

Let us take a look at the course as we are presently experimenting with it. We began this morning by looking at Universal Benevolence and talked about how that is the inescapable consciousness that comes into every man's life. Then this afternoon we looked at Profound Integrity and what depth authenticity looks like as a man takes the care that he finds awakened in his life and struggles with what it means to act out that care in his everyday living. Now we want to look at Endless Felicity.

Of all the titles, that one has always been the most humorous to me, Endless Felicity. It sounds like somebody's name, doesn't? I have been trying to think who in my life experience I might give that name to. You know it would be a woman. The only one I could think of is the hostess on the Thai flight from Singapore to Bangkok who gave us so much white wine, red wine and champagne, hot towels, cold towels, and a little orchid for all the women. I was sitting next to Bob Fishel, and for some reason she had pinned an orchid on him too. We were all so happy when we landed at Bangkok. That may have been human fulfillment, or as Fishel put it, "fill-full-ment." So our name for her was "Felicity." That grounds it for me. Anyway, that is what happens to a man when he decides to act out that care for the rest of his days, when he decides that that is what his life is about forever.

Then, tomorrow morning we want to take a look at the religious life in our times, the secular age. You would talk there about what it means to be the "Awe-fuillleague." That is "awe-filled" league, not the bad league; that body of people in history who have bound themselves together to facilitate that kind of living. We might image this as resurgence happening in our time as men are experiencing it in their lives. I am sure we do not come upon this simply as an intellectual exercise.

I think that what we are about in this course is trying to put brackets around, not something new, but something we have already known and distinguish it from some other things that we have known. We want to get at Sanctification in such a way as to articulate a dimension of life that we have been living for a long time. Perhaps we even need to drop that word "sanctification." I don't know what else you would call this course. We have a course called "Living Effectively in the New Society," the LENS course. Maybe you would call this one, "Living the Holy Way." I don't know how you would pronounce that LTHW. It is living that way of life that has been going on throughout the centuries wherever men have decided to embrace the Word as the final meaning of their life.

You might say something like this: there have always been two kinds of men. Now in reality, any man might show up as both of these; but for the sake of clarity, you can distinguish sanctified men and justified men. People show up either conscious or unconscious of the fact that their lives are being consumed. I want to begin with the unconscious. The unconscious man is the one who is driven this way and that by life but has never discovered why. He has never discovered that life is about expenditure, about being consumed, about care and finitude.

Then the conscious man shows up. One day something happens to him that drops the bottom out; and what he discovers within himself is a fire. What he discovers within himself is the reality that, indeed, all this life is about expenditure. Then he has to decide whether or not he wills to live life that way. Some men decide to say yes to that, and some decide to say no. Those who decide Those who decide to say yes are led to a new world, to the other world in the midst of this world. They grasp themselves as having a whole new relationship to life. They are released to pick up the possibility of living the holy way, or, as we have talked about it in the past, the other way of life. That is what

it would mean to grasp hold of the life of sanctification, the life of the Holy Way. This is just the flip side of the same coin. You spin that coin in the air, and all you see is j/s, j/s, j/s, justification/ sanctification. The Word is at the center of all life forever. The only difference between the conscious and the unconscious one is that the conscious one has decided to will the Word, to imbue every fiber of his being and every relationship that he lives out of with the Word. When he does that, he enters into the Other World.

Once this consciousness has broken in, some decision has to be made. If he decides to stand in the undecided stance regardless of his lucidity, what he finds is that his life is burned up against his will. He may fight it all the time: every time the fire gets hot, he runs and gets a bucket of water, tries to put it out, and smoke gets in his eyes. He cannot stand working, sings all the time, constantly trying to find a way to put an end to that burning. He knows he cannot, he just tries to calm it down a little bit, turn the heat down in order that he can endure, so he thinks. What he finds out anyway is that everything about his life is still burned up, whether he wants it to be or not.

