

Christianity as a Way of Life

DURING the last two years the members of this group * have coöperated in an enterprise which, in intention at least, is of some importance. We have been inquiring how and how far the Christian message of peace on earth and good will to men can obtain realization in modern social life. The enterprise began in a meeting at Lake Mohonk which I did not attend but which, as I have since gathered, agreed in general upon the existence of a dangerously morbid condition of the contemporary social body and the need of seeking a certain kind of remedy. The morbid condition consisted of racial, international and class conflicts which were becoming so bitter and so irreconcilable that they threatened to disrupt the complex, highly specialized and necessarily coöperative civilization of today. The prospect of appeasing these conflicts by the use exclusively of political or economic remedies was far from promising. On the contrary it seemed as if warfare between nations and classes belonged to the nature of current economic and political activities. But it seemed equally clear that the conduct of this warfare violated the most characteristic passages in the teachings of Christ. If such is the condition, sincere Christians are bound to inquire why a nominally Christian society prefers to tolerate suicidal conflicts rather than to translate into life the truths of its own religion and in what ways, if any, they can repair the colossal default.

The Lake Mohonk assembly proposed, consequently, a Conference on the Christian Way of Life which would consider how the truth resident in Christianity could get embodied in human conduct and particularly in those regions of human conduct which were given over to apparently irreconcilable warfare. They set up for this purpose three commissions: one to deal with Christianity as applied to racial conflicts, and others to do the same for international and industrial conflicts. In addition they authorized commissions on the social function of the church and on religious education.

Underlying this program there was one assumption which, as far as I know, never came to the surface but which was nevertheless decisively formative. If Christendom were being torn to pieces in defiance of the promise offered by the religion of peace on earth and good will to men, it was because the churches had occupied themselves with the salvation of the individual soul and had neglected the meaning and the consequence of Christian truth for man as a member of society. The major object of the conference, consequently, was to arouse professing Christians to the need of associating the salvation of the individual soul with some measure of social amelioration and to inquire what Christians

should do in order to give reality to their religion in social conduct. But there was, apparently, no disposition to inquire and no sense of the need of inquiry whether the fast association between social amelioration and individual salvation as part of the fundamental work of the Christian churches would react in any way upon what Christians had meant by the good life in the case of the individual. The Lake Mohonk Conference did not provide explicitly for an examination of individual as well as social frustrations and fulfillment in their relation to Christian truth. It looked in that direction by setting up a commission on religious education, but the general opinion was that this commission had no essential function to fulfill and it was quickly abandoned. If sincere Christians would only associate Christianity, so the Conference tacitly declared, with an ideal and a method of social conduct and amelioration as valid, as authoritative and as constructive as its ideal and method of individual conduct and fulfillment, the Christian churches might succeed in saving modern society from being victimized by irreconcilable conflicts.

The Lake Mohonk Conference did not circumscribe the commissions to which it gave birth either in the scope of their activities or in the choice of methods. They were free to adopt any procedure or plan of work which in the opinion of their members promised to be serviceable. It was far from obvious what that procedure should be. They were a frankly Christian group assembled to investigate how the truths of Christianity could be converted into a way of life; and their working method would depend upon what they conceived truth in general and particularly Christian truth to be in its relation to life. There existed among the members of the commissions a difference of opinion about this important matter. Some of them conceived Christian truth to consist of principles or commandments in which professing Christians did not sufficiently believe, and to which they expected to give reality by explaining their application to the facts of industry and politics and by placing behind these applications the authority of organized Christianity and the passion of sincere Christians for the integrity of their faith. There were others who were more sceptical. They doubted whether in any sense that would be constructive in social conduct they could definitely formulate for other people what the Christian way of life was. They believed that an attempt at such formulation would beg the question and convert what should be the search for a route into the justification of a goal. They wished to begin by taking nothing for granted except a disinterested common desire to seek a way of life which would appease social conflicts, which would take account of the ways in which lives had to be real-

* This address was read at a conference on the Christian Way of Life which was recently held at Lake Mohonk.

ized in this world and which could at the same time honestly be called Christian.

