

Each person in the leadership core is expected

- to feel herself wholeheartedly a member of the group
- to share her knowledge and experience at appropriate points
- to maintain an alertness to the thinking and feeling tones of the group as it moves along
- to help create an atmosphere in which all are free to think, to learn, to grow
- to help in the search for the deeper meaning in the issues at hand.

Preparation of Leadership

In order to think together creatively in Convention, it is essential for the leader to think together creatively in preparation. Team members need to be practiced in group thinking around issues basic to the framework of this particular Convention. To this end a plan for common training sessions has been developed:

In sixteen centers across the country experienced YWCA leaders will gather for Briefing Sessions. A traveling group of three National Board and staff will come into each center where, along with the two conveners, they will serve as leadership for the Briefing Sessions.

Specific assignments will be made on a national basis to the end that the leadership team and core of each group may be widely representative of the country. After the assignments are made, meetings scheduled in the Convention will provide opportunity for -

1. Team members to get acquainted and plan their work together, and
2. the total leadership to meet and move ahead.

Mrs. Walter C. Heckman, National Board member, as chairman, and Margaret Logan Clark and Dorothy I. Height, National Staff members, are carrying over-all responsibility for the development of materials and the training plan.

ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
TO
DISCUSSION PARTICIPATION AND EXPERIENCE

BOLD HOPES...

It is the deep concern of all of us who are carrying responsibility for the 1955 National Convention that it shall break new ground in several determinative ways. We hope that the delegates who come will know themselves more fully as members of a Christian movement that lives locally, nationally, and in the world of nations. We hope the members who come will know themselves more surely as women, functioning creatively in home, community, and national life. We are planning the Convention in such a way that the wisdom and experience of all who come may be released in behalf of the whole for determining the direction and specifics of our tasks in the years ahead. We see that this Convention may mean we shed cherished patterns of thought and behavior if we are truly open to God - letting Him take hold of our lives, both individual and corporate, and directing us for His purposes. We trust we may know more strength and courage for the work we must do in a period of great upheaval because we do it together as Christians, acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord.

WELLSPRINGS OF CREATIVITY...

In all the range and variety of activity which will take place during Convention days, the discussion periods are wellsprings of creativity both for individuals and for the definition and production of "the task." But this creativity will be released most surely if we give leadership based on our Christian understanding of God, man, and the world. No amount of fact or facility with technique alone will suffice. But only as we are able to understand the realities of every day life from the perspective of the Old and New Testaments - with faith - will necessary facts and techniques serve the goals we seek. There is real need to see the relation between the Christian faith and discussion group experience lest we rely too heavily on technique and miss the quality of experience we cherish for all who come.

Finally, we need to see ourselves primarily as servants of the group and Convention objectives. Leadership needs to be understood as a function we are being asked to perform for a particular situation in behalf of the whole. This servant idea releases us from the burden of supposing we have special virtues or qualities which set us apart. Rather, it is that we are carrying a particular assignment for helping achieve a quality of being and working together with discussion groups for the whole Convention. This idea is as old as the New Testament, where Jesus reiterated its essence over and over again. (Gal. 5:13-15).

I. PERSONS TOGETHER TOWARD ENCOUNTER

We are all aware of the elements present when the persons assigned to a discussion group come together for the first time. There is curiosity, strangeness, anticipation, expectation, willingness to share experience - some fear lest one's contribution be of little value. There is also great variety of cultural, religious, economic, racial, geographical, and perhaps educational background. The common factors are membership in the YWCA, Convention delegate status, and feminine gender! The leadership team is confronted with optimum eagerness to cooperate, but minimum identification with the particular

discussion group, and only partial grasp of the objectives sought through Convention discussion. Somehow the team, together with the core, must play its role toward a quality of interpersonal sharing and search that dispels fear, cherishes differences for the insights they may yield, and frees persons to give - not out of shells - but of their deepest selves.

I KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT MYSELF...

In the Convention discussion groups we are very face-to-face. Much of life today is characterized by anonymity and limited sense of personal significance. Many of our personal contacts and relationships with one another lack meaning. By all sorts of protective walls we cut ourselves off from freely giving of our deepest selves to others who would give and receive love if we could ourselves be free and loving. Men are creatures, children of God, and know their true nature only in relation with other men. At the simplest level, we know that infants realize their capacity to love only if first they have been loved.

Because this is so, the possibilities of conversation in Convention discussion groups becoming creative "break throughs" of old ways of being, thinking, and doing, are legion. For in a real encounter with another human being, or with a group, where I am contradicted, challenged, opposed, limited - I know the truth about myself. If I can really relate myself, come to terms with another, enter into community with him, it is good, and of God's purposes for us. If I seek to destroy that other, I walk toward lonely isolation and will perish. Something of God's judgment is known in my suffering.

