no more inner conflict in my life—no more uncertainty of mind—no more question of “Should I do this?” or “Should I do that?” There would be but one answer to every question—the one *right* answer for me—the clear unhesitating answer that this “other power” would always give me.

Release from tobacco was not the only freedom that I gained that day. I found, at the same time, a strange release from boredom. The trip had promised to be one of tedious routine. I had intended to hasten through the details of getting my “copy” approved and to catch the first train home with as little discussion as possible. I found, however, that I was reviewing my own “copy” with new interest. And I listened to the criticisms of my client—not with any thought of brushing them aside and being on my way—but with the thought of using them to write a more effective advertisement. So absorbed did I become in turning out a better piece of work that I not only failed to get away early but remained with my client after hours. And I not only missed the train I had hoped to catch but missed several trains thereafter.

It was, in fact, past six o’clock and I had nearly two hours to wait when I reached the railway station. Supper took scarcely half an hour and I was wondering what to do with the rest of my time when the train announcer beckoned to me. “There’s a New York train just ready to leave,” he said. “It’s the train you missed. It broke down in West Haven and has just backed up into this station.” I smiled, for this seemed most obliging of the train. It seemed, in fact, almost as if—in recompense for giving extra time myself—God had spared me the annoyance of boarding that train, had given me opportunity to enjoy a comfortable supper, and then saw to it that I had no further time to wait before resuming my journey. This, to say the least, had been a day of unusual occurrences and I decided that there *might*, after all, be some fun in living with my usual comforts and interests less at heart. I did not realize it then but I had already begun to live *within* the laws of self-denial.

Even before this trip, moreover, I had begun experiments in a new kind of

fellowship. While driving back from Briarcliff, for instance, I had noted a new interest and animation in my relationship with the man I had known most intimately for the last twenty years. We did not reach my house till three in the morning yet, so interested were we, that we routed my astonished wife out of bed, and sat up till five in order to tell *her* just what we thought about it. And there, as we talked, strange things began to come to mind. I actually *imagined* myself sitting beside her and telling her the things I was sure I never could or would tell her.

The outcome of these curious experiences was that, several days later, I went back to Briarcliff and she went with me. The Oxford Group house-party was still in full swing. This time we stayed but a day and a night, yet that was enough to water the seed already planted. We were not, as we thought, fully convinced, yet, oddly enough, as we drove home the second time, each was ready to defend the movement valiantly when anyone started to criticize what he had seen and heard. Inwardly, I knew it was a step I would have to take some day. I hoped my wife would take it too. But neither of us guessed just then how close we really were to the brink of that new world.

The miracle, in fact, began to happen as soon as we reached home. I found myself sitting on the sofa by my wife—just as I had imagined. She started the conversation and then, without knowing exactly how or why, I found myself blurting out the whole story I was never going to tell anybody. My wife, to my amazement, had something to tell, too. We both were taken by surprise and then by a sense of great relief which, to me, proved even more surprising.

I could and would have sworn that the “sins” of my past life were not really bothering me. Though I was ashamed to let the rest of the world know my secret acts and desires, they were not, I thought, troubling my own conscience. And my wife—when I heard her story—seemed to have even less cause for uneasiness. When, however, we told each other fully and freely the kind of people that we really were—the kind of things we really did and thought—when we took off the masks we had worn through seventeen years of married life and stopped pretending to each other to be something that we were not—we each distinctly felt an acute and actual sense of physical release, as though some forty thousand pounds had rolled from our shoulders.

This sensation of release and freedom is, I now know, an almost universal experience for all who face and confess their sins under the eyes of God and one other person. This is especially true if that other person is one who has suffered through your sins as, in my case, my own wife had suffered. It was the first time I had ever tried being “absolutely honest” with *anybody*. An entirely new bond sprang up between us and, although again I did not realize it, I had begun to live in touch with God, and without barriers of bluff between myself and my fellow human beings. I had, in fact, begun to live *within the laws of fellowship*.

Forming a clean contact with God, however, does no good unless God then

chooses to release His power. And God, as I have said before, will not do so unless He knows that He can *trust* you with that power. He will not give you power to use just as you wish, but only as *He* wills, and only for as long as you surrender your own will in absolute obedience. If you admit you need His advice and then decline to take or follow God's guidance as it is given, you might just as well continue to blunder along "on your own" from the very beginning.

By God's grace, however, my wife and I had no sooner taken the very necessary step of sharing and confessing our sins to each other, than we were led to take the second and crucial step of self-surrender. "I feel," she said, "that we should have a little prayer together"—something we had not done or even thought of doing since, seventeen years ago, we had knelt before the altar. Now, however, we prayed—out loud. And we *meant* it.

I do not remember the actual words of my first genuine prayer. In general, however, it ran very much like this: "I surrender Thee my entire life, O God. I have made a mess of it, trying to run it myself. *You* take it—the whole thing—and run it for me, according to Your will and plan."

According to earliest recollections I began my pagan life by wanting to be captain of a tugboat. I ended it by resigning the captaincy of everything I was, knew or possessed. "I am the master of my fate" gave way to "Thine is the kingdom and the power." "Thy will be done" was substituted for "I am the captain of my soul." As we thus tossed aside "Invictus" and took up the Lord's Prayer, we stood together out of our own light and began, as a united team, a joyous and adventurous exploration of the third or spiritual realm. We were reborn into life and began, for the first time, to live *under the laws of obedience*.

As we emerged into this new environment we felt ourselves responsive to new stimuli. We gained, as it were, new senses like a man who, paralyzed through life, had awakened to his first definite sense of sunshine, and heat and cold, and taste, and touch, and smell and hearing. Like such a man, we found ourselves in a wholly new relationship with the world in which we were living. It was, in fact, a wholly new world—a world in which Jesus Christ Who had been to me a dead historical character, became a vital living Presence Who could actually be "felt." With the inspiration of this Presence, it was a world in which the moral and spiritual qualities of human beings, or their lack, were as clearly discernible as their mental and physical qualities had been in the world of our former understanding.

"Now," said my wife, "I know what is meant by 'The Peace that Passeth all Understanding.'" And it passed understanding indeed.

Never had I known, guessed or imagined anything like this within the range of human experience. I was in a world of which I possessed no former knowledge.

"Nonsense," said some of my friends. "It is just new to *you*. We, for our part, have known religious experience all our lives and it's an old, old story."

I knew, however, what most of them meant. They meant the self-appreciative

kind of “pink glow” I had experienced when baptized. They meant the occasional cold chills that sometimes chase along your spine when you hear a beautifully played organ.

They meant the “being in tune with nature”—the reverence and awe you may feel sitting on a sand dune and looking out at the ocean or in sitting alone on the top of a high mountain.

I too had felt those things. But I can assure my readers, and so can thousands of others in the Oxford Group and elsewhere, that they are nothing—nothing at all—compared with the deep, vital, life-changing experience of facing your sins honestly and of then surrendering your life to God, wholly and without reserve. I had not lived at all until I began that new quality of life—a life which is lived *within* the laws of self-denial, fellowship and obedience. It is then, and then only, that a “self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy” according to the famous definition of William James. It is then and then only that the luminous vision, abundant life, integration of character, power of helpfulness and creativeness in living come to those who confess, not merely their faith but their sins, and who profess not merely a belief in God but begin to practice absolute obedience to Him.

What a difference all this made in the actual business of living. Instead of finding myself surfeited with the stale delights and ever-deadening throwback of self-indulgence, I found myself open to and refreshed by the kind of fun you find in God’s approval. It is fun which is ever so much keener and more zestful than any I had ever experienced from self or public approval. Instead of the pretences of society—a cloying intimacy with women, a shallow friendship with men, utter boredom with most people and a self-seeking eye to all—I found the deep and joyful fellowship of a communion of saints. Instead of the sourness of “my own sweet way”—instead of the self-promotive plans and their inevitable frustration and disappointment—instead of rigid programmes leading nowhere and vainglorious ideals—I found the “energy pattern” of God, as free and rhythmic as a bird and as different from the slow and stupid mapped-out plans of men.

It was thus that I *found* the “higher affection” which my false gods, philosophies, ethics and psychology could not supply. I came upon it not by hearsay but through actual personal experience. I learned to *want* to live this higher quality of life through actually *tasting* the only love in the world that surpasses man’s love of self and gives to him the power of regeneration.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THIS BUSINESS OF GETTING NEW BEARINGS *ORIENTATION*

I had long believed that “you can’t change human nature.” It was no use, I thought, trying to clean up politics, straighten out business or untangle marriage because “men aren’t built that way.” Then I found that men aren’t built at all. They are *building*. And it is not only possible to start a new building in life but to reshape the entire old structure. Human nature, in short, can be changed and changed very roundly. I have seen it not only in my own life but in hundreds of others. And I have seen that it is changed—not by any method I had formerly imagined—but through application of what, to me, has proved a wholly new and unfamiliar power.

I had believed with certain scientists, for instance, that, while self-improvement would suffice in my own case, the level of humanity as a whole could be raised only through a “prolonged and intelligent and humane birth selection aided by humane birth control.” I now know that self-improvement is no good either in my case or any other. It is rather a matter of self-displacement—a putting of self out of the way so that God can step in to do the work. It is a matter of *re*-birth controlled by the Holy Spirit—a matter of the spirit which has nothing whatever to do with eugenics.

Nor is this change, I found, a matter of psychology. I once believed that I could think my way out of all difficulties. To pump up the pressure of desire to a point where I would really want to grow a soul and serve a God, for instance, I thought I would only have to think up enough good reasons for so living. And I thought that when I had given enough of these good arguments to other people they too would undergo a change in thought which would work towards a change in our social, economic, marital, educational, political and religious systems. Now I see, of course, that it is not a change in thought or in system which produces a change in man. The change in the man must come first—a change brought about by God and God alone—a change which will then be reflected in new and creative thought and new and creative systems.

Finally, in this work of orientation, I found I had to abandon not only my own physical-biological theories, not only my old psychological-social theories, but my old metaphysical and spiritual theories as well. I had believed, as P. D. Ouspensky writes, that “The possibility of the appearance or development of cosmic consciousness belongs to the few.” I had thought it was a change which could come only to highly developed, supersensitive or highly privileged characters among which I was not included. I have found, however, that it is a change which can come to everybody in the world. With some it may be a somewhat slow process as was

the conversion of St. Peter. With others it may be a more immediate change as was the case with St. Paul. All human beings, however, *can* be changed and brought into wholly new relations with the world of physics we respond to through our senses, with the world of people we respond to through our minds and with the world of God that I, until now, had not responded to at all.

In my physical world, for instance, I had been governed largely by the law of reciprocity—the physical law which says that to every action there must always be an equal and opposite reaction. My reactions were fixed and inevitable. I never saw a foaming glass of beer, for instance, without wanting it. I never saw an attractive woman without wanting her. I never saw a comfortable couch without wanting to lie down.

Physically I found only two ways to handle these desires. One was to satisfy the desire which, however, always ended that desire and gave me no real satisfaction in the end. The other way was to restrain the desire which proved even more unsatisfactory. As I got my bearings in the new life, however I found that God had a far wiser and altogether different way of dealing with desire. He satisfied unsound desire by *removing* the desire itself and that has given me the only genuine satisfaction I have ever found.

After surrendering my life, for instance, I felt such peace and joy that my reciprocal, instinctive physical desire was to “celebrate as usual” by pouring out a generous libation of alcohol. I had actually started for a bottle in the pantry when God stopped me with my first real bit of guidance and told me that I could not serve Him as long as I was a slave to gin. I then and there admitted my inability to quit of my own will and asked God to take charge of the matter. He did. I looked at the bottle and felt a distinct sensation of nausea. I was revolted at the very thought of a drink and the desire for alcohol has never come back. God simply lifted that desire entirely out of my life, and I have found this freedom far more desirable than any satisfaction or repression of desire I have ever experienced.

In somewhat the same way God swept my mind free from the impure and desirous thinking which had so largely filled it. And where once I had concealed the nature of this thought life—even from my most intimate companions in sin—I would not hesitate today to project my flow of thoughts upon a screen where my own children could read them. God also tackled my lazy fondness for soft couches. Where I used to drag myself out of bed somewhere between eight and ten, it is seldom now that I am not up by six, and sometimes by four or five, eager to spend an hour alone with God and to start the day right, under His guidance. Where, moreover, I grudgingly gave eight hours a day to my business, and seldom put in a full day at that, I now quite often put in eighteen hours at the work God directs and find that day not too long.

This release from desire might seem at first to be a rather dreary matter. But God never seems to take anything away without putting something far happier in its

place. For example, I thought I had found fun in the stimulation of alcohol. But real fun has only come to me in the exaltation of spiritual living. I find myself filled with a kind of outrageous joy, and not just while on a spree, but from morning till night, day after day, month after month. To replace sensuous lusts I find a sublimated and ever-deepening love for people—the kind of love that is concerned, not with multiplying the number of human beings but with the far keener joy of remaking the quality of human nature. And to replace what I once thought was the luxury of laziness I now find deep-seated calm and peace—a peace inside as unruffled by what goes on outside as the depths of the sea are unmoved by surface storms. These, moreover, are only a few of the changes that have taken place in my nature and they are all so far in the physical or self-indulgent areas of living. There is also that whole range of psychological or socially-conscious life and of spiritual God-conscious life where the change is even more pronounced and the results still more enjoyable.

If it were not for other people in the world, I suppose that a self-indulgent man would go through the whole of his life on the physical level, responding reciprocally to every incitement in his environment. Other people, however, make it necessary to control his desires to some extent and here, instead of the reciprocal response of man to nature, we find the psychological response of one individual to another.

Instead of just drinking when and where I wanted, for example, I often retired to the pantry for a secret drink in order not to run foul of my wife's felt or expressed disapproval. The fear of running into conflict with what other people thought confined many of my feminine conquests to the realm of the imagination. And, instead of indulging laziness by stretching out on every inviting couch, I resorted sometimes to daydreams at my desk where I gave the semblance of working. These, I feel, were worse than out-and-out indulgence which would, at least, have been honest.

Even when I sincerely wanted to help other people, this fear of what others would think crept in to distort things. I sincerely wanted to help my own sister, for example, but did not want to let her or other people see that, with my mighty mind, I had no real answer for her problems. Like the would-be helpers who have nothing but a ton of coal to give the poor, I had nothing but a tome of philosophy to give my sister. To cover up this dearth I started "talking down" to her, pretending to be on a level I had never myself attained. Nobody, naturally, was helped—least of all my sister.

God dealt with this social pretence much in the same way that He had dealt with physical desire. Where my way in the physical world had been to indulge or to restrain, God's way was to remove. It proved the better way. And where my way in society had been to cover up the real "littleness" that lay under my pretence of "bigness," God's way was to expose my true sin, placing me honestly on a level with other sinners and thus able really to enter into their lives and give them help.

On this honest level I entered immediately into a new and vital relationship with

the whole of society.

I could give the kind of help that neither a ton of coal nor tome of philosophy had brought to anyone, and my sister, whom I had mistreated for so long, was the first person God enabled me to help by this new quality of life. The first letter after my change brought a surprised and delighted response from her.

“What has happened to you?” she wrote. “I feel something different in you. For the first time in your life you seem to be helping me.”

On this new level, moreover, there has been a big change not only in my relations with others but in my social thinking. The surrender of my life to God did not mean retirement from life, and the surrender of my mind did not result in flabby mental muscles. It meant much greater usefulness in all departments of life and developed a clarity, insight and activity of mind with which I had never before been gifted.

I also found myself possessed of a new element in thinking. A man cannot think clearly or truly with only partial information. He cannot really solve any problem when there is always an unknown  $x$  in his equation. And here I had been trying all my life to *think* with only the physical facts at hand. I was bound to think wrongly as long as the spiritual facts were lacking in my formula and I see now why no one ever gets *anywhere* just by thinking.

With these changes in my mental, physical and social worlds came an even bigger change in the spiritual world that so long had been a blank to me. I used to think of Christ, for instance, just as an historical figure, whose example I always admired but never followed. To-day, however, Jesus Christ has stepped out of history. He has become a real and living Presence who occupies the same room with me just as tangibly and surely as my wife or children.

And He is helping me to be like Himself—not by the long-range teaching of dry and dusty ethics such as I found in Sunday school—but through the contagion of the Holy Spirit caught directly from a Living Personality. I have found for a certainty that “character is caught—not taught.”

As I began to “catch” a little of this Christ-like character, I also began to gain a little clearer understanding of Christian theology. The Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost had always been a most confusing matter to me. Though recognizing Jesus as a lovable and exemplary character, for instance, I did not really think He was the Son of God. God Himself, as someone has described, was just a sort of “oblong blur” while the Holy Ghost held no significance for me whatever.

