

THE  
ETERNAL RIDDLE



JOHN WIRT DUNNING



Class \_\_\_\_\_

Book \_\_\_\_\_

Copyright N<sup>o</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

**COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.**















# THE ETERNAL RIDDLE

BY

JOHN WIRT DUNNING



BOSTON

SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY

1911

M

BX 9178

D76E8

Copyright, 1911

SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY

1.20

© Cl. A 286713

## CONTENTS

	Page
I. WHAT IS MAN? . . . . .	1
II. IMMORTALITY . . . . .	13
III. IS THERE A GOD I CAN TRUST? . . . . .	29
IV. WHY DO WE SUFFER? . . . . .	43
V. WHAT SHALL I THINK ABOUT THE BIBLE?	57
VI. IS PRAYER A RATIONAL OCCUPATION? . . . . .	75
VII. CAN I GET BACK TO CHILDHOOD? . . . . .	91
VIII. CAN I FORGET THE PAST? . . . . .	105
IX. WHAT IS IT TO BE SAVED? . . . . .	123
X. WHAT ABOUT OUR SINS? . . . . .	135
XI. HOW NEAR MAY I COME TO HEAVEN AND MISS IT? . . . . .	151
XII. WHAT IS THE SUPREME MISSION OF THE CHRISTIAN? . . . . .	165
XIII. WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF A CHRISTIAN?	183
XIV. WHAT SHALL I THINK ABOUT JESUS? . . . . .	199
XV. WHAT IS CHRISTIAN FAITH? . . . . .	217
XVI. DOES THE WORLD NEED A NEW RE- LIGION? . . . . .	231



I  
WHAT IS MAN ?



## WHAT IS MAN?

*Thou hast made him but little lower than God.*  
Psalm 8: 5.

Man is an eternal riddle. At every stage of civilization low or high, at every turn of human experience there confronts the individual the problem of his origin. Beside every cradle where a new-born child is sleeping, in the busy whirl of active life, and over every new-made grave, the question of the Psalmist is being asked, "What is man?"

The Sphynx proposed first this ancient riddle, "What creature is that which in the morning walks upon four legs, upon two at noon, and upon three in the evening." It was long before an answer came. Such a creature could not be found. It was Oedipus who finally answered, "That creature which walks upon four legs in the morning, two at noon and three at night is man. In the morning of life, he creeps like the beast. At his noontide hour he stands erect. When the evening shadows gather he must have a staff."

But how terribly inadequate—how incomplete—this answer to the question, "What is man?"

Turn to the physiologist, and ask him. "Man is a living organism composed of lime, and water, a conglomerate of cell life and a certain amount of chemical substance."

Ask the biologist and the evolutionist. "Man

is a lineal descendant from a lower form of life, resembling the ape. Out of this early ancestor has developed the whole of his present life. He is what he is because of the environment in which he is placed, and were it not for the inexplicable workings of chance, he would be dwelling still in the branches of an African palm tree chattering amid a horde of his simian brothers. He is 'a featherless biped without wings.'"

Ask the psychologist. "Man is a bundle of ideas and habits that have fixed themselves upon the cortex of the cerebral hemispheres. His emotions, his will, his thoughts, are expressions of the physical mutations of the molecules on the surface of the brain."

Ask the philosopher. "Man is a wave on the sea of Infinity." He is the "expression of a Divine Idea." He is an "atom in the stream of God consciousness." He is "not a distinct entity, but his soul is absorbed into the soul of the Divine All." He is merely a mode of God's expression and not a being of himself.

How bewildering have been these answers. The modern mind has lost itself in the realm of speculation. The eternal riddle remains unsolved. In despair Heine says, "Man is an age-long riddle only fools expect to solve." He is the chance child of Fate's trickery, and "none can tell a man's appointed lot."



“Throughout untold aeons vast,  
She let him lurk and cower,  
'Twould seem he climbed at last,  
In mere fortuitous hour;  
Child of a thousand chances  
'Neath an indifferent sky.”

What utter failure in these answers to solve the eternal riddle! How sadly they fail to tell us what we really are. “An awful something burns within our clay,” that these do not explain. If these are all, then

“Man is a falling flower, and Fame in vain,  
Strives to protract his momentous reign  
Beyond his bounds, to match the rolling tide  
On whose dread waves the long Olympiads ride.”

But man *is* more. His own heart declares him to be. “Thou hast made him a little lower than God.” This was the raptured expression of a human heart as it contemplated man’s exalted station. To be a member of the human race the Psalmist declares is to come of great lineage. It is to have God as the Great Ancestor. It is to scale the heights of being, until one stands in the very presence of the Infinite Father. In spite of the speculations of philosophers, and the conclusions of materialists, the soul knows itself to be greater than the house in which it lives. There is a consciousness of a spiritual self, that puts on man a superlative dignity, and compels him to say with Aratas, “We are also his Offspring.” “Thou hast made him a little lower than God.”

Man cannot stand amid the wonders of nature, and not feel the breath of the Infinite blowing through his being. As he contemplates the glorious dignity of the great Creator, and sees his own exalted station, the throb of kinship stirs his heart. The feelings of that poverty-stricken painter as he gazed upon the work of the master, and forgetting his own failures exclaimed, "I too am a Painter," are the feelings of man as he contemplates his Creator's glory.

I think it must have been David who wrote this eighth Psalm. How often as a shepherd boy on the Judean Hills, in the silent watches of the night, beside the campfire, he had tended his father's sheep. How often in his solitary watch, he must have gazed up into the clear Judean sky, and seen the starry hosts of heaven, in all their glory, marshalled before their king, sending their message straight to the heart of the shepherd boy. No wonder as he gazed up into "the great and awful city of God," the very vastness of it appalled him.

"When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers,  
The moon and the stars which thou hast ordained,  
What is man that thou art mindful of him?  
And the son of man that thou visitest him."

From this vision of Heaven's pageantry, he turns to his own puny life, his littleness, his obscurity. Can it be that he is greater than the stars!

He gazes inward, and there he sees a holy kinship with the Maker of the stars. A thrill of pride runs through his being as he realizes that he alone can comprehend these wonderful glories of creation, and in them hear the voice of God. The sheep that sleep in silence around him hear no heavenly message. Their eyes are closed to the beauties of the firmament, and in the exultation of manhood, David sings,

“Thou hast made him but little lower than God,  
And crowned him with glory and honor.  
Thou madest him to have dominion over the works  
of thy hands;  
Thou hast put all things under his feet.”

After all, the soul that sees the grand designs of nature's glories, and asserts its power over the “beasts of the field, the fowls of the air and the fish of the sea,” must be greater than them all—kin to the Creator.

Such feelings have come to all. It may have been on some bright winter morning at the foot of a magnificent mountain peak, whose summit gleams in dazzling crystal, as its myriad flakes reflect the morning sun. It may have been beside the mighty ocean, whose billows the ships that men have builded, plough in safety. It may have come beside the campfire in the midst of evening's silence, as the eye gazes, like David's, into a firmament of whose vastness he never dreamed. “How awful is God's glory.”

Then there comes the feeling of wonder, that man has been exalted to a place of pre-eminence in all this universe. In the midst of all creations of which man knows, he stands supreme—the pinnacle of them all. Why has God chosen ME to rule over the beasts of the field, and to “have dominion over the works of His hands?” My own heart tells me, It is my kinship with God. I may have come as the evolutionist tells me, up from lower forms of life, but somewhere in my upward journey, God met me, and breathed into me the breath of His life. I may be a chemical compound as the physiologist says, or a bundle of habits as the psychologist declares, but there is something in me that none of them can explain. It is the immortal image of God. *I am His child!*

How close are the ties of kinship. Nature always draws her kindred together in loving bands. The branches of the willow, on the river bank bend to kiss the lily that floats upon the stream. There is kinship there. The mother wren dies upon her nest fighting with the sparrows for the life of her brood. Hers is a kindred love.

In a rich man’s house are many treasures. Its ceilings are wrought with costly gold, exquisite rugs are on its floors, fine wrought tapestries are on its walls, its shelves are filled with rare vases and heavy plate from Oriental workshops, a hundred servants throng to do his bidding, and all that money can buy is his.

But more than all these there is another treas-

ure. The little child that bears his image and his name, is the greatest treasure of them all. It can feel as he feels; it can know and understand his love; it can come to him in its hour of joy or sorrow, and tell him of its pleasures or its woes. It is the child of his love—a being like himself, whom he has brought to life. No wonder he cherishes it and loves it, and among all his treasures, he holds it the dearest and the best.