Every human being in your discussion group seeks a response from others in the group and from us as leaders - yes, even more, he seeks to be acknowledged and accepted for what he is as he is, one with whom we can live and work with love. It is the Christian faith that Christ was both man with men and man for man. And if we are able to give full expression, each of us, to our human nature, in response to God's call to us, we would live in mutual dependence, mutual consideration, mutual helpfulness - for here is love in action.

INVOLVED WITH OTHERS...

In Convention discussion group setting, persons have the best context in which to give and receive - ideas, feelings, experience, love, anxieties, inadequacies, joys, doubts - the whole range of human expression. Perhaps most of all, the negative or questioning contribution must be accepted, for by such acceptance the person is accepted and freed a little. Then, too, the seemingly unacceptable comment may break ground for new avenues of insight, if we as leaders are not afraid to let them come. It's easy to appreciate the good comments! Tendencies in all of us to threaten, compete with, neutralize other human beings, must be faced and brought to God in worship.

It will not be simple or easy for us as team members to be free of our own sin - too much pride in wide experience or specialized knowledge or status while desiring to make the richness of all these serve discussion and the movement. With prayer to God and humility of approach, we, too, will know more of who we are as persons, as creatures in the image of God. Out of this encounter with other members of the YWCA, in which we come to terms with each other, accept each other, enter into community with each other, with courage and openness, can come understanding of what we must do and be as a movement in these times.

This whole idea of personal encounter is developed in Dr. Oldham's second chapter, "Man with Man." He sharpens for Christians that man is man with man because Christ was man with man and for man. Also helpful is I Corinthians 12:4-26 in showing us how each part or person is to be acceptable and accepted as necessary to the whole.

II. WORLD IN UPHEAVAL AND ME

Back of the faces of the delegates in your discussion group are the spirits of human beings who have felt the impact of a world dislocated, uprooted and unsure of the future.

It may not show on the face that a son or husband died during the 40's; that the homemaker also wins the bread to offset inflation or because homemaking no longer brings commensurate satisfaction; that daughter conforms to campus tradition at the sacrifice of creative ability; that teacher-friend has been dismissed because of supposed political orientation; that race or culture radically conditions the response of my new friend as she knows that colonialism, white supremacy, or poverty are fundamentally challenged. But we must accept these realities of life and know that delegates will speak out of all this kind of experience as well as out of happy, interesting, or productive (or difficult) activity within the YWCA. We must accept that a world - grown small through ease of communication - has brought overwhelming awareness of the difficulty and complexity of real communication between peoples and nations. As the difficulties of living at peace become known in hamlet and village, so the real chance of effective voice in the decisions of state and nation seem more remote, often to the point of helplessness.

TWO-WAY FEELINGS RUN DEEP...

The YWCA has a good record of effective community action and many members in your discussion group will have had meaningful experiences in "making life better." Nonetheless, there may be real ambivalence of feeling, particularly when none of us can, with certainty, know what is ahead, or while certain that justice for all men must be demanded, see no clear way of achieving enough of it within the realities of political and economic life. For some in your group, a degree of remoteness from or unacquaintance with the problems of community and nation may make it difficult for them to help in determining what we must be and do as persons and as a movement. In, through, and under all the conversation in discussion groups will run these determining life experiences.

What can the Christian in leadership role do or say when confronted with persons who have known the meaning and impact of world disorder in some very personal way and who see little real opportunity for helping guarantee world order and justice, even in Middletown, Nebraska? As leadership teams, what point of view will help when any comment comes which reflects, sometimes indirectly, such feelings as are described above? What use can you make of such yearnings of the human spirit?

OUR FAITH IS RELEVANT...

First of all, as members of the YWCA, let us acknowledge our sense of identification with all such expressions from group members. By identification, sympathy, or compassion, we are one with all who have or are suffering in any way - for who of us has not suffered because the world is in turmoil? First responsibility of the Christian is never to separate himself from his fellows wittingly or willfully. Our common humanity is a source of strength in all situations.

Second, God is the Lord of history as well as our creator. No man, or group of men can ultimately, by themselves, determine which way history and events shall go. Nonetheless, we are sons of God and so have tremendous responsibility to Him to work in the world for His purposes. As God's children, we are neither the pawns of history nor can we control it absolutely. We can, because of deep inner drives for justice and love, help determine which way issues shall go. We can't really ever get away from this compulsion for justice in social relations. And for whatever we do, we are infinitely precious in the eyes of God - for He is a loving father.