With my new experience, however, the Holy Ghost or Spirit became a definite force flowing from God to me as electricity flows from a power house. This force worked in me, bringing an affection for things I had never loved before, and bringing the will to do things I had never wanted to do—to serve God, let us say, rather than Mammon—or, as a more definite example, to share the money I used to hoard, or to spend it for God’s work rather than for personal projects. It was a force, moreover, which not only switched over my will and my affections but which I actually could

feel within me as a sort of “comforting encouragement”—as a sense of “absolute dependability”—as an inspiration and as a power actually to *do* things—a force far stronger, far wiser, far more helpful and far more effective than any I myself had ever possessed. It was this power of the Spirit flowing into me that, as St. Paul said, made religion a “force” rather than just a “form” and which gave me the courage, the strength, the poise or whatever else I needed to carry out God’s work. It buoyed me up, for instance, and gave me not only the courage but the words with which to address a gathering of 2,500 people, having had no preparation other than prayer. It gave me the power to swallow my pride and admit to my wife that the misbehavior of our children at table was due chiefly to my own wrong attitude towards them.

Power to do things, however, is not much use unless you know just what to do. Power over an audience, for instance, is a menace rather than a help unless used to move that audience in the direction God would have it go. And power over children is equally useless or equally dangerous unless used to bend the twig as God would have it grow. One cannot, of course, gain any definite direction for the use of power from a God who is just an “oblong blur.” But God in His wisdom had focused that blur into the definite figure of a Man—a figure which could speak to men in their own language and show in human word and character what God’s will was and what His character was like.

I see now, in other words, that to prepare us for the coming of the Holy Spirit and to direct us in the use of that unfamiliar power, God had to walk and talk among us through His Son Jesus Christ. He had sent His power to men before and they had abused it, or misunderstood it, or had failed to make it understood. They had used it cruelly, for example, because—not knowing God in person—they had imagined a *cruel* God. I, too, might have imagined all kinds of things about a God I did not know in person. It took the God in Jesus to show me how really kind and loving He was. And it took personal contact with the risen, still-living Jesus to enable me to “catch” some of the same characteristics and begin to use God’s power in a kind and loving way. Without Jesus, God would always have remained a “ghost” to me. And the Holy Ghost Himself would always have remained a power beyond my reach—a power God could not trust me with because I did not know how to use it.

To-day, however, He *is* sending me His Holy Spirit because He knows that I am following His Son. He knows that I will try to use that power as Christ would use it and, in fact, as Christ *is directing me* to use it—honestly, unselfishly, and in a pure and loving way.

This, of course, did not all come at once. In fact, it has not all come yet. But I have definitely turned about on my path of “Pagan Progress” and am traveling the other way. I have begun to get my bearings in this new world. I find it full of people who have also turned around. God’s orders to His followers are never simply, “Right” or “Left oblique.” They are, “Halt! Right about face! Forward—*march!*”

## CHAPTER IX

### THIS BUSINESS OF LIVING THE OTHER WAY ROUND *RE-DIRECTION*

In the post-War days of dizzy peaks and dizzier slumps I decided I was living in a world turned upside-down. I now see, however, that it was I who was upside-down. In most areas of my life I let myself be guided by a force that was pulling in the very opposite direction from God. Forces working in opposite directions nullify each other. That, I think, is why the selfish indulgence of my desires cancelled out their own satisfaction. That is why my self-directed thinking led nowhere, either for myself or others. And, since both my senses and my understanding were continuously dulled by back-pedaling against God, they were never sharpened to the point of sensitivity needed for a spiritual experience.

God handled these blocks in the physical area of my life by removing sensuous desire, as I tried to explain in my last chapter. He stopped the flow of my misdirected forces and gave me His force to flow within me unopposed. I thus found the peace that comes when conflict ceases. And I found the joy that comes through sharpened senses and a righted understanding when these subjects of the human will are subjected to God's will instead, and brought within the pattern of His plan and within the consciousness of His affection. I did not, however, stop there. The purpose of the Oxford Group is to hold one always to the highest, and they did not let me hesitate half-way.

The Oriental mystic, for example, is content to submerge himself in God just to gain cessation of desire and the peace and joy that self-forgetfulness invariably brings. But the Oxford Group is a Christian body. And Christian mystics are *working* mystics. They "seek God—not joy" and they submerge themselves in God, not so much for the happiness that results as for the usefulness. They contact God in order to implant His purpose in and transmit His power to the lives of others and thus, individual by individual, to bring about regeneration of the world.

I could not, therefore, stop with the mere cessation of my old desires, nor linger to bask in the new peace and joy thus gained. Identification with the Oxford Group meant my acceptance of the new desire Christ wanted to plant in place of the old. And it meant taking up the new direction He gave to my life when I permitted His force to flow unopposed.

I became most definitely conscious of this new direction one night as I was praying some six months after my change. I realized that my prayer had been little but wishful thinking—that I had prayed God chiefly to bring about the things *I* wanted, in the way I wanted them to come. I then and there asked God to take over my prayer and guide it, so

that I might pray for what He wanted to bring about and so that He might use me for that purpose instead of my trying to use Him. At that moment I became distinctly conscious of a force flowing through me. At first, while I was praying for the things *I* wanted, this force seemed to gather within me. It generated from the wish of my being and flowed upward and outward as though I were broadcasting my wish to God and asking Him to do something about it. The moment that I asked Him to take over, however, that flow definitely stopped. *And then it started in the opposite direction.* It was as though an idea generated outside of me had been broadcast from space, entering my mind and flowing downward to *become* the wish of my being. I was not only changed, but completely turned around.

Before this, in other words, I had been passively obedient to God. I was now put actively and creatively to work for God. And while, with my first surrender, my life had been greatly altered, this new surrender completed the reversal and started me in a direction which lay absolutely opposite to all my old ways. I took up a re-directed path, not only in the physical or sensuous environment, but in all the social-intellectual and spiritual-volitional areas of life.

In the physical area, as already suggested, I used to be guided only by the pull of my desire for a sensual indulgence. I would boorishly, for instance, refuse to give or to go out for an evening party unless I saw there some chance to excite my senses through conquests at bridge, to dull my senses through the conquest of more alcohol than others could drink, or to gratify my senses through flirting with some lady who was not my wife. To-day I give parties or go to them, not because I hope for sensual excitement, but because God has *told* me to do so. And He tells me to give or go to a party because, at that party, He has some definite and creative work for me to do.

It may be—much as in the old days—that He guides me to a party simply because He knows I need the rest or relaxation I will find there. I am seldom, however, as tired as in the old days. More often, I believe, God guides me to a party to show my old crowd that giving one's life to God does not make one queer. It is to show them that working, "guided" Christians do not become down-in-the-mouth cranks, but that they actually outlive, outlaugh and outlove the pagans. Again (and this seems usually the case) God may guide me to a party because He knows some man or woman will be there who is in spiritual need. He knows that my experience and victories in Christ will help them. He guides me when to speak and whom to speak to, and thus uses me to win another person to His kingdom. Stupid as this may seem to those who have not tried it, I can assure you that going to a party to make a "conquest" for Christ is far more exciting, satisfying and gratifying than any of my old attempts to make a conquest of my own.

I can even, these days, put on my dinner coat and go with a smile to parties that my wife used to have to drag me to if I consented to go at all. Following God's guidance is by no means a drearily submissive form of obedience. It is something you can always do willingly and gladly. God, in fact, has never called upon me to do anything without giving me the power, courage, words, wisdom, money, love, patience, foresight, stimulation, or whatever else I might need to accomplish the desired result. Just as in

my “B.C.” days I never faced unpleasant things without a hip flask to see me through. God never calls me to a difficult or boring task without giving me new spirit to take the place of that flask and to do a 1,000 per cent better job.

This re-direction of old desires and substitution for old stimuli has extended not only throughout my sensual life, but into my social and intellectual life as well. It enters into all of my thinking and into all of my dealings with other people. When, for instance, I only *thought* about God—when He existed only in my mind as a belief—I could reach Him only as an intellectual conclusion. I concluded that there must be some Higher Power to account for all the things taking place in space much as scientists concluded that there must be an atom to account for all the things taking place in physics. Knowing Him only as a conclusion, however, I could only conclude what He wanted me to do in my relations with other people. And since these conclusions took place entirely in my own mind, I usually concluded that I was just about perfect, but that something should be done about other people to make the world a more comfortable background for my personal exploits, and to remove the various obstructionists who disturbed the even tenor of my ways.

Even before I was married I had decided to “reform” my future wife. I decided, among many other changes obviously needed, that I would “bring her up to my intellectual level” in order that she might form an intelligent and complementary foil to my philosophical discourses during the (anticipated) “long winter evenings.” Once, however, she fell asleep as I—reading aloud—waded through the fourth volume of a history of civilization. I decided to abandon the attempt and contented myself in later years with merely pointing out her faults.

She should, I told her, check her tongue a bit. She should speak less sharply to the children. She should prove less diligent in inventing tiresome errands for me. She should look with greater tolerance on my drinking companions and with less interest on social affairs. She should spend less money on practically everything and keep the children from pounding the piano and playing the radio simultaneously while I was giving the world the benefit of my great wisdom and trying to write. Everything, I was sure, would turn out much better if she would correct these erroneous ways. And everything *would* have been much better—for my ego. Nothing, however, would have happened in the world I was so nobly trying to help. And nothing would have happened in my wife.

Here, I think, has been my most conspicuous redirection. I see now the utter futility of trying to reform the other fellow without starting to reform myself. I see the utter uselessness of trying to work out systems which would solve the world’s economic and social problems if I myself am of such a nature that no system—other than self satisfaction—could work out for me.

I therefore no longer tell my wife to check her tongue. I, as God directs and empowers me, check my own. And when I find myself, not my wife, speaking sharply to the children, I realize that it is because some element of selfishness is not yet dead within me and that I have further surrenders to make. When I see her spending too much money I realize that I have been too preoccupied to seek guidance in the matter with her,

or too utterly lazy to sit down with her and work out the budget by which God wants us to expend His funds. As for drinking companions, I no longer happen to drink, while, as for society, we both have learned to think of people's worth rather than to think how much they are worth, and to move in circles where God has use for us rather than with the people we think we can use.

In still larger circles—the world of society as a whole—I am learning to think and move in the same re-directed way. I am learning, as someone has said, that “the soul of reformation is a reformation of the soul.” I am learning that I cannot give to society what I have not got myself. I am learning that I have nothing *worth* giving to society except what Christ has given to me. And only when I tell what Christ *has* done for me—and thus tempt men towards the same change in their own lives—have I done any creative work in this business of living, or been of any use in this sorely troubled world.

The same sort of re-direction has been brought about in the spiritual-volitional side of my nature. The force of self-will no longer runs contrary to God's will to set up life-plans and ideals that can block the purposes of Christ. My principal life-plan, for instance, was to build a wall of impregnable economic security around myself and then step inside to rot at leisure. I intended to make my business tremendously successful, so that, when I retired, I could continue to draw substantial income from my firm without doing any further work. Just as a side line I expected to make a fortune in the stock market, while looking towards an anticipated inheritance out of the other corner of my economic eye, and equally sure that handsome royalties would pour in from the great books I was always *going* to write. To-day I there is not a single stone left standing in this economic wall. I have learned that life plans are nothing but a block to God's plans and that the only economic security is found in “Give us this day our daily bread.”

The same crash had to come in my ideals, and that, I think, was even harder both to understand and to stand for. I once, for instance, worked out the “perfect plan” for helping fallen humanity. It was a plan involving charity on the part of bighearted men like myself. Instead of the diminishing returns usually obtained from the charity dollar, however, *my* plan *multiplied* returns. It made it possible for the poor to *earn eight* dollars for every dollar that was given. It gave jobs instead of a dole. At the same time it reclaimed the derelict, rehabilitating men as well as multiplying dollars. Proudly I fought for this ideal, diverting much of my new-found, God-given power to this “worthy cause.” I had to learn, however, that man-made ideals, like man-made plans, are nothing but a block to God's plans. They are our hope or the other fellow's redemption through—his adoption of *our* views. But the acceptance of another man's views or the acceptance of his systems has never redeemed anybody, and never will. As long as men form plans and hold ideals—as long as they devise systems—as long as they “conclude” in their own minds what a God they have never met would have them do—the world will be safe for reformers, theorists, idealists, sentimentalists, crooks, selfishness and the devil. But it will *not* be safe for the building of the Kingdom of God until those who have turned in the opposite direction persuade enough others to turn in the same way.

This whole change in the direction of my life can best, perhaps, be illustrated through

a version of the game of “truth” taught me by a member of the Oxford Group. You write down the five things you honestly like most in life. And you write down the five things you most hate. Then—if any change has come into your life—you write them down again to show the comparison between your old life and the new. This is how the game works out for me:

IN MY OLD LIFE

*I most liked:*

Myself.

Liquor, tobacco and almost every other stimulant, narcotic and form of self-indulgence.

Anything which gave me pleasure, possessions power, position and applause, or pumped up my self-esteem.

To be left largely to myself

My wife—because of the comforting and complimentary way she treated me.

*I hated most:*

Poverty (for myself).

Prohibition.

Work.

People who disapproved or tried to interfere with me

Any betrayal of my inner thoughts or emotions.

IN MY NEW LIFE

*I most like:*

God.

Time alone with God. The fellowship of the living Jesus Christ.

The stimulation of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of God’s guidance

My wife—because of the things God now enables us to do for each other  
Communion with others who are trying to lead the same kind of Christ-centered life and the witnessing to all of what Christ has come to mean to me

*I hate most:*

Sin.

Self, because “I” is the middle letter of SIN.

Sins that separate me from God.

Sins that separate me from people.

Anything that falls short of God’s plan for me.

This, I think you will agree, suggests quite a reversal in life’s motives. Some of my old friends, of course, say they liked me better the old way. I did, at that time, fit more comfortably into their particular picture, but I am now trying to fit into the pattern of God. Whether it is comfortable or not, that pattern is, so far as I am able, directing my entire life—not only in my relations with the physical universe and with other people, but in the departments of everyday living—in education, in marriage, in my business, in social work, in politics and in the Church.

## CHAPTER X

### THIS BUSINESS OF STARTING IN SCHOOL AGAIN *EDUCATION*

No sooner had I surrendered my life to God than I found myself starting school again. I found what I had missed in my own education twenty or more years ago. I found what many educators are missing to-day.

Education, I had always thought, is or should be a preparation for the business of life. What I did not see, however, was the threefold nature of this business. I did not see that we are living not only to survive or get along in the physical universe but *also* to get along with other people *and* to get along with God. I saw only the survival part. I wanted to get along in the physical universe with the greatest glory to myself, and the greatest financial gain. And since this is all that most people see and want—since schools cannot run without people to go to them—this “getting along in the physical world” is all that many schools elect to teach.

The institute of technology I attended, for example, could teach me to be a competent engineer but not necessarily a contented engineer. It taught me one way to make a living but in no way how to live.

And, while the more cultural schools and colleges could teach one “to be a gentleman” and to make friends who later might prove useful if you wanted to sell stocks and bonds, real estate or life insurance, they apparently had no way of teaching the true fundamentals of character nor of building true fellowship among men.

If there was any school which could have taught me to engineer, write or advertise by moral means for moral motives—if there was any institute which controlled its practical technique by means of spiritual technique—I either missed the lesson or missed finding that school. I learned to engineer, write and advertise—but for self rather than for God. And I did not, at that time, try to educate myself with any sort of view to helping other people.

Had I, in fact, made social service my main aim in life—had I subscribed wholly to the humanistic rather than the egoistic scheme—I still am at a loss to know where I might have gone to school. Contacts with other people—with parents, teachers, pals, business associates, publicists and with oneself—make up the main part of the business of living. Yet nowhere did I find a preparation for it.

Even in the so-called “progressive” schools there was nothing but an attempt to fit men into the social environment—to teach them to become more cooperative or group-minded and to show them how they could get along without “trespassing on the rights of others.” There is, however, no more use in teaching a man to fit into his social environment than there is in teaching him to make a living while he neither

knows how to live himself nor to plant and cultivate the life abundant in his fellows. No matter how well and successfully he fits into the social environment and no matter how well and successfully he fits into the physical environment, a man is a misfit in life until he learns how to fit into the third or spiritual plan.

My course in technology frankly made no attempt to deal with human relations. My course in journalism, with its much wider range of cultural subjects, taught me to live in a world of books but taught me nothing about people except, perhaps, rather to look down on those with less education. My courses in advertising taught me how to take advantage of human nature—the psychology of twisting where the hair is short until purchasers would come across with the almighty dollar. From fraternity life and other extracurricular activities I learned little but snobbery. Out in life and the school of experience I fared no better, for here I had no teacher but human greed on one hand and the restraint of law on the other. I learned how to get the better of the other fellow without having my friends shun me or having to go to jail for it. Even when, a little later, I turned more seriously and directly to the study of sociology itself, I found nothing but an utterly inadequate attempt to control character, happiness and progress through control of family antecedents, systems of government, systems of education, systems of economics or social environment. Nowhere did I find how to reach the man himself and his real inner problems. Nowhere did I find an adequate method for developing character which, I feel, is the chief lack in the American educational system. Nowhere did I find how to deal with

people redemptively and creatively as Jesus Christ would have dealt with them. Nowhere did I find even the birth of a real wish to do so.

