

Theme: Sympathetic Fellowship with God.

Proposition: Sympathetic fellowship, the key to fellowship with God, is ordinarily best obtained in suffering.

Introduction: The

1. The junction of mankind and God, of the human and the divine, first took place in Christ.

a. This junction was possible because an essential kinship has always existed between man and God.

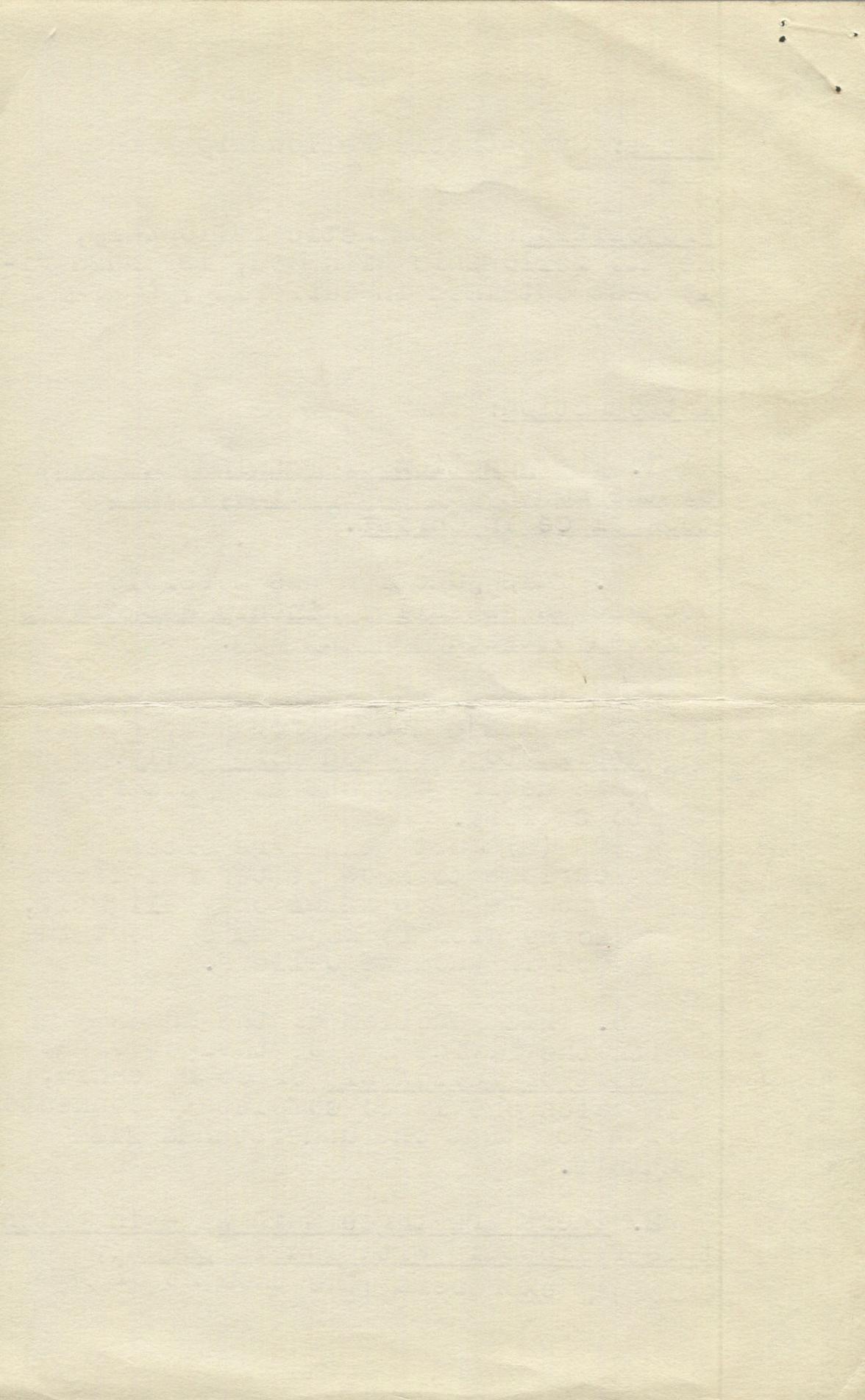
(1) That kinship has always created in man a desire for God, a desire to know God more fully. This desire man has always striven to satisfy.

