

Draft of Chapter XV,
“The Answer to a Perplexing Question”

[July 1962–March 1963]
[Atlanta, Ga.]

King preached a version of this sermon in 1959.¹ Rejecting claims that human action alone can purge the world of evil, he denies that “God in his good time will redeem the world.” He maintains that this belief, which focuses on salvation in the afterlife, “has [led] to a dangerously irrelevant church” that “is little more than a country club where people assemble to hear and speak pious platitudes.” Rather, King asserts, “The unit of power for moral victory is God filling man and man opening his life by faith to God, as the gulf opens itself to the overflowing waters of the river. Racial justice is a real possibility in this nation and in the world.” Several passages of this sermon reflect the thoughts of J. Wallace Hamilton and Phillips Brooks.

“Why Could Not We Cast Him Out?” Mt 17 19

One of the things that has characterized human life through the centuries has been man’s persistent attempt to remove evil from the face of the earth. Very seldom has he thoroughly adjusted himself to evil. In spite of all of his rationalizations, compromises and alibis, man knows that the “is” is not the ought and the actual is not the possible. Though he often allows the evils of sensuality, selfishness and cruelty to rise up aggressively in his soul, something within reminds him that they are intruders. Ever and again man in his deepest attachment to evil is reminded of a higher destiny and a more noble allegiance. Man’s hankering after the demonic is always disturbed by his longing for the divine. As he seeks to adjust to the demands of time, he knows that eternity is his ultimate habitat. When man comes to himself

¹ King preached this sermon under a different title (King, “Divine and Human Mutuality” / “Man’s Helplessness Without God,” 9 August 1959, pp. 368–370 in this volume)

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he knows that evil is a foreign invader that must be driven from the native soils of his soul before he can achieve moral and spiritual dignity

But the problem that has always frustrated man has been his inability to conquer evil by his own power. He is constantly asking in pathetic amazement, “Why can I not cast it out?” “Why can I not remove this evil from my life?”

This agonizing, perplexing question is reminiscent of an event that took place during the life of Jesus Christ. The event occurred immediately after Christ’s transfiguration.² Jesus comes down from the mountain and finds a little boy in wild convulsions. His disciples were desperately trying to cure the unhappy child. The more they tried to heal him the more they discovered their own inadequacies, and the pathetic limitations of their power. At the point at which they are about to give up in despair, their Lord appears on the scene. The father of the child turns to him in utter desperation, he tells him of the failure of the disciples.³ And then Jesus “rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him and the child was cured from that very hour.” At this point “the disciples came to Jesus apart, and said, why could not we cast him out.” They wanted an explanation for their obvious limitations. Jesus tells them that the reason of their failure is their unbelief.⁴ He says “If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, “Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you.”⁵ In other words, Jesus was saying to his disciples that the reason for their failure was that they were trying to do by themselves what they could only do when they so surrendered their natures to God that his strength could freely flow through them. **This is what Jesus means by faith.**

This brings us again to the question, how can evil be cast out? There are two ideas that men have usually held about the way evil is to be eliminated and the world saved.

One idea is that man must remove evil with his own power. It is the strange conviction that if man goes on thinking, inventing and governing he will be able to conquer by his own strength and ingenuity the nagging forces of evil. Just give people a fair chance, and a decent education, and they will save themselves. This idea has swept across the modern world like a plague ushering God out and escorting man

2 Cf. Matthew 17:1–20

3 The words “turns to him in utter desperation, he tells him” were replaced by “told Jesus” in the published version (King, *Strength to Love*, p. 119)

4 Phillips Brooks, “Why Could Not We Cast Him Out?” in *Sermons Preached in English Churches* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1903), pp. 181–182. “The words belong, as you remember, to the story of what immediately followed Christ’s transfiguration. The Lord comes down from the mountain on which he has been glorified and finds a poor lunatic boy in convulsions at the mountain’s foot. His disciples are trying to cure the unhappy child. How we can see their helplessness! Their association with Jesus had taught them to believe that such affliction could be cured, but when they tried they could not do it. Still the poor boy raved on. At last, when they are ready to give up in despair, their Master comes in sight. The father of the child turns eagerly to Him, he tells Him how the disciples had failed, and then Jesus ‘rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him and the child was cured that very hour.’ Then it was that ‘the disciples came to Jesus apart, and said, Why could we not cast him out?’ They could not accept their own failure. They must have an explanation for their weakness. And Jesus tells them that the reason for their failure is their unbelief.”

