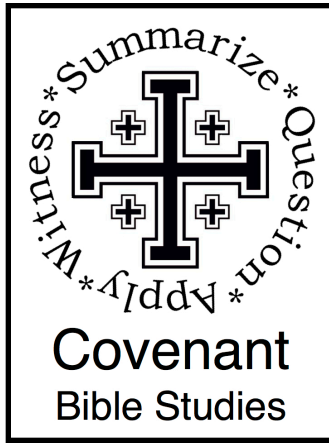


IGNITED FOR MISSION

The Church exists by Mission as Fire exists by Burning



By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapters	Page
Preface	1
Introduction	3
PART ONE: The Process	7
1. The Spark	9
2. The Igniter and the Ignited	13
3. The Wind	19
4. The Logs	27
5. The Heat	35
6. The Flame	41
The Conclusion	49
Our Seeking God	53
PART TWO: Some Examples	55
1. Paul	57
2. Augustine	59
3. Teresa of Avila	63
4. Blaise Pascal	65
5. Jonathan Edwards	67
6. Charles and John Wesley	69
7. Amy Ccarmichael	73
8. Viktor Frankl	75
9. Asa Griggs Candler	77
10. Oswald Chambers	81
11. E. Stanley Jones	85
12. C.S. Lewis	91
13. Joy Davidman	93
14. Mother Teresa	95
15. Henri J.M. Nouwen	97
16. Gretta Palmer	101
17. Morton Kelsey	103
18. James Reuteler	105
Afterword	107
Other Books by the Author	109
Endnotes	111

PREFACE

God confronted Moses in the burning bush. He himself caught the fire and became involved in God's mission, even though he did not feel up to the mission God had for him (Exodus 3:1—4:17). Isaiah felt his lips touched by a burning coal and responded to God's inquiry, as to who would become involved in his mission, with the words: "I will go! Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8) Here we have two Old Testament figures identifying their religious experience with fire. Not every religious experience is so identified, but fire is a significant symbol for it. In the New Testament fire is symbolic of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, when "tongues of fire" spread out and touched each person present (Acts 2:3). Blaise Pascal tied his religious experience on November 23, 1654 to Jesus Christ and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Fire was his most significant symbol. Like Moses and Isaiah he could pin it down to a specific time and place. His experience was symbolized by the fire of the mind and the fire of the heart, and it impressed him so much that he carried a description of the experience on a piece of parchment sewn into his coat until his death. One cannot forget such experiences, but they always have a forward thrust. This was also John Wesley's experience when his heart was strangely warmed on May 24, 1738. His greatest involvement in mission followed the experience.

Such experiences speak to me. I have noticed something very unique about them all. Those who have had them were ignited for mission. Religious experience was never an end in itself for any of them. The same thing happened to me on September 1, 1958, when my heart and mind were ignited with a similar flame. This book is an attempt to describe my spiritual and theological journey, which resulted from that experience.

There is no desire on my part to insist that fire be a symbolic element in everyone's religious experience, only that we recognize the validity of religious experience and its relationship to mission. To this end I write the following pages. It is my hope that religious experience will become a little clearer for us, enabling more of us to discover our own personal mission within our relationship to God. The symbolism of fire may or may not be meaningful to every reader, but the sense of mission as a result of religious experience ought to be. My intent is only to make the presence of God clear and a natural part of our experience. This will enable us to discover God's mission for ourselves, and to work together to fulfill that mission in the world.

In part two of this book I have included a variety of religious experiences. They are all different, but they are all the same. The individuals, who had them, were set on a new path. They were ignited for a new mission, which they were willing to share. I would like to invite you open yourself up to God and allow Him to set you on fire. The mission he will give you will be unique. God will not ask you to do anything for which he has not prepared you. He gives each of us one or more spiritual gifts, and he expects us to use them. He will ignite you for your unique mission.

INTRODUCTION

I did not grow up in the Church and so the remarks that follow are not intended to be critical. They are only intended to be helpful to the Church I have grown to love. As a young person I attended Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist Churches a few times, especially around Christmas and occasionally on Easter. As a teenager I even joined a Presbyterian Church, but I still maintain that I did not grow up in the Church. It was not the Church's fault; it was my own. Other things captured my attention and seemed more exciting, but that is precisely the problem. Why does the Church not have the power to attract and excite people, as does the world? This book is an attempt to deal with that issue.

In 1958 my job as a machine tool salesman took me into the southern part of the country. I moved to Dallas, Texas where I knew no one. This did not bother me at the tender age of twenty-three. I was old enough to find friends in the bars and nightclubs, and Dallas had plenty of those. My boss even suggested that I join a Church to find some friends. "You don't have to become religious," he remarked. The bars, not the Church, were the first places I went in search of friendship. They seemed more exciting, and you could go there at any time of the day or night.

The first thing I had to do when I arrived in Dallas was to find a place to live. It did not take me very long. I answered an ad in the newspaper and moved into a rooming house with four other young men. My roommate was a young man a few years older than myself who considered himself a Christian. He was a carpenter. As I recall it, he invited me to go to Church with him on a Monday night. I had never heard of going to Church on Monday night. To me Church was only something you did on Sunday. I do not recall whether I accepted his invitation that first time or not, but eventually I went with him. His Church, The Assembly of God, was very different from anything I had ever

experienced, and so was he. Perhaps that is why I went with him. He expected something to happen to me. He never said, “You don’t have to become religious.” I suspect that he was praying for me and trying to bear some kind of witness to me with words as well. His most effective witness, however, was not what he said, but how he lived. His life gave validity to his fumbling words.

Within three months my desire to find friends in the bars left me completely, although, I was still entertaining customers in some of the Dallas-Fort Worth area nightspots. I gradually became disgusted with that kind of a life style. My roommate had introduced me to something more exciting and a new way of life. I began to attend Church more frequently with him. On the night of September 1, 1958, he asked me if I was a Christian. I did not know what he was talking about, but his friendship and life style had already won me over. I said, “No, but I would like to be one.” We returned to the Church that night about midnight. The evangelist who had preached that evening was still there. My friend told him of my desire, and he just laid his hands on my head and prayed for me. I did not feel any fireworks, but I did feel my heart strangely warmed. I walked away from there that night a new person. God’s presence became a conscious reality to me from that moment to this. No matter what I am doing, I am aware of God’s presence. As I got behind the wheel of my car and reached for a cigarette, I found myself throwing the whole pack out the window. I no longer needed them. Without being told to, I gave up drinking, although, I continued to relate to those who drank.¹ Some other kind of Spirit got hold of me that night. I was intoxicated, but had no hangover the next morning. What Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17 was true for me: “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” As I looked at the moon and the stars that night they seemed different, but it was me that was different. I was seeing them with new eyes. A spark had ignited my heart that grew into a flame and compelled

me to seek fulfillment in the mission of Christ through the Church.

Why did I not join the Assembly of God Church? I do not have any rational reason for not doing so, other than I was not completely comfortable with their emphasis on speaking in tongues as evidence of having received the Holy Spirit. I spent many hours on my knees trying to receive that gift of the Holy Spirit. I honestly did submit myself to the best of my ability, but the gift of tongues never came to me. I felt somewhat guilty about this because those around me all spoke in tongues. Some of my friends tried to prompt me, but if it came, I wanted it to be the Holy Spirit and not my human effort at mimicking it. As I reflect back on my own experience, I find mine much closer to what happened to John Wesley at Aldersgate. My heart was simply warmed, and the Spirit of God began working in me. I felt his presence and began to respond to his guidance. This experience led me into both a personal and a social commitment to Christ and his Kingdom. It also led me into seeking a Church through which my faith and commitment could be expressed.

How then did I find my way into The Methodist Church?² One day when my roommate was not around to take me to his Church, I went to a Methodist Church with one of the other young men at the rooming house. I felt at home immediately. Two or three young people—I cannot remember the exact number—came to visit me within the week. They invited me to participate in the Sunday School Class and in a Thursday night Bible Study in the homes of the group members. They also went out visiting other young people and took me along many times. I did not know what I was doing, but they were teaching me something about bearing a witness to my faith. Many of them came from broken marriages. Some had been alcoholics. Regardless of their backgrounds, they found acceptance within the group. There was no attempt to get everyone to have the same experience. No one said you had to speak in tongues to possess or be possessed by the Holy Spirit; and yet, they did believe that

the Holy Spirit was present, guiding them. There was a note of assurance in the lives of the members of the group. They had been ignited by fire and they were in mission, both a personal and a social mission. In that environment I was nurtured in the Christian Faith, and I would like to share what I learned with others. The Church today needs to be ignited by fire so that it can approach its mission with meaning, purpose, and clarity.

*The Church exists by mission,
just as fire exists by burning.³*

Emil Brunner

PART ONE

The Process

1. THE SPARK

*It only takes a spark to get a fire burning... Kurt Kaiser⁴
A great flame follows a little spark. Dante⁵*

The United Methodist Church has been called a “connectional” Church. This means that separate congregations work together on a common mission, but what is supposed to connect these diverse congregations together? What is that spark that ignites them for mission? Albert Knudson pointed to “the note of assurance” as the most characteristic feature of the Methodist movement.⁶ It was Wesley’s emphasis on religious experience. This was the spark that ignited our common involvement in mission and forged us into a connectional church.

In recent years we have been guilty of neglecting religious experience, and this neglect has contributed to our institutional distress and consequent decline in membership. This is not to say that a renewed emphasis on religious experience at this time would cause us to grow. It may very well cause a further decline as many people who have not had such an experience fill our Churches and feel uncomfortable with any renewed emphasis on religious experience; nevertheless, it must also be remembered that our most rapid period of growth occurred when we offered people a note of assurance and an experience which set them on fire and gave them a mission.

William James noticed the problem a long time ago when he noted that very few Christians “had a sensible vision of their Savior.”⁷ James also analyzed and described many examples of religious experience in his classic, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. In one of these examples he quotes a Mr. S. H. Hadley, who gained a vision of his Savior and was ignited for a particular mission. Below are Hadley’s own words, which illustrate what ought to be the norm rather than the exception for Christians:

...with a breaking heart, I said, “Dear Jesus, can you help me?” Never with mortal tongue can I describe that moment. Although up to that moment my soul had been filled with indescribable gloom, I felt the glorious brightness of the noonday sun shine into my heart. I felt I was a free man. Oh, the precious feeling of safety, of freedom, of resting on Jesus! I felt that Christ with all his brightness and power had come into my life; that, indeed, old things had passed away and all things had become new. From that moment till now I have never wanted a drink of whiskey, and I have never seen money enough to make me take one. I promised God that night that if he would take away the appetite for strong drink, I would work for him all my life. He has done his part, and I have been trying to do mine.⁸

People need such meaningful and integrating experiences. They live out their lives in modern society relating to institutions which have little relationship with each other and which share few common values. The Church too has become such an institution and has succumbed to offering goods and services rather than experiences. It needs to be revived by the fire of the Spirit, so that its involvement in mission has meaning. John Biersdorf has written in, *Hunger for Experience*—a study of some vital Churches and communities—that the only characteristic in which the liberal Protestant Churches were distinctive was in their lack of interest in personal religious experience. “This lack of interest,” he continues, “comes at a time when interest in informal experiential religion is bursting out all over.”⁹ Church life in most of the mainline Protestant Churches has suffered much as a result of this lack of interest in the spark that could ignite the fires of mission.

As a result of the Church’s neglect, other groups have taken an interest in personal religious experience. While Protestant theologians have been devoted to accommodating modern thought and culture, others such as the charismatics, the mystics,

the followers of the Eastern disciplines, and—ironically—the humanistic psychologists, have been emphasizing the importance of religious experience. They have not been so awed by the influence of science and the secular world as have the mainline Protestants. While Protestants have been trying to help people in a secular world talk about religion, these other groups have been actively helping people experience the presence of God.¹⁰ These groups have been experiencing a tremendous growth in recent years, even though many of them have little in common either theologically or sociologically. The one thing that characterizes all of them is their search for and discovery of religious experience. They claim that one can experience the immediate presence of God and that such an experience gives great joy and meaning to their lives. They also affirm that life can and should be guided by one's awareness of the presence of God.¹¹ What I would like to do is to recall the Churches to their true vocation of providing occasions for persons to experience the presence of God. The purpose of the Church is not simply to talk about religious experience, but to help people experience God's presence in their lives and to recognize what it means to be guided by his presence in mission. People need to be ignited by the fire of the Spirit for mission, and it is the Church's task to provide such occasions and experiences.

If a religious experience is so crucial to involvement in mission, then why do our seminaries not do more research in this area as they train our pastors and leaders? Religious experience, as Andrew M. Greeley says in his introductory remarks to William James' work on religious experience, "is a thing that even today is simply not done in the upper levels of the academy." This is so in spite of the fact that no less than one third of the American population has had experiences such as those described by James.¹² Perhaps the real reason why mainline Protestants, like their seminaries, are not interested in religious experience is that they fear that such efforts will simply produce a "new pietism" in which religious experience would undercut social commitment.

Biersdorf, however, in commenting on the study of vital groups, says that groups such as COACT,¹³ Glide Memorial United Methodist Church, and St. Francis Presbyterian Church seem to be able to combine successfully personal religion and social commitment.¹⁴ This is not to say that religious experience and social commitment are always held together. The emotional power of religious experience can deepen one's prejudices and self-righteousness as much as it can be the driving force behind the personal and social mission of the Church. It certainly can and does support individualism and social irresponsibility at times. Persons possessing such experiences can also become elitist and place burdens of guilt and inadequacy on those who have not or cannot achieve similar experiences. The above dangers cannot be ignored, but they are not sufficient reason for the Church to abandon one of its primary responsibilities. The Church must accept the challenge, through its theologians and leaders, of establishing the norms for religious experience without forcing everyone's experience into the same mold. People need to be led into those religious experiences, which are faithful to, and not the denial of, the love of God.¹⁵

It is my thesis that everyone ought to and can have a religious experience and that it is part of the Church's primary task to make the characteristics of such an experience clear to people. "This generation," writes W. D. Weatherford, "needs to see that religious experience is not some vague, dreamy experience, but a genuine form of life, found in living friendship with God."¹⁶ Although it is not difficult to have a religious experience, it is difficult for many to recognize one when it comes. Therefore it is my purpose in the remaining pages to make clear just what a religious experience is and to argue for the necessity of such experiences to relate to the mission of the Church. Religious experience lies at the heart of the Christian's encounter with God, and it is the spark that ignites the fires of the Church's involvement in mission. Without this spark the Church becomes a dying ember, but with it the Church is set on fire for mission.

