

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT IN EVERYDAY LIVING

© Martin S. Israel

Three Lectures delivered in the Chapter House of Guildford Cathedral by permission of the Dean and Chapter

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER AND MEDITATION

PROBLEMS OF RELATIONSHIPS _ONESELF

PROBLEMS OF RELATIONSHIPS _OTHER PEOPLE

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER AND MEDITATION

The theme of last year's lectures was the integration of personality through the use of the will. It is the basis of modern psychological practice to teach people to know themselves so that they may cope better with their own difficulties and also with those of their environment. We begin to be conscious of the self during times of crisis when we have to make moral decisions: in making those decisions and acting by them we experience the will. The will is inherent in human consciousness. When we are functioning automatically in everyday life we are very often not conscious of what we are doing. We are governed by inner impulses and outer circumstances, and we are scarcely in command of ourselves. But when a conscious choice of a moral nature is put to us we have to act accordingly; indeed, the matter of moral choice stresses the fact that we are subject to value judgements, judgements related not only to our immediate satisfaction but also to that of other people. Man does not live alone; he works in community. Purely selfish living may satisfy temporarily, but it is followed by the loneliness of isolation; an actualised person faces communal responsibilities more and more clearly and firmly. This is the great difference between a person living at the animal level and one who is aspiring towards spirituality. The things of the flesh, important as they are for immediate survival, soon bore. The things of the spirit appear to be much less immediately important, but they grow increasingly dominant as our consciousness of life intensifies. Thus, great wealth or power appear immensely desirable from the short-term point of view, but they ultimately isolate one from one's fellows. If, on the other hand, one can relate well to others, one is less concerned about personal riches and power. This type of reasoning is not obvious to the unthoughtful, but those who are experienced in life and those with imagination can see the truth of it. The only power that ultimately satisfies is love, which in its simplest application means warm relationships with other people and a mutual attraction. There is much more to be said about love. In fact, the basic theme of these lectures is love, because prayer is the expression of our love to God with the reception of his Divine love

to us, but until we realise that enduring happiness as a human being only comes through love, we cannot aspire towards spiritual consciousness.

While the young and inexperienced may consider selfassertiveness and the ability to survive the most important factors in life, those who have had greater experience often become increasingly disillusioned with the fruits of their labour when seen on a selfish level. But in its relationship with other people. How easy it is to be properly pious in communal worship, but how very different we are when confronted with personal antagonism or an irritating outside circumstance such as delay or inefficiency. Then we become self-centred and irritable, and see less pleasant aspects of our nature. Though it is in relationship to other people that we see ourselves with all our faults, it is only when attaining the higher realms of spiritual activity through such relationships that we are able to tolerate our environment and to transform it slowly but surely.

The concerns that ultimately endure are those related to creativity, whether scientific or artistic, to judgements of a moral nature, to humanitarian and heroic action, and above all to an attempt to understand and penetrate the mystery of life itself. As we grow to maturity we can hardly avoid asking questions about the nature and meaning of the life into which we were born. While basic intelligence discerns that bodily disintegration and death are the common end of man, there is in us some intuition of a greater destiny which causes us to act purposefully and work for posterity. The all-important act in life is to break out of one's enclosed consciousness and enter into the consciousness of other people through progressive relationships. When this is achieved, the tragedy of isolation and annihilation is surmounted: when one becomes part of the other, one loses one's self-centredness, and one's consciousness can expand to comprehend that of the other. It is this type of awareness that is widely shared among contemporary humanists and religionists, and it interests itself in social justice and social action, a trend to be highly commended. But though we may alleviate disease, poverty, and ignorance by proper social amenities and education, we cannot escape the fundamental tragedy of life's transience. Thus social action is an excellent beginning, but is no final solution to life's problems. If we are to provide intelligent social action, we need to think past the community to the ultimate purpose of living. We think in terms of right and wrong, but how often do we know what is right and wrong? What is right in one circumstance may be completely wrong in another. Likewise, a piece of advice which is excellent for one person might fail completely in relation to another. This is why doctrinaire collective approaches fail in practice, and we are obliged to consider the individual and understand the reality of human existence. And this is the realm of religion, which raises man's consciousness to embrace the universe and that which transcends the universe. There is a reality, not in the future or the past but in the present moment of time, which transcends and illumines the existential tragedy of life's finitude; it is this knowledge, this awareness, that gives life its meaning. Whoever lives selfishly is finally disappointed no matter how successful he has been, but he who lives in awareness of life's eternity has something to look forward to and is never crushed by the circumstances of the moment. The cloud of witnesses through the ages has demonstrated this abundantly, and religious awareness can never be denied. Sectarian religions may become stultified

and eventually may disappear, but the striving towards what may be termed the spiritual, or super-conscious, level can never be permanently thwarted.

How do we reach these levels? We reach them by psychological means and also by spiritual help. There are psychological techniques which can help us to understand ourselves and rise to a fuller, more mature, humanity.

These include analytical procedures, the training of the will, and the creation of an ideal model possessing qualities lacking in ourselves. The aim is, through all these methods, to heighten our response to the world around us, to become more consciously aware of other people so as to relate purposefully to them, and to detach ourselves from our own problems and view them in a new light. All this is part of the armamentarium of psychological knowledge and is very important to understand. But it is a fact that despite all this knowledge and expertise, one may still fail in the basic problem of personality integration. St. Paul, of course, knew this very well — to paraphrase part of the seventh chapter of his letter to the Romans: the good he wants to do he fails to do, whereas the evil he tries to avoid seems to occur unfailingly. He finds that the spirit has one law but the flesh has another law, and the flesh always seems to triumph over the spirit, for no matter how well intentioned his motives were he is speaking here of unregenerate man, of course — there always seems to be failure. And this is the human tragedy. Most of us really mean well. We work with intelligence, using scientific methods and applying idealistic political measures. The idealist in us really wants to lift humanity out of its ignorance, vice, and disease, to education, morality, and health. The will to good is certainly there. There is no cynicism in this attitude. And yet something always seems to go wrong; it always will go wrong no matter what external methods we use or what political theories we adopt, for the results are bound to be the same. On the historical level we know that reactionary regimes have been followed by revolutions, and the revolutionaries have imposed tyranny as bad as that of the preceding period. This sequence too will persist indefinitely.