The decided man, he is a kind of wild fellow. He goes and buys a fan and fans that flame forever. He knows that the fulfillment of life never comes until he is totally consumed, so he decides to burn himself out, not for his sake, but for the sake of the world. He knows that fulfillment is about expenditure on behalf of creation, into creation, for the sake of creation, for the future of creation. He lives in the other world in the midst of this world as the new religious; fanning the flame is his religious exercise. He becomes the keeper of the flame.

Let me share an old piece of poetry that points to this:

Indeed, if it is your own hand that spoils your faith, you must cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than to keep

both your hands and go to the rubbish heap. If your foot spoils your faith, you must cut it off. It is better for you to enter life on one foot than to keep both your feet and be thrown on to the rubbish heap. And if your eye leads you astray, pluck it out. It is better for you to go one-eyed into the kingdom of God than to keep both eyes and be thrown on to the rubbish heap, where decay never stops and the fire never goes out.

Now, get this next line: "Everyone will be salted with fire." And then comes the line that all preachers like to use all the time: "Salt is a very good thing, but if it should lose its saltiness, what can you do to restore its flavor?" They tend to leave out the main point, which is the last line: "You must have salt in yourselves, and live at peace with each other." You must have fire in yourselves and live the fulfilled life. Well, that kind of poetry launches us into this arena. What we are going to talk about here is what it means to be a resident of the Other World.

Last summer when we first began to work on this, we took visits to the Other World. When we were really daring and bold, we took a whole trek, like 45 minutes and looked around and brought back souvenirs. What we are concerned with now is: what does it mean to set up housekeeping in the Other World? I mean, to be there to stay, to grasp this as the way of life for mankind today, we being those who seek to appropriate that as the style and symbol of what the righteous man would be in the 20th century; not the self-righteous man, but the man on behalf of others. Gogarten has helped us a great deal here.

One of the pictures that has been burned into my memory the last couple of years is a picture of man's relationship to this world, the image of Universal Benevolence, wherein he has the whole world on his hands. He shows up as a bundle of relationships, as we often talk about Kierkegaard. He has these relationships with his job and his family and his children and his nation. What every one of those relationships asks of him is one thing: his whole life. Momma wants it all, wife wants it all, kids want it all, boss wants it all, the nation wants it all, everything wants his whole life. One day he sees through

this. What he sees is that humanness is not about this. It is about being obligated to no thing; or it is about living before 'the Mystery. In this moment of freedom he receives a great gift: the whole world, the obligation to the Mystery. When he decides to live that way he receives responsibility for all of creation. It is no longer obligation to the things, it is responsibility for them. And it is not just some of them, it is all of them: all the mommies, all the wives, all the kids and all the vocations, and all the suffering and all the joys and all the contradictions and all the positive trends. He has the rest of his life to live with that kind of gift on his hands. If you call that the hundred-ton crane on his back, then he has been set in the driver's seat. The door is unlocked, but he is in the driver's seat, and he has that position, that responsibility for the rest of his life. He is responsible to the all for the all.

One of my colleagues, Dag Hammarskjöld, says something like this: "Man must see, you must see, that when you fail to fulfill responsibility, it is God who has failed. You may be responsible to God only by being responsible for God's call--that is, that His creation be loved." This was the role that Jesus played. Another picture that Gogarten helped me with was how you grasp what it means to live in the other world in the midst of this world. He said something like: what this world is about is structure and laws and piety and numerous kinds of complexities and relationships; what it means to live in the midst of this world as a sanctified man is to stand in relationship to the other world. He uses Jesus as his image for the righteous man. He says: "Jesus stands before the Mystery as that which owns all of this creation, and he allows the Mystery to possess him." He becomes something like a lens, a glass through which the power of the Mystery is concentrated and flows and cares for its creation. And it shatters every structure and every relationship that has ever been there and then allows him to be engaged in recreating it for this day. Age after age and

century after century, he is that combustion point, he is that place where fuel and spark ignite. When that ignition takes place, he is fulfilled; he is fulfilled. The fire reaches its greatest intensity, and history is changed, and he stands there loving this world with his whole being. He knows a power and a fulfillment that he had never known before. He knows what it means to be one with the Father, and he knows what it means to stand. That kind of relationship with the Mystery allows care for all of creation to take place.