5 Matthew 17:20

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in, substituting human ingenuity for inner guidance ⁶ Where it had its beginning is not clearly known. It is always difficult to get back to the one causal root of an idea in history. Some say it had its beginning with the Renaissance, when the age of reason was substituted for the age of religion. Others contend that it got under way with Darwin's *Origin of Species*, which substituted the idea of evolution for the idea of creation. ⁷ Still others think it started with the industrial revolution, which substituted maternal comfort for physical inconvenience. ⁸ But wherever it got started, the idea of the adequacy of man to solve the evils of history captured the minds of millions of people. Out of it came the easy optimism of the 19th century and the idea of inevitable progress. Out of it came Rousseau's doctrine of "the original goodness of human nature."⁹ Out of it came the conviction of the French humanist, Condorcet, that the whole world would soon be cleansed of crime, poverty and war by reason alone. ¹⁰

With this glowing faith in the power of reason and science, modern man went out to change the world. Instead of thinking about God and the human soul, he turned his attention to the outer world and its possibilities. Through test tubes, microscopes and telescopes, he observed it, analyzed it, and explored it. Soon the laboratory became his sanctuary and the individual scientists his priests and prophets. In the words of a modern humanist, many confidently affirmed: "The future is not with the churches but laboratories, not with prophets but with scientists, not with piety but with efficiency. Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams, that he has within himself the power for its achievement." **Like a mighty Judge** modern man has subpoenaed nature to appear before the judgment seat of scientific investigation. There can be no gainsaying of the fact that his work in the scientific laboratories has paid off with unbelievable advances in power and comfort. It has produced machines

6 In the published version, the word "inner" was replaced by "divine" (p. 119).

7 Charles Darwin, *On the origin of species by means of natural selection, or, The preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life* (1859).

8 The preceding five sentences were condensed in the published version: "Some people suggest that this concept was introduced during the Renaissance when reason dethroned religion, or later when Darwin's *Origin of Species* replaced belief in creation by the theory of evolution, or when the industrial revolution turned the hearts of men to maternal comforts and physical conveniences" (p. 119).

9 The philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued in "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality" that compassion is the universal source for innate human goodness (Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses* [1762]).

10 The French philosopher and political scientist Condorcet maintained that human progress based on science and reason would proceed indefinitely (Condorcet, *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind* [1795]). The preceding four sentences were condensed in the published version: "At any rate, the idea of the adequacy of man to solve the evils of history captured the minds of people, giving rise to the easy optimism of the nineteenth century, the doctrine of inevitable progress, Rousseau's maxim of 'the original goodness of human nature,' and Condorcet's conviction that by reason alone the whole world would soon be cleansed of crime, poverty, and war" (p. 119). Hamilton, *Horns and Halos*, pp. 62–63: "The Renaissance went too far in excessive optimism. Out of that came the easy optimism of the 19th century and the idea of automatic progress—Spencer's philosophy, Rousseau's 'rights of man,' and 'the original goodness of human nature.' Perhaps the most optimistic book ever written was published on the eve of the French Revolution by a French humanist, Condorcet. He envisioned the whole world cleansed of crime and poverty and slavery and war by reason and reason alone."

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that think and gadgets that contain immeasurable power Its matchless achievements are seen soaring majestically through the skies, standing impressively on the land, and moving stately on the seas

But in spite of these astounding new scientific developments, the old evils continue to exist Modern man has had to witness his age of reason being transformed into an age of terror The old evils of selfishness and hatred have not been removed by an enlargement of ~~an~~ {our} educational system and an extension of our legislative policies **The threat of atomic and nuclear warfare is more frighteningly real today than ever before.** And so a once optimistic generation now stands asking in utter bewilderment. “Why could not we cast it out?”

