

# LIVING IN REVOLUTION<sup>1</sup>

## I

### THE PREDICAMENT OF HUMAN INCOMPETENCE

**W**HEN the state of the world goes from bad to worse over a long period of time, we may be sure that some revolutionary idea is preparing to break forth. Today we are in a frame of mind to appreciate the remark of a lad in school who was asked: "What is the shape of the world?" He replied: "My father says it is in the worst shape he has ever seen it." We are all shocked to find that our twentieth century, through some colossal incompetence, is to date the bloodiest century in the entire history of the human race.

And proceeding according to plan, a volcanic idea is in eruption throughout the world. After decades of rumbling beneath the crust of custom, it has become irrepressible. It is as radical and upsetting as the discovery that the world was round. By terrible things in universal travail it is trying to get itself understood.

It can be plainly stated in a famous sentence of Dostoievsky: "We were born on purpose to be together." We were born in relations, and we stay that way. Our life unfolds its possibilities not in our isolated independence, but in the area of relation between us. Where we meet, there creation happens to us, and correction, and recovery. There we re-

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ceive our revelations of what there is to know and to become. Real living is incurably reciprocal.

This revolutionary idea is nothing new. In like manner the radical discovery that the world was round was nothing new. The earth had been round for a long time before the fact became plain enough to revolutionize navigation. All discovery is no more than a fresh grasp of what was always so, but overlooked.

In our western world we have all been living a great lie, like the lie that the world was flat. The long battle to establish freedom for individuals obscured this basic truth that no man is self-made, self-sufficient, and self-determining. We are each of us rooted and grounded in relations. As John Donne put it, "No man is an island, but part of the main." Totalitarian dictators have called our attention to the fact that the machine age has produced a new situation where the relatedness of men becomes so inescapable that something collective has to be done about it. To be sure, they have capitalized on this discovery and made a racket of it, like modern bandits taking advantage of the newest weapons. But no scramble of individuals, however free, can meet the revolution which they lead. The lie of individualism cannot stand against the connectedness of human life.

On the other hand mere connectedness, wrongly understood, may become another lie. Organization may be worshipped as a false God until the result is the conversion of society into an impersonal chain-gang, ruled by gangster cunning and the ethics of conspiracy.

Our business is not to condemn the revolution but to meet it, learn to live in it, and give it a right chance to transform our thought and practice from the bottom up.



First we must see what it actually means to be tied together. In this field many Americans may feel like colts,

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fresh from open pastures, learning to work in harness. And yet the whole American tradition has been an experiment in community.

It is essential for well-meaning people generally to recognize that all development occurs in concrete situations when we meet people who confront us with a contrast or contradiction or challenge. We settle no important matters in some ivory tower where nothing disturbing happens to anyone. It is a vain thought that we can stay in seclusion and formulate a neat plan which others, who live in the thick of things, will put into effect for us.

The best-laid plans of mice and men, which so often go astray, must be made and remade and made over again where there is actual conflict of wills and opinions. Every discovery of what can be done is made when something happens to us to which we must make a response, not by discussion alone, but by a decision that commits us to action.

After such decisive action in the midst of our relationships, the consequences are taken out of our hands and transformed into a new situation which demands another response. This dialogue of challenge and answer, meeting and being met, is the way we live, as contrasted with the ideal life which none of us live except in thought.

Rabelais has a story of a poor French peasant who had been reduced to a single crust of bread and one small coin. As he passed a certain *rôtisserie*, he sat down to eat his crust in the appetizing smell of a roast cooking before the fire. Thereupon the canny proprietor said a charge would be made for the odor which so improved the taste of the bread. The equally canny peasant, throwing his last coin upon the concrete until it rang, replied that he would pay for the smell of the meat with the sound of the coin. That is like idealism segregated from living transactions.

Next we must revamp our simple notions of brotherhood to fit the double nature of human relationships. The complexity of our living together in this double relation can be dramatically shown in a classic story from the Old Testament.