Well, one other little piece of poetry, and then let us look at what life lived that way feels like as we experience it day to day. Let us turn to the First Letter of John. You just know that this author was concerned with this issue: what does it mean to live a fearless, powerfully-led and courageous life before the awesomeness of creation as it is today? Here is the image that the author of First John had: "We ourselves are eyewitnesses able and willing to testify to the fact that the Father did send the Son to save the world." That was his role.

Everyone who acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God finds that God lives in him, and he lives in God. So have we come to know and trust the love God has for us. God is love, and the man whose life is lived in love does, in fact, live in God, and God does, in fact, live in him.

So that is not just Jesus, that is you and me.

So our love for him grows more and more, filling us with complete confidence for the day when he shall judge all men--for we realize that our life in this world is actually his life lived in us. Love contains no fear--indeed, fully developed love expels every particle of fear, for fear always contains some of the torture of feeling guilty.

We do not have time for that any more.

This means that the man who lives in fear has not yet had his love perfected.

Yes, we love him because he first loved us. If a man says, 'I love God' and hates his brother, he is a liar. For if he does not love the brother before his eyes how can he love the one beyond his sight? And in any case it is his explicit command that the one who loves God must love his brother too.

If we look at endless felicity in the fulfillment of life, we need to talk about four things. The first of these is the Final Certitude. Final Certitude

is that certainty in life that no one can ever take away from you, certainty that comes in a very strange way. You and I have always been taught that certitude came as a result of exercising our rationality, but this comes in just the opposite fashion. It comes every time we think we have clarity on something and the fog machine goes on and the clarity we thought we had is certainly obscured. It comes every time we think that we have been able to give a final meaning to something and that collapses. Aridity sets in, and life turns into a desert and our meaningful thing shrivels up before our very eyes. It comes when we think that we have finally gotten hold of some kind of rational explanation of what it means to live our lives in this world, and it turns into just utter uncertainty and irrationality. In that movie, "Lost Horizon," the people went up in the airplane out of Burma, and when they woke up the next morning the sun was on the wrong side of the plane. It comes as a totally lost horizon in which I find myself going a thousand miles an hour in the opposite direction to what I thought I was going.

As St. John of the Cross talks about it, it comes as a Dark Light: in the midst of the darkness, a light so bright that it destroys my vision, and darkness is the consequence. It is a journey's end. It is waking up at the center, waking up at the center of being itself and finding myself standing there utterly, helplessly alone before the Mystery. It's that kind of certainty that breaks into life while I am wishing that I could be dead, wishing that I did not have to endure for another moment that kind of profound fog in my life and finding myself helplessly sustained, sustained even against my will.

As I stand there alone before the Mystery, I have a vague memory of how I got there. While I was wandering around in my directionlessness and hopelessness and helplessness, this character Jesus showed up and said, "Well, buddy, you don't know what you're doing. Come on, let me show you something." And I

believed him. I took his hand, and he led me over to the gate of the Other World, and while I was standing there admiring the gate, that son-of-a-gun disappeared and left me standing there before the Mystery. And the Mystery said, "Come in, come on in; you're welcome. Check down at the front desk, and they'll give you a room assignment. You can stay, this is your home, this is the place you've been looking for." I wander around there all day and find out that nobody there knows what is going on. The peculiar thing about it is that they are all happy. They are just the happiest people that I have ever heard of in my life. They are working their heads off, and I say, "What's going to come out of all of this?" They say there is a model, but I don't know. They are a strange bunch of people.

As I stand there alone before the Mystery, I have to make a decision whether I am going to live there or go back home. I don't know where home is; all there is, is that gate there and something else. After a bit of a sojourn, I sense the beginning of the disappearance of that desire to return. I don't know how long that takes. I can remember exactly when it was that I quit talking about leaving this style of life. I decided that that was not really an option. That disappearance happens one day, and then you only talk about it in bars late at night when you are reminiscing about the way you used to think and feel about life. As soon as you walk out the door you are sobered again by the fact that there is no other place to live significantly in our time.