The answer to this question is rather simple Man by his own power can never cast evil out of the world The humanist’s hope is an illusion It is based on too great an optimism concerning the inherent goodness of human nature There are thousands of sincere and dedicated people outside the churches working unselfishly through various humanitarian movements to cure the world of its social evils I would be the last to condemn these people because they have not yet found their way to God, for I would rather that a man be a committed humanist than an uncommitted Christian But so many of these dedicated people, having no one but themselves to save, {themselves} end up disillusioned and pessimistic They are disillusioned because they started out with a great illusion For them there is no sinner or no sin Human nature is essentially good, and the only evil is found in systems and institutions, just enlighten people and free them from the crippling yoke of poverty, and they will save themselves. All of this sounds wonderful and soothingly pleasant But it is an illusion wrapped in superficiality It is a kind of self-delusion which causes the individual to ignore a basic fact about human nature ¹¹

None of this is to minimize the importance of science and the great contribution of the Renaissance We needed them to lift us from the stagnating valleys of superstitions and half-truths to the sun-lit mountains of creative analysis and objective appraisal. The unquestioned authority of the church in scientific matters needed to be challenged Too often had it engaged in a paralyzing obscurantism. Through shameful inquisitions the church sought to circumscribe truth and place unsurmountable obstacles in the path of the truth-seeker This had to be rectified. Without the Renaissance and the Age of Reason we would still be wandering in a confusing wilderness of antiquated, scientific notions Nevertheless they went to far in optimism In its earnest attempt to free the mind of man, the Renaissance forgot about man’s capacity for sin.¹²

The other idea concerning the way evil is to be removed from the world says that man must wait on God to do everything. Man must lie still, purely submissive,

11 The preceding seven sentences were altered in the published version “But so many of these dedicated persons, seeking salvation within the human context, have become understandably pessimistic and disillusioned, because their efforts are based on a kind of self-delusion which ignores fundamental facts about our mortal nature” (p 120)

12 The preceding five sentences were altered in the published version “But the exalted Renaissance optimism, while attempting to free the mind of man, forgot about man’s capacity for sin” (p 121)

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and God in his good time will redeem the world¹³ This idea is rooted in a pessimistic doctrine of human nature. It has cropped up many times in the history of Christianity. It was prominent in the Reformation. This great spiritual movement which led to the birth and development of Protestantism was concerned about moral and spiritual freedom. It served as a necessary corrective for a medieval church that had become all too corrupt and stagnant.¹⁴ Its doctrines of justification by faith and the priesthood of all believers are towering principles which we as Protestants must forever affirm. But in its doctrine of human nature the Reformation overstressed the corruption of man. While the Renaissance went to far in optimism, the Reformation went too far in pessimism.¹⁵ The Renaissance so concentrated on the goodness of man that it overlooked his capacity for evil. The Reformation so concentrated on the wickedness of man that it overlooked his capacity for goodness. While it was right in affirming the sinfulness of human nature and man's incapacity to save himself, the Reformation wrongly went to the extreme of believing that the image of God had been completely erased from man.

This led to the Calvinistic doctrine of the total depravity of man.¹⁶ It led to a resurrection of the terrible idea of infant damnation. So depraved was human nature, said the Calvinist, that every baby born in the world was a candidate for damnation, and if he died in infancy without baptism he would burn in hell forever.¹⁷ Certainly this was carrying the idea of man's sinfulness too far.