Third, to understand and accept this view, makes it possible to take one's efforts seriously and one's self lightly. Compromise to get forward movement may be necessary, but capitulation to injustice is not to be tolerated. While tension is accepted as necessary to citizen participation, pervasive anxiety is not. The Christian is essentially optimistic while taking account of the realities of evil, both in himself and others. And the temptation to wield power irresponsibly (that is, not as trust from God) is the great evil always to be reckoned with - first in one's self.

WE MUST SPEAK...

We who are discussion leaders need to speak too - for many of us have thought a great deal about the relevance of the Christian faith when we are at work on social problems. We can share with group members the distilled learnings of effective local or national activity without cynicism and despair. There will be no spot in the Convention where shared learnings and the mutual strength which can come thereby, will have better opportunity for getting voiced.

When the issues are as difficult and complex as they are, we need to see that our response to God and each other is of crucial importance. God cannot speak to us, guide us, love us, if we are not open and responsive. To keep our relationship to God and to each other very central, helps offset feeling at sea, very confused, not knowing where to take hold, in questions of social responsibility and action. Inasfar as we are able to do this, helplessness and the immobilizing impact of complex problems will be neutralized. We will be able to move with sureness and creativity and "count" in effecting which way decisions shall go.

Finally, let's all read Oldham's chapter on "The World" again.

III. DECISION AND ACTION - OUT OF PRAYER AND WITH THE GRACE OF GOD

There will be in the background of everyone's mind acceptance that many activities at Convention finally become legislative. We are a delegated body with responsibility to make decisions of policy and action.

Discussion team members are very alert to the importance of the discussion periods for yielding quantities of raw material which will be distilled and sifted in the formulation of the task. Discussion group members will be aware that "the task" is evolving, and so it is assumed that all discussion is done in the name of the Convention framework. The segments will fall into place as the responsible persons sort the recorded material.

Prayer and worship are central to the life of the Christian, for before the altar of God's love and grace there is confession of pride and egocentric strivings,

there is response to God's love which is given regardless of personal merit, there is commitment with renewal of spirit, there is thanksgiving for opportunity to go again into the world and work for His Kingdom.

For Christians, commitment leading to action is natural and inescapable. To do something about what one believes is imperative. For faith without works is dead. We often have to act without time for reflection and prayer. But we are able to act more serenely when we can first bring ourself, the issue, and possible courses of action to God in prayer. Each of us will accept, deep inside and before God, that the decisions the Convention makes are ultimately one's own decisions, involving a very personal stake in the outcome. To vote yea or nay with half a heart is irresponsible and meaningless.

While there are several periods of corporate worship for the whole Convention, the discussion periods too are times to acknowledge that we "are gathered in His Name" and to pray together for His help and blessing, as we move into discussion of issues. A deep trust that God's grace will be freely bestowed is part of such prayer. Opening or closing prayer may be the most helpful. Some moment of high debate or tension may be released by silence for individual prayer. Team members who have begun the day or the hour with verbal or silent dedication of self to God's purposes will bring a quality of loving concern to the discussion not achievable otherwise. Each team will have to find the best way to keep worship and prayer closely related to the discussion experience, but the whole Convention will be strengthened and the task will come clearer if we find those ways.

IV. IT MAY NOT ADD UP TO MUCH

^{is}This/the risk we all will face, a risk for all who live by the Christian faith. This is not at all a note of cynicism but reflects, rather, a way of looking at one's self and one's responsibilities, a Christian approach to life's incoherencies and incongruities which can release us from the anxiety of carrying too much of this world's problems unto ourselves. It represents a buoyancy and resilience to the risk involved, both for ourselves and for the project - in this case, Convention discussion groups!

We all care deeply about the Association and want it to be bold enough to stand and be counted and humble enough to find new avenues of service in a time of crisis. Many of us have known the Association over a long period. All of us will be carrying this discussion group assignment for the Convention with great conscientiousness and will give of ourselves in extravagance toward making the discussion experience contribute to the lives of individual members and toward defining the task for the whole movement in the United States for the period ahead.

GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN LIMITATION...

But within this caring, this conscientiousness, this great effort of heart and mind and body, our faith in the Christian God is the most important hinge factor. For to place our trust in God and not ourselves saves us from fretting lest we can't know all we should know for this assignment. No man can ever know all there is to know about an issue or a skill. To understand that God is a loving father means we will not be rejected when we "botch things up." He loves us especially when the session was not very good and we were not skillful enough to "pull it off."

INVOLVED IN REALITY WITH HOPE...