The story centers around a regular battle-axe of a woman named Jezebel. Her husband, King Ahab, wanted to acquire some neighboring real estate to enlarge the palace garden. But the land he wanted was the vineyard and ancestral home of Naboth, who had brought up his family there until the meaning of his life was wrapped up in that property. The King offered first a high price, and, when that was refused, some other land that was just as good. To all of which Naboth said "No." The King, like a spoiled child, went complaining to his wife that Naboth would not give him what he wished. Then the old battle-axe got in her work. She trumped up a treason trial, hired some cheap liars, convicted Naboth before the public, and confiscated the property. A typical Nazi trick. The lie was exposed when Elijah, one of the moral rebels in a rotten community, assailed the King in rather primitive language, asserting that there is a bad time coming for anyone who thinks he can draw a circle around his little world, and leave other human beings out as though they were nobody. Here stood the eternal prophet of God, insisting that each man had a right to a meaning within a larger meaning that is ever outside all the little circles we draw to leave each other out.

Jezebel treated Naboth as a utility—just a tool at hand for her purpose. Elijah took Naboth as a person who had a meaning and value of his own. What makes life tragic is not that there are people with Jezebel's attitude, but that both these attitudes are permanently combined in each of us. We deal with people both as utilities and as persons. Without any evil intentions we at times turn persons into objects or things.

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Let a very charming girl cross the Princeton campus and nothing can prevent her from becoming an *object* of observation. No one can know her as a person until he can meet her, so for the time being she remains a fascinating object drifting across the landscape. Go to your favorite food shop, and the man behind the counter is a utility who stands between you and starvation, just as the haberdasher is a utility who shields your nakedness from the public gaze.

So the psychologist analyzes us as cases; business needs us as customers without benefit of personal introductions; factories must have men as hands to run machines; doctors must treat us as patients, or guinea pigs; the army takes us as cogs in a military machine; we like Russians now because they are useful, and they like us because we ought to be more useful.

We are sentimental when we think that, if we were only good enough, we would always treat people as persons. So long as we must promote the world's business, organize trade, study disease, or paint portraits, we will on occasion treat persons as objects to be observed, manipulated, and used.

The more organized and mechanical our civilization becomes, the more acute is the problem of keeping alive as persons. Blindness to the danger here has accentuated our difficulty. We use other people for our purpose and they use us for their purposes; and soon the stronger are tempted to exploit the weaker. Straightway the so-called "weaker" organize their strength to exploit the public as they themselves had been exploited. And finally the public organizes to manage everybody. Instead of dreaming that such a contest of interests can be outgrown, we must realize that the "haves" and the "have nots" are always with us, even in a classless society. The struggle with this problem is the raw material out of which real character has to be made, real

freedom won, just as we boasted of making men in New England by redeeming some of the rockiest farm land in the world.

Admitting this, we must with equal firmness insist that, in these impersonal relations, something vital is missing without which they tend to destroy personality and real community. What is needed is a constant recognition of the other aspect of our double relation. People who have been objects may, in a moment, be turned into persons—and vice versa.

The combination was concretely illustrated for me recently on a taxicab journey across the city of New York. The ride began in complete silence, as if the driver were a mere part of the driving wheel, and I were a load of coal to be delivered at some cellar window. When conversation at last broke the silence, it appeared that he had a son in the country's service; which prompted me to remark that I had two sons in the navy. Looking at me in his mirror the driver said, "You aren't old enough to have sons like that." I asked him how old he thought I was, and he replied, "You aren't a day over forty-five." I could have hugged the man. Everything was different after we had met as persons, even while he went on mechanically driving the car (thank God) and I continued to be a paying load, for which no doubt he also thanked God.

There we were on opposite sides of the class struggle. He was a member of a labor union and I was a member of the bourgeoisie subsisting on endowed funds in a private university. But we achieved a personal relationship which would have made it much easier to settle a strike. That modicum of personal contact in the midst of our impersonal relations did not abolish the impersonal necessities of transportation, but transformed them into a new possibility.

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In this matter it should be further observed that the double nature of our relations indicates how we are always involved in a double purpose. We unite with others both to make a living and to give life a meaning—and one purpose does not displace the other. Life always means more than making a living.

In our machine age we have vastly extended and multiplied our relations with people in order to obtain what we want. And this extension has been so effective that it has become a peril. Men have leaped to the conclusion that if we were totally connected (instead of everybody for himself) in the business of getting what we want, we would create a paradise.