Then another strange thing happened: all those things that had shriveled up and lost their meaning suddenly began to flow again. The Mystery began to come out of all sorts of mundanities and out of every kind of thing that I thought I had detached myself from or lost interest in. All the business of creating a band for the cabaret really amused me. It recalled for me that line from Journey to the East which we printed on our orders for the day, in which Leo asked H. H., "Didn't you used to play the violin?" He was really saying,

"You fool, didn't you know that if you would stay on the march then the Lord would give meaning even to your old violin?" Everything in life begins to flow with meaning and possibility again. All the old loves that had died and collapsed take on a new meaning and significance. No more are they that which I use to sustain my life; now they become that for which my life is expended to sustain. Do you see the difference? My friends are no longer what I suckle my existence out of; my friends are those for whom I enjoy expending my life to see them live. I just find that my cup runneth over. I have discovered the assurance and the fulfillment that our fathers talked about when they sang songs like "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine." They knew that was all they needed to live in that kind of relationship.

Yet at the same time the interior of my life is one explosion after another. Have you noticed that? Actually, it is like being in a twenty-year-long PSU. Every model you build has a point of encounter with a contradiction that just explodes it. The sanctified man has the possibility of picking up the pieces of that explosion. He knows that what it means to be human is to put it back together again; not in the same pattern, but into a new pattern significant for the future, one that resolves the contradiction that blew it apart in the last moment. He knows that his whole life is going to be an explosion, a settling and a recreation. No longer does he go looking for death. He knows now that death will find him, and it will find him again and again in every moment of life. What he looks for now is the way, the Holy Way of life, that makes every death a fulfillment, every collapse, a possibility. He begins to live his life in that kind of relationship.

The second set of things that grows out of that is the Consuming Action. This is still in the realm of experiencing meaning becoming transparent before my very eyes and certain fulfillment in every moment. Knowing that fulfillment as already given permitted the total engagement that Columbus must have had in

his being when he set sail for the unknown, the horizon. He knew there was something out there; he just did not know where. It was not behind him, so there was only one thing to do and that was to venture into the unknown. It is that kind of engagement into which one plunges one's whole being. He has nothing to lose. All of his attachments have been burned up so that there is nothing there to lose. Yet he engages totally as one who is beyond even vocation. He is no longer concerned with getting significance out of anything. He discovers that there is fulfillment in everything that he does with his life.

He is the suffering servant. In the emptiness of this life, he finds now that what it means to live is to take all the suffering of the others into himself. He gives up everything to change history because he knows that there is no other way to change history. History is never changed by a man who has even one compromise. That is all it takes to defeat his venture into history: one thing that he gives more meaning to than his total expenditure. He never sets forth, or he sets forth only so far as that one thing will allow him. If it is his family, he ventures only so far as his family does not complain about it, and then he withdraws. If it is his church or denomination, he stretches himself only so far as their approval will reach, and then he withdraws. History is not changed. The sanctified man is the one who gives up everything to change history. He decides that he himself will be the conscience of civilization. He will not rely on any other conscience to tell him what to do with his life. He owns his own conscience, and his own conscience is the conscience of civilization itself. He lives his life as one who says, "What I am about, every man ought to be about." And he does not say that morally, he says that indicatively. He says, "So far as I can see, what it means to be a human being is to do what I am doing." Now that is some style, is it not? It is not out to make friends, it is out to alter the course of civilization. He is consumed with that.

He engages the unique contradictions of the moment and knows the joy of grabbing hold of those contradictions. No longer does he wish that he could live in some other time when the contradictions were different. What comes to me is, now that we know the answers to those contradictions, it would be good to go back and be a real smart guy there in that situation in the past. But it is probably more like Thomas Edison, who, after many failures, invented the light bulb. If Thomas Edison showed up today he would rejoice over the fact that he did not have to go through all that business of inventing the light bulb. He could plunge directly into computer systems and just enjoy it to the hilt. Or old Thomas Jefferson who struggled with what the law of the land and our nation should be...My God, he would just flip today if he saw he had the possibility of creating global law for the future. That is a suffering. The suffering is bearing destiny's judgment upon you, bearing the consequences of history in your own life.