Any attempt to change society from the front will fail, not because society is basically healthy (in fact it is full of corruptions), but because those who want to change it forcibly are all too often fighting their own psychological battles and projecting their own conflicts on to other people. Even the most profound psychological understanding will not help us while we are still imprisoned in the personality and are using the will on a personal level. It is only when our consciousness can expand to see beyond the personal to the transpersonal in other words, to the reality that involves all other people, all created things in fact, and binds them into a coherent whole rather than a number of separate entities only then can there be a hope that some change may occur.

From this it follows that transformation of the environment must be secondary to the transformation of the personality. A mere transformation of the environment without personality integration does little good in the end. Of course, in practice we have to work in the environment the whole time as well. Nevertheless, it is stupidly naïve to believe that simple external activity will effect a transformation of the world. Peace cannot come until we are at peace with ourselves. And peace is not a state of blissful inactivity resembling sleep, but one of conscious, purposeful, willed activity in harmony with the activity of the universe, which

is a manifestation of the will of God. Therefore, all prayers for peace should include a prayer for the integration of the individual and communal personality. How is this achieved? It is achieved by two techniques which are basic to the religious life, meditation and prayer. We must accept first of all that by ourselves we cannot attain full mastery. It is only when we can allow the Other that lies beyond the personal will, which the religious person would call the power of the Spirit of God, to work through us, — in other words by attending in willed submission, that there can be an ultimate transformation of the personality. This can be put on a much more mundane level. Even the complete intellectual understanding of a neurosis following good psychotherapy, so that cause and effect are fully revealed to the patient, does not automatically result in cure. Though the patient can rationalise the difficulty and speak of it freely to others, the difficulty often still remains. This is due to deep seated conditioning, and the inner attitude cannot be talked away. But help can come through the power of prayer, which includes the emanation of love from those around the person. He can never be helped by argument, however subtle and excellent it is, but only by the flowing out of love, which is usually silent, and by his own attempts to reach the Other, which is God, in love. This is the way in which personal difficulties often seem to resolve of their own accord. Thus, if there is an environmental difficulty, it may tend to lift inexplicably. In any case, if one is in a better state to marshal one's resources, one can act more calmly and constructively and less emotionally, and thus surmount the difficulty. It is not that the difficulty is taken away from us, but that we should have the courage and strength to face it seeing in it a means towards the integration of our personality. By surmounting it, we not only gain spiritual stature, but also learn to understand the difficulties of other people and help them on their path. If there is any point in suffering, it is surely to bring people closer together in love. By shared suffering we enter into the lives of other people. When everything is going well for us, we often tend to be smug and superior scarcely bothering to care about other people. Thus hardship is an essential part of man's evolution towards spiritual integration.

Meditation

Meditation is very much the vogue at present, especially as a result of the much publicised activities of some Eastern teachers. Meditation is preferred to prayer because it sounds less emotional, and it does not demand belief in a personal God which many modern people feel very trying! Thus intellectual integrity is not surrendered. This is, in fact, a most superficial view. Prayer is much loftier than meditation, but it is useful to start with meditation as a preliminary to prayer.

Meditation is essentially an intellectual practice. In meditation we focus, or concentrate, on a particular theme. It may be a visual image or an episode from Scripture concerning the life or ministry of Jesus or one of the parables. It may be an abstract piece of reasoning for those of agnostic tendency. If one is schooled in the Eastern method, a constantly repeated phrase, or mantra, is used. The object of all this is to focus the discursive mind on one particular theme to the exclusion of everything else. If one does this, one soon gets bored and tired. Prolonged concentration, except on very vast themes of great intricacy, becomes very difficult. On the whole it is much better to concentrate on something simple rather than embarking on complex metaphysical considerations. But this is only a preliminary to true meditation.

It is only when we have ceased to think about the particular theme as an object outside us, and have moved into it, that meditation starts. When one concentrates, for example, on a rose, one can think about the symmetry of the flower, the colour, and the scent. There are many aspects of this beautiful flower that one can concentrate upon, but these are soon exhausted. But if one then stops analysing it, and merges one's consciousness into the fact of the rose, one's identity can be expanded to include that of the rose. In this way the object and the subject become one, and the effort of intense concentration with its fatigue, and tension, go, and instead there is an experience of release and relaxation. This is the stage to which those practised in meditation reach. Some can reach it quite easily; others have more difficulty. The final stage is when the consciousness rises to such a level that the very image of the rose, or whatever it may be, is transcended and one is in contact — in communion with the reality of things. This is what is called induced mystical experience. It will never come of its own accord: it comes only by Divine Grace. One can meditate as often as one wants, but one will never reach this state as long as one seeks for it selfishly. One has to go into the silence of self-forgetfulness and humility, and it is here that one begins to see what prayer is about. Prayer really only starts at this stage.

It is very useful to enter the silence through a meditation exercise of some kind. This is not particularly religious; it does not demand an acceptance of God or any kind of creative power. It is purely a technique for emptying the mind of thought and reaching the silence. But when one reaches the silence, one gains insight into oneself and gets a clearer perspective of outer events and problems. The value of meditation is that it can lead the agnostic and religiously uncommitted to deeper insights about existence than are perceived in everyday life. It is a technique linking the psychological to the spiritual. Now prayer, on the other hand, is a more spiritual practice. It involves loving and caring. A person with no faith and devotion can certainly meditate, but he cannot pray. Prayer involves communion with the personal element in Ultimate Reality — this personal element we call God in the theistic tradition. Those who cannot accept the personal element — and this does not mean an anthropomorphic figure sitting on high — fail to understand that it alludes to a power of love and wisdom sustaining the universe, which cares and provides universally, yet for each individual. It is in the higher realms of consciousness that this paradox is explained. It is not that one's own care, or salvation, comes before anybody else's; — this would be nothing at all it is that everyone is cared for, and one is loved as an individual just like every other individual. In other words, God is both personal and transpersonal. Whoever denies one aspect is not seeing the whole truth. Amongst many people the personal aspect of God is regarded with disfavour because of the bad image conjured up in the past, but in fact if one is working creatively in the world, one becomes aware not only of separate personal help but also of help directed to the collective whole. It is in this way that the misconception of an anthropomorphic God is surmounted. God is personal to me and transpersonal to all things; this applies to every person who is both an individual and a part of the Divine unity. The many and the one are the same in eternity though different in time.

