

"OUTWARD BOUND"

Galatians VI : 7, "Whatsoever a Man Soweth, That Shall  
He Also Reap."

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(A sermon delivered by the Reverend Adam Hamilton, M.A., at the CoBourg  
Congregational Church, and published in the COBOURG WORLD Feb. 19, 1925.)

A wise man has told us in his Holy Book that "the letter killeth,  
but the spirit giveth life." We do not want to be killed; we want life.  
Words are like men. The most important thing about them is their spirit.  
These words are not so much a text for exposition this evening as the f or-  
mal statement of a great principle, the envelope which contains something  
more important than itself. You are all perfectly familiar with their me-  
aning and the purpose for which they were written by the author. You are  
aware that if you sow potatoes, you will not reap turnips; if you plant  
cabbages, you will not get a crop of roses. What you want to reap, that  
you must sow, and what you persist in sowing will denote the kind of har-  
vest you are fated to gather. In the "Christmas Carol" Charles Dickens  
had a sentence which sufficiently illuminates ths law of life. "Men's  
courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persisted in, they  
must lead. But if the course be departed from, the ends will change."

It is much as if life could be read as a straight line from the cradle up to the present, what geometry calls "the shortest distance between two points," but to as what goes on in the hidden continuation of that line beyond the present point, it is all a mystery. My mathematical tutor at college used to drum in this perpetual advice, "Whenever you are stuck with a problem, produce your line, and see what happens." You have noticed in the diagram the firm, black lines which stand for established facts, and the faint dotted lines which signify the possibilities to be deducted from these. So my tutor would say, "In the more practical and exciting difficulties of life, as well as in your mathematics, remember always to produce your line and see where it leads. If the direction looks good, keep to it. If bad, try another."

Life is largely a problem in the line, "the straight and narrow way." As spiders spin their course out of the dust in the air, you and I create a route for our souls from the dust of life, its duties, sorrows, temptations, successes, defeats. So far we have spun a career. At present it has reached a certain point. What it will lead to, we do not know, but if we produce that line, over ground not yet actually traversed, we shall get some idea as to its bearings and probabilities. We may even catch a hint of the harvest which we are sowing.

We have dropped into a habit of saying that the future is God's.. A French thinker it was who coined the phrase, "L'avenir est a nous," a phrase which Napoleon, you remember, was one time fond. "The future is ours!" Whereupon another French thinker immediately coined the epigram,

"L'avenir, l'avenir, l'avenir est a nous !

L'avenir ne'est a personne ; l'avenir est a Dieu !"

(1-1-06)

"The future, the future, the future is ours !  
Nay, the future is no man's, the future is God's !.

They were both right,-- and both wrong. The future is both God's and ours. If you and I persist in following the line of life that we are spinning, then God only deals with us on that line. God is fair. If the line produced means a certain course, God must deal with you and me upon that course, as the route upon which we have chosen that He should deal with us, and if He is going to deal with us upon another course, then, as beings endowed with free will and moral initiative, we must depart from the one we have previously followed, and prepare a fresh road for God and us to meet on. Thus the future is both ours and God's. He will give us and never stint His love, on whatever line we choose to make our life, but remember, He can only act for us on the line we are creating for ourselves. There can be no interruption of that law. Nothing except a change in our own will can alter the direction of the line. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," and reap in the field in which he sows.

A year ago (1924) the metropolis of the British Empire saw this time-honoured theme leap into prominent public interest. Perhaps it was due to reaction and reflection following upon the seriousness of the colossal international tragedy. At any rate, all London was talking and thinking speculations about the very line of thought which I have been unfolding to you.

With an uncanny sense of the psychological moment, a playwright staged a drama in one of the leading theatres in London, which captured the imagination of the populace and the pulpits of that great city. On the whole, it was good for London that it should be shaken into a paroxysm of serious thought upon such a question. The drama was called "OUTWARD BOUND", and it seems to me that in these days when somehow when we are thinking and talking so much about the future, it will be well for us to recall that we are outward bound. We are passing from an old age into a new one. If we are alive to the movement of the world to-day, we have left old moorings, and are emerging from the mouth of the harbour to pursue some definite line across the sea of the unknown. We may have taken the trouble to chart that line, or we may not. In any case we are outward bound. It will be good for us to scan the map for the time at our disposal this evening, and reckon up some of the possibilities of the course upon which we are embarked.

