

Elliott #1428

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We call this lecture: Aunt Bertha

Things occur in human life, time and again, which seem to be unfavorable for wholeness. If you get a good education at striving that helps at striving for wholeness. But, if frankly you are timid, then you affect your striving for wholeness. You might get married and for sometime you think this is helpful. And then you find our, "Oh, no!" This marriage becomes an impediment. The major difficulty to understand about wholeness is to let all events, all arrangements, destiny, things that happen us, fate help for wholeness. Some seem to be definitely unfavorable.

It cannot be, can it? It doesn't make sense! If God wants wholeness for us, then the same God should be, in understandable ways, helping us. And to a certain extent he is, if we are only able to interpret what God does to us. What he allows to happen in life largely depends on our interpretation. If you interpret it rightly, you find out time and again, "Yes, it is helpful. It is helpful in striving for wholeness." There are a few things that remain apparently unfavorable for wholeness that can be reinterpreted in a better way -- a deeper way -- then again, prove to be helpful.

Let me try to do this now. To say it simply philosophically the goal of wholeness is eminent in human nature. For there are a lot of things in our human nature which help us to make headway in this direction but growth and maintenance of a striving for wholeness is transcendent. That means things coming in from the outside can help us also and even unfavorable things which seem to interfere with the striving for wholeness might be reinterpreted in a way that will become helpful. That is up to the psychologist and that is an important part of religious psychology: to re-interpret events in human life and find out in what sense and how far other circumstances can apparently be unfavorable and yet become helpful.

If you would succeed in re-interpreting everything in terms of wholeness then life would become much easier, wouldn't it?

It would make it easier for us to make use of these circumstances. There is a similarity between this job as I outlined it now and sailing. If you sail in unfavorable winds, then you have to be a very good sailor. And, if you are clever enough, you can make use of unfavorable winds and make headway with your boat. And if you are clumsy or a poor sailor, then you must sigh, "Everything is lost!" But that is not to be blamed on the wind. It has to be blamed on the skill of the sailor. So, let's try to become better sailors!

Let me give you a lesson in sailing with the winds of fortune!!

The first thing is to accept this law. Let us agree on this. Let us assume, at least tentatively, that God wants us to become whole and that He does His very best to help us to become whole. That's, ah -- the high tide, and it is up to us to learn to make use of His help. His help is, as it were, the play of the wind. He gives us the boat, the sails, and some skills of sailing -- and the wind is blowing. And now we have to develop the skills and make use of this wind; make use of the currents and make headway against the unprevailing wind.

That means acceptance. Something very unfortunate might happen that interferes with my education! I cannot finish my studies, my training -- very bad -- what can I do? I have to support myself. But, you know that many students who think they have to stop their studies -- if they change their minds -- and try to make the grade never the less and are earning their way through college might become better students. The training, hard as it is, might be very helpful for their later development. That would be a rather cruel example, but it would show what I mean.

All right, very important then is whom we meet. What are the friends we find? And certainly, there are some friends. We all have some friends that are helpful that we can use, that we can rely on, ask questions and get good advice from them, and get help in our struggle for help.

But we also need friends which might be dangerous. They might induce us to drink or squander money and, at the time, they might be very bad friends. But it is up to us to decide how and to what extent and what direction we make use of this direct hold of the other.

Next question -- and if you don't have the friends you want -- how you would like to be friends!! To be in the group that is helpful for him, let's say, for the consecutive development and he doesn't have these people, then he finds them and tries to join the group and he is rejected. Is that up to him? Or did he make a mistake? Or did the archangel make a mistake not allowing him to meet the right kind of people?

I would gladly say, "See, this side of our education is in the hands of Divine Providence, and that's what we mean by archangels -- guides-- in charge of our destiny.

So, we must assume we meet the right people and that it is up to us to make use of them and call them to accept us. And if they don't accept us, who made the mistake? The archangels or you? Only you!

Let's think about it? It is another subject for meditation. Why didn't that totality or that group accept me? And that is when we hear ourselves say, "They never accept me! I was rejected! Poor me!! I'm such a nice guy. Why don't they accept me?"