Prayer

Prayer starts with an act of petition. One starts on the personal level of petition to the personal aspect of reality which we call God. Now this immediately demands faith because, as St. John says, "No man hath seen God at any time" (1 John 4. vs. 12). We only begin to know God through the love of those around us and the love that we spontaneously bear towards others. The supreme mystery of life is love, and we know of love through the love given us by God. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us" (1 John 4. vs. 10). Prayer always starts as an act of faith. We are praying to the unknown, which on a rationalistic level is intellectually foolish. There may not be very much love in our prayers at this stage. It is only when a person has reached the end of his tether and does not know what to do anymore, when he has found that all materialistic solutions fail, that he may give of himself spontaneously in prayer. This happens even to atheists and agnostics, when their existential need is so great that they are prepared, at least for a moment, to appeal to the unknown. Very often this prayer is granted this is one of the great mysteries of prayer the utmost need is often granted at once, and this may be the beginning of religious consciousness. In part, the submission of the proud personality relieves the strain on the psyche and allows better functioning. In addition the person becomes aware of the power of the Holy Spirit. When one can cease from striving even for a moment in complete faith, things begin to happen. This is petitionary prayer, and is not to be depreciated. After all, much of the Lord's Prayer is petitionary.

A higher prayer is that of intercession, which is prayer for another person, someone very dear to us who is in desperate straits. This again depends on a flowing out in faith to the unknown through love of the other. Intercessory prayer is of a higher level than petitionary prayer because it is less self-centred, though there is an element of selfish concern in as much as we are personally involved with those for whom we are praying. But love shows here, because unless we have had some very strong feelings for others we would not pray very hard for them. Thus love begins to be experienced in crises, in periods of great emotional need, which bring us to the higher levels of our own psyche. In these types of prayer people more or less tell God what to do. This is, of course, rather amusing, for as Jesus Himself told us, God knows all our needs before we have had time to intellectualise them. What we are doing by intellectualising them is to put ourselves in the right position to receive Divine Grace. There is no harm at all in verbal petition, even of the most simple and childish type, because it helps to put us in the right frame of mind. In this state we are moving beyond the consciousness of self, the isolation of selfishness, towards the Other, towards the Holy Spirit. But the real prayer starts only during the period of silence which comes after the enunciation of the request. True prayer is always silent. It is not telling God what to do or what we want. This is the preliminary action, and very necessary, particularly in the early stages, but true prayer is the submission of the self in complete faith and love, and the waiting. One can do absolutely nothing at all. If one tries to draw the Holy Spirit in, the channel is closed immediately and everything is vitiated.

So the basis of prayer is the complete submission of the self, and it is at this stage that love becomes predominant. The mystical level of prayer can be reached only by those who can give out love. At once the separation between God and the individual becomes lessened, and there is intimate communion with ultimate reality. At this stage we are no longer interested in our petition or our intercession; this fades into

the distance and is merely the preliminary. There is a contact in love between lover and beloved, in other words between God and man. This is the final stage of mystical prayer, and it is thus that the great mystics have had their insight into the ultimate nature of God and His care for the universe. This again is induced mysticism, and the intimate personal and transpersonal nature of God is revealed. We know that He cares, for us and for everyone else, and that He is manifested to us as love, as far as we can understand this term. And the summation of prayer is the prayer of thanksgiving which follows. This is indeed the dedication of the renewed individual to the service of the world. It is the crucifixion; this is what crucifixion really means. It is the surrender of the self through love for all created things. When we see the crucifixion in this light, its horror gives way to its glorification and we understand what the passion of Jesus really meant, that it is something that we can all partake of and be enriched by, only momentarily it is true, but nevertheless our lives go on and we ourselves bear the cross in due course.

So therefore only through prayer can we begin to overcome life's greatest difficulties. We can rationalise, we can build up a considerable edifice of understanding and reasoning, we can intellectualise our difficulties, we can use techniques to help us, but they will never succeed until we subordinate all our gifts to the power of God which cannot use, but to which we can make ourselves receptive. This is what is called Divine Grace. We cannot bring it to ourselves or anyone else by any willed technique. The Grace of God surrounds us, and we only need to let it enter.

It is by our own proud attitude, our own selfishness, our own lack of faith, that it is prevented from entering. If we could keep ourselves open to grace, it would flow from us as it flows from a saint or a great artist or from someone who is acting from direct inspiration. This is the essence of the matter. Therefore we do not have to find techniques to achieve grace within us, but rather we have to learn the technique of submission in faith and love so that the grace which surrounds us may permeate us and also be transmitted to those around us. This is the nature of intercessory prayer. If the power of the Spirit can come to those about whom we are concerned there can be a transformation in their character, and they can traverse their difficult path with renewed help.

Now if a person is desperately ill, it may well be that he is to die soon. No intelligent person would want to live on this earth for ever in his present form. There is a time for life and a time for passing over. But it is important that a person should pass over in the fullness of his being and with the spirit of God around him and around his relatives also. There is a great difference between death and agony, fear, resentment, hatred, and misunderstanding, and death in sanctity, gratitude, and understanding of the nature of the event. It is only through the power of the Spirit that those who are to die even after the most unpleasant diseases may pass through their period of travail with gratitude and glorification, no longer fearing what is inevitable for all mankind, but instead experiencing it with understanding, and praising God for it as the great martyrs in the past have done. This is not masochism but the result of understanding; when we have surmounted suffering triumphantly we can praise God that our own vision has been so increased, our compassion so intensified, that we can partake of the suffering of Christ as man to man, and by understanding what he went through, realise the meaning of our religion. This is not a mere theological

transaction of the past, but rather the essential pattern of human life. Only in this way does our religion become real and enriching, and it alone can transform the world.

Problems of Relationships — Oneself

The key to an understanding of relationships was given by Jesus in the second great commandment: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”. Until we begin to love ourselves we cannot form proper relationships with other people, yet it is in relating ourselves to other people that we begin to love ourselves, for the two processes are reciprocal. Nevertheless, knowledge of the self and love of the self are necessary before we can actualise ourselves as true human beings. As we stand in everyday life, we appear hardly to know ourselves, and what we do recognise seems rather repulsive. In spiritual aspiration we are burdened with an overwhelming sense of sin, often aggravated by oppressive theology, which does little to help us lift this burden. Modern psychology has helped us to understand our incompleteness more charitably, yet we cannot avoid facing this inadequacy during the experiences of life. Until we can bear ourselves as we now stand, there is no hope of moving beyond our present defects, which fact stresses the need for self-love. The love of the self and the clearance of sin have two aspects, as noted in last week’s lecture. There is the way of “works”, using psychological insights and techniques, which takes us to the portal of the self in understanding and love, but does not bring us into the holy chamber. It is here that the power of the spirit working through prayer is essential.

