

"That which I would, I do not; that which I would not, that I do." These words of Paul suggest what I call the internal conflict.

The older we become, the more complex life appears to us. To the young, life seems quite simple...their opinions are few but very definite; their minds are quickly made up because they really do not have much to make up. To questions there are but two sides, the right and the wrong, as easily distinguished as black from white. They are therefore quite often intolerant and simplistic in their judgments. But as one grows older, we find that all questions are really polygons with many sides, and it is hard to distinguish right from wrong. Another and even more important step in growing up is the recognition that man himself is more complex than he supposed himself to be, and that he cannot always depend upon himself, at least on the surface. This was the motivation for Paul's observations quoted above, which continues, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see a different law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity unto the law of my mind, bringing me into captivity unto the law of sin." Can you not see yourself in such a sorry plight?

We look for reasons and excuses for our failures and shortcomings. Man invented the devil as a rationalization for all he seeks not to do, yet does. Victor Hugo says, "I feel two natures struggling within me." Plato likens a man to a charioteer driving two horses, one black and fractious, ever pulling downward, the other white and winged, striving heavenward. It takes a skillful driver to keep such a team pulling together. In theology of former times this would be an evidence of God and the devil in man, vying for man's soul, but actually it is more the struggle between progress and conservatism, or between force and inertia.

Man is a growing being, starting with certain primitive capacities that have served him well in various stages of his development, but which must be lifted up into higher uses. The scriptures say, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the son of man be lifted up." This refers not to the crucifixion of Jesus, but to the redemption of the mortal man within, lifting up and rightly using the primitive forces that indwell us, harnessing the cave man, in other words. The difference between the best and worst lives does not lie in the possession of strong instincts by the lowly and the lack of them in the highly placed. The difference lies in the purposes around which those instincts are organized and the ends to which they are directed.

A dog's loyalty to his master is a wonderful thing to behold; yet this began ages ago with wolves' loyalty to their pack. That was a starting point; primitive instincts can be transformed--that is the great hope of man. The hunter instinct of man was developed because of hunger; it was necessary for man to hunt in order to survive. Now that it is no longer needed for survival, the instinct does not stop; it can be uplifted and enlarged and centered on contemporary needs and goals. Thus, there has been the driving power in individuals that has resulted in some of the noblest achievements. When Magellan circumnavigated the globe, he was hunting for truth. When Galileo swept the heavens with his telescope he was hunting for a larger vision.

The eternal conflict within man is one of the human and the divine. Eternally, we are all sons of God, but presently we are sons of man, seeking to "put on Christ" as Paul calls it on the higher levels of our nature. Through intuition we all have intimation of our son-of-God-self which leads us to high ideals and expectations of ourselves, some of which seem beyond our human ability to fulfill. Jesus gave us an insight into this in one of the Beatitudes, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Whenever you set a course of righteousness or right thinking, when you begin a program of self-

restraint, you will invariably run into the cross-currents of your own static thought.

In physics, to move something that is still, or to stop something that is in motion, it is necessary to overcome inertia. There is likewise a kind of mental inertia that resists change of any sort. For even in the effort to improve your life, you must come to grips with the states of mind that have directed the kind of life you are now experiencing. This was Paul's dilemma. Jesus experienced the challenge of mental inertia which has come down to us in the account of his struggle with Satan in the wilderness. What is temptation? It is but the inertial pull of limited states of consciousness resisting the upward reach of man's loftier aspirations.

Many times a student of truth after reading and studying will wonder why he doesn't demonstrate the truth that he has exposed himself to. Often, as did Paul, he concludes that something over which he has no control is influencing his life. Let us know, once and for all, that the study of this new insight in Truth is at its highest purpose the training and development of the soul. It is dealing with something that cannot be seen, and there is a need for exercises and drills and a great deal of practice, practice, practice.

William James spoke a lot about habits. He gave us four great maxims that we can use spiritually as well as psychologically:

First, we must take care to launch ourselves with as strong an initiative as possible. Take your stand. Speak a word of affirmation. Claim your strength in firm resolve. Make a beginning. Take the first step.

Second, never suffer an exception to occur until the new habit is securely rooted in your life. You have to work at it. Every time the internal conflict asserts itself, speak the word again. Keep on, and keep on keeping on.

Third, seize the first possible opportunity to act upon every resolution you make. Act as if you believed that you had already achieved your goal. Remind yourself, time and again, "He that is within me is greater than he that is within the world." Know that as a son of God you already have the power of overcoming; you are already victorious, so act as if it were impossible to fail.

Fourth, keep the faculty of effort alive in you by a little gratuitous exercise, affirming every day your oneness with God, your strength of will, your faith in your power to accomplish.

We must remember that we are walking bundles of habits in thought and action, and that everything we think, say, and do has its influence on the plastic nature of our soul. Let no one have anxiety that he cannot change because of his education, family background, or environment. If we keep faithfully busy each hour of the waking day, we may safely leave the final result to itself. We can with perfect certainty count on finding ourselves one day being one of the competent ones of our generation in whatever pursuit we may have singled out. We come therefore ultimately to see that the question Paul asks in despair, "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" is answered by himself in his dedication of his life, following the ideal of forgetting that which is behind and stretching forward to that which is before him, ever pressing on to the goal of the highest calling of God.

Like Paul, we too, can overcome the internal conflict within us, and allow the divine man to manifest from within an uplifting of the human man.