(a) Just as we are often curious to know better relatives whom we have known only slightly, so we wish to know more about the God in whom we believe.

b. This junction of the human with the Divine may be thought of as a sort of fellowship or comradeship, in which one is so completely connected with God that one understands His nature.

2. There are three main ways in which this fellowship with God is sought, each way expressing the thought of

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those who seek union with the divine in this manner.

a. There is a present sustained association, dependent on sympathetic relations with God. This means that one is always in contact with God, in any phase of life, and that this contact depends on sympathetic feelings existing between the human and the divine. This will be discussed more fully later on.

b. There is union with God through a series of fitful invasions by which the Divine at will possesses men's bodies, as a result of self-emancipation. We see this type of fellowship expressed today in many of our smaller religious sects, in which fits and speaking in tongues takes place. By working one's emotions to such a pitch that the self is completely forgotten, it is felt that God comes into the human body, and his presence is expressed by these fits or tongues. We must remember that those who seek fellowship with God through this method are perfectly sincere, and that they have examples of such activity from the very first days of Christianity.

c. Then there is the sort of fellowship which is sought through asceticism. This method seeks to deliver one from the illusion and evil of earthly existence, and through such deliverance put one in contact with God. The idea here is that if one can get away from the love of earthly things that one will be able

to better understand God. Asceticism is practiced in varying degrees, some carrying it so far that even death results.

3. The sympathetic method of fellowship with God is the only one available for the ordinary member of the everyday community.

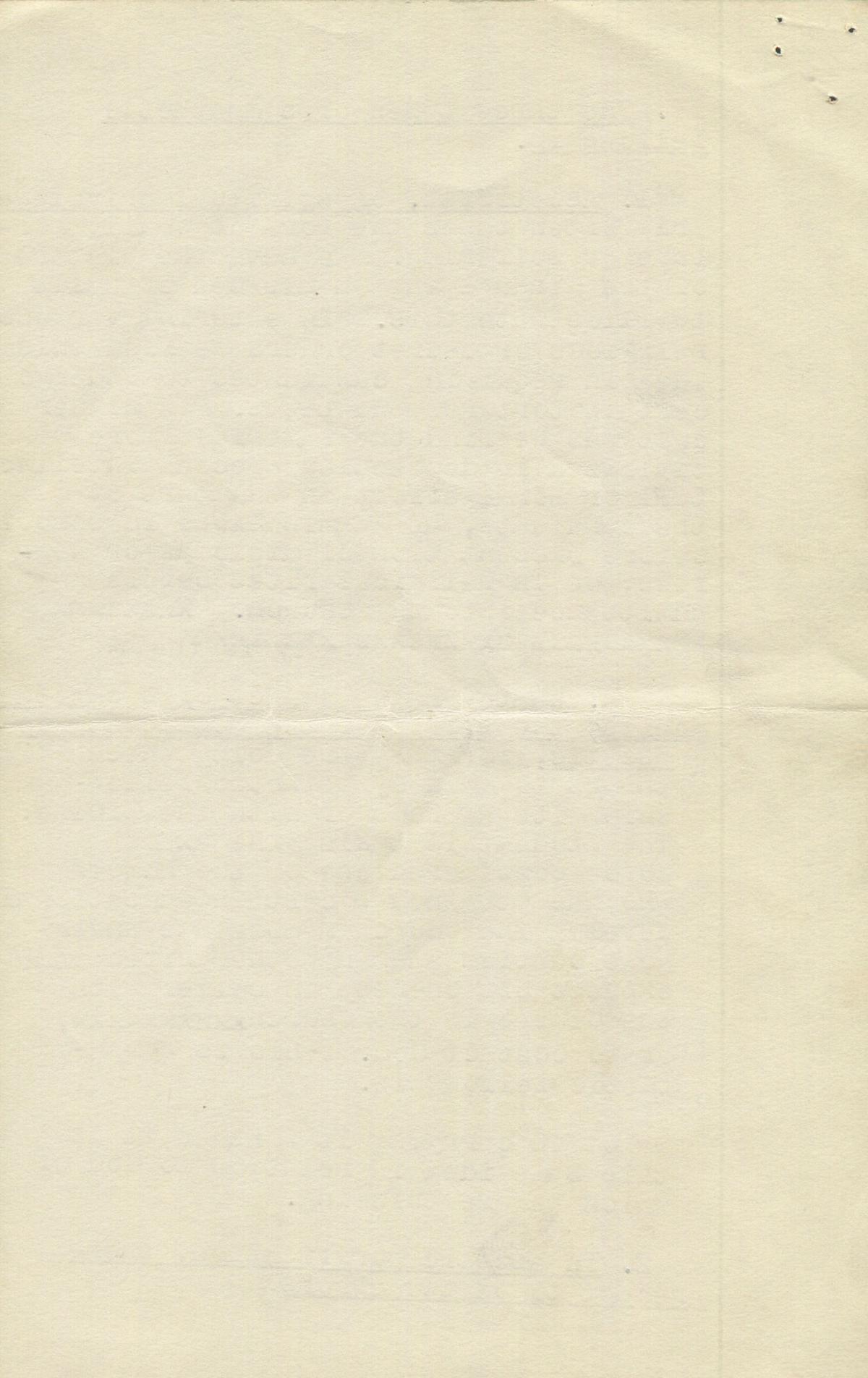
a. The other two types are available for people who specialize in them. Those who meet God through fits and tongues and those who practice asceticism are examples.

