FRANCIS JOHN McCONNELL AND PERSONALISTIC SOCIAL ETHICS
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It is ironic that the majority of the early North American personalists were affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal Church, but most present day United Methodists are not aware of the personalist tradition and its chief proponents. Bishop Francis J. McConnell (1871–1953) was a second generation personalist. McConnell, more than any of his personalist contemporaries, sought to apply the principles of personalism to the major social problems of his day.

There are at least ten types of personalism that have been identified in the history of western thought. McConnell was a personalist in the tradition of Borden Parker Bowne (1847–1910). Bowne was called to Boston University in 1876 as professor of philosophy and the first dean of the graduate school. He primarily influenced men and women who attended Boston University, many of whom, like Bowne, were affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal Church.

McConnell wrote extensively on the religious significance of personalism. His fundamental audience was church lay people. He left the more philosophical and academic studies on personalism to colleagues like Edgar Sheffield Brightman (1884–1953).

McConnell's personalism may be characterized as that philosophy for which person is the fundamental principle of explanation and the basic moral unit. Reality, then, is personal, or a society of persons, who have infinite, inviolable worth and dignity, and therefore should be respected and treated accordingly. This brand of personalism is theistic and freedomistic. Its theory of knowledge is activistic and dualistic (i.e., the mind is not a passive tabula rasa, but plays an ongoing active role in the knowledge process). Idea and object, thought and thing, are not one and the same, though related. Being is active and interactional, i.e., to be is to act or be acted upon. Nothing can be all it can be apart from other aspects of reality. Reality is relational, communal, or social. Personalism begins and ends with self-experience. Its criterion of truth is growing empirical coherence. “The essence of personalism is that the whole universe is a society of intercommunicating selves or persons, of which God is the

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creative center. The world of nature consists of one realm of divine experience, ordered (or created) by God's will, but finite persons are no part of the divine being." 

McConnell's personalism has been variously referred to as: theistic personalism, typical personalism, normative personalism, Bownean personalism, personal idealism, Boston personalism, orthodox personalism, etc. One should be careful when referring to "Boston personalism," since some may wrongly conclude that all "Boston Personalists" were affiliated with Boston University in some professional capacity. Most of the best known personalists in this country did study and teach at Boston, but all did not teach there. Georgia Harkness, George A. Coe, Nels F. S. Ferré, McConnell, Willis J. King, and Martin Luther King, Jr., are examples.

The use of the term "Boston personalism" may also imply that all personalists in this tradition adhered to the same beliefs. While all agreed to the basic outlines of Bowne's personalism, they differed on application and details. For example, though many in the tradition agreed with Bowne's more traditional doctrine of the omnipotent God, a distinguished minority, led by Brightman and some of his students, e.g., Peter A. Bertocci, Walter G. Muelder, S. Paul Schilling, and John Lavely, opted for the theory of the finite-infinite God. The essence of this theory is that the power of God's will is qualified by the existence of an uncreated, coeternal, internal nonrational element that Brightman called "the Given." However, God's love and goodness are infinite.

I have chosen to deal with McConnell not merely because he was so disciplined in his attempts to apply the principles of personalism to social evils. As noted earlier, most Methodists no longer recognize the strong relationship between their religious tradition and personalism. Since McConnell's identity was more pastoral than scholarly, his practical approach may be a good way to reintroduce personalism to Methodists. What follows is a brief discussion of McConnell's background, and a consideration of several principles for grounding his personalistic social ethics.

McConnell's Background

Francis John McConnell was named for his paternal and maternal grandfathers (Francis and John). He was born in Coshocton County, Ohio a few weeks before his father, Israel H. (I.H.) McConnell, began his first pastorate at Chesterville, Ohio. I.H. McConnell was pastor of several churches in Ohio before being appointed pastor of the largest Methodist church in Indiana at the time, Roberts Park Church in Indianapolis (1884-1887).

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Francis had a relatively normal childhood. The oldest of five children, he joined the church just before he was ten years old. He attended Ohio Wesleyan, and graduated in 1894. Francis earned the B.D. degree at Boston University School of Theology in 1897, and the Ph.D. degree in philosophy at the Graduate School there under Bowne in 1899. He accepted the call to ministry just before graduating from college in 1894. McConnell’s first pastorate was in West Chelmsford, Massachusetts. Though his parents did not pressure him to enter ministry, he said when looking back over his life: “Down in my deeper depths . . . I had always felt that I should go into the ministry.”