But the paradise never arrives, for quite ancient reasons. One reason is set forth in that old folk tale of the Garden of Eden. The deceptive temptation there was an offer to the first social group of a paradise free from want and fear if only they could have one more apple. They had a totalitarian monopoly of all the sources and means of production, and yet the old struggle of good and evil began in that deception that all would be well when one more desire was satisfied. This is the bugaboo of all Utopias. No ingenious arrangement can stop people wanting another apple. Hitler wanted only one more living room for his people, and he kept right on wanting more rooms until it seemed that there was no security short of owning the earth.

Something like a poll was once taken to gauge the contentment enjoyed at different levels of income. At each level people felt they could be quite satisfied if they had somewhere around one-third more than they then possessed. On that score, satisfying desire would only lift a man into the next higher bracket where just one more third would usher in the paradise. Even in the old folk tale, when the first family had everything it wanted, the two sons started

the first murder story because one of them had more to contribute to the community chest than the other.

Another reason for the loss of a collective paradise becomes clear today as we think so much of the common good to be reached by social effort. The efficiency of organization becomes an ideal and an end in itself; and before we know it we are trying to shape people to fit the organization. The laborer must conform to the pattern of the union; the individual must be suited to a social system; the citizen must be straight-jacketed to make an efficient state. Instead of organization being made for man, man finds himself being made for organization—until he becomes *the victim of his own society*.

Here eternal vigilance is the price of freedom and personality; with no perfect solution anywhere in sight. This points to the fact that our real, enduring satisfactions lie in some community of life that is more than a convenience for obtaining our desires.

Joseph Conrad, in the famous preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, says that the scientist (and he might have added the business man and the advertisers) appeals to qualities that fit us for making a living in the endless quest for more apples. But the artist appeals to the "invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts—to solidarity in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity—the dead to the living and the living to the unborn."

This is not a natural bond of convenience; it is a spiritual bond of a higher order of satisfaction. We all have experienced this in our families where at first we were bound to others out of necessity. When we began to assert a will of our own, we became disturbers of the original peace. Some parents have tried to maintain the old paradise by threat-



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ening: "So long as you take our money, you do what we want." But in well-ordered families, that original relation of dependence ripens into a two-sided companionship, even while the home ties are relied on for support. Life begins to mean more in that "solidarity in joy, in sorrow, in aspiration, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other." For this bond unites us in interests we can share without losing. No one tries to take from the other, dominate the other, or use the other. It is real communion. It is the only possible communism where private possessions become public possessions in a shared life full of meaning.



This experience of community that does not interfere with our freedom lies at the heart of the world problem around which the present war is being fought. Hitler wants community without freedom; we want both.

I have always noticed in talking with young people that there is something inaccessible in each person that must consent freely before there is any useful communication of ideas. This core of freedom shows itself in discussion by a perpendicular wrinkle just between the eyebrows. The faintest flicker of that scowling line is a sure sign that nothing is being accepted. Right there is the challenging claim of another mind to be understood. Only as I stop trying to force ideas and yield to that claim for understanding, can I expect my claim to an understanding to be recognized. When the recognition is mutual, we get together in a shared meaning where we both are free. We affect each other merely by seeking to comprehend each other, not by trying to improve each other. When I see things from his point of view and he sees something of my outlook, we grow in grace and wisdom without either surrendering his sense of originality and independence.

This unique world of community without domination is

the essential area of experience with which Christianity is chiefly concerned. The term religion refers, not to something new dragged into life from outside, but to something already there, a dimly-recognized part of the landscape before it is understood as religion. It is like the mysterious power of electricity which was known to everyone who combed his hair on a cold morning, long before the scientists named and explained its nature. When two people honestly accept each other's claim for attention, by which we enter each other's world and share what we have with each other, we realize that everyone else encounters us with that same claim. We meet it everywhere, and when we reject it something is lost in the lives that fail to meet. That loss when multiplied in many instances affects many people, disrupts links in society, and prevents mutual exchange until fatal divisions occur. This demand to be known and appreciated has something universal and inescapable about it. Private happiness, personal effectiveness, and all the affairs of the world focus at this center. For the divine demand to get together meets us in every meeting with a person who deserves to be known and understood.