There is surely no one who is without personal problems. It is not necessary to divulge them, for they are private. What is important is that we should ourselves be aware of our failings, which should be faced in cold, clear consciousness without judgement, criticism, or condemnation; when we see where we stand we can hope and work for improvement. We know ourselves primarily in terms of a focus of consciousness in the ever-present moment. Normally we tend to live fairly satisfactorily in a near-sleeping state, but it is during periods of crisis involving moral choice we are confronted by our true nature. And moral choice is an individual matter. There is very little such choice when we are alone. But in a group and having to choose between alternatives that deeply concern the community as well as ourselves, we begin to see ourselves clearly in relationship with others. We only begin to live when in such relationships. The philosopher Martin Buber has said “All real living is meeting”. In fact, real living is every experience of life, and when we are fully aware, we are never alone even when in solitude. All real existence is meeting the other both within us and outside us. The reason why we fail in relationships, why many of us cannot relate at all, is because we are centred in the self. It is the self of isolation, of exclusion, of keeping us away from others, that limits us. Self-consciousness, self-centredness, selfishness — all these isolate us from other people. Many people, apparently successful in life, are thought to relate very well. They have an easy, affable manner, they seem charming, but in fact they do not communicate at all, because there is no relationship in depth. It is very easy for them to make conventional gestures and say conventional things which mean very little, but when a demand is made on them to concern themselves with someone else, they fail because they are self-centred.

Selfishness and self-centredness are the opposite pole of self-love. Jesus taught that one must love one's neighbours as one loves oneself. Loving oneself is not selfishness. It is rather such an acceptance of the self that one is no longer aware of it in isolation. This is an essential step towards true religion and mystical experience. The key to relationship and mystical experience is the supreme relationship, being a communion of God and man, is the loss of self-consciousness. Now one can lose the self only when one has found it. This is a great paradox; until one has recognised and acknowledged the self one does not know who one is. Such a person is barely conscious of his identity, and can relate to no one. One has first to know one's identity and be aware of oneself and accept oneself, before one can forget oneself and enter into the consciousness of the other person. This is called empathy, and is the basis of relationships. Relationships do not consist merely of superficial conversation but are a communion of the one with other, all being "members one of another" (Ephesians, 4:25). Therefore, until one ceases to see oneself as separate from others, one cannot enter into the spirit of the other.

The question arises as to how we can know and accept ourselves as we are without making demands on the self. Why is a selfish person not the same as one who loves himself? Why is self-love good and selfishness bad? The selfish person continually feels deprived, and for this reason is one for whom we should have great sympathy and compassion — this again is very important in relationships.

A selfish person is often one who has been deprived of the acknowledgement of his own identity, usually early in life. If people were given love, particularly in the early years of childhood, their identity would be acknowledged and they would know and respect themselves. The child at about the age of two years first experiences his own being. He suddenly becomes aware that he is somebody, and he associates himself with the name that his parents have given him. This is a very important period of an infant's life. If his identity is acknowledged with love and joy by his parents, he has a wonderful start in life. If, on the other hand, he is ignored, rejected, or simply derided, there is a greater danger that the child may doubt his unique identity. If one is not sure of oneself, there is a tendency to grasp as much as possible from outside to boost the morale; this is how selfishness frequently starts. What one feels one lacks one tries to grasp: one grasps other people's attention by being exhibitionistic, or one grasps at food, money, power, or prestige to boost one's own depreciated identity. People who are aware of themselves are happy in their environment and can co-operate and work with others. Those who do not know themselves properly seek desperately to establish their identity by acquiring outer attributes; this usually means detracting from someone else, which is the basis of sin. Therefore a person who is selfish can be cured of his selfishness only by love. He can, of course, be ignored or ostracised; this may help him. He may learn from it. But the true remedy is love and understanding, and the earlier in life this is given the better for the person.

Many of us have in fact suffered from deprivation of this type, and it is no use regressing into the past and demanding things that can no longer be granted. We have to work in the present situation. Nevertheless, the theory and application of psychoanalysis can help us to understand where in the past events have gone wrong for us, if indeed there is such a thing as wrong in this context. The more I consider the question, the

more I regard it from an all-embracing point of view. It may well be that our suffering and incompleteness are a stepping-stone towards a greater understanding denied to those who have not suffered in this way. This is, no doubt, a philosophical matter open to question, but it is important at least to see other possibilities. Indeed, whenever we have suffered it is far better to use this as a creative principle for the future rather than bemoaning our lot and using it to escape from life's challenges. Fortunately there is always the superconscious aspect of the psyche which strives towards completion, and only in exceptional cases is this so deadened that there can be no chance of remedy and cure later on.

The first step is therefore to acknowledge the difficulty. Sin is based on selfishness, the assertion of the personal self at the expense of others. We are born into a sinful universe; in other words, the universe is not complete. When we are told that we are born in a state of sin this does not mean that the sexual act that brought about our conception was sinful or unclean, but that the universe into which we are born is not in harmony. Our very physical nature is grounded in mortality and death. The body is not complete. And so also our psyche, though as perfect as it can be for ourselves perhaps, is not complete in terms of the inner Christ striving continually for outer manifestation, yet so seldom revealed in the way that Jesus showed us, as did also the saints of the other religions. While the Logos was made flesh in Jesus, its action is to be seen in the full flowering of all great religion, and exclusiveness does not help us in overcoming sin and moving towards integration of the personality. We have rather to take inspirations from all sources which we have tested and proved for ourselves, and use them for our own actualisation as human beings. Sinfulness is therefore a boosting of the self at the expense of other people, yet the self, or the personality that manifests it to the world, is essential for worldly existence. Everything that has been given us comes from God and is therefore divine. That is why, although the world is in a state of sinfulness, it is also in a state of perfection, but the perfection is realised only when we ourselves are perfected. This is the great paradox of God the Creator who must create all things good, according both to our own insight and to theological doctrine, and God the Redeemer, as evidenced in the life and ministry of Jesus, who comes to lift us out of the perfection of self into the perfection of community. In other words, the little child is as perfect as he can be in his own nature, but as a little child he is selfish. Anyone who has nursed babies knows that they are interested only in themselves. If they do not get constant attention, they let their parents know very soon, and this is perfectly natural. Such an attitude is essential for survival during infancy and childhood, but it is no longer satisfactory when the person matures; then he must give progressively to the community from which he in turn receives. The art of communal living requires a selfless giving to the community, while at the same time preserving the individuality of the person. Each person is unique, with special gifts to be bestowed on the community. If these gifts are not used constructively in this way, they do not aid in the development of the personality of the individual, so neither he nor the community benefits from them.