During I.H. McConnell’s day oratorical preaching was in vogue. Many Methodist Episcopal preachers were influenced by this phenomenon, and worked diligently to perfect their oratorical skills. Among the “silver-tongue” preachers in the Methodist tradition was I.H. McConnell, who spent many hours studying oratorical styles. The two orators who impressed him most were African Americans: E.W.S. Hammond of Indianapolis, and Frederick Douglass. Rev. McConnell said that both men had tremendous “ability in emotional eloquence” and possessed superior “power to make hearers weep.” He once took young Francis to hear Douglass, whose oratory impressed the youth.

I.H. was a strong advocate of prohibition, abolition and women’s rights. Yet his ministry was primarily directed toward individual salvation. I.H. did not apply the gospel itself to the social questions of his day. There were several African Americans and a racially mixed couple who were members of his church at Elyria, Ohio. The daughter of this couple tutored Francis in German. It is likely that Francis John’s worship and study experience with Blacks contributed to his own sense of appreciation and sensitivity to the cultural richness of people of color all over the world. We see evidence of this in numerous of his writings, especially after his election as bishop.

One cannot expect to understand Francis J. McConnell the man if nothing is said of the influence of his mother and his wife. His mother was born Nancy Chalfant. Though less educated than I.H., she taught at the little country school, and it was she who gave Francis his instruction in Bible. Deeply religious, she was given to daily Bible study and prayer. She was, Francis said, “the most habitual and persistent Bible reader I have ever known.” Adamant about tithing, she would always place the “Lord’s portion” in her drawer which served as her coffee mill. Francis John’s youngest brother once said that he would always have known whose money it was even if it mistakenly came into his possession. He would know, he said, “Because the Lord’s money always smells of coffee.”

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4By the Way, 28.
McConnell's mother was popular among people in and out of the church. Most expected her to be present at the birth of a new born child, and when one was at the point of death. She reasoned that just as birth is a communal experience, so is death. No person comes into this world alone, and in a strict sense no one dies entirely alone. Francis John liked to quote Bowne's dictum that Love (God) met us when we came into this world, and Love will meet us when we enter the next. His mother had a good sense of the meaning of this and did all she could to be with those who were near death.

Francis married Eva Hemans Thomas, of Delaware, Ohio, on March 11, 1897. He could not say enough good about her. She had what he described as an "enduring and persistent idealism," and possessed "clearheaded practical sense." Perhaps the best way to share what she meant to McConnell is to let him speak.

There is often an unconscious assumption on the man's part that he himself is something remarkable, and the best thing he can say of his wife is that she helped make him so and that her achievement is one of which anyone might be proud. I gladly admit that my wife has done more for me than my most discerning friends could ever have imagined possible, but I am most concerned here in saying something about what she is in herself. . . .

For years she was an official in the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society and gave herself skillfully and without reserve even when she was in severe pain. . . .

She has a genius for friendship of the true sort, based on an interest in people as individuals. . . . she is one of the "constant quantities." Having become a friend of anyone, she remains a friend forever. . . . I have never seen any trait in her in which I would suggest improvement. . . . I am her chief debtor. . . . Everything looks up wherever she appears—and I do.3

McConnell had deep admiration for his wife, and drew much strength, inspiration, and courage from her.

As a young pastor, McConnell learned early the importance of getting to know the people in the churches of which he was pastor. This is the only way a pastor can be faithful to the people. This pastoral faithfulness is "the essential above all others except preaching," he said.6

From 1901-1903 McConnell was pastor in Ipswich, Massachusetts. In 1903 he became pastor of New York Avenue Church in Brooklyn. He was called to the presidency of DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, officially beginning his duties in 1909. During this period McConnell developed a strong interest in youth and their problems.7

McConnell was elected to the General Conference in 1912, and was elected Bishop at Minneapolis on the twenty-first ballot. Originally assigned to the Denver area (which included Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, New

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3By the Way, 80, 82.
6Ibid., 100.
7Ibid., 111.
Mexico, and Mexico), McConnell was a champion of Mexican and Latin American people. Always the prophet, he spoke courageously in denouncing the tactics the United States government was using against the Latin American people. His willingness to speak out earned him such titles as "radical," "heretic," "socialist," "communist," and "the most dangerous man in the Church."  