Here may we find our answer to the eternal riddle. The treasure house of God is full of priceless wealth. Its measure is untold. The heavens declare His glory in the treasuries of the stars, the firmament is His handiwork, the rushing rivers and the lofty mountains, the hoar frost and the fleecy clouds, the mustard seed and the mighty oak, “the earth and the fullness thereof,”—all are His, unlimited, unnumbered, unknown!

But *I* above all these am the child of His love. I am a spiritual being, into whom He has breathed the breath of His own life, and on whose soul He has stamped the image of His being. It matters not if my body be formed of the dust. My soul is in the image of God! “Like as a Father pitieth his children the Lord loveth them that fear him.”

“I con my history cast in rocks, and trace  
The line of life through ages closed in stone;  
And all, minute or mighty, is mine own,  
Outworn, cast off, no longer fit to grace  
The larger hope that mounts to nobler place.  
So I am bound to all the vast Unknown,

The dread and awful eras long outgrown.  
Yet even with God do I stand face to face!  
I, of the dust born, know that unto Him,  
The Life, my being's lineal currents run!  
From Him I sprung; I am His child; a soul  
Thick veiled, led on by Him through cycles dim,  
Whom He will lead until the end be won,  
My manhood rounded full, a perfect whole."

I may be appalled by the vastness of the house I live in, but in love's realm the foot rule does not count. I may be cast down by the feeling of deep unworthiness, as I see the black spectre of my sin rise before me. But my very capacity for sin is the badge of my high origin. After the very worst has been said of me, even though I sit a prodigal child in a far country, there is something that sin has not destroyed. Like the music of a far off song I can hear the Father's voice calling, "My child."

It is strange indeed that any child of God should forsake his lofty dignity as the kin of God; strange that he should choose to lose his crowning glory, and become a prodigal child, marring and destroying the features of his divine heritage, by the scars and rags of sin. But it has been the history of the race, that it has forgotten that on its brow it bears the marks of the divine. We have yielded to the tempter, and forsaken the kinship of God for the company of evil.

And now in our grief and shame, as we realize the treasure we have lost, God comes to us again

with assurance of a kinsman-Redeemer, who shall be for us the Way of Restoration into the Father's image. As once He glorified us by giving us His image, now He honors man by Himself becoming man.

“ 'Twas much that man was made like God before,  
But that God should be made like man, much  
more.”

If man has lost God's image, he may recover it again. There is at-one-ment. “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.” Because man is more than the stick, the star, the rock or beast, he is worth redeeming.

“When the fight begins within himself,  
A Man's worth something—God stoops o'er his  
head,  
Satan looks up between his feet—both pull—  
He's left, himself, in the middle; the soul wakes,  
God wins. Prolong the battle through his life!  
Never leave growing till the world to come!”

Man may be in ruins, but he is still at the summit of the world, “but a little lower than God.” Ruin that he is, he possesses vaster power than the rushing stars, or foaming cataracts. He is God's child. There is no rest, no peace for him outside the bosom of his Father. As Augustine said: “Thou hast made us for Thyself, and in vain do we seek rest until we find it in Thee.” “The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord.” The same light shines from his face as shines from

the face of the Father of all. There is a hungering in every human heart, that will not be satisfied with aught save the Father's smile. Away in the far country that longing seizes on the heart of the divine ruin. There is a hungering for the Father's house, and the joys of sonship once more. Then over the hills of life comes Jesus, "the first-born among many brethren," to call the "sons and daughters of the Almighty," to enter once more the inheritance of their ancestral image.

The answer to the eternal riddle is that ancient word which comes to us out of the far away dawn of man's first morning: "And God said let us make man in our image after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of heaven, and over every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth. And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him."

"My Father is rich in houses and lands,  
He holdeth the wealth of the world in his hands;  
Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold,  
His coffers are full; he has riches untold.

A tent or a cottage, why should I care;  
They're building a palace for me over there.  
Though exiled from home, yet still may I sing.  
Glory to God, I'm the Child of a King.

I'm the child of a King,  
The child of a King,  
With Jesus my Saviour  
I'm the child of a King."



II  
IMMORTALITY

“When earth’s last picture is painted, and the tubes  
are twisted and dried,  
When the oldest colors have faded and the young-  
est critics have died,  
We shall rest, and faith we shall need it—lie down  
for an aeon or two,  
Till the Master of all Good Workmen shall set us  
at work anew.

And those that are good shall be happy; they shall  
sit in a golden chair;  
They shall splash at ten league canvas with brushes  
of comets’ hair;  
They shall have real saints to draw from—Magda-  
lene, Peter and Paul;  
They shall work for an age at a sitting and never  
grow tired at all.

And only the Master shall praise us and only the  
Master shall blame;  
And no one shall work for money and no one shall  
work for fame;  
But each for the joy of working, and each in his  
separate star,  
Shall draw the Thing as he sees It for the God of  
Things as They Are.”

RUDYARD KIPLING

## IMMORTALITY

*If a man die shall he live again? Job 14: 14.*

It is a solemn thought that we all must die. We are a race of ephemeridae, and our life is "swifter than a weaver's shuttle." Herodotus tells us that it was the custom of the Egyptians at their banquet tables to have passed among them a miniature mummy case, in which lay a human image. And the slave who carried it whispered in the ear of each, "Be happy now, for this is what you come to at last."

We need no ceremony like this to remind us that this life is not forever.

I stood in the fields one gray morning in the twilight of approaching day, beside the mangled bodies of seven of my companions in travel. A half hour before, two engines had crashed together in the darkness of the early hours; and these poor fellows, travelling in the day coach, had passed into eternity without a second's warning.

A man came and stood beside me. I recognized him as one I had seen drinking and gambling in the smoking compartment the night before. His pale cheeks and hollow voice showed him to be the victim of terrible fright.

"May I ask you a question, sir?" he said.

I told him to ask on.

"I have never been so close to death before, and this accident has completely unnerved me. I want

to know if you think this life is all of it? One of those bodies there is of a man I have travelled with for years. Do you think that when a man dies he lives again?"

He did not realize that he had asked the oldest question of the ages, and the newest. "If a man die shall he live again?" So long as men are dying we can never get away from that question. In our gayest moments, there hovers near us "that shadow feared by man."

The French artist Poussin has pictured for us a group of happy shepherds and shepherdesses finding even in the forests of Arcadia a dread reminder that earthly joys are not forever. In a gay revel through the autumn woods they have come suddenly upon an old tomb, and as they scrape away the moss above the entrance their fingers trace out this inscription, "et in Arcadia ego"—I too have lived in Arcadia. Their faces are saddened and their songs are stilled as they pause in dumb reverie above the tomb, whence has come this salutation of the dead.

"If a man die shall he live again?" With what terrible fascination this question holds us! We cannot let it alone. Why not say "No" and end it once for all? Men *have* said that. And certainly the signs are with them. What petty creatures we are. The forces of nature crush us like straws in an avalanche. A germ so small that the naked eye cannot see it enters our body, and in a few hours it is racked and tossed with disease. We

feed our bodies thrice a day and sleep a third of our time; but in spite of it all, eyes are growing dim, ears dull and limbs decrepit. The strongest among us comes finally to that

“Last scene of all

That ends this strange, eventful history  
Second childishness and mere oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.”

Then out of “The City of Dreadful Night,”  
Thompson sends his dreary cry of grim despair.

“The world rolls round forever like a mill.  
It grinds out life and death and good and ill;  
It has no purpose, thought, nor mind, nor will.  
While air of space and time’s full river flow,  
The mill must blindly whirl unresting so,  
It may be wearing out, but who can know?  
Doth it use man harshly as he saith?  
It grinds him some slow years of bitter breath;  
Then grinds him back again into eternal death.”

Yet behold us still asking the question, “If a man die shall he live again?” Can we hope for a final, complete and full answer?

M. Louis Elbé in a recent book has tried to demonstrate the Future Life with the aid of ancient wisdom and modern science. But though he brings us the most ancient theories, the newest psychology, and the latest experiments of the Psychic Society he does nothing more than kindle afresh in us “the pleasing hope, the fond desire, the longing after immortality.” We feel that this is a sordid way to prove our hope, and are con-

vinced anew that there is "no demonstration outside the laboratory and the mathematics room."

Is this hope of future life then a dream? By no means. Man is immortal. In the higher judgments of the reason and the soul there are voices in plenty.