2. THE IGNITER AND THE IGNITED

*What is born of the flesh is flesh,
and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. John 3:6*

In order to understand what a religious experience is we must make a careful distinction between the igniter and the ignited. The igniter of course refers to God and the ignited to those of us who have experienced a rebirth or a kindling of our spirits from above. In regard to the former we must consider the existence and activity of God in our lives; in regard to the latter, we must consider the nature of the experience itself.

In addition to religious experience, we also have sense, aesthetic, and moral experiences. All four of these types of experiences are grounded in human nature; that is to say, we have a natural capacity for each one of them.¹⁷ Although all of us are capable of having a religious experience, there always exists the danger of confusing religious experience with one or more of the other kinds. Religious experience differs from the other kinds in that it is ignited by God and not by ourselves, although we must be open to the igniting presence of God. Religious experience is theological and not psychological in its deepest sense.

We all have presuppositions and mine is the positive existence of the divine-human relationship. God created us in his own image and that implies that he has direct access to our minds and feelings. He can communicate with us and we can hear or perceive that communication. He can speak to and in our hearts. All that is required of us is a listening ear and an attentive heart to comprehend his voice. In any genuine religious experience there is an intermingling of the human and the divine, and there is no way of eliminating the human factor without eliminating ourselves.¹⁸ What we need to guard against in regard to the human factor is that of creating our own religious experience. Such an experience can be created by untrustworthy mental

processes, which have little relationship to God. It can be the product of autosuggestion or the projection of our own desires, and although it may well resemble a genuine religious experience, it can also be nothing but the figment of our imagination. A genuine religious experience cannot be evoked by an individual; rather, it must be ignited by God, although it certainly comes through our minds and emotional feelings. A genuine religious experience is the awareness of the presence of God, but it is more than that. It is also an intimate friendship with the God who makes us aware of his presence.

That religious experience begins with God cannot be proven scientifically. The grounding of such an experience in God is of course based on my own presupposition, which can be divided into two parts. The first part has to do with God's existence and the second has to do with God's involvement in our lives. While I recognize that I cannot prove any of this to everyone's satisfaction, I believe that the burden of proof lies upon those who do not accept this presupposition. The existence of the world and the history of religions are sufficient proof for me that God exists and involves himself in our lives and that he directs history toward some meaningful end. What concerns me more than my inability to prove this presupposition is the all too human danger of identifying what God is doing with what we are doing. The reason why so many religions and denominations exist is due to our human inability to perceive the presence of God and submit ourselves to his guidance in the building up of his Kingdom.

If there is no God, then this presupposition is but an invention of human intelligence. If there is a God—and I believe that there is—then we are still faced with the problem of how to be sure that we are in contact with God rather than being involved in wishful thinking. One can have a false religious experience, and this needs to be admitted. A false religious experience would be one that has oneself as the source of the experience, rather than God. The only genuine religious experience is one in which God

has ignited it in the mind and heart of the individual. A genuine religious experience is one in which the individual becomes conscious of the presence of the God who creates, sustains, and directs his world. This experience is one in which we become a friend of this God, who is other than the product of our dreams and desires. The problem that we all face in regard to religious experience is how to know that ours is genuine. The fact that God speaks to us through our minds and feelings may make this difficult, but it does not make it impossible. One can know the difference between psychological and religious experiences. Bear with me as I attempt to explain how.

The igniter of a religious experience is Jesus Christ. This is not to say that all other religious experiences are false; it is only to say that Jesus has ignited in us an experience of God that is genuine. "From almost the beginning," wrote Albert Knudson, "it was realized that in Jesus' life and work there was operative not only a human quest after God but a divine quest after man. Of the two the latter was far the more important."¹⁹ It was this divine quest after humanity that has given to religious experience its most distinctive trait, which is:

In the presence of Christ we feel ourselves face to face with, One who is more than a prophet, more than an example, more than a symbol; we feel ourselves face to face with the Son, the express image of the Father.²⁰

The experience comes through Jesus Christ. We are ignited by his presence and compelled to share in his mission.

This experience with Christ is extremely personal. He, and not the Bible, is the living revelation of God. The Bible is only a written record of that revealing process that culminated in Jesus.²¹ Jesus is the living Word who ignites an experience of God's presence in us. We are drawn into a direct personal relationship with God through him. Through him we gain a sense of God's abiding presence. To experience him is to experience God and to experience God is to experience Christ. As a result,

we cry out with Paul when he wrote: “For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain.” (Philippians 1:21 NRSV) “I have been crucified with Christ;” he continues, “and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:19b-20 NRSV) It is Jesus’ act of giving that makes us sure that his revelation of God is genuine and that our experience of the presence of God in our lives is real.

Jürgen Moltmann is right in suggesting that the Crucified Christ is the “image of the invisible God.”²² The Crucified Christ is not the place where we would ordinarily look for an image of God. Our tendency is to conceive of a God of power, not a God of weakness; but because God came to us in a way that we did not expect, we can be sure that it was actually him and not a projection of our own desires. The distinction can now be made between what we would attribute to God, and who God really is, and how he acts in the world. Our guiding principle is Christ’s unreligious cross, by means of which God has revealed himself to us. “The modern criticism of religion,” continues Moltmann, “can attack the whole world of religious Christianity, but not this unreligious cross. There is no pattern for religious projection in the cross.”²³ What we find in the cross is very different from what we would naturally desire in projecting or creating the existence and activity of a god in the world.

The spark of a genuine religious experience is the Crucified Christ. While we may have religious experiences apart from him, they are not mature and tend to be projections of our desires and feelings. We may, for example, have a deep human experience as we observe a sunset or other handiwork of God, but these things only reveal the “hands of God.” These experiences we have with God’s creation are aesthetic experiences. They are incomplete. A religious experience has to do with being ignited by the fire of the Spirit of God who has revealed himself through the Crucified Christ. The Crucified Christ represents God’s direct attempt to

communicate himself to us. The very essence of the divine personality is that of self-revelation, and the most painful experience of the divine personality is to try and to fail to reveal himself. God, who gives freedom of choice to us all, does not force us to listen to or to obey him; hence, his desire to disclose himself to us is limited by our refusal to hear him speak.²⁴ God revealed himself through the suffering of the Crucified Christ. When we open ourselves to this disclosure, the fire of the Holy Spirit ignites us and we have a religious experience. The Holy Spirit causes us to cry out, “Abba! Father!” and “it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God...” (Romans 8:15-16 NRSV) We are then ignited.

Most religious experiences lack maturity at the time of their inception, and many of them are indeed based more upon human desire and projection than upon ignition by the Spirit. This does not mean however that they will not mature later and become genuine as contact with the Spirit is made. At the time of my own initial religious experience, I was not fully aware of the meaning of God’s revelation in the Crucified Christ; and I knew almost nothing about the scriptures. All I knew in that moment was that contact between myself, and God was possible, and I submitted to that possibility and was not disappointed. My experience was not a mature one at the time, but it was genuine. The moment I experienced his presence there was an overwhelming urge within me to grow and mature in Christ. I felt the same as did a young German woman who grew up in ignorance of Christianity. When she finally came under the influence of some Christian friends, read some from the Bible, and prayed, the following happened to her:

To this day I cannot understand dallying with religion and the commands of God. The very instant I heard my Father’s cry calling unto me, my heart bounded in recognition. I ran, I stretched forth my arms, I cried aloud, “Here, here I am, my Father.” Oh, happy child, what should I do? “Love me,” answered my God. “I do, I

do,” I cried passionately. “Come unto me,” called my Father. “I will,” my heart panted. Did I stop to ask a single question? Not one. It never occurred to me to ask whether I was good enough, or to hesitate over my unfitness, or to find out what I thought of his church, or... to wait until I should be satisfied. Satisfied! I was satisfied. Had I not found my God and my Father? Did he not love me? Had he not called me? Was there not a Church into which I might enter? ... Since then I have had direct answers to prayer—so significant as to be almost like talking with God and hearing his answer. The idea of God’s reality has never left me for one moment.²⁵

Every religious experience begins in immaturity, but the genuine one always has the same characteristic. There is a constant awareness of the presence of God that moves one towards maturity. As I reflect back on my own experience and subsequent growth, I now realize how immature it was. I knew very little of the scriptures or the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; all I knew was that God cared for me. I was like a child being reunited with his father. The consequence of my experience resulted in a new friendship with God and a desire to fulfill that friendship in and through his Church. I now consider the essence of religious experience to be friendship with God, a friendship in which I find a constant awareness of God’s presence. That awareness and his friendship, pushes me beyond myself to involvement in his mission. When God ignites us with the fire of his Spirit, we can never be the same again. We are ignited for mission, God’s mission in the world. We may not understand what that means at the time, but we cannot help but mature and cooperate with God. To fail to do this is to burn out and lose contact with the only one who can give zest and meaning to our lives.

3. THE WIND

*The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it,
But you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.
So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit. John 3:8*

A great deal of confusion surrounds religious experience. How can we obtain and possess such an experience? The present charismatic movement, the emergence of the evangelicals, and the emphasis on being born again has not contributed much clarity to what a religious experience is. Many of these contemporary emphases have only muddied the waters, making it nearly impossible for many sincere seekers to gain such an experience and be sure that it has come from above. The experience itself is simple. The difficulty lies in explaining it to others with clarity so that they can recognize the genuine article when it comes their way. We do not want to create an experience by swinging our hands in the air, but we do want to be able to place our hands in the wind of the Spirit and feel its presence.

Allow me again to define what religious experience is and then deal briefly with those elements of it that are most significant. Religious experience is a conscious awareness of God's living presence, which results in friendship with God; and for Christians, this experience is ignited by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This awareness of God's presence becomes the center out of which we find meaning and direction for our lives. We might have been religious prior to the experience, but the experience takes what had been previously peripheral and makes it central within our consciousness.²⁶ Such an experience is conscious and recognizable. "A strictly unconscious religious experience," wrote Albert Knudson, "would be neither 'experience' nor 'religious.'"²⁷ Religious experience then is a consciousness of the presence of God in which God becomes the foundation and unifier of our lives. He directs our lives and forms a friendship with us. The experience

is radically personal, but never private. All of us who have such an experience feel compelled to share it with others, even though it is extremely difficult to do. The reason it is so difficult is that we usually end up trying to describe our own experience, when we should be sharing the reality of the wind of the Spirit. The Spirit may very well affect others differently than it did us.

One of the major difficulties we face in sharing our experience with someone else has to do with the process by which it came to us. Was it gradual or sudden, quiet or violent? However the wind affected us, that is what we share with others, and that is precisely what confuses them. We communicate what it was like for us; hence, others try to copy our experience. What is important is not how we experienced the wind, but the fact that there is a wind. The validity of religious experience does not depend upon having a highly emotional experience; rather, it has to do with being able to say, "I feel the wind. It is indeed there." It is not important to remember the precise time when we began to feel it blowing. What is important is to be able to say, "I feel it blowing now." Perhaps we cannot point to the moment when it first began to blow. As long as we can say that the wind is still blowing, that is enough. The reality of the wind itself is more important than the way in which we experience it. What is important for us is that we do not create a religious experience. The assurance given by the Holy Spirit must be genuine.

I have defined religious experience as a conscious awareness of God's living presence, which results in friendship with God. We can be aware of this presence without ever having heard of Jesus Christ; and we may lack it, even though we have grown up in the Church with an extensive knowledge of the Bible. Jesus, however, came to make us aware of the Father and to call us into faithful obedience to his will. He appeals to us not in some mystical incomprehensible manner, but very simply through our intellect, our feelings, and our sense of morality. We have built into us intellectual, emotional, and moral consciousness; but all of these can be distorted and abused. Nevertheless, this is his

only way of communicating with us. The wind of the Spirit must touch us in our minds, our feelings, and our conscience or it does not touch us at all. There is no other entry point into our lives. This is the only way we can consciously experience the presence of God.

We often confuse religious experience because we emphasize one element over against other kinds of consciousness. Religious experience is not *only* based on the intellectual consciousness which tends to make “correct belief” the main element of religious experience; but neither is religious experience to be identified *solely* with our emotional consciousness, thus equating the spiritual with our “feelings.” Those who do this tend to expect everyone’s experience to be like their own. They express the importance of “correct feelings.” Feelings may be a confirmation or authentication of the experience, but they do not constitute the experience itself. A third type of consciousness is the moral. While religious experience must bear fruit in moral behavior, there can be good moral behavior without religious experience. Those who emphasize the importance of a moral consciousness tend to stress “correct behavior” as evidence that one has had a religious experience, but it should be made clear that one can live the good life without having any conscious awareness of God’s presence.²⁸

Of the three kinds of consciousness, the overemphasis on feelings seems to be the most prevalent. The original motive underlying this mistake is commendable; it was a necessary reaction to the rationalism and moralism of the eighteenth century, and much good resulted from it. Wesley and Schleiermacher represented this tendency; but as there are dangers in a one-sided intellectualism or moralism, there are also dangers in an identification of religious experience with our emotions.²⁹ Religious experience is not to be identified solely with any one of these three elements; rather, it involves all three. It has to do with thinking and doing as well as with feeling. Insofar as the psychological form or structure is concerned, there

is nothing unique, nor miraculous about religious experience. It is made up of the common elements of the physical life and conforms to its general laws.³⁰

God initiates religious experience for all of us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is the window through which we gain a glimpse of the face of God, the means by which we are sure of the wind of his Spirit. His Spirit exists apart from this revelation, but it is through this revelation that we come to know the heart of a God who is just, righteous, and loving. We know that he is reaching out to us even before we are able to exercise faith and works. This is described perfectly in Ephesians 2:8-10:

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God —not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

What is most important to bear in mind is that the experience is initiated by God and not by our own will, intellect, feelings, or moral behavior. These things only accompany religious experience; they have no power to create it. We interpret as rationally as we can what we have experienced. We respond to the experience with our feelings, but our feelings are not to be identified with the experience. In the light of this experience we begin to behave consistently with what we know about God through the experience, but the experience is not created by our moral behavior. There are only two steps into religious experience, and we only take one of them. The first step belongs to God, and he takes that step in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and the second step is ours, for we must respond in faith to what he has initiated in love and grace.

