II

THE ANSWER TO MAN'S FRUSTRATION

We were saying in the previous lecture that we are continually thwarted in our relationships by the fact that nobody can be all right. The people who are most effective in this predicament of human incompetence constitute a peculiar community who never pretend to be all right but are utterly willing servants of what ought to be.

We shall now attempt to set forth, in the simplest possible terms, the faith about life from which this company derives its character and its strength. The literature of the Bible is the record of its emergence in human history.

Back of the doctrinal controversies of the ages are these historical documents which have done even more to shape our civilization than the great heritage from Greece and Rome or the scientific discoveries of our own time.

The Bible is not a scientific book, since it appeared before science was dreamed of. It is not a philosophical book with an explanation of the universe—its writers knew far less about the mysterious universe than we do. It is not a book of political and economic strategy to be outgrown with changing conditions. It is not even a book. It is the whole literature of an ancient people—folklore, legends, histories, biographies, letters, memorable speeches, poetry, drama, with collections of proverbs, hymns, and prayers—all put together and edited at the end of a nation's existence. The material in these writings comes out of a period roughly fifteen hundred years long.

The book as it stands is best read as one would read any other ancient literature, though its significance is religious
rather than literary. Its myths and folklore and all the more formal literature reflect the stages by which truth dawned on men as they wrestled with the old, old predicament of human nature. For human nature is the field of the Bible. The problems of human nature are the same now as in the past. And the insights given to this people as they responded to things that happened to them have been worked over and tested by all sorts and conditions of men down to this twentieth century. Over this stretch of history has been gathered a body of knowledge into which is packed thirty centuries of experience with life, under all conditions and through the worst catastrophes that ever befell our bewildered race. Out of persistent mistakes and disagreements have emerged recurring agreements which have proved so profound, so universal, timeless, and true to life, that we describe them as a revelation, transcending all generations and races, and belonging to the ages. We work with this old truth to explore the range of its meaning in changing conditions age after age.

The faith of the Bible is a view of life which can be quite simply stated in outline. Life is an eternal triangle: you with your connections, I with my connections, and God at work through all our connections. We often speak of the sun and the earth and some other planet as though they were entirely separate, simply because there is distance between them. But we know that our moving earth is held by the attraction of the sun and also by the attraction of some other planets in an endless number of triangles, all restrained by the sun from skyrocketing off into space. There is no way to draw a line between the various forces of attraction. But the triangular field of force never leaves any part drifting by itself.

So in our personal world there is a field of personal force, where we are affected by others and others by us, and no-
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where can we say this event is by human agency alone or by divine agency alone. We are not in this triangle at one time and out of it another. We live and move and have our being in it, when we remember and when we forget, whether we believe it or not. The ancient symbol of God up above us in heaven has been a way of asserting that God's activity is more than the sum of human feelings and achievements. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord."

The Biblical answer to human frustration is this view of life where a superhuman power intervenes in the network of our human relations, to correct, to reclaim, to transform, and reveal possibilities that have not entered the mind of man to conceive. Let us now consider this unique view in more detail.

* The germinal idea of our faith declares that there is a divine rightness, stronger than all human wrongness, constantly active in the course of events. We owe this insight, so far as we can trace it, to a spiritual genius named Moses. When the Hebrew tribes were slaves in Egypt, he acted as their labor leader. Thwarted by the powers of the Egyptian tyranny, he fled to a desert place and there it was borne in upon him that in seeking to free a people from oppression he was in line with a divine purpose sharing in every struggle to liberate life, and calling men not merely to contemplation of the right but to participation in the common struggle.

How clear this was at the beginning no one can know. But the conviction empowered this leader to set his people on the way to freedom and steadied him to endure their backslidings and ingratitude. He was the instrument of a living force that has held together the Hebrew people through centuries of persecution, created a foundation for the faith of the Mohammedan world, and set the stage for all that
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Christianity has done for mankind. No one can measure the amazing outcome of the insight vouchsafed to this man. We trust this view because it makes more and more sense as we live by it, while its contradiction leads toward the chaos in which we find ourselves today.