This lopsided Reformation theology has often led to a purely other-worldly religion. **It has caused many churches to ignore the "here" and emphasize only the "yonder."** By stressing the utter hopelessness of this world and emphasizing the need for the individual to concentrate his efforts on getting his soul prepared for the world to come, it has ignored the need for social reform, and divorced religion from life.¹⁸ **It sees the Christian gospel as only concerned with the individual soul.** Recently a church was seeking a new minister and the pulpit committee listed several qualifications that he should possess. The first qualification was "He must be able to preach the true gospel and not talk about social issues." This emphasis has led to a dangerously irrelevant church. It is lit-

13 The preceding two sentences were altered in the published version "The second idea for removing evil from the world supulates that if man waits submissively upon the Lord, in his own good time God alone will redeem the world" (p. 121)

14 The preceding five sentences were altered in the published version "Rooted in a pessimistic doctrine of human nature, this idea which eliminates completely the capability of sinful man to do anything, was prominent in the Reformation, that great spiritual movement which gave birth to the Protestant concern for moral and spiritual freedom and served as a necessary corrective for a corrupt and stagnant medieval church" (p. 121)

15 Hamilton, *Horns and Halos*, p. 62 "The Reformation went too far in pessimism"

16 The word "doctrine" was replaced by "concept" in the published version (p. 121) Hamilton, *Horns and Halos*, p. 62 "The result was an extreme Calvinism, the teaching of the total depravity of human nature"

17 This sentence was altered in the published version "So depraved is human nature, said the doctrine Calvinist, that if a baby dies without baptism he will burn forever in hell" (p. 121)

18 This sentence was altered in the published version "By ignoring the need for social reform, religion is divorced from the mainstream of human life" (p. 121)

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tle more than a country club where people assemble to hear and speak pious platitudes ¹⁹

This one-sided emphasis of the Reformation overlooks the fact that the gospel deals with the whole man—his body as well as his soul. It is in danger of setting up a tragic dichotomy between the sacred and the secular, the god of religion and the god of life ²⁰. If the church is to be worthy of its name it must become the fountainhead of a better social order. It must seek to transform not only individual lives, but also the social situation. It must be concerned not only about individual sin but also about social situations that bring to many people anguish of spirit and cruel bondage ²¹.

The idea that man must wait on God to do everything has led to a tragic misuse of prayer. He who feels that God must do everything will end up asking him for anything. Some people see God as little more than “a cosmic bellhop” that they will call on for every trivial need. Others see God as so omnipotent and man as so powerless that they end up making prayer a substitute for work and intelligence. A man said to me the other day: “I believe in integration, but I know it will not come until God gets ready for it to come. You Negroes should stop protesting and start praying.” Well I’m sure we all need to pray for God’s help and guidance in this integration struggle. But we will be gravely misled if we think it will come by prayer alone. **God will never allow prayer to become a substitute for work and intelligence.** God gave us minds to think and breath and body to work, and he would be defeating his own purpose if he allowed us to obtain through prayer what can come through work and intelligence. No, it is not either prayer or human effort, it is both prayer and human effort. Prayer is a marvelous and necessary supplement of our feeble efforts but it is a dangerous and callous substitute. Moses discovered this as he struggled to lead the Israelites to the Promised Land. God made it clear that he would not do for them what they could do for themselves. In the Book of Exodus we read: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.” ²²

We must pray earnestly for peace. But along with our prayers we must work vigorously for disarmament and suspension of nuclear tests ²³. We must use our minds as rigorously to work out a plan for peace as we have used them to work out a plan for war. We must pray with unceasing passion for the emergence of racial justice. But along with this we must use our minds to develop a program and organize ourselves into mass non-violent action and use every resource of our bodies and souls to end **the long night of racial injustice**. We must pray unrelentingly for economic

19 The preceding two sentences were altered in the published version: “This is a blueprint for a dangerously irrelevant church where people assemble to hear only pious platitudes” (p. 121).

20 The preceding two sentences were altered in the published version: “By disregarding the fact that the gospel deals with man’s body as well as with his soul, such a one-sided emphasis creates a tragic dichotomy between the sacred and the secular” (pp. 121–122).

21 The preceding three sentences were altered in the published version: “To be worthy of its New Testament origin, the church must seek to transform both individual lives and the social situation that brings to many people anguish of spirit and cruel bondage” (p. 122).