As a matter of fact as soon as the several commissions got to work, their method of inquiry was determined more by the second than by the first of these conceptions. The Industrial Commission did, indeed, begin by moving along the other road. It assumed for a while that it was the custodian of certain saving Christian principles whose application to industrial controversies had been overlooked or neglected, but which the church could convert into a healing social policy by their authoritative consecration as Christian, their uncompromising application and the invention of an appropriate technique. The realization of Christianity in social life was chiefly the business of the accredited Christian engineer who would plan and administer the reconstruction of society according to the requirements of the social creeds already adopted by the several denominational assemblies. The International Commission, on the other hand, adopted a more tentative and sceptical attitude—an attitude which has in the past been associated rather with the scientific than with the religious search for truth. Its members did not see the virtue of adopting principles and of proposing to reënforce them with the authority of the Christian church and with the passion of Christian conviction as long as their specific application in life was arbitrary or ambiguous. That method seemed to advertise Christianity as a way of discourse rather than as a way of life. Before drawing up principles and adopting resolutions, they proposed to explore international relations as a region of human experience. They preferred in the beginning to ask questions rather than to answer them, and to discover by a cautious survey of the geography and dynamics of international contentions what they were and how much people knew about them. It would be time to consider later whether there was any way of integrating these conflicts which could be called Christian. Soon thereafter both the Industrial and Racial Commissions tried out a variation suited to their own particular needs of the same attitude and method.

In starting on their inquiries, animated by the lean, economical and sceptical spirit of science rather than with the opulent faith ordinarily associated with religion, the three commissions were appropriating the net benefit of a century of futile essays in searching for authentic knowledge of social processes. One social philosopher after another had explained social conduct as the verification of a principle or principles which he inferred from the facts of recorded social experience; and in so far as in his opinion he had reduced past social processes to law, he considered himself justified in sentencing future social processes to obey his determinations. But his assumed laws were in truth mere hypotheses which at best might help to explain what had already happened. They could determine future social conduct only through the agency of human

choices and instruments. A disinterested student of social processes is not entitled to set up such hypotheses as the necessary or desirable forms for the conduct of other people. The subject matter of social science is the activities of human beings who are above everything else *themselves*. The conflicts, adjustments and solutions which we seek to understand or create are inseparably tied up with the choices and the behavior of the people who carry on the activities. The people themselves must be dealt with as realities which can be reached and moved only from the inside of their minds.

It follows that if an inquiry into Christianity as applied to life is to be really scientific, the inquirers have no right to formulate rules of Christian conduct in industry and politics and tell Christians that, if they propose to be Christian, they ought to behave according to the prescribed rules. No matter how inspired or ingenious a commission was in formulating its dictates, it would not by dictation start anything moving in the minds of other people which would enable them to Christianize their conduct. At best it would merely Christianize their interpretation of their conduct. A Christian mission cannot help others in giving reality to Christianity as a way of life without beginning by the issue of a self-denying ordinance for itself and a declaration of independence for them. Principles whether Christian or not are vehicles of understanding rather than instruments of authority.

By abandoning the attempt to reach authoritative conclusions which less enlightened people are under some obligation to accept and obey, the commissions abandoned what is in my opinion an insuperable obstacle to the translation of Christian or any other truth into a way of life for all human beings. As long as enlightened people believe that the key which unlocks the consummate life for mankind is their own formulation of what the consummate life is, they are obliged to propagate spiritual truth chiefly by exhorting other people to listen reverently and to obey, and by imposing some penalty for indifference or disobedience. They talk and act as if truth were superior to life and capable of dictating to life the way of living well. This very assumption is, I think, the obstacle which has in the past condemned Christianity, in spite of the spirit and the example of its Founder, to operate more as a matter of discipline, admonition and dictation than as a stimulus to autonomous and progressive living. Its abandonment by the commissions saves the Conference from proceeding along a road which in the beginning looks deceptively broad, smooth, easy and obvious but which eventually slides down hill into a trackless desert.