To carry this leadership assignment as committed Christians means we know God is with us in the realities of each discussion period, as well as in the individual lives of persons and nations. To have a sense of his caring about human events saves us from cynicism and despair when it goes badly or too much feeding on success when it is very wonderful! It saves us from freezing anxiety about tomorrow or the next meeting for we know we do not do our work alone - the presence of God is always felt. If the session goes well, we are filled with joy and thankfulness that we could serve Him who sustains us. If the contingencies of some situation seem difficult or irreconcilable, we do not shy away from the reality of it but know our hope rests ultimately in God. This means we must trust the Holy Spirit to be at work, too, in each session and some good will come if we combine wits and knowledge with loving patience. Always we place our hope beyond the immediate.

FROM A COMMON HERITAGE, FELLOWSHIP COMES...

Team members will develop sensitivity to each other and to members in the group quickly in a Convention setting. This will greatly increase the chances of experiencing real fellowship and togetherness. We all want this to happen and will use all we know to give of ourselves generously to bring about such a sense of real community with one another. For Christians, the achievement of the moment always is derivative from all that has preceded - a heritage beginning in the Old Testament and a continuity with the Christian community anticipated among the disciples and born at Pentacost. We are ever mindful that we are gathered in His Name. Whatever fellowship we already know in the YWCA is deeply rooted in our founders; whatever we experience at Convention is new and exciting but rests on a continuity with our Christian heritage.

But if we do not know an enlivened experience of fellowship, we can but try to understand and know that there is always another opportunity around the next corner - perhaps we can be more responsive the next time. Or, if some realize the support of our fellowship more than others and some not at all, this is the risk of any who dare to involve themselves deeply with others. Proximate achievement of real fellowship is prayerfully, thankfully acknowledged and accepted.

UNDER JUDGMENT WITH FORGIVENESS...

Finally, all our hopes and efforts to achieve discussion experiences of significance are under judgment. While God always forgives us our failures and inadequacies, even our egocentric motives and actions, if we are penitent, He also judges us for these. Such judgment combined with forgiveness becomes the spur toward new dedication of self to get to work again at whatever needs to be done. To get to work again with redemptive love as the center means we: protect and or create a climate of freedom; respect the dignity of all persons; maintain self-respect. It also means we work to release tension and reduce enmity; find understanding where there is misunderstanding; build bridges across differences; heal wounds of broken relationships. These kinds of elements are always just below the surface and will erupt into words and behavior as we work together in discussion groups, often to our surprise. With faith we work along, using skills and knowledge warmed by love, knowing always we will achieve our deep hopes only in partial and fragmentary ways, with God's help. This kind of functioning is central for Christian leadership in Convention discussion group setting.

V. WORKMANSHIP IS DEMANDED

Great varieties of comment will come from the members when participating in discussion. They will fall roughly into three categories:

- 1) Comments which describe or report an experience or situation.
- 2) Comments which relate or reveal concrete action - by individuals, the Association, the community.
- 3) Comments which state and/or elaborate a principle: of group work, of human relations, of social action, of good YWCA program, of the Christian faith, etc.

All three may come together in a single contribution!

In order to encourage thoughtful probing, it is well to remember:

- 1) All comments will have a moral or religious dimension because human beings are involved and love is needed.
- 2) Every comment will reflect a whole person's life experience and point of view, only partially revealed by the person herself and by what she says. Team members have to "piece out" the fuller context and give encouragement, direction, support, clarification, whatever is appropriate to the person or the group.
- 3) Many comments may have contradictions and inconsistencies within them. These need not confuse the leadership but rather stimulate us to pick up the most provocative or meaningful angle and ask the group to explore it further.

Team members can help enrich the quality and depth of discussion by:

- 1) Exploring, sometimes by throwing it to the group, the ethical issues in the simplest comment.
- 2) Selecting carefully as a period moves along the trend of thought which gets at real feelings, fears, and frustrations - for love is first of all concerned with these.
- 3) Bringing the point under discussion together with some insight out of Dr. Bennett's material, Dr. Oldham's material, or your own experience of God. This should be done frequently.
- 4) Sharing of yourself - your ideas and experience -for in such personal witness to what you know, believe of God and His love is the most powerful content of communication there is.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR YWCA DISCUSSION GROUP LEADERS TO HAVE IN MIND

Prepared by Rollo May, Ph.D.