They must have a reason for that! So you had better ask the archangel "Why, my dear Sir Gabriel -- or whatever your name is -- why don't they accept me? You want me to learn something?! I evidently have to discover some trick, some better way of meeting people -- of introducing myself. It is a lesson that I have to learn."

See how the whole attitude toward our lives changes when you turn a search light on a particular idol!

All right, next... "I was afraid you might get married." With the archangel or against the archangel you find a girl -- assume now you are a man, a boy -- and you find a girl, and you will get married and for a year to come the road of your destiny is decided upon. What does the archangel say? Does this make for wholeness or for scattering?

If it is the archangel and the archangel has allowed you to marry, then there must be at least a possibility to find a way of making use of the new situation even if it is not directly favorable. It might even look unfavorable but it must be at least a possibility in the situation for making new headway. The wind is still blowing. You still have your own sail in your hand and you can make headway.

And then there are children and life really begins to be tough! Sailing with kids in the boat!!! Huh?

And, here is a remark which most analytic psychologists agree on-- who is choosing the kids for you? You might still be free to some extent to choose whether you want to have kids -- many kids or none -- but once they start coming, then who is coming? It is not up to you anymore. You are completely at the mercy of destiny!

And very soon you have, one, two, three or more, huh!? Did you chose them? Or you might resort to prayer and utter secretly, "I prayed to the Lord that I wanted this type of children."

Look now, did you get them to order and then you refused to accept them when they come?

I know a lady. (I knew her when she married and she was a little particular and had to have a very clean house. You know, only touch...everything had to be in the right place. The paper on the desk had to be at just the right angle.) This is the type of housewife you'd better not marry!

But she was like that, otherwise she was a very nice, a wonderful woman and she wanted children -- very badly, she wanted children!

I looked at her now and I thought about my wife. I looked at my wife and thought, "What kind of children had God given her?"

Well, crawling little creatures who have their own ideas about orderliness, cleanliness and everything in the house -- a Dutch house-- as wigwam! Very soon she had three of them and the house -- you can't think about the house anymore -- There's a different house!

Her husband had become happier in the meantime because he didn't like the angular position of the paper on the desk. He wasn't going to break the pattern you know.

What happened in such a case? She had her virtues and she sticks to her virtues that she has inherited from her ancestors, hundreds of centuries back, where ancestors had been proud of cleanliness. Hear, the Dutch house is noted for that!

And now she had to learn the hard lesson that even Dutch infants are infants and they don't care for cleanliness.

Let me anticipate the result of this hard chapter. The lesson she has to learn is an enlargement of her consciousness. Her consciousness at that time, "very nice", but it was a little narrow and rigid and she stuck to rigid valuations. She had to learn the unbelievable act that kids are wonderful even if they mess up the whole house.

It's hard you know! But you be the judge. Is this woman two years later -- when she has learned the lesson better off than she was two years earlier because she learned her lesson. Of course she's better off!

But that's only the beginning of the story. This lady, as you might imagine, is extraverted and she wants people to be clean, exact, faithful and busy. Keep busy! Do something! Don't stare!! Huh? Look into nothing? Leisure time??? "Keep busy, busy!!!! Huh? "Busy!" "Life is short!"

Do you know her? She is rather frequent. I don't know whether this type of people live in Ohio -- but somewhere near we find her.

That's how she is. And, believe it or not, God gave her three introverted children. All introverts, besides being messy and crawling around. They were dreamers -- big eyes -- and look, staring into nothing!

As you tell them the story, they listen to this story with mouths open and hear it all -- like real quæstors, like real artists would -- wonderful kids, but they gave up busyness. Really?? Hey!!! Their imagination is busy all the time, but they never can concentrate on anything. So, they will be poor students. That is clear when the kids are three years old. They never could be students in the sense of the word in our extraverted educational system. They simply didn't fit.

So, their mother's ambition broke down. It was inevitable. There seems to be a spiritual law that extraverted parents beget introverted kids. I don't see why it has to be so. By the same principle, it is as if the archangel only would sadistically call the poor parents to learn what is introversion. God made them male and female. It is quite an educational system, boys and girls, but God also made them introverts and extroverts and well -- you try to get along with that -- study what it is!