Let four of them come before us with their "Intimations of Immortality."

First of all, the voice of Humanity's Experience.

The instinct for immortality is universal. It is a beam of golden light piercing through the dark history of the race. The "Book of the Dead," the oldest literature known, abounds in the thought of a life beyond the grave. On the mummy cases of Egypt, is pictured a lotus flower opening in the morning sun, and a phoenix rising from the ashes of a dying fire. The Vedic hymns of the Hindus proclaim an eternal soul. "When a man is smitten of death, his life goeth back to the sun, but there remains in him that which is undying . . . His soul goeth to the world where his deeds belong. It goeth to the world of the Creator if it have done the deeds that lead it to the world of the Creator."

At the death of Socrates, his young disciple Crito is asking, "In what way shall we bury you?" And the old philosopher replies, "In any way you like. But you must get good hold on me and take care that I do not run away from you, . . . for when I have drunk the poison, I shall leave you for

the realms of the blest. I would not have you say at the burial, 'Thus we lay out Socrates,' nor 'Thus we follow him to the grave.' Be of good cheer; say that you are burying my body only."

And long, long before these words were spoken, way back in the age of ice, the archeologist has found that men buried the tools and trinkets of the dead, for their spirits to use in the land beyond.

There is no tribe so degraded nor so low that does not in some way possess the instinct for a future life. And there is no culture so high that does not claim this instinct as a part of its highest thought. The human mind seems to be built with this as its most necessary concept. Other ideas are cast off as too small for a growing universe, but this abides through every change.

As we examine the lower instincts of the body, that are universal and persist, we discover everywhere nature's provision for their longings. The cry for food and fire is answered with flames and bread.

But here is an instinct for life itself—immortal life. An instinct that grows in power as men rise higher. An instinct that is linked with all human progress, that has nerved men for great deeds, that has been the signboard at every crossing on life's rising slopes, "Here you strike the Upward Trail."

Can it be that man's most persistent, universal and high instinct—the one thing in his being that

has nerved him to great endeavor; that which has built his most beautiful virtues, is to be the one instinct in all his life that is a foolish dream? Is God growing less in power and reason and love as he rises higher? Is he the Father of our physical life, supplying its every need; and at the same time the fiendish Destroyer of our souls, the Mocker of our undying hopes?

“Shall man alone, for whom all else revives,  
No resurrection know? Shall man alone,  
Imperial man! be sown in barren ground  
Less privileged than the grain on which he feeds?”

The second voice is the voice of Human Experiment.

The scientist has compelled us to live in a new world. We used to live in a little universe. The earth was flat, and vaulted by an “inverted butter bowl” on which the stars were pinned. Jacob’s ladder reached to the sky, and the sun was seventy-five miles away.

But the astronomer came first, and with his telescope he opened to us a universe, awful in its immensity. The universe in which we live is only one of many thousands. Our sun, a hundred million miles away, is only a tallow dip amid a hundred thousand others. The world is a grain of sand at the bottom of a shoreless sea. What visions of possibility this teeming universe offers! Is it possible that this brief life of seventy years on the narrow confines of this diminutive ball, is



all there is for a spirit that has aspirations for and dreams of endless life in this vast universe of God? The very immensity of things is a challenge to immortal life.

Following the astronomer comes the physicist telling us that in all this vast immensity not one atom of matter nor one ounce of energy can be destroyed. You may change their form, but you cannot obliterate them. What, then, shall be our conclusion about that most powerful force we know—human personality? On the scientific basis of conservation we know that

“Nothing walks with aimless feet  
And not one life can be destroyed  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete.”

Next comes the evolutionist, to tell us the process by which this universe came to its present vastness and beauty. It has grown like a flower. Step by step through the ages man and the universe in which he lives have been rising, ever rising. And in the upward and onward march that which has been found to be untrue and useless has been cast aside. Only the fit survives. “When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part is done away.” Only those things remain out of a past age which can serve succeeding generations in the onward march of progress.

And behold! Constantly growing in power and certitude, ever occupying a larger place in the

lives of men, is that crowning jewel of humanity's thought—Immortality. As we evolve through the centuries from lower to higher planes of life, the doctrine of immortality is more and more a necessity to our thought, and the reality behind it a more vital element of our being.

The size, the permanence, and the progress of the universe, science has unfolded, are convincing proof that this hope of immortality is not "the dream of fools."

A third voice is the Philosophy of Life's Incompleteness.

We seem to enter only the beginnings of things here.

Our knowledge is incomplete. We have a capacity for intellectual power far beyond our present life. The wonder is not that one small head can carry all we know, but that in a field of knowledge so vast we can acquire so little. Mysteries are ever before us and we die with Goethe's last words on our lips, "More light, more light."

I gather a handful of pebbles by the sea, and classify them in my laboratory; and I call this geology. But how utterly have I failed to comprehend the Logos of the earth.

I pluck a "flower from the crannied wall," and analyze it to the last detail. And I call this biology. But over my boasted science of life I am compelled to say, "*If I could understand* what you are, little flower."

I send my strongest telescope far out into the

heavens, and chart the sky with a million stars, but I have only reached the edge of the infinite spans beyond. The curtain falls on mystery.

I am standing by the cradle of a new-born child. "What is this new Mystery?" I ask. "A little bone and muscle, and chemical fluid," the physiologist answers. "A mind wrapped up in a case of clay," the psychologist says. "Another producer and consumer," says the economist. "My child," says the mother. And the curtain falls on the mystery of life.

Over our highest wisdom is written, "Continued in our next." The unfinished epistle of life's knowledge calls for an eternal postscript.

Our work is incomplete. Who ever feels that he has accomplished all his heart desired? We are a race of men whose "reach exceeds our grasp." We are compelled to write "finis" over our toil before it is half complete. Victor Hugo said: "For half a century, I have been writing my thoughts in prose, verse, history, philosophy, drama, romance, tradition, satire, ode, song—I have tried all. But I feel that I have not said a thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to the grave, I can say like so many others, 'I have finished my day's work,' but I cannot say, 'I have finished my life.' The tomb is no blind alley. It is a thoroughfare. It closes in the twilight to open in the dawn."

The trowel falls from nerveless fingers on an unfinished wall; the needle dulls with the seam half

sewn; the plow rusts in the unfinished furrow. Our work is too vast for earth. Queen Elizabeth dies crying for "an inch of time"; and our hearts echo her cry.

Love and justice, too, are incomplete.

Our lives beget some deathless loves. They are broken, severed. We cannot force ourselves to the horrid conclusion that death has severed them forever, when their silver cord is loosed and their golden bowl is broken. "I shall see her again," a mother said to me as we turned away from the grave of a beautiful child of twelve. "Yes, dear mother, you will see her again. Hope on."

We believe in perfect justice. But, Oh! what wrongs, what inequalities here. "Right forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne." Goodness unrewarded. Evil unpunished. This is indeed a sorry scheme of things if there is no balancing of the scales in a land beyond. What a tragedy is life, if for her wrongs there is "no balm in Gilead!"

These three voices have told us much. Death comes on. We meet it bravely, heroically, full of hope.

"Into the dark and silent night before us  
 Naked we glide.  
 No hand hath mapped the constellations o'er us  
 No comrade at our side—  
 No chart, no guide."

Now another voice is heard—the voice of Revelation.

Human experience, human experiment, human philosophy, link their messages with a fourth voice—the sure, unfailing voice of God.

If we have been walking in the moonbeams of hope before, the Bible rises, like the sun, to shed over us the glare of noon day.

“Toil on, in hope o’ercome  
The steeps God set for thee.  
For past the Alpine summits of earth’s toil  
Lieth thine Italy.”

A gentle spirit moves over the hills of Palestine. Some men say, “A great prophet is come.” Others, “We have seen the Messiah.” One has the vision to say, “Thou art the Christ, the son of the Living God.”

And now I hear this Christ speak for himself; “I am come from the Father. The Father and I are one. He is not a God of the dead, but of the living. In my Father’s house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me though he were dead yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die.”

And all through that marvellous story, the one thought that towers high above the lofty peaks that surround it, is this, “In me ye shall have life—immortal life.”

Now it is the hour before the crucifixion. The Son of God is talking to His dejected disciples. But He is talking to them of conquest, of victory.

"WHEN I AM RISEN, I will go before you into Galilee."

Dark days follow. The gloom of twilight deepens into night. Discouraged and defeated, the disciples are hiding in Jerusalem. Their Lord is crucified and buried.