An educated man, without Christ at his center, is, as I know now, like a ship loaded with valuable cargo but not going any where—or else headed the more certainly and swiftly for destruction. In my own educational career I had attended something like eight preparatory schools and four colleges and universities. I had read many books. A book a day was once my standard. I had engaged in research work in some of the world's finest libraries. I had attended learned lectures. I had seen, taken part in or produced a wide variety of plays. I had delivered myself or written for others a considerable number of orations. Through twenty years of advertising work I had been in direct touch with almost every known branch of industry, finance and professional endeavor. I had helped to sell tiny phials of imported perfume and an entire industrial city. I had ridden freight locomotives and marketed Rolls-Royces. I had been in debt and seen palmy days. I had bummed it from one riverfront saloon to another and lived with millionaires. I had associated with harlots and with nobility. I had sampled almost everything there was to sample in the physical-sensual and social-intellectual areas of life. Yet my real education did not begin till the day that I found God.

I have, in fact, learned more about the real business of living in four days at an

Oxford Group School of Life than in any four years of my previous history. That is because it is a school in which God is the Instructor and human teachers but His instruments.

It is a school in which all instruction is guided by God in relation to the deepest needs of its pupils and their present stage of growth. It is a school where old lives are made new and where new lives are matured in truth. It is a school where we learn to treat the physical world with a moral emphasis as God would have us. It is a school where we learn to deal with the social world *creatively* and *redemptively* as Jesus Christ would. Finally it is a school—and the only such school I know—which enters effectively into that third department of living—which ushers us into the presence of God and which teaches us how to live and grow there.

Were the principles of the Oxford Group School of Life extended into all institutions of learning, then Applied Religion, or “the application of God” in all of life’s activities, situations and relationships, would become the backbone of each curriculum. The chief course in science for example, would be the science of finding and using spiritual power for all of life’s accomplishments—a subject in which, as Steinmetz declared, we have reached only a Benjamin Franklin or kite-string stage of knowledge. History would tend to show the calamity or inescapable frustration that comes upon all races, peoples, rulers or subjects who rely on self-determination and seek to work out their own salvation unguided by God. Sociology would show the futility of trying to build society around any center but Christ. Economics would teach the limitless quest of soul-growth as life’s fundamental aim, relegating the quest of wealth and other limited possessions to their rightful place as a mere supporting activity in life’s real programme. Psychology would seek, not simply to apply aptitudes in choosing a vocation but to apply the “pleasure-experience” of surrender to God as a motive in following these vocations. Political science would teach the sovereignty of God’s will—replacing human desire as the basis of good government. Philosophical and religious studies would jump to life and become a mainspring in living rather than a mere callisthenic for the mind.

On the physical side of education the athlete’s training table would be extended to all students since the desire to serve God brings the companion desire to keep physically at top notch for His service. And on the social side, helpful sharing of experience and new truths discovered would replace pointless debating societies, while fellowship in Christ would be substituted for clubs that are founded merely on the affinity of kindred pocket-books and spirits. The whole, like an Oxford Group School of Life, would offer us real preparation for our three-phase business of living.

While waiting for such schools to grow, as the number of God-guided lives increases among educators and students, it may be interesting to trace guided and surrendered individuals through some of our existing schools. Even with no change in the curriculum or staff, a surrendered and God-conscious student can gain much

more from the present modes of education than any of his pagan friends.

There is first of all the matter of choosing schools and of finding the means to go there. I have seen youngsters in the Oxford Group, for instance, select their schools or colleges, not according to parental preference, not according to ideas of their own, but according to the direct and often amazing guidance of God. This guidance sometimes leads to most unexpected institutions that neither student nor parent had considered. At other times God shows the opportunity for attending leading universities that the student had considered beyond hope. In one case, due to the depression, a young man had given up all idea of going to college. Then God told him that he *ought* to go—told him *where* to go—and told him where to *find the money*. This is not an unusual occurrence. It is only one case in many.

Once *in* his school or college, moreover, the guided student finds the right selection of studies and he finds a greater ability to study—a certain sharpening of the mind such as I have tried to describe in my own experience. He finds himself able to attack the most intricate studies and to master subjects that have always been a bugbear. He finds, moreover, that God does not let his studies suffer when, as sometimes happens, He diverts him temporarily to other details of His work.

At a later stage in life, we find men and women who have completed their education on an unguided basis (as I had) and who, on their surrender, are sent back by God to attend the schools He wanted them to go to in the first place. I have in mind a sales engineer who had been out of college for six years and a lawyer who had practiced his profession for thirteen years. God told them He wanted them both in His ministry and they obediently started in at a theological seminary.

A little further along we come to my own stage of education—twenty years or more out of college and with ten or more years elapsed since our last go at Dr. Eliot's "Five Foot Shelf" of books. It is too late to go *back* to school, perhaps, but not too late to *start* in school again under the tutelage of God.

God to-day is teaching me *directly* through my daily quiet hour in the morning and indirectly through passages in the Bible that He indicates, through the books He guides me to read, through the group meetings and Schools of Life He guides me to attend, through the rich experiences He leads me into and through the difficulties He uses to develop my moral fiber. In this instruction He brings me down to the very essentials of living. He wastes no words in superfluities. He tells me what I am living *for* and there is no mistaking it. He tells me where I fail to live that way. He tells me what is the matter and how to correct it. He tells me how to add to my stature physically, mentally and spiritually. He directly reverses most of my previous ideas on physical, mental and spiritual values. He gives me a whole new set of values and shows me how to select, from an ocean of possibilities, that one thing needed at the moment to live according to His plan.

He is teaching me meanwhile to make a living, not by selfishly getting the better of the other fellow, nor even by "fitting into society without trespass on other's

desires.” He is teaching me to live by *His* desires and that what He supplies is always “plenty.” In the social area of life He is teaching me what to do for my mother, sister, wife and children that will help *them* grow in soul. He is showing me what human teachers to go to and how to teach myself.

He is teaching me how to get along with my companions and associates—both those who know God and those who do not. He is teaching me to recognize almost at once the man in need who is longing to *find* God. He is teaching me what attitude to take towards publicists and critics who are molding the world’s ideas—usually away from God. He is teaching me to know myself in the light of truth. He is teaching me to know His Son and the Son, in turn, is teaching me to know ever more of God.

Best of all, this education “sticks.” Where volumes of human advice and misinformation have poured in one ear and out the other, the guidance of God seems to wrap itself around my backbone and become an integral part of my character. It is education He has made not only mine but mine for “keeps.”

## CHAPTER XI

### THIS BUSINESS OF BEING REMARRIED *WEDLOCK*

When romance went out of marriage I came to the profound conclusion that no one man and no one woman could give each other everything they needed. And I worked out an idea for a sort of communal marriage where half a dozen women (including a good cook, a good mistress and a good mother) and half a dozen men (including a good money-maker, a good love-maker and an intellectual or two) were to marry and thus extend the range of talents and satisfactions to be found in one and the same family. I considered this idea very “advanced.”

So, no doubt, do the “free thinkers” who demand “free love,” “companionate marriage,” more liberal divorce laws and other forms of easy promiscuity. Actually, of course, these ideas are not advanced. They are very much “old stuff.” Even companionate marriage dates back to ancient Hindu tribes and has long been practiced among the Turcomans as well as in Ceylon and the Andaman Islands. Monogamy, therefore, is by way of being the very newest and most modern form of matrimony.

Far from having been “tried and found wanting,” monogamy, as G. A. Studdert Kennedy suggests, has been “tried, found difficult, and not tried enough.” There is one form of monogamy, however, which has scarcely even been tried. Its name is Holy Wedlock. I do not mean simply a marriage sanctioned by the Church. There are plenty of those which are far from holy. I mean a marriage entered into neither for its selfish-sensuous satisfactions, nor for its social-economic consequences, but for the purpose of spiritual growth. I mean a marriage where both parties contract not only with each other but with their Maker. I mean a marriage which successfully and joyously carries out the marriage vows. I mean a marriage in which bride and groom fully and freely surrender self-will—not becoming a henpecked husband or submissive wife—but a man and wife handpicked for each other under God’s guidance and submissive to His will.

Other forms of wedlock may as well be called deadlock, for they simply mean the bringing of two self-centered people together—each revolving on a different axis and thus bound to clash. They may tolerate each other as long as they are “nice to each other. “I liked my husband,” as one wife admitted, “because of the nice way he treated *me*.” But when this treatment begins to cloy—when romance flattens like stale champagne—they soon enough return to their own self-centered ways of living. I have seen mothers train their daughters before marriage to gain and hold “the upper hand.” These mothers had long since learned that the “give and take” of marriage is largely a matter of just giving in to-day so that you can take advantage of your better half to-morrow.

Such relationships wear thin, I feel, because so often they are based on nothing but convenience or on a matter of purely physical affinity. So far as I was concerned, I wanted to be free to mix cocktails under my own roof, as already stated, and I wanted a lot of other things I could indulge myself in more freely and fully if I had a wife to give me opportunity or an excuse. There came a time, however, when the solace offered by these early satisfactions grew a little thin and gritty. I continued married life more as a duty than as a pleasure, but I still felt pangs of conscience when I thought of other women. Fidelity I considered as a duty to my wife, to my children and to social custom. I was also just a bit afraid I might get caught.

Like many other dutiful wives and husbands, we tried to maintain this semblance of a smoothly-running marriage to the world and even to each other. We pretended everything was all right. Under the calm exterior, however, was a constant conflict of desires—a conflict of self-centered egos unremittingly at war. Continuance on this suppressed conscientious level cried out for escape.

The usual attempt at escape lies in some form of “advanced thinking”—a taking-up of the “new freedom” which offers an easy excuse for slipping back into the old immorality without more ado. Then, perhaps, may come divorce, which in ninety per cent of the investigated cases is due to selfishness and nothing else. Divorce, of course, is *not* an avenue of escape. It brings no sublimation of the old self-indulgent desires. No separation from a life partner can separate one from *oneself*. The first divorce, therefore, is likely to lead to a chain of divorces in the hopeless attempt to get away from one’s own personality, and with never any attempt to develop those inner qualities that can lead to happy marriage any time and anywhere.

My wife and I did not get as far as divorce. While as selfish and self-centered as the rest, we had learned, like turtles, to pull in our heads when we saw trouble coming. We learned to go on having our own ways without much surface friction, though the friction continued to grow inside. I, in fact, began to sample some of the easier methods of “escape” which I called “just seeking a little variety.” My wife, meanwhile, approaching the dangerous age, was caught in an emotional net which she hated with all her soul, yet could not escape. Then we met the Oxford Group and learned a *real* way of escape. It is strange I had never thought that there might be *two* exits from a conscientious strained relationship—an exit leading to an *upper* level of living as well as the drop to a lower one. We have now found escape on that upper level. We have found escape in holy wedlock instead of in communal marriage, companionate marriage, free love or divorce. We have found in Christ a full answer to every problem of our marriage as to every other problem of our lives.

I do not mean, of course, that the problems were all solved in a day. We are still very far from a perfect family. We are still tripped up at times by ego, and fall into many forms of selfish sin. Instead of growing *away* from each other as in the past, however, we are steadily growing *towards* each other and *into* the sort of match that is really made in heaven.

Our problems are not all answered but they are *being* answered. And I have seen enough Oxford Group families further advanced than our own to know that Christ is the positive and unfailing answer to divorce, to infelicity, infidelity, disobedience, strain, incompatibility, “nerves,” sexual maladjustment, over-conscientiousness, irksomeness, temper, irritation, disagreement, and every other form of marital disunity and woe.

Just the other night, for instance, I heard a man discussing harmonious sex relations as the key to a happy marriage. A few years ago I would have heartily agreed. I now know, however, that true harmony lies much deeper than sex and that even harmony *in* sex itself lies, not merely in a man and woman’s attitude towards each other, but in their attitude towards God. I have found, in fact, that an experience of God means far more than a new charge of strength flowing into the will. It means far more than a new direction and a new power to choose correctly and rightly. It also brings a new affection—strengthened, invigorated, cleansed. There is something wonderfully fresh, vital, new and full in this cleansing “breeze of the spirit.” There is a bubbling up and flowing over—not of the old and sickening physical affinity—but of a new and purified, outgoing and self-sacrificing love.

God, we have found, is not only the answer to disharmony in sex relations; not only our Guide, Counselor and Friend; not only the Giver of a new and purified affection. He is Judge, Provider and Stabilizer in all the psychological and economic difficulties which arise in the intellectual and social areas of marriage.

I was suffering, for instance, from what psychologists might call a sense of “juvenile omnipotence” carried over into middle age. As a new-born babe I had gathered the impression that the entire universe revolved around me. I was the center of everything. The whole world had no other function than to contribute to my comfort and support. This impression was never dispelled. When I married, therefore, I naturally expected my wife to fall into this procession of encircling satellites, only to learn that she had gathered some of the same omnipotent sense in her own infancy, and expected to find a dancing attendant in me. This self-willed “adult infancy” was, indeed, a psychological difficulty. But it had no psychological cure. The only remedy we found was to go *back* to infancy—this time a *spiritual* infancy—and re-begin our lives as satellites in one and the same orbit revolving around Christ as the center.

Economics are often blamed for marriage difficulties when emptiness of the spirit, rather than the pocket, is the real source of woe. Economic worries, for example, are supposed to wear a husband-wife relation to the ragged point. And too much poverty, too many children, too little food or too many bad companions are supposed to snow a couple under till they have no thought or time to work out a domestic harmony. This once was so in my own case. My family suffered from bad business—not for lack of something to eat, but for the lack of that in me which would enable them to rise above despondency and annoyance. And each break in the stock market brought me nearer to a break with my wife. To-day, however, I am

much nearer being *really* broke than I ever was before in my life. And yet, at the same time, I am much nearer to my wife and children. Economic difficulty is not the cause of marital difficulty any more than is a false psychology. In our own case, in fact, it has been the very reverse. Through teaching us a far deeper dependence upon God it has brought us into far deeper unity, and is thus the best thing that ever happened to the members of my household. We are, in fact, happier and more harmonious now than at any time during prosperity. And there are married people in the group who live entirely on faith and prayer, yet who are the happiest couples I know.

Even in the dark ages before my change I could I see that biology, psychology and economics were not the real or basic causes of domestic strife. I attributed it, rather, to an unsound philosophy—the fact that men and women failed to see what they were really living for, and that they chose to live selfishly in consequence. My wife, meanwhile, attributed it to the fundamental difference in men and women which gave us different viewpoints and made it impossible for us to see eye-to-eye. I know now, however, that while philosophy may change or repress the destructive effects of selfishness, it never sublimates them. They are sure to break out anew somewhere else. And my wife now knows that it was not the fundamental differences in us that *led* to difference of opinion. It was the fundamental sameness—the fundamental ego in each one of us which led to the assertion of self-will.

We are a different man and wife to-day, but that is not due to anything new we have learned about biology, psychology, economics or philosophy. It is not due to the difference or sameness in men and women. It is due to following the same love, the same Inspiration, the same Teacher. We have both been re-educated under Christ.

In my own case, for example, the new philosophy I had formed of life did not even repress my old desires. I was no better husband or father than I had ever been. It was not, in fact, until the love of Christ drove out the love of self that I even wanted to *become* a better family man. And I had to let God dispel most of my previous beliefs of what a husband and a father should be like—instructing me entirely anew—before I became of any significant use to my family.

My wife, too, has been re-educated in this way and from all angles. Where once she fell asleep, as I attempted to read her “The History of Civilization,” she is now handing me worthwhile books and magazines to read. And she is now *making* history in her family instead of merely repeating the drab and uninspired precedent of many million homes.

At one time, for instance, she wished she could place a housekeeper in charge of her family while she went away to take a psychological course in child training. She wished she could start all over again and try to learn, not only to rear us in the way we should go, but get along with us in the meantime. To-day she has made that fresh start, but without going to college. Under the direction of God’s guidance, and that alone, she is using the most advanced psychology with both me and the children.

And she is gaining that confidence in handling us and living with us that she always knew she *should* have, but had always lacked. “Mother, please don’t *worry* about me so,” was once a frequent saying that has now become obsolete in our household. She has put the children in God’s hands, and awaits His wise direction in dealing with them. Instead of suffering under a super-imposed parental authority which is irritating, fleeting and ineffective, they are learning discipline from within—a discipline imposed by the divine Authority Who now has charge of them.

Where once, in other words, physical affinity was about the only bond between us—and a waning bond at that—we are now united through our children, through our minds, through our interests, through our common work of winning people to Christ, and through the all-enveloping love of God. We have become a team united and held together, not by the usual irksome ties of “matrimonial harness,” but by the freely-chosen and willingly-accepted “reign” of God.

One of the first lessons I learned under this new reign was a far more selfless love for my wife and family. I learned to love them, not for the nice things they did for me, but for the deeper needs I began to discern in them, and for the way God then enabled me to fill them. I learned that holy wedlock is not a matter of self-indulgence, but a matter of self-sacrifice. And I learned what self-sacrifice really means.

Self-sacrifice, I found, was not a matter of stinting myself at the club so that my wife might have a new fur coat. It was not going without bread ourselves so that the children might have chocolate cake. It was not borrowing money and bearing silently and nobly a burden of debt so that my wife might rest her “tired nerves” at an expensive sanatorium. It was the far more difficult task of disregarding the fact that Mrs. Jones had a new fur coat—of swallowing my pride regarding coat-providing prowess in the eyes of Mr. Jones—and of taking the trouble to dig far enough down into my wife’s life to find that lack of a fur coat was not the real cause of her tense restlessness. It was the equally difficult task of seeing that withholding chocolate cake from our children was often far better than giving it to them—even though the withholding, apparently, would lessen their liking for us. Lastly it was the extremely difficult task of facing the fact that my wife was on the verge of breaking down—not because of her family—not because of the strain of the times—not because she was approaching forty—not because of the perversity of the feminine nature in general—but largely because of the extremely stupid and egotistical way in which I had first spoiled and then neglected her, rebuked and misunderstood her, for nearly twenty years.

