

Way *to*
Happiness

Way *to* Happiness

A R C H B I S H O P
FULTON J. SHEEN

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Fulton J. Sheen". To the left of the signature is a small cross symbol.

TAN Books
Gastonia, North Carolina

Nihil obstat: John M. A. Fearn, S.T.D., *Censor Librorum*

Imprimatur: +Francis Cardinal Spellman,
Archbishop of New York

DATE: February 2, 1954

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Philosophies at War published by TAN Books 2022

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Cover & interior design by www.davidferrisdesign.com

Cover image: Bishop Fulton Sheen in Choghan County, Roscommon, Ireland. April 22, 1952 / CSU Archives/Everett Collection / Bridgeman Images

ISBN: 978-1-5051-2337-1

Kindle ISBN: 978-1-5051-2338-8

ePUB ISBN: 978-1-5051-2339-5

Published in the United States by

TAN Books

PO Box 269

Gastonia, NC 28053

www.TANBooks.com

CONTENTS

<i>Publisher's Note</i>	<i>IX</i>
<i>Introduction: Plan and Purpose</i>	<i>XIII</i>

HAPPINESS

1: Contentment.....	1
2: Humility	5
3: Egotism	9
4: Joy.....	13
5: Is Modern Man Far from Peace?.....	17
6: The Ego and the Moral Law	21
7: Detachment	25
8: Return to Nothingness.....	29
9: The Subterranean	33
10: The Need of Revolution	37

11: Joy from the Inside	41
12: Love Is Infinite.....	45
13: The Philosophy of Pleasure	49

WORK

14: Work	55
15: Repose	59
16: The Idle in the Marketplace	63

LOVE

17: The Three Causes of Love	69
18: When Lovers Fail There Is Love	73
19: True Love	77
20: The Effects of Want of Love	81
21: The Infinite and Sex.....	85
22: Reflections on Love	89
23: The Mystery of Love	93
24: Love and Ecstasy	97

CHILDREN

25: Motherhood.....	103
26: Parents and Children.....	107

YOUTH

27: Blood, Sweat and Tears	113
28: The Teen-Agers	117
29: More about Teen-Agers.....	121
30: The Loves of Youth	125

MAN'S GOAL

31: The Master Value	131
32: Wealth and Power.....	135
33: God Is Self-Preserving.....	139

INNER PEACE

34: "Getting Away with It".....	145
35: Inscape.....	149
36: The Spirit of Forgiveness	153
37: Inner Life.....	157
38: A Quick Psychoanalysis	161
39: Self-Discipline	165
40: Kindness	169
41: Fear and Ethics	173
42: Rest and Meditation	177

GIVING

43: Better to Give Than Receive	183
44: The Problem of Giving.....	187
45: The Spirit of Service.....	191
46: How to Give.....	195

FELLOWSHIP

47: The Divine Psychology of Gossip.....	201
48: Atomic Men.....	205

MAN

49: Progress.....	211
50: The Mass-Man	215
51: A Recall to the Inner Life	219
52: Sneeze Morality.....	223
53: What Makes Us Normal.....	227
54: How to Overcome Bad Habits	231
55: Readiness for Sacrifice	235
56: Does Mercy Stand Alone?	239
57: Why We Are Not Better.....	243
58: Revolution Starts with Man	247
59: There Is Hope	251

<i>Prayer to Obtain a Favor Through the Intercession of Venerable Fulton J. Sheen.....</i>	<i>254</i>
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

ARCHBISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN (1895–1979) was one of the greatest theologians of the twentieth century. As the first Catholic televangelist on prime-time television, his program, *Life is Worth Living*, inspired an audience of nearly thirty million people weekly, more listeners than St. Paul ever could have reached during a lifetime of preaching. With his eloquent writing and preaching on television and radio, he movingly and masterfully portrayed life, eternity, love, sorrow, joy, freedom, suffering, marriage, and so much more. His memorable style was distinguished by his booming voice, his Irish wit and wisdom, and his warm smile.

In this carefully selected set of books, Sheen offers clear guidance on the problems affecting all people in today's world, including key ideologies that seek to destroy the Church and society, including Marxism and Freudianism, what is today called "Cultural Marxism." His spiritual and practical wisdom cover a wide variety of subjects that range from discussions of down-to-earth spiritual

and moral problems to provocative conversations on the meaning of life, family, education, Christianity, world affairs, and more. Together they add up to a stirring and challenging statement of Bishop Sheen's whole philosophy of life and living. With ease, Sheen shows the relationship between human reason and religion. He shows that the world of today has reached a point of irrationalism that is in utter contempt of lasting truths. With honesty and capable scholarship, Sheen has something to say for everyone. His works are of immediate concern to all men and women seeking understanding, belief, and purpose in these troubled times.