One of the most common mistakes we make in trying to help people have a religious experience is to try to make them aware

of the fact that they are sinners. We attempt to awaken in them a sense of guilt so that they will somehow begin to make religion central rather than peripheral in their lives. We hope that by doing this, they will have a religious experience, but the whole thing is like putting the cart before the horse. By doing this we are trying to help people create their own religious experience, and we are not expressing enough trust in the presence of the Spirit itself. The wind is really there. We do not have to create it. We just have to make people aware of it and let them experience it for themselves. Although it is much easier to have a religious experience with the help of Jesus Christ, it is possible to experience the presence of God without knowing about Jesus Christ. We discover this simply by reading the Old Testament. When Isaiah went into the Temple it was not his awareness of sin that created an experience of God's presence. It was the other way around. It was his experience of God that caused him to cry out:

And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!"
Isaiah 6:5 (NRSV)

A consciousness of God does make us conscious of sin and guilt, but it also brings healing; thus, Isaiah continues:

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." Isaiah 6:6-7 (NRSV)

Isaiah felt the wind of the Spirit. It made him aware of his own sin and guilt, but he also felt the healing power of the Spirit. He was ignited by fire for mission. The very next thing he heard was a question from the Spirit, who asked: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Isaiah was quick to answer. "Here am I;" he said in Isaiah 6:8, "send me!" At this stage Isaiah may not have

fully understood what he was being asked to do, for not everyone so touched by the Spirit of God responds so willingly; and yet, there is an excitement created in the heart of the person who becomes aware of God's presence and feels the burden of guilt lifted.

When we emphasize a consciousness of sin as the first step into religious experience, we are saying that religious experience consists primarily in struggling away from sin rather than entering into a relationship of friendship with God. It is true that in the presence of a holy God we feel very keenly our own sinfulness, but this can become an obstacle to religious experience. It can drive us "away from" rather than "close to" God. If a consciousness of sin is not the first step into religious experience, then what is? The answer to this question is quite simple. It is God's seeking³¹ grace. Seeking grace refers to God's initiative. It is the grace that comes "before" and prompts the movement of the mind, the emotions, and our moral consciousness. We must feel loved before we can be moved to love in return, and God makes us feel loved through his seeking grace. God took the initiative in sending Christ to express that love. God continues to make us feel loved by the testimony of his Spirit. "By the testimony of the Spirit," explained John Wesley, "I mean an inward impression on the soul whereby the Spirit of God immediately and directly witnesses to my Spirit that I am a Child of God; that Jesus Christ has loved me and given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out and I, even I, am reconciled to God."³² This initiating grace from God makes it possible for us to respond to and enter into a relationship of friendship with him. Although we do become conscious of our sinfulness at the same time, it does not become an obstacle because God himself has initiated the desire for friendship with us. "We love," says 1 John 4:19, "because he first loved us."

Jesus did not come simply to reveal where we went wrong; he came to reveal the suffering heart of God. Human sin broke God's heart, but no emphasis on human sin held a hope of

reconciling the sinner back to God. The only thing that could attract the sinner to God was a revelation of God's suffering love, that is, a reaching out by God to the individual, conscious or unconscious of sin. William James gives an example of a French Jew, Alphonse Ratisbonne, who had a religious experience without any consciousness of sin preceding his experience.

You may ask me how I came to this new insight, for truly I had never opened a book of religion nor even read a single page of the Bible, and the dogma of original sin is either entirely denied or forgotten by the Hebrews of today, so that I had thought so little about it that I doubt whether I ever knew of it? I can answer nothing save this, that on entering that church I was in darkness altogether, and on coming out of it I saw the fullness of the light.³³

That was my own personal experience. When I did think of sin or wrongdoing, I only thought of it in terms of what it did to me. I never realized that my sinfulness caused God much more suffering than it caused me. In spite of this, it was God who opened up a path of light for me. He revealed his grace to me, and only then did I really become aware of what my sinfulness was doing to him. By then sin was destroyed as an obstacle, for his grace had already reached me and penetrated into the depths of my heart. I could only respond in friendship in spite of my new awareness of sin. His seeking grace touched and overwhelmed me. I felt the wind of God's Spirit and it was real.

4. THE LOGS

*For where two or three are gathered in my name,
I am there among them. Matthew 18:20*

It is difficult to start a fire with one log. Two or three of them are needed. Space is also required in between them for the wind or air to pass through and for the flames to have space in which to burn. I am not saying that one log cannot burn by itself, only that it will burn more brightly in the presence of two or three more. Likewise the presence of God is more apt to be experienced wherever two or three persons come together. John Biersdorf mentions the fact that most people experience the presence of God when they are with friends. Out of 190 persons who responded to how they experienced God's presence, 113 of them said that they underwent such an experience when they were with friends. The other responses included 76 who experienced the presence of God through prayer or meditation, 45 who had their experiences in a formal service of worship or on the occasion of the Sacrament, 43 who said that nature was the medium for their experience, 16 who were reading the Scriptures at the time, and 10 who related their experiences to the use of drugs. These religious experiences were not just vague feelings about religion; in most cases, they happened at a definite time and place.³⁴

In view of the fact that Biersdorf mentions 10 persons who came to some kind of experience through the use of drugs, it is necessary for me to say a few words about this. I certainly do not deny that drugs can create a deeply emotional experience. Perhaps they can even open the way into a valid religious experience. William James suggests the reason why this is true when he discusses the relationship of alcohol in religious experience.

The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the sober hour. Sobriety diminishes, discriminates, and says no; drunkenness expands, unites, and says yes. It is in fact the great exciter of the Yes function in man.³⁵

My problem with alcohol and drugs in leading us into a religious experience is not that they do not have the power to do so; they may indeed have the power to help us overcome our resistance to the Spirit of God, but such experiences can also be creations of our minds and have little or no relationship to reality. If we need alcohol and drugs to have a religious experience, then we are not responding with our own free will. In both cases it is like waving our arms in the air to feel the wind. We create our own wind and do not necessarily feel the wind of the Spirit.

The key to a genuine religious experience is not to do things our own way but to open up to the wind of the Spirit. God cannot or will not force himself on us; hence, Christian experience is limited by our refusal to enter into relationship with him. Self-revelation is the basis for entering into relationship. God has tried to reveal himself to us. It is very painful for him when that self-revelation falls on deaf ears. It is painful for us as well when we desire to establish a friendship with someone who simply is not interested. We cannot force the person to accept our self-revelation and respond to us in mutual friendship. God will never force us into such a relationship. This becomes especially impossible when we are too wedded to the material things of life, as many of us in the United States are; but it is also impossible when we attempt to create our own religious or mystical experiences through alcohol and drugs. There is nothing difficult or complicated about religious experience. We do not really need drugs and alcohol. If human beings, through crude vocal cords and dull ears, can speak to and hear one another, surely God can make himself known to us and we can likewise respond to him.³⁶

What is it that enables us to hear him speak? “I do not know it and I do not understand it,” said Martin Luther, “but sounding from above and ringing in my ears I hear what is beyond the thought of man.”³⁷ We all have the same spiritual ears with which to hear—our minds and our feelings. Why is it that so many of us do not hear him speaking like that, while others hear him so clearly? We all are thinking and feeling beings. God has no other way to speak to us. The problem lies with our own ability to block his attempt to communicate with us by simply not being interested in him or his ways. It is very difficult to talk with someone who is not the least interested in what we have to say. Our words just go right on past them, hardly making any impression at all on their minds or feelings. We have to be interested in what God has to say to us before we can hear him speak. When we have that commonality of interest, the words will be heard and they will penetrate the depth of our being through our minds and feelings. They will ring in our ears and we will not be able to mistake them.

Communication with God involves a growing friendship with him, and there are some basic laws that make such a friendship possible. They are similar to the laws that govern friendship between persons. W. D. Weatherford reduces these laws to four, which have to do with character building, self-communication, common interest, and self-giving. He sums these laws up in relationship to religious experience as follows:

An enriched personality offered to God; a willingness to reveal oneself to God, knowing that God would never lead us astray; a growing interest in the things in which God is interested...; and the glad giving of ourselves to God and to His children—these are the basic laws of a growing friendship with God.³⁸

We enter into friendship with one another or with God on the basis of shared values and common interests. When these things are lacking, we have a difficult time hearing one another speak;

and we are unable to give ourselves totally to one another. When we withhold ourselves from God and the things he is interested in, how can we expect to know him or hear him speak? “It goes without saying,” continues Weatherford, “that two persons cannot be real friends if they have nothing in common in their thoughts and ideals.”³⁹ Perhaps this is the reason why so many of us have trouble hearing God speak or experiencing friendship with him. We have very little in common with his ideals and will for our lives. We are in open conflict with him. If we stand in rebellion to him, how can we expect to have a religious experience? The essence of such an experience is friendship, and friendship emerges through shared values and common interests. Communication with God becomes impossible without the fulfillment of these principles.

“The most powerful influence that can be brought to bear on an indifferent man,” insists Weatherford, “is the contagion of one who has had an experience with God.”⁴⁰ With this I heartily agree, for such a person helped move me from indifference to friendship with God. I lived with such a person for more than three months. I needed to know what it was like to be a friend of God’s, and those three months gave me an opportunity to observe a friend of God’s firsthand. It broke down my indifference and instilled within me a desire to become God’s friend. Bible study, meditation, and prayer all help us in experiencing the presence of God, but none of these things are as valuable as an association with a person who has had a personal experience of God’s presence and is living in that presence as a friend of God’s. Such a person helps us to move from indifference to friendship.

Growing numbers of people are discovering how difficult it is to experience the presence of God on their own, and so they search for communities that offer the intimacy of interpersonal relationships and authentic personal discipline within the context of religious experience. We need the nurture and help of the group to become conscious of God’s presence, but even more than the group, we need to be able to relate to a friend. There are,

however, dangers involved with both the group and a personal friend. We tend to allow them to act as a model for our own religious experience. For everyone to have a similar emotional experience is not the validation of religious experience but precisely the opposite. It only proves that we are creating our own experiences. This kind of thing often happens within groups where ecstatic emotion must accompany conversion. That such emotion must always accompany religious experience is a dangerous thing to teach. It causes us to create our own experiences, when we should allow the presence of God to come upon us in such a way that what we think or feel is simply a natural response to that presence. For some of us it will be highly emotional, but for others, very little emotional response will be present at all. It all depends upon the kind of person we are. We all react differently to God's presence in our lives. "If an Emerson were forced to be a Wesley," wrote William James, "or a Moody forced to be a Whitman, the total human consciousness of the divine would suffer."⁴¹

Our goal is not to make every log burn in the same way; rather, it is to give the logs breathing space so that the flames can burn more brightly. We cannot give specific steps into religious experience, nor can we describe to everyone's satisfaction what it will feel like. Religious experience has to do with an awareness of God's presence and we will all feel that with a different emotional intensity. What is important is that we become aware of God's presence, and I believe that is possible. The religious experience described by a 49-year old man in James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience* tells of one person's consciousness of God in very graphic terms:

God is more real to me than any thought or thing or person. I feel his presence positively, and the more as I live in closer harmony with his laws as written in my body and mind. I feel him in the sunshine or rain; and awe mingled with a delicious restfulness most nearly describes my feelings. I talk to him as to a companion in

prayer and praise, and our communion is delightful. He answers me again and again, often in words so clearly spoken that it seems my outer ear must have carried the tone, but generally in strong mental impressions. Usually a text of Scripture, unfolding some new view of him and his love for me, and care for my safety. I could give hundreds of instances, in school matters, social problems, financial difficulties, etc. That he is mine and I am his never leaves me, it is an abiding joy. Without it life would be blank, a desert, a shoreless, trackless waste.⁴²

I cannot tell from this description of religious experience what kind of an emotional response this man had. I do not even know to what denomination he belonged or what the nature of his theological position was, whether liberal or evangelical. He could have had an ecstatic emotional response or a quiet subdued one. His emotional response has little to do with the experience itself. What is important in the experience is that we become friends with God; and when we are friends with God, we cannot help but be friendly with everyone else. Getting right with other persons might represent the first and essential step into a religious experience, but it is also the first step following such an experience. It is not ours to say in which order such things must take place, but it is ours to say that friendship with God includes friendship with his other children. In the midst of such friendships the fires of the Spirit of God burn more brightly and can be felt more surely.

At this point we might ask ourselves why we cannot feel the flame of the Spirit with such assurance. Is it because we are out of relationship with another person? It could very well be. Being estranged or alienated from anyone can certainly affect our ability to become conscious of God's presence in our lives. Various sins can also cause us to feel guilty and make it difficult for us to respond to God without some prior assurance that he will forgive our sins and accept us. We find it difficult to face people whom we have mistreated or who have mistreated us; we

also find it difficult to pray when we know that we have offended God by our words and actions. Barriers are constantly erected between ourselves and other people; hence, we make ourselves miserable and incapable of any genuine relationship with anybody and especially with God. William James distinguishes between the religious experience of the “healthy-minded” and the “sick soul.” He states that it is possible for the “sick soul” to have a religious experience but that in many cases the doubt and depression never completely leave such persons. In discussing the cases of John Bunyan and Leo Tolstoy he has the following to say about it:

They had drunk too deeply of the cup of bitterness ever to forget its taste, and their redemption is into a universe two stories deep. Each of them realized a good which broke the effective edge of his sadness; yet the sadness was preserved as a minor ingredient in the heart of the faith by which it was overcome. The fact of interest for us is that as a matter of fact they could and did find something welling up in the inner reaches of their consciousness, by which such extreme sadness could be overcome.⁴³

I would like to be able to say that the flames of the Spirit can overcome the problems of the “sick soul,” but a lifetime of alienation and depression cannot be overcome in a moment. It takes time for the Spirit of God to break down the barriers we have built. That they can be broken down, at least in part, is the testimony of such men as Tolstoy and Bunyan and others. If we fall into this same category, we will have to be patient in coming to a full consciousness of God’s presence, but it will come if we endure. What we need more than anything else are friends who know God firsthand. Such friendships will help us move more quickly into a personal and deep fellowship with God, but space must be maintained between ourselves and our new found friends so that the fires of the Spirit have room to burn.

5. THE HEAT

*Were not our hearts burning within us while he
was talking to us
on the road, while he was opening the scriptures
to us? Luke 24:32*

Wherever there is a fire, there is also heat, and it is the heat that makes us aware of the presence of the fire. Christians have frequently compared their experiences of God's presence with a warming of their hearts. John Wesley was neither the first nor the last to do this, but his experience is as beautifully described as that of the two disciples who walked along the road with Jesus to Emmaus so long ago.

