

self-mutilation was his way of taking at least a part of his own life in an act of atonement.

#### PURPOSIVE ACCIDENTS

Purposive accidents are a type of chronic suicide. When a person for no apparent reason swerves his car into the approaching path of another vehicle or over an embankment, or perhaps he rushes through a red light and collision follows—many such accidents are intentional. The death impulse became a momentary master.

Polysurgery is a way of taking one's life. Many doctors would relate how many patients are fanatically convinced of the necessity of many operations. Many a "knife-happy" patient is actually longing for death without the commensurate courage to take his life. So, the easiest way out is to lose one limb or member of the body at a time—hence, the endless round of surgical experiences.

Another type of functional suicide is impotence and frigidity where one takes his emotional life out of circulation. The affections are reined up and put in deep-freeze. The person moves around in detached indifferences, and the normal biological processes of sex, warmth, and affections are allowed to fade away by decision. Tragically, this activity is often the doings of the subconscious mind and therefore more difficult to get at by professional helpers. The causes are numerous: puritanical teachings, prudish mores, ignorance, sadism, selfishness, and a host

of undesirables that gang up to wring out of life its rightful heritage.

#### ASCETICISM AND MARTYRDOM

Asceticism and martyrdom constitute a type of self-destruction. Asceticism is the outlook of life which says that all that makes for merriment, joy, and enthusiasm some how or other belong to the province of evil—that all activities that produce recreational fun are the works of Satan and therefore should be shunned at any cost. Oh, what a lie: that the Church of Jesus Christ should give quarter to this kind of error as so often it does. Jesus is never so misunderstood as when He is portrayed as a killjoy or a negator who wanders through the countryside with a long face and a desire for death. He was no such thing! His was an infectious life of regnant joy—living with all the stops pulled out, not as a sinful libertine. No, not at all, but as one who had been set free by Almighty God. To impose a long-suffering martyrdom on one's discipleship as an enhancer of its quality is vain deception. This actually is a type of death.

We are to conquer the death impulses by the sheer forthrightness of willpower, by a wholesome annexation of our lives to that which is constructive, useful, and valuable. By loving God and Godly things one stays away from the pitfalls of self-annihilation. When one comes alive in God through Christ Jesus, he loses all of his purposelessness that would rob life of its zest for living.

## QUICKSAND

March 16, 1958

As the little band of hunters listened to their instructions from the guide, he stated, "You will encounter many hazards on this safari: insects, reptiles, swollen rivers, vicious animals, but nothing will be more hazardous than the mires of quicksand. Be on your guard for these seeming placid spots. They are yawning chasms of death."

The journey through life has its quicksand, its snaretraps of unwary, unheeding feet. It often is a treacherous journey especially when many have set themselves to the infamous job of camouflaging the pitfalls. Many movements are underfoot in our world designed to tell us that the quicksand really is not miry—instead, a concrete plateau. That millions are en-

snared by this deception is tragically apparent. Let us look at some of the sand pits with prayerful caution that we shall not stumble in them.

#### A LIFE OF NOTHINGNESS

One such pit of sinking sand is a life of purposelessness—if you please, the sin of nothingness. No sand is more sinking than the belief that life is a sheer accident—at best, a set of contradictory circumstances without any design, purpose, or plan. Man has no right to come into God's ordered world and go through it just marking off his days. Of all the freedom that accrue to his account, this is not one of them. It was said of Napoleon that "he was an embarrassment to God." Indeed he was: for he foiled the purposes for which a man is brought into the world; he set life in reverse gear until it backed into a fate which defied description. For God to have sent His Son into the world to live and to die for it, and for a man to regard that with a casual "what-does-it-matter" attitude is sinking sand. Such a life is an embarrassment to God indeed.

Even now as I speak, there are countless millions in our nation whose propping purpose is merely to get by, to seek out a few creature comforts, to extract what they can without putting much (if anything) back into it. Much like what Oliver Wendell Holmes said of his mother, "She died with all of her music still inside of her." He meant, of course, that she never brought it out of her. She never played the melodies of life; instead the potential remained locked up inside.

How can a person live in this kind of world with all its wondrous opportunities for creative enlightenment, its uncharted horizons, its locked-up freedoms, its aggravatingly alluring designs, its magnetic poles of consuming thought, its rarefied virtues highly esteemed but rarely exemplified, its beckoning vistas, its alluring challenges—how can one live in this kind of world and remain stolidly neutral? Such is a compounded mystery. The sin of nothingness is sinking sand.