I do not mean that, with my efforts to “escape,” I had become a sort of Bluebeard who was cruel and harsh. I mean that, in common with millions of other unseeing husbands, I had spoiled her in early marriage for my own pleasure and for the sake of my own vanity. I had tried to make life as luxurious as possible for her, not so much for love of her as for selflove—to flaunt my earning ability in the eyes of other wives and men. I gave her all my money (that I did not want myself), but

gave nothing whatever *of myself* for the sake of her soul. Then, tiring of this sport, I abandoned her—socially and spiritually if not geographically. I sought my escape through other “experiments” and in office and speakeasy, while leaving her to lead a very thin existence with the children neither of us understood, with church work that held no real significance for her, and with a shallow life that had no contacts whatever in the world of reality. I thus enacted the “Great American Tragedy” within the walls of my own home.

My wife, meanwhile, was playing her own part in this tragedy. Wanting constantly to regain at least a small share of my time, attention and affection, and caring really very little for the money and other things I tried to give to her, she seldom had the courage to intrude on what I insisted were the “important affairs” of life. And her only method of intrusion was to plead that I *give* her a little more of my time. I called it “nagging,” and went my way.

When God pointed out these various mistakes, He not only convinced us of our folly, but showed us what we could *do* about it. It was a matter of starting each other’s reform all over again, but starting this time with ourselves. Instead of impatiently brushing by her requests for time, for instance, and telling her I had more important things to do, I listened to the voice of God Who told me that the most important thing in life for me, right then, was to help Him reconstruct the wife and mother I had helped bring to the edge of nervous breakdown. He told me that I would have to lay my life down beside hers, giving her—not a grudging ten or fifteen minutes every other day or so—but as much time as she needed every day.

He told me to listen patiently to what seemed unnecessary and uninteresting detail from my point of view but what, in her point of view, God recognized as dangerous suppression which needed to be externalized through sharing, and sublimated into constructive channels in the way He promised to direct. Through thus giving her the time I had formerly denied her, and thus holding her to centeredness in Christ rather than allowing her to lapse into self-centered introspection, God used me to restore the stability of character I had so carelessly helped to upset.

She, meanwhile, underwent a change which altered her approach to me and enabled her, in turn, to start the loving reconstruction of my character. Instead of nagging for “more time—more time,” she began to pray with me about it, and thus kept me from retreating back into the caves where I had so long neglected not only her, but all other members of my family. We began, in fact, to pray together in creating the new vision of the couple God would have us be. “One of our greatest blessings,” as my wife says now, “is finding ourselves telling one another our own weak spots and asking for one another’s prayers about them, with no fear that the other will gloat about it or use that confidence as a weapon in the future.” Instead, in other words, of criticizing each other, we now criticize *ourselves* to each other, and ask the other’s prayers about it. And when we occasionally *do* “check”—to hold the other to the maximum in Christ—it is not without first examining the beam in our own eye, and *then* only under guidance in a prayerful and redemptive way.

Guided living also eliminates the frictions which are bound to arise when two self-centered people revolving on different axes are brought into close proximity. There is little friction between my wife and myself now because, when we see a difference of opinion in the offing, we have a quiet time and refer the matter to God. He settles it, without argument or dispute, in the way He knows is best for both of us. This influence is even working down into the children. They are learning that things work out better for them, too, when they await, not our decision, but the verdict of God. And where, at one time, we considered ourselves fortunate in having an efficient nurse to keep the children out of the way, we are now able to include them in our social life, in our family plans and even in most of our personal sharing without having to spell certain words or to hush up things that are either too risky or too *risqué* to have them hear.

It is remarkable, in consequence, how much I enjoy my family now, whereas I used to be so annoyed or bored by them. And yet, when I am away from them, there is no sense of separation such as there used to be. We have been brought so much closer together in spirit that, no matter where we may be in body, I have the feeling that all members of my family are always *there*.

I have, in fact, seen spiritually-united families rise triumphant not only over geographical separations but in the separations of death. Funerals in the Oxford Group do not bear the stamp of funeral. They are entirely free from the sort of mourning which arises in self-pity and self-love. And I have attended more than one in which I echoed, "Death, where is thy sting, indeed?"

These, of course, are only a few—a very few—of the many blessings which occur when an ordinary marriage is turned into holy wedlock through surrender of self-will and the sharing of one's sins. I have seen, for instance, young couples seek God's guidance together and then check that guidance with others in the group before they became engaged. I have seen other couples break off their engagement when God told them that their love was not on the right basis. I have seen couples on the brink of bitter divorce reunited after all good offices of friends, relatives, lawyers, psychologists, clergymen and fairy godmothers had failed. I have seen one surrendered member in an otherwise unsundered family endure the most intolerable family abuse cheerfully, confidently and lovingly, intent on bringing the abusive ones into their own right relationship with God. And I have seen families wholly surrendered—where all members have become Christ-centered and where all, revolving around this one axis, live together in such utter serenity and with such amazing peace, intelligent happiness and cooperation as had never before been my pleasure to behold.

My own family, as I have said, is still far from perfect. But we are growing. We are gradually beginning to approach the happy consummation just described. And, until Jesus Christ came into our home, we had known no way to grow—except apart.

## CHAPTER XII

### THIS BUSINESS OF MAKING A LIVING *ECONOMICS*

Five years ago, if anyone had asked me why I went into business, I would have said, "To make a living." The truth is, however, that I was in business, not just to make a living, but a *better* living than the other fellow. Our modern system of economic competition, I believe, started in the days of the robber barons and some of that same strain still seemed to be running in my blood.

Rough figures show, for instance, that if America's total wealth—not only in dollars but in sheep, goats, automobiles and every other form of property—were divided equally among everybody, everyone would get a stake amounting to about \$2,500. New wealth, of course, can be created, but not at anything like the rate demanded should individual desires in the matter all be satisfied. It might take a hundred years or more, for instance, just to double our present wealth and give everyone a claim to \$5,000. I, however, did not want \$2,500, nor \$5,000, nor twice that amount again. I wanted twenty million dollars—nothing less. And since new wealth could not be created fast enough to give me that amount in my own lifetime—without taking some of the existing limited supply away from someone else—I was quite ready and willing to do four or five thousand people out of their shares in order that *my* personal desires might be satisfied.

I did not face this fact frankly at the time nor admit the folly of so many people bitterly and stupidly competing for so large a share of such a limited supply of wealth. I simply shrugged my shoulders, allowed that "business was business" and, if other people didn't have jobs—well, it was just too bad that they didn't have the brains to get them. Now, however, I am ready to admit the folly of all this and more. I am ready to admit that, in company with countless other descendants of the robber barons, I was nothing but a genteel racketeer.

In advertising, for example, I held a gun to people's heads, more subtly perhaps, but just as surely as any highwayman. I held the gun of business fear. I used high-sounding terms when I advised my customers to "build up consumer acceptance and demand," but I really meant to give the veiled threat that "your competitors will force you out of business if you *don't* advertise and your advertising will look sick in comparison if you don't use my particular and superior brand of advertising brains." Since several hundred other advertising agencies, moreover, might be aiming the same sort of gun at the same advertiser's head, I was led from time to time into cutting a competitor's throat or finding, as I justly deserved, that he had cut mine. Advertising volume, like everything else in our material economic world,

is strictly limited in supply. There is not, and never will be, enough to give each advertising agent as much business as he would like.

I sought every opportunity, therefore, to fatten my income, stooping even to the petty padding of my expense account in a firm where I myself was a partner. I overcharged my customers when I thought I could get away with it. I strained points of honesty in my advertising copy and lied freely face to face. I used liquor and the ladies to help us secure business and impure suggestiveness to catch attention in the advertisements that I wrote. I took all kinds of steps to see that no other fellow got ahead of me when I was working for a boss, and formed my own company so that, should the economic shoe begin to pinch, I would be in a position to fire the other fellow instead of getting fired myself.

Finally I began to see through myself, and I tried accordingly to cover up by dignifying advertising—promoting it, in my conversation, at least, from the ranks of a “game” to the ranks of a “profession.” I referred to the “high standards which have made good advertising an economic and social force of vital importance to us”—a phrase I adroitly borrowed from a President of the United States. And I agreed most heartily when a Postmaster-General said, “To the advertising man is due a great deal of credit for the up-building of our country, making it the richest, the most prosperous land in the world.” I soon saw, however, that this sort of tripe was getting us nowhere. The fact that they were “upbuilding the country” did not prevent competitors from undermining me and stealing my best accounts. Clearly something should be done about it and it occurred to me that perhaps, after all, I should begin to work, not merely to make a better living than the other fellow, but for the sake of *better advertising*. If advertising could be cleaned up, and my competitors would turn honest, then I too could begin to play the game on the level. As usual, therefore, I began to work out schemes for reformation of the other fellow.

I envisioned an advertising world with all of the “bunk” cut out—with no claims of “superiority” for this brand or that—with no belittling and no underselling of competitors and with no secret rebates or other undercover inducements. I championed a system which would bring all methods, prices, costs and volume of production out into the open and which would prohibit overproduction. I foresaw, in fact, the need for controlling production in relation to “legitimate market demands,” dividing production volume and coordinating production effort among our 7,000 different trades and industries, shortening working hours to fit into this smaller volume of business and dividing these hours, in turn, among all men who needed the work.

Again, however, I ran into the old, old difficulty. What was going to make people *want* to debunk advertising, reveal their costs and limit their production? Since their robber baron forbears business men had been motivated by acquisitiveness. Nothing else seems to have worked and no other motive has ever succeeded in

keeping most men *at* work. Where men don't *want* to, of course, it is obvious to think that we "who know better," must devise a better system for them and force them into doing the right thing. Naturally, therefore, I thought of advocating laws which would make false and misleading advertising, cost concealment and overproduction a misdemeanor "punishable by fine and imprisonment." In the fiasco of prohibition, however, I had seen that, where desire is repressed and not removed, it simply squeezes out in some other and more sinister direction. I knew that manufacturers, advertising men and bankers could not be made honest by law. And I knew that any attempt to limit private profits—where private profits are still a man's chief desire in life—would result only in his finding some way to bootleg those profits. I had, in fact, seen such bootlegging result from almost every form of business restriction ever imposed.

What then?

An advertising man suggested, some years ago, that the instincts of selfishness and greed could be over-come by giving men the opportunity to work for *honor* rather than the privilege of growing rich. How any business man, who himself has been offered a vice-president's title as substitute for an anticipated raise in salary, could seriously advance such a suggestion is, of course, beyond my comprehension.

I then saw nothing left except the possibility of leading men, through reason, into recognizing the sheer folly of their unlimited efforts to gain a hog's share of limited wealth. If I could give them some other quest, I thought—a *limitless* quest which all could share without robbing anybody else and which all would make the main endeavor of their life—then they *would* be willing to cooperate in business just to gain the necessary living while finding their real pleasure, honor and *desire* in my other goal.

Knowledge, I decided, was the only other possible goal. Here indeed was limitless supply, and of something most people wanted. All could pursue knowledge without ever reaching the bottom of the well—without stealing from others—and growing the richer themselves the more they gave away. I thereupon worked out a theory of intellectual economics to replace our system of material economics—making knowledge the main pursuit of life and material pursuits a mere secondary interest supporting this main quest.

I think I might have gone a little mad on this subject had I not met the Oxford Group and learned—not a material economy—not an intellectual economy—but the spiritual economy of Christ. This experience confirmed the fact that men are made honest neither by the adoption of new laws, or of new systems, nor by the adoption of new ideals. They are made honest by a love of God, discovered through Jesus Christ. This fact forced home the knowledge that, if I wanted to do anything of economic value in the world I would have to give up my aim of making a better living than the other fellow. I would have to give up the rest of my days in being used primarily to bring people to Christ and thus build *better men*.

This work, as in all other cases, had to start—not with the other fellow—not with my advertising competitors—but with myself. Christ could not make me morally contagious—other business men could not catch honesty, unselfishness, love and purity from me—unless I possessed those qualities myself. And I found that with the power and the knowledge that God gave me, it was possible to apply these qualities in business—even in the business of the pagan world.

When I first drew back from the Oxford Group's challenge, for instance, I told them it would be utterly impossible to go back and start being honest in the advertising business. That was an evasion on the face of it. I meant simply that it would be difficult, embarrassing and probably unprofitable. God showed me, however, that it was not only possible to be honest in advertising, but to be unselfish, loving and pure.

On the first day of my return He gave me courage to hand my partner a check for the estimated discrepancy in my expense account. Then, as miracles began to happen, He guided me to the discovery of a check I had folded up, put away and forgotten—made out to me for the exact amount He had guided me to give my partner! The next day He guided me to open a magazine I seldom read and to turn directly to a page and paragraph which gave me the suggestion as to how I could be wholly honest in the advertising that I wrote. Then, at the bottom of the depression, came the offer of a substantial campaign from a client who asked me to split commissions. God told me to sever my connections instead.

As for purity, the suggestive touch I had previously used disappeared from my work and I no longer appeal to out-of-town customers through the lure of limitless Scotch and night clubs. As for business relations, there has been neither feeling of resentment nor gesture of retaliation towards the competitor who spirited away my best paying customer a year ago January. And as for unselfishness, I am now—as God has guided—on part-time work in my own company at less than 10 per cent of my one-time salary, thus helping to retain several employees I could have selfishly dispensed with by doing their work myself.

The most remarkable result of all, however, is that—faced for the first time in my career with any real cause to fear for myself and family financially—all anxiety and fear has flown out of the window never to return. God has time and time again vindicated this faith in Him by taking care of our needs as each such need has arisen. Banks have closed but God has always kept open for us some way to live. He has, for instance, guided me in certain business deals. My partner felt that, in my new life, I would miss many business opportunities because, as he put it, I was likely to be out somewhere “saving souls” when an opportunity arose. He, however, was the one who happened to be “out” when one such an opportunity *did* arise. My guidance of the morning had told me to make no plans for the evening but to be on hand and ready to seize the opportunity that *would* arise.

At another time—now just about a year ago—God guided me to make a certain

investment in an enterprise I had never before known about, and which I would not even have considered on a human basis. Guidance, however, was insistent. God promised that this investment would give me more time and opportunity to do His work. And it has been that very investment the prospects of which encouraged me to take time to write this book, to take certain trips with Oxford Group teams, and to engage in other phases of creative spiritual activity.

My experience of Christ, moreover, has made me a better business man, not only from the spiritual standpoint, but from the standpoint of efficiency and responsibility. As described in my trip to New Haven, I immediately began to find new interest in my work. I tried not simply to get my advertising copy “approved” but to get it *improved*—even if that meant sacrificing words of which I was inordinately proud. I also found a better flow and control of ideas. One day, for instance, God guided me to write a plan for advertising transatlantic steamship travel. It was a branch of advertising in which I had had no experience and a subject I knew nothing about. I asked for God’s help in the matter and almost immediately a complete and original plan came to my mind.

In dependence on God, moreover, I no longer am worried as to whether or not I secure new business. I am no longer, therefore, anxious and strained in soliciting accounts and that makes me a very much better salesman than I have ever been before. And, as a servant of God, I am as interested in the whole order of business as I am in my own small corner. My mission is to fill my small part of God’s whole purpose and I want to make the best possible job of it. I also find that my whole business day is better arranged. Where I used to plan the day, making a list of all the jobs I thought I had to finish, all the people I thought I had to see, all the phone calls I thought I had to make and all the letters I thought I had to write, I now simply ask God’s guidance on the day. He strikes from my list the jobs, visits, calls and letters that would afterwards have proved unnecessary or untimely while, at the same time, He reminds me of matters I myself had not considered. He also fills my day to a nicety—laying out just enough work for me to finish in an easy natural stride without fuss or strain.

This guided business day, of course, may not prove as “profitable” financially as some self-determined days. As has been written of the followers of Christ, however, “they may never succeed in accumulating a large estate; they may fail in their business operations; but they do *not* fail in their end, which is to perform useful work, and thus they can never be overwhelmed with disappointment.”

God, meanwhile, provides the necessary living for all who give themselves to Him. At the Calvary Rescue Mission for down-and-outers in New York, for instance, members of the Oxford Group in charge report that *every* man who surrenders to God, wholly and unreservedly, is invariably shown the way out. I know any number of such cases myself and I know any number of business men who, since *their* surrender, have found experiences exactly similar to mine. There are, in fact,

not simply individuals, but entire firms surrendered to Christ. There are businesses turned over to God and Christ literally steps in to direct them, not simply in policy but in the business conduct of each individual and the business details of each day.

