

Eric Butterworth Speaks

Essay #15
A RENDEZ-VOUS WITH LIFE

Having a rendez-vous with life could imply an exciting adventure in human indulgence or an experience in the eternal unfoldment of our soul. What is life? If written starting with a small letter, life might refer to the passing show, to the human experience; but written with a capital letter, Life, it could stand for God in action.

Life is the great potential to be unfolded and revealed; and we are told that it is not yet manifest what man shall be. Everyone must anticipate a rendez-vous with life. Unfortunately, we do not at all times discern what life is, and so we misread the implications of our rendez-vous. St. Augustine left us a profound and excellent self-analysis of his going through this very experience, as related in his Confessions, a most moving story of a man running away from God and from himself. Finally, he came to the realization, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee."

You, and everyone else, has a rendez-vous with life. No matter where you are or what you are there is more for you; there is more in you; and the very purpose of your life is to expand and unfold and express your innate potential; and you must express it, perhaps not today or tomorrow, but this cannot be evaded; it is your destiny. There is no predestined way in which or by which it will come about, but come about it must; it is your rendez-vous with life, and there is a universal urge to "open out a way whence the imprisoned splendor may escape."

Now, this being the case, we are led into pursuits of all descriptions and in all directions. Often we become trapped in the upside-down world of materiality, and there is little remaining but to exist as best we can, clinging to a sort of life we may nevertheless be refusing real life. The inner urge, the restlessness is still there, but through laziness, fear, prejudice, and plain inertia, we fail to press on to our rendez-vous with life. At times a crisis or mental earthquake will come along and shake us out of our rut; it is sometimes tragic that we make life forces out of our constricting shells of mental and physical experience.

Some time ago I had been visiting a man in the hospital, and he had been in fear of a malignancy. He had been told that his case might be hopeless and had therefore been living in fear, under a cloud of emotional darkness. What a surprise it was to enter his room one day and see his face glowing with joy; he burst out, "The doctor has just been here and has spoken the five most inspiring words I have ever heard! He put his hand on my should and said 'You are going to live.' Those words were a magic key to a new life, as though I have emerged from a dark tunnel into bright sunlight." His home, his wife and children, all his friends seemed far more dear than ever before; life seemed to him now to be a great and wonderful adventure. Resting in bed during his convalescence he did more real thinking than he ever had done before. He established a new set of values for his life. He decided that what had seemed important was not really important after all, so he determined to take time to live as well as to make a living. He was a man reborn into a new way of life, with farther horizons than he ever thought he would know, and all because of those words, "You are going to live!" That was his rendez-vous with life.

Even though you may have postponed it, pushed it aside, your rendez-vous with truth, with life, with God, will be an experience of communion. There is a message waiting for you everywhere, and you can find a blessing in terms of a revelation from the most difficult reverses. We must begin to get the point that there is a deeper than deep within man, and that there is always more within us. We must learn a new language of limitlessness. We must realize that there is a creative mind at the root of all things, and that something of the creativity of the infinite is endowed with some of the mind of the infinite. The finite always has a rendez-vous with the infinite, and the partial expression has a ceaseless urge to find itself

in wholeness. When we begin to get this idea for ourselves, we begin to act as if we were going to live forever; at least we begin to live in the deep foreverness of life, and so we live on the verge, always getting ready for something.

Great is the need in our day to stir up individual creativeness. It is dismaying that this is an era of vicarious participation. We go to movies to look at enactments of other people's lives; we slump in a chair witnessing sports events, or we view wistfully the works of others in art galleries, but man is essentially a creative being, and he is created in the image and likeness of the great creative genius that alone has brought forth all the wonders of the natural universe. Our human instincts cause us to long to create, and the frustration of this urge is at the root of so many emotional problems. To own the most insignificant talent is greater than to be a cultural hanger-on. Nowadays, working people are retiring at an earlier age, and adjusting to the prospect of unending leisure time is a problem. A man who permits his work to become so automatic and consuming without supplementing it with creative hobbies or participation in fields of service is a man who is on dangerous ground. Not only is he denying himself a means of joy and fulfillment while working, but he is heading into a terrifying void when he reaches retirement.

You have a rendez-vous with life; prepare yourself for the more that life has in store for you. First, reject forever the idea of death, and live! Sing, paint, carve, or construct; study a foreign language, delve into geography, or simply develop skill in listening and appreciating, which is in itself a creative talent. I always delight in the story of the man who, at the age of ninety-nine, bought the Encyclopedia Britannica because, as he said, "There is so much to learn about the world."

Too, we all like to remind ourselves that we have a rendez-vous with Truth. How many of us have fallen victim to the religious propaganda that joining a Church is finding God? Or that assenting to a particular creed is finding God? Or even that emotional acceptance of Jesus as Saviour is finding God? Actually, we never find God until we find ourselves, and we never find ourselves until we search out our inmost self, dig within our mind and heart and make the great trek into the mind of the infinite.

Our problem is that we have not dug deeply enough within ourselves. We have allowed ourselves to get into positions where our entire spiritual life is in the hands of so-called professionals. In this relationship, we have little or no access to God ourselves. We rely on the clergyman to intercede for us and on the church to provide the worshiping medium and to prepare the way for our salvation. But, my friends, every single one of us has a rendez-vous with life, a meeting up with a first-hand and immediate experience with God; this is our goal, our quest, our destiny. Life is for living, and life is lived from within out. You have a rendez-vous with life.