On the other hand the procedure adopted by the commissions will prove to be more constructive than in the beginning it looks. When they refused to penetrate social life with Christian truth by affirming the competence of certain Christian principles to declare how life ought to be lived, they acted as

if life were prior to truth or at least as if life and truth were coördinate and interdependent. The procedure implies a revolt against the prevailing methods of realizing moral and social truths. Not only does it grant a reality to life, not our own, which such life can never obtain in the case of those who know enough to order it about, but in as much as the lives of these people must take orders, if anywhere, from within, it requires the commissions as the logical consequence of the adopted method, to start something moving in other minds. That, of course, is precisely what they have undertaken to do. They have selected as their agency of education and propaganda discussion groups, formed so far as possible of people who themselves participate in political and industrial conflicts. They are depending upon the intellectual and moral impulse and experience generated by well-managed discussions to arouse previously stagnant minds to the meaning of such conflicts and to the consideration of possible ways out. The object is to create a liaison between what these people are doing and what they are thinking which will help them to demonstrate in their own experience the indispensability of thought to the fulfillment of life and the indispensability of life to the objectification of thought.

If this liaison is a requisite indispensable to the realization of both life and thought, is not the method adopted by the commissions at least potentially religious—as religion was understood by the Lake Mohonk Conference? The Christians who felt the need of a conference on the Christian way of life proclaimed in effect that their religion would not be true to itself or faithful to its function unless it could become, much more than it now is, a way of life. They sought a better synthesis between life and truth. But if, as the method adopted by the commissions assumes, no formulation of truth, whether religious or not, can presume to dictate to life in so many words how it should behave in order to get itself realized, the problem of religious and Christian education takes on a novel, a perplexing and even a somewhat paradoxical character. Christian education will be dedicated primarily to the discovery of a method whereby life itself will secrete the truth which it needs for its own liberation. Whatever that method may be, it must include the sceptical, experimental, patient and tolerant assumption of the ability of human life to find the good way through the increasing understanding of its own experience which the commissions are practicing. This sceptical and experimental attitude is a necessary safeguard for the sanity of those people who seek to live by the light of truth in a world like ours in which what is declared to be God's truth is so often only a peculiarly pretentious form of error or illusion. But concealed in this sceptical attitude there is something resembling a religious faith. It attaches more reality and power to the lives of human beings than it does to any assertions or commandments which the authorities can utter about

those lives. If human lives are to be fulfilled the fulfillment must result from the meaning which they themselves infuse into what they do. Those who act on this method are by implication setting up a catholic democratic fellowship which seeks to enlist their brothers in an undertaking to attain the good life by participating watchfully, disinterestedly, methodically and purposively in a parliament of common activities.

II.

Much, however, as I believe in the educational and possibly the religious value of the work now being undertaken by the commissions, their program remains unsatisfactory in one essential respect. It is limited to stimulating the thorough-going, attentive and well-informed discussion of conflicts which arise out of social activities by groups of people who participate in them. This program seems to me invulnerable so far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. No doubt if it were put into practice by faithful Christians as sincerely, as devoutly and as generally as they now practice attendance on church, it would not only help to appease troublesome and dangerous social conflicts, but it would constitute the beginning of an improved individual moral education. Yet it would not, I feel sure, satisfy the imagination and the conscience of the great body of Christians or the urgent need of Christendom as a spiritual society. It lacks the direct appeal to personal aspiration, to purity and intensity of personal feeling which has been and will continue to be the most powerful source of Christian reformation. How can the Conference on the Christian Way of Life summon to its assistance the characteristically religious passion for purity of life and for personal spiritual power?

If the Conference has neglected to start inquiries in this direction, the fault is not entirely its own. For a reason to which we have already called attention, the layout of its work did not provide for an investigation into the possible increase of the personal religious aspiration and power which was available for Christianizing the conduct of a professedly Christian society of men and women. The meeting at Lake Mohonk planned only for the attempted transfer into social conduct of a fund of spiritual energy and religious truth which was assumed to have been successfully but too exclusively expended on the salvation of the individual soul. It is this assumption that we seem obliged now to call into question. The commissions have proposed a program which, if carried out by the churches, will gradually mobilize for the appeasement of social conflicts some part of the ability to realize righteousness and truth which Christians were already vindicating in their personal lives. But have they any reason for believing that Christians now possess any such ability in sufficient measure?