McConnell retired from the office of bishop in 1944. In his retirement he lectured widely at Methodist and other colleges and seminaries.

**The Influence of Bowne**

McConnell first met Borden Parker Bowne at the Methodist Bookstore in Boston in 1894. He recalled being nervous when a former teacher called him over to introduce him. He had heard that Bowne could be rather curt and sarcastic with those who did not at least border on genius. McConnell was thoroughly amazed, though pleased, at Bowne's encouraging response. Their friendship lasted fifteen years, during which time they conversed regularly.

While doing his doctoral studies under Bowne, McConnell decided that his vocation would not be in education. Bowne gave him what McConnell considered the wisest advice, viz., to spend the remainder of his doctoral program taking courses in more practical areas such as political theory and economics. McConnell saw the wisdom in this advice, and followed it. (McConnell was thought to be the heir apparent to succeed Bowne, but declined.)

McConnell wrote the only existing book-length biography of Bowne, entitled *Borden Parker Bowne* (1929). The book essentially dealt with Bowne's lifework in philosophy. McConnell maintained that this is as it should have been, since philosophy was what Bowne cared for most.

We learn quite a lot from McConnell and his own personalism through the biography and other writings he produced on Bowne. He wrote excellent essays on Bowne's ethics. These give us a good sense of how McConnell thought about the principles and application of personalistic

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9 Ibid., 27.
11 *By the Way*, 92.
12 Ibid., 259. McConnell tells us that near the end of his life Bowne burned many of his personal letters. The burning of these letters leaves the door open to much speculation. When a colleague of mine read this essay he wondered whether Bowne was an eccentric, and whether there may be details about his life which may further illuminate this, as well as his philosophy. One wonders whether Bowne had something he wished to conceal. One implication of all this is that a different kind of biography is needed on Bowne.
ethics. McConnell was a very creative and independent thinker who did not hesitate to challenge his teacher’s views and to propose alternatives.

McConnell questioned Bowne’s doctrine of God and God’s relation to time. Bowne essentially concluded that God is nontemporal. Bowne’s concern was that if God is affected by time, then God must somehow change. It therefore becomes possible to view God as a developing God, which, for Bowne, was anathema. The notion of a developing God, he believed, implies that God moves from a less perfect to a more perfect being.

McConnell’s empiricism was more thoroughgoing than Bowne’s. He was less hesitant to follow the facts where they seemed to point. He could see, for example, that if God is not in time and is unaffected by time, we cannot conclude that God cares about what happens to persons in the world, or that God is involved in events in the world. McConnell believed in a Christlike God, a God who is moral and cares about created persons and the rest of creation. If God is like Christ, he reasoned, then God cares about what happens to us and suffers when we suffer. If God is affected by what happens to us in the world, it is reasonable to conclude that God must change in some way or other.

Bowne was concerned that a model of a developing God would somehow diminish God’s divinity and dignity. McConnell believed, to the contrary, that God’s divinity is actually enhanced as a result of interaction with created persons and the world. McConnell contends that God must be affected in some way by the moral and other experiences of persons. Something must happen to the quality of God’s experience, he reasoned. Created persons may not be able to add to God’s power and wisdom, but what they do and fail to do must add something to the divine experience.

There is no question that McConnell thought highly of his teacher. He said of Bowne: “I never knew a finer, purer soul.” He wrote of Bowne’s “immense capacity for friendship [which] stood forth as a surpassing revelation.” One of the last times they talked was at a relative of Bowne’s in Brooklyn. Reminiscing nearly twelve years after Bowne’s death, McConnell wrote:

A severe attack of grippe had weakened him and he confessed to me some slight apprehension as to his heart—“his pump,” as he called it. We talked three hours and finally

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I started to the door. He followed me out upon the porch, and said: "Well, we have started a number of things that we haven't been able to talk out. If I don't see you again we'll meet some day in some fairer land where we shall have a little more light on these questions. Then we'll take up our talk and finish it." I got a fleeting glimpse of him once after that, but I like to think of him as standing on that Brooklyn porch looking toward "a fairer land where there is a little more light."  