What are the virtues? See the poor lady! She had developed all the virtues of extraversion: exact work, hard labor, and schedule. Planning her days knowing exactly when she had to go to the grocery and when she had to be back from the market. She was destined to do it. Her virtues were unlimited there. But the bad thing about these virtues was that they were limited and their opposites were not recognized as virtues.

Now, if you think of the introverted child who hears the story -- has heard the story the day before yesterday and still is full of it -- and still walks around slowly with big eyes; forgets what was supposed to be bought at the grocery and comes home with the wrong kind of carrots and still thinking, "What color is thunder clouds?" Scolded! "Isn't the sun always red?" "Mommy, why is Mr. Clark not married?" "Is there a Mrs. Clark?" What a question!

But, her husband is enjoying it because her husband says, "It reminds me of my mother. My mother used to be like that. She was an introvert. How good -- you belong to the family."

So, you can't assume that the choice of children and even more the choice of grandchildren is even right in the hand of God.

Oh, I wish you could visualize your grandchildren! Ho!!! Humm.... look around at your weakest spots, where you are blinded.

So, here is someone who is absolutely blind regarding modern music. How do you call it? Atonic music? Suppose you do not understand a bit of it. I don't know it either!

Then you can assume that one of your grandchildren will be an atonic musician. It is almost sure that he will!

Look at your other weakness -- something that you do not understand -- Let's say you cannot understand politics. When someone talks about politics you turn away. You hate it! You dispise it! It is ugly to you.

Well, of course, one of your grandchildren is bound to become a politican. The archangels have notebooks you know, and they note down where your weak spots are and then they look it up -- another grandchild,

"Lets see -- what do you need? You are too poor in politics. I'll give you a politican. Here he is."

And when he comes along and he is already a senator when he is born. He is a born senator. All right -- what can you do about it? Will you rebel against the Living God? Or will you begin to? He starts running the business as soon as he can open his mouth. That's what senators do. So you watch him, and you dislike it! Then you say its my flesh and blood, well -- it somehow must have been in me, dormant. I never thought of it. I never could do it; or I rejected it. But it must have been dormant inside me.

In Biology you find things of this sort. It changes from generation to generation you know. But here is a body, your grandchild! Help educate it in meditation. Look at this new creature with seventy years ahead of him and try to visualize what he will be like eighty years from now -- a retired President from something -- and marvel! Try to feel your way into life. That is not only feel your way into this new creature, this particular individual -- Oh, no! -- you have to do more than that. You have to feel your way; identify with the whole of life. This miraeulous creative power which gives you help through introverted children! Atonic musician! And here's another one, a future politican and what about the next one? And, anticipate what will come in the next five years! Each year a new grandchild opening up new vistas of life. A whole new province that you don't like. What a better life!!! Twelve of them! Each one of them represent something I dislike! There are twelve provinces in life which I dispise. And of course, the answer, "Yes, and there are more than twelve! Be glad when you stop at twelve. Otherwise we might give you thirty-six!!!"

But, isn't that great! To get all this education each grandchild will open a new province of life for you!! There is not One American Way of Life there are thirty-six and you are educated and initiated into new American Way of Life at each grandchild. What an education! How much do you have to pay?? That is another question.

Now, we are carefully being initiated into life and then it gets still-born. (One more step and then we can turn to something else.) They start fighting. One is taking sides with the underdog. Mind you, people do this you know, they complusively identify with the underdog. But the oldest child usually identifies with what? ...the upper dog...What is the opposite to underdog? Conqueror? (If we took a vote here, the large majority of people would say, "Yes, I identify with the underdog and a few people, if they were honest would say, "I identify with the conqueror.") Now, among your grandchildren there will be -- let's see three that will take sides with the underdog and one or two will take sides with the conqueror and you, Grandma -- I'm really talking to the Grandmas now -- this is a hard topic!

Time out for Grandmas! And Grandmas only and future Grandmas. Grandma doesn't like the fight and she does care to know what it means "underdog and conqueror" or what the implications are, but she wants the kids to live in peace.