There is nothing magical about this superhuman factor acting in events. This rightness is forever out of our human reach but it reaches down to share the failures of creation, to do unexpected things with our incompetence, yet without violating anything natural.

Up-island on Martha's Vineyard, I once witnessed an exhibition by an English sheepdog, bred from a champion, who after arriving in this country had escaped to the woods and gone wild, just following his own silly will. He was recovered and treated with such patient kindness that he became a completely devoted one-man dog. After months of training he acted in that public test as though nothing mattered to him save his master's will. Watching every move of the man's hand, listening to every word of command, he rounded up the sheep in the big field, driving them according to signal, lying down at a whistle to slow the pace, sneaking carefully behind his charges when the voice called him to be steady. Like magic those sheep were taken around the field into one pen, out into another, and back into the field amid the cheers of the crowd.

Yet it was not magic, nor contrary to dog nature. The man's mind, with all its knowledge, was absolutely out of reach of the dog; but that super-dog mind reached down to the dog's level, giving hints of what was wanted, correcting false moves, recovering him from mistakes, without ever violating the dog's free nature. The outcome was more than all the wisdom of dogdom by itself could either predict or achieve.

Something like that is the Biblical faith that our imperfect
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world of persons has a superhuman rightness entering actively into it.

There are only two other alternative faiths. One comes from the Orient, claiming that the meaning of life is not in any of the details of this earthly scene, but in the whole, which is not like any of the parts and which is reached by contemplation and escape from the things of the world. The other is the age-old material view that we live in a purposeless, natural process, that has no use for our ideals and aspirations. Whatever is true in these views can be preserved and fulfilled through faith in a creator who is involved in all the resistance and incompleteness of his creation.

Vagueness is of the very essence of this faith. “Commit thy way unto the Lord” seems too indefinite for practical use. But a scientist’s devotion to unattainable truth does not seem to be too indefinite—it is a very definite way of getting results. An ordinary person who loves integrity does not feel it is vague to do his work as well as he possibly can, without being able to see exactly what good it will do. Every discoverer is first dimly aware of some right way before he discovers it, or makes it practical, or knows how people will respond to it. If we are to keep our life open and growing, we have to be devoted to the unattainable and the unknown, without calculation, just for the fun of it. Thus we can take our leap in the dark, ever ready for correction, laboring at our best until the unpredictable can be revealed through us. Man without God is only half there.

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Another of the Biblical insights into the mystery of human nature is expressed in the familiar statement that man is “made in the image of God.” That refers to the mystery of our double life—the life of nature, and the life of the spirit. We live both lives at once. We are bound to the
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natural, but we can rise to a higher level whence we look back at ourselves, laugh at ourselves, judge ourselves, and feel ashamed of ourselves.

How we live these two lives at once is an eternal mystery, but we do it. I recently saw a student walking with his feet on the ground of the Princeton campus, reading a letter. By his smile I knew he was really living on the campus at Vassar, from which place his Princeton existence looked unexciting and dull. So do we put ourselves in other people’s places, look out on the world from their point of view, and sometimes, from that angle, get a startling view of ourselves. With a smattering of psychology we may even stand off and analyze ourselves into a stream of impulses and reactions, and then laugh at the psychological nonsense that supposes we are a stream watching ourselves stream.

This mysterious capacity to be in two places at once is the secret of our dignity and value as persons. We can withdraw from the present, survey the past, and grasp something of the future, holding in mind a great span of time as though it were one moment, like a small sample of eternity. We can detach ourselves from the customary and live ahead of our time, perceiving what others do not realize and making it available. This unique power of appreciation by which a person can be used to make the unrealized actual is what gives each individual his value to the Creator. Furthermore, we can rise above limitations and mistakes and the pressure of circumstance into freedom of conscience—the supreme mark of the free man responsible only to God. All true freedom stems from this unconditional relation of a man’s will to the Highest—call it truth, love, God, or what you will.