...I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

It is this warmhearted experience that gives us assurance that God is present with us. Wesley spoke of such a religious experience as "the strongest of all arguments" and as "the most infallible of all proofs."⁴⁴

Theologizing or philosophizing about God cannot generate the heat of a genuine religious experience, and this is why it is futile to attempt to prove God's existence to anyone. It is as William James has so adequately put it:

That vast literature of proofs of God's existence drawn from the order of nature, which a century ago seemed so overwhelmingly convincing, to-day does little more than gather dust in libraries, for the simple reason that our generation has ceased to believe in the kind of God it argued for.⁴⁵

Theological and philosophical formulas are only secondary products. They are like translations or interpretations of something deeper. Religious experience may evoke both an intellectual and an emotional response in us, but the latter is the deepest and also the generator of the former. “Only through experience,” wrote Albert Knudson, “do we know what truly exists. Through it we have first-hand knowledge.”⁴⁶ Only after we have felt the heat of the Spirit are we able to theologize and philosophize about the experience. Belief that theological formulas are true will never take the place of such personal experiences. A personal religious experience will always be much more convincing than any dogmas we establish by reasoning and logic. While it may be difficult to generate a religious experience through the intellect, it is not difficult to convince the intellect of religious truth as a result of having had a genuine warmhearted religious experience. Therefore, religious experience must be acknowledged as the chief test of religious truth, that is, of the reality of God’s presence.

I call our response to God’s attempt to communicate with us “faith.” Just as our five senses receive data from objective reality, the same is true of faith. Seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, and tasting do not create the stimuli to which they respond; rather, they receive those stimuli and respond to them. They can distort their response and their understanding of the stimuli, but the stimuli are still there. The same is true for the sixth sense, which I call “faith.” Faith is simply a response to God’s Spirit and seeking grace. His Spirit speaks to us through our minds and our hearts, and we respond with faith and trust. Such a response is primarily felt and described in terms of warmth, and only later do we struggle to describe it with words, which cannot adequately do justice to the experience. The same is true of our attempts to describe any of the experiences we have with the five senses. Faith can be trusted as much as any of the five senses. The experience of faith can be verified in the same way as the experience of any of these other senses, but one must be aware of

one problem. We cannot verify the experience of sight with persons who are blind and have never seen with their eyes. Such persons cannot understand the experience of sight, and they will find it difficult to understand what we are talking about. Two persons can however verify the objective reality of something when they both have the common effective use of the sense of sight.

Fortunately, faith is a sense that is available to all, even to those who are blind and deaf. It is not a gift or talent possessed only by the saints. The most impressive thing about religious faith is not that it is only found in the lives of a few saints but that it is something found in the lives of common ordinary persons as well. The unique faith experience of unusual individuals might conceivably be chance variations without further significance, but this cannot be so when so many ordinary persons claim to have similar experiences.⁴⁷ While I realize that not every ordinary person testifies to such an experience, it is also true that not every person has had an experience of sight. There are persons who do not perceive God's Spirit and seeking grace and are consequently spiritually blind, but in most cases nothing is seriously wrong with them. They possess all that is needed for faith to emerge. If their mental faculties and their feelings are intact, then they possess the power to use their sixth sense—FAITH. The validity of those who exercise faith improves as more individuals respond in faith and share something of their responses with one another. Their sharing occurs in two ways—through speech and actions.

The first response comes from the heart. As Charles Wesley has put it:

What we have felt and seen
with confidence we tell;
and publish to the ends of earth
the signs infallible.⁴⁸

Anyone who has felt the presence of God feels an inner compulsion to share this experience with someone else. One cannot experience God's presence without wanting to tell someone else about it. This is precisely what the disciples going to Emmaus had to do. They had to go back to Jerusalem and tell the other disciples about what had happened to them. It was like a fire burning within them and they felt the heat.

Another kind of response that takes place as a result of this fire within is the awakening of a moral consciousness within the heart. The conscience comes alive. We cannot go on as usual with the presence of God burning within us. That presence makes itself felt and our conscience comes alive. John Wesley pointed out this inner moral change that takes place as a result of religious experience.

I have seen very many persons changed in a moment from the spirit of fear, horror, despair, to the spirit of love, joy, and peace.... I will show you him that was a lion then, and is now a lamb; him that was a drunkard, and is now exemplarily sober; the whoremonger that was, who now abhors the very "garment spotted by the flesh." These are my living arguments for what I assert.⁴⁹

The above has always been the most convincing argument for the validity of religious experience.

Can such experiences take place without any knowledge of Christ? My assumption is that they can but that Jesus makes God known to us in a much clearer manner. We can test our experience against his life and teachings. My own experience came before I knew very much about him, and I have been comparing my experience with his life and teachings ever since. Christians are not the only ones who have religious experiences, but they do come to their experiences of the presence of God with the aid of Jesus Christ. I perceive the Christian type of experience as the purest and most highly developed form of religious experience. It is the same God that we experience.

Christianity does not deny the fact that other religious experiences are genuine; on the contrary, it affirms the validity of all experiences that are genuinely felt and not created by wishful thinking or illusion. Albert Knudson puts it this way in his discussion of Christian and non-Christian experiences.

It (Christianity) acknowledges that there is a light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. If there were no such light, if there were no native insight into religious truth, there would be nothing in men that would enable them to receive and appropriate the “revealed” truth of the Christian faith. Christian experience presupposes the common religious experience of [human]kind and is built upon it.⁵⁰

Although non-Christians may feel the presence of God, their experience of the presence is uninformed by Christ. When Jesus said that he was the way, the truth, and the life and that no one approached his Father except through him, he was not saying that the presence of God could not be felt without knowledge of himself; rather, he was saying that one could not come to a complete knowledge of God without becoming familiar with his words and works.⁵¹ Having a right concept of God is very important, especially to the Christian. “Our falsified and inauthentic ways of dealing with our fellow men,” wrote Juan Segundo, “are allied to our falsifications of the idea of God. Our unjust society and our perverted idea of God are in close and terrible alliance.”⁵² Even Christians can have a falsified idea of God if they succumb to creating their own experiences, and for this reason Christians must also constantly test their experiences of God’s presence against the life and teachings of Jesus. Although the revelation of God comes through Jesus in a way that it has never before come to us, we have clever ways of obstructing the view. When the revelation finally does break through, it causes our hearts to burn like fire. The experience cannot be contained within us. We have to respond with words

and actions. We feel as did John Wesley, who said, “The world is my parish.” We also feel as his brother Charles, who wrote:

O that the world might know
the all atoning Lamb!
Spirit of faith, descend and show
the virtue of his name.
the grace which all may find,
the saving power, impart;
and testify to humankind,
and speak in every heart.⁵³

6. THE FLAME

The Church exists for mission as fire exists for burning. Emil Brunner⁵⁴

Anyone who has had a religious experience has been ignited for mission. The spark must become a flame, or it goes out. The only question remaining is whether that flame will burn out of control or have some direction and accomplish something constructive. Just because we have had a religious experience does not mean that we have gained control over the fire burning within. The flame needs control and direction.

The flame resulting from religious experience symbolizes the Church's mission, and gaining insight into one's mission is the new Christian's most complicated and perplexing task. We usually begin by seeing our mission in very personal terms, such as personal witnessing to others about our own religious experience. As we mature we begin to see the social dimension of our mission. What is unfortunate is the way in which the personal and social dimensions of mission often become polarized and cause division within the Christian community. Our mission is neither, one nor the other, personal or social; it is both personal and social. The flame burns in both directions at the same time, but it burns with direction. It is not out of control.

One thing that enables the flame to burn in the right direction and under control is its link to the larger fire. When we have had a religious experience we want to be connected with others whose flames are also looking for greater expression, and so we come together in order to fulfill our common existence. As a fire exists for burning so Christians exist for witness and service; that is, for mission. In order to control our flames, we need first to understand two questions: What is the Church and, where is the Church? The first question has to do with the nature of the

Church and the second with its mission. The flames need to know in which direction they are to burn.

The first question about “What the Church is” can be answered from Matthew 18:20, Galatians 3:28, and Colossians 3:11. The Church is a fellowship of believers. This is its essential nature. “For where two or three are gathered in my name,” said Jesus, “I am there among them.”⁵⁵ The nature of the Church—what it is—is a fellowship of persons who have experienced the presence of God in and through Jesus Christ. This is why we call our fellowship Christian. This does not mean that we do not experience God in other ways, only that our experience of him in Christ colors our experience of him in other areas of life. What is common to our fellowship is our Christian experience, and this experience transcends all our differences. Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11 informs us of how little these differences mean in the light of our oneness in Christ. The new identifying mark of the Church is that it is composed not of equal-minded persons, but of dissimilar persons, indeed even of former enemies. According to Jürgen Moltmann, one can say of this Church:

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither Greek nor barbarian, neither master nor slave, neither man nor woman (and if we may proceed with modern relevance: neither black nor white, neither Communist nor anti-Communist) for all are one in Christ Jesus.⁵⁶

This means that, “national churches, class churches, and race churches are false churches of Christ and already heretical as a result of their concrete structure.”⁵⁷ In spite of the diversity of people within the fellowship of believers, the Church gains its Christian identity in its fellowship and experience of the Crucified One; and where this connection is lost, the Church loses its Christian identity. The flame goes out.

The question about “where the Church is” is more complicated. If we must say that the Church is a “fellowship of believers,” we must also say that believers exist to be “friends for

the poor and the oppressed.” This does not mean that the rich are to be excluded, only that they cannot be favored. It will be more difficult for them to come to Christ, and when they do come, they will have more hurdles to overcome. It is possible, but there are not many like Zacchaeus, who are willing to say: “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.”⁵⁸ The point being made is that the Church aims at the bottom rather than at the top of society. We reach out in friendship to those who need it most. It does not mean that friendship is withheld from the rich. Friendship is held out to all. Two New Testament passages are especially important. They are Matthew 25:31-46 and Matthew 28:19-20. The former, often referred to as the last Judgment, stresses the need to reach out to the poor and oppressed; and the latter, the Great Commission, emphasizes the universal scope of that outreach. The flame must burn in these two directions at the same time.

Jesus used two parables to describe the double foci of the Church’s mission, and they are the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan. As someone has put it, the Prodigal Son must learn how to walk the Jericho road. It is not enough simply to enjoy our Father’s company, or even to go in search of more prodigals to share with them the joy of the Father’s house. The next step is to learn how to walk along the Jericho road, that is, to learn something about serving others. This means that the mission of the Church involves both evangelism and social concern. In the former we share the good news and in the latter we bear the good news. We help to lift up the fallen and set free those who are oppressed. As Jürgen Moltmann has put it: “There is no alternative...between interior conversion and improvement of social and political conditions. There is no alternative...between the vertical dimension of faith and the horizontal dimension of love.”⁵⁹ The fire must burn in both directions and dimensions at the same time. Anything short of this is an idealistic illusion—as if a person were only a soul and not a body as well. E. Stanley

Jones described it in graphic terms when he said, “An individual gospel without a social gospel is a soul without a body. And a social gospel without an individual gospel is a body without a soul. One is a ghost, and the other is a corpse.”⁶⁰

Although evangelism and social concern cannot be separated, we can discuss them as two elements of the Church’s mission. Not everyone will have equal involvement in both. Some of us will be almost exclusively involved in evangelism, while others of us are involved primarily with social concern. We do not all have to aim at a balanced involvement in both, as long as we can appreciate and respect those whose involvement is different from our own. Our involvement depends upon our talents and the needs of the community in which we live. The application of our gifts is not limited to the needs of our particular community; however, our talents cannot be exercised apart from a relationship to some community or environment.

Evangelism and social concern, however, cannot be neatly separated. Fulfilling one leads us naturally into the other. The Church has a primary and universal obligation to share its good news with the world. This mission to all persons was born out of the early Church’s experience with the risen Christ, who commissioned it to mission and service to all peoples and nations. The obligation, as Jürgen Moltmann puts it, is to make sure that “no corner of this world should remain without God’s promise of new creation through the power of the resurrection.”⁶¹ For Christians this means that we must search for freedom: (1) to proclaim God’s liberating power publicly, (2) to assemble new congregations, and (3) to critically cooperate in the process of community according to the criteria of creative love.⁶² This last point means that even though we begin with an evangelistic task, we cannot avoid direct involvement in the social and political problems of society.

The Church must become directly involved in the world. The nature of this involvement is to penetrate the world and transform

it; that is, to reshape society and bring about its conformity to the Kingdom of God. This social concern of the Church for centuries has been understood in terms of paternalism, philanthropy, and charity; but today, this will simply not do. This understanding is not bad; it is just not the primary way in which social concern ought to be expressed. The aim is not paternalism, philanthropy, and charity, but social justice. The Church is not to be-there-for-others, i.e. to help the poor and oppressed; rather, it is to be-there-with-others. The goal is to eliminate poverty and oppression in the world so that paternalism, philanthropy, and charity are no longer needed. This is what is meant by reshaping the world to conform to the Kingdom of God. It is not that we build such a Kingdom with human hands, but that we involve ourselves in the world in such a way that we, and the world begin to live according to the principles of God's Kingdom. Paternalism, philanthropy, and charity may have a temporary part in our social concern, but they have no place in God's coming Kingdom.

To build this kind of a fire in society is bound to hurt those who thrive on things as they used to be or are. It means that the Church needs to learn how to read the plan of God in contemporary history and give the right direction to our contemporary leaders in society. The Church can never be satisfied with asking the rich to share out of their abundance with the poor; rather, the Church needs to direct society towards creating a situation in which the poor are no longer dependent upon the rich for the meeting of basic human needs. This dependency of the poor on the rich, says Jan Milic Lochman, is "a harmful limitation of Christian brotherly love." To help a person effectively," he continues, "demands a purposeful, organized and planned system of welfare for the whole sphere of men's social life, a reconstruction of society, not only the dealing with crying individual needs."⁶³ This does not mean that all of society's problems are simply turned over to the government, leaving the Church free to proclaim the good news and be about

its evangelistic task. Beyond the establishment of justice in society, the personal turning of one person to another is still necessary. We can never say completely that the cup of cold water must be given only through public health measures and economic planning. The personal element cannot be lost as social justice is being established, but the Church cannot continue to emphasize the methods of paternalism, philanthropy, and charity simply because they seem more personal. The emphasis must be upon the establishment of social justice, and the Church is guided here by its concept of the coming Kingdom of God where paternalism, philanthropy, and charity will not be necessary.