"Ah, be good children. Be Christians. Shake hands." If it were up to Grandmother, they would do nothing but shaking hands all day long!

All right, all right..."Let's fight! I hate you. I will beat you up afterwards." And Grandmother looks..."but let's not quarrel as long as she is there." Now, that's what means "good children." Its kind of a lie, but nevertheless... But Grandmother is a kind of lie detector at the same time. She finds out that the kids really want to fight. What can she do? "I'm such a peace loving person. I am thriving in harmony and wherever there is dis-harmony I get my headaches. You know, I cannot sleep! I cannot eat!!" Poor Grandma. She has a very hard time. She gets nervous and finally she quits baby-sitting altogether. Now, this is a terrible thing for a Grandmother. But she cannot stand it because the kids always fight. There's too much friction between them. So many differences!!!

"Why did God give me all these grandchildren?" The archangel says, "Madam, just don't stop. That is what you need. You have to learn. First study the noise and detach yourself."

"I should detach myself from my grandchildren? You want me to become a Buddhist?" Yes, so -- become a Buddhist; detach yourself. And become more than a Buddhist; become a Christian. Real Christians are supposed to be peacemakers. A good translation of the Greek word is "peace maker", the one who produces peace out of nothing. And the peacemakers are supposed to be called "the sons of God." In the case of grandma, of course, she would be a daughter or grand-daughter of God because she can make peace.

Now, how can she learn to make peace? It becomes a question of life and death for her. If she wants to make, create peace, that is, a peace out of nothing. Then she is a great grandma. If she does not learn this lesson, she goes to pieces and will be sent to a sanatorium sooner or later.

All right. How can Grandmother become a peacemaker? God gave her the great gift from the very beginning. Life saw that she would be a grandmother one day. Maybe she would become "The Grandmother of the Year." Do you have such an institution in Ohio?

Now, who would you elect "Grandmother of the Year"? The one who is creative peacemaker, creating peace out of nothing.

How can she create peace out of nothing? If she would only watch her youngest grandchild she would learn what introversion is. She would learn to have big eyes and to see the truth behind the truth.

In other words, she would stare into nothing and time would not matter to her any longer and out of this nothing -- the images would emerge like forms emerge out of fog, and she would say, "Once upon a time..." and the children would be fine! "Go on...go on...go on...Once upon a time what?????" Like the thread out of a spinning wheel, the creativity of the human mind would run in neverending flow of creative imagination and there would be peace and the children would be better off because their imaginations would develop and Grandma would be wonderfully at peace within herself.

And if they had a tape recorder somewhere maybe they could make a best seller out of it. It might even pay, huh! "Grand Sitting in Peace."

There are a few grandmothers like that who I think would have guessed that the archangels are right trying in innumerable cases to educate Grandma's for their job, but they fail. They go on strike. Grandmas go on strike. The union of grandmas is strong. Instead of accepting their prison of babysitting as a training for creativity -- more than that -- training for their own individual creativity and training for shaping up the imagery of the next generation. Who? The kids!! Fifty years later they will be grandmothers and grandfathers, both. And if our imagery is as clear then as it is today, then we grandparents don't grow up to be grandparents anymore. We die out, we go down!

So, ladies, grandmas, won't you please change your ways of life! Something here in your brain -- there is a switch somewhere -- where you can switch from extraversion to introversion and from dryness to creativity and that makes you peacemakers.

Ladies, if you manage to become peacemaker regarding your grandchildren, this business of peace making will spread maybe five or ten years. Maybe this business of peace making will spread and the peace will last twenty years, thirty to forty years. That would be worthwhile, wouldn't it?

If we only could cooperate with the educational efforts of the archangels! All right, let's go on...children, grandchildren to be accepted.

Another word about the lack. Suppose there is a mother who would really love to be a real mother of real children and she has had no child. Life doesn't give her children, and what does she do. Is she going to be unhappy? If she has a reason; an alibi; say "I'm unhappy. I'm negative. I'm nervous. I get neurotic because life hasn't given me children." --see the education of life is very complete and a very creative institution -- (You learn by getting something, usually something that you don't want.) She and you learn that sometimes you learn by not getting anything. Out of hunger she gets creative.