My own office is located at 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue, New York, and in this locality each week I have been meeting with two members of the New York Stock Exchange, a real estate broker, an oil and gas prospector, an engineer, a banker, an automotive man, a noted international lawyer, the head of a travel bureau and an efficiency management expert. Visit any of these men unexpectedly in their offices and you may find them talking business. But you are just as likely to find them talking to a business *man* about his deepest spiritual needs and leading him to surrender his life also to the great economist, Jesus Christ.

In this group we discuss our various business problems as God has guided us to work them out. We seek and check guidance on the next steps God wants us to take in our own business affairs and in winning other business men. We are used by God to aid each other's growth, economically as well as spiritually. And knowing that the task of co-ordinating some 7,000 trades and industries in this country and many more throughout the world, is beyond the power of any but the Great Co-Ordinator Himself, we seek *His* answer in solution to the economic tangles of the day.

We have found as a result of this experience that a personal recovery act is the only sound basis for national recovery. And we are seeking not so much a "new deal" in business as a new stake in the game. This small group is but one of many Oxford

Groups of business men meeting in New York City, in Philadelphia, Washington, Louisville, Akron, Cleveland, Detroit, Kansas City, Phoenix, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg, Montreal, Ottawa, Quebec, London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Paris, The Hague, Cairo, Geneva, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria, and various other cities and towns scattered through some forty countries of the world. All have found the *same* answer—that the only permanent, stable, and worthwhile change in economic conditions will come, not primarily through any change in laws, not primarily through any change in economic systems, but first of all through the change in business men. They have found that, no matter how his surface-conduct may be forced to conform, a racketeer at heart will remain a racketeer until his heart is changed. They have found that, until they give themselves with their whole hearts to the *limitless quest* of spiritual growth, men will continue to pursue the selfish quest of limited wealth or will find themselves caught in the dreary, drab routine of a socialized control. They have found that a personal experience of Jesus Christ is the only thing that sets men's hearts on this Limitless Economy. They have found, as I have, that they cannot give men this unimaginable and vital experience until they have had it themselves.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THIS BUSINESS OF “NEW DEALS” *POLITICS*

Politically, for years, I was a member of the “What-Can-You-Do-About-It?” Party. Solemnly my drinking cronies and I would wag our heads, declaring that politics were rotten to the core, but—”What can you do about it?” Then I would turn my back on all such matters till election day when I reluctantly went down and voted for what I considered the lesser of two evils. I voted, in other words, for the “deal” I felt would cause least disturbance to my personal affairs, though highly skeptical that this new deal would ever be “dealt” as promised.

I was sure, in fact, that when “Big Tooth,” the caveman smote his political rival with his stone axe and thereby won the election of the Paleolithic Party, he had promised his fellow troglodytes a new deal. And then, as usual, he dealt them another crack over the skull.

I know that throughout the ages there have been genuine new deals offered by leaders who really meant it. I know that such deals would have benefited the people no end but that the people themselves turned down the hands thus dealt them.

Moses, for instance, had a splendid new deal to offer for it was a plan suggested, directed and executed entirely under God’s guidance. Moses, however, had great difficulty in persuading the people to follow him. So rebellious were they, in fact, that, when they came to the very edge of the promised land, they refused to go farther and spent a miserable forty years in the wilderness in consequence. Moses was a guided leader who did not have guided followers.

Coming closer to our own time I believe Abraham Lincoln was guided. It is said that he came to his decisions on his knees. In the Gettysburg address he resolved that “this nation, under God, shall have a new birth in freedom”—and that “the government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth.” The people took the government of, by, and for themselves and hugged it to their breast. But they largely overlooked the “new birth under God.” The reconstruction period, therefore, issued in little but new forms of human slavery and new manifestations of human greed. Again a government, guided at the top, was distorted at the bottom through the blindness and self-will of an unguided followership.

Before his recent inauguration, as you doubtless remember, President Roosevelt himself partook of Holy Communion and closed his inaugural address with the hope that God would guide. A prayerful nation shared his hope. Then came the National Recovery Act, which it seemed to me, was the most open avenue that has ever been laid out for God to work through government. We can see now, however,

that any kind of national or world recovery depends on cooperation between men. And cooperation without Christ is usually dominated by self-interest.

As soon as it begins to involve any real self-sacrifice—as soon, let us say, as a business man sees that subscribing to a code is beginning to benefit his competitors more than himself—that particular attempt at cooperation winds up with a bang. It may be prolonged a little, as in some of the more recent experiments, through an emotional appeal to nationalism. It may be prolonged again through the compulsion of a strong soviet or individual dictatorship. Sooner or later, however, the national emergency passes or the dictator is deposed. Human beings then revert in act to the self-seeking they never ceased to have at heart. They throw aside the voluntary cooperation which was only a short-lived form of “enlightened self-interest.” They throw aside the nationalism which was only thinly-veiled self-protection. They throw out the dictator who had ruled them. And they find, as a surrendered man could have told them in the beginning, that there is no whole-souled and lasting cooperation except in the spirit and love of Jesus Christ. A *personal* recovery act beginning with surrender of self-will and continuing through all phases of self-sacrifice—is the only act which can lead to national or world recovery in any permanent and redemptive way. Here is America’s great hope. And here—right at this moment—is the World’s great CHANCE!

It was thus that I was led to see where lay our real political needs. It was thus that I was led to desert the ranks of the ““What-Can-You-Do-About-It?”” Party and to join with those who not only see what should be done but are in touch with the spiritual power that enables them to *do* it. I began my political career in earnest, not by advocating a new system, nor by going out for this or that candidate or party, but by going all out for Christ.

In other words, until I found Christ there was nothing useful that I *could* have done in politics. I might have given my evenings to the local political boss instead of to booze or to books. I might have stumped for a favorite candidate in the time I gave to “treading the boards” of an amateur stage. I might even, like so many chaps before me, have given up my business and gone into politics as a life work while flattering myself that my superior intellect would soon raise the political *morale*. None of these things, however, would have been of any real avail. I would still have given people only what I *thought* was best for them or, more likely, what I wanted them to have. I would still have been an unguided leader or unguided follower whose best efforts could only block the guidance that might come to such leaders or followers in my party as were genuinely in touch with God.

I now see, in short, that politics—like the proverbial stream—can “rise no higher than its source.” And where God is blocked out—either through unguided leadership, or unguided followership, or both—the source of politics is human desire and nothing else. I could see that some such blocks *had* crept in and that, whether in a despotism, dictatorship, absolute monarchy, aristocracy, plutocracy,

limited monarchy, democracy, technocracy, or commune, the sovereignty had finally lain in somebody's human wish and never wholly and fully in the will of God. I could see that unsundered human wishes—even under the best of philosopher kings—never could be wholly wise. And I could see that God's work never could be wholly done until my nation and, in fact, the world, had established an absolute theocracy—a government with a God-appointed and God-guided leadership and a nation of God-guided followers all down the line.

What such a theocracy might be like can be seen in the "politics" of the Oxford Group. This is probably the only world-wide group there is which is *not* an organization in the usual sense of the word. I speak of "members" of the group but it really has no members. Those who are leading Christ-centered lives, asking God to make them absolutely honest, absolutely loving, absolutely pure and absolutely unselfish, those who are living as life-changers under God's control, are "members" whether they know it or not. And those who do not lead that kind of life are not "members" no matter how loudly they may claim to be.

There are, moreover, no committees, no officials and no official duties of any kind. There are leaders, to be sure, but only as through training and discipline they have fitted themselves for such service in God's eyes. The man that God guides us to choose as a leader one day for any given task may be chosen the next day to open windows in the balcony. That, in fact, is where one is likely to find Frank Buchman whom God guided to start this movement.

Where God's Will rather than human desire is allowed full play, in other words, He may choose one leader one day and another the next. This, I think, is because there are different tasks to be done from day to day and different needs to be met. And I think that God knows not only which leader is best qualified to carry out that task or meet that need but which one, at that time, is in the best spiritual condition to do so, or which one will thereby find the greatest spiritual growth.

All of these tasks and services consist in carrying out God's direction. Oxford Group "government," therefore, is entirely made up of "executives." We have no "legislative department" and no "judicial department." We make no laws and have no rules within the group because all our law comes from God while the only rule is obedience to guidance. Similarly God is our only judge. To tell another man what is the matter with him is, as God has shown us, worse than useless. We merely incur his resentment—expressed or suppressed—and accomplish nothing. When we sit in quiet time, however, and let God tell us of our sins we are not only convicted by His judgment but moved to do something about it.

Group "government" "is called into "session" during these quiet times. You may see an "assembly" of three, twenty, or five hundred people asking God who is to be their leader for that hour, for that day, for that week, for that job or for that international evangelistic tour. You see them "legislating" simply by asking God for His principles in the conduct of life or by asking for specific application of those

principles to a particular case of need, to a family or group expenditure of money, to the winning of a man to Christ, to the capture of a city, or of a nation, or any of the many other matters that make up a guided life.

More conspicuous even than guided leadership, however, is the guided “followership” of the Oxford Group. With all minds open and surrendered to God there is certain agreement in the selection of a leader. The secretary is not “instructed to cast one ballot” but God brings the same name to the minds of all those present. Or He brings it to enough to assure the certainty of that selection while, to others, He brings other details of the project that He has on foot. I have seen all members present at such times receive *different* words of guidance. Yet all fit together, like the pieces of a picture puzzle, to form a perfect whole. There is always, therefore, not only thoroughly directed action but amazing concord in action. An Oxford Group meeting finds every man in his place—some ushering, some praying, some speaking, some sensing the need and reaction of the others present, some attending to ventilation, some at the book table, some seeking guidance as to whom to speak to after the meeting, and others arranging for transportation home. When once established between individual team mates, moreover, this co-ordination is not confined to a single room and hour. It extends over long periods and distances of separation—transcending both time and space. I have played and watched a good deal of football but I have never seen teamwork on so large a scale and so perfectly worked out as under the co-ordinating directorship of God.

I am quite convinced that this same smoothness and perfection would work out in a much larger theocracy were the national leaders God-elected, and were they and all their followers led to harmonize in this way under the central directorship of God. And I am equally convinced that such co-ordination is the only possible solution to local, national and world political problems.

What else, for instance, could ever really end international war?

An advertising contemporary published an article in a leading magazine in which he suggested that we advertise war out of existence. “Let us advertise this hell,” he said, in the belief that if we dramatized the horrors of war to enough people of the world they would refuse to enter another war. They would be too afraid of consequences both to the victor and the vanquished. But fear, as he admitted in the same article, is the cause of war. Can one fear be used to cancel out another? Can the devil, as Jesus said, be used to drive out the devil?

The answer, as I now know, is not to advertise “this hell” but to advertise “this heaven”—this heaven which I and thousands of others have found right here on earth—this heaven where not only war, but economic distress, political corruption, social unrest, sectional selfishness and all other nightmares of political economy would be lost for ever in the concord of God’s universally-accepted and universally-followed will.

I know now, in other words, what there is that I can do about politics. It is not

simply a matter of “doing my duty as a citizen and casting my ballot on election day. It is not simply a matter of taking greater interest in politics nor of going into politics myself.

It is not simply a matter of sending telegrams or “better men” to Congress. The only trouble with Congress is that it is a representative body and will never represent God’s guidance until you and I ourselves find God.

We need not, fortunately, wait for a complete theocracy before tasting the benefits of Christ-centered political life. Without that, to be sure, there may be no “promised land,” no adequate reconstruction period nor successful recovery act. But there is sure to be and already has been a new birth in political life wherever Christ has touched.

A politician reached by the group in the western states, for instance, was not only changed himself but went out immediately thereafter and helped to change his political rival. The two men then appeared on the same platform, witnessed to what had happened, and promised that each henceforth would be influenced by Christ instead of by personal ambition. At the same time, thousands of miles away across a continent and an ocean, we find a European Cabinet meeting to lunch with the group. Here a channel of high government is opening to trust in God. Back to America again and we find a faculty member of a well-known university proclaiming that the group presents the most statesmanlike programme for recovery he knows. Across to England where the *Manchester Guardian* publishes the fact that coalition government in South Africa would have been impossible without spiritual awakening—an awakening started there and carried forward by the Oxford Group. And recently we find a third of the Parliament at Westminster crowding out two committee-rooms to hear speakers tell of results that have followed this amazing spiritual awakening in Britain and the Continent. Lastly, a statesman who for many years represented his country on the Councils of the League of Nations has said that he sees more hope for world peace and international accord in the Oxford Group than anywhere else in the world.

Now let us visit a group house-party at Oxford itself. There were, at one such party, some five thousand people attending, from more than forty nations. They came from as far away as New Zealand. And they came from as close at hand as London, where the abortive World Economic Conference had just drawn to a close. Thirty-five delegates from that conference attended the group meetings. One rose to say to his colleagues that the sins he now discerned in his own character were the very things that caused the Conference to fail. A newspaper reporter also came down from the London Conference. “It was,” he said, “because it missed this that it failed!”

Across the Channel, at a group luncheon on the Continent, it was said that if seven European statesmen could be changed, it would change the entire political and economic history of the world. Such is the far-reaching power of Jesus Christ—

a power which, in Wesley's day, "saved England from a revolution such as France knew" and which, as Lecky adds, "was of greater importance than all the splendid victories by land and sea won under Pitt."

It becomes very clear, therefore, what you and I *can* do about "rotten politics," about national recovery, and about threatened revolution. It is the very thing that members of the Oxford Group are doing.

We can, in other words, surrender our wills to God and get ourselves right with Him. God then can use us to win others to Christ and Christ can confer citizenship on ever increasing numbers in the Kingdom of God. It is a matter not of getting votes, but of winning men. It is a problem not of electioneering, but of evangelism.

My own political thought therefore no longer looks to political expedients for a real answer. It is given to the possibilities of theocracy under the Oxford Group and other working Christians in all sections of the world. Our old system of democracy, like our old system of economics, is gone—never to return. No intermediate stage of man-made adjustment is likely I to linger with us for very long. Therefore, on whether you and I accept this new awakening of the Holy Spirit, depends the outcome of present political experiments. They will not escape disaster unless the tide turns to God. There, and there only, lies the Nation's Real Advantage—a "new deal" of the kind that enables everyone to hold a winning hand, and the only programme which enables everyone to play' a vital part.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THIS BUSINESS OF REMAKING THE WORLD *SOCIOLOGY*

I had gained most of the possessions, pleasure, power, position and applause I wanted in life. But they did not bring me what I had hoped to find. I had, you might say, attained my material *aims*, but found no lasting *gains*. And, as most people do when they miss the point of life, I was quick to blame this on the other fellow.

I did not, in other words, find any fault with my own efforts or achievements. I envisioned a society in which *everybody* was to be made as happy and as comfortable in life as I had *wanted* to be. In this ideal state, however, I was still to draw a slightly greater measure of happiness and comfort than the rest by reason of having shown the others how to be so. It was to this end that I directed my early writings.

With my change, however, I saw the futility of *any* of this social dreaming and planning. I saw, at the idealistic end, the futile effort to build a fairy dream castle in the clouds, while we had nothing but earth-bound dwarfs as carpenters. I saw, at the selfish end, nothing but a greedy attempt to “divvy up” the spoils, or to build a society which gave the ruling power to one’s own kind and thus gave to oneself a much higher position of glory. The idealistic end offered nothing but heart-break. The other could lead nowhere but to social revolution, which, as always, would be nothing but the exchange of a known evil for an unknown evil—a change in the delegation of power, with no change in the powers of the delegate—a change in the basic system with no change in the baseness of men.

I saw, in other words, that it was not a new system we needed, but a new people—not a new division of wealth, but a new discernment of where wealth lies—not a new kind of government, but a new quality of life. I saw that no division of spoils can really help people who are spoiled themselves. I saw that to rebuild the social order its constituents would have to be rebuilt one by one. I saw that, as in education, in marriage, in business and in politics, such a reformation would have to start, not in the other fellow, but in myself.

My first thought in self-reformation was that I would have to begin to *do* more for the other fellow. I would have to be more “charitable” than I had been. A man’s belly must be fed, I figured, before we can feed his soul. And while my charities had never been generous, while I foresaw grave dangers in indiscriminate doles, while I did not approve of “made work” or unsecured “loans to the deserving,” I could, for the time, think of no other way to feed, clothe or house the unemployed.

Soon, however, members of the group led me to see the temporary nature of these “charitable” efforts. They showed me that in helping a man only to find his next meal I was merely “helping a lame dog over a fence.” The really charitable thing to

do for a lame dog, after helping him over the fence, is to get down to the cause of his lameness. And the really charitable thing to do for a hungry man is to get down to the sin which is blocking him from God and thus blocking him from knowledge of the plan by which God means him to make his living.

I now know that when I lead a man to God “all these things shall be added unto him.” If I give him charity *without* God, he is likely to find neither the next time. Once, for instance, I gave \$20 to a hungry artist who had come to the very brink of an experience of God. I thought my gift would increase his confidence in me and thus help him to take the final jump. Instead of this, however, my “charity” convinced him that he could get along “on his own” as usual. He turned away from God and found no lasting solution to his spiritual or physical problems.

The Oxford Group, in short, taught me that true Christian charity is not a matter of sympathetic sentimentality in trying to meet a man’s obvious needs alone. They taught me that it is a matter of getting down to his deeper hidden needs—no matter how much more difficult that may be. It is easy, for example, to get a man to show you his cellar and thus to diagnose his need for a ton of coal. It is far more difficult to get him to show you his soul, diagnosing his sin and relating his need to its remedy in Christ. This, however, is the only effective way to help.