This cruciform style of life is something like seeing that my life is an experiment: I try this, I try that, I win, I fail, I do this, I do that. Here I do something that looks like I failed. The next day I find out that is exactly what I should have done, and I spent all night running around trying to stop it. Over here I decide against doing something, and the next day I find out that is exactly what I should have done. My whole life is an experiment in which I bear total responsibility for the consequences.

Yet it is also a drama. It is a great and exciting drama. Seeing the stage excites me. We have come to the point where we stick people on a stage to do their cabarets. Here I am on stage in history, and somebody yells, "George, do your line." What line? I am on the stage of history. "Look around, George, there is a play going on. What's your role?" I thought I was supposed to get an assignment. But then what it means to live life in this kind of moment is to live as one who sees that the act he is now performing is the last act of his life.

When the curtain comes down it is all over. He lives that life then with the passion of one who is pouring out every last ounce of his being into that deed and that moment. For it is the last one. This is the last lecture I will ever give. This is the last set of notes I will ever prepare. This is the last lecture you will have to endure. This is the last sleeping you are going to do. And so you do it to the fullest. If you do not take the best set of notes you have ever taken, you do not know what it means to be a sanctified man in this moment. Now some of you say, "George, we expect to see you around tomorrow." Well, that is true. I want to tell you another secret: if the curtain comes up on my life after this lecture, it is an encore. It is an encore, and I will pick up that encore and live that encore as if it were the last act of my life. That is cruciform style. It is a drama. It embraces every moment in everything and bleeds every last ounce of meaning and possibility out of it.

A man who has decided to live his life before the mystery always engages in that style of life. He is the one who shows up knowing that he is bound to the Mystery and will never separate himself from the Mystery. He is driven by his care, and he chooses to acquiesce in that relationship as a son, not a slave. Our fathers created a term called "the bond slave." The bond slave was one who came and said, "Would you be my master?" Would you be my master? This man comes before the Mystery and says, "Will you be my master forever?" He binds himself to the Mystery, he acquiesces to that relationship as a son. He turns his destiny over to the Mystery, for he knows that the Mystery's destiny and his destiny are the same. They are one and the same. The future of civilization rides on his back as it rides on the back of the Mystery. He binds himself in that relationship. He is probably like Patton: during one of those moments of his life when he was in despair, walking down the halls past great columns and corridors (?), he turns around and slugs one of the pillars with his fist and

says, "My God, what is my destiny?" The next thing you find him doing is reading psalms in which the psalmist cries to the Lord and tells him to destroy his enemies who are trying to tell him that he has no destiny. That is an enemy. This man knows he has a destiny, and he decides to surrender that destiny to the Mystery.

Out of that binding of himself in which he gives up all, he experiences life as an endless adventure: first of all, a zestful drive that goes through his life all the time. Once he has submitted himself to the Mystery, then the Mystery takes advantage of him at every moment, always pouring through him like water through a sieve into every situation and relationship. He discovers the creative energy of his own life released as never before.

He is like Martin Luther. In the one moment he finally decided he had nothing to live out of except the grace of God, he became the catalyst for a whole revolution, the Reformation. He looks into his life and sees there a deep whirlpool of possibility from which to dip and drink all his days. Every time he dares to stand present to his neighbors out of that whirlpool of his life, a strange kind of boldness fills him. Never again does he fear his own insignificance or the insignificance of anything external to himself. He lives as a forgiven man. From now on he knows that his sins will be forgiven before he commits them. That is assurance and transparency of life, to know that whatever I do is received into history even before I do it. That power that moves through him is then transformed into something like a whirlwind. He is like Don Quixote, who takes on the windmills. That was not foolishness, that was just submitting himself to the power that was flowing through his life. Wildness just breaks through, and he channels it forth on behalf of the world and his neighbors.