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Well, let's go on. All this is / natural and in the frame of natural relationships, relatives. Very nice! But it goes far beyond this. The archangels are very, very clever creatures I think. Really, the archangels might even be former novelists. And just as a skillful novelist is trying to plot what is novel in order to unfold certain aspects of the human character, so these archangels try very strange things sometimes. Apparently impossible complications of human relationships; they make use of all kinds of catastrophes, such as earthquakes, fire and flood. Something terrible happens and probably--an Aunt Bertha. Usually her name is Bertha.

Aunt Bertha sends a letter, Usually a night letter saying, "We left our house. Our house was burned up last night, or, we are burdened and we are coming tomorrow. I am bringing five suitcases and five cats. And so, I'm coming. Bertha."

There she sits, on her five suitcases, surrounded by her five cats and she wants you to be hospitable. She looks--if you see her you cannot help but being glad--"Aunt Bertha are you there!"

"Yes, here I am my darling. And I will stay here. You have such a wonderful place here." And unless you are aware of what the archangels do, you might have a breakdown immediately.

But here is the juice of this lecture, if I could give these lectures really time, with any success the sanatoriums would be empty and unemployed. You, psychologist, would be out of a job! So, you's better go and see the psychologist and he should tell you -- I wish he would tell you what this is for -- You couldn't avoid Aunt Bertha. You will have to live with her for atleast six months to come. Why?

Why on earth did the Lord God do this to you? Have you done something evil? Or what is the reason? Then he would say with resignation, "I guess I have to learn a lesson." Isn't that the heart of theology? Well, what is the lesson that you have to learn? Be hospitable. Be patient.

But five cats! "Yes, they do have lovely qualities," says Aunt Bertha. And she always wants to play Bridge. She is so deaf that she cannot listen to the radio and she has to play Bridge. Bridge! That's just what you don't like! You cannot stand Bridge!! Not anymore, the archangel wants you at your age to learn and love Bridge!

Now how can we go about it? That's up to you. You are in the hands of the living God being educated without cost by the archangels themselves. The best psychotherapy that exists! And part of this education, this particular chapter is "Learn to Play and Love Bridge."

How can I do this? Where is this undertaking leading? If I had my schedule now! "We will go to bed at 11 o'clock, won't we?" "And we can start playing Bridge at 8 o'clock and we will have from 8 until 11 every night." "Isn't that wonderful!" And you brace yourself!

What is it you have to learn. Evidently you have to remain positive in a situation that would turn everybody negative. Is that so difficult? You have to learn to do it. Read the confessions of Peter who has been in prison for a long time. There's one in particular by Dostoevski, a Russian novelist, about a lad in prison in Siberia where he had to adjust to all kinds of impossible situations. And he said, "the worst thing of all was he was never left alone. All twenty-four hours of the day he had to be with other prisoners." That was the rule there and this was bad on him. But, he finally learned it and he learned to love the souls of these peasant that he was living with.

Now, why on earth shouldn't you discover the soul of Aunt Bertha? Or are you content to think Aunt Bertha has no soul. Sure she has one! And you find out what it is. Don't you have any eyeglasses? Look! Get out your eyeglasses and look at her. Watch her while playing Bridge; all her reactions; all her behavior patterns and discover what is nice in her and you will find lots of lovely things. I don't have to tell you how nice Aunt Bertha is, you can find out most of it by yourself.

And then invite other people. Other in-laws, so that every chapter is -- Oh! I should have said it earlier; I skipped it. Let me do it now.

When you marry you think you know whom you marry, do you? I think to some extent we do -- though somehow or other they descend because there is another whom you married because he's always difficult. That's true also. But even more true is that this person to whom you attach your own life -- is not alone and you might be cautious and careful then in choosing your mate, but can you choose your inlaws? They are quite different from what you think they are. And again, the rule holds good. The archangel gives you the inlaws you deserve.

Who are you? Who am I? Can easily be answered by a list of your inlaws. That is the list God gives you to work with and to learn by. Aunt Bertha is only one of twelve.