We never in this world can become perfectly detached spirits, because we are obliged to make our living among natural necessities. Some do leave the world behind and
make it their one mission to magnify a thousandfold the dedicated life of the spirit which we so easily forget in the struggle to survive. A French traveller recently described a priest who lived among the Eskimos, in a cave, without any modern conveniences, and in temperatures that ranged to fifty degrees below zero. "He was a perfectly simple soul," wrote the traveller, "wholly given to living for God's love of every human creature. Cold to him was a mere word. He was somewhere living another life. Once again I was taught that the spirit was immune and irresistible—there was something more than grub and shelter in this conqueror of the Arctic."

But we cannot all leave the world behind. Most of us come gradually to a sense of the spiritual life by a kind of commonsense religion, which begins with what is good for us, and develops through a mixture of motives to an uncommon sense of what we are good for. At first our motives were quite unmixed. As infants, when we were hungry in the night, we had no altruistic considerations whatever for the family. But through our connections with people, our self-interest became mixed with other people's interests. We felt their claim to be understood which called us to be part of something greater than ourselves. From small meanings to larger meanings, including more of our fellows, we were led on to forget ourselves until at times we were satisfied to be swallowed up in purposes that were of value to everybody.

First it was like doing one thing after another. Then our faithfulness was seen to be part of all faithfulness at work in the world; our suffering part of all the suffering by which good has been recovered from evil. We realized our connection, not only with each other, but with an unbroken continuity of purpose active in all events. In that endless connection we find our true life.
Many modern people have lost sight of this simple clue once expressed by our fathers in the words: “the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” For His purpose is partly embodied in all that is accomplished, and partly waiting, as it were, to keep us awake and on the move. There is no time when it is appropriate to halt. We are children of the eternal and the infinite; connected parts of a community of the spirit that transcends all boundaries and time itself.

Perhaps the most unique insight of the Bible has to do with the perversity of human nature. We have a way of contradicting our own nature, standing in our own way, biting off our own nose, and going against our best interest. This has been traditionally known as “original sin.”

For us and our Creator there is nothing for it but to make the best of imperfect parents in our homes, imperfect teachers in our schools, imperfect people in business and government. If the truth were known, this is a college where young sinners are trained by older and wiser ones, with nothing but sinners on the Board of Trustees, and a whole retinue of sinners in the alumni body.

It was the cheerful illusion of the nineteenth century that this predicament was not permanent. Somehow if we improved our education we might overcome this limitation. But we cannot even know all that is right, to say nothing of doing it. Right is as inexhaustible as truth.

Furthermore, we are all like the man who said he never made a fool of himself twice in the same way but always found a new way to make a fool of himself. We began life as self-centered babies, and so long as we have to look after ourselves the bias of self-interest always affects our judgments. And besides, however good our intentions, we are involved in a society which will not let us do just what we
wish, as when we have to choose between voting for one of
two rascals or not voting at all.

Also it is ridiculous to think we can bring ourselves to
love everybody as we should. Who can love four hundred
million Asiatics when they are seven thousand miles away?
There are some who cannot start with enough charity at
home to love the D.A.R., or the American Chamber of
Commerce, or the Federation of Labor.

However we explain this incompetence, we are always
held accountable. This is what intensifies our human predica-
ment into tragedy. Our New England ancestors, on the
occasion of a serious epidemic of disease, are reputed to
have crowded into their church to pray for protection, thus
spreading the epidemic from which they sought deliverance.
When people contradict the laws of life, ignorantly or wil-
fully, the laws are not rescinded. Our fathers learned that
they were responsible to the laws of hygiene whether they
could know them or not. With the best of intentions their
efforts for health were self-defeating.

Some have argued that evil ways are due to ignorance
and, if we used a little more reason, our troubles would be
over. For it seems that anybody would do what he knew to
be right and for his best interest. This argument is as old
as Socrates, and is still good but not good enough.

For we never can know all the consequences since we are
not omniscient, and we are therefore bound to make mis-
takes when we draw conclusions before all the facts are in.

Furthermore, this does not explain why we do not want
to know all we should, or why we do the wrong thing when
we actually know better. Augustine once prayed: "Make
me pure . . . but not now." Why delay, after he understood
what was right? We want to look out for others, but not
right now when we have ourselves to look after. We want
our spiritual nature to be satisfied, but not at this moment
when some very natural desires clamor for attention. So
our spirit turns back from the calling of the Most High and
becomes a servant of our passing impulse.