The drama opens with a ship out at sea, she is sailing over quite still waters in a strange dreamy light, and with absolutely no noise or shiver of movement. A very representative list is a catalogue of the passengers aboard. There is in constant attendance a steward, pale-faced, grave, thoughtful, who moves around his duties without a remark or sound of any kind, but intensely interested with the passengers aboard. Then there is a young man of the kind fashionable to the present day, what we call "a typical young-man-about-town," the "Knut", of the morning paper cartoons, up-to-date, modern, spending most of his time at the bar on deck. As an offset to the character I have just mentioned, in dramatic antithesis, a parson included, serious but genial, who plays an important role in the development of the story. The list further contains a society lady, flagrantly supercilious, affected, superficial, of the opinion that the ship was built specially for

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her individual convenience, and no one has a right to disregard her importance or prerogatives in the social scale of the ship's passengers. The antipodes of my lady is a poor old woman of the people, obviously a char-woman, shy, reticent, apologetic, dowdily dressed, plebian in her manner of speech, but conspicuously of a good heart and unspoilt mind. Again there is a loud and pompous individual, a self-made business man, with a gruff voice and a bad temper, who orders everybody and everything about as unfortunately necessary evils in the world he rules. Of course there are the inevitable pair of lovers, very much wrapped up in themselves, solitary, aloof and closely reticent of some secret best known to themselves.

The peculiar thing about the passengers on this ship, outward bound, is that all in common look furtively and enquiringly at one another as if half afraid to broach some subject upon which they are not quite settled in their own minds or prepared to speak. Frequently the young man has stolen anxious glances at the parson. He is apparently worried for some reason of his own. If it is candour you want, you may depend on getting it from a young-man-about-town. He at least, has the honesty to admit to himself what his trouble is. He has clean forgotten where he is going, has not a gleam of a notion where he is booked to, and rather through asking questions, he shown up for a mental wreck or a fool, he decides to take careful notice of the others and surmise what he can. Strange to say, they too seem to be nursing a secret of some kind.

For some time life aboard plays that double game which life mostly evinces when people living together refuse to trust one another. We do not have to go aboard ship to discover this phenomenon of one's life on the surface and another underneath. You are all more or less familiar with it. It is part of our evil heritage that men will not be honest with one another, playing the game with two packs of cards instead of one. So life proceeds aboard this ship that is outward bound, when one day the young man finds himself alone with the parson. It is strange, but true that, in the case of such men, you will find them ready to talk to the parson as they will talk to no one else. I do not know why, but perhaps, with the poet Burns, the consciousness of squandered life makes them so honest with themselves that there is relief in unbosoming their failings to one who is supposedly, accustomed to listening to confessions and respect secrets. At any rate, the young man proceeds to open his heart to the parson. "Look here, I am in a plague of a difficulty. You will think me a hopeless idiot, but, to tell the truth, I've forgotten where this ship is bound for or where this ship is bound to go."

"Now that's strange," says the parson, "I am in the same difficulty myself. I really cannot tell you where I have booked to, I seem to have forgotten."

"Well, confided<sup>s</sup> the young man, from something that happened to-day, I have come to a certain conclusion. I was listening to these two lovers. Pardon me for overhearing, but I could not help it. They were talking worriedly about some dog called Gyp and broken glass. The lady was trying to console the man. I have an idea they once committed suicide. Their conversation was so queer that it set me thinking and putting two and two together, I have come to — a disturbing conclusion. In fact I think we are all dead."

"Why," confesses the parson, "I am similarly puzzled myself. For the life of me I cannot remember where we are going." they decided to call the Steward.

The attendant with the sheet-white face enters; noiseless, melancholy, obsequious. The young man launches into a series of direct questions. "Can it be, steward, that we are all dead?"

"Yes you are, sir."

"Where is this ship going?"

"Outward bound, sir."

"But, where? Heaven or Hell?"

"Its all the same place, sir."

"Do the passengers usually know they are dead?"

"Very few guess it so soon."

"How do they take it?"

"In most cases very badly, sir".

"And who are you?"

"I am only a half-way, sir. I came here on my own account before I was called. I am doomed to sail backwards and forwards on her trips. I have been at it for years and years, but time mellows it down, and things are not so bad. Some day I may be allowed to land, sir"

The young man and the parson hold a council of war as to how they are going to inform the others. It must be a very difficult situation to have to break the news to a man that he is dead. The society lady does not take it well. Certainly she remembers that she was ill and her secretary had been told to book <sup>her</sup> a passage for abroad, but had neglected to tell her where she had been booked to. She should be fired immediately she gets back. But she discredits the information. The pompous gentleman says it is atrocious that they should play upon his feelings in this way. His doctor had told him that he must have no worries and that the next shock he had would be fatal. The old char-woman is prepared to believe anything. It might easily be, because, when she was thought to be alive she often felt dead, and now that she is dead, she is not surprised to feel alive. It is all the same to her. As for the pair of lovers, they will have nothing to do with it; they will not enter into conversation. They want to be left alone.