The love of God is not something up in the sky in somebody's imaginary heart up there. It is this living demand, reaching us in concrete situations. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," was Jesus' formula for religion. In His famous parable of the Judgment, the "goats" who were separated from God were the righteous people who failed to recognize, in persons all around them, this universal call to be understood. Love is not simply a nice feeling towards other people, which cannot be forced when the people are unlovable. Love is where we meet the invitation of any sort of person to enter his life at the point of his real need, whatever that may be. If some satisfactory

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sensations follow the transaction, that is our pleasant surprise which we cannot have in advance.

Our religion was given to the world in the drama of a man's life who entered into the lives of those who were misunderstood, and shared their meaning while they shared his. This religion cannot be had by argument or by scientific discovery. It is a personal transaction with a universal, personal claim. No wonder people have difficulty understanding a personal God while discussing Him as an object, or while exploring the mysteries of the physical universe. The personal effect of God confronts us in our personal relations with each other, like something *alive*. It is only as we get together, with the best in each of us freely shared, that we can know and explore "what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God," forever too great and too good for a few of us alone to know.



And now from this understanding of life in relationship we can see in a new light the everlasting predicament of human incompetence, which is the great thorn in the flesh of humanity. We hate to admit it; our optimistic modern world has tried to ignore it. But we cannot dodge the plain fact that *nobody can be all right*.

That is the only common ground where all parties can keep in contact. It is the incontestable, irreducible truth about all of us in all countries, and in all classes. Would that some stentorian voice could stop the whole warring world in its tracks for two minutes of silence, in which each man could say firmly to himself: "Nobody can possibly be all right." Recognition of this age-old fact should be the first peace aim in any controversy.

We can be grateful that disillusioned youth have rediscovered this ancient predicament of human life. They have been frowned upon for their suspicion of the natural good-

ness of man. They should rather be congratulated. Since the last war it has been dawning upon them like a revelation that we were not as good as we thought we were, and are not now all that we like to think we are, and never will be in this life as good as we ought to be. Even picking flaws in our idealized ancestors (though a bit on the mean side since the dead cannot defend themselves) is a healthy sign provided their descendants remember the old adage that we should beware of looking for specks in another man's eye while we carry a telephone pole in our own. The best antidote for the cynic who scorns his fellow men is the plain admission that nobody can be all right—not excepting himself.

Likewise it must be affirmed that nobody is all wrong, though this is hard to prove with those we dislike. For much that is good in persons can only be discovered as we befriend them, and, being real friends with so few in this impersonal age of machines and remote relations, there is no way of telling how much is fine in most of us.

Life would be so simple if some of us were either all false or all true. What bothers us is the fact that we are both right and wrong at the same time.

One of our humorists once drew a picture of a ski slope with the double tracks of a man's skis running straight down the hill toward a tree. Instead of swerving to one side as you might expect, one track goes one side of the tree, one the other, both coming neatly together again and running to the bottom of the picture where the man is proceeding as nicely as you please. No caption explains how the feat was accomplished, and the imagination is left boggling with the problem of taking two alternatives at the same time. One cannot do that in skiing without serious consequences, but life is like that. The clean-cut "either or" is a rare thing; the baffling mixture "both and" is built into the very

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structure of life. We are not confronted by either an income or an income tax but by both an income and an income tax; just as we are not faced with either a wife or a mother-in-law, but both a wife and a mother-in-law, for better or worse.

The prophet of old surveyed the chosen people and declared "none is righteous, no not one," which does not deny that some of them surely had their good points. A Biblical parable with a sly sense of humor put the whole problem in the story of two boys on a farm who were told to work in the vineyard. One said, "I won't go," and that was wrong; then he changed his mind and went, and that was right. The other said he would go (in just a minute), and that was right; but then he never got around to it, and that was wrong. Nobody was all right. Pascal once summed up the pros and cons with the conclusion that there are only two classes of people, sinners who think themselves righteous, and righteous who think themselves sinners; which is another way of saying that the nearest thing to goodness in this world is a repentant sinner who "hungers and thirsts after righteousness," a searcher for truth who is convinced of his ignorance and "cannot bear not to know what there is to be known."

