become the Holy City for many American, and thousands have bowed before its shrine, feeling that the more divorces the receive, the more they would receive the grace of [glamour?] Love has been eliminated as a necessity for marriage, and in its place has appeared such thing as economic security, status and physical attraction. All of these thing have lead to a [disregard?] for the sacredness of [marriage?]. Marriage is holy ground. It sanctifies the privilege of sharing in creative life. Through its portals men and women enter the realm of their immortality. Marriage is not an arrangement of convenience, to be entered into at will and dissolved at whim. It is a holy covenant between two souls pledged to revere one another, to face life's [tasks?] together, to face life's sorrow and struggle together, to build a [home?] and to shield, and love the offspring of their union.  

AD  CSKC  Sermon file, folder 76, “The Crisis in the Modern Family”

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project
“The Secret of Adjustment”

[2 December 1961]
[Atlanta, Ga]

“I have learned in whatever state I am to be content ” Philippians 4:11

I  Introduction  One may well characterize life as a pendulum swinging between opposites joy and sorrow, hope and despair, poverty and wealth, sickness and health success and failure, popularity and obscurity

a  One moment we are in joy, and in a flash we experience sorrow
   One day we are wealthy, and then we are poor.
   One day we are popular; another day we are hardly known

b  This is the structure of life. Life is something of the strife of opposites
   Nobody ever absolutely escapes this [tension?]

   c  Every individual is in a constant struggle seeking to deal constructively with this tension. Ultimately an ind. is judged by the way he handles this tension
   The adjustment of the individual depends on his ability to handle this tension

D  Methods used to deal with the tension

   (1) Most people attempt to deal with the tension by attempting to freeze one side of the opposite. The gear themselves for living with one side of the opposite.

   (a) So there are persons who are geared only to live under categories

   by those opposites that fall under the category of fulfillment

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6  Abba Hillel Silver, Religion in a Changing World, pp 162–163  “Marriage, it maintains, is holy ground. It sanctifies the privilege of sharing in creative life. Through its portals men and women enter the realm of their immortality. Marriage is not an arrangement of convenience, physical or financial, to be entered into at will and dissolved at whim. It is a holy covenant between two souls pledged to revere one another, to face life’s tasks together, sorrow, struggle and disillusionment, to be each others complement, to build a home and to shield and love the offspring of their union.”  

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The Secret of Contentment

"I have learned in whatsoever state I am to be content." Philippians 4:11

Introduction: One may well characterize life as a pendulum swaying between opposites: joy and sorrow, hope and despair, prosperity and wealth, sickness and health, success and failure, popularity and obscurity.

a. One must be wise in joy, and wise in sorrow.
   
   One day we are wealthy, and then we are poor.
   
   One day we are popular, and the next we are hardly known.

b. This is the structure of life. Life is something of the nature of opposition.
   Nothing absolutely escapes this tenant.

C. Every individual is in a constant struggle...
Consequently when the darker moments of life come, they are knocked off of balance.

(b) There are other persons who are geared only to live by those opposites that fall under the category of darkness. Consequently, when the sunshine of life comes they aren't prepared for it.

(c) Neither of these methods brings proper adjustment.

II The Apostle Paul confronted this problem. Certainly no man has confronted the omnipresence of life's opposites any more than Paul. Probably he confronted the opposites of disappointment much more than the opposites of fulfillment. Yet in his own life he discovered the secret which every man must discover if he is to live the adjusted life. In Phillipians 4:11 he rings out with words which sound over echo across the generations: “I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” This is the secret of adjustment.

III What did Paul mean by this? What had he learned?

A First, Paul did not mean that he had learned to become complacent. There is nothing in the life of Paul which could characterize him as a complacent man. Gibbon in his “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire” say, Paul has done more to promote the idea of freedom and liberty than any man who set foot on western soil.” This does not sound like a complacent man. So Paul is not telling us that the way to become adjusted to the opposites of life is through stagnant complacency. If complacency were considered a sign of adjustment, I would advocate maladjustment as the ideal and supreme virtue of life, leaving adjustment as a deadening and tragic vice.

b Secondly, in declaring that he had learned to be content, Paul did not mean that he had merely become resigned to his fate. There are those who look upon man as the plaything of a callous nature sometimes friendly and sometimes inimical. They feel that the only way to solve the problems of life is to give up in the struggle and become resigned to [strikeout illegible] fate. Such persons give up in the struggle of life.

c What then, I repeat, had Paul learned? He meant that he had leaned to stand up amid the opposites of life and not despair. He had had every sort of experience. He had ranged from the lowest valleys to the highest mountain. But he declares, “These circumstances have not controlled me, I have learned to control them.” Paul had discovered the distinction between a tranquil soul and the outward accidents of circumstance. He had leaned to live from within instead of from without.

IV How did Paul learn to be contented?

a Paul found contentment because he believed that over against the changing structure, changeableness of circumstances, there is a permanent changless structure of goodness in the universe, which transcends every circumstance.


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7 Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–1788)