

# Repentance

Six Doctrinal Classes by Nathaniel Dandridge Pendleton

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1982

PREFACE

Three years before his death, and a year and a half prior to his retirement as Executive Bishop of the General Church, the Rt. Reverend Nathaniel Dandridge Pendleton wrote and presented to the Bryn Athyn Society this series of doctrinal classes on Repentance. One of the foremost scholars and writers in the church, Bishop Pendleton had authored innumerable sermons, classes, and addresses which he gave in societies from Bryn Athyn to the farthest-flung corners of the General Church, spanning a period of some twenty-five years. He studied the Writings in depth and presented the results of his doctrinal understanding accordingly.

In apparent contrast to his usual intellectual style, the Bishop's classes on Repentance, although they were not written for publication, are expressed in a simplicity of form and thought sequence that points up all the more strongly the profound depth of understanding and life's perception to which his unique mind had come over his nearly fifty years as a pastor, theologian, and administrator. These classes are here presented in the hope that they will lead the mind of the reader back to the Heavenly Doctrines themselves, with a fuller and richer appreciation of their teachings as the Very Word of the Lord in His Second Advent.

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# Class I. MARCH 23, 1934

Many things are revealed in the Writings concerning repentance - its need and place in the life of man; and also concerning the false and true ideas which may be and are entertained concerning it.

The definitions of true repentance which the Writings give are for the spiritual man; for one whose outlook is to the after states of reformation and regeneration.

True repentance can have no other intent. With this in view, the word, in its finality, can have but one meaning, namely, "to sin no more." This is at once the motive and the objective in repentance. Both may be open to question. The quality of the motive may be uncertain; "To sin no more" may have regard to the eyes of the world, or because we are seen of God. To avoid sin because it stands in the way of natural prosperity or natural ambitions, is one thing; and to resist evils because they are against the commandments of God, is quite another.

Our motives in the beginning of life are of a lowly order. With increasing power of reflection they may be raised to higher and different ends. These may become more clearly evident. Our doctrine is that a motive compelling action may be raised above our self-life and its gratifications; not entirely so, but only to the point where self-love is so reduced that it ceases to be the dominant or central aim in life.

In so far as this is accomplished man is said to become spiritual, or to have a spiritual motive, which is imparted by the Lord.

The first requirement or acquirement making possible such a motive is that man may believe in the Lord and in His power to lift man above the purely selfish life into which he is born.

Through this faith in God, that which is spiritual is derived, to a greater or less extent, into man's conscious life. There can be no motive which in any sense may be ascribed to man, or be appropriated by him, save in so far as he is able to conceive of it or assume it by a conscious mental process. But this calls for a prior faith in God. Obscure though this motive may be in the beginning, yet, if genuine, it is marked by a humble sincerity.

It can be seen that a human impulse from self may be for the sake of self, or it may be as of self, with a view to God and His kingdom.

If it is of self for self it can never rise above a selfish outlook; never lead to true repentance, and so to reformation and regeneration.

If, however, the impulse be as of self; it implies a recognition of the presence of God within and above man's life; within man in a way to be appropriated. Hence the need of belief in God, and acknowledgment of His presence and His power to save man from sin.

It is through this faith that a spiritual motive may be born in, and from, that which we speak of as spiritual. In such a case man believes that his possible salvation is a gift of God, the fact of which may be ever more clearly revealed to him.

But as to this, knowledge must precede a state of faith, and faith must precede that living evidence of it which alone is truly spiritual and lasting.

Because of this sequence of knowledge, faith, and the living evidence, which is charity, we and our children must be taught, in the first instance, the knowledge of God. For the sake of this knowledge the Word has been given, i.e., that the knowledge of God may enter from without and inform the minds of men. Given this knowledge, backed by the authority of a Divine Revelation, then repentance, reformation and regeneration may follow; but apart from such knowledge a condition would arise of which we cannot conceive the consequences.

Certainly men would be doomed to remain in their primitive self-life, and the end would be a total failure of the Divine intent in man's creation. Because of this the knowledge of God, of some God or gods, has never been lacking. Man must worship something - something conceived of as outside of, or above, himself - apart from himself.

If worship, or the love which is the soul of worship, be centered in self, then man will be consumed as by an evil flame. Every man encounters this danger. Confirmation of this self-love may be strengthened by the refinements of natural reason. It can be reduced or overcome only by a motive born of the knowledge of God.

To see God outside of, or apart from, self, and to perceive ingrown self-love as evil is the first imperative.

If from an interior perception God is seen as within man, and if the thought proceeds from this realization, it will be known that God is there with power, and that the God within is the same as God above.

The Divine is not the less outside of man as a vessel, even while it be within him. When within man, it is distinctly apart. The knowledge of God within must be revealed from without lest man should have no knowledge of the full presence of God. This knowledge brings with it an affirmation of the life within that is God. This affirmation is called conjunction with God, in which case men, though separate, are joined with Him.

A redeeming feature of the old Christian theology is that it insisted upon the separateness of God from His creation. Theologians were impressed with the need of this in view of that ancient mode of thought which failed to distinguish between God and His creation, and which in the end held that God entered into His own conscious life only in man.

To guard against this ancient view Christian theology devised an ingenious but spurious doctrine, that God created the world out of nothing, the object being to effect a strict demarcation. However, there is, and can be, no other source of the substance of creation than God Himself. Out of His own Divine Substance He made all things that were made, and yet no thing so made is Himself. The making implied that which was discrete from Himself.

God in Himself is unqualified Life - pure, unbounded and continuous. This is the definition given us.

His will to create may be seen as a turning in and upon Himself, whereby He produced limited

enclosures - minimal vortices of inconceivable perfection which successively became more and more finite in form and structure.

The first of these may be regarded as the primitives of the Spiritual Sun, in which the Divine Substance is immediately present.

Successives thereafter and therefrom composed all things of creation, spiritual and natural.

One sequence of these enclosures, by the highest degree of compression, produced the natural sun, wherein the finite forms suffered a total deprivation of the life which is God; and these, in their emanation from the natural sun, formed the earths - the final basis of creation. They compose nature, in its strict definition, as apart from living forms, and as ultimates at rest. or substances exclusive of life.

On the other hand, the create enclosures derived directly from the Spiritual Sun are called spiritual because inclusive of life, and each in their degree responsive to the Divine; yet the Divine Life within them is constrained within bounds, and this increasingly, down to the ultimates of the spiritual world. It is through the intermediation of these spiritual world forms that so-called living things spring up on earth.

In all descending spiritual forms, increasing constraint is accompanied by a lessening of freedom. The Divine Life in itself alone is free in its unbounded continuity.

But wherever there is life in any degree, there also is the freedom of life in that degree. Hence the teaching that men are gifted with human freedom, and that animals and plants possess something of freedom, each in accord with its structural form.

There is even an analogue of freedom in the mineral kingdom, presented in the volatile spheres which emanate from and are fluent about a central object.

With the increasing constraint of life, freedom suffers until it ceases.

Where there are successive structural degrees within an individual, as in the human form, life is constrained in accord with those degrees.

Man is a form composed of three distinct degrees, namely, soul, mind and body. Life in its descent into man manifests itself as qualified by these degrees.

The life within the soul of man suffers the least constraint, yet there is its first binding. Its freedom therein is, however, superlative. The inmost soul of man is near placed with reference to the Spiritual Sun. Its residence is in the radiant belts. Through this soul comes the grant of man's immortality. But the life pertaining to the soul is superconscious. Conscious life is a strict predicate of the human mind.

The division of the human planes or receptive vessels composing man into soul, mind and body, is fundamental.

But the intermediate or mind of man is also divided into three degrees. These degrees, in their potency, are inborn in man, but the mind as such does not exist at birth. It is subject to development by an inner

creative process.

The first formed mind is called natural. It is indeed a spiritual formation, normal to every man; yet in its formation it falls within the lumen of nature.

The two higher degrees can be opened and developed only by the affirmative reception of influx from the Lord through heaven, or what is the same, through and into the corresponding degrees of the mind.

This influx is or may become spiritually creative. The several degrees of the mind are thus created distinct one from the other; yet because of the encompassing sphere called the lumen of nature, the clear distinction between these degrees is not perceived; i.e., no sense realization of them, so long as man lives in the world.