As soon as we candidly face the revolution in

individual and social conduct which the sincere attempt to adopt Christianity as a way of life would involve, we are forced to put the question to ourselves which an anonymous writer in the *Manchester Guardian* put to the Englishmen who are interested in the corresponding effort of the British churches. After paying tribute to the ideals which Copeck had rendered articulate he asks "whether there is in the churches today the necessary spiritual power to bring these ideals into being." If the resolutions passed at the Birmingham conference were acted upon, "they would involve something like a change in human nature. . . . So the question whether there is in England today the necessary spiritual force to effect the change is important." If the question is important for Copeck, it is even more important for the American Conference on the Christian Way of Life. The British group sincerely believed that by passing resolutions which authoritatively formulated the principles of Christian social ethics, it was really adding a cubit to the stature of effective Christian moral aspiration. But the American group has at least provisionally renounced such an expectation. It does not count on infusing Christianity into social life by adopting good resolutions, and it is bound to be equally sceptical about their efficacy under the existing circumstances to give increasing reality and energy to individual religious aspiration. Popular Christianity of today, notwithstanding its services to the moral standards of the community, is not capable by the use of any of its customary methods of effecting the profound alteration of human nature which seems to be demanded. The problem of the Conference is not a problem of shifting or redistributing an existing fund of effective spiritual truth and energy. The spiritual insight and energy effective for the purpose does not exist. If it did exist and was being dedicated by the churches to redeeming individual lives in the sense of inspiring them with sufficient aspiration and knowledge to fulfill themselves in this world, it would already have enabled the churches to create Christians who would not feel themselves so helpless in the face of social conflicts. The Problem of the Conference is to suggest some way of calling to the assistance of Christendom a substantial increase of spiritual aspiration and energy which, if it could be evoked, would invigorate and reconstruct human life as a whole and in all its expressions.

The Conference is not prepared by its present organization and program to consider this problem. It has abandoned the commission on religious education which might have searched for possible ways of impregnating individual minds with an increasing passion for their own and general human fulfillment. The commission on the Church will be occupied chiefly with the adequacy of that institution as a spiritual society in competition or coöperation with other less spiritual societies rather than with the problem of regenerating the individual

and increasing his effective spiritual power. The several commissions which are investigating the application of Christianity to special regions of social misconduct are employing a method which, so far as it goes, infuses Christian conviction with the energy of life, but the scope of their investigation and the adequacy of the method are limited. They have no express license to inquire into the nature and source and the possible acceleration and increase of Christian spiritual energy and vision in general. Yet the progress of their own investigations is checked by the want of some provisional answers to these inquiries. At the same time their scepticism as to the existence of Christian formulas which are capable of appeasing social conflicts renders it indispensable for them to seek some substitute for the important part which in the past a devout belief in the efficacy of formulas has played in the manufacture of spiritual energy.

What I am driving at, consequently, is this. If Christianity is to furnish to modern society an authentic way of appeasing the conflicts which are by way of tearing it to pieces, its professors must not only, as we have already concluded, stimulate their less enlightened brothers to act as if they were capable of realizing their own lives, but they must set up Christian schools which are qualified to convert this capability into more of an actuality. Well managed group discussion will no doubt do much to humanize those who participate in social activities, but the educational value of group discussion depends largely on the personal quality of the members of the groups. It results only in partial understanding, in impoverished agreements and possibly in costly decisions just in proportion as the people who participate therein begin by being unawakened, uninvigorated and unenlightened. Why are they not better prepared? Clearly because the education which they obtain as Christians is not an education which enables them to infuse the truth of Christianity into their lives. They do not know how to take counsel either with others or with themselves and to live bravely by the light of the accruing wisdom. The failure of the Christian churches to derive from their gospel of peace and understanding a method of appeasing or integrating social conflicts is the reflection of a deeper failure. They have also failed to study disinterestedly and searchingly how human personalities which are so frequently torn by equally unmanageable, elusive and stubborn conflicts and which usually confuse self-control with certain specific habits of self-denial, can integrate themselves by the assimilation of Christian or any other truth. The Conference on the Christian Way of Life cannot make any headway with its task of providing a social equivalent for Christianity unless it adds to its undertaking an equally scientific study of what individual souls must do, know and believe in order to be liberated, unified and redeemed.