22 Cf. Exodus 14:15.

23 The term “nuclear tests” was replaced by “weapon testing” in the published version (p. 122).

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justice But along with our prayers we must work diligently to bring into being those social changes that will make for a better distribution of wealth We must use our minds to develop a sort of massive Marshall Plan that will aid the undeveloped countries of the world to emerge from the long and bitter winter of poverty to the warm spring of economic stability²⁴

All of this reveals the fallacy of the idea that God alone will rid the earth of evil Man, sitting complacently by the wayside, and expecting to see God cast evil out of the world, will see no such thing No prodigious thunderbolt will come dashing out of the sky to blast evil away No mighty army of angels will descend from heaven and force men to do what their wills have led them not to do Throughout the Bible God is pictured not as an Omnipotent Czar who makes all of the decisions for his subjects nor as a cosmic tyrant who uses gestapo-like methods to invade the inner lives of men, he is rather pictured as a loving Father who stands ever ready to give exceedingly abundant things to his children if they will freely accept²⁵ It is always clear that man must do something “Stand up on your feet,” says God to Ezekiel, “and I will speak to you”²⁶ Man is not a helpless invalid who is left in a valley of total depravity until God pulls him out, he is rather an upstanding human being whose vision has been impaired by the cataracts of sin and whose soul has been weakened by the virus of pride But there is enough vision left for man to lift his eyes unto the hills, and there is enough of God’s image left for man to turn his weak and sin-battered life toward the Great Physician, the curer of the disease of sin

So we can see the real weakness of the idea that God will do everything It is based on a false conception of God and a false conception of man It makes God so absolutely sovereign that man is absolutely helpless It makes man so absolutely depraved that he can do nothing but wait on God It sees the world as so contaminated with sin that God totally transcends it and only touches it here and there through a mighty invasion This view ends up with a God who is a despot, ~~a dictator and not a Father~~ (and not a Father) It ends up with such a pessimism concerning human nature that it leaves man little more than a helpless worm crawling through the morass of an evil world ~~But neither God nor man is like this~~ (But) Man is ~~not~~ (neither) totally depraved, ~~and~~ (nor is) God ~~is not~~ an almighty dictator We must ~~continue to~~ (surely) affirm the majesty and sovereignty of God, ~~We must continue to declare with unmistakable clarity that God is all powerful and all knowing~~ But (but) this should not lead us to believe that God is an Almighty Monarch who will impose his will upon us ~~He has made us persons with freedom, free to choose the good and therefore free to choose what is not good~~ (and deprive us of the freedom to choose what is good or what is not good) He will not thrust himself upon us ~~Like the~~

²⁴ The Marshall Plan (1947), named after secretary of state George C. Marshall, was an economic program intended to aid in Europe’s reconstruction after World War II The preceding three sentences were altered in the published version “We must pray unrelentingly for economic justice, but we must also work diligently to bring into being those social changes that make for a better distribution of wealth within our nation and in the undeveloped countries of the world” (p. 122)

²⁵ The phrase “stands ever ready to give exceedingly abundant things to his children if they will freely accept” was replaced by “gives to his children such abundant blessings as they may be willing to receive” in the published version (p. 123)

²⁶ Cf. Ezekiel 2:1

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~~Father in the parable of the prodigal son, God will not~~ {nor} force us to stay home when our minds are bent on journeying to some degrading far country. But he follows us in ~~our shabby defilement~~ {love}, and ~~if~~ and when we come to ourselves and turn our tired feet back to the Father's house, he stands waiting with outstretched arms of forgiveness²⁷

Therefore we must never feel that God will, through some breathtaking miracle or a wave of the hand, cast evil out of the world. As long as we believe this we will pray unanswerable prayers and ask God to do things that he will never do. The belief that God will do everything for man is as untenable as the belief that man can do everything for himself. It, too, is based on a lack of faith. We must learn that to trust God with the expectation that he will do everything while we do nothing is not faith, but superstition.

What, then, is the answer to life's perplexing question? How can evil be cast out of our individual and collective lives? If the world is not to be purified by God alone or by man alone, who, then, will do it?

The answer to this question is found in an idea which is distinctly different from the two we have been discussing. It is not either God or man that will bring about the world's salvation. It is both man and God, made one by a marvelous unity of purpose, by an overflowing love and the free gift of himself on the part of God, by perfect obedience and receptivity on the part of man—these two together can transform the old into the new, and drive out the deadly cancer of sin.