- 1) Dr. Paul Tillich, the theologian, defines religion as "that about which one centers his ultimate concern." What are the real, not merely verbal, things about which people in your group are ultimately concerned?
- 2) Does the present wave of anti-intellectualism (fear of ideas) show itself in your community? How and what seem to be the causes?
- 3) Does fear of the consequences of the atom bomb cause real anxiety in your community, or is this particular fear generally ignored? What are the real sources of anxiety in your community?
- 4) There are evidences of an increase of pressure to conform in the nation. Does this show itself in your community? On your campus? and how?
- 5) Do people you know - and yourself - have genuine confidence that you can change and influence the local and national developments, politically and economically, in our day; or do you have generally a feeling of powerlessness and insignificance?
- 6) What is your judgement of the values and causes of the present revival of religious interest in the country? Do you see any detrimental aspects of this particular revival?
- 7) The late philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, defined religion as "what a person does with his solitariness." Do people in your community - what with TV, mass media and the highly-organized nature of our mechanical and gadget-minded culture - have time for "solitariness"? What do you see as the values - and difficulties - of contemplation and what is called the lost art of meditation?
- 8) How do you feel the mechanical nature of our culture affects faith and the spiritual life?
- 9) What kind of psychological knowledge is helpful for your spiritual life?
- 10) Our age is often called the period of the "lonely crowd." Do people you know, under the surface, feel pervasive loneliness?
- 11) What do you feel are the real goals - as contrasted to verbally-stated goals - of people in your community? and yourself?

(NOTE: Dr. Bennett has prepared the following three summaries of his material for the 1955 National Convention. These have been prepared primarily for Convention discussion group leadership and may be used in any way which proves helpful)

AN APPROACH TO THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

(An outline of the first presentation)

Christian faith is first of all faith in God. Today there is much emphasis in America on faith but often it seems to be no more than faith in faith or perhaps faith in our own capacities if we share a vague religious faith. The Christian begins by recognizing that he depends finally upon God for his existence and for all that gives to his existence meaning or value. God is not another name for the universe, for God is the Creator upon whom even the universe depends. God is not an unknown X behind all things for he has revealed Himself to us. God is not the product of human wishing or of human imagining, nor is He merely the sum total of humanity's highest ideals. He is the Lord of life, whose thoughts transcend our thoughts and who brings even our highest ideals to judgment.

NO MAN WOULD HAVE PLANNED IT THIS WAY

The center of Christian faith in God is the belief that God has acted continually to reveal Himself to us. From the beginning of man's life on earth God has sought to speak to him without overwhelming him with His majesty or His power. It was in the history of the people of Israel which is recorded in the Old Testament that we can trace the early stages of God's clearest revelation of Himself and it was in Christ, in His life teachings, His death and victory over death that God identified Himself with us most fully. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself" is the affirmation which most adequately expressed the central Christian conviction about God. This is, first of all, a conviction about God because it means that God in spite of His transcendent power and glory came to us in Christ. He came to us in one who had no worldly power, or prestige, who was born of humble parents in a stable, whose life ended in what seemed to be defeat. It is one of the extraordinarily unexpected things in all human history that the execution of a man by the authorities of His time and place should become the center of human history from which would come new powers of redemption for all mankind. No man would have planned it in this way and it will always be a source of judgment upon our human ways of arranging things.

WHAT GOD DID IN CHRIST

Christians have differed from one another and will doubtless continue to do so about many questions which this simple statement of their central faith raises. The following questions are examples: What is the relation between this revelation of God in Christ and the gropings after God in much of our life apart from Christ or the confident assurance concerning God in some other faiths? How do we understand the relation between the majesty and power of God to the human figure of Jesus Christ? In what way should we understand the redemptive effect of what Christ did? Differences about these and many other questions should not be allowed to hide the common affirmation of faith that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

WHAT MEN DO

What are we to think about ourselves? Christian thinking about the nature of man has received great emphasis in recent years because man has become a problem to himself. God made all men in His image. He made us free to find our own way and He made us finite but with remarkable gifts of imagination and of creative power which always tempt us in our freedom to try to become the lords of our own lives in place of God. This religious error, arising from the great gifts which God has given us, expressed in countless forms of self-will, of injustice, of efforts to control or exploit other persons in our own interests. We are all the victims of our own sin and of the sin of others which has this religious root whether it is recognized or not, and the world with all of the destructive forms of social evil which haunt us is the victim of this same sin as it is embodied in nations and races and many other social groups.

Christians can never be cynics or even dogmatic pessimists about human life, for this same humanity which in its freedom can be lost and become so destructive is always being called by God to a new life. God never leaves humanity alone. He never leaves one human being outside the circle of His love or beyond His effort to save.

MAN'S HOPE

(An outline of the second presentation)

THERE IS A LOSTNESS

Christian thinking about man began with the dual conception of man as made in God's image for fulfillment in lives of faith and love and of man as a victim of his own freedom, always needing to be drawn back to God's purpose for him. This is true of man in his personal and in his social life. Today we see the results of what can only be called a kind of "lostness" in the depths of the soul of modern man as well as in the catastrophes and the threats of greater catastrophe which he finds in his world. The personal feelings of lostness which are often called feelings of guilt, of anxiety, of despair are part of the universal burden of man's freedom but in some respects in our time they have been intensified by the social experience of our generation. At least our generation has been deprived of many of the objects of faith and hope which have been antidotes to the feeling of lostness for preceding generations.

