

# A Challenge from Britain

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I first came to the North American continent soon after World War I. Thirty years later, I find myself here again, and have been quick to note a very considerable change in the intellectual attitude of this generation toward the Christian faith.

When I first knew America, it would have been true to say that, outside the pale of organized religion, there was practically no interest in spiritual truth. That was a consequence, I think, of two things: First, of the materialism that followed in the train of the interpreters of Charles Darwin, and second, of the Rationalism of the school of Herbert Spencer.

Man in his unregenerate state has always been eager to explain the universe, with its mysteries of life and being, without having to bring God into the calculation, and in the middle of the last century, it seemed as though there was being offered to the world, an explanation of itself in which there was no need to admit of creation or of a Creator. Side by side with this teaching, there was going the philosophy of the Spencerian School, which claimed that nothing indeed be accepted as truth unless it could be demonstrated in the laboratory of the scientist or proved according to the laws of logic. It is easy to see how such a doctrine would strike at the very roots of the Christian faith which, after all, is dependent upon revealed truth. So, materialism and rationalism went hand in hand through the early part of the 20th Century, making their appeal to the mentality of a world, which consequently had but little interest in spiritual truth.

With the passing of a generation, a great change has come over the thinking of the people. It would not be true today, to say that in America there is no interest in spiritual truth outside the Churches. Indeed, one of the most outstanding features

of the life of our age, is the obvious interest in the spiritual, outside of organized religion. Indicative of the change that has come over the thinking of our people, is the change in our vocabulary. The great word of the last generation was the word 'evolution'. It summed up the thought trends of an age, and was a word with which to conjure. The word has lost its magic power, and its place is taken in the vocabulary of today, by the word 'personality'. All the research of modern metaphysics is toward the explanation of that in the human, which we call 'personality'.

There is something about the man that is not hands or head or physical frame: something that is independent of the physical—not quite that, for it uses the physical as a vehicle of expression. Medical science is busy explaining to us today the processes of anabolism and metabolism, whereby our bodies are undergoing change continually; every drop of blood, every scrap of bone, every ounce of flesh, being replaced particle by particle, cell by cell, moment by moment. The process is complete every seven years, so that every seven years, evidently, we get an entirely new body; and yet I am meeting people in America this year, whom I met thirty years ago, and have not seen since, and I recognize them, and they know me! Why? Because there is something about the man that is continuous in spite of material change; the personality, the soul! The mind of our generation, working in this realm, at the very center of which is this emphasis upon personality, has turned from the old apostasy, and has evidently discovered that the real is to be found only in the realm of the spiritual.

For one thing, Materialism as a philosophy is about bankrupt. It was built up, on the theory that all existence could be analyzed and sub-analyzed until we came

to final analysis—the atom, a unit and indivisible. But we have lived to see science discredit Dalton's atomic theory, with the discovery that the atom, far from being a unit, is a microcosm, capable of division, in which the sum of the parts is not equal to the whole; and the difference has expressed itself in what militarism calls 'blast' and what the industrialist, we hope, is going to call 'power'. That process of subdivision can go on to infinity, until there is nothing but 'blast' or 'power', and what we thought was the 'real', can no longer be regarded as such, but ultimately resolves itself into something that can only be explained in language that belongs not to the material, but to the spiritual universe.

There is another thing. We belong to a generation that has faced squarely alternatives to the Christian way of life. Fascism deified the State and regarded the individual of importance, only as a unit in the aggregate. We have rejected this as a philosophy of life because it came into conflict with our basic belief in the sacredness of human personality. Or Naziism, which did with Race what the Fascists did with the State; which taught that there was one supreme Nordic race and that ultimately world salvation was dependent on that supreme race having full opportunity of self-realization; that the interests of all people must be sacrificed to the interests of this supreme race. We rejected it, because the Scriptures have taught us that, with God there is no such respect of persons. Or, that atheistic Communism, about which

Europe knows so much, and which America so rightly dreads; which would separate one class from the rest of the community, and sacrifice the whole community in the interests of that one class. We rejected it as being contrary to our profound Christian faith in the brotherhood of man. Our generation has faced these alternative philosophies to a Christian civilization, and we have rejected them in turn. We are left with a widespread and profound intellectual interest in Christianity as the only practicable way of life for a slowly-awakening world.

What an opportunity this gives to the Christian Church! Here we are, the experts facing the challenge of an inquiring generation, and ours is the privilege to guide the thought of an age, profoundly interested in spiritual truth, into channels that will converge on the discovery of the soul of all that is spiritual—God Himself.

In this day of God's power, is His Church in America to be found willing? For good or for evil, world leadership has crossed the Atlantic Ocean. Eighteen hundred millions of people have their eyes on this nation. Richly endowed by nature, with almost inexhaustible wealth, leading the world in the mechanical sciences, having an educational system second to none on earth, America carries a great responsibility. Let there be a revival of real religion on the North American continent today, and before the century ends, "the Kingdoms of this world would become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ."