

CHANGE: What, where, where to, where from?

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What is change physically? For a boat, a ship? It is changing the direction. But to change the direction you must be in motion. So is change a movement, which has a direction. And what is change with an apple? It begins with flowers. Some people want to be flowers all their life. But the flowers have to fall, and the fruit begins and ripens. And what happens when the apple is ripe? It falls from the tree. It may be eaten, it may fall in the earth and become a seed, and a new tree begins. That is life. Life is always going beyond itself, changing every moment.

But what is change in us? In human beings? Change goes from what I am to what I am meant to be. Therefore change in human life can miss its direction. Some people are satisfied with what they are. They don't go beyond that, they go around and around themselves. And they are dead without knowing it. That explains the hard word: "Let the dead bury their dead."

The main question is now: What does Jesus say about change? You will find change in every religion. There are wonderful things said about change in the Koran and in the Bagvad Gita. But what is it with Jesus? In what connection does he speak about change? His main and first message was: "The kingdom of God is come. Change your way of thinking and living, and follow me!" Change is a wonderful Greek word: metanoia. It is mostly translated with "repent". Repent is good, but change and metanoia is more than repent. It is to change our whole way of living and thinking. Change is always going deeper than we like. Change is against something, against our usual way of thinking, of living. There is nothing bad about that, that is human nature. It is a natural way of living. We go our way, we try to do our best, we try to go higher and higher, we try to get to the top of the ladder. The movement goes from earth to heaven. But then we reach our limit. To reach our limit is the decisive experience of our life. It is a hard experience. We don't like to be limited. But suddenly our efforts have come to a full stop. It is a complete breakdown. But the most terrifying discovery is that the limit is a barrier which separates us from the source of our life, from God. That deadly separation is our own fault. We are at the end of our self-effort, our self-realisation, our selfjustification. Nothing can be done from our side. Then a miracle happens. Through the self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ the barrier is taken away. God comes himself from beyond the limit answering death with life, sin with forgiveness. That is the experience of the cross: it is not what we can do for God, it is what God does for us.

The succession is important. It begins with "the kingdom of God is come". Somebody said the other day: But you must accept it, you must be open for it. No, no, no! The kingdom is come, even if we don't know it, if we don't accept it, if we don't like it, if we don't believe it. It is here. That is the beginning. And then comes change - metanoia - what we can do. "The kingdom is come" is God's work, and only then does man's work begin. Metanoia - change your way, return and follow me. Maybe we don't realize what it means that the kingdom of God is come. If you see somebody excited saying: "Do you know the news?" And you say: "What is it?" "The kingdom of God is come!" That is news. That is good news.

Now the second question: Where does change happen? Jesus himself answers this question: "The kingdom of God does not come in a spectacular way. You cannot say: Here it is, or there it is, because the kingdom of God is inside you. Do you know what it means, that the kingdom of God - the coming of the kingdom of God - is inside us? That means also that it is inside everyone we meet. We could say instead of: Good morning, Peter! Good morning, kingdom of God! And what a change it makes in our dealing with people, that we know that inside them there is the coming of the kingdom of God. How different would be our attitudes towards them, if we realize that in every moment with every person. The Greek word which Jesus uses here is "entos". And entos means inside you and amongst you. The coming of the kingdom is always inside and outside. Both are connected. Change is always inside and outside. If it is only inside, it will become a sentimental reversal in oneself. If it is only outside, it will become a sterile striving for our own growth, our own success.

Here comes our next question: Where is change going to? Listening to the inner voice is only effective if it is at the same time changing ourselves and the world. Our failures we discover in measuring our life in the face of the four absolute moral standards. In that connection we see their full weight and terrible significance. They are the obstacles to the coming of the kingdom of God. They are hinderances. Our sins are not only relevant to ourselves, but relevant to what happens with the coming of the kingdom of God in the world. Being an obstacle to the advance of the kingdom, they have their terrible relevance. That makes us hate sin, and go through the whole sequence: forsake, be honest, restore. We see more clearly how the person is related to the universal, and we understand the full meaning of what Gabriel Marcel, the French philosopher, said: "The secret of Caux is the strange connection between the intimate and the global." That is the full dimension of change. Changing the world means economic change, social change, political change, all based on personal change.

The last question: Where does change come from? The question: What are you living for? is intimately connected with the question: What are you living from? What is the source of our change? Our good will, our duty-mindedness, our know-how? All these things are not bad. No, but the important point is again in what succession you put them. First thing is the coming of the kingdom: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." That great descending line from heaven to earth is the real direction of change. The coming of the kingdom does not exclude intelligence, good will, duty-mindedness. But if they are included in the coming of the kingdom, they become fluent, creative, peaceful. Frank Buchman spoke often of liquid love. Wonderful expression! And I heard him say once: "If you deal with a very difficult person, there is nothing more helpful than divine non-challenge." I think I must stress this point, especially for the good people among us. They do their best, they measure their life with the four absolutes, they listen to their inner voice early in the morning, they write down their thoughts, they obey. And they think, it is all they can do. And sometimes they become overtired, and all that becomes homework, a difficult task to do. That is what Caux means for many of us. But that can be an entirely false attitude. You become overtired because you are not living in the right succession. The right succession is: First the coming of the kingdom, and then what we do. Some of us don't realize that all we do is because first there is the coming of the kingdom.

It would be a great help, if they knew that first the kingdom of God is here. And because the kingdom of God is here, even if they don't know it, they are doing what they do. They are willing to give their life to God, to let their will be crossed by the will of God, but the real thing is that God comes over the limit on their side.

It wouldn't be such a liberation, such a joy, as we experience when we are willing to give our life to God, if it wasn't for this new dimension coming into our life, if it wasn't that the coming of the kingdom goes directly into our usual life, and that this wonder of change comes in and makes all things new. One day I heard Frank Buchman saying: "What interests me when I have to deal with a person is what hinders him from having the glorious freedom of the children of God." That was his way to change others in the world dimension of freedom.

And you know that the fruits of the spirit, and this is the heart of faith and the nerve of change, are love, joy, peace. Remember, there is no change without love, joy, peace.