III

OLD INSIGHTS AND OUR MAJOR DIFFICULTIES

IT IS an amazing thing that when science has reached its highest peak of success, we are caught in the most colossal failure of personal relations of all time. The ancient ferocities of human nature have arisen in new situations to confound our complacency. The faith about life which we discussed in the last lecture can furnish us with some of our oldest insights to guide us in the task of living together in this time of revolution.

At the outset we might point out that the root of many difficulties might be traced to the degeneration of unconscious faith. Our western world has been saturated with faith for so long that, like heart action, you may rely on it when you do not think about it. Some of the finest characters we know might say of their beliefs what Mark Twain said of his finances: "I am resolved to live within my means if I have to borrow money to do it."

For instance, in any field of endeavor scientists might put their case in some such fashion as this: "We never reach an end where we find the solution. We find only partial, tentative solutions. The utmost we can do is to furnish at any moment the best answer we can, however imperfect it is; and then stand ready to be corrected and willing to be shown any light that dawns. After that we must leave results in other hands than our own." That, you see, is justification by faith and not by works.

When men talk that way they have smuggled in a concealed partner in the business, without any name or label.
Old Insights and Major Difficulties

There is an unconscious trust that our answers are part of some true answer which is not contained in all our human minds put together. There is a concealed faith that when our work is incomplete, we can leave the conclusion to some nameless nothing which checks up human errors, transforms the consequences of our mistakes, reveals a new light to open minds, and weaves our little accomplishment into a pattern too big for us to know. We rely unconsciously upon an unnamed factor, and our action always prepares the way for a surprise.

There is a great danger in this unconscious faith. In the educational world there are teachers who expose their students to a mechanical, materialistic view of life, while they themselves live by quite another view when choosing a wife, or making friends, or serving the community.

The results with students are almost laughable at times. Once a boy said to me that his courses had convinced him that everything was absolutely determined to the exclusion of all freedom. He was embarrassed to explain why we were making such a fuss fighting Hitler who also has no use for freedom. Another boy had been left with the impression that everything was mechanical, even a person was just a complicated machine. Lacking a sense of humor, he did not see that if he took himself literally he might some day marry a Ford car by mistake.

It takes patience to argue soberly with anyone thus trained to use his reason to contradict the way he lives. This fatal inconsistency put forth in the name of academic freedom is neither academic nor scholarly nor common sense. It is an intellectual disease that occurs when reason and speculation are segregated from a life of decision in actual relationships. It reminds one of pâté de foie gras which results from over-feeding an under-exercised goose. This intellectual self-contradiction in the guise of modern education
Living in Revolution

has done as much to undermine our culture as any fifth-column in the land.

Outside academic circles unconscious faith is also dangerous, because it degenerates so easily into enlightened selfishness. Our modern counterfeit for real Christianity is self-interested good will, which has broken down in chaos all over the world. This counterfeit takes the gospel message—“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men”—and emasculates it something like this: “Leave out as irrelevant the part about ‘God in the highest’ and live a life of good will without God. When you want others to leave you alone in peace, or when you wish to influence people and acquire friends for your own purposes, or when you would avoid labor trouble that disturbs business and dividends, just make clever use of good will, which makes it safe to mind your own business and mind it profitably. If you want your union to take advantage of a crisis, use enough good will to keep in the good graces of the public. If we want national peace and isolated prosperity with the highest possible standard of living, let the world know of our good will to all, and promise them access to what is left of the world’s resources after we have attended to “obligations already undertaken” for ourselves. In other words, “peace on earth, good will toward men” means: forget God, put our enlightened self-interest in the highest place, glorify that, and use good will to serve our self-love so that we can be left in peace. We call this good will, but it is self-will dressed up with sentimentality and cunning. It may become anti-Christian and devilish; and it has nearly wrecked the world.

This modern imitation of Christianity, so rich in good intentions, has been summed up in the following paraphrase of a Biblical sentence: “God so loved the world that he inspired a certain Jew to inform his contemporaries that
Old Insights and Major Difficulties

there is a good deal to be said for loving one's neighbor."

What we desperately need today is to have our uncon- 
scious faith become conscious. The faith crisis of our age 
has put a younger generation of parents into the position of 
Charles Lamb, who is reputed to have said: "I am de- 
termined that my children shall grow up in the faith of their 
father, if they can find out what it is."