It is difficult, of course, for charity workers to see and admit that spiritual needs are both more numerous and more acute than physical needs. It is difficult to think that the physical need—or the educational need—is never fully met unless the spiritual need be met as well. A group social worker, however, explained to me that modern sociologists themselves have long since discredited the effectiveness of any kind of soulless charity. They are employing to-day what is known as the “case method” of giving help—a method which takes each individual case and seeks to get down to and meet the real underlying needs that may be found there.

By the “case method,” for example, a social worker studies the individual’s personal problems and diagnoses the cause of trouble. He may then try to make up any educational deficiencies he finds there. He may try to help that individual surmount his marital difficulties or show him how to train his children. He may show him how to budget his income. He may teach him how to overcome his physical disabilities. He works with individuals, in other words, as Jesus Christ Himself, would work, and as any Christian worker *should* work, but with the following important difference:—it is not enough just to show a man what changes in his life are needed. The need is never met until you give him the *power* to change, along with the discernment. That power is not found in education, in marital psychology, in child training, in economic budgeting, in dietetics, hygiene, or birth control. The only power that fully meets man’s needs physically, mentally and spiritually is the power of God, and that power can only be conveyed through a *converted* social worker.

The *unconverted* worker, in fact, not only lacks the power to change lives, but is

handicapped from the beginning in his investigation of the case, in his diagnosis of the trouble and in the formation of a further life plan. Without the direction of God, for instance, it is an impertinence to pry into another man's personal affairs or to try to change him according to one's own ideals and standards. Only God can make one sincerely loving and wholly selfless in such work. Only the directing love of Jesus Christ can give any worker the right to enter the life of another human being. And, in fact, only such love can gain us the entrance. In my unconverted days, for instance, I found men like an island without any landing. I could row around them for days without finding any opening in their shore-line. They, in fact, considered my approach an affront, which is exactly what it was. They rightfully shut up like a clam, told me to mind my own business, or got rid of me with glib lies which preserved their pride, but gave me no clue to their inner problems. To-day, however, when I go as God guides, I *find* an entrance. In many such cases the other fellow has actually started to seek *me*. He is *looking* for help and *ready* to discuss his problems.

Without God I would find myself helpless in diagnosis. Even when men come *seeking* aid there are often inner sores so filthy and repugnant that they dare not bring them to light. Or they are utterly unconscious of the real sin that is causing all the trouble. Without spiritual insight and intuition I have failed many times to get down to these shame-hidden or unrecognized sins. At one such time, for instance, a man seemed so unreserved and straightforward with me that I accepted his whole story at face value. On the human basis he had me fooled completely. And then the Holy Spirit whispered, "This man is lying. He has *not* told his wife—no matter what he tells you. Get down to the real truth of the matter."

Another difference is that the unconverted worker may know what a man should do to fit into the social environment, but has no idea what he should do to fit into the plan of God—His scheme for civilization. A final solution will come for the world only when its individuals are led to plan, not for their own small sake, not for the benefit of their immediate social environment, but only when they are fitted into the place God has for them and thus rise to their true position of equality in His great service. The sociologist, in short, is as helpless as the psychologist, economist, educator or priest unless he has the power of the living Christ at hand to help him.

The modern sociologist goes into the problems of an individual's physical disability. With nothing but the social gospel or the social sciences, however, he cannot go beyond physical education, medical care, the cleaning up of unsanitary conditions, the provision of recreation centers and the issuing of health and liability insurance. He does not, through these agencies, effectively root out self-indulgence and fear—the two factors which probably contribute more to ill-health than any others you could name. A stern physician may temporarily check the desire to overindulge in alcohol, tobacco, narcotics, candy, coffee, tea, or rich food. He may give orders concerning laziness, lack of exercise, depressing moods and uncontrolled thoughts

and imagination. This is nothing but suppression, that sooner or later must break out in some other form. It takes the power of God to *remove* the desire for these indulgences. A shrewd psychologist moreover, may diagnose worry about the past, discouragement, resentments, irritation, temper, worry about one's family, job or future, possessiveness, and being run ragged with duties. Yet he has nothing but good advice to offer as remedy. It takes the power of God to *remove* these fears and mental conditions. This is not suppression, but a true sublimation. Without the Great Physician at his elbow, the medical social worker can be nothing more than stretcher-bearer on a field of endless warfare. He cannot remove the cause of much physical ill-health, nor cure sick souls.

The same handicap, I have found, confronts the social criminologist. It is not only bad human companionship that produces the moral pervert. It is lack of spiritual companionship. It is not only want of food that gives us a thief. It is want of God. It is not only poverty of purse which makes the prostitute. It is poverty of soul. It is not the criminals who cause an annual loss and waste of billions of dollars. It is the Christians who refuse to use the power Christ would give them.

It is not, in brief, any new social science nor any new technique in the "case method" of approach which has made the Oxford Group such a vitally effective social instrument. It is because these people have found, obey, and use the power and direction of Jesus Christ. It is this power which converted man after man in a certain prison and brought an ex-thief into group fellowship with the judge who sentenced him. It is this power which has formed life-changing groups of sixty in one Central Prison and of seventy-five in a House of Detention. It is this power which causes a director in one of our largest prisons in this country to say that the whole atmosphere of the place has been changed in a few months because of the work of the Oxford Group.

It was this power, again, which caused a young industrialist to see the conditions in his plant through the eyes of Christ. It was this power which brought a woman who owned tenement houses in the poor districts of her city to investigate the actual conditions there herself and put them right. It is this power which has stopped divorce proceedings in hundreds of homes, stopped suicide in hundreds of cases, and stopped many bitter private wars between antagonistic men.

It is this power, moreover, which is now solving the difficult black and white as well as English-and-Dutch race problems in South Africa, and which brought members of different races together on a new basis in Persia. It was this power which brought reconciliation between the cousin of a famous German war ace and the Canadian aviator who shot him down. It is the power which is leveling national barriers, and it is the only power that can prevent another international war.

It is this power, finally, and this power only which can bring into being the social ideals of freedom, equality and fraternity—ideals that can never come to pass in any humanistic plan. With their inborn inequality of talents, for example, men can never

gain equality in money and possessions. All men, however, have equal opportunity to serve Him and the talent of the least is as necessary for this purpose as the talent of the greatest. Under God all men are equal indeed.

Here also all men are free. In a social system men invariably become the slaves of the systems they themselves devise. Only God's higher freedom can detach them from these systems, liberate them from dependence upon other men and free them from slavery to their own pleasures, indulgences, traditions, willfulness and deceit. As for fraternity, a brotherhood may seem to be closely knit together through some common interest or at times of menace when some mutual concern is at stake. But let the interest wane or the emergency pass, and men are again at each other's throats. There are no true brothers except through a common father. There is no brotherhood of man except under the fatherhood of God.

I had been, for instance, a slave to my own business for some twenty years. I had never left the office for a stretch longer than a week. When I gave my life to God, however, He freed me from this bondage. He made it possible and made me willing to take an extended trip with an Oxford Group team. This team consisted of some forty life-changers working, under God's guidance, as one man. Some, judging by human standards, were more talented and spectacular than others. As members of God's team, however, our talents all combined and each played an equally important interwoven part in furthering God's plan. We were equal in His eyes.

As for brotherhood, there probably were not more than ten of these people who—on any human basis—I could or would have picked as friends. Yet after but three days of sharing and fellowship in Christ I grew to know and love each one of the forty as I had not known or loved my own chosen clubmates during an intimacy of years.

When, therefore, I am told that the Oxford Group has no social outreach, I can answer from experience that, unless a man has Christ he has no reach at all. I When I am told of those who would substitute a "social gospel" for the Gospel of Jesus Christ, I can answer, "You are slipping backwards—not forging ahead." And, when I am told of radicals who would remake the world through revolution, I can answer, "We want a revolution as much as you do. But you are only pikers. Yours is only a surface revolution. Ours goes all the way down—deep down—inside the man!"

## CHAPTER XV

### THIS BUSINESS OF GOING TO CHURCH *RELIGION*

That bride of popular song renown is not the only one left waiting at the church. I kept Jesus Christ waiting at His church for more than forty years and my name is legion. I did not go, I said, because I found all the religion I wanted out on the golf course and none that meant anything to me in church. I thought, however, that it was a good place for other people. And when asked to write a series of letters soliciting funds for the building of a new church in my community I vociferously quoted Theodore Roosevelt to the effect that you would not invest your money in any town which did not have a church.

As an advertising man, moreover, I was full of what I thought were good ideas to help churches fill their empty pews and lean collection plates. The church, I was quite sure, needed modernizing—snapping up a bit. It needed shorter and funnier sermons—more comfortable seats—dances, card parties, moving pictures, toleration of drinking and smoking in the parish house and other innovations to attract the young people. It also needed modernizing in its subject matter. The advance of science, I believed, had lifted us above many of the old time superstitions and traditions of religion. The Christian myth might have served very well in a simpler and less sophisticated generation. But it was time, I felt, that we stopped struggling for an utterly impractical ideal and set up something men *could* work towards in this modern and more understanding age. I thought, for instance, that we might rewrite the Bible, recognizing Jesus merely as a great human being and bringing in lofty passages from Lincoln, Emerson, John Dewey and other thinkers closer to our time.

Since Jesus Christ has become, not a myth, but a living Presence to me, since the Holy Spirit has become not a fancy but a vital power and affection without which I could make no real progress in the business of living, I see that my attempt to quash the deity of Christ and to take the supernatural out of religion was as ridiculous as it would be to expect an automobile to run after I had lifted out the engine. And I see that my suggestions to “advertise” the church through dances, card parties, greater toleration and similar lures, was nothing but an attempt to *create* an attraction and set it up in place of the real attraction I had missed.

I know well enough now, however, that no sideshow can substitute for the main event. I know that dancing is no good if there is nothing left to interest the dancers “after the ball is over.” I know that the much advertised personality of certain preachers can all too easily overshadow the subject they present. I know that clergymen and laymen can devote so much time just to keeping their church

organization *going* that they have no time to start or keep anything related to God going *on* in these organizations. I know that while my promotion schemes might temporarily fill the pews and collection plates most of the congregation would still go away empty. Finally I know that to fix interest in God, there is no possible substitute for His Son Jesus Christ and that the church can never be properly “advertised” until Christ Himself is permitted to speak out from the pulpit through wholly surrendered and guided individuals, who can thus transmit an unadorned and unmodified message from God.

I thought, at first, even after my change, that all this fuming ineffectiveness in church was the fault of the ministers. I thought they were relying too much on their organizations and not enough on the Holy Spirit. I thought, in fact, that they did not *have* the Holy Spirit to rely upon and hence resorted to shallow showmanship to keep their churches filled, their deacons, elders or vestrymen pacified, their salaries and reputations intact, their sins concealed, their pride unpunctured and the fact that they lacked a vital message hidden under a barrage of pompous sermons. I know now, however, that the primary fault was mine—not the minister’s. I know that the average congregation gets no better minister than it deserves. And I know that I can do nothing whatever to make congregations more deserving unless I myself join up with some congregation or—if already a churchgoer—unless I myself experience some change within myself that will make me a *better* member. The Oxford Group, in short, has shown me that neither my cooperation in advertising nor attempts at criticism are of the slightest avail. They have shown me that I myself must be born in Christ and must grow in this new domain before I can assist such births and aid such growth among the members of any church congregation. It is only thus that I can help to build a more deserving congregation and create what advertising men might call a “congregational demand” for ministers who are not merely preachers, organizers, showmen, job-holders or compromisers, but who are experienced obstetricians of the human soul and practicing dietitians in the matter of spiritual growth and nourishment.

There are those, of course, who “have heard” that the Oxford Group is a separatist movement, critical of the church and eager to divorce from it. Such is far from the case. It is a group composed of church members of all denominations who have accepted this new quality of life, and become within their own churches far more vital Christians and more useful members of the congregation. And where, as often happens, the Oxford Group brings an atheist, pagan or non-churchgoer to Christ, one of our first concerns is that this neophyte should form a church connection. The Oxford Group, in short, is not a *new* church or a *separate* church. It is a fellowship within all churches. It *is* the Church—at *work*.

In recent years bishops, clergy and laity alike have spent much time devising plans for “renewing the life and witness of the church.” Innumerable conferences and committees have discussed the situation. The “ancient machinery” has been

“patched and modernized on every hand.” The Oxford Group has taken up that same endeavor “renewing the life and witness of the church,” and is seeing that renewal take place.

In this spirit I want to make a plea to other church members. Everywhere, I know, they have recognized the need for a deeper spiritual experience. But I want to plead especially that they attempt to see more clearly *how* this experience is to be attained and how they can *grow* in such experience, once it is entered into.

A missionary once said, for instance, that he had been sent to India to change lives without having been changed himself and without receiving the slightest instruction in changing others. He had learned much about the Bible. He had learned to pray and to preach sermons. But this brought no spiritual rebirth within himself. And he had never even been present at the rebirth of another. His Mission Board in no way tested him in these capacities.

There may, of course, and doubtless *have* been cases where the reading of the Bible, the preaching of a sermon or the joining in a prayer have brought people to a vital Christian experience. In many cases that I know of, however, the reading of the Bible is lifeless and therefore has no more effect in developing a Christlike character than the study of American History has helped the average school child to become a second George Washington. The preaching of a sermon—even an inspired sermon—goes completely over the head of the average man who has had no personal experience whatever of what the preacher is talking about and who, in fact, seldom even understands the verbiage. As for prayer, I know from my own case that people pray for what they hope God will do for them. They seek a God who will do their bidding and, naturally, since no such God exists they do not find Him.

Religious education is, of course, an important preparation for the greater depths of religious experience. I did not have half enough of it. But I could have gone to Sunday school and church all my life and probably never would have found Christ had I not encountered people who were filled with the Holy Spirit themselves and who knew how to transmit that spirit—not by books or preaching—but by *breathing it into me*, as it were, until I too felt the stir of that new life. They were people, both clergymen and laymen, who had not only been reborn themselves but who, through training and experience in the Oxford Group, had gained real skill as spiritual obstetricians.

I have seen a group minister, so trained and experienced, go into a sick church and build a living Christian body within the dead shell of the old institution. The pews, and the prayers, and the hymns are just the same but the *people* are different.

This was a minister who went into his church, not to “interpret a literature,” “expound a theology” or “build an institution.” He went, not to *assert* “the existence and personality of God.” He went because he no longer *had* to assert—because he had, at last, found God for himself and could introduce the living Christ to his

congregation *in person*.

He went, moreover, not simply to assure them pleasantly that this Christ was their personal Savior and the agent for remission of their sins. He went to confess the sins in his own life—to show how Christ had come into that life to cleanse each sore and to suggest that members of his congregation share their own sins with him so that he could help them to relate their difficulties to the same remedy.

People came up to him after church—not to say, “What a splendid sermon,” but to say, “I want to talk to you.” And they came to see him in his study. That study had once been a cave for retreat, a composing-room where sermons had been put together out of books, and a consulting-room where people came to “discuss” their problems—always blaming the wife or “the other fellow”—and always seeking and usually getting some compromise suggestion or other easy but inadequate solution to their difficulties. The study now, however, was more than a study. It became a spiritual maternity ward where people were not only “helped,” “comforted,” “advised” or “influenced” but where they were *born* in Jesus Christ and ushered into a wholly new existence.

Many congregations, of course, do not like to have such a man come to them. They were too comfortable before—too complacently asleep—and they resent the intrusion of so real a challenge to their old ways of living. This, however, has always been so. As Finney says, “If you have much of the spirit of God, you must make up your mind to have much opposition. Very likely the leading men in the church will oppose you.” Our converted pastor knew all this. He knew it had been true throughout all Christian history. He knew that he would risk his job in standing for no compromise with Christ. He also knew that it was the only job he could do *for* Christ of any consequence.

When a child is born into the physical world it requires not only a skilled obstetrician but an experienced dietitian. He is not born as a full-grown man and, *without loving care and skilled direction*, the intricacies of modern life make it increasingly difficult for him to reach maturity. A spiritual infant, similarly, is not born as a full-grown saint, though many people, unfortunately, seem to think so. And the variety and complexity of modern temptation makes it increasingly difficult for the Christian neophyte ever to grow up spiritually.

I have found, in other words, that despite large attendance and large confirmation classes, there are churches in which there never seems to be real Christian birth. They are little more than adult church schools, content to educate their people to the cold facts of Bible history, in theories of Christology, and in things that happened two thousand years ago, but incompetent or unwilling when it comes to entering into a personal experience of Christ and applying this new power, love and direction in their lives to-day. Then there are churches more evangelically inclined or empowered, where a minister himself has had a vital personal experience of Christ and is thus able to lead his parishioners into an equally vital experience. Here,

however, the matter is likely to drop. The converts are rubber-stamped “Christian” and shoved out into the world to find their own way again and, usually—to *die* spiritually, because they try to go on breathing the same air as they did twenty or forty years ago. These churches do not seem to want or are not able to *carry on* with their converts over any prolonged period of time. They are willing and able to bear spiritual children but not to go to the pains of bringing these children up through all the vicissitudes, through all the “mewling and puking,” and through all the errors and complaints of spiritual infancy. They do not bring their converts to a state of spiritual puberty where they too are able to give birth to other Christians, nor to a state of spiritual maturity where they too are able to act as companions, counselors and teachers of their own new-born babes. I enter a plea, therefore, not only for birth in the church but for growth—*continuous* growth. My own deficient church experience will illustrate both lacks.