What has just been said has tremendous implications in regard to how the Church operates in the world. It means, for example, that although the Church is involved in the political arena, it is not to attempt to duplicate it in any way. The Church equips its people for political involvement, but it ought not to establish its own institutions in competition with those of the political order. The Church's role in regard to the political community, is stated very well by Wolfhart Pannenburg:

The Church's devotion is to the impact of the future of God's Kingdom on present life in all its dimensions. The specifically social activities of the Church (its establishments, schools, etc.) are subsidiary and temporary. The Church engages in these activities as a substitute for the political community. The Church's effort should be directed toward making the state ready and able to assume these responsibilities which are appropriate to the political structures of society. It is a strange twisting of its sense of mission when the Church becomes jealous of the state and wants to monopolize certain welfare activities. The Church's satisfaction is in stimulating the political community to accept its responsibilities. The only irreplaceable social contribution of the Church is

the personal integration of human life by confronting man with the ultimate mystery of life, with the eternal God and his purposes in history.⁶⁴

The Church is not to establish its own social institutions. It is to proclaim the Will of God and equip its people to become involved in the public social institutions, to improve them, to transform them, and to make them conform to the coming Kingdom of God. The political community is also subject to God and must be made aware of its responsibility. When the Church builds up its own social institutions, this fact is much easier to forget. The Church should encourage the use of the public institutions that everyone else has to use. Only after the Church demonstrates its support of these institutions does it have the right to pressure and influence them. In doing this the Church will find it much easier to become prophetic and true to its twofold mission of evangelism and social concern. Christians who have experienced the presence of God will move ahead with these two goals in such a way that the fires will not be able to be put out. This is because it is God who sets them.

THE CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages I have been trying to point out that religious experience is simple and natural. There is nothing complicated about it. There is only our resistance or submission to the God we can all experience. Everyone can and ought to experience him, but only those will, who submit to his desire to be present in their consciousness. I have attempted to illustrate how religious experience cannot be limited to our minds, our feelings, or our consciences; rather, it involves all three. We move into religious experience in the same way that we make friends with other persons. Common interests draw us together. If we want to be friends with God, we need to identify with his interests. When his interests become ours, we will become aware of his presence. It will be like a fire burning within us.

God does not enter our consciousness without changing us, and we need to be ready for that eventuality. George Macdonald has described what happens to us in a parable, which compares us to a house:

Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of—throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come live in it Himself.⁶⁵

When God comes in we ought not to attempt to control him; rather, we need to become submissive to what he wants to do with us.

Before dealing with the consequence of religious experience, please allow me to digress for a few minutes. One of the things that has caused many people a great deal of perplexity is the difference between a sudden emotional religious experience like that of the Apostle Paul and the slow realization of God's presence over a long period of time like that of one who has grown up in the Church. Perhaps a reference to the Parable of the House will be helpful. The front door through which the Lord enters can be held closed or it can be opened up. Religious experience depends upon what we do with that door. We all have one. If it has always been open or if we open it very slowly our religious experience will be of the gradual type. We may not be able to say when we first began to experience God's presence, but we know that he is indeed present. On the other hand, we may have kept the door shut for many years; and then through various circumstances we are led to throw the door wide open all at once. As we do this we invite the Lord inside and we experience the full impact of his presence in an instant. How can we ever forget the moment of his arrival? Whether our religious experience is gradual or sudden depends upon how we have dealt with the door. If we have opened it slowly over the years, our experience will be gradual; but if we have held it shut and then opened it up all at once, our experience of God's presence will be sudden and filled with intense emotion. The important thing is that the door is open and that we are aware of God's presence within us.

What is the consequence of religious experience? One cannot experience God's presence without being involved in God's mission in the world. Religious experience is no end in itself. It is a means to the end. We are ignited for mission. That is the consequence of religious experience and nothing else. The current dichotomy between evangelism⁶⁶ and social concern is

false. Those engaged in perpetuating one emphasis over against the other misunderstand the nature of religious experience. That is why they mistrust one another so much and continue to perpetuate the divorce between spiritual and social concerns. These two concerns can never be separated; one leads naturally into the other. One cannot have a religious experience without becoming concerned with social matters. On the other hand, one could be very much concerned with social matters without experiencing the presence of God in a conscious way; but even then, such a person may in the end find that it was indeed a religious encounter with the divine, when the Lord finally says:

Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.⁶⁷

I do not deny that this is a divine encounter, but it is not a religious experience. A religious experience is a conscious awareness of God's presence and direction. It leads us to feed the hungry, satisfy the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, and visit the sick as well as those in prison; but it does so with the full consciousness of God's presence. With a religious experience we do not meet God by accident; rather, we become involved in such forms of social concern because we ourselves have been ignited for mission. It begins with a "spark of grace," says Charles Wesley, but it ends with a "flame" that sets persons, nations, and kingdoms ablaze.

See how great a flame aspires,
 kindled by a spark of grace.
Jesus' love the nations fires,
 sets the kingdoms on a blaze.

To bring fire on earth he came,
 kindled in some hearts it is;
O that all might catch the flame,
 all partake the glorious bliss!⁶⁸

OUR SEEKING GOD

Moses experienced the burning bush, Isaiah experienced live coals in the Temple, The disciples experienced tongues of fire in the upper room, and Paul experienced Jesus in a blinding light on his way to Damascus. All of these are examples of persons who were ignited by the fire of the Holy Spirit for mission. Not all of us have had such dramatic experiences, but if we are truly aware of God's presence in our lives, then we are being ignited for mission. If you have not had such an experience, I would like to suggest the following prayer written by Peter Marshal:

Our Father, sometimes thou dost seem so far away, as if thou art a God in hiding, as if thou art determined to elude all who seek thee.

Yet we know that thou art far more willing to be found than we are to seek. Thou hast promised, "If with all thy heart ye truly seek me, ye shall ever surely find me." And hast thou not assured us that thou art with us always?

Help us now to be as aware of thy nearness as we are of the material things of every day. Help us to recognize thy voice with as much assurance as we recognize the sounds of the world around us.

We would find thee now in the privacy of our hearts, in the quiet of this moment. We would know, our Father, that thou art near us and beside us; that thou dost love us and art interested in all that we do, art concerned about all our affairs.

May we become aware of thy companionship, of him who walks beside us.

At times when we feel forsaken, may we know the presence of the Holy Spirit who brings comfort to all

human hearts, when we are willing to surrender ourselves.

May we be convinced that even before we reach up to thee, thou art reaching down to us.⁶⁹

Peter Marshall

*Every Saint has a past
and
Every Sinner has a future*
Oscar Wilde

PART TWO

Some Examples

Which of the following experiences
comes closest to your own?

I didn't have any tears, I didn't have any emotion, I didn't hear any thunder, there was no lightning. But right there, I made my decision for Christ. It was as simple as that, and as conclusive.⁷⁰

Billy Graham

1. PAUL (5 to 67)

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9 For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like scales fell from his

eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.” All who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem among those who invoked this name? And has he not come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?” Saul became increasingly more powerful and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Messiah.

Acts 9:1-22 (NRSV)

2. AUGUSTINE (354-430)

I probed the hidden depths of my soul and wrung its pitiful secrets from it, and when I mustered them all before the eyes of my heart, a great storm broke within me, bringing with it a great deluge of tears. I stood up and left Alypius so that I might weep and cry to my heart's content, for it occurred to me that tears were best shed in solitude. I moved away far enough to avoid being embarrassed even by his presence. He must have realized what my feelings were, for I suppose I had said something and he had known from the sound of my voice that I was ready to burst into tears. So I stood up and left him where he had been sitting, utterly bewildered. Somehow I flung myself down beneath a fig tree and gave way to the tears, which now streamed from my eyes, the sacrifice that is acceptable to you. I had much to say to you, my God, not in these very words but in this strain: *Lord, will you never be content? Must we always taste your vengeance? Forget the long record of our sins.* For I felt that I was still the captive of my sins, and in my misery I kept crying "How long shall I go on saying 'tomorrow, tomorrow'? Why not now? Why not make an end of my ugly sins at this moment?"

I was asking myself these questions, weeping all the while with the most bitter sorrow in my heart, when all at once I heard the sing-song voice of a child in a nearby house. Whether it was the voice of a boy or a girl I cannot say, but again and again it repeated the refrain "Take it and read, take it and read". At this I looked up, thinking hard whether there was any kind of game in which children used to chant words like these, but I could not remember ever hearing them before. I stemmed my flood of tears and stood up, telling myself that this could only be a divine command to open my book of Scripture and read the first passage on which my eyes should fall. For I had heard the story of Antony, and I remembered how he had happened to go into a church while the Gospel was being read and had taken it as a counsel addressed to himself when he heard the words *Go home*

and sell all that belongs to you. Give it to the poor, and so the treasure you have shall be in heaven; then come back and follow me. By this divine pronouncement he had at once been converted to you.

So I hurried back to the place where Alypius was sitting, for when I stood up to move away I had put down the book containing Paul's Epistles. I seized it and opened it, and in silence I read the first passage on which my eyes fell: *Not in reveling and drunkenness, not in lust and wantonness, not in quarrels and rivalries. Rather, arm yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ; spend no more thought on nature and nature's appetites.* I had no wish to read more and no need to do so. For in an instant, as I came to the end of the sentence, it was as though the light of confidence flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled.

I marked the place with my finger or by some other sign and closed the book. My looks now were quite calm as I told Alypius what had happened to me. He too told me what he had been feeling, which of course I did not know. He asked to see what I had read. I showed it to him and he read on beyond the text which I had read. I did not know what followed, but it was this: *Find room among you for a man of over-delicate conscience.* [Romans 14:1] Alypius applied this to himself and told me so. This admonition was enough to give him strength, and without suffering the distress of hesitation he made his resolution and took this good purpose to himself. And it very well suited his moral character, which had long been far, far better than my own.

Then we went in and told my mother, who was overjoyed. And when we went on to describe how it had all happened, she was jubilant with triumph and glorified you, *who are powerful enough, and more than powerful enough, to carry out your purpose beyond all our hopes and dreams.* For she saw that you had granted her far more than she used to ask in her tearful prayers and plaintive lamentations. You converted me to

yourself, so that I no longer desired a wife or placed any hope in this world but stood firmly upon the rule of faith, where you had shown me to her in a dream so many years before. And you *turned her sadness into rejoicing*, into joy far fuller than her dearest wish, far sweeter and more chaste than any she had hoped to find in children begotten of my flesh.⁷¹

3. TERESA OF AVILA (1515-1582)

I was unable to pray or read, but was like a person stunned by all this tribulation and fear that the devil might be deceiving me, and quite upset and worn out, with not the least idea what to do. I have sometimes—often indeed—found myself in this kind of affliction, but never, I think, have I been in such straits as I was then. I was like this for four or five hours, and neither in Heaven nor on earth was there any comfort for me: the Lord permitted my fears of a thousand perils to cause me great suffering.⁷²

I was extremely fearful, as I have said, and my heart trouble made things worse, with the result that I seldom dared to remain alone in a room by day.⁷³

While I was reciting it (*Veni, Creator*), there came to me a transport so sudden that it almost carried me away: I could make no mistake about this, so clear was it. This was the first time the Lord had granted me the favour of any kind of rapture. I heard these words: “I will have thee converse now, not with men, but with angels.” This simply amazed me for my soul was greatly moved and the words were spoken to me in the depths of the spirit. For this reason they made me afraid, though on the other hand they brought me a great deal of comfort.⁷⁴

4. BLAISE PASCAL (1623-1662)

The Background

On the night of November 23, Pascal was alone in his bedroom reading the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John, the high-priestly prayer of Jesus spoken before his final suffering and sacrifice. As Pascal read and reread these words he was caught up in an experience of burning, radiant ecstasy. The vacuum in his desperate life was suddenly and mysteriously filled. From that moment onward he knew in his heart of hearts what he had to do and to become. As the ecstasy began to fade he reached for the nearest piece of paper and began to write quickly, fervently:

The Experience

The year of grace, 1654
Monday, 23rd November, feast of Saint Clement,
Pope and Martyr, and of others in the martyrology
Vigil of Saint Chrysogonus, Martyr, and others,
From about half past ten until about half past twelve
FIRE
God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob
not of the philosophers and savants
Certitude, Certitude. Feeling. Joy. Peace.
God of Jesus Christ.
My God and Thy God
“Thy God shall be my God”
Forgetfulness of the world, and of everything except God
He is to be found only in the ways taught in the Gospel
Grandeur of the human soul
Righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee,
but I have known Thee
Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy
I have fallen from Him

“They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water”
My God, wilt Thou forsake me?
May I not fall from Him for ever
This is eternal life, that they might know Thee, the only
true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent
Jesus Christ
Jesus Christ
I have fallen away; I have fled from Him,
denied Him, crucified Him
May I not fall away from Him for ever
We hold Him only by the ways taught in the Gospel
Renunciation total and sweet
Total submission to Jesus Christ and to my director
Eternally in joy for a day’s exercise on earth
I will not forget Thy word. Amen.⁷⁵

5. JONATHAN EDWARDS (1703-1758)

The appearance of everything was altered; there seemed to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost everything. God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in everything; in sun, moon and stars; in the clouds and blue sky; in the grass, flowers and trees; in the water and all nature; which used greatly to fix my mind. And scarce anything, among all the works of nature, was so sweet to me as thunder and lightning; formerly nothing had been so terrible to me. Before, I used to be uncommonly terrified with thunder, and to be struck with terror when I saw a thunderstorm rising; but now, on the contrary, it rejoices me.⁷⁶

6. CHARLES AND JOHN WESLEY

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

“My first year at college I lost in diversions.”

“What would you have me be a saint all at once?”

“The next I set myself to study. Diligence led to serious thinking.”

The Experience of Charles Wesley

Upon resigning his position with George Ogelthorpe in May, of 1738, Charles moved into the home of a devout family (the Brays), where he continued to struggle both spiritually and physically. On May 21st, after a visit from John, Charles heard a voice saying as he slept, “In the name of Jesus Christ, arise, and believe, and thou shalt be healed.” (It was in fact Mr. Bray’s sister who believed God had told her to speak to Charles in a dream.) Charles picked up the Bible, where his eyes lighted first on the words “Truly my hope is even in Thee” and on “He hath put a new song into my mouth, even a song of thanksgiving unto our God.” The next morning, as he himself says, he “waked under the protection of Christ, and gave himself up, soul and body, to him.” He now found himself, as he wrote in his journals, “at peace with God.” His health began to recover, and several days later he wrote the hymn “Where Shall My Wondering Soul begin.”

Where shall my wondering soul begin?

How shall I all to heaven aspire?

A slave redeemed from death and sin,

A brand plucked from eternal fire,

How shall I equal triumphs raise,

And sing my great deliverer’s praise?⁷⁷

Charles had been the first at Oxford to be called a Methodist; so now he was the first to have the experience of religious

sureness, which was to be the outstanding characteristic of the Methodist Revival. What a day May 21st must have been for John, as he watched his brother, sick in body, but radiant in spirit because of his new satisfaction! On the eleventh anniversary of his religious experience, Charles wrote:

O for a thousand tongues to sing,
My great Redeemer's Praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of his grace.⁷⁸

John Wesley (1703-1791)

“I went to Georgia to save the Indians,
but alas, who will save me?”