Bishop Sheen reminds us that if we are to help cure the modern world of pessimism and despair, hatred and confusion, we must enlist as warriors of love and peace. Sheen's daily Holy Hour before the Most Blessed Sacrament was the catalyst behind his preaching and writing but also his great love for the Blessed Mother. She was the woman he loved most, "The World's First Love," in addition to his great love for St. Thérèse, patroness of the foreign missions.

Sheen wrote over seventy books, many of which are still widely read today. When the first nationwide Catholic Hour was inaugurated in 1930 on NBC, Sheen was chosen as the first preacher. He hosted this nighttime radio program for twenty years from 1930 to 1950 before moving to television where he had his own show on prime-time TV from 1952 to 1957. Sheen twice won an Emmy for Most Outstanding Television Personality and was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine. But more important than any earthly awards, Fulton Sheen's tireless evangelization efforts helped convert many to the Faith, especially Communist organizer Bella Dodd.

Entombed in a side altar at the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria, Illinois, Sheen's cause for canonization was officially opened in 2002. May readers be inspired by Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, a timeless voice described as one of the greatest Catholic philosophers of our age.

INTRODUCTION

Plan and Purpose

These articles are written with a particular purpose, a special method, a deliberate spirit. The purpose will be to bring solace, healing and hope to hearts; truth and enlightenment to minds; goodness, strength and resolution to wills. The method will be the application of eternal moral and spiritual principles to the basic problems of individual and social life today. The spirit will be that of charity: love of God and love of neighbor.

And this preface will declare the basic assumptions of this book.

First: The over-emphasis on politics today is an indication that people are governed, rather than governing. The complexities of our civilization force us to organize into larger and larger units; we have become so intent on governing what is outside of us that we neglect to govern our own selves. Yet the key to social betterment is always to be found in personal betterment. Remake man and you remake his world. We gravely need to restore to man his

self-respect and to give him his appropriate honor: this will keep him from bowing cravenly before those who threaten to enslave him, and it will give him the courage to defend the right, alone if need be, when the world is wrong.

Second: As society is made by man, so man, in his turn, is made by his thoughts, his decisions and his choices. Nothing ever happens to the world which did not first happen inside the mind of some man: the material of the skyscraper merely completes the architect's dream. Even the material of our physical selves is the servant of our thoughts: psychologists recognize the fact that our bodies may become tired only because of tiredness in the mind. Worry, anxiety, fear and boredom are felt as physical: mind-fatigue appears to us as bodily fatigue.

One basic reason for tiredness of mind is the conflict in all of us between ideal and achievement, between what we ought to be and what we are, between our longing and our having, between our powers of understanding and the incomprehensible mysteries of the universe. A house divided against itself cannot stand; this perennial tension in man can be accepted and made bearable only by a surrender of the self to God. Then whatever happens is welcomed as a gift of love: frustration cannot happen to us for we have no clamorous, selfish will.

Society can be saved only if man is saved from his unbearable conflicts, and man can be rescued from them only if his soul is saved. Once, not so long ago, men put their hope of happiness in material advance; now that mood of shallow optimism has ended; the heavy burden of worry and anxiety about the future of the race and of the individual has made men conscious of their souls.

Third: Our happiness consists in fulfilling the purpose of our being. Every man knows, from his own unfulfilled

hunger for them, that he was built with a capacity for three things of which he never has enough. He wants life—not for the next few minutes, but for always, and with no aging or disease to threaten it. He also wants to grasp truth—not with a forced choice between the truths of mathematics or geography, but he wants all truth. Thirdly, he wants love—not with a time-limit, not mixed with satiety or disillusionment, but love that will be an abiding ecstasy.

These three things are not to be found in this life in their completion: on earth life is shadowed by death, truth mingles with error, love is mixed with hate. But men know they would not long for these things in their purity if there were no possibility of ever finding them. So, being reasonable, they search for the source from which these mixed and imperfect portions of life, love, truth derive.