The Ground of Social Ethics

McConnell grounded his ethics and social ethics in his doctrine of the Christlike God. Brightman characterized McConnell as a metaphysical social philosopher. Such a one grounds her or his social ideals and social aims "in the nature of reality"; in one's doctrine of God, and one's doctrine of human nature and human destiny. How one interprets social phenomena has much to do with these. The metaphysical social philosopher (hereafter social ethicist), then, is concerned about the place and relations of persons in the world, human nature, and human conduct. She or he views both reality and the state as a society of selves and persons, and is adamant that persons have infinite worth and dignity. In addition, such a person believes all being to be good and to have worth.

For McConnell, metaphysics had practical application. His interest in and commitment to social questions was prompted by ethical impulse and his doctrine of God and humanity. "Bishop McConnell's social interest," Harris Rall contended, "is not an addendum to his religion; his thought is all of one piece. His religion is social and his social viewpoint is religious, and both root in his basic world view."  

To say that McConnell's religion was social is a crucial point, since it is consistent both with Christian and personalistic traditions. Personalistic teaching contends that reality itself is communal, relational, or social. By viewing religion as fundamentally social and proceeding to determine the concrete, practical applications of this, McConnell was being consistent with the best in the Christian and personalistic traditions. Personalism holds not only the conviction of the centrality of person, but insists that individual persons cannot be all they can be apart from their relationship with the group or community. Indeed, throughout much of his ministry McConnell emphasized the principle of "persons-in-community." He was certain that "the individual is the end toward which the scriptural redemption and glorification aims," and that "individuals find their own best selves not in isolation but in union with their fellows."  

There is nothing mysterious about McConnell's approach to the social question. He was always concerned about how one views the place of

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15 McConnell, "Borden Parker Bowne," 357.
persons in reality and the concrete implications. McConnell wanted to know the meaning and relevance of philosophical issues for human values and Kingdom-making. His earlier interest in abstract problems of philosophy (as exhibited in his books prior to 1912) gave way to more practical, social concerns.

McConnell was always aware of the philosophical and theological assumptions of his social thinking and action. These were dependent upon his idea of God and reality. The basis of all he did was grounded in his theism. Rall made this point well, and if we are to understand McConnell’s contributions to social ethics, we need to remember the point. For McConnell “the determining center, the regulative idea is God, personal and ethical.”

That McConnell grounded his ethical thought and work in his idea of God, is an idea that is presented in systematic form in his book, *The Christlike God* (1927). The basis of McConnell’s faith is the Christlike God who comes nearest us in the person of Christ and the cross experience. “This conception of God and his relation to the world pervades his [McConnell’s] whole field of thought and action, and not least in the social realm. It is determinative for his social hope, and for his faith in man and in the democratic method. . . .” The Christlike God is infinitely moral and good, and therefore does not rule over creation and persons as an imperialistic dictator on high. As a moral being and one who possesses unsurpassable power, God, according to McConnell, is obligated (as any possessor of power) to use power for the highest possible outcome, i.e., for the greatest enhancement of persons, animal kingdom, and nature. McConnell saw much meaning in Abraham’s question to God: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Possession of power morally obligates, and the more power the greater the obligation to be moral in its use. McConnell held that “we may say that God may not run the universe as he pleases, in any arbitrary, personal sense.”

McConnell’s writings did not always reflect an interest in applying the principles of Christianity and personalism to social problems. His movement to social personalism was gradual. Like most recipients of academic doctoral degrees his first writings were oriented toward the more scholarly audience. Though his book, *The Diviner Immanence* (1906), surpasses Bowne’s book, *The Immanence of God* (1905), in the sense that it

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22 It is important to understand that personalists do not think of the personal in individual terms only. McConnell, for example, made it very clear that the personal means “persons set in relations to one another, which relations are as much a fact, as is the separate existence of the individuals” (*Personal Christianity* [New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1914], 48.) Reality, then, is personal-communal.
takes more seriously the problem of evil and what McConnell calls "the dark [sic] side of nature," it clearly is not a book written by a man who, at the time, was interested in linking the gospel to the eradication of social problems.

However, as early as 1910 there were signs that he had a sense of the significance of applying Christianity and personalism to social questions. In another of his earlier scholarly books he wrote:

Economic laws indeed mold politics and social ideals and artistic creations, but in the name of God and man Christianity emphasizes the sway of higher law which shall make the industrial law and all laws subservient to the noblest ends. . . . The whole world must be purified for the sake of that better understanding of God and of ourselves which will come out of the cleaner life.