If these contentions are justified, the Conference

should provide in some effective way for the exhaustive study of the fundamental problem of how Christians can make the religion of Jesus Christ more creative of liberated, invigorated and integrated human beings. I shall not try to suggest what the provision should be, but whatever else it is, it should be planned to meet one particular demand. By undertaking this responsibility the Conference would not be adding to its program of work one more region of special investigation, as it would, for instance, if it set up a commission on the family and the relations between men and women. It would be starting an inquiry, the results of which would be formative for the future work of all the existing and all possible future commissions. The new agency, whatever it is, would deal with the central problem of the conference as a whole, and it should be constituted for the purpose of bringing to bear on the work all the intellectual and moral resources which the membership of the group contained.

Should the Conference set up a group or several groups which are to study how Christian truth is to be rendered more dynamic and creative for all human activities, personal and social, the first question which these groups would have to decide is again that of method. How can they acquire the knowledge which may help it to perform their task? They would not, like the special commissions, be exploring regions of secular human experience which in the past have so often been supposed to owe allegiance to some non-religious authority. They would, on the contrary, be studying what has always been the central problem of religious or Christian truth in its relation to life, and for this reason they would be strongly tempted to begin the inquiry in a less sceptical spirit than did the special commissions. They would be tempted, that is, to assume that the most important material for them to study is the historical record of Christianity—the different attempts which sincere Christians have at different times and under different conditions made to give reality to Christianity as a way of life. They might naturally expect to derive from an examination of the periods and lives which were more profoundly moved by Christian truth than are the Christians today, the knowledge which they need in order to give reality under contemporary conditions to the Christian way of life.

In my opinion this would be a mistake. The Conference cannot obtain the knowledge which will enable the Christian churches to associate Christian conviction with an enhanced quality and energy of human personality by a critical examination of the worldly record of Christianity. Such an examination is, I think, an essential part of the work of the Conference, but it is introductory to the main job rather than contributory thereto. If the light which the Conference is seeking could be obtained from an examination of the triumphs which Christians as the result of Christian faith have found the power to

achieve, this assembly would not, I believe, be necessary. The knowledge which it is seeking would then be incorporated in the common consciousness of Christians. It is rendered necessary by the more exacting requirements which the scientific, industrialized, secular and coöperative civilization of today is making upon the effective spiritual insight and energy of mankind. Civilization can no longer afford to overlook the continuation of those internal conflicts which in the past did not disturb the equanimity of the most impassioned Christians. Even St. Francis of Assisi took part in a holy war. An inquiry into the method whereby the Christian churches may create the spiritual energy necessary to realize a Christian way of life in the world of today must explore the energy and the flight of the human spirit, not so much in its historic manifestations as in its essential processes and in novel possibilities.

Christianity has not heretofore tackled the job of educating Christians to live adequately, freely and so far as possible harmoniously in this world. The most impassioned Christians have regarded secular life as a brief, miserable and necessarily discordant prelude to an eternity of privation or fulfillment in the world beyond. They have regarded human nature as depraved and incapable of fulfillment save by virtue of some miracle of divine intercession and grace. Such being their attitude, they have sought a method of conducting life in this world which at best amounted to no more than the preparation for a consummation which would take place elsewhere. The good life consisted in building up certain habits of self-denial which were considered equivalent to positive and general self-control and purging one's state of mind of carnal and selfish passions. Those whom Christianity saved were being rescued from an enemy. They were being delivered from a prison which consisted of human life itself and the surrounding world of nature. This contempt for human nature and its fulfillment in this world dominated Christian consciousness until an increasing knowledge of nature and human society brought with it a new hope for mankind. During the eighteenth century men began to believe that scientific research would furnish to humanity methods of controlling nature which would alleviate the misery, the discord and the impotence which had frustrated human life. This hope first appeared among people who were not Christian and to whom it became a promise of increased individual satisfaction through the augmented production and the socialized distribution of an economic surplus. Later the Christian churches began to share the hope and to express it in their social creeds and aspirations. But by so doing official Christianity altered by implication the valuation which it had traditionally placed on life in this world and the meaning which it attached to human fulfillment. Not only did it pledge itself by adopting a social program to seek a method of social amelioration

which was both scientific and Christian; it also pledged itself by the same innovation to seek a method of individual fulfillment which could only be derived from a study of the latent possibilities of the formerly despised and distrusted nature of man.