★

The issue is a critical one because unconscious religion, 
having no conscious headway, tends to drift with the winds 
and tides of the time. In the last six hundred years we have 
been unconsciously shifting from a God-centered to a man- 
centered world. The result might be likened to an experi- 
ence in my home when my children, finding an old record of 
a Beethoven sonata, bored a new hole in it about an inch 
off center, and then played it on the victrola from that 
center. It was the same great music, but off center it 
sounded like the cackling of fiends of hell.

That suggests what has occurred in our specialized educa- 
tion when we take the disk of human existence, bore a bio- 
logical hole here, a psychological hole here, a sociological 
hole there, and a historical hole nearby, and then play the 
record for our students from the different holes on Mon- 
days, Wednesdays, and Fridays; and expect them to dis- 
cover what the tune is.

Of course no sweeping statement about one age as against 
another can be entirely true. But every age has a center 
of gravity, as it were, where the weight of interest is gath- 
ered. Since the middle ages this center has been shifting 
from God and the things that lie beyond the appeal of the 
senses, to man's mastery of nature for the purpose of mak- 
ing a material living on a grand scale. So long as the scien- 
tist works in his laboratory with the laws of nature, he can 
temporarily forget the question of God. So long as tech-
nology can make us comfortable and prosperous, we may consider religion just a private option, as the orthodox communists would say. And this has led to the assumption that we can manage nature for our private ends and become the lords of creation—like the soldiers in the last war whom someone described by saying: “When the English tommy went into a place, he acted as if he owned it, but the American doughboy acted as if he did not give a damn who owned it.”

Right now man’s easy claim to a managership of the universe for his own ends has been rudely shaken. We are in a catastrophic experience of correction, reclamation, revelation, and rebirth, making us sure that our complacent yesterday can never be restored.

We might put the result in the simple form of the old nursery rhymes. Little Jack Horner sat in a corner eating his Christmas pie. He stuck in his thumb, and pulled out a plum and said, “What a good boy am I.” There is our self-centered life, thinking of the world as its own private pie, from which each of us takes his material plum and makes it the measure of worth. And then: Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall; Humpty Dumpty had a great fall; and not all the king’s horses, nor all the king’s men, could put Humpty Dumpty together again. There is our material civilization, with its proud security all gone to pieces; and not all the king’s tanks nor all the world’s armies can put that old order of society together again.

A reshift of our center of interest will not start with the majority, who may yet bring more confusion upon us. But the confusion can only be reduced and a rebirth of life made possible by a new minority of the justifiable type, who do not pretend to be good or to know it all, who promise no final solution, but live ever ready to be corrected and remade into instruments of a better future.
Another of our difficulties today has to do with reconciling religion with the evil of total war. It is a natural inclination to separate God entirely from such conflict, and to think of Him as functioning only in the long-suffering good will now working in all men's longing for unity and peace. This interpretation tends to identify God with the total of men's better feelings, which after all are not too reliable in our fierce situation.

Our faith in a divine corrective acting in human events must mean that God is involved in the consequences of evil. All through the Bible one finds honest minds wrestling with this issue, and being shown new light through repeated catastrophe. The steps of their progressive insight should be in our minds today.

At first the answer was over-simplified. The story of the crossing of the Red Sea is a sample. A people fleeing from slavery took advantage of a break when prevailing winds had made fordable shallows, while their pursuers were caught in the midst of the returning waters when the wind had fallen. That story, through constant retelling, was farther and farther detached from the event until it became the great symbol of faith. The oppressor, trying to overtake the oppressed, is himself overtaken.

But time showed that evil is not always so neatly corrected, and good is not always so neatly delivered. The book of Ecclesiastes voiced the sceptic's honest doubt. Judging life by appearances, the writer concludes that "all is vanity and a striving after wind." This book has invited readers in tragic times because it does not mince matters and has expressed the worst that men can feel, as follows: Good and evil occur so evenly mixed in the lives of all of us that they check each other out and add up to zero—vanity. After every party, there is a morning after. Women are a blessing, but only one in a thousand can be trusted. Fortune and
misfortune, happiness and sorrow, come alike to all, and death is no respecter of persons. Wisdom is excellent, but much study is wearisome to the flesh. If you achieve success and amass a fortune, fools come after you to undo your work and spend your money in folly. So the best you can do is to make the most of patches of happiness in a meaningless existence, and not be righteous overmuch. No sceptic has ever put the case more bluntly. Doubtless this precious book would have been lost from the Bible had not some orthodox editor attached a note at the end to make it acceptable: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work unto judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

The author of the book of Job represents a further stage. How can a man judge any catastrophe when he cannot see the end of it in the far future? Only God knows the future. A divine purpose that spans the ages from the beginning into the unknown cannot be justified at any one moment—it can only be trusted. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?"