In my early church life I was taught salvation by faith. But I was *not* taught how to make my faith anything more than a *belief* in certain doctrines. It seemed I had only to stand up, say I believed in Christ and submit to baptism. I then became a “full-fledged” member of the church. There was to me no real birth here. I was not even an incipient saint. And there was no growth thereafter. I remained an adult spiritual infant.

The faith that was nothing but a credulous belief lay stored in my memory, like a suit of clothes stored in the attic, and just about as useful. I might *believe* that Jesus was alive and available to help me overcome my sins to-day but, as a boy in Sunday school complained, I had no *proof* of it. Why? Why could the church give me no proof of its own central message? Without that proof of His living presence—without actually feeling His living power or seeing its result in my own life—I could not really trust God to do things for me. Without, in fact, being able to receive His guidance, I could not even tell what He wanted to do for me nor how He expected me to cooperate with Him in doing for myself. I took jolly good care, therefore, to see to such things myself. Hence I never really allowed God in anything that came up at home, in school, at the office, on the street, in the polling booth or even in the church. Without application there can be no growth. Without growth there is stagnation.

Later, though I did not then rejoin the church, I joined, through my approval, that modern school of eclectic compromise which seeks to take the “best” parts of Christianity (meaning the easiest) and to combine them with other sugar pills in a religious dose that was not as difficult as Christian rebirth and its equally difficult growing pains. I applauded these modern church idealists, calling them “up-to-date” and “broad-minded,” much as I had applauded the “free thinkers” who offered easy escape from the consequences of marriage. The old school of “cold storage faith,” in other words, was too afraid of hurting people or too afraid of getting hurt themselves to get down to the “labors” of a true birth. The new school of eclectic

compromise could not face the labor of climbing towards the best and highest. Where one produces *no* spiritual children, the other produces “spoiled children.” Like the mother who gives a boy chocolate cake because he does not want to eat his meat, they give their followers a soft way out. Naturally there is no growth here—or only a stunted or diverted growth. For a full and straight growth of the spirit there can be no compromise with striving for Christ’s standards of absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness and absolute love.

The Oxford Group, however, believes that a man has to be *born* spiritually. It believes that he then has to *grow* spiritually. It will have nothing to do with any evasion of the one or compromise with the other. It was thus, through sharing and surrender, that I was led into a real birth. It was thus, through group fellowship, sharing and checking, through house-parties, schools of life and personal work that I was led to real growth. It was thus, finally, that I was led to rejoin the church, enabled to make my first practical use of the bits of religious education acquired in my Sunday school days, and empowered to see God, feel the Holy Spirit and discern Christian truths in the Bible, the sermons and the prayers that I hear in church today. Religion for me has become—not just religion—but an applied religion. And church has become not just the place to go to hear learned discussions about the existence and personality of God. It has become a place in which I can *feel* the presence of God, become *sure* of His existence, and become *acquainted* with His personality at first hand.

At one and the same time, the Bible, Hymn Book and Prayer Book have sprung to life. I had always thought the Bible very dull reading, while many of the hymns and prayers I had attributed to mere silliness, sentimentalism or downright delusion. Now, however, I understand that these authors were not writing a fable. They were writing of fact. They were writing of experiences similar to those I had just been through myself. The sacraments also were invested with new meaning. I had known, in Baptism, what it meant to be cleansed outside as an “outer symbol of an inward grace.” Now, however, I learned what it meant to be clean *inside* as well, and to experience the grace of God, not in any symbolic way, but as something happening in my life. In Scripture readings and sermons I learned to see—not something that took place between Christ and His disciples two thousand years ago—but something that is taking place between Christ and *me*—today. Much as one may buy valuable goods from a salesman who himself does not use or understand his product, I have even learned to find this value in sermons delivered by ministers who may have no personal experience of Christ and who, in consequence, do not really know what it is all about. In prayer, finally, I have learned the secret of two-way praying. I have learned not only to pray *to* God, but to *listen* to Him. And even while I pray *to* Him I listen. I listen to Jesus Christ, praying, as He dictates, for the things He wants accomplished—not for what *I* want.

I have learned also, in this way, that I can go to church—not just to “get something

out of it”—but to give something to it. And the thing I give is not just my money in the plate, nor the time I may contribute to teaching a Sunday school class, to participating in new-member drives or any other form of organization work. It is *myself* that I give, fully and freely wholly and unconditionally, to “go to Africa,” or to be used by God in any way He guides. He since has guided me to many men who, like myself, had formerly found no vital help in church. In one town where the church was closed, in fact, He actually used me—a neophyte and but several months removed from paganism—to start and to conduct church meetings.

I am not, therefore, making a plea which I myself have not found it possible to fill. There *is* a way to “renew the life and witness of the church.” There is a way to be born and to grow spiritually in the now established church. It is the New Testament way demonstrated so successfully by the Oxford Group.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THIS BUSINESS OF BEING OF USE TO PEOPLE *CREATIVENESS*

There are four reasons to write, as they told me at the School of Journalism. You can write for fun, for education, for profit, or for service. I have written for all of these aims, and before my change I always referred to my work as “creative.” I know now, however, that the most creative work is to create in people first a longing to know, and then a definite knowledge of the living Jesus Christ.

In the last chapter, for instance, I tried to show that dances, socials, and other forms of church “advertising” could not substitute for direct prophecy or interpretation of the word of God. Unless God Himself shall speak, people are not led to seek Him. A creative minister, therefore, must be a prophet—not simply a performer. And yet even prophecy is not enough. For the word of God passes over the heads of those who are not alive to God. The most prophetic and inspired sermon cannot create if it falls on ears that fail to hear and eyes that fail to see. A minister is stumped unless he preaches to a few “live coals.” He cannot just advertise the Kingdom and then leave the actual conversion to someone else in his congregation. The truly creative minister must not be simply a prophet or spokesman for God, but must also, as I have suggested, become an actual changer of lives.

This is true, however, not only of the work of ministers, but of my own work also, and that of all workers in the world. I cannot ask a minister to share his sins with his congregation and point the way to victory unless I do the same with my *own* business associates and customers. I cannot ask a minister to incur the displeasure of his vestry and risk his job by standing out uncompromisingly for Christ unless I am willing to incur the displeasure of my partner and clients and risk my own job for Christ. Why, then, should I ask him to get down to the difficult task of becoming creative in his work unless I am willing to become creative in exactly the same way? The fact that I am in the advertising business—not a professional minister—does not excuse me from working towards the same goal. And the fact that I may write books rather than sermons does not excuse me from the task of writing as a prophet. Nor does it then excuse me from that second and equally essential task of creation—the bringing of people whom I have interested to a definite experience of Christ. Without this creativeness in my own work I am a “dud” member of any minister’s congregation, of no real use to people, a passive, negative and non-productive factor in the world.

If this book fails to bring you or some other reader to talk to me in person—or to some other group member, minister or evangelist who can show you the way to relate your sins to the remedy in Christ’s atonement and who can thus lead you into a *personal experience of the still-living Christ*, this book is distinctly *non-creative*. It has failed to further the business of real life. And unless I—or the other person that you go to—can

carry on from that point and play our part as a spiritual obstetrician, the creativeness of the book itself—and any prophecy it may contain—will go for absolutely nothing. And since you are as likely to come to me as to the other fellow—particularly if your sins happen to be similar to mine—I must be filled with enough of the Holy Spirit myself to be able to make Him real to you.

This giving of the Holy Spirit also calls for realism. When I had shared my own sins with anyone and witnessed to the victory of Christ in me, I rather hoped the matter would stop there. I hoped the person to whom I had witnessed would pass on to some other member of the group or would read another book rather than embarrass me by sharing the unpleasant things in his own inner nature. And I hung at this point for several months—still negative and non-creative. One day, however, God whispered in my ear—“Go on, go on, go ON! Ask him what *his* troubles are!” I did. A life was changed. For the first time I walked with Christ—a *partner* in His business of creation.

When, as I described in my last chapter, a minister began to apply Christ in his own life, his listeners came up to him to say—not “what a splendid sermon”—but “I want to talk to you.” And when I began to apply Christ in *my* business, business men came up to say—not “what a splendid advertisement”—but, “How did you get that way?” and “How can I get that way myself?” My testimony, in other words, has brought several other advertising men and a number of business men in other lines to a personal experience of Christ. And this, I consider, is the most vitally creative work I have ever done in advertising.

Again this same applies, not only to my book and to my work, but to all of my affairs and contacts in life. I had, for instance, thought much of the difficulties of the church and, as part of my professional work, engaged in various forms of church promotion. But I had never done anything creative for the church until, through my witness in a church, God used me to change a minister. I had, through my vocation and as avocation also, furthered all sorts of charitable, benevolent and social schemes. But I never did anything creative for society until God used me to change a social worker. I voted regularly on election day. I wired to my Congressman and signed petitions. Yet I never did anything creative in politics until God used me to change a state assemblyman. I have been to more than the usual number of schools and colleges. I have studied since graduation. I have talked with educators and written on education. Yet I never did anything creative for education until God—teaching through me in an Oxford Group School of Life—used me to change a school teacher.

I would not, as I said in the beginning, ask a minister to do these things unless I were doing them myself. And Christ, I think, would not ask me to do these things unless He asked the same service of all. Proclaiming the kingdom of God and winning people to Christ is not the business of the minister alone. It is not the business of the advertising man alone. It is the business of the architect, the plumber, the housewife, the farmer, the schoolboy and the President of the United States. It is the duty of everybody and not only in church or on Sunday but every hour, every day. It is, in short, the surest standard of usefulness for anyone, any time or anywhere.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THIS BUSINESS OF GETTING AHEAD IN LIFE *GROWTH*

I never felt that I was getting ahead materially in life unless I was able to buy a new and better automobile or to step into a new and better job. When I got the car, however, I soon lost interest in it unless I could keep fitting it out with all sorts of new and fancy gadgets. And when I got the job I soon lost interest unless it gained me new business or promoted me into higher positions. Acquisition, in other words, had to be followed by growth or it soon fell into disinterest and disuse.

I know now, of course, that spiritual acquisition is the only acquisition worth wanting, let alone worth working for. I would willingly let God deprive me of automobiles and jobs in order that He might give me more of His spiritual treasures. In the spiritual world as in the physical world, however, acquisition soon falls into disinterest and disuse unless followed by a steady *growth*.

Christian teaching, as I have tried to show in recent chapters, is of no avail unless it issue in Christian birth. And Christian birth, in turn, is fruitless unless it issue in Christian growth. I know men and women who were converted twenty, thirty, forty or more years ago and who are still inhaling the same spiritual breath they drew on that first day of their conversion. The compelling force of Christ's love has not diminished. But they draw no further breath of it. As a result of this stagnation they can be of no more use to themselves, to the world or to God. In some cases, in fact, they are a detriment rather than a benefit to the Christian cause for the spiritual infant—like the physical infant—is at times clumsy and uneducated. In my case, whatever first impressions I made, my spiritual sponsors in the group guidedly let me have my head. They knew that to cramp unduly this newfound life would be to kill it. They knew that the only way that I would ever learn to bring all my thoughts, actions and words under God's guidance was to let me note the results of trying to lead a spiritual life on the basis of the truth I already possessed. They knew that if I kept close to God I could not fail to grow. And they knew that only through such growth could I become of practical use to Him.

Without this growth, in fact, religion—in the church, in the school, in the home, the office, and the forum—is just an “escape” such as agnostics have accused it of being. As I grew, however, I began to find the reality of religion. And as I found that I not only could be born in Christ but could grow in Him day by day and hour by hour, I saw that this reality provided an “escape” of an altogether different nature. It was an escape, not from life, but from death. It was an escape, not from the reality of life, but from the ugliness, delusion, and sin of life—an escape from the *unrealities* of life and a finding of the underlying beauty, truth

and goodness which go to make God's real "design for living." It is not an escape from the responsibilities of marriage, education, politics, society, and the church. It is an escape from the monotony of marriage, the irksomeness of education, the acquisitiveness of business, the hopelessness of politics, the inadequacy of social service and the ineffectiveness of the church. It is a finding of true happiness, interest and usefulness in the home, school and office, and of true leadership in politics, true practicality in social service and true life in the church. As I grew in my submission and responsiveness to guidance these facts became constantly more clear to me. And, as I "bathed in the stream of Christ's atoning blood," the sin was washed from my eyes and I actually began to *see* God in the beauties of nature, in the truths of philosophy and science and in the lives of men.

I have heard, for instance, that native Africans do not really begin to note or appreciate the beauties of their natural surroundings until after their conversion. That proved largely true in my own case. In the beauty of a sunset, for example, I used to see not much more than gorgeous colors that appealed to my aesthetic senses. I now began to see, with Wordsworth—

A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things."

As I grew, nature sprang to life for me as had the Bible. I also found new life in the minds and affairs of men—"a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused" in what I had always regarded as the hopeless snarl of tangled humanity. I came, in fact, to see that, despite this seeming chaos in man's microcosm, God is still at the helm of the macrocosm. I came to see with Robert Browning that—

"Man is not God, but hath God's end to serve,  
A Master to obey, a course to take,  
Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become—  
Grant this, then man must pass from old to new,  
From vain to real, from mistake to fact,  
From what once seemed good to what now proves best."

Spiritual growth, however, was far more than a matter of clearing vision. I not

only could *see* new things in life but began to *do* new things—to find new forms of happiness for myself and to enter into new forms of usefulness for man and God. It was like advancing from one beautiful room through a suite of rooms constantly *more* beautiful as I progressed in the depth of my spiritual surrender.

My first surrender, for example, was largely a moral surrender. I loosened my hold and gave over my desire for the more obvious carnal sins such as drinking, gambling and adultery. I found that God had forgiven them and that Christ had swept them away. I also surrendered the fears, malice, envy, resentments and other attitudes I had borne towards people.

I developed, in short, wholly new habits in life and a wholly new attitude towards life. I thus came into harmony with the spiritual laws of living or with what Henry Drummond calls “correspondence” with our spiritual environment. When, he says, an organ has only “partial correspondence” with this environment, “it is feeble and anemic. Only when correspondence is perfect is vigorous health possible; but when that is established doors are opened on every side into the treasure-stores of the universe.”

It is said that there were earlier words for “happiness” but that, adequately to describe the Christian experience, the Greeks had to coin the word “joy.” I certainly had never known what the word “joy” really meant until, through spiritual growth and increasing “correspondence,” my doors began to open into “the treasure-stores of the universe.”

The best description of this sort of joy which I have ever found appeared in an article entitled “Twenty Minutes of Reality.” It was written by Margaret Prescott Montague and was published in *Harper’s Magazine*. As condensed by the *Reader’s Digest*, this joyous author wrote, “I cannot say what the mysterious change was, or whether it came suddenly or gradually. I saw no new thing, but I saw all the usual things in a miraculous new light—in what I believe is their true light. I saw for the first time how wildly beautiful and joyous, beyond any words of mine to describe, is the whole of life...I knew that every man, woman, bird and tree, every living thing before me, was extravagantly beautiful and extravagantly important...Never in my life before had I seen how beautiful beyond all belief is a woman’s hair. A little sparrow chirped and flew to a nearby branch, and I honestly believe that only ‘the morning stars singing together and the sons of God shouting for joy’ can in the least express the ecstasy of a bird’s flight...Once out of all the grey days of my life I have looked into the heart of reality I have seen life as it really is—ravishingly, ecstatically, madly beautiful, and filled to overflowing with a wild joy, and a value unspeakable.”

Since my surrender I have experienced this same “wild joy” and sense of “value unspeakable.” I have reveled in it—not just for twenty minutes—but for days at a time. It once came to me not through meditating upon nature’s beauties from a lofty mountain but in lowly contemplation of my spiritual shortcomings while taking off

my shoes in an attic bedroom. It came to me at that time that the biggest block still standing between me and God was my still-persisting indifference to other people. I surrendered that indifference then and there and, then and there, I was caught up in a new harmony that beggars all description.

I had not long been born into the spiritual domain, however, when I found myself eagerly seeking such joys—much as in the physical world I had sought the exhilaration of alcohol. I had begun to seek joy rather than God. In this way I found that self-indulgence can creep in even on the spiritual level. An indulgent, changed Christian is of little more use to God than an indulgent, unborn Christian, and God very properly and promptly took these new-found joys away from me. He reminded me again that the Christian must be an active Christian and that this work lies largely with other people. He brought me up against rebuffs in my own home, and against harsh criticisms outside my home—forcibly recalling that I was still not only in the land of the living, but in the land of the unborn Christian and the unconverted pagan. There was work to be done—a further growth to experience—and, through guidance, He indicated clearly that I should begin to think less about my spiritual joys and more about the needs of the other fellow.