It is a serious predicament—imperfect people all tangled in the consequences of unlimited relations in an inexhaustible universe, dealing with titanic forces of cosmic machinery and responsible to universal laws, so few of which we know. This state of things is not our choice, nor entirely our fault, but our permanent condition. It is like being born in Texas—you never get over it.



Now what type of person is found best fitted to live in the midst of this lasting predicament? There are at least four types that force themselves upon our attention today.

First there is the perfectionist—the super-conscientious

person who seeks to avoid implication in any evil. Twenty years ago such an individual asked me why I did not clear my conscience by declaring that I would never in any way lend my support to war. I agreed to do so provided he would immediately clear his conscience by withholding his taxes which created the war machine.

It is proper for anyone by non-cooperation to make conscientious objection to war (the army and navy are full of young men who object harder than anyone else) provided he does not claim to be *all* right. For he is obliged to depend on others to defend the country which gives him freedom to object. Otherwise he would permit tyranny of a hideous sort to engulf us all. If he says he is willing to be engulfed, he is still not all right for he knows perfectly well that others will save him from actually facing the consequences.

If one would stay out of evil entirely he could join no party, belong to no church, support no nation, unite with no human movement for good; because every organized effort on earth has to be sustained by people who are quite a little lower than the angels. Perfectionism inevitably tends to paralyze action in the name of purity, with nothing to do but talk and protest. Meanwhile the operation of the world's affairs must be left in the hands of the imperfect who are always with us and glad to take over—especially in politics. All the best martyrs have made their protest at great cost, and were sure that neither they nor anyone else could be all right.



Then there is the sentimental type, to which most of us belong. Admitting that no one can live up to the ideal, we can compromise here and there and still be fairly good. In this situation we are like the little girl who said she never prayed God to help her to be good—she could be good if she really wanted to be. It seems that if all had a Christlike

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spirit our difficulties would disappear. Of course if everyone had the right spirit everything would be easier all around, but until that happens what are we going to do? Make more surveys, issue more encyclicals and pronouncements?

Here again we leave a moral vacuum into which rush the clever men who are impatient with talk and promise to get something done. Our ideal is so remote that we try to cover up our hopelessness or take for granted that what is hard to change now is about as good as anyone could expect. While in Rome we do as the Romans do. And simply holding ideals makes us feel that we are somehow faithful to them. Of course we are not perfect, but certainly we are as decent as our class expects us to be. We may compromise now and then, but, after all, we do nothing questionable unless so many others are doing likewise that we are not conspicuous. We exploit no one save in the ordinary course of business under the law. We are glad to let others have access to privileges provided ours are safe first. We will play fair, provided it does not interfere with success in areas where it is better to be crooked and clever than to be good but dumb.

This kind of sentimental idealism has been the road along which our disasters have come. The Archbishop of Canterbury has recently remarked that "this vast accumulation of evil is due to the fact that millions of people are as good as we are and no better." Such results produce the cynic who honestly sees that there is a worm in every apple. But, as someone has said, we cannot live by the discovery of worms alone.



Revolting against the perfectionist and the sentimentalist, there appears among us the fanatic type. The Germans, after the last war, were allowed to remain in desperation

until their youth became cynical. Then began the fanatical belief in their own crowd and their own leader, as though they were the only good fruit on earth and all the rest were but rotten apples. But when that fanaticism fails, it is not like defeated justice which is still justice, nor like a denied fact which is still fact. Disillusioned fanaticism of the modern sort turns into nothingness, where cynicism begins again. This is a vicious circle that brings all fanaticism back to the doubts where it began.

In their aggressive and successful stage fanatics are inclined to abandon all morals and go over to nihilism. We all like a little nihilism when it suits our purpose. The adolescent, revolting from the customs of some stodgy or stagnant respectability and going forth to sow wild oats, is a budding nihilist on the loose. Without some such break from goodness that wants to stand still, we would still be caught in the sins of our ancestors and final dullness. But since the last war we have learned what a general looseness could mean. Scrapping the Ten Commandments became the vogue. It was like the soldier who, after listening to a chaplain's talk on the Commandments, pulled himself together saying: "Anyway, I never made a graven image."

