

“There is an experience of the Eternal breaking into time, which transforms all life into a miracle of faith and action.” Thomas Kelly, Testament of Devotion, page 89

Over time, the church has vacillated between a focus on the eternal yonder in the by and by
And a focus on the current now on this earth and its well-being today
Sometimes we have focused on the spiritual needs to the exclusion of physical needs
Other times we put our energy on meeting physical needs and we neglect the spiritual

But Thomas Kelly says neither focus is correct—for in the Divine Presence they are simultaneous

George Fox said, *“I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death,
But an infinite ocean of light and love which flowed over the ocean of darkness.”*

Kelly says, *“The possibility of this experience of Divine Presence, as repeatedly realized and present fact, and its transforming and transfiguring effect upon all life
—this is the central message of Friends.”*

We don't simply live in earthly time—we also live in the Eternal time—at the same time
It is the Kingdom of God on earth—we live in both realms simultaneously
They become one
Sometimes we are more aware of one realm over the other
But in reality they are both fully present to us
It is the Eternal Now—the Presence of God fully within and without

Time no longer is limited to an ancient past, recent past, now, and a future, and eternity
Now is no longer just a moment in time between the past and future
In that scenario, now is always moving and unstable, never settling and steady

The Eternal Now of the Divine Presence is the place where God lives
This Eternal Now becomes all important
Now no longer serves to separate past from future
The Eternal Now contains all that is needed in this Present Moment
God is fully present and brings all resources to bear in the Eternal Now
The Eternal Now is the dwelling place of God
In this Eternal Now, we are fully home
As humans we live within time—
But every moment of now is a continuance of an Eternal Now

As we live in the “Holy Obedience” and the transforming and transfiguring Presence of God...
We find our lives entwined with the Holy One—inseparable
In that we find a sense that the Presence of God within us, carries a sense of being guided
The Presence takes on such a weight in our lives that it pulls us and we are Led
The more we yield to this pull and Leading, the more pliant and flexible we become
We begin to recognize that God is the Initiator in our lives—breaking in on our routines
Our task is simply to Listen and follow

This life begins to grow with in us and becomes real
We find ourselves singing a new song—and become aware that the Eternal sings in us

We find within us a new joy, love, and peace that originate from the Divine Presence within
It flows over into all of life—it is shared with others that we encounter—we become new
*If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away;
see, everything has become new! 2 Corinthians 5:17*
As new beings—this joy, love, and peace permeate everything
We see people in a new way—we love them with an Eternal Love that is from God
There is a new kind of security that comes as we are held in the Presence of God
Every part of our lives are infused with this new way of being—even the mundane

Thus in faith we go forward, with breath-taking boldness, and in faith we stand still, unshaken, with amazing confidence. For the time-nows are rooted in the Eternal Now, which is a steadfast Presence, an infinite ocean of light and love which is flowing over the ocean of darkness and death.

Thomas Kelly, Testament of Devotion, page 105

As we live in this Eternal Now, we find that our focus moves outward
We become aware of God's nudge and call towards others and we find ourselves sent out
"As the Father has sent me, so I send you." John 20:21
Truth is—this moves from a Biblical story or even a command by Jesus—to my experience
I become aware that I have been sent out by God
It is no longer enough to let it go and shrug it off—I feel compelled to go

First I become aware of the cosmic way in which God is at work in the world
All of creation becomes important and has a new "smell"
But as I Listen to the Divine Presence, I find that there is a particularization to which I'm called
I find that I'm drawn to those places that are given to me—they stand out among others
In Listening, I find that I am sometimes given a "no" and other times a "yes"
I must tend to the guidance and then be faithful to the Leadings that come
Quakers have called these particularized areas to which we are drawn "concerns"

The social concern of Friends is grounded in an experience of the Love of God and a Leading to go out
It comes directly out of this experience

Social concern is the dynamic Life of God at work in the world, made special and emphatic and unique, particularized in each individual or group who is sensitive and tender in the leading-strings of love. A concern is God-initiated, often surprising, always holy, for the Life of God is breaking through into the world. Its execution is in peace and power and astounding faith and joy, for in unhurried serenity the Eternal is at work in the midst of time, triumphantly bringing all things up unto Himself.

Thomas Kelly, Testament of Devotion, page 111

Main resource for this message...

A Testament of Devotion, by Thomas R. Kelly, Harper and Row, 1941, *The Eternal Now and Social Concern*, pp. 89-111.