I really got amused last week at one of our colleagues. He came in one morning and sat down and watched this movie called "The Greatest Show on Earth," about a circus. As that movie went on, he sat up straighter and straighter. By

the end, he had a top hat on and a baton in his hand. There was not any question about who he identified with. Then he brought that wildness to bear on our whole body, upon every one of us; and that wildness broke loose wildness in us. That is what I mean by being transparent to the Mystery. That was not our colleague up there, did you notice? It was the Mystery attacking our life. Tomorrow that same colleague will probably slump down in his chair in despair again. But with what he understands about being the sanctified man, when the next chunk of wildness comes into his life, he will come and give that to us too and know that strange boldness at the bottom of his life.

I remember when I was a kid and went to the Saturday morning movies, my favorite was the one where the riders of the purple sage come on and then you see this great show about Pecos Bill. One thing that I remember I really liked was when the tornado came along and Pecos Bill lassoed it, rode it down the Rio Grande River. That is what I mean by "boldness." There is nothing that is impossible, and you ride the whirlwinds of civilization as one who is channeling them to create the future. Then it is courage; and it is the courage of the dead. It is taking the willing risk in every situation that only a man who is dead to everything can take. He sees that civilization is at stake in every deed. When he stands to perform his act, it is not so that people will say, "Boy, is that ever a good act!" What he is doing is changing history. All of civilization is at stake in every act of his life. So the passion that he pours into that is the passion of all his being in that moment. He decides that nothing is impossible, and that is true. For a dead man, nothing is impossible. Dead men walk through walls: "to blaze with walls." What everybody else calls "limits", a dead man calls "possibility." As soon as somebody points out that something is impossible, the dead man rushes in to destroy that illusion. All is possible for him, and he lives his life embodying that stance towards all of creation. Every-

thing is possible, and he is never put down. He is nothing, he is nobody, he is never put down.

He is like one of the old missionaries long ago who went to Ceylon. While he was talking, a heckler in the crowd screamed at him, "Christians are the dregs at the bottom of the pot," putting down that little minority upstart group in their midst. The old missionary, grey-haired, ready to die, turned to the heckler and said, "Yes, son, but you don't understand that the fire is under the pot, and the pot bubbles from the bottom up." He is never put down by anything in life. He is the nothing that is everything; he becomes the all in all in the midst of life. He takes his wildness and focuses it on the immediate contradictions of history. He takes the meaningfulness and fills everything with that meaning.

He is like a member of one of those teams that Jesus sent out one day. (Jesus had the team/unit construct a long time before we did.) He was having trouble training his disciples to "go and do likewise: heal the sick, cast out demons, work miracles, do all the things I've been doing." They all said, "Huh, we can't do that." So he decided what it would take was corporateness. He made up this team chart, 35 teams, with first teacher and second teacher on every team. He sent them all out and said, "Don't come back until you do it." So they all went out and, by golly, this time they did it. They cast out demons, they cured the sick, they healed the blind, they made deaf people hear. When they came back to Jesus, they said, "We did it! We did it!" Jesus said, "Yes, while you were out I saw Lucifer himself fall from heaven." They were just having a great time, and right in the midst of it, Jesus decided to be a guru anyway and said, "Don't get excited about your power; only just be glad your names are written in heaven." That has nothing to do with succeeding or failing; your name is written in heaven, period. The perpetual creativity of the dead man is lived as his name is already written in heaven. He is not out to prove anything, he does not have any axes to grind, he is not concerned about coming off. All he cares about is that the

Father's creation is given the possibility that it has. Then he experiences absurd tranquility, that peace that is utterly unmerited in his life, that he has done nothing to deserve. It has just been given to him as he finds himself, in fact, embodying the Mystery. He lives his life forever beyond understanding now. He has been given another life to live, the life in which he rejoices in his humiliation and in his ignorance. When somebody points out to him that he was stupid, and here is the way it ought to be, he says, "Thank you, that's fantastic, that's tremendous." He understands that at the bottom of his life he has nothing to protect and nothing to gain.