Here is my list of twelve and now I know from this what I am not! I'm not patient. I am not charitable. I am not -- what? warmhearted. I'm not a loving person. All of these qualities I have to learn and here is my darling Aunt Bertha who will teach me all this! Shouldn't I love her? "Aunt Bertha, if you stay with us two years and I died after that then I am safe to go to Heaven."

All right. So we really should be grateful for these lessons, shouldn't we? I guess that is so. And, we in psychology, being forced to study these relationship very often, did what all scientists do, we created technical terms. That is the safest thing for a scientist to do. We have, you have, lived for a long time with the right name and then we came to America, and we had a chance to reformulate our terminology and we investigated very carefully what these things should be called. Finally, we decided on the technical word taken from the kitchen and the life of the housewife, a "grater."

You know what a grater is? Something you grate with. In the kitchen you have this thing to grate with and the best graters are those in which one lemon is being grated by another lemon. And that is just what the archangels do!

Gee! You know, being grated -- I and Aunt Bertha. I am a lemon, I know, and so are you and you, and I look -- we are forced to live under this one narrow roof year after year -- maybe three years to come. And day after night, this machine is grinding and the two lemons grate each other. Won't we be successful! Isn't it marvelous what life does if you only cooperate!

If we cooperate too sweetly, as if we were oranges, everything would be all right wouldn't it. So, why call each other lemons. Let's cooperate with the archangels.

That's all I have in mind to say. I have to be able to say it the right way. It is a subtle inner reorientation; revaluation while looking, but it has to be honest. You know pretense does not help at all. You cannot play/act in such an action. You're really tested to your kidneys! Wait just a minute -- You have to look at Aunt Bertha honestly and feel actually as you feel toward her.

Here am I; here is my "eye doctor" revealing antagonism for a case of absolutely different living -- our life schedule should be quite different --but now we are forced to stay up until 11 o'clock and can't allow ourselves to go to bed before that -- up to then we have to go through with it.

But we are not alone. And try to see it! Here am I caught in this predicament and I know it so well -- for months I have studied this now-- and I know how she feels and she is and that she doesn't approve of anything I think or say, but we have to carry the load together. .

We are like two mules with a heavy load hitting each other and there is God. There is God, God, the government of life; the archangel who arranged the whole thing. (I often feel there might be more than one, maybe two or three archangels. Then my guardian angel and Aunt Bertha's

guardian angel. And now I feel how they lead us and how they, the two archangels, smile at each other and wink their eyes!)

"Aunt Bertha, we still have half an hour to play another round."

"Ja, let's do that! Ah, how good it is to be with you," she says. (I would not be here but for the archangel.) But it is the archangel himself -- it is life itself! And the reward is waiting for us, and I feel it already right now, quite honestly. I have stood this for so many weeks already. I can stand it a few more weeks, I think, before going crazy. So, do it.

That's what life wants us to do. This is the thing before our noses and the old rule is "Do faithfully what is just before your nose, right now!" So, let's do it. And let's do it gladly, if possible, with a smile. Just keep smiling. Is it so difficult? And so we do it.

I think I have failed. I think I have to try to say it once more. The archangel; the divine power is present within us glorified. So, in our doing it -- it is not really me that does it -- it is the same divine power which cooperates with itself. This divine power has arranged the situation and the little grinding of the two lemons -- one against the other -- is being moved by the same Divine Power which is within me. And within me is the determination "I'll go through with it and I will be glad! I will smile!! I will go through with it positively."

Is it me? Or, is it life? Or is it something beyond me and life? We reach almost the point Paul is at when he says, "It's not me, it's Christ in me." It's more than life. Life is grinding us and finally it is 11 o'clock. "Aunt Bertha, good night." (That was worthwhile, wasn't it?)

If we could reach this point only occasionally at first and later more frequently, we would have gained something. We would have learned to cooperate with life.

And later, when you get tuberculosis, or what will you get -- maybe something much worse than that -- you can cooperate as well.

Well, what do you say, Cancer? Well, I have lived with Aunt Bertha, why shouldn't I live with cancer!