Yet the emphasis in this 1910 publication was not on social Christianity. We do not see McConnell's social gospel connection, nor his social realism. However, it was soon to be evident that McConnell far surpassed both his father and Bowne in the application of the principles of personalism for the transformation of society.

By around 1912 McConnell had turned completely in the direction of social personalism and Christianity. He claimed to have had an interest in social questions and their solution since the time of his youth. He might have been influenced in this regard by his father’s interest in the abolition of slavery and the prohibition movement. His father did not, however, identify Christianity with public affairs. His mother, on the other hand, saw the connection clearly. McConnell recalled that in her efforts to round up votes for political candidates she often came home “disgusted with the number of ‘soft heads’ she had found, by which she meant the good people who didn’t believe that religion had anything to do with political and social issues.” Though an “intense individualism” was the focal point of her religious life, she was able to see, where her husband did not, the importance of the faith for social questions.

McConnell’s personalism is distinguished from that of most of his personalist contemporaries because he was more consistently intentional about identifying its social meanings and putting them to work in his ministry. By the time McConnell was a pastor for several years he was less interested in expending energy on the “more technical aspects of personalism,” focusing on the significance of personalism for persons in their concrete, everyday situations in life. For him a basic question was: What is the significance of personalism for human and social values? At bottom, then, he was more interested in ethical personalism and what it means for life.

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25 By the Way, 208.
26 Ibid., 208-209.
A third element in McConnell's ethical theory is very similar to Bowne's. There is a dialectical tension between the absoluteness of good will and the relativity of applying good will or concretizing it. Good will (love) is the fundamental principle of his ethics, but it must be actualized, and this will take various forms, depending on the situation. So we see an emphasis on both principles and situationism in McConnell's personalistic ethics. There is always a tension between the principle of good will and the most appropriate or fitting means of applying it to the concrete situation.

A related point is that McConnell, like Bowne, was aware that basic or general moral principles, e.g., good will and justice, are dependent for their application upon "extra-ethical conceptions" which serve as conditioning factors. These were referred to in the earlier discussion of McConnell as metaphysical social ethicist. He grounded his social ethics in a particular theory of reality and doctrine of God, as well as a particular theory of human nature and conduct. These "extra-ethical conceptions" condition the application of general moral principles. For example, it is conceivable that one can possess such principles intellectually or in theory, but because of a low estimate of the worth of persons, animals, and environment one's treatment of these will likely be unethical. A low conception of the worth of persons, for example, will generally result in corresponding behavior.

Critical evaluation of McConnell demands that one see him as "a man of his time." This sounds platitudinous, but it conveys the idea intended. To be sure, the phrase has often been used to justify the socio-ethical misdeeds of otherwise good people of past eras.

McConnell was a man of his time in the sense that he often resorted to the dehumanizing, demeaning language of his day when referring to people of color in and beyond the United States. At one point in one of his earliest books, for example, he implied that western culture is superior to African culture. He also suggested that Christianity is superior to other religions. In The Diviner Immanence he writes:

We do not require prolonged argument to see that the thought of God as loftiest personality is worthier than the picture of God as dragon or serpent. We need not be profound philosophers to conclude that there must be some vital difference between a religion which teaches that man is a son of God and one which teaches that he is less sacred than a cow or a monkey. Of course it would be possible to manipulate syllogisms even here, just as it would be possible to make a show of formal reasoning to prove that the chorus of the Central African pigmies is to be put on a level with Handel's Messiah. The inspiration of the God of all melody is no doubt back

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of the choruses of savagery and of civilization, but we should hardly care to say that the inspiration seized Handel no more divinely than it seizes the pigmy.  

It should be understood that this statement was written prior to McConnell's move to detect and apply the social meanings of Christianity and personalism. Yet the statement is quite characteristic of his time, though not excusable. However, in McConnell's case this practice progressively changes. In part this was due to his close contacts with people of color throughout the world, and his associations with African Americans in his father's church as a youngster. But in addition, McConnell was a good Christian and personalist, and recognized the dignity and worth of all persons. As a consistent, thoroughgoing personalist he had to progress in this way for at least two reasons.