The oldest bit of folklore in the Bible describes the origi-
nal sin, when the first man did the forbidden thing because
his wife tempted him; and she tempted him because a
snake told her that forbidden fruit was not so bad after all.
This is not a scientific nor even historical story, for no snake
ever had any vocal chords; but a snake in the grass is a
good symbol of the sneaking, deceitful way our desires per-
suade our reason to grant their requests. This story of how
the first man fell for the wrong thing is not something
that happened once, long, long ago, but something that is
always so.

When our fathers considered it as actual history they had
a hard time arguing that the original corruption of the race
by the first man continued into all descendants, so that our
nature is now by itself incapable of good.

But now the psychologists are winning us back to face
this curious deception in our nature. They tell us that in
some subterranean depths there are our original hunger
drives, impulses, and emotions, that are our impelling forces.
These have no conscience of their own, no character. They
conflict with each other and have no self-control. Each is
out for itself, creating inner tensions that cause us to break
down and go to pieces. And our reason is supposed to man-
age these unruly forces like an overseer managing his slaves.
But the slaves bribe the manager to do their will. We call
this rationalization. Self-deceit is a plainer name. And
original sin is the old-fashioned terminology for the same
thing.

Karl Marx was a prophet of this old truth when he
pointed out that our interest in making a living may con-
stantly bias our point of view. We are determined by it
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more than by our ideals, when we are not thinking much about it. Every man's idea of the income tax is influenced by the size of his income. Middle class people in the churches have ideas of social change that are affected more by their investments than by their Christian ideals. Marx forgot that the proletariat would likewise be biased in their minds by their interest in making a living in their way. Certainly in affairs of state, self-interest has to be recognized as having more weight in our policies than our highest moral sentiments.

So the Bible, psychology, and sociology all agree that we never outgrow this habit of fooling ourselves.

Or we can put the case in an even more modern form. We were born self-centered, under necessity of looking after ourselves. To dodge this responsibility is to leave it to others, which is death to initiative. But we were also born to be in relation to others, and we keep blocking ourselves when we try to look after ourselves separately. We are, of course, unselfish up to a point, where it is safe, and appreciated, and where relations are friendly and reciprocal. We do at times forget to look after ourselves—almost. But whenever some vital interest is threatened, we at once make ourselves the center from which the whole of life is judged. We look at everything to see how it affects us, as though we were the whole show and all the rest but side shows to the big tent.

Thus a break comes in our relations with others who expect the world to revolve around their interest as the center. We become like galaxies of self-centered groups, talking of separate rights and independent sovereignty. All this is against our own nature, which was created for relations without limit.

The result of self-centeredness is the old, familiar contradiction. We find ourselves doing what we know we should
not do, acting against our own best interest. A self-centered man wants to make friends, but no one likes a friend who is all wrapped up in himself. He wants to be satisfied by doing what he pleases, but in pleasing himself he pleases no one else whose respect he would be most pleased to keep.

The self-centeredness of groups ends in the same impasse. We want peace and we get war. We want preparedness against war, and we start others preparing against us. We want unity and we get division. We want security, and get more insecurity. Without knowing it we become caught in the sins of the whole world. This leaves us with a curious inability to deliver ourselves from our own self-centeredness.

Offsetting this pessimistic view of the obstinate perversity of human nature, our Biblical faith offers another insight that gives ultimate ground for hope. Final trust is to be placed, not in man alone, but in the divine intervention as a power that corrects. Christianity courts no sunny delusions about man’s perfectibility on this earth; and at the same time it is the only faith in the world, as someone has said, that holds together absolute confidence and absolute despair. All the foolishness of humanity is forever subject to a correcting power that is not of men, but of God. You can take your choice—either a superficial optimism about human nature which ends in pessimism, or an honest pessimism which, through God, ends in hope.