Later came a time when men were given to see that some suffering was the result of man's wrongdoing, but much of it had to come to the innocent. If we live by inescapable relations where we take advantage of each other's lives, it seems we must pay the price of sharing the worst as well as the best. Especially those who stand for what we value most, and pay the price for living ahead of their time, become the "suffering servants" through whom the work of creation is done.

This insight was supremely confirmed in the best man that ever came to earth, representing the will of God, taking upon himself the consequence of the typical prejudices of the respectable, the hatreds of the mob, the suspicions of
Old Insights and Major Difficulties

the powerful, and the bigotry of the religious. He was the symbolic victim of the universal perversity of human nature. But even in that tragic injustice, correction was operating to bring unmeasured good out of the consequences of evil. Here began a revealing strand of history where good, crushed to earth, rose again as a living spirit in a vast company of people who have willingly suffered for the sins of the world and been a channel of redeeming power. This long-continued revelation has produced the faith which holds together complete confidence and complete despair.

With this historic view of life to guide us we must wrestle with the obscurity surrounding our faith in the triumph of right today. Out of the thick of disaster in England, an honest believer has written: "It is a fatal mistake to assume that good and evil in life are ever separated into two sharply opposed camps. The forces of life are not extinct among enemy peoples. The forces of spiritual decay are at work among ourselves. Those who fight in a righteous cause are tempted to trust in their own righteousness, which is tainted with frailty and is far less deep-rooted and stable than they suppose, and may at any moment reveal itself as utterly inadequate. It was a profound insight of Christ into the realities of life that sinners may be nearer salvation than the righteous."

Comparison of our best with another's worst leaves confusion thrice confounded. In the Civil War, Charles Sumner scored the South for its cruelty in exploiting slaves, but refused to speak of the exploitation of laborers in the industry of his home state. That was enough to make people in the South feel like seceding just to get away from such Bostonian stuffiness.

The truth is we are all under correction, and one form of correction appears in a relentless reduction of choice. The more bad choices we make, the fewer good choices are left
for us to face. If you decide to ignore the symptoms of a diseased appendix, you have made a bad choice; and if you continue making the same false choice, there comes a time when only two choices are left. You may either die, or be carved open with a knife. The knife is not good; it is a necessity that was avoidable.

Up to a point we are free to make choices, and then circumstances take charge of us, lessening our freedom until we can only choose between greater and lesser evils. Up to December 7th we felt free to manage our affairs, but on that day we found ourselves reduced to two evil choices—war, or the threat of enslavement by the combined foes of all freedom in the world.

We cannot call war all right as though God willed a wholesale murder; it is a necessity to which we have reduced ourselves. Nor can we call it simply a punishment for our sins, for too many of the wrong people are being hurt. In one way or another we were all involved in the causes, little nations and big, and to some extent we reap what we sowed; but innocent people in occupied countries are enduring horrors all out of proportion to any guilt that may be theirs. They are not like willing martyrs for a cause. They are victims of bestial cruelty such as we thought belonged to barbaric days long gone. Thus are the guiltless caught under the wheels of the juggernaut we all helped to create. But even now it begins to appear that all this senseless misery is not outside the vast process of correction which, through such tragedy, stirs the whole world against the oppressors, and awakens in the inner lives of men everywhere a force of aspiration which no gestapo can put down.

The principle of living under divine correction is wider than we can measure. It is the affirmation, in fear and hope, that our choices and our sufferings are recognized and have significance in the scheme of things.
Old Insights and Major Difficulties

The most dangerous difficulty of living in revolution lies in the fact that everybody naturally likes to exercise power. Acquiring power over nature need have no limits, so far as we can see. But power in the world of persons is ever getting out of hand.

All our life might be described as an experiment with power. And we have to take its possibilities of good and evil together. Like the adventure of marriage, it is “to have and to hold, for better for worse.”