“...I want that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it...though many may imagine they have it, who have it not.”

The Experience of John Wesley

When I met Peter Böhler again, he consented to put the dispute upon the issue which I desired, namely, Scripture and experience. I first consulted the Scripture. But when I set aside the glosses of men, and simply considered the words of God, comparing them together, endeavouring to illustrate the obscure by the plainer passages; I found they all made against me, and was forced to retreat to my last hold, “that experience would never agree with the literal interpretation of those scriptures. Nor could I therefore allow it to be true, till I found some living witnesses of it.” He replied, he could show me such at any time; if I desired it, the next day. And accordingly, the next day he came again with three others, all of whom testified, of their own personal experience, that a true living faith in Christ is inseparable from a sense of pardon for all past, and freedom from all present, sins. They added with one mouth, that this faith was the gift, the free gift of God; and that he would surely bestow it

upon every soul who earnestly and perseveringly sought it. I was now thoroughly convinced; and, by the grace of God, I resolved to seek it unto the end,

By absolutely renouncing all dependence, in whole or in part, upon my own works or righteousness; on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, though I knew it not, from my youth up.

By adding to the constant use of all the other means of grace, continual prayer for this very thing, justifying, saving faith, a full reliance on the blood of Christ shed for me; a trust in Him, as my Christ, as my sole justification, sanctification, and redemption.

I continued thus to seek it, (though with strange indifference, dullness, and coldness, and unusually frequent relapses into sin,) till Wednesday, May 24. I think it was about five this morning, that I opened my Testament on those words, *Ta megista emin kai timia epaggelmata dedoretai, ina genesthe theias koinonoi phuseos*. "There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that ye should be partakers of the divine nature." (2 Pet. i. 4.) Just as I went out, I opened it again on those words, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." In the afternoon I was asked to go to St. Paul's. The anthem was, "Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice. O let thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? For there is mercy with thee; therefore shalt thou be feared. O Israel, trust in the Lord: For with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins."

In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change, which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my

heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation: And an assurance was given me, that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there, what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, "This cannot be faith; for where is thy joy?" Then was I taught, that peace and victory over sin are essential to faith in the Captain of our salvation: But that, as to the transports of joy that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply, God sometimes giveth, sometimes withholdeth them, according to the counsels of his own will.

After my return home, I was much buffeted with temptations; but cried out, and they fled away. They returned again and again. I as often lifted up my eyes, and He "sent me help from his holy place." And herein I found the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving, yea, fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now, I was always conqueror.⁷⁹

May 21 and 24, 1738

7. AMY CARMICHAEL (1867-1951)

It was a dull Sunday morning in Belfast. My brothers and sisters and I were returning with our mother from church when we met a poor pathetic old woman who was carrying a heavy bundle. We had never seen such a thing in Presbyterian Belfast on Sunday, and, moved by sudden pity, my brothers and I turned with her, relieved her of the bundle, took her by her arms as though they had been handles, and helped her along. This meant facing all the respectable people who were, like ourselves, on their way home. It was a horrid moment. We were only two boys and a girl, and not at all exalted Christians. We hated doing it. Crimson all over (at least we felt crimson, soul and body of us) we plodded on, a wet wind blowing us about, and blowing, too, the rags of that poor old woman, till she seemed like a bundle of feathers and we unhappily mixed up with them. But just as we passed a fountain, recently built near the kerbstone, this mighty phrase was suddenly flashed as it were through the grey drizzle:

Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide...

If any man's work abide—I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. The fountain, the muddy street, the people with their politely surprised faces, all this I saw, but nothing else. The blinding flash had come and gone, the ordinary was all about us. We went on. I said nothing to anyone, but I knew that something had happened that had changed life's values. Nothing could ever matter again but the things that were eternal.⁸⁰

8. VIKTOR FRANKL (1905-1997)

Viktor Frankl worked as a psychotherapist with suicidal patients prior to the Second World War. He continued his work until 1942, when he and his wife and parents were deported to Nazi death camps. Viktor spent the next three years in four camps, not knowing the fate of his loved ones and undergoing much humiliation and brutality.

He later wrote *Man's Search for Meaning*, which describes his experiences in the camps and speaks of the importance of “meaning” in life. Those prisoners, who were unable to develop and live a meaning that took their cruel reality into account, without losing their humanity, lost the will to live.

Prior to this except, Viktor described the difficulty the prisoners had adjusting to liberation. “‘Freedom’ — we repeated to ourselves, and yet we could not grasp it. We had said this word so often during all the years we dreamed about it, that it had lost its meaning.”⁸¹

Viktor needed help to move from this emotional numbness. Throughout his imprisonment, verses from scripture would come into his mind when he was trying to discern an attitudinal path that would help him through his ordeal. He recounts how he was guided at this time.

One day, a few days after the liberation, I walked through the country past flowering meadows, for miles and miles, toward the market town near the camp. Larks rose to the sky and I could hear their joyous song. There was no one to be seen for miles around; there was nothing but the wide earth and sky and the lark's jubilation and the freedom of space. I stopped looked around, and up to the sky — and then I went down on my knees. At that moment there was very little I knew of myself or of the world — I had but one sentence in mind — always the

same: “I called to the Lord from my narrow prison and He answered me in the freedom of space.”

How long I knelt there and repeated this sentence, memory can no longer recall. But I know that on that day, in that hour, my new life started. Step for step I progressed, until I again became a human being.⁸²

Viktor could not feel joy at the beauty of nature or his new freedom. He could feel gratitude. And that movement toward God was all that was needed to start the healing.⁸³

9. ASA GRIGGS CANDLER, JR. (1851-1929)

The Background

My own youth may or may not have been exceptional in one thing. I do not recall any period of intellectual doubt concerning the truth of the Christian religion. From earliest childhood Bible-reading and prayer were standard at my home, and at least two church services each Sunday. The sky and the sunlight were not more real to me than my faith in God and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. However, not until mature years did I discover Christ for myself as the power of victory. I inherited the point of view called enlightened capitalism. I was later to learn the full meaning of Christian social responsibility.

I cannot present a story of intellectual or philosophical revolt. In all honesty there has been none. My struggle, however, was not without storm and stress; it simply occurred on another sector of the battle line. Prosperity and affluence present hazards of their own. My story was the old familiar one of falling in with the wrong crowd. The habits of my associates gradually became my habits. At the time, if I experienced qualms of conscience about moral laxity, I stifled them. Day by day I became more deeply addicted to the use of strong drink, and was hardly aware that the habit had me by the throat. Altogether this period of defeat and despair lasted about three years. It gradually dawned upon me that I could no longer help myself. My will, strong in other things, was impotent.

The Experience

One afternoon my chauffeur was driving me home. I was about three quarters drunk at the time. I was unusually troubled in my soul. Suddenly I heard a voice, just as clearly as I have ever heard anyone. My chauffeur did not hear the voice, but I was surprised that he did not. The voice said to me, "You must get rid of your *self*; you must renounce your *self*; you must reject your *self*." These were surprising words. I should not have been

surprised if the voice had commanded me to stop drinking. But this was not the message at all. It was my *self* that I was commanded to give up. My *self* was my trouble—my love of myself, my fear of anything that might frustrate my wishes. My will had always been the central interest in my life. False pride had erected a barrier between my soul and God. This pride had to go—in one way or another. I am grateful now that it was taken away—even through alcoholism.

It was just my *will*, my *self*, that I had to renounce. Until a man gets rid of himself, that inner circle of sacred self-love, he is never good for anything—whether he is rich or poor. But the words staggered me, and for a long time I did not understand them. I blubbered in my drunken voice: “Lord, how shall I give up myself? I can’t do it. How shall I do it?”

I went into the house. My wife, the most wonderful and understanding woman I have ever known, met me, as she always did, and led me to my favorite chair. She got out my slippers and cigars. I knew I was breaking her heart as well as the bishop’s [his uncle] heart. I knew I was setting an example that might destroy my sons. I had always been careful not to sin against anyone else, but I sinned every day against myself, and the worst sins are those a man commits against himself. In sinning against myself I was sinning against all men. I was the most miserable man in the world, yet for the first time in my life all meekness and humility.

I told Mrs. Candler what had happened, and we knelt in prayer. She prayed the most beautiful prayer I have ever heard. I said, “Lord, if I try to renounce myself, will you help me?” All self-sufficiency was gone; I was as poor in spirit as a newborn babe. I now understand Jesus’ words: “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” I felt the assurance that God had made my problem his own.

We were weeping, but for the first time in my life I experienced peace of soul. There was an open bottle of liquor on

the table—there always was—and I asked Mrs. Candler if she had a ribbon in the house. She said she did. I asked her to go and get it. Without saying a word, she went upstairs and presently returned with one. I said: “Put the cork back in the bottle, and tie the cork in with the ribbon. Then tie the most beautiful bowknot you ever tied.” She did. Then we put the bottle in the closet, and there it sits until this day. From that hour I was delivered from the desire for drink—but more, I was delivered from selfishness and the love of money. I am as certain as I am of my own name, as certain as I am of anything I have ever known or experienced, that Christ was dealing directly with me, forgiving my sins, giving me newness of life in his Spirit.

I have found his grace always sufficient; I owe him everything, everything. I have learned to put my trust in him alone—not in property, not in prestige, not in pride.⁸⁴

10. OSWALD CHAMBERS (1874-1917)

I was in Dunoon College as a tutor in philosophy when Dr. F.B. Meyer came and spoke about the Holy Spirit. I determined to have all that was going, and went to my room and asked God simply and definitely for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, whatever that meant. From that day on for four years, nothing but the overruling grace of God and kindness of friends kept me out of an asylum.

God used me during those years for the conversion of souls, but I had no conscious communion with Him. The Bible was the dullest, most uninteresting book in existence, and the sense of depravity, the vileness and bad-motivedness of my nature, was terrific. I see now how that God was taking me by the light of the Holy Spirit and His Word through every ramification of my being.

The last three months of those years things reached a climax, I was getting very desperate. I knew no one who had what I wanted; in fact I did not know what I did want. But I knew that if what I had was all the Christianity there was, the thing was a fraud. Then Luke 11:13 got hold of me—"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"

But how could I, bad motivated as I was, possibly ask for the gift of the Holy Spirit? Then it was borne in upon me that I had to claim the gift from God on the authority of Jesus Christ and testify to having done so. But the thought came—if you claim the gift of the Holy Spirit on the word of Jesus Christ and testify to it, God will make it known to those who know you best how bad you are in heart. And I was not willing to be a fool for Christ's sake. But those of you who know the experience, know very well how God brings one to the point of utter despair, and I got to the place where I did not care whether everyone knew how bad I

was; I cared for nothing on earth, saving to get out of my present condition.

At a little meeting held during a mission in Dunoon, a well known lady was asked to take the after meeting. She did not speak, but set us to prayer, and then sang “Touch me again, Lord.” I felt nothing, but I knew emphatically my time had come, and I rose to my feet. I had no vision of God, only a sheer dogged determination to take God at His word and to prove this thing for myself, and I stood up and said so.

That was bad enough, but what followed was ten times worse. After I had sat down the lady worker, who knew me well, said: “That is very good of our brother, he has spoken like that as an example to the rest of you.”

Up I got again and said: “I got up for on one (else’s) sake, I got up for my own sake; either Christianity is a downright fraud, or I have not got hold of the right end of the stick.” And then and there I claimed the gift of the Holy Spirit in dogged committal on Luke 11:13.

I had no vision of heaven or of angels, I had nothing. I was as dry and empty as ever, no power of realization of God, no witness of the Holy Spirit. Then I was asked to speak at a meeting and forty souls came out to the front. Did I praise God? No, I was terrified and left them to the workers, and went to Mr. MacGregor (a friend) and told him what had happened, and he said: “Don’t you remember claiming the Holy Spirit as a gift on the word of Jesus, and that He said: ‘Ye shall receive power...?’ This is the power from on high.” Then like a flash something happened inside me, and I saw that I had been wanting power in my own hand, so to speak, that I might say—Look what I have by putting my all on the altar.

If the four previous years had been hell on earth, these five years have truly been heaven on earth. Glory be to God, the last aching abyss of the human heart is filled to overflowing with the

love of God. Love is the beginning, love is the middle and love is the end. After He comes in, all you see is “Jesus only, Jesus ever.”

When you know what God has done for you, the power and the tyranny of sin is gone and the radiant, unspeakable emancipation of the indwelling Christ has come, and when you see men and women who should be princes and princesses with God bound up by the show of things—oh, you begin to understand what the Apostle meant when he said he wished himself accursed from Christ that men might be saved.⁸⁵

11. E. STANLEY JONES (1884-1973)

Religious Experience

My first remembered contact with religion was when, as a little boy, I went to the Sunday school at Frederick Avenue Methodist Church, South, in Baltimore, dressed in a brand new suit. To call attention to my new suit, and me, I took a collection plate and began to pass it around before the grow-ups standing chatting. I didn't hope to get any money. I hoped to collect compliments for my new suit and incidentally for myself. Hardly an auspicious beginning with religion. And yet I had unwittingly run into the central problem in religion—the problem of the self-assertive self.

My second crisis contact with religion was when, about ten years later, at the age of fifteen, I was in the gallery of the Memorial Church, with a group of boys, mostly chums. The speaker was an Englishman from John Bunyan's church in England. He was a man of God, and at the close of his address he pointed his finger to where we were seated and said, "Young men, Jesus said, 'He that is not with me is against me.'" It went straight to my heart. I knew I wasn't with him, but I didn't want to be against him. It shook me. I turned to my chum and said: "I'm going to give myself to Christ. Will you?" He replied: "No, I'm going to see life first." Then I saw I would have to go alone, and did. I climbed over the young men, went down the steps and up the aisle to the altar, and took my place among the seekers. I felt undone and wept—wept because I was guilty and estranged. I fumbled for the latchstring of the Kingdom of God, missed it, for they didn't tell me the steps to find. I stood up at the close when they asked if it was all right with us. I wanted the Kingdom of God, wanted reconciliation with my heavenly Father, but took church membership as a substitute. My mother came into my room next morning and silently kissed me before I got out of bed. Her son was a Christian. But I soon found I wasn't. I felt

religious for a few weeks, and then it all faded out and I was back again exactly where I was before, the springs of my character and my habit formation unchanged. I had been horizontally converted, but not vertically. I was outwardly in, but not inwardly in. It was a sorry impasse. I could have lived out my life on that level the balance of my days, a cancelled-out person, neither here nor there.