#### NOT A SPECTATOR

It is even more acute when it applies to the life of a professing Christian. Herein not one has any right to remain a passive spectator. By virtue of his association and identification, he is automatically a participator (at least, he is supposed to be). No one who goes under the ensign of Christ's name has any liberty to go through long periods of neutrality in service where interest wanes and zeal drags. That little typed reminder on any train ticket, "No Good If Detached," applies also to those who number themselves among the redeemed. No good if detached from the body of Christian believers; God does not have any Christians Anonymous!

My, what a reassuring, inspiring sight to see a life that is committed to that which is the highest in holiness; to see one who is willing to spend and to be spent in the greatest cause on earth; to see especially a young person clean-faced, high-browed, clean of hands and pure of heart whose shoulder is tight against the wheel of life service. This, I contend, is a sight worth seeing.

In a small American community the pastor of that one little church after years of preaching had a throat ailment that made his voice husky. Sometimes it was almost impossible to hear him speak. Some visitor one Sunday asked a loyal member of the church, "Why don't you get a new minister? This man can't speak clearly at all." Knowing the background of the preacher who had been among them for two decades, the member answered the question by saying, "This man's life is his best sermon, and we just love to see him go in the pulpit." What a compliment: his life was his best sermon!

#### SOCIALISM: NATIONAL QUICKSAND

Let me warn our nation of a second pit of quicksand: socialism. Before us is a quivering, liquid hell, a way of life that can be all-engulfing. But let us not be misunderstood: we have no words but praise for social legislation that foresees the miseries of the masses, that has as its sole motive the alleviation of human suf-

fering. Social progress that does not rob the individual of his rightful freedom is imperatively needed in all nations. However, when group action becomes the means by which individual personality is reduced to its lowest common denominator, when personal freedom is absorbed in the mass equation, when out of interest for the masses we sacrifice the ultimate freedom of the masses, then this is death-dealing quicksand. It always has been in history. The present cancer over our world called Communism inevitably follows in the footsteps of socialism. One is the prophetic herald of the other.

Herein every thoughtful Christian must be alert to the motives that are behind our lobbying efforts. Whether there are civil rights, economic legislation, or political agreements, if the motivation is not above board, let us beware! Much of the misery of our present nation is the aftermath of political jockeying for other than noble motives. Socialism is usually spawned in the minds that know more about pale utopias than about hard realism. Dreamers are still good stock in trade; realists must ever counterbalance them.

#### ELEVENTH-HOUR RELIGION

Eleventh-hour religion is a type of quicksand. I mean by this a Joseph-type of religion. You remember him, don't you? He was the man who came up after Jesus had been crucified and offered to take his dead body and bury it in his

family tomb. On the surface that is a noble gesture, but where was he when Jesus stood alone in the judgment hall? Why such a postmortem display of interest from him? Was this a way of mildly appeasing a stricken conscience? I cannot honestly say, but it would have left us a nobler heritage of this man had he been among the chosen twelve or one who was willing to risk his own skin for the sake of Jesus while He was still living. This is death-bed stuff—where one gives his whole life to Satan and his last dying gasps to God. It is a happy thought that such is possible, but there is only one account of it in the whole Bible, one account so that man may not despair. It is possible; but that he may not presume, it is highly improbable. Wouldn't it mark us as more intelligent creatures to come to terms with God early in life while health is still in us and some ability for service is still there?

Nothing is more characteristic of human nature than the fact that important things are put off until the last minute. We do not actually intend to postpone or to forget permanently, yet often these are the results. The eleventh hour is too close till midnight for safety and assurance.

Friends, let me press upon you now the urgency of turning to God through Christ Jesus while it is early. To surrender your life in all its completeness now and to serve our Maker the rest of your time is to fit you for superlative living now and eternal life hereafter.

## IS LIFE WORTH LIVING . . . REALLY?

March 23, 1958

To ask the question, "Is life worth living . . . really?," raises a resounding "yes" from multitudes of people. Many of these have discovered the scarlet thread of purpose in life. Theirs is more than creature comfort or animal existence. But for other multitudes they honestly reply to this question, "No, life is not worth living!" These are they who have discovered the

purpose but have refused to follow that purpose.

Others, after reasonably honest and diligent search, have found nothing but a predominance of contradiction, misery, and fatalism. One need not be classed as a pagan to admit that life can be a sorry affair. The fact of the sorrieness is seen not only in the inevitable approach of old