It is a most perilous illusion, common among Christians, to expect religion somehow to take the place of power. A misguided prelate recently wrote an article in which he claimed it was the church’s business to tear out all lust for power from the human heart—he must have known that it could not be done. Plenty of accidents have come from the power of gravity; and yet we do not dream of tearing out gravity from the core of the universe. We learn to work with it. Power is a permanent part of life. It is neither possible nor desirable to reduce all behaviour to the sweet and amiable gentleness of sheltered folk, who depend on others to take the rough and tumble of maintaining order and keeping the supply lines open.

In all practical relations we must learn to handle three kinds of power, which do not exist neatly separated from each other. We will always need some power over people, and it may range from mild restraint to absolute tyranny and military force. We will also need power for people, and it may range from easy charity to a Christlike passion to be “servant of all.” We will need, more than all else, power with people, and it may vary from friendship among thieves to the supreme leadership that can win the free devotion of men, and enable them most fully to express themselves.

In our families we start with absolute power over helpless
children, but that is modified by power acquired for their protection and support. And we cannot stop there, else we spoil their initiative and make them into parasites. The aim from the beginning is to develop power with them, so that we can awaken their initiative and bring out their own independent powers in a mutual relationship. Nowhere can we draw a line between power over our children, for our children, and with our children.

The problem becomes more intricate as we extend our relationships outside the home. The urge for power to get ahead and stay ahead is the prevailing motive in the world of affairs where we make a living. If we were all like an affectionate family, we could solve all difficulties with the method of love; but as things are we must make what arrangements we can to direct self-interest toward mutual help and security.

Unfortunately our life has been organized to favor a man's making his way at the expense of others. Our society has become inverted so that business, instead of functioning as a servant of public needs, tends to take advantage of public need to promote its profits. Individuals are better than the system, and find themselves compromised against their will. The profit motive, which must here be the guide of policy, is always too biased or shortsighted to embrace the public interest as a whole, and so is ever requiring some measure of government control. And now we are forced to plan changes that will favor living with each other instead of on each other. How to balance power against power, how to foresee reactions, and how to control or adjust rival forces is in large part a technical matter calling for experts and leaders trained in the school of hard knocks. Religion cannot be a substitute for this worldly wisdom any more than it can take the place of a physician's skill.
Old Insights and Major Difficulties

In all this business of the distribution and control of power, an unpredictable element is introduced through persons gifted in power with people. They are the justifiable type we have described, whose faith about life peculiarly equips them for entering into relations.

Here is a sample. A friend of mine manages a large mill where the C.I.O. recently organized seventy per cent of the workers. The owners were for closing out the business. But he wanted to experiment with this newly-organized power. Without pretending to have all the right on his side, he recognized that the labor leader, like himself, had a business to conduct. Each was under responsibility to make his job a success. If they thought of each other as mere obstacles in each other's way, they ended in a deadlock. But the two men came to know each other as persons, sitting down together in a room by themselves, and talking over their problems man to man. That little personal relation did not eliminate the organized power of the union or the industry, but it made all the difference in gaining constructive results without violence. In that situation, ruthless power over each other by strike or lockout was present as a threat; but it was drained off into a helpful channel—even before the mass of workers had developed a personal affection for the owners of the mill and the investors waiting for dividends.

This is harder no doubt where unworthy leadership from outside interferes in such local good feeling. But a city in the west met this difficulty in this same personal way. In the face of common disaster through perpetual labor trouble, a council was formed representing all the unions and industries of the town, with the one object of keeping the city at work. It was an experiment in power with each other. An executive secretary and trouble hunter was hired for a moderate salary—a man who did not pretend to be
all right, who was sure that no one side of a struggle monopolized all points of view, and who by sheer integrity was able to win trust. He helped leaders of rival groups to sit down together as persons, lay all cards on the table, and work their way through to mutual conclusions without violence. In one year that strike-ridden city, still threatened by the same organized powers, was transformed into a city of comparative peace.

No solution is ever permanent, no method brings a Utopia, but this power with people to get them into some personal relation, where before they had treated each other as objects of fear, is the only antidote to violence. It may not always work. It never works perfectly. But without it we are lost in interminable strife.

And we should realize that our democracy is just a political device for liberating this power with people to reduce the need of power over people.