Man appears to possess but one mind, whether here or hereafter and indeed it is so; yet by his life in the world one of the mind's three degrees may be opened and developed; and as this comes to pass, so is the mind in its totality qualified. According to the state and degree of this qualification the spirit of man is permanently constituted and located, not only in some one of the three heavens, but in a society which is intimately congenial to it.

In all cases the life of man's mind descends as a life flux passing through the two higher degrees into the natural. It is at first not retained by the higher degrees. Though open for the life passage, the higher degrees are not reactive. Only the natural is so. There, in the natural, constraint by reception and reaction is first encountered. There, apart from inherited inclinations, innumerable forms are discovered which have been raised in an image into this lower plane of the mind from the outside world, through the open door of the bodily senses.

It is in the natural mind that the conscious awareness of self-existence of the individual is first aroused. This awakening is produced by the life influx coming into touch with impressions from the outside world. First there is a sensing of objects, then an obscure awareness of the self which perceives the object. Both are mental operations - one a distinct sensation, and the other at first but a vague realization.

This first formed mind enlarges with each experience; with each contact it increases its measure. But even as the influx of life from within is unconsciously received, so is the growth of this mind a hidden process.

This meeting place of the influx from above with an afflux from the world is the plane wherein the spirit is formed and its quality determined. There also that freedom is founded: that peculiar freedom called human, which is not the freedom of life in se, but a freedom environed by many conditionments, both affirmative and negative; a freedom hampered by adversities, entangled in discordances. Nonetheless, the mind ever enjoys a fundamental freedom which is a gift of God in permanence. It is permanent because flexible and adaptable to the conflicting states of the natural mind. Moreover, this freedom of the mind of man, despite every constraint imposed, is such that man can act even as he wills, or as he chooses. He can, as of himself, turn to the right or to the left as his reason dictates. God has so provided. And this provision is never taken away, save for some super-

normal cause, but at such times the man is not the man, but is impelled beyond himself. When he returns to his normal state there is a full recurrence of his freedom, with a revived sense of his own individuality, as characterized by his attainments, whether good or evil.

This freedom of man in the midst of counteracting constraints is his peculiar, his unique, gift which constitutes him a human being, separate from the lower forms of life, and a defined individual apart from all his fellows.

This life of rational freedom is not born in man, though he is born to it. It is as if acquired - acquired by his life in the world. The power that enables this acquirement is born in man, contained in the gift of life to the infant.

The growth of freedom is progressive, and its determination is qualified by many contingencies. In the adult only is it confirmed by reason. Then the man becomes responsible in the exercise of his choice of good or evil, both as to the evils which he is disposed to acquire, and those which are inborn - which he inherits from his progenitors; all are subject to his free choice. These last are said to be innumerable; yet they are comprised in one, namely, the evil of self-love. This evil manifests itself increasingly and in many directions; yet the Lord provides a counterbalance in the semblance of good and truth, apparent in childhood. No man was ever born regenerate.

From the beginning, self-life and self-love are and were man's first status - this because of the necessity of life in the world of nature. Hence man in the beginning is an image of the world - that hard, unyielding world, where self-protection, self-preservation, is a necessity, the first and most insistent law of nature. This law cannot be denied. Man must comply with it.

Therefore he was created in the beginning a form of self-protective love, that he might, as of himself, provide for his well-being. This refers to man's natural life in the world, but not in a like degree to his spiritual states.

Through man's spiritual re-creation, the image and likeness of God is, in some degree, attained, while his natural creation is and must ever be animalistic; yet deep within his animal-like form, the image and likeness of God is inseated, i.e., in man's soul, while his body is more or less possessed by his animal cravings.

Only by the gradual ascent of man to meet with his soul in its descent, can his re-creation be effected.

The mind of man is that meeting place. There the decision is made between the life of the soul descending, and the evil of the body inheritance. There in the mind regeneration or degeneration takes place. Only of the mind may either of these be predicated.

As to the threefold enclosure which is man, the highest never falls, and the lowest is put aside by death. The intermediate is competent to salvation, or damnation, in accord with its own freedom of choice - its decision in affirming the life descending from God through the soul, or by approval of the affections having their origin in the body, and its inherited content. The mind makes this choice, but never in the right way apart from a struggle, a contest; for evil delights ascend from the body with many allurements. If man is to be saved, these must be resisted. By this resistance, the power of freedom increases, and the bonds of the flesh are weakened. A reconstruction is engendered - a rebirth effected.



The beginning of this process - the key to it - is called repentance, a word significant of man's peculiar responsibility. It is the one thing which man must, and can, do - which he must continue to do so long as his life in this world lasts. But more as to this on another occasion.

# **Class II. APRIL 13, 1934**

All create things come into existence in one of two ways.

The first is a descending series which comes to rest in and upon the earth.

The second is an ascent of living forms out of the earth, and out of the things produced from seeds sown, in successively higher orders.

In the descending creations, the atmospheres, spiritual and natural, are produced in succession by lower formations of the higher.

In the return series, the higher forms are prepared in the lower, and are thence born to a higher life.

These last are living growths. Their upward development is effected by an impulse of the life contained seeking its source.

This upward movement puts on successively higher embodiments - vessels which hold back from a final absorption of the create into the uncreate.

In the universe of descending and ascending forms, the human is an epitome of total creation.

The life blood of the brain and body comes down and goes up in the making of a man.

The inmost human is an undefiled creation which vivifies the paternal seed of man, and molds his body.

The body born into the world, in all the marvels of its structure, is in its primitive formation a responsive containant of its soul; and this until the hidden inheritance from the seed of the father and the blood of the mother successively awake and intervene.

After birth the inborn aspiration of the individual forms itself into a beginning mind.

This mind, whatever the direction of its development, whether to good or evil, is inbuilt between the God-given soul and the body, and is discretely separate from both.

The mind is the return kingdom in man, and the subject of an ever higher evolution, given in emulation of its Divine Source, as that Source is represented in the soul; yet the mind never becomes one with the soul.

The mind may, in its freedom, reject this upward emulation by turning to, and becoming increasingly inbound in, the affection of bodily pleasures.

In either case the mind undergoes a continuous development in accord with the direction of its turning.

Its enlargement becomes manifest as it passes from first obscure sensations to more defined thoughts and feelings.

During infancy and childhood the foundations of this development are laid successively. Each is the basis for an advanced formation.

In this process the living experiences, which are various and numberless, congruous and incongruous, good and evil, are recorded.

Only a Divine ordering and a Providential guarding could encompass in one form good and evil things, which because of their antagonism, cannot be joined together.

The things impressed upon the mind in each stage of its development are preparatory and competent to receive those that follow.

Providence guides in this with an unerring hand, so that the present state of life may be a sequence from the past and opened to the future. Whatever the future brings falls into prepared states, and is received and qualified thereby.

The mind, at any given time in this life, holds within itself a little world which may enclose a little heaven or a little hell. In adult life one or the other is confirmed.

From the beginning the ground is laid, and a balance provided between good and evil.

In later life it may be seen that every good and every evil harks back to earlier states which are congruent with and receptive of them.

Our interest is concerned with the things pertaining to man's past which make repentance in adult life possible; that is, with the events and states of childhood which by their presence in the mind provide the ground of repentance.

All so-called good remains conspire to this end, while every evil entanglement is a block in the way.

There are, however, special states in the past of the child which have a direct bearing upon the possibility of repentance. These early states are images, having a certain likeness to, but lacking the soul of, free repentance.

They are implanted by the discipline imposed as guards against wrongdoing. They carry the fear of punishment - a constraining fear which insists upon an avoidance of that which is forbidden, which checks the doing of that which results in punishment.

This discipline establishes a close association of ideas in the mind of the child between wrongdoing and its painful consequences.

The pain, when remembered, produces an uneasiness of the mind - a fear. The lesson learned is that to hurt is to be hurt.

The realization of this brings the first intimation of the retaliatory law of life.

No child can escape this knowledge, no matter what the system of education or the mode of parental training may be.

This discipline comes, to a large extent, by ways and from sources outside of and apart from, parental guidance or school training.

Neither the tender hearts of parents, not training by love alone, which refuses all punishment, can keep the child from learning, by experience, the punitive side of life.