The principle which opens the door for God to work through man is faith. This is what the disciples lacked as they stood at the foot of the mountain desperately trying to remove the nagging evil from the body of the sick child. Jesus reminded them that they failed because they had been trying to do for themselves what they could only do when he was behind them, when their very lives were open receptacles, as it were, into which God's strength could be freely poured.

In the Scripture two types of faith in God are clearly set forth. One may be referred to as the mind's faith in God, the individual intellect ~~asserts~~ {assents} to the belief that God exists. The other may be referred to as the heart's faith in God, the whole man is here involved in a trusting act of self-surrender to God. It is this latter type of faith that man must have in order to know God. The mind's faith in God is directed toward a theory. The heart's faith in God is centered in a person. **In a real sense faith is total surrender to God.** Gabriel Marcel has said that faith is really believing in rather than believing that. It is "opening a credit, which puts me at the disposal of the one in whom I believe." If I believe, he says, "I rally to, with that sort of interior gathering of oneself which the act of rallying implies."²⁸ Faith is the act of opening one's life to God. It is openness on all sides and at every level to the Divine inflow.

This is what the Apostle was getting at in his doctrine of salvation by faith. For him, faith is man's capacity to accept God's offer through Christ to rescue us from the bondage of sin. God, in his magnanimous love, offers to do for us what we can't

²⁷ Luke 15:11–32

²⁸ King refers to the thoughts of the French existentialist Gabriel Marcel on spiritual faith (Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, trans. Robert Rosthal [New York: Farrar, Straus, 1964], p. 134).

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do for ourselves. The humble and willing acceptance of this offer is faith. **Indeed, faith is the willing acceptance of a free gift. It is accepting our acceptance. It is reaching out to take in. It is man's whole nature wide open to God.**

So it is by faith that we are saved. Man filled with God and God operating through man will bring unbelievable changes in our individual and social lives. As we look out into our world we see that social evils have risen to ominous proportions. They have left millions of men wandering through a dark and murky corridor with no sight of an exit sign. Others have come dangerously close to being plunged [into] a dark abyss of psychological fatalism. If these deadly, paralyzing evils are to be removed from the world it will be done neither by God alone or man alone, it will be done at last by a humanity perfectly united with God through obedience. The unit of power for moral victory is God filling man and man opening his life by faith to God, as the gulf opens itself to the overflowing waters of the river.²⁹ Racial justice is a real possibility in this nation and in the world. But it will not come by our frail and often misguided efforts alone, neither will it come by a mighty act of God in which he imposes his will on wayward men. It will come when enough people will open their lives to God, and allow him to pour his triumphant Divine energy into their souls. Our long and noble dream of a world of peace may yet become a reality. But it will come neither by man working alone or God breaking in to crash the wicked schemes of men. Peace will come when men so open their lives to God that he will fill them with love, mutual respect, and understanding goodwill. Yes, ~~even~~ social salvation can only come through faith—man's willing acceptance of God's mighty gift.

Let me turn for a moment to an application of all that I have been saying to our individual lives. Many of you here know something of what it is to struggle with sin. Year by year you became aware of a terrible sin that was taking possession of your life. It may have been slavery to drink, untruthfulness, impurity or selfishness. As the years unfolded the vice grew bolder and bolder.³⁰ You know [knew] all along that it was an unnatural intruder. And you said to yourself "one day I am going to rise up and drive this evil out. I know it is wrong. It is destroying my character and embarrassing my family." At last the day came. You made a New Year's resolution that you would get rid of the whole base thing. And then the next New Year came around and you were doing the old evil. Can you remember the surprise and disappointment that gripped you when you discovered that after all of your sincere efforts the old habit was still there?³¹ In utter amazement you found yourself asking, "why could not I cast it out?"