A professor from my own university has been working in Washington to manage one department of the war-bond campaign. He said he had been amazed at the limitless variety in American life which made impossible the application of any over-centralized plan for the whole. Each community had its own way of carrying out ideas. He was welcomed everywhere as a representative from Washington with ideas of what was wanted; but no community expected him to order them what to do. It was his power to enlist their willingness that got more done than he could have ordered.

Our American system depends on a variety of communities where a few individuals can create personal relations that modify the impersonal relations, and save us from exercising too much dominating power. We do not want perfection of organization. We want imperfection with elbow room for originality. We must have space and time
Old Insights and Major Difficulties

and patience for trial and error. We must risk waste in discovering the uniqueness of individuals. This is possible only when there is spread abroad, among leaders and followers, that religious quality of life which shows itself in power with people.

It is the same on an international scale. After the war we will need power over people. But that power must be located where several nations share it together for the sake of all. It will not be a safe power. It will need to be checked and balanced, and will ever tend toward exploitation and conflict; but the world is not good enough to do without it. Our one chance is to tame it, and direct it toward mutual security and growth according to the law of interdependence. In that process our salvation will be in a pioneering minority, in the various nations, who build bridges of personal relations across gulfs that divide, and liberate the power to work with people.

Inside nations and between nations we need groups of such forerunners. Those from within the church, rooted in clear knowledge of its faith, must unite in work with those outside the church whose faith is not so clear but who know their way about in practical affairs, and are akin in spirit.

The church as it stands today is over-full of people who are so like the rest of the world that they can have no radical effect upon it. On the other hand, scattered individual Christians and near-Christians are not enough. There must be the organized body, to transmit the faith to each generation of children as separate parents by themselves cannot do. There must be some common practice, like worship with its age-old sacraments, where a body of all sorts of people can refresh and recapture their unconscious relation with God and with each other in that supranational community of the conscientious, who live under the judgment of God. The continuing church preceded us, nurtured
In a day where men are frustrated by forces they cannot control, they seek escape from personal meaninglessness by belonging to some community—a party, a union, an industrial organization, a rising class, or a state. These loyalties are nearby and definite and essential, so far as they go. Millions find escape from personal frustration in a feeling of power through community of effort which is relevant to their vital needs. These secular organizations are getting real work done that no church organization ever can or should do. It is the business of the church to bring up a supply of men and women for activity in these secular movements, where their religious quality of life will give them special power to create personal relations, and ease the pressure of power over people.

This battle, like the struggle for freedom, can never be relaxed. Wherever there is a change needed for the better, neither a moral ideal nor mere talk nor individuals morally rearmed, are sufficient. Some organized power must take the business in hand. And no organization of any size can be made up of saints. Some power over the unworthy members and over opponents must be vested in a leader, and, since there are always contestants for power, more power will be needed to hold down opposition and resist change. Stagnation and corruption come with success. It has always been so. Our life proceeds not by a steady rise but through repeated unsettlements where power over people is not forestalled soon enough.

This problem is not confined to the totalitarian states. In a news letter from England this ominous quotation from the speech of an English general has come to public attention: "This world in which we live is not a milk and bun shop—or a glorified kindergarten. It is a thieves’ den, in
Old Insights and Major Difficulties

which the violent survive and the submissive succumb. In it two things predominate—you grab or you are grabbed. I prefer to be a grabber rather than a grabbee. Grab, grabbing, grabbed—in these three words are condensed ninety per cent of world history, and in war the remaining ten per cent doesn’t count." That fascist type of mind is everywhere among us, waiting only for a desperate situation to come to the fore. Some of us are too sheltered to appreciate the fierceness of such a state of mind. We are not personally dealing with ruthless political machines, with the bullying policy of modern collective action, whether it be from the side of financial manipulators and lobbying monopolies, or from the secret cabals of labor agitators and racketeers.

We are in the best position to deal with human power when we recognize its varieties with our eyes open to the worst. There is most hope where there is variety of experiment instead of a blanket plan. In America now we have at least five experiments with power in actual operation: individuals in free competition checking each other, consumers’ and producers’ cooperatives, national ownership, community ownership, and government control of private enterprise. Our future depends on a supply of those justifiable people who never expect everything to be all right, and who are not afraid of anything that happens, for their final confidence is not in man but in God who enters into all our relations to correct and reclaim.