"Now he is dead, far hence he lies,  
In the lorn Syrian town  
And on his grave with pitying eyes,  
The Syrian stars look down."

Then a strange thing happens. These defeated, cowering, nerveless disciples, are suddenly transformed. With tremendous courage and fiery eloquence they fling themselves upon the world, and literally "turn it upside down." Their whirlwind rush does not stop until they have girded the earth. Nineteen centuries pass, and the eleven have become four hundred million!

What was it that thus transformed this band of weaklings, and completely altered the course of human history? "A dead Jew hanging on a cross?" "A dream, a vision, a fraud, of which ignorant fishermen were the victims?" No! The keynote of it all was in that grand word which they so fearlessly hurled upon the world, "Now is Christ risen from the dead."

And all through the rest of that matchless story, the glad refrain is "Christ is risen!" "If Christ be not risen, our faith is vain." "Death is swallowed up in victory." "This corruptible

shall put on incorruption, this mortal shall put on immortality." "O, death, where is thy sting; O, grave, where is thy victory?"

Down through the centuries that song has gone, sounding louder as the years roll by, its divine assurance of life that never ends.

"Good night," the early Christians used to say, as their soul took its flight. Not "farewell." This is the voice of every happy soul that falls asleep in Jesus.

In the home of a friend of mine there was a little child who was the sunshine of her parents' life. To those who loved her she seemed almost an angel child. It was her father's custom to come to her bed each night before she fell asleep, for his good-night kiss.

At length sickness came. The little body wasted away. The end drew near, and the sleep of death stole over the childish heart. But, she, thinking it was only the gentle drowse of her evening slumber, lifted her arms toward her father and whispered, "Good night, father. I'll see you in the morning."

The child was right. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

God help us all as we gather the cloak of death around us, to say, not in the poor pessimism of the pagan, "Vale Aeternum"—everlasting farewell; but in the simple faith of a little child to whisper, "Good night, good night, I'll see you in the morning."





III

IS THERE A GOD I CAN TRUST ?

“Atheism leaves the reason like a fluttering and dying bird, in an atmosphere exhausted of oxygen. It wraps the imagination in darkness. It blackens the heavens. It proclaims the human race to be fatherless. It empties the universe of purpose. This complex web of unresting energies is a machine, not only without a Maker, but without an end before it or a mind within it.

“What conception could be more terrifying than a mindless universe! We are passengers in a train rushing at maddest speed, but whither we cannot tell. There are no signals on this line, no engineer has laid the rails; no driver is on the footplate. Happiness, for us, depends on the presence of certain qualities in the universe—love, foresight, justice, righteousness. But these are personal qualities: and since there is no personal God, these things are not to be found in the system to which we belong. We are an orphan race, wandering under pitiless and empty skies.”

W. H. FITCHETT, *“The Beliefs of Unbelief.”*

## IS THERE A GOD I CAN TRUST?

*The fool hath said in his heart, "There is no God."*  
Psalm 14: 1.

There is a somewhat distressing study taught in our theological seminaries known as Systematic Theology. Not that one revolts against system, for that word is one of the slogans of the present hour. Nor does one object to theology,—the logic of God,—for than this, there is no higher logic. But there is a certain coldness about those long drawn out discussions of subtile problems, that chills the very marrow of life, and wearies the brain with words.

“. . . Do not all charms fly,  
At the touch of cold philosophy?  
Philosophy will clip an angel's wings,  
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,  
Empty the haunted air, the gnomed mine—  
Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made  
The tender personed Lamia melt into a shade.”

And one of the most unsatisfactory things about this study, is its attempt to give us reasoned proof for the existence of God. There is presented to us a long series of arguments designed to “prove” the existence of Deity. When you have waded through it all, you are convinced anew of the failure of mere dialectics to satisfy the longing for the Infinite.

There lingers the memory of a few long

words, "ontological," "cosmological," "teleological." We have a vague impression that in some way we have demonstrated the existence of God. We remember what this Nicene father and that said about it. We have a feeling that Hegel didn't quite grasp reality, when he said God was the "Idea" behind all. We cannot say with Schopenhauer, that the Power behind all is "Blind Will," nor with Mill, that it is "the Uncaused Cause." It is not Spencer's "Unascertained Something," nor Haeckel's "Blind Law." It means little to have Matthew Arnold tell us, "God is a Power in us making for righteousness."

We feel that we, with these, have been striving with a problem that is far beyond the realm of demonstration; that we, with them, are believers in God, but that it is not the reasoned proof of theology that makes us such. Whatever name we give to the Infinite and Eternal, there is not one who does not believe that these exist. The philosophy of atheism is the philosophy of the fool. **THERE IS A GOD!** Man cannot demonstrate, nor prove it by the method of the laboratory. **BUT WE KNOW IT.**

We are ready to believe that if God is perfect, He must exist, for existence is a part of perfection. We know that every effect must have an adequate cause; and if the universe is an effect, then the Cause of it must be well nigh Infinite. We believe that order is the product of mind alone. And here is a universe, wonderful in its order and adap-

tations. We conclude that this Infinite must be also a Designer.

But have we proven the existence of God? Not a bit of it. We have established the reasonableness of His existence, and have forced the burden of proof back on the Atheist, with his tremendous negation, "there is no God." Men might still say this Being, Cause, Designer, existed, and declare still, that It is impersonal, and the Evidences, the workings of accident or of material evolution. A tremendous task would be before the man who sought to establish such a position, and his logic would have to deny the very foundations of knowledge itself, and contradict the experience of universal humanity. But in the realm of pure philosophy it might be done. We shall have to determine the character of the existing Infinite by other processes, than the dialectics of the reason.

What better can we do than to turn to ourselves. The heart and the soul of man has a logic all its own.

The theologian and the philosopher have led us thus far along the journey: They have shown us that this dream of an Infinite, Personal God is not necessarily a lie, contrary to reason. Indeed they have shown us that it is in accord with the highest reason.

What then do our hearts say?

Well, first of all we discover, that their deepest *longing* is for a personal God.

“O, give me a God with an eye to see,  
A mind that my mind can know,  
A love to meet my deepest love,  
And a heart to comfort my woe.”

The first instinct of the savage is prayer; the latest longing of the learned is prayer. We could not pray to chance, to cosmic force, nor to blind law. Only the personal can communicate with the personal. If God be not a person, than the instinct of prayer is a lie; and there is presented the paradox of man's holiest emotion born of deceit, and his highest instinct, a lie. The saints are all deceived, and the testimony of rogues is true. The innate longings of the heart, will not let us get away from the thought that God must be a Person. If He is not, then he is not the kind of a God the heart of man, in the deepest longings of his highest moments, craves. He is not God.

And again, there is the fact of *ourselves*. Here we are. What a wonderful life, modern psychology has revealed ours to be. Grand are our thoughts. Is it possible that the Power who gave them does not think? We feel, we have emotions. Great loves, great compassion, great sympathy, are born of these associations of ours. Is it possible that the Power that put them in us does not Itself possess them? Can a Creator give that which he himself does not possess? And there is conscience, too; and back of it the sense of absolute Right and Justice and Truth. Whence came these? Is it possible that they have been born of blind law?

Then, too, we are conscious of our own *being*. We are spirits, grandly free. Personality is the great ultimate of our consciousness. Is God less than His creature? Is He lower in the scale of *His* existence? Does the infinitesimal contain that which cannot be found in the Infinite? The paradox is absurd. We are driven irresistibly to the conclusion that the Power which is responsible for a personality, cannot be of lower order than the creature of its hands.

“But,” says one, “that is making God in the image of man. A dog as he bays the moon, might with as much reason project a dog Deity on the skies, and say “behold your God.” Is this true? Not at all. If God is God at all then we must place Him in the highest category of *being* we know. If the dog could reason, he must conclude that his master is a superior creature. And if he were to project a God on the heavens, it would be a man—the highest being of which he is aware. The highest category of being man knows, is that of Free Personality. A god who is any less is no God. It is Sir Oliver Lodge who says, “There are many errors, but there is one truth in anthropomorphism. Whatever worthy attribute belongs to man, be it personality or any other, its existence in the universe is thereby admitted; we can deny it no more.” The unwritten logic of the life of men draws irresistibly to a Personal God. Men may call Him by many names, Zeus, Jupiter or Jehovah, but it is the same God behind all—an

Immanent yet Transcendent Person, in whom the universe lives and moves and has its being.