In facing our defects in clear consciousness, we must view them in charity. Those who are seriously disturbed need psychotherapy, but most people do not require such treatment. It is in having the insight to recognise unpleasant traits, such as aggressiveness, meanness, hypocrisy, dishonesty, maliciousness, and jealousy — and none of us is free from at least some of these “domestic” failings — that healing

ultimately depends. The very fact that we are all afflicted should serve to lessen the unpleasantness of this realisation, and it should be accepted, not in abject condemnation, but with a philosophic sense of humour. This good-humoured acceptance is very important; it concurs with the commandment of Jesus not to judge or condemn. If we condemn ourselves out of hand, we cannot move out of our present state. If we see our defects in the light of charity, remembering how important conditioning and a bad childhood environment are in shaping one's character and what a large part hypocrisy plays in the life of society, we may be able to live creatively amid the tension between self-centred survival on the one hand and love for humanity on the other. Both the survival instinct and selfless devotion to others are essential components in the integration of the personality. The tension between these two contrary drives is beneficial, and leads to personal growth. Without tension humanity would soon go to sleep. True peace is a state in which there is a creative tension towards the integration of the personality and a raising-up of the world. There is an inevitable conflict between the body, which is mortal, and the spirit which is eternal. This is the experience of incarnation. It is not to be regarded as bad, and must be seen with intelligent compassion, equanimity, honesty, courage and a sense of humour.

With regard to suffering, it must be admitted that there appears to be great inequality among people. Some lives seem to be constant battles against injustice and cruelty, while others are spent throughout in an atmosphere of affluence and warmth. The reason for this inequality of distribution of suffering and good fortune is obscure. Certainly it transcends intellectual solution. However, it is worth remembering that even the most unfortunate have personal assets (provided there is mental normality), while those who appear quite enviable to the outsider will usually be found to lack a particular quality, e.g. intelligence, beauty, or some moral attribute. If we have had difficulties, we must learn to accept them with gratitude and love also. It is only in the positive acknowledgement of love that the difficulties can be relieved. The person who hates himself and his condition in life and prays that he may be helped must first receive help to accept his present condition before anything further can happen.

When a living relationship is being made, one moves beyond the consciousness of the self to the consciousness of the other, and this demands, as already noted, an understanding and acceptance of oneself as one is, and an experience of one's identity in terms of moral choice. It is only in the experience of mystical union that we really know our identity in its full power, but in worldly life we begin to know ourselves when we act with purposeful independence. There are some who would assert that our conditioning is so great that we can never really act independently at all, and there is great truth in this, but even to be aware of this conditioning is a step forward. When we act in terms of personal choice, we are beyond mere conditioning and can control the inner impulses and outer environment, at least to some extent. It is thus that the will is asserted; it is the conscious action of the self making critical decisions. When we are aware of the self as it stands, it no longer needs to be boosted. When we are aware of ourselves there is an inner rejoicing. It is not something of which we may be necessarily conscious, but there is a recognition of achievement and no longer any need for the external attributes that makes for selfishness. And then we are free, or at least having the first glimpse of freedom. Instead of being completely subject to inner impulses and outer circumstances we are in a position to move independently

into the unknown, a course made inevitable by our innate curiosity. It is thus that we venture towards the actualisation of the superconscious impulses of creativity, altruism, and love. The integration of the personality and self-actualisation therefore depend on self-acceptance. There is less self-consciousness and concern about the impression one makes on other people, greater personal independence, and a more direct communication with other people and with the environment generally.

The basis of a true relationship is the ability to listen to the other person. One should listen consciously and with interest, knowing when to stop and also when to continue listening. The person who can relate well is naturally creative, and he is one who lives in the moment. The true way of life is living in the present. This, of course, forms an important part of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus tells his followers to live like the lilies and that each day has troubles enough of its own (Matthew, 6. 26-34). In other words, people who constantly worry about what the future is going to bring — and they cannot really do much about it anyway — or who are lamenting the past, are not living constructively. The person who is living properly is living in the moment. He knows himself, and he can participate actively in the affairs of the moment. This is the key to practical living, and it is also the very heart of mystical illumination. The mystic knows that beyond the past and future of a time-space world there is an all-embracing timeless, spaceless realm of eternity and infinity. This concept is too vast for most people. In fact, it does not make sense rationally, but it is made practical by living in the moment from the point in space where one stands, for this embraces all time and all space. The only work that one can do is done in the present. This is the way of constructive living: living in the moment and being intensely concerned in the work one is doing. This can only be done when you are able to take yourself for granted and no longer demand anything. Then you no longer regard people as alien to you, worrying about what they think of you, what they have done to you in the past, and so on — these things are of little importance in any case. The object is not to forget the past or ignore the future, but rather to allow past and future to merge into the eternal moment of being. To live in this state permanently one should, of course, have resolved all inner difficulties. This none of us has done, and it is certain that none of us will do so in this lifetime. Nevertheless, one can aspire to it by self-knowledge and the enlightened use of the will. It should be noted that all this discussion is rooted in the experience of the great spiritual directors and mystics of the past. The achievement of modern analytic psychology is to reveal the unconscious forces that influence motivation.

In proper relationships we should be aware of the reaction that another person evinces in us. This, if unfavourable, should be accepted without self-judgement or a feeling of guilt. The honest acceptance of inner antipathy is the first step towards reconciliation. It is not a question of being right or wrong, but of working towards an understanding. This is one way of becoming consciously aware of the moment. We are all too often not aware of the moment in time. We are hardly aware of the things we see in the street. We very rarely listen attentively to what people say unless they tell us news of such importance that we cannot ignore it. If, however, we muster awareness through an act of the will, we are becoming cognisant of our mental processes in the moment. And all this leads inevitably to meditation. Meditation starts with

an act of concentration on a particular theme or a repeated mantra, or even on the void for those who are particularly gifted in meditation. Now in creative living, instead of concentrating on an abstract theme we use something concrete, namely the matter at hand to the exclusion of everything else. It may be conversation, everyday manual work, scenery, music, food, or any other mundane consideration. What starts as concentration and appears to be contrived and artificial soon progresses to true meditation in which one merges in deep relationship with the matter at hand. Then willed concentration with its fatigue and boredom expands into that meditative relationship in which subject and object are one. Yet one never loses one's own identity, and this again resembles mystical experience. The mystic believes he is in contact with a source of reality so great that he can only equate it with God, and the critic of mysticism accuses him of identifying himself with God, which is not only blasphemous but also clearly ridiculous to the point of insanity. But even in the highest ecstasy the individual identity is always retained. That is the great mystery, identity in separation. We are also in identity with the community that we serve in love, but always as unique persons, thus what the mystic experiences in his ecstasy the practical man who lives abundantly expresses in his daily work. He is an individual with definite skills, and yet he works so at one with the community that he has ceased to regard himself and his interests as apart from the community. It was this line of thought that St. Paul had in the twelfth chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians, in which he compared the disciples to different organs of the body, each essential and unique, and each contributing to the whole body. This analogy expresses beautifully how practical life is one of relationships.