★

The problem of power is everywhere today entangled with the problem of freedom. "Power with freedom" is the knottiest issue of them all, and yet our most precious future is wrapped up in that formula. Evidently it oversimplifies the matter to think that the American dream is to preserve one hundred and forty million separate freedoms for that number of persons to follow their own silly
wills. To keep the lid on such a madhouse would require a "Leviathan" state that would rival Hitler's tyranny.

Again we need the insight from our religious faith to comprehend the meaning of freedom, which is not simple. Being made in the image of the creative God, each of us begins with a will of his own. We are bound to find out what we can do with this will. We cannot eliminate it, as we learn when we try to make children do our will instead of their own. If we seek to break another person's will, we destroy his creative originality. If we suppress it, we only prepare for a revolt and an explosion.

This will of our own is the secret of all discovery. It drives us beyond what is accepted as reasonable, to find out what merely reasonable people would never discover. When a boy I used to play a game on ice called "tickly bender." We would skate fast out on thin ice until it began to wave under us, just to see how far we could go before we fell in. That same spirit of adventure took men like Columbus and Magellan beyond the limits of reasonable navigation to find America and the Straits inside Cape Horn.

On the other hand, self-will is a constant source of disaster. So often wilfulness does not see quite where to stop until it is too late. Two of us boys in the summer on a farm attempted to teach a calf to work in a yoke. We could get motion either by twisting his tail or by tempting him from ahead with a green apple. The more apples, the less twisting. Our elders warned us on the apples, but we were wilful. And we would have shown them something had not the calf died from eating too many green apples. We did not know or care how many green apples a calf could take.

Wilfulness and ignorance make it unsafe to follow this will of our own. Blindly pursuing our wilful desires, we split our personality. We look at our worst self, interfering with our best self, and say: "You little devil, you are myself."
Old Insights and Major Difficulties

And yet you are not all of myself. If you were, I would have to confess that 'I myself am hell.' And if we pool our self-wills in a state or class to obtain what we want, we divide the world against itself to the undoing of us all.

Some way must be found, then, for controlling our freedom to avoid evil. The Nazis would stop evil by compelling people to be good. But this is to stop their freedom and produce the worst of all evils—tyranny.

The only alternative to complete tyranny is to determine freedom by something besides compulsion. For whether we like it or not we are always determined by something. Once while hunting I was pursued by a bull across a wide pasture. The force of circumstances so determined me that I covered ground in record time and cleared a stone wall with sky under me as I could never have done in a time of peace. On the Princeton campus I often see students racing like that to get to their first classes in the morning. It is not the zeal for knowledge that produces that speed; but something like a bull in the Dean's office. However, the compulsion of no dean on earth could make those students get an education. Comes a day when a professor surprises one of them with something he did not know before. He is suddenly interested in a subject which determines the way he studies from then on; and sometimes he is so determined by it that he gives the rest of his life in its service.

Samuel Johnson once said: "Scarcely any man persists in a course of life planned by choice, but as he is restrained from deviation by some external power." We do not rise to virtue on the unassisted wings of our pure aspirations. The pressure of circumstance and the fear of consequence and the claim of people upon us play a large part in our making.

The older we grow the more sure we are that our self-will needs to be involved in relationships that will not let
Living in Revolution

us do as we please. Somewhere between the ages of thirty and forty we see what we stand for as other people recognize our position to oppose or sustain it. We are thus placed in observable connections. And as we watch the older members of society dropping out, leaving places for us to fill, we realize that our life is not the plaything of self-will, but a charge given us to keep and to understand. We are not quite our own any more—and like it. We welcome the pressure from without to reshape us. To be an utterly willing person, ready to be made over for new opportunity—that is the way to discover our destiny. Our self-will is only fulfilled when it is determined by the infinite will of God, who is the source of all truth there is to know and of all good there is to explore, and whose service is perfect freedom.

The final perplexity with which we are all concerned, as we live amidst revolution, has to do with the outcome of this earthly struggle. Someone has said that the modern man has lost faith in a heaven hereafter and now has lost faith in any heaven on earth.

A young teacher of history said to me recently that when you teach youth about the rise and fall of civilization after civilization, you begin to wonder whether the struggle is getting us anywhere.