The search is like looking for the source of light in a room: it cannot come from under a chair, where light is mixed with darkness and shadow. But it can come from the sun, where light is pure with neither shadow nor darkness dulling it. In looking for the source of love, light, truth, as we know it here, we must go out beyond the limits of this shadowed world—to a Truth not mingled with its shadow, error—to a Life not mingled with its shadow, death—to a Love not mingled with its shadow, hate. We must seek for Pure Life, Pure Truth and Pure Love—and that is the definition of God. His Life is personal enough to be a Father; His Truth is personal and comprehensible enough to be a Son; His Love is so deep and spiritual that it is a Spirit.

When enough men have found this way to happiness, they will find one another in brotherhood. Social peace will then ensue.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sultan Ahmed". The signature is written in dark ink and features a small cross-like mark at the beginning of the first stroke.

HAPPINESS

CHAPTER ONE

Contentment

Contentment is not an innate virtue. It is acquired through great resolution and diligence in conquering unruly desires; hence it is an art which few study. Because there are millions of discontented souls in the world today, it might be helpful for them to analyze the four main causes of discontent, and to suggest means to contentment.

The principle cause of discontent is egotism, or selfishness, which sets the self up as a primary plant around which everyone else must revolve. The second cause of discontent is envy, which makes us regard the possessions and the talents of others as if they were stolen from us. The third cause is covetousness, or an inordinate desire to have more, in order to compensate for the emptiness of our heart. The fourth cause of discontent is jealousy, which is sometimes occasioned through melancholia and sadness, and at other times by a hatred of those who have what we wish for ourselves.

One of the greatest mistakes is to think that contentment comes from something outside us rather than from a quality of the soul. There was once a boy who only wanted a marble; when he had a marble, he only wanted a ball; when he had a ball, he only wanted a top; when he had a top, he only wanted a kite, and when he had the marble, the ball, the top, and the kite, he still was not happy. Trying to make a discontented person happy is like trying to fill a sieve with water. However much you pour into it, it runs out too rapidly for you to catch up.

Nor is contentment to be found in an exchange of places. There are some who believe that if they were in a different part of the earth they would have a greater peace of soul. A goldfish, in a globe in water, and a canary in a cage, on a hot day, began talking. The fish said: "I wish I could swing like that canary; I'd like to be up there in that cage." And the canary said: "Oh, how nice to be down in that cool water where the fish is." Suddenly a voice said: "Canary, go down to the water! Fish, go up to the cage!" Immediately, they exchanged places, but neither was happy, because God originally had given each a place according to his ability, one that best suited his own nature.

The condition of our contentment is to be contained, to recognize limits. Whatever is within limits is likely to be quiet. A walled garden is one of the quietest places in the world; the world is shut out, and through its gates one can look upon it with the affection of distance, borrowing enchantment from it. So, if the soul of man is kept within limits (that is to say, not avaricious, greedy, over-reaching nor selfish), it, too, is shut into a calm, quiet, sunny contentment. Contented man, limited and bound by circumstances, makes those very limits the cure of his restlessness. It is not to the point whether a garden has one

acre or three, or whether or not it has a wall; what matters is that we shall live within its bounds, whether they be large or small, in order that we can possess a quiet spirit and a happy heart.

Contentment, therefore, comes in part from faith—that is, from knowing the purpose of life and being assured that whatever the trials are, they come from the hand of a Loving Father. Secondly, in order to have contentment one must also have a good conscience. If the inner self is unhappy because of moral failures and unatoned guilt, then nothing external can give rest to the spirit. A third and final need is mortification of desires, the limitation of delights. What we over-love, we often over-grieve. Contentment enhances our enjoyment and diminishes our misery. All evils become lighter if we endure them patiently, but the greatest benefits can be poisoned by discontent. The miseries of life are sufficiently deep and extensive, without our adding to them unnecessarily.

Contentment with our worldly condition is not inconsistent with the desire for betterment. To the poorest man, Christianity says not to be merely content, but “be diligent in business.” The contentment enjoined is for the time being. Man is poor today, and for this day, faith enjoins him to be satisfied; but deliverance from his poverty may be best for tomorrow, and therefore the poor man works for his increased prosperity. He may not succeed; if his poverty continues for another day, he accepts it, and then proceeds until relief comes. Thus, contentment is relative to our present state, and is not absolute in respect to the entire demands of our nature. A contented man is never poor though he have very, very little. The discontented man is never rich, let him have so very much.