The Christian answer to the lostness which is so characteristic of our generation is to be found on at least three quite different levels.

FORGIVENESS - AND NEW LIFE IN COMMUNITY

The first is the gospel of God's forgiveness which has been mediated to the human race most clearly by the cross of Christ as interpreted by the New Testament writers. Paul expressed this gospel in these words: "But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Theological or denominational differences about the meaning of Christ's death need not obscure the central point that is made here, that God does not wait until we are free from sin to forgive us. He comes to us as we are and the only condition which we must fulfill is to begin to be open to Him, to begin to look toward Him in faith. Faith is not belief in orthodox doctrines, but it is this beginning of openness to God's love for us as shown in Christ. All of our struggles with guilt should be seen in this connection. Forgiveness is not merely a kind of legal acquittal for what we have been but it is the beginning of new life, or our entering a new relationship. Paul Tillich has helped our generation to see one aspect of the Christian gospel in terms of the problems of which we are most conscious when he emphasizes the relation between such forgiveness and being accepted by God. Some, perhaps dim, awareness of this is the beginning of the sense that we as persons are not lost after all, that we need not live haunted by guilt and anxiety, that we are not alone in the world. The Christian Church should be and, to some extent, it is a community where people are helped to appropriate what it given to them by God in Christ. It does represent a new start in the life of humanity.

GOD LAYS UPON US - OBLIGATION

What should we say about hope for society in this distrustful and dangerous age? Our predecessors in the nineteenth and early twentieth century were buoyed up by great confidence concerning cumulative and rather easy progress in the world. But today our chief concern is that we avoid the abyss of universal war or of a tyranny made efficient by technology. No one can promise deliverance from either. We can say that God works upon us through visions of justice and fraternity and through making clear to us in events the consequences of our sin and folly. Never before in all history has there been such an opportunity for justice as between races. Never before has there been such a chance for the vast majority of the human race that has been exploited or neglected to win the opportunities which it has been denied. Today the awareness of the consequences of nuclear war is a ground for hope as well as for fear. There is no place for a fatalistic outlook toward the future and especially in America there is no place for thinking that what we do can make no difference. We need not live only by hope in the things which we observe and about which we calculate, we should live also by the conviction that whatever may happen in the more distant future, God has laid upon us the obligation how to do what we can to overcome particular wrongs and to form institutions and communities which embody social justice and even an imaginative love that goes beyond justice.

GOD IS LORD OF HISTORY

The third level of hope is brought to our attention whenever we face the fact of death and whenever we think of the final destiny of humanity. Here we do not need to do more than affirm the faith that God is the Lord of the future, of our future as individuals and of the future of the race. We know that in both cases the future is beyond our control and we believe that it is in the hands of the One who made us for a purpose and who loves us now. The question might well be raised as to what more can be said or need be said.

CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY - (THE IMPLICATION OF LOVE)

(An outline of the third presentation)

DECISIONS HAVE FATEFUL CONSEQUENCES

The Christian knows that Christ is the Lord of all spheres of life, that he is commanded to love his neighbors and that love means at least this: caring for the welfare and dignity of his neighbors. The YWCA has always put great emphasis upon public affairs and rightly so because the decisions which are made by all of us as citizens or as participants in economic life or as members of many voluntary associations which influence the public mind have most fateful consequences for the welfare and the dignity of our neighbors.

Sometimes there has been a tendency to make a sharp distinction between the problems of individual character and personal life on the one hand and the problems of communities and nations, of labor unions and corporations on the other, but this is a major error. The personal lives of people are much influenced by what is done about these large social problems and individuals acting as members of communities and organizations must take the social decisions.

LOVE IS IMAGINATION TO SEE AS OTHERS SEE

One of the most important aspects of Christian love is the kind of imagination which enables us to see the world to some extent as others see it who live under quite different conditions or who belong to groups which have interests which are different from ours, even at times opposed to ours. Today Americans have a special responsibility to school themselves in order that they may see the world more as it is seen by people in other countries. We need to understand why the free nations of Europe resent it when we apply pressure to win their support for our ideas, why they often fear that the belligerent talk of some of our leaders may mean that we will recklessly drag them into war, why it is difficult for nations, which have had great power and which have a great tradition, to be dependent upon our power.