Our inherited faith has no simple answer as to the outcome of the operations of the universe. Tolstoy, in War and Peace, reminds us that more is always in the making than any human being at any time can trace on the map of events. Napoleon thought he could impose his will on the order of the world; but the intricate working out of consequences in all countries soon outran his intuitions of destiny. Hitler is caught in the same impasse. Our faith insists that we cannot know the meaning of the infinite pur-
Old Insights and Major Difficulties

pose of God in its fullness, and we do not need to know. Enough of that purpose was revealed in Christ in his power with people to keep us going from one step to the next, responding with our best to what happens to us, and then waiting for the next situation to arise.

There is a strain of thought in the Bible which, in very symbolic language, reminds us that the end of the natural is not in the natural anywhere. It is not in any material success however great, nor in any social order however improved. The old phrases, such as the "Day of the Lord," the "end of the world," the "new heaven and the new earth," show men grappling with this fact that no Utopia becomes a heaven on earth. So long as man is finite and self-centered, these earthly conditions will be mingled with imperfection and tragedy to the end of the world. We are dealing here with matters known only to God. Fanatical sects who take the old language as literal have proved how vain it is to dabble in prophecies of the end of history. There may be many ends in the long story of the whole universe, we can never know. We do know, however, that our natural relations can be transformed, resurrected, into a spiritual relation, where we rise into a sharable life in a limitless union of lives. Our real citizenship is there in the only life that truly unites us with each other through union with God, from henceforth and forever. In this view, death is not an end, but a final experience of transformation which we have known in part before.

With this faith we live from day to day in the assurance that God is never through. No creator ever wants to stop; his joy is continuous creation. In a little book called The Mind of the Maker, an English writer reminds us that we moderns have become obsessed with the idea that life is like a problem to be solved. There are problems to which science keeps finding answers, and there are detective stories
and moving pictures which make plots resolve into neat solutions. And as devotees of science, murder stories, and movies, we have acquired a habit of talking of solutions just around the corner. But around every corner are different schools of thought with new fights on their hands, and nowhere does life come to a finish.

One learns that in bringing up children. At first, when an infant crying in the night could not explain what was the matter, it seemed that all would be better when children could talk and fend for themselves a bit. Then they could talk, and talk back, and go about by themselves getting into everything and getting everything into them. At that stage you dreamed of good days ahead when they would be older and could manage their own lives; and then came adolescence when to your horror they wanted to manage themselves and try everything once without parental restraint. But you were comforted with the thought that soon they would marry and settle down, only to find yourself anxiously wondering whom they would marry; until finally they did marry, and presented you with grandchildren and started the whole cycle over again.

Life is never through. We are supplied with new material and new relations out of which can be made something new.

After this war and after new plans are tried, there will be no solutions. Always it is the readiness to be remade which keeps us awake to what is coming alive in the world. In every age something outworn is dying, and something untried is being born. Under a creative God, every ending is our introduction to some beginning. It is a tragedy to be taking sides with that which is doomed to pass away.

There have always been two ultimate groupings of humanity. There are the people who are fascinated by the future, and there are the people who are attached to the
Old Insights and Major Difficulties

past. One group lives on the assumption of change; the other on the assumption of the "status quo." Society seems able to reproduce a sufficient number of both types to maintain an unceasing conflict between the two. But those who are dominated by the power of the future have the advantage in the testing of time, because they have behind them the two greatest forces at God's command: the unrest of the masses and the idealism of youth.

Today ours is a world imperilled by conservatism. We are hearing much of the perils of radicalism. But these perils grow because conservatism dams the stream too long.

Let me describe the kind of conservatism that I mean. It is not the conservatism of the earnest, practical man who is willing to see change but who insists that ideals shall keep at least in sight of facts. No, it is a conservatism best described in a picture. You will remember in the story of our Lord's passion week how it says that while Jesus was in the judgment hall, Peter was sitting outside by the fire warming himself. While the great issue of right and wrong hung in the balance, he was simply looking after Peter. He was not opposed to Jesus, nor was he for Him heart and soul. He was keeping at a safe distance taking care of himself.

That is the kind of conservatism which is blocking the progress of the world. It is found among those who are sufficiently comfortable to be content with their lot. It exists in people who favor no change until they must. Such conservatives are not opposed to improvement, nor will they promote it. Their inertia invites some disturbing force to move them. Huxley once said that there was just one class of people whom he could not endure—the people who were "neither for God nor for the devil, but for themselves." Horace Bushnell had this same group in mind when he said that the progress of righteousness was delayed, not by being opposed, but by being "sat upon." Benjamin Kidd refers
Living in Revolution

to the same source of trouble when he reminds us that all the reforms which have been the blessing of England in the last century were originally opposed by the cultured and comfortable people.