A rapid change takes place. the whole ship becomes enveloped in darkness, and out from the gloom there comes a sound like the call of a siren. With equal suddenness the vessel is transfused with a brilliant light. The representative of the Great Judge is coming. He steps aboard to examine the passengers. First he takes the self-made man, who hotly resents the probe. "Do you know who I am? I am so-and-so, the well known company promoter. I have piloted so many businesses through hard times. I have put so many people in the way of making money." But the officer will not listen to him. "It does not matter who you have been. You count for nothing here," and he goes on to tell him a few facts about his past life, thus sending him instantly into the background. Next, he deals with the society lady. She is shocked at being treated in this way. Imagine a threat of judgment made to her! She will appeal to the British Consul, but the officer reminds her that he will have none of this and hints of a few plain truths about her career which she had thought nobody knew but herself. And what of the parson? He is conspicuously shy of meeting the representative of the Great Judge, who probably knows how, after \_\_\_\_\_ having worked for his own personal

ambition and gain, he had taken up a labourious working parish in London, and settled down to the drudgery of really helping his fellow men. It is a bigger sacrifice than people imagine for a minister to have some cosy little middle-class charge and remove into the great city, where stupendous social problems require to be tackled and soul-draining work overtaken among the seething masses of the many-headed crowd. It takes a man to stand it.

Unfortunately the poor parson had found it too much. He had been taken ill. He remembers thinking that it is a long rest that he wants, and wonders if he has been taken away from his work because it was so badly done. The representative, however, slaps him on the shoulder and assures him he is all right. He will get similar work to carry on with in the new world. The young man is very shame faced before the representative. "Deal with me quickly", he pleads, "I have wasted my life, but I am sorry now". "Well", says the official, "You will get a second chance here. God's love is the gospel of the second chance. Go and begin all over again." "But I will need my mother again," pleads the man. "She helped me when I was a boy. It was only when I forgot her that I fell into wicked ways." The old woman's turn comes next. "What would you like to do in the new country?" "There is only one heaven for me, and that is to find my boy and teach him all over again what are the best things to value. I did it but poorly last time. Perhaps that is why I lost him." The official then discloses that the young man is her missing boy, and they too go off together to help each other recapture the heaven they have dreamed about and the mutual trust they never found. As for the lovers, who had talked of broken glass and the dog, it transpires that they had come aboard ship not as proper passengers, but as spiritual stowaways. In the embroilment of some romance, they had attempted to take their own lives with gas, but the breaking of the window by the dog had admitted fresh air and saved their lives. They must go back to make another try in the old life before embarking again Outward Bound.

The effect of this drama upon London was immediate, electric, even sensational. Men began to realize in a new light how the Other Life might not be so different from the one we are now living. Is not God the same God in all the world? Why then should man be different? Will he not follow the prolongations of the line which he has struck here? Is not death but the production of that line beyond the edge of the paper? Does not the ship keep the same course although the sun goes down? How much difference does death make in a man? Is the idea so fantastic that we may be dead when we think we are alive, any more than the notion that the dead still live.?

What is death? We know what the destruction of a piece of paper involves. You toss it into the fire, and the flame seems to make a definite end of it. But is that so? All that happens is a dissolution of its component elements,-- so much carbon, so much nitrogen, so much hydrogen, so much oxygen, and so on, the gases escaping into the air, the solids turning to ashes. Not an atom, not an ion is annihilated. Everything in it is released from its prison, changes its form, and enters upon a liberated existence. Men come under this same law. His body decomposes into the elements, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust", not a jot or iota wiped out of existence. If this be true of man's chemistry, it is equally applicable to his personality, his ego, the thing that is himself. "His soul goes marching on." this ego, this self, this soul continues to follow its line, tracing

the track of its own bent, projected along the direction of its own aim. Brave men feel that, and do not fear death. They know they will still be living when they seem to be dead.