He experiences in his life an inexplicable presence. When you run into a character like this, you experience an inexplicable presence about him. Sometimes he is too hot to get very close to. Our fathers decided to stick halos on people like that. The strange thing is that they never had those halos when they were alive. It was only after they were dead that somebody noticed that they had been wearing those halos. In other words, it had nothing to do with coming off in this life.

He has an eerie kind of problemlessness about his life. It is a peace that is at the center of his being. He lives every moment as eternally present, eternally being his relationship to the Mystery. He is a Mountain Rivera: "I got no special problems." Every time he dares to live that way, he finds that he is able to jump into any ring at any moment and do anything on behalf of any s.o.b. with whom he ever lived. That possibility is there for him. He only has one struggle, only one contradiction in his life; and that is the struggle with being the being that he is. For he has one enemy and only one enemy: the enemy that has been given the name "Satan." This enemy is always whispering in his ear, "Oh, you'd better not try that. Oh, you're probably not capable of doing this. Somebody else ought to do it." When an assignment comes up, old Satan speaks

through his mouth and says, "Oh, I think you ought to give that assignment to Joe. I think he ought to have that experience. I've done that before." And that enemy has to be destroyed in every moment by his decision that he is going to live in the Other World. That gate is barred against Satan. Satan is constantly cast out of the Other World, and this man dwells there. He is out, in fact, to destroy Satan's possibility for getting his life and preventing him from fulfilling the history that he has upon his hands. He knows that his weak and inadequate self is the only gift that he has. He lives his life in joyful humiliation and sees that his Father's world is his home and the only home that he has.

Somewhere about this point in the experience of the sanctified man, Jesus shows up again. By now he is over enough of his anger that he does not say, "Where the blazes have you been?" Now he greets him as a new relationship, a brother. Now he greets him as his brother--his Savior, but also his brother. He finds that he has an advocate before the Mystery at every moment now: his brother, his colleague. He starts singing songs in a new way. Whenever he sings that song, "I Know Whom I Have Believed," it's as if he were Jesus rather than Jesus being somebody else with whom he had a very indirect relationship. With this brother now, he sees a new possibility of marking his life and his relationship to the Mystery, a way to symbolize his decision to be the brother of Jesus, a son of the Father. The Father is a strange character. He does not have any grandsons or great-grandsons. All he has is sons. You decide either to be Jesus's brother or not. There is no other relationship you can take to that.

Then you emulate that way, and it is something like this: Jesus has shown you what it means to be fully human. Then why would you do anything else? In this emulation you are about calling other men to that style of life. If you have discovered what it means to be fully human, why would you ever say anything to any other man except, "Live like me. Do what I do. Go where I go, and be as I be."

That is the sign of the experience of gratitude in life, spontaneous gratitude for having shown up as the brother of Jesus and the son of the Father.

The final participation in that relationship is one that allows you now to reappropriate your relationships in history. No longer are you simply the bond slaves of history. You see God as your Father, and he is your Father in the same way that he is Jesus's Father. Seize him as personal Father. Whenever you say, "I and the Father are one," you mean the same thing that Jesus meant by that: you mean that you have no other accountability with your life except all of creation. Every death in your life is a scream. "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." You too have chosen to take into your hands all the power of heaven and earth.

One of Jesus's last sayings to his disciples was, "Whatsoever you prevent on earth is prevented in heaven, and whatsoever you permit on earth is permitted in heaven." You know what it means to be before the Mystery alone, this son with that one Father. You have upon your hands the burden and joy of leading others to the Father. You do not lead them to someone else. You lead them to the Father. You yourself take them by the hand and take them to the Mystery. While they are standing there filled with awe, you get yourself out of the way so they have the possibility of deciding to be a son to the Father as well.

You discover then the meaning of that fire at the center of your being: it is not out to destroy you, it is simply out to consume you as the light of light. That light of light is a light for all mankind, and so you decide whether you will try to put it out or spend the rest of your days being the keeper of that flame.

Amen.

—George Walters