Men bid us beware of the radicals. That negative program is always easy to advocate. And far be it from any of us to approve of all that the radical represents. But in a world where evolution and change are the law of life, the radical who wants movement is not the only one to be feared. An equally dangerous group in a moving world is the group which wants to stand still. This group creates the desperation which it deplores. The violence of the radical is the outcome, in part, of the inertia of the conservative who would marshal the power of law itself against the inevitable process of change. And when law defends inertia, it opens the way for lawlessness. You young people go out into a world where the crisis of the nations might be summed up in this question: Can we move the conservative far enough before the radical moves too far?

Your chief danger will be that the native energy of your idealism will be weakened by a daily fraternizing with the very foe you wish to oppose. Everywhere in life, in politics, industry, religion, you will find people who favor no change until they must. They are among your friends. They are people of personal rectitude, often charitable to a fault, and deeply religious in their private life. You will find that their respectable condition in life will be your own subtle temptation.

The person who has attained a comfortable home and an equally comfortable income is not in a hurry to think that there is anything wrong with the world. His condition tends to slow down his thoughts about change. But those with no home worthy of the name and with an income which keeps them on the precarious edge of poverty—they are in the
Old Insights and Major Difficulties

mood to think about change. Their condition tends unduly to hurry up their thinking. This is why humanity is always “renewed from the bottom.” Not because the wisest people are there—they are generally found farther up toward the top—but because a discontented mind can be made to think of change sooner than a contented one. If God finds contented minds too slow for His purpose, then He will have to use what minds He can get. He often must use the most unwise in making a disturbance which will set stagnant minds to thinking again.

It is so easy to settle down and take care of yourself, and not worry until you must. Society will not complain if you do. You can perform the duties which custom prescribes. You can pay out your pleasant charities. You can develop a charming personality and behave yourself most seemly withal, and, before you know it, be a stagnant, inert member of society helping to create the desperation which grows around you.

Into this situation an educated man should bring the contribution of a disciplined mind. The difference between a disciplined and an undisciplined mind is this: one is naturally inclined to seek truth, and the other to hold opinion. Colleges have endeavored to train youth not to hold an opinion as a man who clings to a “chip off the block of absolute truth,” but to hold it as a man who is seeking for more truth, which might at anytime modify the little he already has.

Alas! How many intelligent people have ceased to be seekers of truth! They have become mere holders of opinions. They borrow a one-sided view from a biased paper. They absorb the prejudiced talk of their set. They learn about the thoughts of the masses through the embittered judgment of critics. They see everything from the angle of their class or profession. They read the books with which they agree. They live on the untested ideas of others.
Living in Revolution

But let it not be so with you. With a mind disciplined to live up to the facts, make it your business to condemn no man on the evidence of his enemies. Go back to the man himself. Read his thoughts, earnestly desiring to get his point of view. Try to look at things as they would appear if you stood in his place. If people differ from you, discover why they differ. No man is wrong by sheer perversity. He is wrong because he thinks he is right. Learn to find the partial truth which men hold mingled with their fallacies, that you may fulfill and not destroy. Thus you may become more than a critic. You may become an interpreter of the life of your time. To embrace in your sympathy the thoughts of all sorts and conditions of men—this should be your ambition and your service. Seek to have in you something of the power which Emerson described in his famous picture of our martyred president: “Lincoln is the true history of the American people in his time; the true representative of this continent, an entirely public man, the pulse of twenty millions throbbing in his heart, the thoughts of their minds articulate on his tongue.”

Your one chance at life has been bought with blood and tears. Millions of lives have been laid down for the world in which you will work and live. Across all your plans there should appear the shadow of humanity’s great cross. It has cost endless suffering to make the world ashamed of its wrongs and ready to move toward truth. You will be strengthened against the perils of selfishness as you experience the old but ever-deepening truth that you have been died for. In the strength of this motive, it is your responsibility to “carry on” in the unending struggle between those who are fascinated by the future and those who are caught by the power of the past.

Robert Russell Wicks.