b. Let's look at this sympathetic type of fellowship with God, the type available to all of us.

I. The seeker of sympathetic fellowship must so take to himself those things which he considers characteristics of God that he will sense his fellowship with God in these respects. This sense of fellowship can come from honestly striving to assimilate these characteristics. Absolute likeness of God can never be achieved by men, but they must continue to strive for that likeness.

1. There are three types of sympathy, all of which lead to a type of asceticism (asceticism being the idea of getting away from the love of material things.) These three types are:

- a. Spiritual privilege.
- b. Purity.
- c. Suffering.



a. The first is found in old religions and is expressed in the idea that evil spirits can get into the body, and that purification takes place in putting them out.

b. The second idea is that all matter is essentially evil, and that only the soul of man counts. This idea means that one is not interested in life, and it is the extreme of this idea that ascetics, as we usually think of them, practice.

3. Sympathetic fellowship through suffering is the third method.

III. Suffering is almost an exclusively Christian idea, in relating man to God. The very genius, the outstanding characteristic, of Christianity is the idea of suffering.

1. The mystery of the power of suffering and the joy of shared suffering is the idea.

2. Christianity is centered in one who suffered, in Christ who died on the cross. Even though he was the most perfect man and the supreme teacher of moral truth, he suffered.

3. Christians must suffer with Christ, to truly have fellowship with him.

a. This suffering must be of the same type that Christ underwent; that is suffering endured to make possible the union of others with the divine, with God.

4b. With some people the joy of

suffering is so great that it becomes a passion.

a. These suffer for the sake of suffering, not for the sake of fellowship with Christ or for the good of others.

b. Thus their suffering is carried to useless and senseless extravagance.

5. Love is the inspiration of service.

a. The secret of love is learned in communion with Jesus.

b. This communion is permitted only to the ones who share his suffering.

Conclusion:

1. We may, then, say that sympathetic fellowship, understanding comradeship, is the key to fellowship with God.

2. This sympathetic fellowship is best reached by those in the ordinary community through sharing of the suffering of Christ.

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Duane memorial young people - oct., 1943

Independence - may, 1944

Septuagesima - " "

Marshall Presbyterian - 6-1-44

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