An offence against others, if not wisely disciplined by those who are over the child, is certain to receive attention from irate companions. This last is a potent constraint, often more effective and more feared by the child.

The only way of escape from this is by isolation, but this, fortunately, is not possible. There is a disciplinary value in the play and counterplay of retaliations between children.

The child lives most intimately in the world of its companions. It seeks this world with avidity. The things it learns from other children, and the discipline encountered, in some respects are more potent than those from any other source. In that world, as the child gives, so will it receive, and in consequence, something like self-restraint arises.

Many and passionate are the sorrows of childhood, from which an escape is sought. Ways are tried; readjustments with the groups are made; broken friendships are renewed. Never mind the motive. In any case it has in view self-protection advancement in favor with equals. There is herein a vague image of repentance.

The primitive beginning is made when the parent insists that a child should say it is sorry before it knows the meaning of the word.

Experience of years brings added meaning, as affection deepens; then regret becomes contrition, which is a more interior stricture. This may, in time, be followed by a confession of sin, which opens the door to repentance.

Parents explain the need and cause of their applied punishment - sometimes at length. If in this explanation they go beyond the child's ability to understand, the mark is missed; yet the child understands something. Its instinctive faith in the parent is a marvel of confidence. At a later date they work themselves free from this first implicit reliance, as their normal conceit of opinion develops. This is a part of life and is normal development - its natural growth through learning, and the opening of affections. These all are so many prefigures to be later fulfilled or closed off as the case may be.

Even so, regret for wrongdoing, in the child's mind, is an image vitally significant of a later turning from evil to good.

Indeed, all things of adult life are early symbolized in the thoughts and affections of childhood. Not only in the apparent goods and truths, apparent evils and falsities, but also as to child freedom and its alternation of states.

As the ceaseless alternations of states, with the adult, are the most potent means in the hand of the Lord in effecting man's regeneration, so also with the child. Its alternations of states are the living means which enable its development - which initiate every advance and open to new issues of life with

an increase of freedom. Thus the child enters the youth period, which is the beginning of higher seed formation - the seed of the rational mind is implanted, which manifests itself in a notable physical change, and a corresponding determination to do as the youth wills, aside from parental control. "The boy's will is the wind's will," or something like that. This not infrequently begets a startling feeling of impotence on the part of parents.

A change in the manner of control is necessary. The boy becomes creative, as if in his own right; furtively at first, and with little understanding yet as the seed of manhood comes to life, which is accompanied by an unaccountable restlessness which drives the lad afield. He becomes a venturesome wanderer beyond the home environment. The understanding parent will call him back, knowing that he will go again, until he discovers a settlement for himself.

There is a great mental relief on leaving the parental home. A world of wide freedom opens.

There are other bonds, not the less binding because self-imposed. The opening to rational freedom begins in and with this youthful development.

Its attainment, even as all things of life, is gradual. With it comes an increasing responsibility among men, and before God.

The quality and degrees of this freedom before God, at any given time, can be gauged by the Lord alone.

When it is said that man alone is responsible for his way of life, whether for evil or good, we must understand that there are many qualifications to this during the period of transition from childhood to manhood. Of necessity there is then less and more of rational freedom.

This freedom, whatever its states at any time, is coequal with the power of repentance, which also is less and more during the period of transition. It is of one kind in the beginning, and another at the end.

At first it is little more than a vague sense of evil in oneself, but as the mind ascends as by successive gradients, it opens to a higher light, and more interior perceptions and motives whereby the first recognition of evil within oneself leads to a more interior contrition - a heartfelt sorrow, in which case true repentance may be nigh. This calls for an inward effort to put aside the evil known and confessed.

The confession that man of himself is entirely evil is of essential value as a primary dogmatic truth, but is pointless until some one evil is discovered.

The sensing of an evil as peculiar to oneself, and as an actuality, is a most humiliating experience. It induces a definite feeling of shame. It does not refer to all in a general way as sinners, and to ourselves as vaguely included. This inclusive characterization leaves the individual well nigh untouched.

On the other hand, when some one evil is felt as a peculiar possession, the realization of it may bring us to our knees, in which case the point of contact with real repentance is effected.

Something of signal import is here involved, i.e., the sight of a special evil in self draws aside the veil of our customary observance of the amenities - the decencies of life into which we have been trained, and

this though such civilities may possess a certain external sincerity which has in the past disguised the underlying quality of the proprial life.

Self-examination draws aside this veil, and the impelling emotions which have prompted our actions come to view. To look these frankly in the face, even within the closet of our mind, is a task.

Lest we neglect this introspection, we are advised to examine our motives at stated times. Indeed, a stated time is set for us, lest we forget.

In the beginning this undertaking is superficial. Life adds to its seriousness and multiplies its findings, as the custom of self-examination becomes habitual.

While it is true that the total of man's self-life is evil - is selfish - and that there is no end to its malign involvements, yet we may note that a counterbalance is provided by the many apparent goods and truths - innocences left over from infancy and childhood; and apart from these the evils of the self-life would damn from the beginning, and from them there could be no redemption.

No, the Lord's Providence is ever present and operative. From the beginning it stores up within the growing mind counteracting influences, to the end that with the arrival at adult life there may be within the mind, even as sacred mansions, these Divine implantations competent to receive a vivifying influx given us as an enablement as of self from God.

It is said, as of self, because the things called "remains" are implanted by the Lord in such a way as to appear as if they belonged to the man as if of equal right in the person's life with their opposites. For they also stand in his mind, in part, as memories pertaining to his past life.

Therefore it is said that man repents as of self because his empowerment on such occasions is by the Lord through the things which seemingly belong to him.

From these, and these alone, arises the power of self-compulsion against evil, which, if repeated, establishes within the man a new proprium, so called because it is a new appropriation of life from the Lord - a little here and little there.

This in time becomes much, as man's engagement against his evils is undertaken as a self-imposed responsibility; undertaken in a freedom which assumes that responsibility.

The after reformation and regeneration are the Lord's work - a hidden process, i.e., the ordering of truths and the implanting of regenerate goods in the human mind, in an image of heaven. This the Lord alone can do.

Resistance to evils discovered in oneself must, therefore, be a conscious effort on the part of man, and that it may be so beyond all questioning, man's determination thereto is exercised with no manifest help from the Lord.

We may and should pray for help in the face of our selfish vanities; pray that we may be lifted up above the drift of our passions, but the need is for more than prayer. The call is for resolution, which we may after confess is also a gift from God. The enablement is indeed from Him alone, but it can

become effective only through the remains of His Providential implanting, i.e., by a resolution which finds the source of its strength, and its impulse, in the innocences left over from childhood. From this source alone man is enabled to comply with the will of God. Note therefore that this as of self-arising out of these "reliquae" is to be sharply distinguished from the man's original proprial life.

Because remains appear to belong to the man, so also is the effort thence derived felt distinctly his.

Man was created with a view to his taking upon himself this responsibility, and bearing it as his own, as something having its origin in him.

Yet he may know, in the light of truth, that it is from God alone.

These are the simple facts of human life. God gives the power, but in so doing He makes man responsible for its use - its employment - so that it is clearly of man's choice if he fails.

For this reason his failure cannot be ascribed to God. This may not be the logic of man's reasoning, but it is the truth of God.

## **Class III. APRIL 20, 1934**

We have noted that man is brought to the door of repentance through alternations of states, and that these involve affections which come to view as their mutations accent their quality.

As the mind becomes increasingly reflective, so also a realization of the qualities of these affections is perceived with increasing clarity. Their accentuation is sharpened by the contrast of joys with sorrows, of states of exhilaration over against depressions. Thus the quality of the affections emerges in terms of good or evil; in terms of good only in so far as the mind has been informed by sacred remains implanted during infancy and childhood. In the degree that these have been kept alive, there is an inclination away from evil.

Not only on the basis of self-life, in itself evil, is the reflective thought determined but this determination may be influenced by and through sacred remains, insofar as they have not been destroyed by the passion of evil.

In either case the reactive life of man is more and more turned in one direction or another, as its quality is defined by experience.