It took the modern revolutionists, however, to draw the full conclusions of nihilism. Seeing all the dirty work of self-interest concealed behind a respectable and even Christian front, they came into the open to do the dirty work without embarrassment. Seventy-five years ago in Russia Dostoevsky saw this coming and warned us by the extraordinary characters in his books, who today are in the flesh. His man from the "underworld" says: "I shall not be a bit surprised if, in the midst of universal reason, there will appear all of a sudden some common man, a rather cynical and sneering gentleman who, with his arms akimbo, will say: 'Now then, you fellows, what about smashing all this reason to bits—and living as we like according to our own



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silly will.' " People on the edge of desperation always begin to talk that way.

It was Nietzsche, with his philosophic mind and rapier wit, who put ordinary nihilism into a program for life. A young man of fastidious and aristocratic taste, he was nauseated by the mediocrity of Christian life that had lost its fear of God and degenerated into an easy-going morality with no bite in it. It had become complacent, amiable, ineffective, watered down to comfortable charity and good will toward the weak. He was equally disgusted with the irreligious ambition of the secular world trying for universal happiness by easing all difficulties.

When he turned his back on the false show, he sought to define what men must do in a world where "God was dead." He believed that God was dead, and dreaded the consequences when men realized there was no fixed and universal meaning to which they were responsible—nothing but the incoherent mixture of life that was cruel, contradictory, and senseless.

He proposed that man must put his own meaning into the senselessness. He called others to join him in creating a company of supermen who, with unlimited power, could somehow hold all the contradictions together and achieve perfection. This perfection would include all the extremes of cruelty and kindness, falsehood and honor, force and gentleness. With God gone, he wished to create men who would be as gods in their own right. This theoretical solution of deifying man, when actually worked out in practice by human beings, is now before us in the horrors of Nazism, which doubtless would have shocked Nietzsche as it does us. To Nietzsche all the laws by which life evolves seemed to contradict the values by which we live. He insisted this was "the secret trouble" that gave the tragic character to our modern world.

Over against these three types, there is one other which is the true product of our Biblical faith at its best. We will name it the *justifiable* type, because its whole strength comes from the admission that no one can possibly be all right.

Our trust in this justifiable type began in our childhood before we could think for ourselves. My first impression of it can be traced back to a family who, in the summers, took me to live with the families of relatives in a country community, where the community church had been founded by one of my ancestors under Jonathan Edwards. In that connection of families I learned whom to believe. They were not a company of saints—quite mixed in fact. Even the hypocrites of the community helped my judgment. For I remember hearing of a pillar of the church who was brought up for discipline because he had thrown a butter plate into his wife's face. He still thought he was good enough to be in the church, and defended himself by claiming that he only meant to throw the butter. The plate slipped from his fingers. A pious old hypocrite like that, passing collection plates on Sunday and tossing butter plates on Monday, was an asset because he helped you recognize a real Christian when you saw one. A dear old aunt of mine appealed to me especially because she was at her best when dressing down an old skinflint like that.

And yet she never pretended to be good—that was the point. She never took a holier-than-thou attitude to interfere with our morals, and would have laughed at any praise of her own virtue. But whenever I was left in her hands, without any pretensions at all she would give her entire will and time to take care of me and identify herself with my childish needs, patiently enduring my obvious deficiencies. Ingeniously she beguiled the hours with all sorts of amusements, ending with a treat of her special molasses cookies over an inch thick; so that my earliest impressions

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of Christianity were colored by her sulphurous denunciations of self-righteousness and made fragrant by the unforgettable smell of her pantry.

There, reduced to its simplest terms, is the type we trust. She did not think she was good; but out of her honest humility came that eagerness to give the best she had whenever the need arose. Her character was not like something self-made and self-righteous. Her goodness was more like a spirit that awakened her, in the midst of her faults; and she responded, grateful for the chance to offer what little she could, letting the results take care of themselves, anxious only to be faithful, and enjoying a reward which no wealth could give. Her life did not consist in the things that she possessed. She was one of the common saints who though poor could make many rich.

And having a mother of the same type, in the real apostolic succession of family life, I was given my lasting taste of a religious quality of character long before I had made up my mind about religious beliefs. The most intellectual people in the world gathered the impressions they live by today from a similar homely source.