We need to understand why in many countries on other continents people feel the need of a revolution in economic institutions, especially in forms of land ownership, why people in Asia still resent the western white man's domination of the world and fear the return in new forms of the old imperialism which they have rejected. Deeper than any decisions touching what we are to do about the so-called technically underdeveloped countries, about policies in relation to the advance of Communism in the serious efforts to understand the fears and hopes and the needs of the people who will be affected by what we do. The Churches and such organizations as the YWCA and the YMCA with their many-sided programs in other countries can do a vast amount to prepare the American people at this point. We must remember that there is one great difference between people in this world. There are those who are tempted to hope that any radical change would be for the better and there are those who are tempted to fear that any radical change would be for the worse. Most Americans are in the second category but the greater part of humanity is in the first.

LOVE IS FREEDOM TO SPEAK, TO HEAR, TO BE CHALLENGED

In this country great gains have been made in the relations between the races. The United States Supreme Court has given great authority to an idea which has been slowly dawning on the American people for some time: the idea that racial segregation is in itself a form of discrimination against the minority race. In thousands of communities during the next few years this issue will be the paramount local issue which will often bitterly divide neighbors. The Churches and the Christian Associations in those communities will have an advantage over other institutions because they can always appeal beyond the local prejudices to the essential Christian claim upon them and to the support of a larger Christian community.

We Americans have been living in a period in which national hysteria seemed to be undermining the freedom to express ideas which differ from those of the majority. We have been in the ironical situation of attempting to defend ourselves against Communism by methods which undermine our own institutions of freedom and which have caused millions of people in the free world to wonder if there is much to choose between Communist totalitarianism and our type of democracy. Conditions today are a little better but it is doubtful if there has been much change in the smaller or more isolated communities. Christian love involves defending the right of our neighbors who are in the minority to be true to their own convictions. Only where there is freedom to speak the truth as one sees it is there a chance for communities and nations to hear what they most need to hear, to have their interests and their pride challenged. The freedom of Christian institutions to be true to the Gospel which they have received is inseparable from the freedom of all citizens to be loyal to their convictions.

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ALL REAL LIFE IS MEETING

Among the thousand questions which perplex and baffle us, is there some crucial issue which, if it were rightly understood and rightly dealt with, would mark the turning-point in our society from sickness to health? In the confusing complexity of life today is there one decisive point at which a change, if it were to come about, would be so fundamental as to mark off one period of history from another? That seems to me to be the question which Professor John Macmurray was asking in his recent broadcast talks on "Persons and Functions."

Persons and Functions

It would be difficult to formulate the issue more succinctly than in the illustration with which he began his talks. G. K. Chesterton was once moved to anger on seeing on a poster the advertisement of an article entitled "Should Shop-assistants Marry?" The proper question, he thought, should have been: "Should human beings capable of love and marriage consent to be shop-assistants?" It shows the extent to which our values have become distorted that, instead of the statement appearing obvious, the first reaction of most of us probably is to think of it as one of Chesterton's clever epigrams and to wonder whether there is not a catch somewhere.

What Professor Macmurray believes to be fundamentally wrong with our present society is that its underlying assumption is that people are less important than the jobs they do, whereas the true view is that men and women are essentially persons, meant to live in personal fellowship with one another, and that the services which they have to perform in society are incidental and subordinate to this personal life.

When we distinguish the personal and the functional, we do not mean that one part of our time is given to personal relations and another part spent in performing functions, nor that the life of some people is predominantly personal and that of others predominantly functional, though these statements are often to a large extent true in fact. In all human life the personal and the functional are inseparably interwoven. Nowhere does the personal find more complete expression than in the love of a wife and mother, while the care and management of a home is at the same time the most necessary of social functions. The whole of life is functional; everything that the individual does contributes in some way to the life of society. But it is possible for this functional life to be transfigured by becoming the vehicle of intercourse between persons. The function of eating, for example, may be lifted to a high spiritual level in the intercourse of the common family meal. The doing of jobs may become a means to the mutual enrichment of human beings through intelligence and love.

Everything hinges in Professor Macmurray's view on whether in our hearts, and consequently in our practice, we regard human beings as existing primarily for the building up of an efficient society and state, or whether we find the real significance of life in the mutual relations of persons, which all human activities are meant to further and enrich. For the sake of the fullness of personal life, functions must be efficiently performed, and it is in the common performance of functions that persons find opportunities of fellowship and mutual service. But the whole future of mankind turns on whether human beings are regarded as means or end.