First, McConnell believed there to be one God who created all persons in God's image. No matter what else this may or may not mean, minimally it means that God is the God of all persons or of no person. God, the Creator of all persons, loves all persons, and all are equal before God. In the second place, McConnell was a thoroughgoing personalist. The very method of personalism requires that one responds appropriately both intellectually and practically to new evidence and data. Through McConnell's travels and extensive involvements with African Americans and people of color throughout the world, and his understanding of the socio-economic and political forces involved in human oppression and degradation, he necessarily had to broaden his ethical field to include those who had been left out. His contacts with these groups convinced him of the essential humanity they share with all persons.

Paul Deats, Jr., rightly refers to what he considers McConnell's "insensitivities" regarding frequent references to African Americans, Chinese, Africans, and the people of India as "backward peoples." McConnell did this, despite the fact that personalists emphasize the sacredness of all persons. But as noted above, this was more characteristic of the early McConnell. He was apt to speak of "heathen" peoples in his early writings. As he matured in his thinking and ministry he would often qualify his reference to "backward" or "heathen" peoples with the qualifier, "so-called." Such qualifications at least suggest his discomfort with referring to people of color and nonwestern peoples as backward, inferior, or

30 The Diviner Immanence, 75-76.
31 McConnell, Living Together (New York: Abingdon, 1923). Here McConnell writes of "the inalienable sacredness of every person," and the need for groups all over the world to develop "mutual appreciative respect" for each other (16, 17) (italics mine).
33 The Diviner Immanence, 131.
as heathens. We see many examples of these qualifications in McConnell’s writings.

He revealed his distaste for Bowne’s use of phrases like, “heathen people.” McConnell’s preference was to say, “so-called heathen peoples.” Elsewhere he preferred to say, “so-called backward races.” In The Essentials of Methodism (1916) McConnell wrote of “so-called heathen lands.” However, the evidence suggests that he was not always consistent in his use of qualifiers.

At times McConnell would refer explicitly to nonwestern nations as “backward nations,” or to Native Americans as “savages,” and in the same book would introduce the qualified phrase, “so-called backward peoples,” even during his more mature periods! This happens, for example, in Democratic Christianity (1919). But interestingly, we see a similar tendency in Church Finance and Social Ethics (1920). In an even later publication, Living Together (1923), he used phrases like: “men of lower development”; or referring to Africans as “so-called nonadult peoples.” We also find the phrase: “The African may be a benighted mind....” However, the preponderance of the evidence suggests that McConnell was a much more sensitive person and that he was consciously trying to break free of such questionable language.

McConnell’s tendency to resort to the language of his day when referring to various groups of people of color might cause the uncareful reader of his works to conclude that he was insensitive to the socio-political, economic, and racial plight of such groups, when in actual fact few of his contemporaries were as concerned or did as much as he to eradicate the mistreatment of such groups by the dominant white group. McConnell was also a man of his times in the sense that he was a liberal progressive in outlook, devoted to working for social change primarily within the context of the existing structures of society. He was not a radical by any means, though he sometimes made statements regarding the “breaking of institutions” for the sake of human values — statements that one might attribute to a radical.

To get a good handle on McConnell’s social ethics, then, it is necessary to be aware of these four points: 1) His early writings did not reflect sustained interest in social personalism; 2) From around 1912 onward there were conscious efforts to identify the social meanings and consequences.

37 McConnell, Democratic Christianity (New York: Macmillan, 1919), 58, 64, 65.
38 Church Finance and Social Ethics, 106, 109.
of personalism and ways to apply these to the human situation; 3) There is an ongoing dialectical tension in his ethics between the centrality of good will and its concretization; 4) McConnell was a man of his times.

We said earlier that McConnell was a metaphysical social ethicist who sought to ground his social ethics in his theory of reality, his doctrine of human nature, and his theory of God. A fuller treatment of his ethics would require not only a more specific analysis of positive elements of his theory, e.g., the centrality of good will, the sacredness of persons, and the use of moral principles, but a consideration of his doctrine of God as well. His idea of the diviner immanence of God is based on the idea of a God who is perfectly ethical and under heavy moral obligation. It is God, after all, who calls persons into existence and endows them with freedom and the terrible responsibility which comes with it. In no case did humans ask to come into the world. Following Bowne, McConnell maintains that God is the most heavily obligated being in the universe, and in the final analysis even God will have some explaining to do to created persons.40