Deeper things, however, are involved in this process than the man can know through conscious reflection; yet he may become more or less aware of the general drift. If, however, that drift is to the confirmation of evil, the man deceives himself by calling evil good, since in evil he finds the satisfactions of his life; while he that turns to good encounters the shock of his evil proprium, and can at the time see in himself nothing but evil.

In the case of one who makes evil his own from pleasure therein, the invisible working of Providence with him is in the direction of a lesser evil.

In order that Providence may effectively guide with the evil, even as with the salvable, every man is led to a hidden end, which if openly exposed to him would excite a destructive resentment - this even with those who otherwise might be saved.

It is clear that if the final end of Providence, with reference to anyone, should be openly revealed, not only would resentment arise in the human heart, but freedom would be at an end.

Because of this the future is veiled, not only with men, but also with the angels. They also must be held in the as of self; i.e., in the ever present power of going in the direction of their choice, and this even while they know that such a choice is guided by the Lord - by His love for them, and reciprocally by their love of Him - by their love of His Truth, which they are given to understand, and as they understand, to obey.

From this it may be seen that the future is hidden from both men and angels, to the end that they may enjoy the full and free sensing of self-guidance.

In this their alternations of state play a ruling part, even as it is the leading sign of their finite humanity, and of the ever enduring distinction between God and His angels, as well as of men, of any



and every kind; with this difference, that the angels, in their former earth life, had once and for all confirmed their choice of good. This does not again come into question.

It is through alternation of states also that all off casting takes place, whether of evils with those becoming regenerate, or of the semblances of good with those who undergo degeneration.

Every change of state makes possible the removal of something. Therefore there is in every such change a likeness, either of repentance or of the confirmation of evil.

Therefore something is strengthened and its opposite weakened in every mutation as life advances from childhood to age. It cannot be otherwise, for it is the design of Providence that in the end the entire active life of man should be either good or evil, and this to avoid the profanity of a double life in one person.

While man is born into self-love and may later be so changed as to become a form of love to the Lord, yet great as this change may be, the personal identity of the individual remains the same. Man's sense of his personality holds.

The submergence of the natural-world memories after death is no more disturbing to spirits or angels than we here are disturbed by failure to recall the time when we nursed at our mother's breast. The ever present sense of our personality is continuous, both here and hereafter. It is not dependent upon the power of recollection; yet it may be asked, What does it matter as to where we are going, or what we may become, if we are to forget our past and know not who we were in that past? Will we not be as someone else? Shall we not, in a practical sense, become another?

This is a futile reasoning. We are and ever continue to be ourselves in person, howsoever much we change, and howsoever much we forget. It would not be so if the life from God in us was not deeply qualified by our human states.

In the present is the fullness of our life; but the past is in the present in greater fullness as we forget, for that which is forgotten is present, not as memory but as a quality. So also our future is involved in the present. In human life there can be no outcome of that which is not involved.

Our love of life is inborn, and its increasing fulfillment is our deepest concern. This love becomes a fear in the face of an evil threat, and our choice of a way is often determined by fear. It is through this fear that we may, with God's help, be amended.

This is made possible by virtue of the two states, i.e., that of fear and love, and their alternations. The one of these is but a reverse manifestation of the other.

Repentance involves and leads to an uplifting of life; yet its occurrence begins in a state of depression, when we are in the depths - when evils are pressing, when their visibility is more than normal, and their power seemingly overwhelming; when release from them appears to be all but impossible.

This zero state, like every other dominant mood of life, takes full possession of us for the time. It persuades of its permanence; yet even as we feel this - as we sense the dominance of evil - just then the change begins.

The current of life is never at rest. It runs ceaselessly forward and backward, upward and downward; despair gives place to hope, and hope is lost in despair. Nothing of human life is static. Its movement is immortal, and this regardless of whether good or evil be confirmed.

The confirmation of the one or the other is allowed and provided for in and by nature, which alone is composed of an unyielding substance.

It is in this world, therefore, that radical changes can be made in the quality of man's reactive life, and be so confirmed by nature that there is no release from the decisions here made.

This is the same as to say that in this life alone may man repent and have his repentance established by an ultimate fixation in and by the blood of his body and brain; yet in the afterlife certain clearances are ceaselessly effected. This even with those angels who were born in the dawn of time; and this because of their underlying self-love which is never entirely dissipated.

Their finite molding in and by nature ever remains, and this contains the states of their original self-life. This original self-life is that which insists upon their continued alternations of states in the afterlife, with a view to their unceasing purification, no matter how much in the past they may have been born or reborn of God.

While the angels, by this means, are continually purified, they never become pure. And while evil spirits, by their alternations, ever sharpen their evils, they never become evil. Yet, as no angel can permanently fall from his good confirmed, so no devil can repent of his established evil.

An evil spirit may fancy an escape; may seek refuge from a threat of evil to himself; may flee the punishment of his sin, and in so doing find a temporary asylum (in God's mercy); yet in his refuge he encounters a self-exposure which cannot long be concealed.

An angel may be let down to a near approach to his proprial life; yet he returns to the clarity of his love and wisdom.

It is of God's provision that both the good and the evil should undergo mutations by means of which their life is quickened; and it is to be noted that every recession makes way for some gain beyond that which was before attained. In this lies the joy of life and the hope of another day.

Through this hope, in the world life, a will to repent may be born out of regret and sorrow; out of states of depression in which there is the near sensing of evil.

This is a self-concern into which something spiritual may be derived through religion - through faith in revelation, through teachings concerning God and the life to come, and by an observance of the Lord's commandments.

Only so may a spiritual motive be given; yet the change involved can be but gradual. For long man's motives are mixed; his reasons for an action are more than one, and differing, maybe, in origin.

However high the ideal, self-prompting to personal welfare plays its part.

In certain states, with all men, their human impulses may be seen to be quite below a spiritual level, in

which case, if spiritual ideals are in any degree entertained, the man suffers from a sense of debasement. He will cry, "I am a worm, and not a man." He will, as it were, creep upon the ground. The angels hold him in the sight of his evil lest his pride of spiritual attainment be excited; lest he encourage prematurely a sense of spiritual security. Therefore he is constrained to suffer the presence and feel the power of evil in himself.

It is well with him if on the occasion he senses the evil as a vile breath from hell. In such a case his repentance may become vital, and the life of his mind, in part - its inner part - may become truly spiritual. Thus a spiritual power may find place in him; at first as a feeble pulse, which gains strength.

Yet so long as the life of the body lasts, the underlying evil into which man is born, and which is rooted in his nature, is capable of a resurgence, with an apparent increase of strength. This prevents man's resting content with what he may regard as his present goodly attainments.

A feeling of contentment is ever felt as a blessing; yet it is also a signal of danger - a forerunner of a recurrent temptation.

It is not the knowledge of evil that brings repentance. Knowledge is cold. Only a realizing sense of evil in self intromits man into the state called temptation. This state is that which calls imperatively for renewal of repentance, apart from which the way cannot be opened for the Lord's regenerative work.

In this matter man must pay the price. He must meet and take his punishment. His repentance is this payment. The root meaning of the word 'repentance' is to pay. It is a ransom payment, felt at the time as a severe affliction - as a deprivation; yet after the payment there is a joy in having fulfilled a just requirement.

In this world life is constantly changing. Pleasures wane, and sufferings ease. Moods are entertained and forgotten, until their like recur; but when they recur they fill the mind to such an extent that the mood seems to be the man - so long as it lasts. But it does not last, for life is intermittent.

I refer to the reactive life of man, not to Divine influx. Influx, indeed, is continuous, and because continuous, it is imperceptible. Only as life enters into a finite vessel does a stroke or beat, like a pulse, become manifest. The stroke expands; in the intervals the vessel contracts.

Every recipient vessel acknowledges the inflow of life by expanding and contracting; hence the pulse in all created things which have life within them. This pulsation begins with, and is derived from, that which we know as the Spiritual Sun.

By virtue of the pulsation, the vessel senses itself, as of self. This selfhood of a human vessel is that in which the origin of evil is found.

Every create thing incloses a shade, and casts a shadow. From increasing shadows, night falls.

In the night, evil breeds, for Evil loves darkness rather than light.