29 The preceding five sentences were altered in the published version: "Social evils have trapped multitudes of men in a dark and murky corridor where there is no exit sign and plunged others into a dark abyss of psychological fatalism. These deadly, paralyzing evils can be removed by a humanity perfectly united through obedience with God. Moral victory will come as God fills man and man opens his life by faith to God, even as the gulf opens to the overflowing waters of the river" (pp. 124–125).

30 The phrase "grew bolder and bolder" was replaced by "widened its landmarks on your soul" in the published version (p. 125).

31 The preceding four sentences were altered in the published version: "At last you determined to purge yourself of the evil by making a New Year's resolution. Do you remember your surprise and disappointment when you discovered, three hundred and sixty-five days later, that your most sincere efforts had not banished the old habit from your life?" (p. 125).

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In this moment of despair you decided to take your problem to God. Instead of asking him to work through you, you said “God you must solve this problem for me. I can’t do anything about it.” As the days and months unfold[ed] you discover[ed] that the evil is [was] still with you. God would not cast it out, for he never takes away sin without the cordial co-working of sinful men. No, the problem could not be solved by your standing idly by waiting on God to do all of the work.

What, then, is the way out? Not by our own efforts, and not by a purely external help from God. One cannot remove an evil habit by mere resolution, nor can it be [~~strikeout illegible~~] done by simply calling on God to do the job. It can be done only when a man lifts himself up until he can put his will into the hands of God’s will as an instrument. This is the only way to be delivered from the accumulated weight of evil. It can only be done when we allow the energy of God to be let loose in our souls.

May we go out today big in faith, strong in our determination to be new creatures. God has made his free offer through Jesus Christ.³² “If any one is in Christ,” says Paul, “he is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.”³³ In other words, if any man is in Christ he is a new person. His old self has gone. He becomes a divinely transformed son of God.

One of the great glories of the Gospel is that Christ has transformed so many men, and made sons of nameless prodigals. He transformed a Simon of Sand into a Peter of Rock.³⁴ He changed a persecuting Saul into an Apostle Paul.³⁵ He changed a lust-fested Augustine into a Saint Augustine. Tolstoy’s beautiful confession in “My Religion” is the experience of men in every nation and every tribe. “Five years ago I came to believe in Christ’s teaching, and my life suddenly became changed. I ceased desiring what I had wished before, and began to desire what I had not wished before. What formerly had seemed good to me appeared bad, and what had seemed bad appeared good. The direction of my life, my desires became different. What was good and bad changed places.”³⁶

Herein we find the answer to a perplexing question. Evil can be cast out. But it will not be removed by man alone nor by a Dictatorial God who invades our lives. It will be removed when we will open the door and allow God through Christ to enter. “Behold I stand at the door and knock,” sayeth the Lord, “if any man will open the [door] I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me.”³⁷ God is too cour-

³² The previous two sentences were replaced in the published version. “God has promised to cooperate with us when we seek to cast evil from our lives and become true children of his divine will” (pp 125–126)

³³ 2 Corinthians 5:17 (RSV)

³⁴ John 1:42

³⁵ Acts 9:1–28

³⁶ King cites the opening paragraph of the introduction to Tolstoy’s book *My Religion* (trans. Huntington Smith [London, Walter Scott, 1900], p. 1). This discussion of Tolstoy was altered in the published version. “The measured words of Leo Tolstoy’s confession in *My Religion* reflect an experience many have shared. ‘Five years ago faith came to me, I believed in the doctrine of Jesus, and my whole life underwent a sudden transformation. What I had once wished for I wished for no longer, and I began to desire what I had never desired before. What had once appeared to me right now became wrong, and the wrong of the past I beheld as right. My life and my desires were completely changed, good and evil interchanged meanings.’” (p. 126)

³⁷ Revelation 3:20

teous to break the door down But if we will open it there will be a divine and human confrontation that will transform dark yesterday into bright tomorrows, and turn the ruin of sin into glorious victory³⁸

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TADd CSKC Sermon file, folder g6, Dr King's Letters

³⁸ The preceding two sentences were altered in the published version "God is too courteous to break open the door but when we open it in faith believing, a divine and human confrontation will transform our sin-ruined lives into radiant personalities" (p 126)