Martin Buber's "I and Thou"

The same demand for a fundamental change in our way of looking at things - a challenge more truly revolutionary than either Nazism or Communism - is made in a little book by a German writer, now an exile from the country of his birth. The book was begun during the last war. A preliminary sketch was made in 1916, a first draft completed three years later, the work put into final shape in 1922 and published in the following year - six years for the writing of a small volume of little more than a hundred pages. An English translation appeared in 1937,¹ and has attracted far less attention than its importance deserves. I question whether any book has been published in the present century the message of which, if it were understood and heeded, would have such far-reaching consequences for the life of our time. That the importance of this small volume has been as yet so little perceived shows with what difficulty truth that might save us is able to penetrate the crust of our inveterate habits of thought.

The book is at once a poem and the profoundest philosophy, compressed into a hundred pages. It does not disclose its meaning on a first reading. We have to go back to it again and again, allowing it slowly to remould our thought. As this takes place, sentences which at first seemed difficult and obscure will be found to be full of profound meaning.

The Twofold Nature of Existence

The world, Buber tells us, has a twofold meaning. Man's attitude to it is dual. The two attitudes are different and uninterchangeable. To understand this twofold nature of human existence is the beginning of wisdom.

This twofold attitude is expressed in the fundamental difference between our relation to persons and our relation to things or objects. That is not precisely Buber's language. He speaks of the difference between our relation to the world of "Thou" and our relation to the world of "It." But the term "Thou" has disappeared in English as a form of address to a human person, though it survives in the language of the most personal of all relations - the language of prayer. For our present purpose Buber's meaning can sufficiently be expressed by the contrast between persons and things, provided we understand clearly that, in the sense in which the words are here used, persons are not always persons nor things always things. Persons may be, and for certain purposes must be, treated as things, as when we organize them or discipline them or care for their health of body or of mind; and even in the most personal meeting the "Thou" who addresses us and to whom we respond is continually passing over into a "He" or "She" (which in respect of the twofold attitude is the same as an "It"). We become aware, for example, of the tone of our friend's voice or of the colour of his hair or of his individual characteristics, and he no longer confronts us as a person, but has become an object among other objects. Every human person is at the same time an "It." On the other hand, both animate and inanimate nature can meet us in a personal approach - confront us, that is to say, not as something to be experienced and used, but as entering into relation with us, making demands on us and evoking from us a full personal response of our whole being.

¹ I and Thou, Martin Buber (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 2s. 6d).

This distinction between two fundamental attitudes may appear at first sight difficult and abstruse. But in reality what Buber is talking about is the common stuff of our ordinary experience. If it seems difficult, it can only be because we have not been in the habit of reflecting on our experience; and partly also because, as we shall see, our experience has become distorted. Things have gained so strong a hold over us as to blunt our sensitiveness to the personal.

The World of Things

Let us look first at the world of things. I observe something, I imagine something, I feel something, I think something, I will something. These activities have all to do with "It," and taken together they seem to include the whole range of our experience. To the world of objects belongs the whole of the vast domain over which science reigns. To it belong also the spheres of industry and commerce, the tasks of the economist and statesman. All organization, all arranging and ordering have to do with things. From the mechanization of life, from the pressure of institutions, men seek an escape into the region of feeling, hoping there to find the meaning of personal life. But feelings, as the feelings of an individual, belong also to the world of "It." It might seem as though we had included the whole of life in the world of things. It is true that everything that we experience and everything that we use belong to that world. Just as the whole of life is functional, so it is embedded inextricably in a world of "It" and lived in an unbroken relation to things.

The World of Persons

Yet nothing could be farther from the truth than that man's life consists only in activities which have some thing for an object. From out of this infinite, inexhaustible world of things which he is so eager to explore, to taste, to appropriate and to bend to his purposes there may come to him unexpectedly a voice. What that voice may say to him he cannot control; he can only listen and respond. In relation to the world of things man is master; he observes, measures, weighs, judges, arranges, and orders. But in the encounter with another person he is no longer the sole arbiter; he does not alone control the situation. He is addressed and has to respond. The situation to which he has to respond is not created by him, but created for him. He meets the other. He has passed from his solitariness into community, where there is not one point of view, but two or more.

Things exist, events take place, in the context of space and time. Each is bounded by something else. But a person is not a thing among other things. We do not experience a person - so far as we experience another person it is as a "He" or "She" - but enter into relation with him. He gives himself to us; we give ourselves to him. Meeting takes place not in a fixed and stable world of unalterable law, but in the free and living present in which the world is continually born anew.

The meeting is unforeseeable. It comes unexpectedly. It is not found by seeking. We can, of course, make a date, and keep it, but that does not in itself ensure the personal meeting. The other meets us by grace; our response to the meeting is our destiny. We cannot "order" the world of personal meeting; only things can be ordered and planned.

It is through our responses to other persons that we become persons. It is others who challenge, enlighten and enrich us. There is no such thing as the isolated individual. We are persons only in our relation with other persons. How

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