“A fire-mist and a planet,  
 A crystal and a cell,  
 A jelly fish and a saurian,  
 And the caves where the cave men dwell;  
 Then a sense of law and beauty,  
 And a face turned from the clod,  
 Some call it Evolution,  
 And others call it God.

A haze on the far horizon,  
 An Infinite tender sky,  
 The rich, ripe fruits of the cornfield,  
 And the wild geese sailing high;  
 And over the upland and lowland  
 The charm of the golden-rod,  
 Some of us call it Autumn,  
 And others call it God.

Like tides on the crescent sea beach  
 When the moon is new and thin,  
 Into our hearts, high yearnings  
 Come welling and surging in,  
 Come from the mystic ocean,  
 Whose rim no foot has trod;  
 Some of us call it Longing,  
 And others call it God.

A picket frozen on duty,  
 A mother starved for her brood,  
 Socrates drinking the hemlock,  
 And Jesus on the rood;  
 And the millions who, humble and nameless,  
 The straight, hard pathway trod,  
 Some call it Consecration,  
 And others call it God.”



Will this God reveal Himself to His creatures? Or must we like the Athenians erect our altars to "The Unknown God." One of the great qualities of personality is self-revelation. Shall Infinite, Perfect Personality not reveal Himself? The Book of Nature, the Book of Life and the Book of Books, all have their answer. It is the same. No man can read them long and seriously without discovering that lesson that they teach on every page: "God is a Father and we are His children." The ultimate qualities that make the Infinite God are perfect love, perfect goodness, perfect holiness perfect justice. And these are the qualities of Fatherhood. Out of the deepest experiences of human sorrow, and out of the highest ecstasies of human joy, our hearts are always calling "Abba, Father."

There is no higher vision of God. "Judge," "Creator," "Preserver," "King," grand words are they! But best of all, "Our Father!"

This is no fantastic dream—this thought of Fatherhood. Nothing else will satisfy the soul. We cannot force ourselves to believe that we are a race of orphans. Far within the deepest recesses of the soul, a still, small voice is whispering, "A Father to the fatherless is God, in His holy habitation."

"The *fool* hath said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" The word means "empty, faded, withered." Such is the life of him who says "There is no God."

A fading flower, whose beauty withers, whose fragrance dies.

And still there are those who say, "I will not believe except I see. Prove God to me. Give me a written guarantee, that all you say is true. Demonstrate it all to me."

Like sailors on a torn and tattered raft they sail the sea of life. All hope is gone. And now in the distance a ship is seen. Their signals of distress bring her alongside. "Shall I throw you a rope," the captain calls. "Wait a moment," is the reply; "can you prove that you will bring us to the harbor; is your ship a staunch craft; are there any combustibles in your cargo; is your skipper drunk?" All these are answered, and still the shipwrecked sailors are not satisfied. Then they are allowed to come on board. They examine her from stem to stern, from mizzen mast to keel. They come back to the captain. "Captain, this ship looks seaworthy, we would like to take passage with you, but unless you will give us a written guarantee to bring us to the harbor we will go back to our raft." AND BACK THEY GO. Such is the position of the man who demands that we "*prove*" the Fatherhood of God.

Happy is the soul that "believes where it cannot prove," and walks the path of life, now in sorrows, now in joys, "enduring *as* seeing Him who is invisible."

“‘In pastures green,’ not always—sometimes He  
Who knoweth best, in kindness leadeth me  
In heavy ways where weary shadows be.  
Out of the sunshine, warm, and soft and bright,  
Out of the sunshine into darkest night—  
I oft would faint with sorrow and affright

Only for this; I know He holds my hand,  
So whether in the green or desert land,  
I trust, e’en though I may not understand.

‘And by still waters;’ no not always so.  
Ofttimes the heavy tempests round me blow,  
And o’er my soul the waves and billows go;  
And when the storm beats loudest and I cry  
Aloud for help, the Father standeth by  
And whispers to my soul, ‘Lo, it is I.’

And more than this, where’er my pathway lead,  
He gives to me no helpless, broken reed,  
But His own hand, sufficient for my need.  
So where’er He leads me I can safely go,  
And in the blest hereafter I shall know  
Why in His wisdom, He hath led me so.”

We are living in a day of daring deeds, and stupendous dreams. The watchword of the hour is expansion. The universe has expanded. When a boy I gazed up into the blue of heaven, and saw it stretching like “an inverted bowl” to the horizon. I was glad to think that I lived under the apex of the sky, and did not have to stoop, like those poor fellows living close under the horizon! I know better now. The house of my Father is larger than I had ever dreamed. Billions of miles will not measure its vastness.

Knowledge is expanding. The books on mechanics and science have to be remade every year or so. The study of psychology was all but unknown fifty years ago. It is a commonplace with every schoolboy now.

Our pleasures are expanding. The world has been turned upside down for things that shall delight and thrill us. "A pitful of Kings," for which the French king sighed, to amuse him, would be all too tame for us today. We must have six-cylinder automobiles and flying machines.

Our achievements are expanding. Man, "imperial man," is harnessing the forces of earth and air, and launching into achievements so startling that he himself is bewildered.

Our religion is expanding. We are rising to loftier heights, and the horizon is broadening. We can almost pierce today, through the mist-veiled harbor, into the eternal city. Old creeds are cast aside, and new ones are born in a day. The heretic of today is the bigot of tomorrow.

Where in all this changing, expanding, unstable age, can that be found which does not change? On what can the troubled heart lean for support when the props are falling one by one? Where is there anchorage when the tidal wave has buried the harbor?

There is but one place. **IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER.** "I will receive you, and be a Father unto you and ye shall be my sons and daughters," saith the Lord Almighty."

Here is the Rock of Ages—the Infinite, Eternal Father of our spirits, in whom we live and move and have our being, “the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

“God will not change; the restless years may bring  
Sunlight and shade—the glories of the spring;  
And silent gloom of sunless winter hours;  
Joy mixed with grief—sharp thorns and fragrant  
flowers.  
Earth’s lights may shine a while and then grow dim;  
But God is true, there is no change in Him.

Trust in thy Lord today and all thy days;  
Let His unerring hand direct thy ways  
Through the uncertainties, and hopes and fears  
That greet thee through the changing years;  
And find, while all life’s fleeting scenes pass by,  
Thy Refuge in a Love that cannot die.”



IV

WHY DO WE SUFFER?

“The mystery of the storm wind is the riddle of the universe. The origin of evil is the night whose blackness refuses to lift. If I could understand the storm wind, I could fathom God. If I could fathom God, if I could drop a plummet and strike bottom in the divine nature and say: ‘I have measured the Almighty, I know his height and depth and length and breadth,’ that instant I should lose God. God must ever be beyond us, dwelling in a mystery that can be entered only by a blindfolded soul willing to trust where it cannot trace, to believe where it cannot see.

Yet we need not be lost in the labyrinth of mystery. Faith in the midst of the storm is not to be confounded with credulity in the fog. There are landmarks which do not disappear even when the storm wind blows. We cannot understand the origin of evil nor the mystery of suffering, but there are certain great facts we can lay hold of, and by means thereof keep hope alive even when the tempest is at its worst.”

JAMES I. VANCE, “*The Eternal in Man.*”

“To reject Christ as some humanitarians do, on the ground that evil is incompatible with a belief in God as love, is surely a most illogical and misguided course. By so doing you do not in the least mitigate the evil, and you dismiss the one power which can overcome it. The more intensely we feel the sorrow and sin of the world the more earnestly and consistently will we avail ourselves of the one remedy. The more painfully we recognize the darkness, the more diligently we shall abide in the traversing ray of light.”

ROBERT F. HORTON, “*My Belief.*”



## WHY DO WE SUFFER?

*So I fed the flock of slaughter, verily the poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock. Zechariah 11:7.*

There are many synonyms for sorrow. "Present tribulations" are as varied and as limitless as the leaves in Vallambrosa. Adam is driven from the Paradise of God; the Hebrew is making strawless bricks on the banks of the reeking Nile; the Greek is buried in the silver mines of Crete; the Roman is an exile in barbarian Gaul; the Russian perishes in Siberia's snows; the Indian crawls weary miles across the plains of India to reach the sacred Ganges; the leper cries "unclean, unclean"; the son of Israel weeps by the river of Babylon when he remembers Zion.

Yes, the world is full of sorrows. The great mystery that confronts us all is the mystery of suffering.

In the face of a world that "groans and travails in its pain," what shall the heart of man believe? When, out of the depths he lifts his face and cries, "O, God, why my pain?" what answer has heaven to offer? Is the difficulty insoluble, the mystery impenetrable? Apparently so. For after ages of experience, the race is still facing it.

