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WE NEED A HEART WITH MANY ROOMS

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To come to peace as a human being is not a simple task. We aren't simple. Our hearts and minds are pathologically complex and pull us in many directions all at the same time. To be human is to be a bundle of contradictions, seldom certain of what our hearts and minds really want.

This makes it difficult for us to live simple, peaceful, and restful lives. To be at rest is to be at peace, but peace is more than the simple absence of war. Peace is a positive quality, the positive ordering of various elements into a harmony, a symphony.

Thus, for example, if someone sits down at a piano and strikes various keys at random, the result is discord, an abrasive sound, something far from peaceful. If, though, the various notes played are bound into a certain harmony, you have a melody, a peaceful sound. Most melodies, however, are far from simple, they've many notes. Hence if someone plays a certain musical score and omits certain notes, again you have discord, no melody. Peace depends upon ordering the notes correctly and upon having all the notes there.

Given this idea of peace, we see that the task of coming to peace as human beings is one of bringing into harmony all the various notes, elements we experience inside of us. This is far more difficult than it sounds and is a task that we rarely do well. Why?

Because most often we try to make the melody without all the notes. Rarely do we accept all that is inside of us, rarely do we resist the temptation, coming to us from our own temperament, to not reduce and render too simple our own hearts and minds.

By temperament, we are much simpler than we are in actuality. Each of us have certain propensities—to be liberal or conservative, upbeat or morose, individualistic or communitarian, intellectual or emotional, earthy or spiritual, given to feasting or fasting, prone to naïve trust or more naturally given to cynicism and doubt. By nature, we tend to one or the other and thus, perennially, our temptation is to reduce the complexity of our hearts and minds and of life itself to what we are most at home with inside of ourselves.

If we are liberal by temperament, we tend to reduce the bad to the good, the head to the heart, the soul to the body, the fast to the feast, law to conscience, the individual to the social, the next world to this world, and Good Friday to Easter Sunday. If we are conservative by temperament, we tend, conversely, to reduce the good to the bad, the heart to the head, the body to the soul, the feast to the fast, conscience to law, the social to the individual, life after birth to life after death, a joyful resurrected life to a "mourning and weeping in this valley of tears."

Accordingly, if we are liberal or conservative by nature we judge the validity of all conventional wisdom, ideology, theology, spirituality, and catechetics according to whether or not it emphasises strongly what is most evident in our particular temperament.

The price of this is lack of peace. Our hearts and minds have many more rooms than does our temperament. In reality, we are always both: good and bad, head and heart, body and

soul, creatures of fasting and feasting, subject to both law and conscience, social and individual, destined for life after birth as well as life after death, living in joy and pain, Good Friday and Easter Sunday, all at the same time.

To come to peace we must bring all of these into harmony, we must make these various elements within us be friends with each other. Not to do so, to reduce in any way any of these elements, is to create a heart and a mind, and a life, which is ultimately too small for us to live in.

To vary the metaphor: We need every letter of the alphabet if we are to write words for every season and aspect of our lives. To deny part of ourselves is to lose some letters and to make it impossible to ever make a symphony of our lives. We need a song for every season of life. Again, to deny part of ourselves leaves us without some notes we need to fully sing the song of life. We need a heart with many rooms. To deny any aspect of ourselves is to close off a room which, on some occasions, we will desperately need to live in.

We need an alphabet with enough letters to write words both emotional and rational, spiritual and bodily, individualistic and communitarian. We need a song with enough notes to sing about life after birth as well as life after death: a song that can be sung while feasting or fasting. And we need a house with rooms enough for crying during our bitter seasons of death, sickness, hurt and loneliness, and with rooms enough for celebrating and drinking, for feast lies at the heart of life itself.

To be human is to be pathologically complex. To come to peace is to find an alphabet with enough letters, a song with enough notes, and a heart with enough rooms.

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