But as I look back, I am not sorry I went through that half-conversion which was a whole failure. For the fact that I got out of that failure into the real thing may be used to encourage those who have settled down to a compromised stalemate, dull, listless, and with no note of victory. They, too, can get into the real thing. So my failure can be used to help others to victory.

The real thing came two years later. An evangelist, Robert J. Bateman, came to Memorial Church. Through his rough exterior I saw there was reality within. He was a converted alcoholic, on fire with God's love. I said to myself, "I want what he has." This time I was deadly serious. I was not to be put off by catch phrases and slogans. I wanted the real thing or nothing. No halfway houses for me; I wanted my home. For three days I sought. During those three days I went to the altar twice. On one of those times my beloved teacher, Miss Nellie Logan, knelt alongside me and repeated John 3:16 this way: "God so loved Stanley Jones, that he gave his only begotten Son, that if Stanley Jones will believe on him he shall not perish, but have everlasting life." I repeated it after her, but no spark of assurance kindled my darkened heart. The third night came; before going to the meeting I knelt beside my bed and prayed the sincerest prayer I had prayed so far in my life. My whole life was behind that simple prayer: "O Jesus, save me tonight." And he did! A ray of light pierced my darkness. Hope sprung up in my heart. I found myself saying, "He's going to do it." I now believe he had done it, but I had been taught that you found him at an altar of prayer. So I felt I must get to the church to an altar of prayer. I found myself running the mile to the church. The eagerness of my soul

got into my body. I was like Christian running from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City. I went into the church and took a front seat, a thing I had never done before. But I was all eagerness for the evangelist to stop speaking, so I could get to that altar of prayer. When he did stop, I was the first one there. I had scarcely bent my knees when Heaven broke into my spirit. I was enveloped by assurance, by acceptance, by reconciliation. I grabbed the man next to me by the shoulder and said: “I’ve got it.” “Got it?” What did I mean? I see now it was not an “it”: it was a him. I had him. I had him—Jesus—and he had me. We had each other. I belonged. My estrangement, my sense of orphanage were gone. I was reconciled. As I rose from my knees, I felt I wanted to put my arms around the world and share this with everybody. Little did I dream at that moment that I would spend the rest of my life literally trying to put my arms around the world to share this with everybody. But I have. This was a seed moment. The whole of my future was packed into it.

Crude? No, creative. Emotional? It took an emotional upheaval to carry me across from a self-preoccupied life to a Christ-preoccupied life. The center of being was changed from self to Savior. I didn’t try by an act of will to give up my sins—they were gone. I looked into his face and was forever spoiled for anything that was unlike him. The whole me was converted. There was nothing the same except my name. It was the birthday of my soul. Life began there. Note, I say “began”—the whole of my life has been an unfolding of what was infolded in that moment.

So my Song of Ascents began there. Up to that moment I had no Song, and I had no Ascents. After that moment I had both. Life began to sing and to wing. And I did nothing but take it! That was the most sensible thing I ever did—barring none. It was sense and has worked out as sense. Beside it all else seemed, and seems, non-sense.⁸⁶

A Tiny Ray of Light

What had really happened? I said that “a tiny ray of light had pierced my darkness.” In that ray of light, as in all light, were seven colors blended—three primary, the rest secondary.

1. A sense of forgiveness and reconciliation with God, with life, with my brothers, with myself. The universe seemed to open its arms and take me in. The parable of the prodigal son was reenacted in my setting.
2. A sense of being at home in my homeland. I did not try to make myself at home in my new condition and position—I was at home. This was my native land. This had the feeling of a homecoming upon it. This is where I belonged.
3. A sense of purpose, direction, and goal. I had been a raft, tossed by storms and waves of meaningless emotion. Now I had been taken aboard a great liner that was going somewhere, with some goal, with power to move on to that goal. A woman in one of our Ashrams asked: “Is there anyone here with a car going anywhere?” Well, I didn’t want to go “anywhere.” I had a goal and power to move on to that goal.
4. A sense of not being alone. I had Another who knew and understood me perfectly and was always with me. In spite of knowing me, he loved me. I was loved, and I was giving love. I was no longer preoccupied with myself. My entire being went out in gratitude and love to Another. My self absorbed me no longer. That was the greatest emancipation. With it came a sense of caring. I began to think of and care for others.
5. A sense of being a person. My total being was awakened and coordinated and fulfilled. One man said: “I’m not a man; I’m a menagerie.” I was a

menagerie too, growling with passions, in a state of tension. But now I was at peace with myself and respected myself as a person. My whole being was awakened, including my mind.

6. A sense of wholeness. Fragmentation was over. Life was pulled into central meanings and purposes around a single Center.
7. A sense of grace. How did this happen to me? I felt so undeserving and so unworthy, and yet it was mine! I found myself going off in solitude and reading my New Testament, and when I came across a verse which spoke of him, I found myself reverently pressing my lips to that verse. The people in the synagogue “wondered at the words which fell from his lips.” I did too. And the wonder has turned into a life of wonder. I gaze at him and wonder and wonder until my knees bend in gratitude. But I’m soon up on my feet again with a compulsion, a divine compulsion to share this with everyone, everywhere.

These seven colors of the light that pierced my darkness are a part of that light and only a part, for the light comprehends them; but the light is much more.⁸⁷

Methodist Class Meeting

I was running under cloudless skies. And then suddenly I tripped, almost fell, pulled back this side of the sin, but was shaken and humiliated that I could come that close to sin. I thought I was emancipated and found I wasn’t. I went to the class meeting—I’m grateful that I didn’t stay away—went, but my [spiritual] music had gone. I had hung my harp on a weeping willow tree. As the others spoke of their joys and victories of the week, I sat there with the tears rolling down my cheeks. I was heartbroken. After the others had spoken, John Zink, the class leader, said: “Now Stanley, tell us what is the matter.” I told them

I couldn't, but would they please pray for me? ... they fell to their knees, and they lifted me back to the bosom of God by faith and love. When we got up from our knees, I was reconciled to my heavenly father, to the group, and to myself, I was reconciled. The universe opened its arms and took me in again. The estrangement was gone. I took my harp from the willow tree and began to sing again.

12. C.S. LEWIS (1898-1963)

The odd thing was that before God closed in on me, I was in fact offered what now appears a moment of wholly free choice. In a sense, I was going up Headington Hill on the top of a bus. Without words and (I think) almost without images, a fact about myself was somehow presented to me. I became aware that I was holding something at bay, or shutting something out. Or, if you like, that I was wearing some stiff clothing, like corsets, or even a suite of armor, as if I were a lobster. I felt myself being, there and then, given a free choice. I could open the door or keep it shut; I could unbuckle the armor or keep it on. Neither choice was presented as a duty; no threat or promise was attached to either, though I knew that to open the door or to take off the corset meant the incalculable. The choice appeared to be momentous but it was also strangely unemotional. I was moved by no desires or fears. In a sense I was not moved by anything. I chose to open, to unbuckle, to loosen the rein. I say, "I chose," yet it did not really seem possible to do the opposite. On the other hand, I was aware of no motives. You could argue that I was not a free agent, but I am more inclined to think that this came nearer to being a perfectly free act than most that I have ever done. Necessity may not be the opposite of freedom, and perhaps a man is most free when, instead of producing motives, he could only say, "I am what I do." Then came the repercussion on the imaginative level. I felt as if I were a man of snow at long last beginning to melt. The melting was starting in my back—drip-drip and presently trickle-trickle. I rather disliked the feeling.

You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that

night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not then see what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility, which will accept a convert even on such terms. The Prodigal Son at least walked home on his own feet. But who can duly adore that Love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance of escape? The words *compelle intrare*, compel them to come in, have been so abused by wicked men that we shudder at them; but, properly understood, they plumb the depth of the Divine mercy. The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men, and His compulsion is our liberation.

To accept the Incarnation was a further step in the same direction. It brings God nearer, or near in a new way. And this, I found, was something I had not wanted. But to recognize the ground for my evasion was of course to recognize both its shame and its futility. I know very well when, but hardly how, the final step was taken. I was driven to Whipsnade one sunny morning. When we set out I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the zoo I did. Yet I had not exactly spent the journey in thought. Nor in great emotion. “Emotional” is perhaps the last word we can apply to some of the most important events. It was more like when a man, after long sleep, still lying motionless in bed, becomes aware that he is now awake.⁸⁸

13. JOY DAVIDMAN (1915-1960)

My husband had been overworking. One day he telephoned me from his New York office—I was at home in Westchester with the children—to tell me that he was having a nervous breakdown. He felt his mind going; he couldn't stay where he was and he couldn't bring himself to come home.... Then he rang off.

There followed a day of frantic and vain telephoning. By nightfall there was nothing left to do but wait and see if he turned up, alive or dead. I put the babies to sleep and waited.

For the first time in my life I felt helpless; for the first time my pride was forced to admit that I was not, after all, “the master of my fate” and “the captain of my soul.” All my defenses—the walls of arrogance and cock-sureness and self-love behind which I hid from God—went down momentarily—and God came in.

How can one describe the direct perception of God? It is infinite, unique; there are no words, there are no comparisons. Can one scoop up the sea in a teacup? Those who have known God will understand me; the others, I find, can neither listen nor understand. There was a Person with me in that room, directly present to my consciousness—a Person so real that all my precious life was by comparison a mere shadow play. And I myself was more alive than I had ever been; it was like waking from sleep. So intense a life cannot be endured long by flesh and blood; we must ordinarily take our life watered down, diluted as it were, by time and space and matter. My perception of God lasted perhaps half a minute.

In that time, however, many things happened. I forgave some of my enemies. I understood that God had always been there, and that, since childhood, I had been pouring half my energy into the task of keeping him out. I saw myself as I really was, with dismay and repentance; and, seeing, I changed. I have been

turning into a different person since that half minute, everyone tells me.

When it was over I found myself on my knees, praying. I think I must have been the world's most astonished atheist. My surprise was so great that for a moment it distracted me from my fear; only for a moment it distracted me from my fear; only for a moment, however. My awareness of God was no comforting illusion, conjured up to reassure me about my husband's safety. I was just as worried afterward as before. No; it was terror and ecstasy, repentance and rebirth.⁸⁹

14. MOTHER TERESA (1910-1997)

As a 12 year old growing up in Albania, Agnes knew God was calling her. At 18 she entered the Congregation of Loreto nuns, knowing they worked in Bengal. When her novitiate was completed, Agnes made her first vows and took the religious name “Teresa,” after St. Therese. St. Therese’s spiritual path was known as the “little way” because she encouraged growing closer to God through humility and service through the ordinary tasks of everyday life.

Agnes found herself teaching history and geography in a congregations high school in Calcutta for 17 years. Poverty and illness surrounded her. “I knew where I belonged,” she said, “but I didn’t know how to get there.” God showed her the way. It came as a clear message on September 10, 1946 as she was traveling to a retreat. “I was to leave the convent and help the poor while living among them.”

In the book, *A Gift from God*, Mother Teresa explains how we can see the face of Christ: “Actually,” she says, “we are touching Christ’s body in the poor. Today the same Christ is in people who are unwanted, unemployed, uncared for, hungry, naked, and homeless.”

On the very last page of Mother Teresa’s book, *Words to Live By*, she concludes:

At the end of life we will not be judged by

how many diplomas we have received

how much money we have made

how many great things we have done.

We will be judged by

I was hungry and you gave me to eat

I was naked and you clothed me

I was homeless and you took me in.

Hungry not only for bread

—but hungry for love

Naked not only for clothing

—but naked for human dignity and respect

Homeless not only for want of a room of brick

—but homeless because of rejection.

This is Christ in distressing disguise.

15. HENRI J.M. NOUWEN (1932-1996)

For many years I tried to get a glimpse of God by looking carefully at the varieties of human experience: loneliness and love, sorrow and joy, resentment and gratitude, war and peace. I sought to understand the ups and downs of the human soul, to discern there a hunger and thirst that only a God whose name is Love could satisfy. I tried to discover the lasting beyond the passing, the eternal beyond the temporal, the perfect love beyond all paralyzing fears, and the divine consolation beyond the desolation of human anguish and agony. I tried constantly to point beyond the mortal quality of our existence to a presence larger, deeper, wider, and more beautiful than we can imagine, and to speak about that presence as a presence that can already now be seen, heard, and touched by those who are willing to believe.

However, during my time here at Daybreak, I have been led to an inner place where I had not been before. It is the place within me where God has chosen to dwell. It is the place where I am held safe in the embrace of an all-loving Father who calls me by name and says, “You are my beloved son, on you my favor rests.” It is the place where I can taste the joy and peace that are not of this world.

This place had always been there. I had always been aware of it as the source of grace. But I had not been able to enter it and truly live there. Jesus says, “Anyone who loves me will keep my word and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our house in him.” These words have always impressed me deeply. I am God’s home!

But it had always been very hard to experience the truth of these words. Yes, God dwells in my innermost being, but how could I accept Jesus’ call: “Make your home in me as I make mine in you.”? The invitation is clear and unambiguous. To make

my home where God had made his, this is the great spiritual challenge. It seemed an impossible task.

With my thoughts, feelings, emotions, and passions, I was constantly away from the place where God had chosen to make him. Coming home and staying there where God dwells, listening to the voice of truth and love, that was, indeed, the journey I most feared because I knew that God was a jealous lover who wanted every part of me all the time. When would I be ready to accept that kind of love?

God himself showed me the way. The emotional and physical crises that interrupted my busy life at Daybreak compelled me—with violent force—to return home and to look for God where God can be found—in my own inner sanctuary. I am unable to say that I have arrived; I never will in this life, because the way to God reaches far beyond the boundary of death. While it is a long and very demanding journey, it is also one full of wonderful surprises, often offering us a taste of the ultimate goal.

When I first saw Rembrandt's painting,⁹⁰ I was not as familiar with the home of God within me as I am now. Nevertheless, my intense response to the father's embrace of his son told me that I was desperately searching for that inner place where I too could be held as safely as the young man in the painting. At the time, I did not foresee what it would take to come a few steps closer to that place. I am grateful for not having known in advance what God was planning for me. But I am grateful as well for the new place that has been opened in me through all the inner pain. I have a new vocation now. It is the vocation to speak and write from the place back into the many places of my own and other people's restless lives. I have to kneel before the Father, put my ear against his chest and listen, without interruption, to the heartbeat of God. Then, and only then, can I say carefully and very gently what I hear. I know now that I have to speak from eternity into time, from the lasting joy into the passing realities of our short existence in the world, from

the house of love into the house of fear, from God's abode into the dwellings of human beings. I am well aware of the enormity of this vocation. Still, I am confident that it is the only way for me. One could call it the "the prophetic" vision: looking at people and this world through the eyes of God.