The old saying that spirits may be known from the fact that they do not cast a shadow, is misleading. A spirit seen and thought to be in this world casts no shadow therein; yet in the spirit world his shade

increases as he draws near to hell. Hell is the shadow of spiritual darkness. This shadow also lies in the natural mind of every man. Therefore that mind is the bed of evil, of that human perversity which alone is truly evil.

Moreover, this evil has its communications. Its contact is with its like in others, and the likeness of evil is found in all men.

Every man stands between the self-force of evil in himself and Divine Presence within him from above. His reactive life, between the two, is one of vacillation. He seeks, but can find no rest; he prays, but hears no answer. Prayer to God may open to the light of truth; it is an invitation to that light, yet God never answers man's prayers by a presence in light so manifest, so powerful, as to remove from man the sense of his responsibility. God is present both in light and power, without increase or decrease. That which increases is man's apperception and his sense of responsibility, his realization of the need of resistance to evil.

In a state of temptation man seems to himself to be the more evil. His suffering is more sharply defined. This according to the law that the severity of a temptation is equal in degree to man's resistance.

Spiritual light, when it falls upon the dark places of the mind, by its exposure excites the evil.

While doctrine teaches what things are evil, their nature, kind and degrees, it is only when doctrine is enlightened from love that the animosity of evil is aroused. The light comes as a challenge. The evil assaults; the ensuing combat is not radical; but a victory is counted if the evil withdraws.

The effect of such a withdrawal upon the evil is a loosing of its hold. By degrees it is driven aside, and at length rendered impotent.

Evil, by nature, is cowardly. It seeks a place of concealment, from which it infuses into the mind tormenting fears - sometimes fears of what man knows not, and sometimes of that which he knows. It is said that conscience makes cowards of us all. It is the exposure of evil that does this. As a result of the exposure the repentant man discovers a division in himself. His repentance accentuates this division, and the man becomes aware of the fact that he has entered upon a way of life from which he must not turn back.

A parable gives warning of this: "Let him that is on the housetop not go down."

After the first conflict and victory man must not fall back into his former state, lest he profane. Herein the Lord's Providence operates in a way beyond all marvels, binding man by an invisible bond to the height that is possible to him. This the man cannot see.

To our view our high resolutions fail, and we are recalled to repentance.

We pray that the inner heart of strength holds despite our irregularities, and in the face of the veiled uncertainties which cover our future. We pray that our hope of heaven may be more than a refinement of self-love. The conclusive answer to this is not given us here.

In this, as in all things, we can only do the best we may in the duties and responsibilities of our life, and leave our future where it belongs - in the hands of the Lord.

## Class IV. APRIL 27, 1934

We have seen that the discipline of childhood forms the basis for adult repentance, and that as adult repentance opens the way for the reformation of the understanding, so also reformation makes possible a newly generated will in the understanding.

And that as this sequence is effected in successive order, in distinct stages, it involves in each a different development; yet the spirit of repentance follows throughout. It is seen in a certain likeness in childhood and in the higher stages it becomes evermore a deeper reality.

Of these stages, that which is known as repentance is the first to be undertaken in a state of rational freedom.

It is also the most crucial, in that it is a radical turning away from evil to good, by a supreme decision which may rightly be called crucial, both because it stands as a radical turning in the direction of man's life, and because it is undertaken in a state of suffering. There is in this turning, therefore, a living sign of the cross, which the word 'crucial' implies.

Involved in the state of that which is specifically known as repentance there is a deeper mystery than we can explore, or which our limited human minds can solve; a mystery that is known to God alone. We touch it always with a sense of bafflement whenever the question is asked, Why does one man repent, and another not? Many answers may be given, and yet the mystery remains essentially unanswered.

We seem to follow a clear rational sequence of cause and effect in the explanation of the way in which the complaints of childhood progressively lead to the door of repentance; and after repentance we also follow externally the mode by which the understanding is reformed, and also that by which the will is subsequently renewed in the understanding. In both of these there is a comprehensible mode and sequence, a step-by-step progression.

Thus in the first, the third and the fourth states there appears a clearly defined sequence - a normal passing from one state, as involved in that which precedes; while in the second, or adult repentance, there is a break - a turning so sharp, so radical, that we look in vain for the reason - the cause why one man makes that radical turning, and another man does not. How then, may we avoid the pitfall of predestination?

The word 'freedom,' man's God-given freedom, is of course the true answer, i.e., man's freedom to do as he wills; a freedom that is imposed upon man by the nature of his creation. i.e., by the will of God, carrying with it the necessity of man's taking upon himself the responsibility for his turning, and the necessity of his bearing the blame if his choice is wrong.

This, as a fact of human life, is clearly revealed, but why one man turns in one way, and another in another, is hidden from our eyes.

We may, however, see that our permanent ignorance as to this is of Providence, in that our ignorance sets an effective guard to the exercise of freedom. It would seem from this that human ignorance is the

underlying factor that makes this freedom possible.

If we could perceive the inner workings of the cause of man's turning from evil to good, we would be raised above every human appearance, and would see even as God sees.

We know that every man is born into evils, and also that to everyone remains of good are given; and that a balance is struck between these two opposites, so that in a state of balance between them, each man may choose his way of life. This to us is the simple fact of life.

Even so, there is something God-like in this amazing freedom of man. It is the very image of God in man, yet it is only an image; but as such it is a medium competent to control the animal propensities of the body, and so to raise man above the beasts of the field, and enable him to look up to God, and to worship Him, whereby the firstborn love of self is or may be superceded.

This is accomplished through this image, by an imperceptible influence which breathes into man an endeavor to free himself from his firstborn state, i.e., from the supremacy of his self-love.

On man's part, an appeal for enablement must be made to God to prevent sin against Him; the sin of confirming the inborn self-life.

It may first be seen that this self-love, apart from repentance, is also inimical to the neighbor, and that if an injury to man results from it, repentance before God of need calls for a restitution to man, insofar as this may be possible.

Yet in this the debt is to God, and the confession should be to Him. The reward also is His. This reward is a spiritual power which alone can raise man above his animal-like impulses.

The preparation for this vital change in man calls not only for an orderly inspiration of power from within, but also for instruction from without from the Word, which is first received in a state of childish faith. Children may be so trained in this faith that they take for granted what is taught them in the innocence of their ignorance.

Arriving at adult life, if their faith is kept alive, then as their sense of responsibility increases, they encounter the threat of loss of their childish faith with a feeling of fear. If at the time their fear is sufficiently aroused, they are at the opening phases of temptation, and the first call to real repentance is: given. If the affirmative spirit prevails they cast out the thought injected into their minds that their faith is weakening. This they do because they love their faith.

Whatever is loved is a very real thing, for love itself is the supreme reality of life, and the strength of man is according to the strength of his love- his love of his faith. Whatever is loved is accompanied by the fear of its loss, and the deeper the love, the greater the fear. The threatened loss of faith is therefore the beginning of man's struggle to maintain his faith, and in so doing he attains spiritual life, i.e., the life of which faith is a sign.

The saying is true that the fearful suffer many deaths through anticipation; yet through fear of loss, love increases. It is the means of love's increase.

Temptation is a spiritual fear. It has the element of death in it, and also the spirit of life. Fear is destructive; life restores. There is that in man which must be broken down. Fear gives warning of this.

All living things fear. They flee for their lives, and none so much as human beings. To them nothing so appalls as the fear of evil to themselves. This is the essence of punishment which, when permitted, is both destructive and preservative. Hence it is that punishment and the fear of it is a beneficial constraint in the life of everyone. In it lies the beginning of the great change.

True repentance, however, is given when the fear of the punishment is transferred to a fear of the evil as the cause. This transfer can be made only after the rational mind is in some degree opened, when the man is able to distinguish causes from their effects. Then it is that evil, apart from its effects, may be feared.

Man may then fear evil in itself as a dreadful thing; not as something apart from himself, but seen in himself.

Evil is, indeed, in man. The fear of it is that which draws a line marks a distinction, and the beginning of a separation.