Shall we then conclude with Heine, that life is "an age-long riddle only fools expect to solve;" and that in this wild remorseless battlefield of life

we are doomed never to know the meaning of our tears?

Three answers have come to us from the philosophy of men.

One is the answer of Infidelity. The infidel has an easy task. He simply gathers together the vast accumulation of human woes, and says to men: "Is this then a world framed by a good and beneficent Being? Why, the lowest of men would not inflict on a dog, the tortures that God inflicts on men. If he exists at all, he is either a fiend or a fool, who has created forces to torture men, which he cannot or will not control. Nature's fires burn man, her snows chill him, her acids burn him, her steam scalds him, her famines starve him, her forces destroy him, and the revolving earth is like a wheel to which he is bound, whose revolutions tear limb from limb." This is the philosophy of Pessimism—of Infidelity. This world is the worst possible world. There is no Eye to see our sufferings, there is no Ear to hear our cry, no Heart to pity and no Arm to save.

“. . . All is black.

In heaven no single star, on earth no track;  
A brooding hush, without a stir or note,  
The air so thick it clots within the throat.  
And we stride on, austere,  
No hope can have no fear."

A second solution is the answer of the Sentimental Idealist. This is the best possible world. There is no such thing as pain. Our senses deceive us.

Have consumption or the fever worn and racked our bodies? It is a "delusion of mortal mind." To the business man standing beside the ashes of his fortune its voice is, "This heap of ruins is not real, you are suffering from 'deluded imagination.'" To the shivering wage slave of the tenement it says, "This hovel is a palace. 'Be thou warmed and fed!'" To Byron and Mrs. Browning, and the thousands who suffer constant pain; to the martyrs who die for truth; to the blind, the lepers and the outcasts, it says: "Your life is a delusion. You do not suffer. Close your eyes, bury your head in the sand like the ostrich; 'think beautiful thoughts;' put on 'immortal mind,' and you will be done with trouble. Let 'Divine Science' show you that suffering is not real, and that pain is a delusion."

There is a third way of looking at life and its troubles, that is not the philosophy of gloomy Nescience, nor yet of sickly "Divine Science." It is the philosophy of "Divine Sense."

It fully believes that this is a *good world*. It recognizes that there are pain and sorrow here, but the good far outweighs the evil. Pain is the only drawback in a life that is full of pleasure. The vast majority of human beings are not at any given time in pain. A man laughs a thousand times where he cries once. The organs of his body and the laws of nature contribute a thousand-fold more to his pleasure than to his pain. Even his troubles themselves, he finds often to be

'Angels of Joy. This is not the best possible world, nor yet the worst. It is a *good* world.

There is hope in this philosophy. Fools say there is no good. Weak men say there is no evil. The strong and the wise declare: "There is great good here, and much of evil, and I am determined by God's help to turn the troubles of life into blessings."

Let us rid ourselves once for all of the idea that our sorrows are the curse of a vindictive God. Our pains are not of His creation, and our calamities are not the stroke of an avenging hand. When San Francisco lay in ruins, I heard men say, "This is the judgment of God on a wicked city." Did they forget that the temples of God Himself fell in a common ruin with the dens of iniquity? I heard the same words, when a beautiful child whose father was not a Christian, passed into another room in her Heavenly Father's house. What a slander this has been upon God! It makes Him not a Father but a Fiend. God punishes sin, but life's sorrows are not the arbitrary smitings of a vindictive arm. God is not the author of evil, but He is the author of evil's consequences.

We must realize, too, that many of our sorrows find their source in ourselves. Our sicknesses are born in some violation of the beneficent laws of health. Our environment, which we blame so largely for the woes of life, is man's creation and our own choosing. Our inherited tendencies, "the shackles of the past," are chains our fathers have

forged upon us—chains which we are forging upon generations to follow. As a nation we are suffering from the curse of the vicious negro, and yet I have heard men cast the blame for that back on God!

What then is God's relation to earth's sufferings? If we believe in God at all we believe that He is the Creator of the cosmic order. The laws of nature and of spirit, we are accustomed to say, are an expression of the goodness of God. Who would want to live in universal anarchy, when he might have Law behind him? Who would want to live under laws that had no penalty? The purpose of law's penalties is not vindication; it is protection. Wherefore there is pain to tell us that the fire burns.

And God has made us grandly free. He might have made us puppets and worked us with a string. But there would have been no manhood in that, no dignity and honor. God permits our sorrows, and permits us to choose the path that leads to them, because we are men. He does not coerce with stern decree and adamant will. He shows the path of happiness, and bids us choose. "The possibility of evil is the price God paid for human Freedom."

Zechariah pictures Him as a loving shepherd, caring for his flock. In his hand is the staff of Beauty, the slender crook of comfort. God has made all things beautiful, and with life's beautiful things, he "feeds the flock." But he bears also the staff of Band, and with this he feeds the flock.

The other day I went out into the garden to plant some autumn bulbs; some the simple little flowers of nature, others the highly cultivated plants of the hot house. At the heart of each, was the tiny germ of the springtime blossom. But over each are the whorls that enclose it. And as they rise higher, I discover that the whorls are wrapped the tighter. As beauty grows, the bands increase. The more complex the blossom, the tighter is it wrapped, the harder struggle does it have to open in the sunlight. Its beauty and its bands both belong to the realm of its highest life. And God who folds the flowers in their encircling bands, stoops to reason with us and make clear the meaning of our tears. He shows us the tie that links the folding whorls of autumn's bulb with the blooming hyacinth of spring. As no poet could, he reveals "the sweet uses of adversity," and with sorrow, pain and trouble, he links achievement, happiness, perfection.

Out of our sorrows there is developed the *Upward Look*. We are reminded that we are strangers and pilgrims here, the citizens of an eternal city. Sometimes we forget, in our earthly clinging, our higher citizenship. Sorrow comes. Out of it new life is born.

Such is the parable of the eagle's nest. "As the eagle stirreth up her nest, and fluttereth over her young, and spreadeth abroad her wings, and beareth them on her wings."

In a rocky cliff an eagle has built her nest. The

time has come for the eaglets to fly, but they will not. Their downy nest is so soft! The mother's shrill calls are all in vain. At last the nest itself is loosed from the ledge and the young birds must either fly or fall. Then it is that the mother bird darts beneath their tired wings, bearing them on her strong pinions, till they have strength to fly again.

Thus are we. Wealth and fortune have builded us a downy nest. God sounds His call to higher things. But the nest is so soft and cosy! And we do not hear His call. Then the nest itself falls, and we are compelled to soar away from "earth's sordid toys to reach immortal joys." When the world has lost some of its charm, we begin to sing

"Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings. Thy better  
portion trace.

Rise from transitory things, toward heaven, thy native place."

Out of our sorrows is developed also the *Upward Reach*. Through sorrow we test the promises of God. The Bible is a Book of Promises. Sorrow forces us to prove them real. "We cry unto the Lord in our trouble and He bringeth us out of our distresses."

You sit in a railway train, and at the further end of the car is the glass case, containing axe and sledge and saw. You read, "In case of accident break the glass." But you never know the worth of yonder tools until, a prisoner beneath the

wreck, you hear the stroke of axe and the hum of saw above you. We never know what it is to lean on God and to trust Him, till adversity has called us to test His promises. We never know the fullness of the Shepherd's care until, in the far thicket on the mountain side we hear his rescuing footsteps and feel his protecting arms. When the storm breaks, we seek the shelter; in the noonday's weariness "the shadow of the great rock."

Out of our sorrow there is developed also the *Upward Life*.

Adversity is the stimulus of character, the builder of manhood, the maker of heroes. "Night brings out the stars."

"Affliction is the good man's shining scene,  
Prosperity conceals his brightest ray.  
As night to stars; woe lustre gives to man."

"The blood of martyrs is the seed of the church."  
Aye, it is the seed of everything that is highest and best. If you were to ask me where I thought liberty was forever safe, I would take you to America or to Switzerland, where liberty has cost men dear. If you were to ask where patriotism rises to its highest, I would name Holland. Here a people has lived for centuries with the sea crowding them on one side, and the armies of the oppressor on the other. Every inch of country has cost her dear. For generations she has stood literally "between the devil and the deep sea." If you would have me name the greatest artist, he of grandest themes



and noblest touch, I would name Michael Angelo, persecuted and oppressed.