Is this a realistic possibility for a human being? More important: Is it a true option for me? This is not an intellectual question. It is a question of vocation. I am called to enter into the inner sanctuary of my own being where God has chosen to dwell. The only way to that place of prayer, unceasing prayer. Many struggles and much pain can clear the way, but I am certain that only unceasing prayer can let me enter it."⁹¹

16. GRETTA PALMER (b. 1910)

Five years ago I was a prisoner in a bright, bleak, narrow cell which I called the universe. Things were very tidy there—it is easy for the poor to keep their possessions neat. Mine was a bare, modern, antiseptic universe with colorless, windowless walls and the strong, astringent smell of modern science. It had neon lights to read by, but it never admitted the sun. For forty years I had lived, with ups and downs inside the cell called atheism.

There are virtues inside the modernist's narrow world, for no human being ever born could live entirely removed from grace. But we atheists were living on a subnormal plane; our virtues were devitalized, and they glowed with no superhuman glory. We had faith—but faith in Freud and in a mystical, unproven principle of life called "progress." Since the brain does not thrive on prison fare, my believing mind was filled with a hundred contradictory fallacies, a thousand sloppily contrived assumptions. Because doctors had been able to wipe out smallpox, I thought it followed that they would shortly find a virus for man's hostility to man. Because the engineering sciences had been a great success, I expected social engineers to produce, within a hundred years, the principles on which a society of perfect men would operate as smoothly and with as little friction as a really good Diesel engine.

One of the most horrible things about the atheist's cell is that it is a fairly comfortable place in which to live. The inmates are not clamoring loudly for someone to free them; each of them is working very busily to exchange his present cell for another exactly the same, only a little larger and more enviably placed. The man in the five-thousand-dollar hopes, in a few years, to move into the twenty-five-thousand-dollar cell; then, he is sure, his troubles will be at an end.

I was not unhappy four years ago. I did not have pain or frustration or failure in my little cell with me, as goads to finding

the way out. My life was a success according to the formula laid down by the psychiatrists. If anyone had suggested that I needed a god, I should probably have asked, "What for?"

Things were going well. My life was orderly. My thoughts were neatly ranged.

And then I became confused. Thank God, I became confused!

The war confused me. It showed, rather shockingly, that mankind was not getting along as well with its job of perfecting itself as I had hoped. The scientists were not delivering the goods.⁹²

So I have been miraculously fortunate in escaping from that atheist's cell in which only fungus thoughts can grow. I have also discovered, *Deo gratias*, that there is a simple, quite accurate name for the cramped and narrow universe in which I lived my life until a year ago. The name of it is Hell.

The new world into which I have entered is flooded with the sunshine of God's love. His divine artistry is mirrored in the running brook; the smiling meadow, and the tall trees which lift verdant fingers in prayer and praise to their Creator. I glimpse His artistry as He paints the wayside flowers and lights the evening star. All nature, tremulous with His presence, is articulate in His homage. Books, people, the experiences of every day also echo Him, so that I can best describe the new world into which I have come as at least the foothills of Heaven.⁹³

17. MORTON KELSEY

I was brought up in a conventional Christian church and was fairly active. When I was twenty-one my mother died; she was the only person who I felt truly accepted and cared for me. I then went off to graduate school to study philosophy. There I read Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, which swept away any structure of intellectual belief I had and plunged me into an abyss of almost total agnosticism. The trouble with most people is that they are not agnostic enough; they are not consistent in their agnosticism and do not go into it far enough to see its darkness and agony. They disbelieve what is inconvenient and believe what they want to believe. Total rootlessness can cause unbelievable pain and suffering and so I went to seminary to see if Christianity could provide meaning for me.

Reading von Hügel and A.E. Taylor showed me that my agnosticism might be based on bad thinking. I emerged from a liberal seminary in 1943 with the blazing conviction that there were as many good reasons to believe in God as not to believe. With this conviction I set out to convert the world.

Intellectual belief was not enough though, and I soon fell into the abyss again. It was through the writings of Jung and personal contact with some who had known him that I came to realize that the spiritual world was real and the Divine Lover could be known and shared. Since then, only the experience of Love *plus* intellectual belief have kept me from permanent residence in the pit.

Later I met Jung, who told me how he was jolted out of the rational, materialistic agnosticism of his medical training. He learned that there was a nonphysical dimension of reality, which was observable to anyone who would take the trouble to experience it. It was, as he said, as experienceable as were the two moons of Jupiter to those in Galileo's time who would take the trouble to look through his telescope. He believed that one of

the most important therapeutic tasks was to free people caught in the constricting materialism of our time and open them up to a more adequate view of reality. He viewed the person wholly caught up in materialism as more sick than amoral or immoral. We need to outthink the modern materialistic world, just as the early Christians outthought the ancient world.⁹⁴

18. JAMES REUTELER (b. 1935)

On the night of September 1, 1958, I went to Church with a friend. He asked me on the way home if I were a Christian. I did not know what he was talking about, but his warm friendship and life-style had already won me over. I said, "No, but I would like to become one." We returned to the Church that night about midnight. The preacher of the evening was still there. My friend told him of my desire, and he laid his hands on my head and prayed for me. I did not feel any fireworks, but I did feel my heart strangely warmed. I walked away from there that night a new person. God's presence became a conscious reality to me from that moment to this. No matter what I am doing, I am aware of God's presence.

As I got behind the wheel of my car and reached for a cigarette, I found myself throwing the whole pack out of the window. I no longer needed them. Without being told to, I gave up drinking, although, I continued to relate to those who did. Some other kind of Spirit got hold of me that night. I was intoxicated, but had no hangover the next morning.

What Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17 was true for me: "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" As I looked at the moon and the stars that night they seemed different, but it was me that was different. I was seeing them with new eyes. A spark had ignited my heart that grew into a flame and compelled me to seek fulfillment in the mission of Christ through the Church, his Body

September 1, 1958, 12:00 Midnight

AFTERWORD

*The Church exists by Mission
As Fire exist by burning.*

Emil Brunner

I agree with Emil Brunner. Everyone who has a religious experience knows that he or she has been ignited by the fire of the Holy Spirit to engage in some form of mission. That mission will differ according to the spiritual gift or gifts that have been given to the individual. Those gifts may change over the years. I also believe that those who have been ignited for mission will exercise those gifts through a community of faith. The fire from one log does not burn as brightly as the fire from several logs.

If you have had such an experience and would like to share it with me, I would appreciate it very much. Please feel free to contact me with questions, comments, or criticisms.

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1. **The Bible as Sacred History:**
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1. **Ignited for Mission:**
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1. **Foundational Documents:**
Basic Methodist Documents
2. **Instructions for Children:**
by John Wesley
3. **Speaking Iban:**
by Burr Baughman
4. **The Essentials of Methodism:**
Basic Methodist Beliefs

ENDNOTES

¹ I don't mean to imply that drinking wine, or any other alcoholic drink, is wrong. With my background and my new birth, it just seemed inappropriate. Given, the social problems caused by drinking, I decided to abstain until I enter the Kingdom of God. In Matthew 26:29, Jesus concluded his Last Supper with the following words, "I tell, you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom." (NRSV) Abstaining from alcoholic beverages is my particular manner of Fasting. When John Wesley mentioned Fasting he also included Abstinence. I will drink wine again in the Kingdom of God, where it will never again be abused.

² I entered The Methodist Church in 1958, which then merged with The Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1968 to become The United Methodist Church.

³ Emil Brunner, *The Word and the World*, p. 108.

⁴ The United Methodist Hymnal, "Pass It On," (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), #572.

⁵ These two quotations can be found in the following sources: Kurt Kaiser, "Pass It On," *Hymns of Faith* (Wheaton: Tabernacle Publishing Company, 1980), #491. *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, ed. by Emily Morison Beck (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), p. 142.

⁶ Albert C. Knudson, *The Validity of Religious Experience* (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1937), p. 184.

⁷ Gary T. Alexander, “Psychological Foundations of William James’ Theory of Religious Experience,” *The Journal of Religion* (October, 1979), p. 429.

⁸ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Garden City: Image Books, 1978), pp. 206-209.

⁹ John E. Biersdorf, *Hunger for Experience* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), p. 128.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 132 and 139.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹² James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 18. This comment was taken from, The “Introduction,” by Andrew Greely.

¹³ COACT: Community of Active Christians Today.

¹⁴ Biersdorf, *Hunger for Experience*, p. 32.

¹⁵ W. D. Weatherford, *Studies in Christian Experience* (Nashville: Methodist Evangelistic Materials, 1962), p. 3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁷ Knudson, *The Validity of Religious Experience*, p. 146.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 53

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

²¹ Weatherford, *Studies in Christian Experience*, p. 60.

²² Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (London: SCM Press LTD, 1973), p. 69.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁴ Weatherford, *Studies in Christian Experience*, p. 58.

²⁵ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 84.

²⁶ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 189.

²⁷ Knudson, *The Validity of Religious Experience*, pp. 23-24.

²⁸ Weatherford, *Studies in Christian Experience*, pp. 9-11.

²⁹ Knudson, *The Validity of Religious Experience*, pp. 25-26.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

³¹ Another word would be “prevenient” grace.

³² Paul B. Kern, *Methodism Has a Message* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1941), p. 178.

³³ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 230-231.

³⁴ Biersdorf, *Hunger for Experience*, p. 84.

³⁵ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 377.

³⁶ Weatherford, *Studies in Christian Experience*, p. 64.

³⁷ Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, Translated by Douglas Horton (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1957), p. 179.

³⁸ Weatherford, *Studies in Religious Experience*, p. 470.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁴¹ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 470.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁴⁴ Knudson, *The Validity of Religious Experience*, p. 21.

⁴⁵ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 88.

⁴⁶ Knudson, *The Validity of Religious Experience*, p. 21.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 170-171.

⁴⁸ Charles Wesley, “How Can We Sinners Know?” *The United Methodist Hymn Book* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989, # 372). Changes in this hymn were made in the latest edition of the Hymnal. The original wording of the third line was: “And publish to the sons of men.” The title was also different in previous editions. Instead of “How Can We Sinners Know?” the title was “How can a Sinner Know?” The point I’m trying to make, however, is the same. Those who *know* cannot keep quiet.

⁴⁹ Knudson, *The Validity of Religious Experience*, p. 133. This passage is taken from Wesley’s Journal, May 20, 1739.

⁵⁰ Knudson, *The Validity of Religious Experience*, p. 187.

⁵¹ See John 14:6.

⁵² Juan Luis Segundo, *Our Idea of God*, Translated by John Drury (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1978), pp. 7-8.

⁵³ Charles Wesley, “Spirit of Faith Come Down,” *The United Methodist Hymn Book* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), #332.

⁵⁴ Emil Brunner, *The Word and the World* (London, Student Christian Movement Press, 1931). p. 108.

⁵⁵ Matthew 18:20 (NRSV)

⁵⁶ Jürgen Moltmann, *Religion, Revolution, and the Future*, Translated by M. Douglas Meeks (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), p. 141.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁵⁸ Luke 19:8b (NRSV)

⁵⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, "Christian Theology and Its Goals Today," *Theology in Action*, Series I (Singapore: The Christian Conference of Asia, 1972), p. 34.

⁶⁰ *World Outlook*, September 1968, p. 50.

⁶¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, Translated by James W. Letich (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1967), pp. 146-147 and 328.

⁶² Moltmann, *Religion, Revolution, and the Future*, p. 70.

⁶³ Jan Milic Lochman, "The Service of the Church in a Socialist Society," *Christian Social Ethics in a Changing World*, Edited by John C. Bennett (New York: Association Press, 1966), pp. 246-247.

⁶⁴ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology of the Kingdom of God* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), pp. 90-91.

⁶⁵ Quoted in C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1952), p. 174.

⁶⁶ Or Spirituality.

⁶⁷ Matthew 25:34b-36 (NRSV)

⁶⁸ Charles Wesley, “See How Great a Flame Aspires,” *The United Methodist Hymnal* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), #541.

⁶⁹ Peter Marshall (1902-1949), *Book of Prayers*, Compiled by Robert Van de Weyer (Edison, New Jersey: Castle Books, 1997), pp. 247-248.

⁷⁰ *Time*, November 15, 1993, p. 74.

⁷¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, Book VIII, #12 (New York, Penguin Books, 1978), pp. 177-179.

⁷² Quoted from James Leuba, *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1926), I, p. 163.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, I, p. 162.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, I, p. 155.

⁷⁵ Roger Hazelton, *Blaise Pascal: The Genius of His Thought* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), p. 33.

⁷⁶ Tony Campollo, *Carpe Diem*, p. 143.

⁷⁷ Hymn #342

⁷⁸ Hymn #57

⁷⁹ *The Works of John Wesley* (Franklin, Tennessee: Providence House Publishers, 1995), May 24, 1738.

⁸⁰ V. Raymond Edman, *They Found the Secret* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), pp. 37-38.

⁸¹ Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), p. 109.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁸³ Nancy Reeves, *I'd Say Yes, God, If I knew What You Wanted* (Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada: Northstone Publishing, 2001), pp. 98-99. The above is a complete quotation from Nancy Reeves' book on spiritual discernment.

⁸⁴ Asa Griggs Candler, Jr., "Self-Surrender," in David Wesley Soper, ed. *These Found The Way: Thirteen Converts to Protestant Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), pp. 53, 55-57.

⁸⁵ V. Raymond Edman, *They Found The Secret* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), pp. 45-47.

⁸⁶ E. Stanley Jones, *A Song of Ascents* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1968), pp. 26-28.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

⁸⁸ C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1955), pp. 224-225, 228-229 and 237.

⁸⁹ Joy Davidman, "The Longest Way Round," in David Wesley Soper, ed., *These Found the Way: Thirteen Converts to Protestant Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951), pp. 23-24.

⁹⁰ Of the Prodigal Son.

⁹¹ Henri J.J. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (New York: Image Books, 1992), pp. 16-18.

⁹² Gretta Palmer, "Escaping from an Atheist's Cell," in John A. O'Brien, *The Road to Damascus* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1951), pp. 50-51.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

⁹⁴ Morton T. Kelsey, *Companions on the Inner Way: The Art of Spiritual Guidance* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983), pp. 61-62.