We think of relationships primarily in terms of people, for we begin to know ourselves when we are in the company of others like us. This is perhaps why many people love domestic animals; they cannot answer back and they depend upon man for his affection. Nevertheless, relationships must include all the kingdom of nature, embracing what Albert Schweitzer called "reverence for life". Relationships extend even beyond nature to things. If we are living properly, our work, this room, the very bench on which we are sitting is something more than an "it" in the "I-It" relationship that Buber speaks about. It becomes a "Thou". When we are living properly we respect property; our motor car, for instance, is something very personal to us. This is relationship in practical living. Every material object as well as every living creature in the universe is in relationship with us, and we cannot interfere with any aspect of our environment, whether it be the human community or nature, without affecting ourselves.

All this is part of man's work towards integration, the use of the will and the understanding to effect good relationships, but by itself it will not succeed. Though the advice and the scheme may be admirable, in the cold light of experience the results tend to be disappointing. This is our eternal dilemma, and it forces us once more to religious practice. It forces upon us the realisation that though we can move a long way towards self-forgiveness and self-love, this cannot be achieved only by intellectual processes. It is here that prayer comes in. This is a petitionary prayer to the Most High, stating our inner desolation and need in silent conversation. Our defects, be they dishonesty, meanness, malice, envy, or anything else, should be confronted directly and unemotionally. All condemnation and judgement are to be banished. Then comes the silent communion in faith and love, waiting in hope that the petition may be granted. For those of

agnostic tendencies prayer is much more difficult, but a start can be made by flowing out in love to one's fellows. Here we follow the teaching, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us" (1 John 4, vs. 12) and "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4, vs. 20).

Prayer therefore starts with the inner request. It may be a confession, but it should not be self-depreciatory; after all, God created us, and there is no need for us to denounce ourselves to our Creator. It is a question rather of coming to terms with and acknowledging our defects which we want to be healed, and then flowing out in love. This is an important part. For those of us who accept a personal God this should not be difficult. For those who have great difficulty in this acceptance, a flowing out in love to the community is an acceptable alternative. Then follows the periods of silence which is true prayer, in which we wait in complete faith and love for that which we have petitioned to be granted. Then follows an outflowing of gratitude. We may or may not be given what we asked for, but we will certainly gain something. It may not be what we expected or wanted, but in any case we seldom know what is best for us. We will return enriched, and there will be a change in our personality. It may not be immediate. It may not even be the change we expected, but something will happen that will lead us onwards in our quest towards integration.

Problems of Relationships Other People

In the last lecture I discussed the difficulties within oneself which prevented proper relationships developing, and how they could be dealt with by psychological knowledge and the power of prayer. We must now consider the difficulties within other people as they confront us. This is generally a more difficult problem. Nothing is easier than when sitting in a state of great tranquility and security, for one to irradiate happiness and love to all and sundry. When, however, one is in direct conflict with another person, one's temper tends to become frayed and one loses one's calm. It is this experience that makes life so important — if we could live permanently in mystical unity, this problem would never arise. Once again Jesus gives us the key to solving the problem. "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" The importance of self-love as opposed to selfishness was stressed in the previous lecture. We have now to consider how we may love our neighbour.

At the outset, let us realise that love is not an emotional state; it is not a feeling. We know from our encounters with people that there are some with whom we enjoy an almost pre-ordained harmony. There are some whom we like, some to whom we feel indifferent, and others whom we dislike almost at sight because of certain qualities and mannerisms. Now nothing is more false than to pretend to like someone whom we dislike. It is most important to confront the situation with honesty. Love does not consist of showing a smiling face to the world and pretending that everything is wonderful when we know very well it is not. If we do not like a thing we must acknowledge it in clear consciousness. This is the first step in overcoming our dislike and beginning to love our neighbour. Furthermore, those to whom we feel a

natural affection we may not necessarily love. A mother may, for instance, “love” her children dearly but refuse to let them go when they reach the age at which independence is essential. This attachment masquerades as love but is in fact mere possessiveness. There is an element of possessiveness in many impulsive friendships.

One cannot make a real relationship with another person until one is centred in oneself. Of course, if we had to wait until our personalities were fully integrated before relating to other people there would never be any relationship. It is in the trials and struggles of such incomplete relationships with others that we learn about ourselves and become more actualised as individuals. In other words, there is a constant interplay between community relations and inner self-development. When we see another person we are immediately seeing some aspect of ourselves. This insight is valuable, particularly if we react directly to this confrontation. We like those whose qualities support and complement our own. Such sustaining qualities include amiability, kindness, honesty, and reliability. These are the basis of friendship, and, of course, there is also the sharing of common interests. The sharing in a constructive relationship fills out and completes the personalities of all the participants. On the other hand, those whom we dislike possess qualities which repel us, often because we have these characteristics ourselves, at least latently. Thus the innate snob is soon aware of another’s snobbery, while to the mean man, the meanness of his acquaintances is the subject of repeated conversation. We project our defects all too readily on those whom we dislike. Therefore it is most important to see clearly what we dislike in others, without judgement against our own attitude of dislike. It is only thus that we can begin to relate to the person as he is, and not simply with an image of what we would like him to be. This can only start when we have lost the deep concern about ourselves, as discussed in the last lecture. It is only when we can in some measure accept ourselves that we may reach out to the other person and make contact with him, even if there is initial fear, suspicion, and dislike. Dislike of another has two basic causes. The first is personal inadequacy with projection as already noted, and the second is unpleasant traits in the other person; the two often go together. Therefore, the dislike we bear other people is a compound of mutual inadequacy, sometimes mostly our own, and sometimes largely that of the other person. We therefore do not need to castigate ourselves for being uncharitable, for the cause of the trouble is much deeper than is at first sight evident. It is obvious that if a person is generally disliked, the difficulty is almost certainly within himself. On the other hand, personal dislike suggests that at least some of the difficulty lies in oneself.