We might go back to our figure of life as a triangle and say that there are always three sides to every question: your side, my side, and the right side. Today it is the Allies’ side, and the Axis’ side, and the right side. God is on the right side correcting the two human sides which are never all right. So you cannot have God entirely on one side of any human conflict.
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The Bible has two ways of describing this corrective activity entering into all human affairs. One way is picturesque and primitive, and grows ever farther away from our modern thought. Here God is conceived in terms of an oriental monarch whose absolute power brooks no infringement on his law. He dispenses arbitrary punishment to all offenders, that his majesty may be held in respect and fear. If he does not catch the offender at once, he will find him out later on.

It is in this framework that divine correction has been thought of as a “judgment” in the sense of “punishment.” Here is the root of the elaborate imaginings about God as a wrathful judge threatening sinners with the fires of hell. But we must remember that most of the familiar hell-fire dramatization came not from the Bible, but from pagan sources by way of Dante’s *Inferno* and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Both Protestants and Catholics have taken undue advantage of this primitive picturesqueness to put the fear of God into people. “Punishment” and “wrath” are questionable words to connect with God. But leaving old language behind should not conceal the fact that these old terms stood for a profound truth. The “wrath of God” and “the judgment day” are symbols of the final reckoning that comes to all that is unreal and contrary to the laws of life. Separating oneself from God and his conditions for our life would be the living death which has gone by the name of hell.

This suggests the other Biblical way of describing divine correction. It precludes the representation of God as mad, or mean, or jealous for his majesty. It represents the will of God as a fixed order of life in which everything takes place. To ignore that order is to miss life.

An ancient prophet uses the figure of God’s “plumb line.” Any construction that is out of plumb will be in
danger of collapse. Jesus employed the figure of house-building on rock or sand. When a house is constructed on foundations of sand instead of rock, the storm, when it comes, will bring about a fall, the innocent family to the contrary notwithstanding.

Another prophet used what we might call the symbol of the “big stick.” God will reduce the false pretensions of one nation by using some other nation as a club; and then in turn will bring down the pride of the clubbing nation in the same fashion.

These metaphors are never out-dated. Science today trusts to trial and error with continuous correction from the order of nature, which is foolproof and not man-made. So in the world of personal relations there is an order (a “structure” as we say today) by which we are all tied together to fulfill each other’s life. If the law of life requires community where we take the consequences of each other’s living, there is no other way for us to complete ourselves. We may defy the structure, but it is still there, and the bad results which follow in their own time will illustrate its finality.

Even this figure of speech is not adequate, for the correction is not merely mechanical. It is concerned with recovery of persons as no automatic process alone would be. Perhaps it was this personal interest which the older picture of God as merciful Judge sought to preserve. All religious terms are approximate symbols, not accurate definitions.

There is always something obscure and hidden in the whole operation of correction. A student once said to me that he had put together his ideas into a rather satisfactory philosophy of life—except for the problem of evil. For that he saw no solution save to close his eyes and forget it as best he could. Such a disposition of an ultimate question is characteristic of most of us, while we pull down the shades
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on the world's evil and live within our comfortable surroundings, saying to ourselves, "It never can happen here." But not thinking about this skeleton in the closet of the world is like a game Tolstoy used to play in his childhood. The family would take turns going behind a door to see how long each could stay there and not think of a black bear. Our faith has a better answer than that, as we shall see later in connection with the present tragedy of war.

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Correction alone is negative, and by itself would leave us in despair with our predicament. Only out of such despair did it first dawn on men that the divine intervention seeks not simply to judge but to reclaim something from our failures. Failures, while they entail real losses, need not be total losses. In some unaccountable fashion, past our understanding, good is salvaged out of evil, to awaken fresh expectations and arouse response to untried ways.