This came about when, after my first enthusiastic and fruitless attempts to convert my relatives and friends, I began to realize that I myself did not have the insight to get down to a man's real need and that—even should I diagnose it correctly—I myself did not have the power to remove that person's sin and to transform his nature. Gradually however, I learned to stop trying to work *for* God. I learned to let Him work *through* me. I learned to seek and to rely on His spiritual diagnosis rather than my own sizing up of a man. I learned to let God tell me what the matter might be with the other fellow. I learned to draw the other man into prayer, quiet time or other direct relations with God, where God could speak as plainly to *him*. I learned to let God tell me *and* the other fellow what should be done about restitution for these sins. I learned to seek from Him the power to accomplish these results where we were our own strength. As I grew in this humility I grew in usefulness to God. Finally, sweeping me over the last bars of self-consciousness and embarrassment which made me hesitate to look into another man's sins, God used me actually to change a life. And then He used me to change another—then another—and another.

Physicians tell me that watching human birth is a most awe-inspiring and reverential experience. I doubt, however, if it can compare in sheer wonder and sheer joy with watching human *rebirth*—especially when you are used to assist at such rebirth under God's guidance. But self, as I learned to my sorrow, was still at work. As my number of spiritual children began to mount I began to fill with pride and satisfaction. It was, no doubt, the same sort of pride and satisfaction that a surgeon might feel after his first string of successful operations. In the surgeon of souls, however, such emotions are a serious hindrance. Pride is *always* a barrier

which cuts off God's power and some of my operations became not so successful. Some of my spiritual children relapsed into an unregenerate stage of paganism. God saw that self was again creeping in to short-circuit harmony and insight, and He again proceeded to take corrective measures.

I had not, in other words, progressed far enough along the path from self to draw others after me and give them there a firm foothold in that further ground which the Oxford Group calls "continuance." At this juncture, therefore, God sent me through an unusually long "dry spell"—through a sort of "arid desert of the soul"—in which He set me to the task of shaking out the vestiges of self that still kept me from becoming a wholly free and useful servant. One morning, for example, as I sought to make surrender of one of my pet plans, a force other than my own took hold of me and shook me till I almost felt it physically. These "little" sins, in fact, were more deeply and firmly rooted and took a lot more shaking than many of the sins I thought were "big" ones. They were the roots of my basic sins—the sins of which my grosser acts were only symptoms.

Drinking, for instance, proved to be only the symptom of loneliness and boredom which, in turn, were rooted in pride and selfishness. With love for God flooding me and tempting me upward instead of downward—and thus tempting me *away* from the bottle—it was comparatively easy to loosen my grip on this mere symptom of a sin and let Christ's stream carry it away from me. As Professor Grensted of Oxford points out, however, sin is the only thing we ourselves have created—the only thing that we ourselves really own and possess. The deeper the sin, therefore, the deeper the possessiveness, and while letting go of alcohol, I still clung to my basic pride and selfishness. With God's help it was easy to give up the drinking. And with God's help it was easy to help other drinkers quit. But when it came to not drinking in the praise of those who admired my new stand—when it came to not lapping up the thanks of those I had helped to quit—when it came to recognizing and admitting that all of this was God's work and none of it mine—that was another question.

Still, however, God continued with my spiritual growth. He showed me, as F. B. Meyer suggests, that even while I sang His praises, I was inclined to admire my own singing. He showed me that, while my face shone with a new light, I was noting that fact in the mirror. He showed me that, in my most earnest appeals to come to Christ, I was greatly admiring my own earnestness. He showed me that I was proud even of my new humility and that I congratulated myself on the knowledge of divine things which other men might not possess.

He showed me in business that, while I had given up dishonest writing and dishonest dealing, I was still prone to defend my work rather than admit to my partner or client that I had slap-dashed through it in order to get at what I considered some more important and interesting detail of God's business. He taught me that, if *any* of my work proved uninteresting, I could not be, at such a time, really *doing* His business. He taught me that, while He could use me to convert other business

men, He could not yet do so on as large a scale as He would like and that He could not use me to carry these others very far into continuance.

In the home He taught me that while I was now ready to let Christ control all my decisions in family matters and in any difference of opinion, I was not yet ready to let Him control all my thoughts and words, let us say, at the dinner table. I was still prone to snap at my children if they annoyed me by snapping at each other. I was still inclined to dream there about my book or other matters of personal interest rather than let God use my mind to dwell in others and *their* interests, and *their* needs, as Christ Himself would dwell there.

In life generally He taught me that, while it was easy to be honest in money matters and easy not to lie, it was not so easy to refrain from witnessing beyond my experience—to refuse to talk of things on which I was not quite clear—and to keep my guidance uncolored by personal desires or opinions. He taught me that, while it was easy to keep my mind free from thoughts of sexual impurity, it was not so easy to keep it free from *all* impurity—meaning any strain of thinking that runs contrary to God’s will. He taught me that, while it was easy to be obviously unselfish and to give in gracefully when anything came up, it was not so easy to go out of my way to be unselfish—*looking* for the need in other people and holding them to their best. He taught me that, while it was easy to love those for whom I had a natural affinity, it was not so easy to love those who are unlovely or who seemed undeserving of my love.

In my work for Him He taught me that competition, imitation and comparison were still apt to creep into such work. He showed me that I felt more comfortable with those spiritually behind me than with those out ahead. He showed me that in checking my plans with others of the group I was still hoping that they would do the thinking and take the final responsibility. He showed me that such sharing and checking was not yet the happy overflow of a real relationship but that it still contained some fear and pretence of fellowship. He showed me that while I was submitting to a certain amount of discipline and public persecution I was not yet ready to go barefoot or submit to stoning as a martyr.

Theologically, He showed me that the Cross was the only possible and ultimate termination of my self-life. And He showed me that, while I had taken up my cross to follow Him, I had not yet nailed myself upon the Cross, I had not really crucified the ego in me. In this supreme revelation of His love, in other words, God—through Christ—had shed His blood for me. He gave His life that I—seeing the great depth of such a love—might find a higher love than self-love—the only dynamic powerful enough to raise me above self-centered sin.

I found in ancient lore the blood covenant was the most sacred compact ever made between men. It superseded every other form of treaty or agreement ever known. I had entered into a new compact with God. He had made it a blood covenant on His side. What like degree of sacrifice had I made on mine? What had I done to

make myself a blood brother of Christ? I had brought Him my soiled life and He had cleansed it. The least I could do in return was to lay down my own life to cleanse others in His name. I thought that I had done so. At this juncture in my growth, however, He showed me how little of myself had really died. He showed me that, when my will crossed God's will, I still too often chose my own way. I had still, therefore, to go through a real experience of the Cross. And though I saw that neither I nor any other man would ever fully understand the Cross in this life, I also saw how far I had still to grow.

It was only when I began to grow through these further reaches that I really began to lead a Christ-centered rather than an egocentric life. It was only then that I passed through the outer fringes of surrender to the place where we give up more than bad habits and attitudes, and where we give away more than our time in listening to other people's problems and helping them relate their need to its remedy in Christ. It is here where we really lay down our very lives—finding no survival of desire other than the desire to follow God—forming no plan other than to find and follow God's plan—holding no ideal other than that of self, sacrificed for the common good in such ways as God may direct. It is here, in other words, that we really begin to “go all the way out for Christ.”

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THIS BUSINESS OF GETTING BACK TO GOD *DESTINY*

I could not see, at first, why the Oxford Group insisted on going *all* out for Christ. “I,” said one chap, “would like to go into this thing in a mild sort of way, and I rather felt that way myself. And then a speaker said, “If you don’t go *all* the way—if you don’t go *far enough for the joy of it*—you had better not go at all.”

I know to-day that this is so. When I went halfway out for Christ, as I did during my first Sunday school and church experience, I was simply on the fence. I tried, on one hand, to give up some of the pleasures that I thought were wrong. I found no new pleasures on the other. And in this half-way state—a state of being merely “influenced” or “helped”—I was as useless to Christ and blocked God’s plan as effectively as though I had taken no step at all.

But why, you may ask, take any steps? Why especially intrude on others who seem happy as they are?

Why, I ask in reply, did anyone intrude on the state in which Helen Keller was born and bring her into touch with the seeing, hearing and speaking world? To live out of touch with the spiritual domain is to miss the whole point of life. If I had not, for instance, turned about in life and set about growing a soul—if I had not gone all out for Christ in the service of God—I not only would have “missed the boat” but would have found myself aboard humanity’s sinking ship with no land in sight and no life preserver at hand. There is no other way to reap full benefit from either the egoistic, humanistic or theistic plans. There is no other way to find the most in life. There is no other way to keep civilization from impending wreck. There is no other way to serve God.

The way He wants us to go—made clear by Christ’s aims in contrast with the selfish aims of men—is a way which, as we travel it, will open us to the reception of more and more of His blessings. In early radio development, for instance, effort centered around perfection of a receiving set which could pick up more and more distant stations with ever greater clarity, fidelity and volume. Similarly, in man’s development, Christ’s efforts seem to have centered in building self-sacrifice, fellowship and obedience—the qualities we must have in order to pick up more and more of God’s love and thus fulfill the fundamental reason for our being.

As a pagan, for example, I wanted comfortable surroundings and narcotics for my body, comfortable opinions for my mind, and comfortable religious assurance for my soul. Christ, however, taught me that while my heart, mind and soul were filled with such desires, there would be no room for God’s love to flow into them. He taught me His first great commandment—that I must love the Lord my

God with *all* my heart and *all* my mind and *all* my soul—that, in other words, I must surrender my alcohol, my tobacco and my ladies, I must surrender my self-glorifying philosophies and surrender my easy religion. Then and then only could I begin to experience a moral exaltation far greater than any physical pleasure I had ever experienced, a peace and contentment of mind far greater than any intellectual satisfaction I had ever found, and a contact of my soul with the Holy Spirit such as I had never known at all.

Then He taught me, through His second great commandment, that I could not love my neighbor as myself just by wishing for that neighbor or securing for him the same sort of comfortable things I had wished, or secured for myself during the indulgent years of my life. I could not, in other words, solve social problems just by sharing my fortune with my neighbor nor even by sharing my intelligence with him. We had to share our real selves, *sins*, and all, with each other—thus removing the blocks between us—thus letting the love that God had given us flow from me to him and from him to me, and thus again fulfilling God’s great purpose of disseminating Love.

Finally Christ taught me, through His beatitudes, that I could not enter the kingdom of heaven until, through recognizing my own poverty of spirit, I let God remove the obstacles that kept His love from flowing in. I could not inherit the earth until, through meekness, I saw God in things, rather than my own or another man’s prowess. I thus found the true usefulness of all things and inherited them indeed.

So it is—when I will let Him—that God is shaping me towards the Christ-like character. This is not because He wants me to be “good” as I wanted *my* children to be good (in order not to annoy me). It is because achievement of that character is the only way I can achieve receptivity to love.

It is only thus, as I have said, by going *all* the way out for Christ, that I can go far enough for the full joy of living. It is only thus that I can help avert another of civilization’s periodic wrecks. It is only thus that I can serve God’s underlying purpose of *loving* the people He created for that end.

Unless we begin to get back to God and His purposes, we will fail in life, not only as individuals, but as a nation and as a world. Without Christ our best social, economic and other efforts can do no more than drag out the disease of selfishness from which civilization is now suffering and from which, throughout past history, it has *always died*. The effort to secure voluntary cooperation among business men, for instance, without changing the volition and affections of the business man himself, is doomed to failure in advance. It is merely dipping a little trouble out of the bucket of human woe without for a moment turning off the trouble-giving taps. This inevitable failure can be followed only by a harsh dictatorship or dreary period of socialization—equally oppressive and equally futile attempts to strap a governmental strait-jacket on human greed.

In struggling to attain or to retain *any* man-made system the world is simply

striving to maintain a system of self-love. And in subscribing to any such system we are simply buying a ringside seat for the world's greatest tragedy—the disintegration of civilization.

Men were sure that education of itself was going to produce the superman. Without Christ, however, education can and has produced nothing but the super-idealist, on the one hand, who finds himself helpless and bewildered in the ruck of actual living where his theories fail to work. It produces, at the other extreme, the super-crook—highwaymen in high places as well as on the high road—men whose educated wits make them an even greater menace to society than they were before. Philosophically, instead of furnishing a fresh synthesis of life, it can but pick to pieces a world already crumbling to pieces. Scientifically, although a colossus of achievement in the material world, it stands a helpless pygmy in the world of moral defeat. Spiritually it offers eclectic compromise in place of the absolute standards of Christ Who can raise us above sin. It substitutes intellectuality, which keeps us in touch with the errors of men, for the quality of life that puts us in touch with the wisdom of God.

When I realized this and began to lead a Christ-centered life, the world, of course, called me eccentric. It even called me deranged. I met criticism, opposition and persecution on every hand—and not only from pagans and other outlaws of the spiritual kingdom, but from head men in the church itself. I found, on the other hand, the peace of God. I found a new purpose and usefulness in life—the kind of usefulness which, as Finney suggests, makes one Spirit-filled Christian more useful while sick in bed than any hundred able-bodied Christians of the common order. I found that I was no longer vexed, distressed or worried when people spoke against me. I found myself calm under affliction and happy regardless of circumstance. I found how to appreciate the beautiful in nature, the true in thought and the infinite goodness of God. I found a future, stretching through eternity and which, for the first time, held a sure salvation for myself, for my family and for all others in the world who will but reach out a seeking hand.

Give God a world, nation or even a community of these Spirit-filled and guided Christians and He can build a new social order such as no social idealist has ever dreamt. It would be an order wholly “spiritual in genesis, character and development.” I have already hinted at its make-up, by tracing the activities of the Oxford Group through the home, school, office, social welfare center, governmental departments and church. I have tried to suggest what the beginnings of such a kingdom might be like. And it is not a difficult feat of the imagination to project these present spiritual trends into a future spiritual state.

It will be, I think, a state conquered through a policy of “peaceful penetration.” God's programme, I believe, will simply infuse politicians themselves with His Spirit and they themselves will then set up such political machinery as the Spirit may direct. In this state there will arise a spiritual economy replacing the economics of

avarice—a quest for the limitless rather than the pursuit of limited wealth. The great economic wastes due to immorality and the lack of stewardship of God’s property will quickly disappear as Christ’s motives and attitudes spring into flourishing life. Other pagan *mores* and institutions will either change in like manner or will “perish from sheer functionlessness.” In our educational life we shall learn what it is to have the Holy Spirit as the Teacher. Business will become a means not of making a better living than the other fellow, but of cooperating with the other fellow in making living better. Industry will release us from our present slavery and become *our* slave instead. The need for sociological work will diminish as spiritual needs are met and as mankind—relinquishing selfishness—adjusts his relationships and fuses his social purposes under the coordination of God. Science will graduate from the world of form and begin its explorations in the world of spiritual significance. Philosophy will find the missing pieces in its picture puzzle—the *x* in its equation—and begin a constructive synthesis of life rather than a mere critical analysis. The church will permeate world interests with changed men and thus diffuse its “character and ministry through society as a whole.” Internationally, some sort of “Federated States of World Theocracy” will exist where each state plays its part in the orchestra of universal accord.

It may be that we have so far abused the free choice God gave us that the fall of civilization is inevitable. If so, He may keep the knowledge of His purpose and the means of its attainment alive only in some band of faithful followers—a band, for instance, such as the Oxford Group—whose duty it may be to carry the live torch through the Dark Ages that must come.

Whatever His further plan, God’s present plan has been made very clear. And it is clear that, in this purpose, He is using the Oxford Group to show that personal salvation is still available to all who seek it in the name of Jesus Christ. To me, moreover, it is clear that He is using me as a part of that group and that, although I will never grasp His plan as a whole, my own part in it will be made perfectly plain from day to day.

My part in this future programme, I know, is going to be a thrilling and endless adventure. Despite all that has happened to me already I know that I have just *begun* to grow. I have just begun to open to God’s love. I have just begun to touch the varied lives He is using me to change. I have just begun to sense the possibilities ahead. And these possibilities, I am convinced, will continue to unfold into ever new and richer adventure, not only for the rest of my re-born days but through eternity.

I used to believe in immortality because I *wanted* to. It was the only way I knew in which my best interests could be served. I thought, in other words, God had given me so shabby a deal in this life that He, in justice, would have to make up for it in some kind of life hereafter. Now, however, I believe in immortality because *God* wants me to. I am *told* to believe by the Voice that never yet has lied. And I am

told to believe—not that my own interests may be better served—but that God’s purpose can finally be fulfilled.

Such purpose, I well know, has never been fulfilled in *this* life excepting only in His Son. Yet He has labored long and patiently with every one of us. He will not throw so many “uncompleted tasks” away. I do not mean, of course, that God will *force* me to a glorious completion in some life hereafter. He has reared me to a point where, spiritually, I am of age. There he has left me free to choose. I can choose His love or choose my own way, responding to those forces of inertia, disintegration and decay which would pull me back towards the nothingness from which I came. There surely would I find that “the wages of sin is death.” But I have chosen the other way. I have tasted the joys of walking with Christ. Any other course, by contrast, is intolerably painful. I no longer can stand to breathe the other air. My thanks to the Oxford Group who led me to Christ, and to Christ Who is leading me to God.

THE END