The basis of living is making relationships. No one can be regarded as outside our realm of concern. To us all human beings are kin. Some people evoke adverse reactions in us because we ourselves are inadequate; others evoke similar reactions in us because they are inadequate. Our final objective is to bring all together in honesty and love. Now what is this love to which we aspire? It is not an emotion. It is not a feeling of benevolence, of affection, which can be turned on and off. It is a state of being in which we can confront the other in direct relationship. When we love a person we can come to him face to face as we are. This is not the whole of love, of course, but it is the beginning. And it does not come naturally. Affection can certainly come naturally; there are some people who are much more affectionate than others. Affection is a feeling for a particular person, whereas love includes everybody. It is a confrontation, a state of being, in

which one can exteriorise the self to merge with the other. The three qualities essential to the nature of love are (a) that it is willed; it does not come naturally but develops through experience. (b) it is not emotional; on the other hand, it is tranquil, and (c) it does not fluctuate; it is constant. Even if the person whom we love betrays us, though we can hardly bear to face him for a time, still the relationship persists and eventually transcends the difficulty. Love never fails despite suffering, betrayal, and disappointment till the end of the world. This is the love of intimate concern for the other person, that he may grow into the fullness of his own being.

There are two reciprocal actions in love. The first is attraction — the desire to be near the beloved, fulfilled completely in the sexual act, which should be one of selfgiving. This is the primary function of the act of sexual union, and stresses the significance of the body in incarnation. But the sex act, and any other act of communion, is short-lived. The ecstasy of self-giving is temporary, and when the lovers separate they are as apart as they were before, and the fact of isolation, the existential tragedy of all human beings, dominates once more. But if there is love, it does not depart even when the lovers separate. It persists through minor separation and greater separation, and even the greatest separation of all, which is death of the physical body. But on the material level, when a person loves another he lets the other go in freedom even to the other side of the world, knowing that the bond of true love is never disrupted. It does not depend on physical proximity or ideological agreement. It depends on a respect for the identity of the other individual and with the concern that he may grow into maturity, which means a growth into freedom. Love and freedom converge in a point. Where there is love the bond is never broken, no matter where the person is, and he who is completely free — and this is the freedom that Jesus spoke about in connexion with the truth setting one free moves through the world and beyond it to mystical union with all people. When one is in this state of being there is a love for all people no matter who they are or what they are doing. Martin Buber made this point when he said that the love that Jesus bore for the possessed individual was as great as the love He bore for the beloved disciple, but surely the affection He felt for them was different. He could not have the same affection for the possessed man as for the beloved disciple, but the love, the healing force, was the same for both. Love transcends one's feelings. Feelings are entertained, but love is a state of relationship that persists.

The ideal is that love for all people which Jesus demonstrated in the crucifixion, we can hardly envisage what it means to take on the suffering of the world, though each of us in turn has to bear his cross, which is either rejected in hatred or else accepted in love. It is in loving people that we can progress beyond attachment to one person only. But love starts on an individual level, and only later embraces other people. Love for a person may leave one bereft when he dies, but love for the collective transcends personal death. In this way our isolation is overcome, and an approach to mystical understanding becomes possible. Such experience does not come merely through techniques of self-development, but rather by grace given to a person who has loved so intensely that he is completely unaware of himself. Then he is shown, for a brief moment, a greater reality which makes his sufferings and the sufferings of the world bearable and even acceptable. This is the basis of what is called holy indifference in the Christian mystical tradition, a state in which one acts perfectly in the moment, not for the result of the action but for the action itself, and this

is the state of profound love for all things. Some great mystics have spoken of God as being beyond good and evil. This is a most dangerous concept for unregenerate man, who could hardly avoid misconstruing it, but what it means is that God, being the quintessence of good, transcends duality. All ideas of duality are grounded in a universe which is not whole, but God is the source of wholeness in love. In Him there is no evil at all. In the ecstasy of mystical experience there is no longer any antipathy towards other people, but neither is there blindness to their inadequacies nor of course, to the inadequacies in oneself; even the mystic is far from being complete. How then should we deal with those we dislike intensely but in whom we recognise the indwelling Christ, present alike in saint and sinner, in persecutor and persecuted? How can we reconcile the mystical truth that we are members one of another with the racial, religious, and national disharmony in the world's various societies?

We all vary greatly in spiritual evolution; each has his own talents. Through what might be called the chance (or mischance) of upbringing, we have all undergone different conditioning. The unpleasant qualities in others and in ourselves also are due in part to conditioning from unpleasant early experiences. Nevertheless, a person's character is not entirely explained by environmental factors. There is, as we all know, a general world-wide tendency to ameliorate social injustice, poverty, ignorance, and disease. There is surely nobody who would disparage this trend, but it must be seen in intelligent perspective. No matter how much money a person has, he will always feel poor in comparison with someone else, and will strive for more and more — even millionaires are victims of this state of inner insecurity. Likewise the great social and economic benefits of the Welfare State have not removed unhappiness and rebellion from the young, who are now the most privileged group. The great prevalence of mental disease in the community is one indication of social malaise; drugtaking is another. It becomes clear that man's salvation will not come through economic improvement or social change. It is only when man ceases to be satisfied with material things and strives towards spiritual reality, seeing life as an evolutionary adventure, that he will make sense of existence. Reactionary people yearn nostalgically for a golden age in the past when everything was wonderful. In fact, life then was wonderful for only a tiny minority, and most had nothing at all. Simple idealists, on the other hand, predict a golden age in the future, when the millenium will be heralded by social revolution, and everyone will be happy. This is as much an illusion as the idea of a past Utopia — both are based on pleasant wishful-thinking. The existential human tragedy cannot be healed by external measures, which are only the initial palliatives. Social justice is the beginning of the spiritual life, but social justice becomes real only when man is spiritual. Inner development precedes the outer change if there is to be a permanent lifting of people's consciousness. Therefore, a prosperous home environment does not guarantee that a child will become saintly. Suffering causes many to become perverted and bitter, but it also leads to the sanctification of some. Those with little imagination see the cruelty and injustice of it all. Those who know compassion and can feel for others through their own suffering are given a glimpse of life's fulfilment, a fulfilment very different from the Welfare State or any other earthly Utopia.

This is the key to relating with other people. When we have faced all our defects, we can relate to other people in their own severe inadequacies. We begin to make relationships with people who are unpleasant

through charity and understanding, and furthermore we gain a new insight into ourselves. This is why it is most important to respond in love to people whom we dislike, without pretending that we like them. If we persist thus, an event may suddenly occur in which the other person is shorn of his apparently unpleasant qualities and can be seen to be likeably human. This occurs most often in times of difficulty when we are at breaking-point and in need of the help of someone who previously seemed disagreeable, but in the crisis shows himself to be admirably helpful. In this way we not only begin to feel a spontaneous liking for people whom we previously did not understand, but we ourselves move further towards self-actualisation.