The central doctrine of Christianity is the Incarnation. It is a way of saying that God's nature is such that His spirit (not His omnipotence or omniscience) once took the form of a man who was wholly given to identifying himself with the neediest, seeking out the lost, not to condemn but to awaken and reclaim them for a higher purpose than their own desires. The drama of Christ's life is looked upon, not merely as a moral ideal too high to attain, but rather as an Act of God expressing the divine intention to stay involved in the imperfections of His creation, cost what it may. The idea is concisely packed into one Hebrew word "Immanuel," which means "God with us." Not God with me alone nor with my country alone. Not our common effort without God, nor God without our common effort. But God taking part in all our interactions to reconcile our foolish ways to the ordained way which alone can lead to fuller and fuller life.
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We do not discover this "way of salvation" by a clever use of reason. We respond to something that happened to us as though it were a gift from God for our understanding of life. We can best understand this reclaiming power if we connect it with some common experience which reflects it.

Here is a student, for instance, who is drifting along in college on the assumption that he knows enough to get by. And he does get by a vast amount of knowledge that he needs, and escapes education despite the concerted effort to give it to him. Some day his ignorance catches up with him and he is effectively convinced that he knows next to nothing. A professor's profound knowledge puts him to shame. That is a perfectly healthy state of mind, the only right and justifiable state of mind for a student in his youth. For directly out of that correction there comes an awakening, as of a new hunger and thirst to know more. The awakening is not like an act of will of which one feels proud. It is like an inexplicable gift or inspiration to which a man responds, as though giving himself over to the spirit of truth itself.

Edison was corrected over three thousand times before he found the proper filament for an electric bulb. The corrections did not make him merely sorry for himself. They brought a continuous stimulus to explore further into the untried. He was reclaimed from imperfections, not to be perfect, but to become an utterly willing servant of any truth that could be known.

The effect of Christ's revelation is something like this in the field of personal relations. His life of selfless love has acted like a correction which has convicted man's respectability for the sham it really is. Like all moral correction, rightly understood, it has made men more than sorry for themselves.

A master preacher of our time, with inimitable clarity, has pointed out that after Judas sold his Master down the
river for thirty shekels of silver, he saw he could not unkill what he had killed, and went out and hanged himself. We would say today that he was the victim of an inferiority complex who died of remorse. But the Apostle Paul had killed plenty of Christians while he was a fanatical persecutor of the new sect. Like Judas he could not unkill all he destroyed. When correction came to him, it did more than make him sorry for himself. It came like a light, an awakening to which he responded, "What wilt thou have me to do?" Instead of hanging himself, he yielded himself for use in an untried opportunity. He was still imperfect, but after that yielding he was used to lay the foundations of our western world.

He is the great prototype of that justifiable kind of character which we described at the beginning of these lectures. He who had been a martinet for living up to rules, trying to make himself good, found he never could make himself good enough—there was always much left to be forgiven. Once his self-made goodness had been reduced to shame, there came a quickening as of a new spirit, making him feel at once unworthy and yet eager to be worth more. As he responded with complete willingness he found that he, a persecutor, could be used as a most effective promoter. His mistaken past, which he could not recall, added weight to his persuasive power. He was so grateful for his recovery that he went forth on a mission which no amount of money could have hired a man to undertake. He summed it all up in the phrase: "By grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God."

No one can prescribe just how this reclaiming effect is produced in each of us. For at this far date there is no way to disentangle the influence of Christ himself from the living community of people who carry the power that he represented down to us.
Søren Kierkegaard once described how his father connected him when a child with this winning force. A collection of prints of great personalities in history was used to draw the boy’s admiration to their various qualities of character. Among the pictures was one of a man on a cross. When the boy asked what that meant, he was told that crucifixion was a form of punishment for criminals. Was that man a criminal? No, he was a very good man. Why then was he made to suffer like that? Well, that is what the world is likely to do to people who try to help others who do not want to be helped. The first reaction to that was a child’s indignation against such cruelty. But later, as he wondered why a man should want to suffer for others like that, the question struck home: “Why shouldn’t anyone be that sort?” as though a merely respectable life were nothing in comparison.

I once knew a college student who in somewhat the same way was attracted by a man who for thirty years had given his life to a boys’ club of four thousand members in the slums of a great city. With means enough to live in the suburbs in comfort, he chose to identify himself completely with the tragedies and troubles of his boys as though they were his own, in order to reclaim whatever was good. No doubt the college man wondered at first why anyone would willingly do that, but then to him the question came home: “Why shouldn’t you?” Whatever had held that man in the slums had laid hold on him. Ever since, he has given himself to restoring lost boys to opportunity, until today his methods have aroused the attention of leaders in far ends of the land. “The spirit bloweth where it listeth.”