And if you would have me show you the sweetest and gentlest characters of history, behold the dying Socrates; Saul of Tarsus, "now become Paul;" Dante, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the two sufferers of Florence; David Livingstone, and Abraham Lincoln. And better still "the Man of Sorrows" himself, "made perfect through suffering."

The highest beauty is beauty of character, and the chiselling of pain completes it. There is no chance in our affliction, nor any stern decree. Grapes are sometimes crushed that the wine of life may flow. Ore is cast in the refiner's pot that the silver may gleam. The promise to man as he turned his back on Eden was, "Thou shalt crush the serpent's head, but he shall bruise thy heel." **VICTORY!** But "victory, through bruising."

One tells us of a fabled island, "whose shores are washed by silver and turquoise seas, whose air is filled with the fragrance of blooming flowers, and with the music of the winds and song birds; but the island is uninhabited. It has no harbor. High sand cliffs or dangerous rocks girt it round and make impossible the landing of a vessel. One day a great tidal wave rolls in from the outer sea, and a mighty earthquake shakes the island from centre to circumference. The cliffs of sand crumble and a great gash is cut in the island's side, into which the waters rush and form a bay that calls to the

open sea. Then great ships come and anchor there. A populous city rises. The storm has given the island a harbor. The name of the island is 'Heart' and the name of the storm is 'Sorrow.' "

Thus doth sorrow prepare the heart for larger and more glorious life.

"Blest be the sorrow, kind the storm  
That drives us one day nearer home."

Why then should any child of God give way before the sorrows of life? There is offered him not the grim despair of pessimism nor yet the sickly sentiment of a blind optimism, but the sane, sober, cheering hopes of the Religion of Jesus. Catching the spirit of suffering and persecuted Paul, he may cry, "We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience Godliness, and Godliness hope—a hope that needeth not to be ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts." This is the manly, heroic way to look at suffering. It is the attitude of life that prepares one for the company of martyrs, apostles, patriots, heroes; yea even for the "Crown of Manhood," Jesus Christ.

There is an old poem of Theocritus I like. A traveller wandering on a desolate coast comes upon a grave in the sand with a slab above on which is written:

"A shipwrecked sailor buried on this coast  
Bids *you* set sail.  
Many a gallant ship the day that we were lost  
Weathered the gale."

Yes, but how are we going to "weather the gale," unless we rise grandly to meet its surging tide?

"Tossed on the sea of troubles,  
Soul, my soul,  
Thyself do thou control,  
And to the weapons of advancing foes  
A stubborn breast oppose;  
Undaunted by the hostile might  
Of squadrons, burning for the fight.

Thine be no boasting when the victor's crown  
Wins thee deserved renown;  
Thine no dejected sorrow when defeat  
Would urge a base retreat.  
Rejoice in joyous things, nor overmuch  
Let grief thy bosom touch  
'Midst evil, and still bear in mind  
How changeful are the ways of humankind."  
ARCHILOCHUS, "*To His Soul.*"



V

WHAT SHALL I THINK ABOUT THE  
BIBLE?

“God has revealed Himself (to man) especially in His redemptive energy. We see most of God and of all that is essential to His character and purposes in His approaches to man and education of man in order to restore him to Himself, and to free him absolutely from all evil. In the Bible we have the written history of this approach to man, the record of His revelation of His gracious and saving purposes and work. To think of it as a convenient collection or summary of doctrines, a text book in theological knowledge, is entirely to misconceive it. . . . God has revealed Himself, and the leading facts of this revelation are recorded for us in the Bible, and from these facts we can gather what God wishes us to know about Him, and as He wishes us to think of Him. But the Bible must not be thought of as, ‘a collection of truths formulated in propositions, which God from time to time whispered in the ear, to be communicated to the world as the unchanging formulas of thought and life for all time.’”

MARCUS DODS, *“The Bible, Its Origin and Nature.”*

“ Last eve I paused beside a blacksmith’s door  
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;  
Then looking in, I saw upon the floor  
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

‘How many anvils have you had,’ said I,  
‘To wear and batter all these hammers so?’  
‘Just one,’ said he; and then, with twinkling eye,  
‘The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.’

And so, thought I, the anvil of God’s word  
For ages sceptic blows have beat upon;  
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,  
The anvil is unharmed—the hammers gone.”

## WHAT SHALL I THINK ABOUT THE BIBLE?

In the recent dramatization of the "Prince of India," there is one scene where the Wandering Jew stands before a table on which lie some rolls of parchment. One by one he takes them up: "The Brahmanas of the Indian," "The Maxims of Confucius," "The Ethics of Aristotle," "The Scriptures of Buddah," "The Torah of the Jews," and "The Bible of the Christian." The impression conveyed to the hearer is that there is little to choose among all these sacred writings; that the Bible of the Christian is simply one among the sacred books.

This scene is expressive of a feeling that is prevalent that the Bible is no better than any other book; that the Christian is mistaken when he accepts it as "an authoritative rule of faith and practice," that there are hundreds of other sacred books whose precepts are just as binding and whose teachings are just as high as those of the Bible itself. To correct this impression one has only to wade through those dreary volumes which Max Muller has translated for us in "The Sacred Scriptures of The East"—books which can now be found on the shelves of almost any public library. There are some good things discoverable in them, it is true, but in the main they are worthless and deserve to be studied as the translator himself says,

“as a physician studies the ravings of a madman or the twaddle of an idiot.”

Meanwhile the pages of the Bible are being pored over as never before. Robert Ingersoll said twenty-five years ago, “In ten years the Bible will not be read.” In 1909 ten million copies were printed in the English language, and it had been printed in over four hundred tongues. More copies of it were sold than any hundred other books combined. As the years come and go it plays an ever-increasing part in the history of the race.

What shall we think about this Book? There are still many who think with Voltaire that the Bible is an “exploded book.” There are others, good Christians, who are disturbed as they see the old conceptions vanishing and new ones taking their place. They are afraid for what the higher critics have done; they imagine that the foundations have all been swept away, and that the Bible

“Precious book divine,  
By inspiration given.”

is no longer a book to be believed, and trusted as the word of God.

Both these attitudes are born of misconceptions as to this book. These misconceptions are four in number. A misconception as to what the Bible is; a misconception as to how we got it; a misconception as to why we believe it; a misconception as to what belief in it involves. To answer these mis-



conceptions is to solve the problem of the Bible. There is no better method than reverently to approach the book itself.

Opening its pages with no preconceived theories, unfettered by any creed or dogma, let us ask ourselves four questions that we may set over against the four misconceptions enumerated.

Here is this Bible of ours: "What is it?", "How did we get it?", "Why do we believe it?", "What of it?"

1. What is it?

We call it a Book. Indeed that is the taunt that Prince Muhammed flung at the Christians when he called them "the people of the book." But the first thing that we discover is that this is not one book but many. The name BIBLE is itself plural, and means "the books." As we examine these books, sixty-six in all, we discover that they cover a wide range of human history. They begin way back in the mists of prehistoric days, and end somewhere near the dawn of the second century A. D. Their authors were a varied set of men, extending all the way from kings on their thrones down to ignorant Galilean fishermen. The subjects they treat are as varied as the leaves of the forest. The forms in which they write include almost every known kind of literature—poetry, drama, history, epistle, laws, oratory, traditions, biography and a dozen others. Here they are, all bound together—the Bible.

As we read it we discover, first of all, that it is

not a book of science. The men who wrote it were ignorant of science. Physiology, geology, astronomy, biology, psychology, were all unknown to them. They lived in a very narrow world. They believed the earth to be flat, and the heavens above it an inverted bowl, which rested at the horizon on foundations. The stars were balls of light fastened to this inverted bowl, and the sun and moon, larger balls that were hung down from its dome. When it rained, they said that God who lived way up at the top of this bowl, had opened windows in it to let water pass through. Down underneath the flat earth was a vast pit where the rivers and oceans found their source and where the spirits of the departed dwelt.

They thought that God had made the earth in six days of twenty-four hours: that woman was made out of the rib of a man. They thought that the heart was the seat of the intellect, and the kidneys the organs of affection. They were utterly ignorant of science. They did not aim nor claim to teach it. We must rid ourselves once for all of the idea that the Bible teaches correct science. It nowhere claims to be a scientific book.