That is why in my opinion the method and knowledge which Christians need in order to give reality to Christianity, conceived as a way of life, cannot be derived from a study of the historical record. Jesus bequeathed to his followers a gospel, an example and a vision, but he did not bequeath to them, or his immediate disciples did not understand him well enough to discover from the way in which he lived, a trustworthy method of keeping the truth which he incarnated alive in themselves and other people. His later disciples have tried many methods, including ritual and worship of all kinds, indoctrination, impassioned meditation, magic, preaching and prayer. Particularly during the past three centuries Christians have propagated Christianity very largely as a truth which would liberate human life through the creative uplift of potent and sacred words. But they have never sought for a method which was derived from a study of human nature itself, which would know enough to bring liberation to human beings during this life and which had to be handed down, not by being recorded and expounded, but by being applied by individual Christians in elucidating their own experience. Recognition of the value of such a method, of its possible attainment, of the way in which it can be attained, and of the hopelessness of searching for it by exploring the historical record is the great need of contemporary Christianity.

In fact the present dependence of official Christianity on the power of noble and sacred words to create spiritual energy makes it extremely difficult for ardent Christians to reach an imaginative understanding of what a method or way of life is and how it differs from a way of discourse. Of course good Christians are wholly sincere in proposing to realize Christian truth in their lives, but they take for granted that the knowledge of the Christian record and the worship of Christian symbols, reinforced by personal sincerity, is sufficient to convert Christians into personalities whose lives are being fulfilled by the incarnation of Christian truth. In as much as they passionately or devoutly will the end, they assume themselves to have willed the means. But they do not know what the means are, and the ignorance is fatal. For unless they are conscious of their own processes and by consciousness achieve self-control, the end is realized, if at all, without their participation. They will never find out what the means are until they cease to be so confidently preoccupied with the virtue of promulgating the end. If they wish to translate Christianity into a way of life, they must first realize how completely destitute they are of a method which will enable them to unfold their lives in the

light of any authentic knowledge of themselves. After they have reached an understanding of how human nature works and how it can become individualized, they can consider how far the naturally good life, in so far as they have learned to live it, is not also the Christian life.

The search for this method, although conducted for the purpose of throwing light on a Christian way of life, would be primarily scientific. Like all scientific inquiries it would undertake its enterprise guiltless of any allegiance except to the truth as developed by the inquiry itself. Those who undertook it could not assume a certain conception of Christianity in order to try out whether or how far it would work in unfolding human life. By so doing they would place their trust, not in human life itself, but in a Christianity which insisted on being an intellectual and external interpretation of human life. If human beings are able by experience in living to secrete a truth whereby they as individuals can liberate their lives, that truth must be embodied in a method rather than in a hypothesis, principle or a dogma or even a symbol. The truth for which they were searching would have to be both realized through the medium of lives which were actually being lived and could not be envisaged without confidence in those lives.

In so far as they sought for a method rather than a principle or hypothesis, the members of the group which conducted the inquiry would have to submit to a drastic but an inspiring test of success. Unlike social investigators the inquirers would be to an unusual extent personally responsible for their own success or failure. A commission which deals with Christianity in industry or politics is investigating chiefly the activities of other people—of employers, wage-earners, statesmen, voters and generals. It must take these people as it finds them and depend upon a method which will open and stir up other minds and stimulate them to watch and reform their activities. But the members of groups which applied the scientific method and spirit to the possible regeneration of individual life would be engaged primarily in reforming not other people but themselves. In so far as they caught a glimpse of some promising way of liberating human life, they would be bound to test by personal experiment whether or not the guess was good. They would conduct the inquiry at their own spiritual expense. They would themselves be living as well as inquiring, and the life and the inquiry would be inseparable, if not indistinguishable. They must either produce something in the nature of regenerative human lives or they will have failed to vindicate their enterprise.