Lincoln Steffens once wrote: “I have always told my children that nothing is done finally and right; that nothing is known positively and completely; that the world is theirs, all of it. It is full of all sorts of things for them to find
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out and do and do over again and do right. And they eat up the good news.” In religion we call that good news the “gospel”—that awakening out of correction to new chances that have not been explored.

Today we stand in the ruins of what we thought was about good enough. Business has failed, labor has failed, so has democracy and fascism and communism and education and so have we all. And as we admit that we got what was coming to us, blaming not only our enemies but ourselves for making our enemies what they are, and feeling ashamed of it all, we find everywhere an awakening that calls us to fresh adventures far beyond what we had thought respectable and good enough.

This, in private and public life, is the common material of experience to which the gospel of divine correction and redemption refers.

Finally, this view of life, derived from the Bible, sums up our human history as a continuous and final transformation of the material into the spiritual. The whole pattern could be defined thus: Creation, Imperfection, Intervention, Correction, Reclamation, and Rebirth into a new order of fellowship that is spiritual and eternal.

This most important of all the insights came, strangely enough, out of a primitive tribalism of the Hebrews. At first the individual was submerged in the tribe. Everybody’s security was in the tribe, everybody’s strength and glory was in the tribe, and survival was the survival of the tribe. But, unlike modern tribalism which makes the nation supreme, here men believed that the tribe and all its members were subject to the supreme will of God. The prophets saw this more clearly than the mass of people, as the tribes developed into a nation. And when the nation was destroyed, so that no outward bonds held the popula-
tion together, it finally became clear that the people were still responsible to God as individuals. It was that common center to which they were all related that kept them related to each other in a religious community.

Our whole conception of life took its shape from this tragic, historic experience. This was our revelation of how an outward community is always being transformed into an inner one of quite a different kind, just as ice is a transformation of water. This explains why Christianity has stressed the importance of the inner life. That inner integrity and fidelity, which unites people down underneath exterior distinctions, creates a universal society, spread through all human societies. And especially our inner receptiveness to anyone's claim for friendly understanding makes possible a community of the spirit which is both within and beyond all earthly communities. It is like something that can defy death itself because it is not identical with our material bodies.

It was a French aviator, in his flight over Arras, who represented one way modern men may rediscover this old truth. When the shells came up to meet him with the threat of death, he suddenly realized for the first time that his life was not his body. He had taken care of that body for years, protected, fed, and clothed it, satisfied its desires, until he had unconsciously identified himself with it. But when death looked him square in the face, he knew that life is in what you are loyal to, in what you do and care for most, in what you really are inside, that makes you one of the family of all faithful souls everywhere and in all time.

Here is the mystery of rebirth into an eternal community of shared life, around God as the center. This in our religion is called the Kingdom of God, which is an everlasting kingdom over which death has no dominion. It is both here "at hand" and forever coming.
The Answer to Man's Frustration

This Biblical faith which we have been describing may be depleted and weakened in us all. We may have doubted this view of life while we live by the very view we question. But now we can thank God we are not the shackled followers of a totalitarian faith that would abolish ours from the earth. This new tribalism, telling people that the meaning of their whole life is in their relation to one state, would have the faithful believe that the man with the most presumptuous pride, who can tell the biggest lie, could hold the loyalty of the biggest crowd and fool all the people and all the laws of life all the time.

One of our wise interpreters of the signs of the times has well said: "The man who pretends to be absolute has to be right or he is nothing. He walks on stilts, pretending to be God, and if he stumbles he is only a mountebank on wooden props." There yet may be a hard road ahead of us, but it is something to know that our enemies follow men who have staked their own careers and the supremacy of their nation on a belief that has no principle to support it. And so, with sore conflict of emotions and perplexities of conscience, our people are singing with a growing confidence: "Praise the Lord and pass the Ammunition."