There are, of course, people who are very difficult to get on with. Some of these are so mentally ill that they require psychiatric treatment, but there are others who do not come into this category yet can wreak havoc wherever they are. Many of us have had to work with someone of these, and very often there is very little that can be done about it. Such a person seems to be intractable to all attempts at friendship, and our own faith is very sorely tried. What are we to do in these situations? The first thing to remember is that these circumstances do not occur fortuitously. As we become more aware, we realise that nothing in our lives is fortuitous: everything has a reason and purpose. People who, for instance, have never been able to relate properly to their parents often find that they have a difficult relationship with their employer; when they marry there are likely to be difficulties with their spouse. And such a person is usually quite sure the other party is to blame! It is only when one faces oneself in truth and courage that one can see how much one was to blame for getting into the situation in the first place. This difficulty has occurred to teach us a lesson about our own inadequacy, and we dare not to escape from it before earnest heart-searching about its cause and effect. Otherwise, it will recur in a subsequent relationship, and we will be back where we started. Life can be compared quite aptly to a race with hurdles, each of which must be surmounted before the next is attempted.

If a hurdle is sidestepped, it will only reappear, perhaps in a slightly different guise. This is why the person with courage and wisdom faces his difficulties and does not look for a magical means of overcoming them.

To many people prayer is a magical means, and when it apparently fails they lose faith. True prayer is not magic. It is a submission of the self to God, so that strength may be given to traverse the valley of the shadow. Whether a remarkable event occurs or not is immaterial. The important point is that we may become better, stronger people. Difficult relationships, in which the other person is much more at fault than we, teach us two things: firstly, that it may have been our own weakness and precipitate action which caused us to get involved in the first place, and secondly, to enlarge our sympathy for other people in difficulties. If we can actualise these two insights, our lives are progressing. If we cease from bemoaning our fate and grumbling incessantly, we will understand both our own and the other person's defects. And incidentally, it is wrong to seek exoneration through attributing all personal difficulties to conditioning. After all we are educated by conditioning. The aim is to use the conditioning constructively rather than to be governed by it. When we see how our inner attitudes are conditioned, we should use the will, which is

the action of the self, to judge whether the conditioning is beneficial or deleterious. And this judgement in terms of inner understanding is the beginning of true maturity.

But what are we to do in a difficult relationship when we are confronted by somebody who is completely unreasonable, probably for deep psychological reasons? There are three possible solutions. We can either try to destroy him, or we can allow ourselves to be sacrificed, or we can temporise with patience. This applies on a communal level also. The revolutionary will destroy a corrupt society, while the passive individual will simply yield to it, thereby strengthening it. Neither of these courses is usually satisfactory. It is exceptional for something to be so bad that it should be annihilated, and in any case one has then to come to terms with a new circumstance which will probably be equally unfavourable until one's own personality is better integrated. Actions directed simply towards removing the cause of difficulty or running away from it, are seldom adequate. It is the third solution, the coming to terms with the difficulty and working within its limitations until such time as the power may be given to one to move constructively through it, that is the most enlightened. In other words, in a difficult relationship it is right to bear with it at least temporarily, and also to lift up the problem in prayer to God. I do not believe that one is called upon to bear such a difficulty indefinitely as a penance, — this view has some religious support, but it is surely contrary to the nature of God that there should be unrelieved distress — but if one confronts the difficulty with courage and psychological wisdom and uses the power of prayer, one will be given the strength to endure, and the understanding with which to find a solution.

This is important, particularly in estranged marriage relationships. Divorce seems often to be an easy solution, but it is really an admission of failure. It is the last resort, not the first solution. It is only when one has gone through the difficult relationship in clear consciousness, unclouded as much as possible by emotional judgements, and in true charity, that one can make this great decision. There is clearly a place for divorce, but it should come only after long endurance, growing charity, and such an integration of the personality that the final separation can be made with a full understanding of the antecedents and consequences. People who break relationships with thoughtless selfishness eventually suffer. It is easy to cast off something that displeases one, but it is only the outer form that goes; the inner essence remains. It stays with one until one has mastered the problem of its rejection constructively and intelligently. If one has made a bad relationship one has to bear its consequences to their logical conclusion. This means pain and suffering which one has brought on oneself, but when the solution is near one emerges a stronger person, whether there is reconciliation or separation. In this way one does not make the same mistake again through foolish, precipitate action, and one also has a greater charity towards and understanding of other people.

This is the fruit of all difficulties of this type. We do not live for ourselves alone, and it is in the pain of suffering that we rise to our full humanity and are able to help others. Life on earth involves inevitable suffering. Disappointment, disease, and physical death are our common lot. Those people who see life only on an earthly scale move to ultimate pessimism, but those who have given of themselves in love and

service to others are lifted up beyond their own concern to see a vaster scale of life, and may, through the Grace of God, be given a glimpse of eternity in mystical awareness. Mystical experience comes to those who have suffered, who have suffered for God, which entails suffering for their own “deification”, because Christ is in us, and is our hope of glory to come. But there is a difference between suffering undergone and ultimate victory in love and wisdom and the suffering continually repeated in ignorance, so that nothing appears to have been learnt in life’s travail. It is in this way that the difficulties inherent in relationships are transmuted to world service through the awareness of meaning in life. The great saints achieved mystical illumination through the patient working-out of their personal and environment difficulties. A good example is St. Catherine of Genoa, who had to endure excruciating headaches and a difficult personal relationship. She is one of the greatest Christian mystics, and also a pioneer of modern nursing. Others have had to overcome lust and selfishness.

The summarise: be honest with yourself about the difficulty of a relationship; do not automatically castigate either the other person or yourself, but try to find out the inner (psychological) cause of the trouble. Love is not deception of oneself, nor is it sentimentality to the other person. Sentimentality is a tendency to be swayed by feeling in opposition to the insights of reason; it is emotional weakness. In fact, emotion should not colour our appraisal, which should be intuitive and intellectual (rational). Emotion should follow the appraisal, and it is manifested in altruistic endeavour and aesthetic performance. It should play no part in judgement, or initially even in relationships, but following the relationship there is a corresponding emotional response. Finally comes the power of prayer: petitionary, that we may be strengthened in love, and intercessory, that the other person may transcend his personal difficulties and enter into good relationships. We do not look for magical changes, but for the slow, progressive integration of the personality, which is the key to all fruitful relationships.