Evil is in man, but it is a saving thought if the man realizes the truth that he need not regard the evil in him as his own, or as himself, but may say in the words of the Writings, that though in him, yet in him from hell, and may be rejected as such. If he takes it as his own, or as himself, he makes himself powerless. If not, he may insofar free himself from it; not however, from his own power or self. For while his own, called his proprium, is evil only, still there is also in him inmosty an image of the Lord, through which comes the life power of his salvation. This power in itself is not man's but the Lord's; but in man it is first felt as a fear of evil, which fear takes hold of the man, and enables him. In this way a new as of self-life is born, and as born, so is measured. Thereafter man finds his place through the measure of his resistance to evil in the world. Hence the regenerate life is not man's proprium, but his appropriated life which he acknowledges as a gift from the Lord - a gift to the repentant, to the man who fears evil.

In this fear there is a beginning of wisdom, and also the love of the Lord.

Even so, the gift is by measure, in accommodation to man's state at the time. After his first repentance he still has a long way to go, if it is the will of God that he should have long life in the flesh. Only at death is his measure complete. While he is on the way the end is hidden. He may yet relapse. Because of this he is not given a permanent sense of security from evil, nor freedom from its threat; not until the judgment is made manifest after death.

Yet he is from time to time elevated into the light of heaven; but he cannot maintain this state in constancy. His mind is ever changing. This because of outward events, and from the recurrence of past memories. These, as we have noted, with their pleasures and pains, he may, in Providence, live over again.

Sharp pangs of regret arise out of the recollection of long past evils; at times even small inadvertences of the distant past bring an acute pain. At times also bright joys recur.



If the man has entered upon the way of life which is characterized by a love of spiritual things, and from this love has contended with his selfish affections, heaven opens, and therefrom comes a sense of peace. But, as said, such moments quickly pass, as the dull life of the world is resumed.

While an uplifting into peace may be prayed for, yet it may not be given in direct answer to the call. But when it is given, and for a supreme moment, we perceive it to be of an essence not of this world. It is a waking dream. This may come to man early in life as a miracle promise. Then the workaday world covers it over; it is withdrawn, and retained only as a memory, vague but very precious. It lies deep within the mind as a potent ideal, as a sustaining force which helps to carry man through many labors, many doubts and temptations.

As a medium of power it rarely descends to external sense and feeling; nor is it often repeated. It is withdrawn for its protection. This glimpse of the Lord's gift given in the beginning for a moment as a reality, is withdrawn to become a prophecy of that which is to be later fulfilled; given in the youth of manhood, in the generous and hopeful period of youth as a significant promise.

This early foretaste comes to man as a most living experience. It is a sacred implantation from God to serve as a sure prophecy of the fullness of life's measure, if man can be held in faith, to the end. To the man it serves as an undying hope.

AE 9362:

I know that many think in their hearts [thought from Christian creeds] that no one can shun them [evils] from himself, because man is born in sins, and has no power from himself of shunning them. But let them know that everyone who thinks in his heart that there is a God; that the Lord is the God of heaven and earth; that the Word is from Him, and consequently holy; that there are a heaven and a hell, and that there is a life after death, is able to shun them, but not he who despises such things and rejects them from his mind, and certainly not he who denies them. For who can think that a certain thing is a sin against God when he does not think of God?' And who can think evils as sin when he thinks nothing of heaven, of hell, and of the life after death? Such a man does not know what evil is. Man is placed in the midst, between heaven and hell. From heaven goods continually inflow, and from hell evils; and because he is in between, he has freedom to think goods and to think evils. This freedom the Lord never takes away from anyone, for it is his life, and is the medium of his reformation. Insofar, therefore, as man from this freedom thinks of shunning evils because they are sins, and supplicates the Lord for help, so far the Lord removes them, and gives man to desist from them, as of himself, and afterwards to shun them. Everyone from natural freedom can shun some evils because they are against human laws. Every citizen of a kingdom does this who fears the penalties of the civil law, and the loss of life, fame and wealth, and thence office, gain and pleasure. Even the evil man does this, and his life appears in the external form altogether like the life of him who shuns those evils because they are contrary to the Divine Laws; but they are altogether unlike in the internal form. The one acts solely from natural freedom, which is from man, and the other acts from spiritual freedom, which is from the Lord. Both act from freedom. When man is able to shun the same evils from natural freedom, why can he not shun them from spiritual freedom, in which he is constantly held by the Lord? Only let him think that he desires to do so because there are a heaven and a hell, a life after death, punishment and reward, and let him pray to the Lord for help.... From these things it is clear that whoever believes in the Lord, shuns evils as sins; and that whoever shuns evils as sins also believes. Wherefore to shun

evils as sins is the sign of faith.

# Class V. MAY 4, 1934

In temptation man becomes aware of his powerlessness against evil.

He is driven to seek refuge outside of himself - above himself; to seek aid from an invisible power which he calls God - his God.

Because of this it is said, men have discovered God; some say, invented Him. They cannot see Him; yet they seek a way to Him.

They employ rituals to invite His hidden power, in times of stress, of fear and danger, when they see themselves to be powerless against the evil which threatens.

Hence the so-called magic of the past, which has fallen into disrepute. Magic was once true. It was the accepted way of approach to God, and a means of gaining His power.

Rituals became magic, as the word is now understood, when men fell below their primitive significance; when gods became evil; when selfish gain of power displaced, in the minds of men, the remission of sins; when the intent of repentance was lost to view; when external dangers were primarily regarded as the evil to be avoided; when there was no longer spiritual courage to face the entanglement of evils within the self-life of man.

It is true that if these evils, inherited and acquired, should be exposed to any man's view in their full complex and power, he would be appalled to the point of madness.

Therefore a merciful Providence opens man's eyes to them only little by little. In this ignorance is man's protection. Even as in the beginning of life it is his security, his first protective birthright, in which the highest gift of the Lord may dwell. In ignorance only may innocence dwell, until wisdom is born.

Knowledge tempts. It widens the understanding, and exposes the dangers of life. Reflection upon knowledge opens the rational. The rational mind brings freedom of choice. This freedom is the essential human gift; through it the Lord remits sins, with man's cooperation.

In freedom man calls upon and employs the power of God, but this employment is fatal to man's claim of original power in or of himself.

Only God can make the scarlet of sin white, by its remission. But the Lord's forgiveness, His healing, is made manifest only little by little.

The rational man can freely say, "I will not. It is a sin," as if the power were his.

Children can say the same; but actuality is not yet. The child's so saying is not the thing; yet therein power is latent, as in a seed sown. It is a sign that must first be given, and repeated until stamped upon the mind. It is as a gesture acquired by imitation, as when a child sees his parent kneel in prayer.

In such a case the parent is moved by the innocence of the child. The presence of an angel is felt. The

kneeling child is a symbol most holy, because unconscious, with no reflection upon self. Such is the power of innocence in ignorance in its effect upon others. The life of everyone so begins.

This precious unconsciousness is born with every generation of men. By it the race is renewed in each generation.

The life of man begins in a meaningless ritual, out of which every meaning may develop, into which every meaning may be inserted, under the Providence of God.

In a supine imitation, in a vague gesture, lies the beginning of human power.

Our sacred rituals have come out of childhood out of the forgotten past. Children love their first learned rituals, by an inborn instinct. Old men hold to them in their higher forms, with reverence. The order of human life throughout insists upon them, upon their elevation. The angels, when raised into heaven, do not depart from them. The angels are but God's children.

Evil spirits make magic of every ritual. They defile them; yet, as defiled, they are instruments of power, the power of evil.

When Israel's high priest placed his hands upon the head of the scapegoat he employed an effective ritual of power. The sins of his people were thereby remitted; they were sent away into the wilderness, into the land of separation, into the infernal region. The Israelites were as children. The evils they feared were outward dangers.

There was no spiritual forgiveness of any Israelite in this priestly ceremony; but such forgiveness was signified for a later generation, and for the heavens above. To Israel it was a communal ceremony - a protection for the tribe, a release from a curse.

John's baptism was for the remission of sins, yet it did not purify the Jews. Their sins were not forgiven, save with a few; yet Israel's salvation was represented thereby.

By this representation of purification the Lord's coming into the world was prepared. Apart from this He could have found no place among men.

The Lord, in the world, preached repentance for the remission of sins.

While the Jewish religion was not exalted through His preaching, the Christian Church was thereby established, of as many as repented.