This justifiable type is most effective amid the finiteness of human life, pursuing the unknown and unattainable with never a chance to be all right. The best scientists, knowing they do not know and trying to make themselves willing servants of the truth, are of this sort. So were the best teachers we remember, humble about their achievements, ready to take our ignorance as their burden and gladly teach, sowing harvests they would never reap. So are the chosen few in every community, most sensitive to wrong and most alive to what ought to be. So are the ever-willing people everywhere who make no pretensions but carry more than their share of the public load, suffering most from the public inertia and outwearying the evil opposition around

them. These are the salt of the earth and the light of the world in their several generations. They connect us with an innumerable company of faithful people which the Bible calls the "fellowship of the Holy Spirit." We trace them back over a long trail that leads through our family to a legion of battlers for lost causes, who have helped make our life and whom we do not want to let down. We owe everything good to these discoverers who through unconditional faithfulness have pioneered the open ways that were hid from the "wise and prudent."

This society of the conscientious, justified not by their perfection but by their faithfulness, is what Christ called the "leaven" in the great lump of humanity. It is a society within society, and effective all out of proportion to its numbers; not ordered or compelled; open especially to those who have clearest appreciation of their own shortcomings; leaving out none who wish to enter save the proud, self-righteous, and intolerant, who exclude themselves; respecting integrity in everyone from the least to the greatest; existing in all countries, races and classes, yet confined to none; in all churches, yet represented truly by none; supporting all states, yet finally subject to none; aggressively defending a free conscience freely shared. They are the carriers of the divine discontent, forever seeking, asking, knocking at doors which others are loth to try. The future is theirs. Time, the tester of all things, is on their side. They are the "terrible meek" who inherit the earth.



The conclusion of the whole matter is that this one justifiable type of life, which cannot be produced by the power of any state, is chiefly fostered at first in our smallest and most potential social unit—the family. There each new generation learns unconsciously whom to believe. This is

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proven true because our human nature is more impressionable than it is reasonable, and we are most impressionable in the first few years after birth. To make a good home, where this vital work with first impressions can be done, is not only our greatest personal satisfaction, but one of the greatest services to render to the world today. The kind of homes our young people make in the years ahead will largely determine what kind of bulwark we shall have against the encroachments of an all-powerful, centralized state.

To this end we must have a constant supply of marriages which commit people to a permanent union, where two lives may learn to live through mistakes and differences and failures. This relation of fidelity has best been secured by a lifelong preparation in fidelity among those who form a society of their own kind, where fidelity is held in profoundest respect, and defended against its perversion in respectable promiscuity. Nothing reaches so far into the future as to give children a chance to live in such a home that stands by them while they meet the unknown, steadies them through the free experiments of youth, and furnishes them with the family tie which holds them to the excellent, expressed in those who have loved and trusted them, while granting them liberty to make their own decisions in an original life of their own.

In the family the principle holds that our growth occurs in the area of relation between people who are different. Incidentally, that fact favors a reasonably long period of courtship when partners can discover the peculiarities of character which come out of different backgrounds, and which are sure to stick out like sore thumbs as they grow older. Some of us wonder how our wives could have put up with us for so long had they not had some adequate previews of the coming attractions.

Likewise, child training is achieved neither by imposing a pattern nor by avoiding the strain of differing. Freedom in religion for children has too often meant freedom to know nothing about it. But we do not avoid prejudice by exposing children to nothing, for they will be exposed to plenty that is false and shallow and second-rate in spite of us. Their minds will be open to a jumble of impressions and half-baked opinions which leave them utterly confused as they face the radical philosophies which today are seeking to overthrow a free civilization.

If children are going to differ from our view of life, as they should, then it is for us to expose them to the best in our religious tradition which represents the experience of thirty centuries. Let them wrestle with its enduring truths which belong to the ages. The only cure for a bad impression is a better impression gained when they are most impressionable.

Watching parents in the little things they do, while they are working, playing, making friends, going to church, reading books, acquiring good taste, talking at the table and behind people's backs—this is the great school where a new generation learns whom to believe. There is little that is academic or spectacular about it, but, first and last, it is a free world's best hope.