But what if this line of direction be a wrong one, that is, one constantly deflecting from the path of the Best Things? Ah, that is the serious matter. That is what sin does. The root-meaning of the Greek word which the New Testament uses for "sin", is interesting. It denotes 'missing the mark,' "a bad aim," "off the road". A man may let his soul get lost on the way. It may miss the road, get wandered among side issues, and strike a path which, when produced, leads nowhere. That is the death to fear, the death which lost souls endure, which Paul meant by "dead in sins".. In that phrase, the term "dead" is a metaphor. It suggests, simply, to be living in a position which is as bad as death at its worst. Science is not ignorant of cases where a man, who looks alive, is to all intents and purposes dead. An authentic case of this kind came under my notice a few years ago. An English doctor, who has earned a wide reputation for his success with the more subtle forms of nerve-trouble, was called in by two Harley Street specialists to give his opinion regarding a patient whose malady had baffled them. The sufferer seemed to be physically sound, yet was always ill. It is this doctor's method to get in touch with the personality, the psychic contents, so to speak, the soul of such patients, and work from within outwards. After an hour's labour with this particular patient, he returned to the specialists and in an unusual state of alarm reported, "I was never afraid in my life before, but I tell you, I am afraid to-day. I have tried to get down into his psychic nature, to lay my finger on something from which to work, but I always come to the edge of an abyss, a line where there is nothing beyond. Its eery. Your man has NO SOUL! I say, he has somehow gone and lost HIS SOUL! He is, in my opinion a dead man who looks alive. I'm afraid. I give up his case." The specialists laughed at the report. They made some reference to quixotic psychics. Not long after, the patient in question dropped dead on the street. To this day, no one knows what he died of. Life simply ceased. There is such a thing as a lost soul!

The great secret is not a question of life and death, but of the soul and its direction. The important thing about us is the line, which spider-like we are spinning out of the dust of life, and the direction which this line is taking. If it leads nowhere we are but spending our strength upon that which is not gain and losing our souls in the process. To find out wither it is carrying you, place yourself upon the spectral ship "Outward Bound", and size up the thoughts which must work like bees in a honeycomb within the cells of reflection as you gaze upon the far horizon where lies the landing-place. Are you living the life which is worth prolonging, which you yourself would care to resume on the other side, when you come to see it from a new point of view in the Land of Light? We bear the frailties and imperfections of the "days of the flesh," our thoughts are often better than our deeds, we are baffled again and again in our own endeavors, but if our ideals still be our goal, if our efforts be honest and our faces are set toward the things which are good and true and beautiful, that is the crux of the whole matter. The line of life, at least, is right. This is the truth which a Canadian poet, who was educated partly in this town and trained his mind to think during lonely walks along the sands down there, I mean Archibald Lampman, phrased so beautifully in his sonnet "Aspiration".

"O deep-eyed brothers, was there ever here,  
Or is there now, or shall there sometime be  
Harbour or any rest for such as we,  
Lone thin-cheeked mariners, that eye must steer  
Our wispering barks with such keen hope and fear  
Toward misty bournes across that coastless sea,  
Whose winds are songs that ever gust and flee,  
Whose shores are dreams that tower but come not near"

Our reach exceeds our grasp. We labour forward, on and on, never getting there, but if the direction be true, then the course, at least, is fixed, and travels toward a merciful God. Shall I change the metaphore? We are weavers, working the Woof of the real upon the Warp of the idea, and when time wears the texture threadbare, the weft which shows through is seen to be spun out of the stuff of Eternity, and if our work, a poor thing but our own, comes under the scrutiny of the Taskmaster, He is found to be the same merciful God.

In a celebrated Scottish novel there occurs a graphic sketch of a dour old Calvinist, Lauchlan Campbell, who turned his daughter out-of-doors for her sins against the covenant. But Lauchlan's heart beat his head, for o' nights he placed the family Bible upon the window-sill and on it a lighted lamp, lest perchance "The lassie should tak' thocht and wan to come hame."

That is the light which leads on the "deep-eyed" men and women; no will-o'-the-wisp, but the gleaming invitation of God's "Welcome Home." Jesus was strangely reserved about the future life, but one definite statement He did make, "In My Father's house are many mansions," - a room for every man, and a light in the window to cheer him on the way. That is enough for me. Long ere we step aboard the spectral barque, we are already Outward Bound-- somewhere! Will the course we are making, if followed straight ahead, bring us home or not? That is the paramount query. To repeat the thesis from Dickens, "Men's courses will Foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persisted in, they must lead. But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change." And again to insist upon the text from St. Paul, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth of the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Steady your eye on the beacon! Follow the gleam! That way lies home and safety, flashing across the murky waters of life's fog and gloom, the harbour lights of God. Then Outward Bound becomes a voyage to the Homeland!

"Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me!  
And may there be no moaning at the bar,  
When I put out to sea.

"But such a tide as moving seems asleep,  
Too full for sound and foam,  
When that which drew from out the boundless deep  
Turns again home.

"Twilight and evening bell,  
And after that the dark,  
And may there be no sadness of farewell  
When I embark.

"For **tho'** from out our bourne  
of Time and Place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to  
face  
When I have crossed the bar."

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By : Percy L. Climo, who attended  
the Church service and listened  
to this sermon.