The Writings teach repentance for the remission of sins as the only way of entrance into the New Jerusalem. They call for self-examination; they insist upon the discovery of evil in oneself. They advise self-searching at stated times; they set the time for this - before partaking of the Holy Supper. Such self-examination, even if only formal, is of value, for all things begin in formalities.

Formal self-examination becomes a habit from religious conscience. Sooner or later it opens to a vital struggle for spiritual life.

To this end the call to the Holy Supper is given by the Church; given that the communicants may

prepare. Through self-examination a worthy approach may be made; and formal though that examination may at first be, the ritual of it is of incalculable value; like an open door it invites entrance.

Be assured that the sign of repentance is seen in heaven. If there be sincerity in it, that which is represented in the Supper will be given.

The communion of the Supper is of Divine appointment. It also is seen in heaven, and is there fulfilled. Its significance enters deeply into every repentant heart, into the resolution against sin. This is the living heart of the matter. This resolution, with God's help, holds despite man's weakness.

The weakness of man makes frequent repetitions necessary. All things of human life must be renewed, even with the angels.

Evil, though repented of, is long in yielding. During the world-life it retains the essence of its power; but happily, not always its first place in man.

Evil is sometimes in the blood; is there like a disease. The man cannot in constancy be withheld from it. But if his heart is repentant the Lord's mercy abides with him. He is raised after a fall, again and yet again, until death brings release from his bodily infirmities. In such a case his repentance is bitter; his pride is broken. His life he sees as a failure; yet in the end he finds salvation.

In the spirit such a penitent can be confirmed. The angels see his motives only. Motives make the spirit of man despite every bodily failing. His confirmation is of an inner degree. The body of a man is never saved. There was but one exception to this.

Because of the proprial life into which man is born, the Lord inflows into him with a force inconceivably great; but man does not so feel it.

Man's freedom requires that the Divine force should be unfelt. Never is it sensed as an overwhelming drive, but as an equable balance. This balance is ever maintained, though constantly shifting, called changes of state.

Thus man is held between the mercy of the Lord and his own self-condemnation. He is so placed that he may not be overpowered. He stands hesitantly between the two.

The angel pressed Lot to hasten his departure from Sodom; yet he lingered until the angel laid hold of his hand, "in the clemency of Jehovah," and led him forth without the city.

This is the story of man's choice between the forces of good and evil. With man it is a lingering choice. The past has its proprial pleasures, the evil city - its allurements - follow after those who flee from its destruction. One can escape only if an angel takes him by the hand.

This angel is the presence and power of the Lord's mercy. It is so throughout life, and in every temptation. The safe mountains are before, and the burning city behind.

Though man goes haltingly with the angel on the way to the mountain, he is safe on the way only if he does not look back. Man's look is the direction of his life.

In turning to the Lord through repentance the end of life is determined, though the way to its fulfillment may be arduous. At every step aid is given; not obviously, but from within, felt as an urge to self-compulsion, as a constraint of conscience to keep within the law of an ordered life. Man is helped in this by a faithful performance of the rites of his religion. These may be to him even as an angel's hand, guarding and guiding.

Ritualistic compliance was Israel's protection. So also it is ours. It holds us within the walls. Its benefits may not be obvious; yet hidden within such rituals, secret powers are stored. By them we are bound together as one in the worship of our God.

Once a year the sins of Israel were remitted. Not otherwise could that tribe have held together. The ceremony of remission was a warrant of their security, presented before the angels as the spiritual salvation of the race of man; so much so that heaven itself was underbound and supported by that primitive rite of the scapegoat. As a safeguard to a wandering tribe it came of Providence into outward contact with the ultimate order of heaven, and sustained that order. There could scarcely be a greater miracle of power than this - a miracle of support whereby the heavens, for a time, were sustained by and through a significant formality.

The church since that day has been raised, twice raised. New revelations have been given. The life beyond the grave made manifest; spiritual values openly expounded; the way to heaven uncovered; a spiritual rebirth seen to be the requirement of heaven; the process of regeneration, the way thereto - all these are now unfolded and seen to be infolded in the ancient rituals, so that we now know that we also have need of a scapegoat upon which to lay our hands, that our sins may be sent away to the land of separation.

Every reaction to life is ritualistic; nothing else can be predicated of man as a reactive vessel. Only life in se is real. Everything else is a form - a sign, an image, a ritual.

The first and fundamental need of human life is that the way should be opened for the uncovering of the latent evils - those that are hidden, concealed under the deceptive pleasures of the self-life of man. These evils are ever self-excusatory; they are felt as good. Their disguise must be removed before the higher life, called spiritual, can find place. Their condemnation must be made before man can meet with his Lord. They cannot be carried into His presence. They have no place at His Supper.

The ritual of the Supper, if it is in the heart of man, is one with entrance into heaven. Evil must first be laid down. The Supper afterwards is for the freed man. Only the full grown can approach it. The freed man only can sense and confess his own unfitness. This is the way of approach, in humility before God, and in the face of one's evils, confessed and repented of.

All are called to the Supper. Those who would best not go up to it are the unbelievers, and the non-repentant, lest in so doing they become the more a child of the devil. But this is hidden from our eyes. Man's life is known to God alone; yet each one may know of his desire; can sense his own impurities, and pray that he may be cleansed. He can add resistance to his prayers, as of his own doing, even while confessing his impotence.

Man is a vessel, nothing more, nothing less by the power of God a living vessel, and human; gifted with

the competence of choice between good and evil in himself; gifted with the power of repentance and the attainment of heaven; gifted with the allowance of refusing heaven for the pleasures of the low life of his body and its perverse passions, if that be his choice.

A voice from heaven said...Actual repentance is to explore self; to know and acknowledge your evils, to make yourself guilty, to confess them before the Lord; to implore aid and power to resist them, and thus to desist from them, and lead a new life, and all these as of yourselves. Do these things once or twice in a year, when you approach the Holy Communion; and afterwards when sins...recur, say to yourselves, We will not do these things because they are sins against God. This is actual repentance. (@AR 531)

## Class VI. MAY 11, 1934

At the close of last Friday's address I quoted a statement from the Apocalypse Revealed, number 531, to the effect that man should explore himself in order that he might know and acknowledge his evils; that he should make himself guilty of them; that he should confess them before the Lord, and pray for aid to resist them, and so desist from them, and lead a new life, as of himself; that afterward s when sins recur he was to say to himself, "I will not do these things because they are sins against God." This is actual repentance.

A primitive doctrine of the Christian Church is that man is born subject to the original curse which fell upon Adam because of his disobedience, and that he must look for salvation to a miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit; to an instant filling of man by that Spirit, whereby his nature is changed. While man's salvation is, indeed, a miracle of mercy, yet this childlike faith in the instant operation of the Holy Spirit overleaped the intermediate stages of regeneration.

Yet there is in this primitive conception the high truth that the end is, in fact, involved in the beginning, and it is there in power.

Salvation, in this sense, is a gift - a reward of repentance; even of man's first repentance, which in subsequent states of temptation is brought into doubt by the oppressive presence of evil.

Nonetheless, the saving power of the Lord has found lodgment within man, and though hidden in times of temptation, yet it comes into active life and power as the need arises, or when its renewal is called for.

For all states of man's life are recurrent. Even as sins recur, so also does repentance.

But when the temptation of sins recurs, the mind questions its former repentance in terms of doubt as to its reality or its sincerity and depth; thus, as to whether there was a sincere confession of guilt before God, and prayer for help; or whether there was sufficient resistance to the infesting evil.

But as time passes, man realizes the truth that no depth of repentance can eradicate a single sin, or quite dissipate one evil.

He realizes the truth revealed that the Lord, through man's repentance, can only cover evil, but that what the Lord covers He subjects, i.e., places under His permanent power. And also that such covering is the sign of His forgiveness; and in the end the evil is forgotten by man. In this man finds peace.

As long as life lasts in the world, the recurrence of evil is permitted. This recurrence induces states of temptation. A revival of evil causes man to fall within the sphere of hell, and as if under its condemnation.

Yet it is only when evil is recurrent that man can be stirred to resist it in the name of the Lord.

It is in the presence of evil that the sorrow and the pathos of life is most keenly felt, i.e., in the presence of evil, not outside of, but within self.