The time is ripe for the starting of such an experimental inquiry. Recent additions to the prevailing knowledge of the human mind and body are encouraging. There are plausible reasons for believing that human beings are physiological and psychological units of a kind which are always mov-

ing in the direction of more or less complete wholeness. They are capable of fulfillment only as individual personalities and in terms of the progressive movement of their own lives. This conception of human nature is proposed as the result of observations, but it cannot be vindicated merely by observation. Its verification demands systematic and whole-hearted experimentation designed to discover how far and in what way the progressive individualized integration of human lives can be brought about. It demands, that is, the kind of inquiry which I am proposing as the essential task of the Conference on the Christian Way of Life. Precisely because prevailing psychological theories call for and are provoking experiments in the laboratory of life itself, there are many investigators of all kinds who have already started upon the search, and in a few years there will be many more.

There are obvious and powerful reasons why devout Christians should not allow this immensely important inquiry to be monopolized by psychophysicists or lay moralists. A large part of the future credit of Christianity is staked on the result. The prevailing knowledge of human nature is now passing through an upheaval analogous to that which took place in cosmology at the time of Copernicus and Galileo. If as a consequence of this knowledge it is possible to develop a method of liberating and integrating human lives which work sufficiently well but in which the Christian gospel and experience play no part, Christianity will enter upon a final misunderstanding with science from which it is certain to suffer. This result may well take place, unless the leaders of the Christian church understand at once the crying need of increased spiritual energy and vision, the impossibility of obtaining it without discovering a better method of liberating and integrating individual human lives and the necessity of seeking that method by trusting and stimulating human beings to develop their own means of fulfillment rather than by imposing it on them by some assumption of other worldly authority.

Devout Christians have no reason to fear the search for such a method unless they themselves turn away from it and continue to wager the future of Christianity on their ability to uplift mankind chiefly by the power of sacred and authoritative words. Jesus himself has expressed far more lucidly and persuasively than any other religious teacher a conception of human nature fundamentally similar to that which is now emerging as a result of purely scientific inquiry. But his followers did not understand that he meant and failed to associate the fulfillment of this conception with belief in the person and message of Christ. They tried to keep the personality of Jesus alive chiefly by means of doctrine, worship and prayer, but these methods of propagation, indispensable as they were, had one fatal defect. They obscured in the minds of Christians the vision of human personality as a

self-moved unit of infinite possibilities which was foretold and incarnated by the Master. Applied Christianity has been, consequently, only too often sometimes an heroic and sometimes a merely well-intentioned but weak attempt to compensate for the pretentious ignorance which in the name of religion Christians had cherished about human nature. The proposed inquiry implies a revival of the original conception of human nature which Jesus Christ envisaged in his life and teaching and which has withered in the church precisely because Christians turned to words and records rather than to human nature itself in order to discover a method of giving reality to Christianity.

Although such an inquiry in so far as it was successful, would bring into existence for the first time a body of knowledge which could really be called Christian, it would depart from perhaps the most fundamental tradition of Christian education—the tradition that when a Christian convert is re-born through faith in Jesus, the willing of the end of regeneration is tantamount to willing the means which shall give reality to the end. The tradition has hitherto not only prevented Christian education from seeking a technique of individual human fulfillment, but it has blinded generation after generation of sincere Christians to the reason for their impotence to realize Christianity as a way of life and what they must do in order to repair the default. It has sentenced Christian ethics to a servitude to partial and negative ends which has too often associated official Christianity with an ignorant loyalty to one side in irreconcilable moral or social conflicts. It has encouraged Christians to console themselves with illusory verbal escapes from the dilemmas in which they have allowed their personalities to be entangled. It has substituted in devout Christians a knowledge of words for the knowledge of life and how life can be lived consummately which was implicit in the gospel of their Master. If Christianity is ever to become a way of life this tradition must be abandoned, and the Christians who abandon it can and must employ a better method of justifying their non-conformity than by argument or even persuasion. Their only possible vindication turns upon their ability to demonstrate by their increasing mastery in the conduct of life the comparative fertility of their interpretation of Christian truth.

In the meantime would the Conference on the Christian Way of Life have any assured right to invoke the name of Christian on behalf of this inquiry? Perhaps not. It would not be an attempt to impose what we mean and believe by Christianity on human life but to find out whether human life, in so far as we know how to realize it, would not as a consequence of self-development be better prepared to assimilate the spirit, the method and the example of Jesus. The possible method of more harmonious and spiritually powerful living which the inquiry might disclose would not be hall-

marked as Christian. The result would be available no less for pious pagans than for faithful Christians. But faithful Christians would, I think, show little faith in the truth of their religion if they attached much importance to this lack of perfect assurance. The results of all scientific inquiry are, if authentic, valid for all human beings irrespective of religious faith. It would remain for Christians to prove that, as Christians and as a consequence of their Christian convictions they were capable of adding something to the fulfillment of human life which was denied to the pious pagan. This they can undoubtedly do if Christianity is a truthful interpretation of the reality of human life, and if there is any virtue in the idea of vicarious atonement. But they can do it only after having trusted every possible future convert to Christianity with the opportunity and the obligation to discover the truth of Christianity for himself as the result of his own methodical moral and religious experience.

If faithful Christians will understand how com-

pletely they now lack an authentic method of realizing a good life and what steps they must take to repair the deficiency, they will have started a new era in the propagation of Christianity. A religion in so far as it really takes possession of the minds of good people must above all appeal to the imagination. Christianity has, I think, appealed more vividly and beautifully to the imaginations of its disciples than has any other religion; but the vividness and the effectiveness of this appeal has been impaired by the moral and intellectual compulsions and obligations which have been attached to it. In so far as we accept Christianity as a matter of obligation rather than as a matter of more complete and intelligent participation in life itself, the Christian gospel and its record become a dogma and a discipline which overpower the mind and the will rather than an imaginative vision of the whole man which when reënforced by a valid art of living may help to bring the whole man into existence.

HERBERT CROLY.

A Green International

FARMERS of the world—unite! . . . cautiously, conservatively, the international idea dawns upon agriculture. Unlike labor, which leaped to world organization before unions existed in half a dozen countries, agriculture has proceeded carefully and sceptically, scratching its head at every step. It is true that in 1848 an International Agricultural Congress was held which has been repeated at intervals of a few years ever since. But these congresses are too unrepresentative and spasmodic to count as a real international organization. There have also been formed recently several international associations, like that of the wine-growers, of a special technical nature, but a broad confederation of all farmers' organizations does not exist. Twenty years ago David Lubin, merchant and fruit grower from California, preached the gospel of internationalism for farmers—not for government appointees and avowed friends of agriculture,—but for farmers. No self-respecting farmer would listen to him, naturally. It took the King of Italy to do that. But since 1905 there has been a tendency of large farm organizations to understand that it's a small world after all, with agriculture all over it, and on May 8, 1924, at Rome, the gap between tendency and tangibility was finally bridged. Dr. Ernest Laur, president of the Swiss Peasants' Union, called a meeting of representatives from the important farmers' organizations of all countries before whom he urged that an international federation be formed. He spoke to men who had worked for union and coöperation in their own countries and who knew the advantages of both. One after another they rose and endorsed his plan. Though their approval

could not be official and did not commit their organizations to anything at all, it showed the leaders ready to consider an initial step toward international federation. By the time they had elected a committee to correspond with all the important agricultural associations of all countries for suggestion and support they had taken that step.

This is the beginning of a beginning, of course. What the form of the organization will be no one can say, since that depends on what the federation members want. Besides the technical questions which concern special branches of agriculture, like the seed growers, dairymen or wine growers, there are large questions which touch agriculturists as a whole. Since the war, for instance, there has been a profound change in land tenures all over Europe. The experiments in public ownership and division of large estates which have been extensively made, have not had unbiassed interpretation. Farmers and intelligent representatives of farmers, in unpolitical coöperation, could interpret these facts, and on them base their fight for agricultural justice. Farm labor is at present regulated by the Labor Bureau at Geneva. This is most unsatisfactory because the Bureau in no way represents agriculture. It is especially desirable, therefore, that farmers have some way of expressing their opinion. There are a dozen other questions—prevention of insect pests and plant diseases, international coöperation in buying fertilizer and raw materials, stabilization of prices, limitation of interest rates—all difficult questions, all rooted in divergent interests, yet full of possibility. These questions must be divided broadly between various types of international organization—some already existing, some needing to be