In temptations it seems that there is no end to evil within, and no limit to its recurrence. Nonetheless, man, by repentance, binds to himself the essential power of salvation, and this though his repentance may have touched but superficially the surface of his evils, and but slightly loosened the death grip of that which is called his proprium.

In all things the truth holds that the beginning is significant of the end; and that the end in this beginning is there as an inner power confirmed, and this though evil continues its hold upon man.

The beginning of repentance marks a separation in man in a free state of mind - a separation which is in line with the division which Providence has placed between good and evil remains. Repentance confirms the distinction between the two lives, the good and the evil. It raises the good and depresses the evil. And insofar, the proprium stands beneath the new life which the Lord appropriates to man.

The recurrence of good and evil, and their sharp separation, one from the other, testify to the marvel of the Lord's Providence in the formation of the human structure.

Man is, indeed, wonderfully made, from the womb. The first breath of his life plants the dual seed of rational freedom and human individuality, and imparts therewith that strange gift of recurrence, which opens the way, step by step, to every attainment, every advance, natural or spiritual.

Man is born, even as an animal is born; but unlike every other animal he is born to be or become an intellectual ruminant. He is gifted with a memory which, like a stomach, casts up the food of a former eating, and at times a cud of bitter memories which induce states of mind called temptations; not so much defined thoughts as an unaccountable feeling of despair which is the essence of mental suffering.

In contrast with this is the recurrence of good - of innocent remains; but these the senses of man are dull to perceive; yet the arousal of such remains is felt as a quiet contentment, a rest from disturbance, and it may be, a touch of that peace which passes understanding.

While the past is revived in the present there is ever a new gift from the Lord, felt as a new issue of life and the record of a new decision for or against good or evil.

If not for this notable recurrence, man could not be raised above the status of his animal-like birth; a condition impossible to conceive.

Man is born as an animal, but he is a spirit, and as such, unlike an animal, he is not subject to the rule of death. The spirit rises from the grave; his life continues thereafter even as determined in kind and quality in the world.

In his first experiences after the material body is cast aside, there is, as we know, a recurrence of world memories, and along therewith a clarifying infestation, but this clarification implies no change in the prior determined direction of his life; it only accelerates it. This of spirits in the intermediate world.

But an angel may, on occasion, repeat some world-life experience; may reenact some former memory. Being human, there is, even with the angels, a tendency to reversion, but rarely are they let into particular memories. Their lapse is only into a shadow; their recurrence is into a gentle sadness, which

quickly brightens.

Neither with the evil in their prison hells are world memories excited. Their former life is equally lost and normally beyond recall. Their contrast of states lies between the dull heaviness of night and a morning revival of pleasure in evil design.

Thus both with angels and infernal spirits life is recurrent in sign of their humanity; but their recurrences are of states apart from, and in place of, earthly memories; of states which are vivid, beyond our imagination, and highly concentrated. This is made possible by the lack of heavy recollections which would confine and constrain their living states. These states there stand clear and potent beyond anything known in this life.

This exposure of the inner life of spirits we may look up on as something of an ordeal; but all spirits, of whatever kind, go rejoicing on their way in the delight or that freedom of self-expression which can be given only after the death of the body and the sleep of its memories; a freedom which is unconstrained and unprevented.

The Lord wills freedom to all; to the angels the freedom of light and its life, and to the evil the freedom of their slavery.

While the end of regenerate life is involved in man's first rational repentance, and while Providence guards lest man should enter upon this way if he cannot be maintained therein---yet no man is certain as to this with regard to himself. As he surveys his life in the past he sees his record as inconclusive; his motives as mixed; his affections at best as short of an angelic standard. He perceives the presence of undeniable evil in the continuance of selfishness; and while he makes confession time and again, yet evil persists. He sees himself like the sheep of Laban - at best speckled and spotted, and at those times when there is a resurgence of his proprial life, as in temptation, his doubt, for the time, seems more than doubt; he is under the conviction of sin and the oppression of despair. How then may he see himself as saved?

The memory of oppressive temptation, like that of other states of mind, fades; but each experience of life, as it passes, brings an increase; his life ripens. The richness of life is a product of innumerable things forgotten which compose a deep soil out of which the spirit grows. Every event, every state, has its value, and the value remains for good or evil, and is heightened in its seeming death.

The complex of this imbedded influence is potent in swaying the present choice; but by virtue of the balance which the Lord provides, man may, by a conscious effort, overrule and become as if the master of his fate in making a new beginning.

Life in the world is given that such new beginnings may be made; while in the other life the provision is for an unlimited and progressive variation of the essential life which has here been confirmed.

The root of man's tree of life must be planted in the body of his flesh and blood. This is revealed to us that we may be earnest in repentance here, and persistent therein in the face of every temptation.

While the body of man falls into the grave, an inner vestment is raised; a superfine vestment which closely compasses his spirit, and upon which is written the totality of his past, an ever durable record

which is held above every mischance, beyond the range of natural vision and below the spiritual sight. It is stamped with the hidden record of man's life, which may, however, in spiritual representations, be reproduced in case a lying spirit denies his world record in the day of his final judgment.

After the judgment this natural border recedes, and by its recession makes way for the purely spiritual to stand forth. This spiritual is the essential quality of the spirit whether good or evil, which stands forth to life in the after world as if in finality separated from the tangled web of man's world-life, in which good and evil are seemingly mixed.

In other words, this border structure holds the record of man's past life. It is as the book of his life, which, after the judgment, after the determination of his essential quality, is laid aside, lest memory of evil should tempt the good or the memory of the good should become a torment to the evil.

The final judgment in the spiritual world is but a summation - a final clearance. While in the world, life-recurrences out of the past are ever allowed. They are resurrections which call for vital decisions, for affirmation or rejection. They are essential judgments, effected in that state of life where the decision brings vital changes, and insofar alter the future course of life. It is here that the turning judgment takes place; here that life is converted from evil to good; here, therefore, is the opportunity which, if passed, is gone for ever.

Consider, therefore, that the thing is done here; that every real decision is here encountered and confirmed, and this on the basis of recurrences out of the past that are felt acutely as in the present. Thus it is that every state of temptation affords opportunity to the end that the resurgence of evil from a seemingly dead past may be consigned to a deeper death.

It is the like with the higher life attained, called spiritual, which has been imbedded in former confirmations of good. These, in this recurrence, open to yet higher attainments, to advanced issues of the life called spiritual.

Thus it is that step by step, and through state to state, man may be raised above his self-life as if by his own endeavor; but this only if accompanied by the confession that he is led in this upward movement by the light of revelation and the empowerment of God.

No one will deny the possibility of life's betterment with anyone - its improvement through training and experience; but what is not so clearly seen is the essential difference between natural culture and its refinement, and those spiritual qualities with which man is endowed by the Lord, when as a penitent he shuns evils as sins, and is steadfast in the worship and love of God.

The development of the finer appreciation of life's offerings in the world is, indeed, a natural benefaction; yet this at best is only natural, and may be but an exaltation of the original self-life whereby a deceptive imitation of spiritual qualities is put on. Indeed, a refinement of the senses - a keener appreciation of natural benefits - is a gift which, with the evil, invites a more subtle condemnation.

Religion, a true religion, is the deepest need of human life, and at no time is the need greater than at the end of an age; at the consummation of a church, when the minds of men wander in darkness, with no guide and no goal; when the old religious bonds have been discredited and fallen into disuse; when

the fading worship of an unseen God leaves the world of men destitute of all save their own ingenuity and the prospective fulfillment of their own plans for life; all of which gives no clear outlook, and no guidance by that primary inspiration which from the beginning has raised the race out of its animal-like life; that inspiration which time and again has lifted the eyes of men to their Maker, and to a life beyond the grave, and called them to repentance for the remission of their sins.

A new inspiration is now at this time given to men; to as many as have ears to hear the call and eyes to see in the light of a new revelation, the saving truth which exposes the evil of the age and guides in the way of a new life - a new spiritual life beyond the reach of any natural attainment; beyond the reach of a spiritual death.

That which counts in life are the things that are loved. Consider, then, what things are loved. Weigh carefully all compelling affections which move us in this or that direction - our many affections and especially those that rule.

It must be that the man who loves the truths now revealed, thereby takes to himself the promise of a new life.

END.