Nor is it a book of history. It contains history. But the teaching of history is evidently not its primary aim. If it were, it would not pass over so lightly whole centuries of the most absorbing periods of human life. A great many are perplexed because of historical errors in the Bible. There are a few. Macauley is considered the best

English historian, and his avowed purpose is the writing of history. But only recently an English writer has shown us one hundred and twenty-seven mistakes in his great work. Not nearly that many have been shown in the Bible. If Matthew tells us that Pharisees asked Jesus, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" and Luke tells us that it was Jesus himself that asked the question, evidently one or the other made a mistake. Only a trifler will concern himself with such a trivial thing as this.

The Bible is not a book of morals. It teaches the highest morality. But that is not its end and aim. There is considerable moral teaching in the old Testament that is utterly wrong. It is the morality of a race struggling in the darkness after virtues that were far beyond them. Jesus himself set aside a great deal of the moral teaching of the Old Testament. How frequently he said, "Ye have heard it is written,—but I say unto you." We shall fail utterly if we contend for the entire Bible as a teacher of morals.

Then we must remember that a great deal that we have been accustomed to call "God's Word," in the Bible is really not a part of the Bible at all. The dates that occur in the margin of our King James version, were put there by an English scholar, Usher by name, who demonstrated to his own satisfaction that the world was created four thousand years before Christ. He was mistaken, but somehow people got to thinking that his reckoning was the word of God.

The titles that appear at the head of the books of the Bible were never on the original copies. The manuscripts of the authors were lost long before the Bible was gotten together. The earliest one we have is from the fourth century after Christ. We read at the head of the epistle to the Hebrews, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews." As a matter of fact there is serious reason for believing that Paul never wrote this epistle. The heading was put there by some monk of the early centuries, who had never given the question a moment's historic study.

At the head of the chapters of the Bible appear brief sketches that aim to interpret the text that follows. These are not parts of the Bible itself. They are traditional interpretations, many of them the work of mystics of the second and third centuries, who believed every letter of the books to have some hidden meaning. The result is that the "Song of Solomon," which is nothing more than a dramatic poem to teach the uplifting power of pure love, is made to contain hundreds of allusions to Christ's relationship with his church. These are not and never were a part of the true Bible.

We must remember, too, that the Bible is full of poetry. And wherever there is poetry, there is bound to be figurative language. A great many things our grandfathers thought was history, is found on closer study to be the figurative language of the poet. Many of the hard things that used to

drive thinking men into skepticism, are discovered after all to be only beautiful poetry. No wonder men staggered away from faith when they were threatened with death as Galileo was, because he declared that the earth moved and the sun stood still, in direct contradiction to the word of Joshua, where he bids the sun cease from moving in the heavens! We have learned the difference now between poetry and history.

What then is this Bible? Briefly this: The Bible is a religious book given us by God wherein He reveals Himself in a unique way, in connection with our salvation from sin through Jesus Christ. The Bible's purpose is to teach men the way of salvation. It is the Christ in it that makes it unique. Toward him, all before his birth is progressing, and back to him goes all that follows. The Bible is a religious book—religious only. It concerns itself with one problem only—getting the heart of man at one with God. If it teaches theology or history or morality, it is only to prepare men for the fullness of time when the world's Messiah should come to show them the way of life, and himself become the instrument of atonement, making man AT ONE with God.

It cannot be too often repeated. The Bible is a religious book, and religious only. That which marks it from all other books, is that it contains a Revelation of God as a Saviour of Manhood from its sins, through a divine Redeemer, Jesus Christ. The Bible is THE WORD OF GOD. The

Father revealed Himself in a special way for our redemption, and the Bible is the record of that revelation. This is its heart, its life. And anyone who makes the Bible anything else, is neglecting the body for the clothes it wears.

II. Well, how did we get it?

I talked with a young Mormon missionary the other day and he told me the old story of the book of Mormon. "It was written," said he, "on golden plates and let down from heaven. With them were some supernatural spectacles which should aid in their interpretation. Finally the angel led Joseph Smith to the spot where they were buried, and he with the aid of the spectacles was able to decipher them and translate them into the English language."

I marveled at his credulity! And yet it was not so very long ago that the Christian church accepted a doctrine for its Bible very like that! It was easy to close one's eyes and believe a ready made Bible, let down from Heaven. It was easy to say over every difficulty that arose, "Thus saith the Lord." A ready made Bible furnished one with a fine arsenal of weapons for theological debate. It was easy to crush an antagonist with a divine fiat. When one lost himself in the mazes of perplexity, it was grand to have the Bible come down like a *deus ex machina* of the Greek tragedies, and set things all to rights. The Bible was a fetish.

One has only to read the Book to realize that

we did not get it in that way. The men who wrote it were more than fifteen hundred years at their task. They were human beings, and they wrote with human fingers. Few of them had any idea that their work was to last, and become universal. Little did Moses dream when he came down from Sinai with the tables of stone, that he held in his hand the germ of universal law. Little did Paul imagine, when he took advantage of a chance messenger going to Rome, to send greetings to some of his friends there, that what he wrote would become a part of immortal story.

Out of the deepest experiences of their hearts men wrote these books. Now in deepest penitence it is a sinful King pouring out his anguish; now it is the scribe of an ancient kingdom setting down the annals of a reign; now it is a prophet on fire with a message of condemnation and deliverance; now it is a friend writing to a friend; now it is a patriarch way back in the dawn of history setting down on tablets of clay traditions that have been handed down from father to son, no one knows how many thousand years; now it is a loving disciple writing down the record of His Lord's life and sayings, that a young friend of his and his companions may "believe also."

Then slowly through the centuries these books were gotten together. Men found that they had a message of life. As they proved themselves of help to men in their search for the way of Life, they began to copy them and scatter them abroad.

One was picked up here and another there, haphazard. At times some were made a part of the Book and were later rejected, because they did not contribute to the one thing for which men were seeking—a way of salvation from sin into the life of God.

Finally an organization known as the church arose, and it took upon itself the task of gathering these sacred writings. Naturally enough there were many forgeries and false writings. In selecting the genuine, the church was guided by definite principles, chief among which was “is this book directly concerned with salvation through Christ and true to the established facts of his life and teaching?” Thus it came to pass that after many years, certain books were given an authority above all others, the Word of God.

And in all this copying and selecting process, the hand of God was at work also, sifting the chaff from the wheat. The hand of God is just as really evident in the work of deciphering manuscripts as in the heart of the first writer himself.

The Books we call the Bible, do not hold their place in its canon, because the church has said they are the Word of God. But they hold their place there, and are the Word of God, because they bring to humanity new life, new power, new hope, and vindicate themselves as such in the experience of those who put them to the test.

This then is how we got our Bible! “Holy men of old wrote as they were moved by the Holy



Spirit." Men saw the value of what they wrote, and preserved their words. Slowly through the years the collection grew. Then those writings which seemed in accord with God's general revelation, and were in special accord with his revelation of himself as a Saviour, in Jesus Christ, were eliminated from the rest, because they seemed the highest and fitted best the needs of men in their desire for salvation from sin.

The purpose of their writing and the test of their acceptance are summed up in one word—Christ. "We do not accept Christ, because the Bible tells us of him, but we accept the Bible, because it testifies of a Christ we feel constrained to accept." In short it is the truth the Bible contains that makes it the Word of God, it is not our belief that it is the Word of God that makes its contents true.

III. This brings us to the third question, Why do we believe it?

We are accustomed to say we believe it because it is true. How do we know that? Is the Bible after all authoritative? If so, what makes it an "infallible rule of faith and practice?" "It is the truth," says someone. Yes, but what guarantee have we that it is the truth? "It is *inspired*." "Inspiration guarantees infallibility." What do we mean by inspiration? The word the Bible itself uses means "God-breathed." What is it for a writing to be God-breathed?

There are some who think it means that God

came, and put His stylus into the unknowing fingers of the writer, took away his mind and will, and Himself guided the fingers of man across the pages. The result was, that what man wrote was not his own, but actually the work of God. Every letter then, every curve, and mark was verily God's own. What was written was inerrant to the smallest jot and title. God simply dictated the work. Human will and judgment were suppressed. There cannot, therefore, be the slightest infusion of error.

I search in vain through the Bible itself for some support for this mechanical theory. There is none. I look through the history of the church and I discover that this is the secret of that long, sad conflict between the world of scholarship and religion. I see what strifes and persecutions it has engendered, how it has turned men from Christ, and furnished the scoffer with an arsenal of weapons, to hurl against the religion of Jesus.

There is no warrant anywhere for such a view. A careful study of the Bible itself will show us the error of this conception. "God-breathed," says the Book. And God is a Spirit. Impregnated with the Spirit of God—this is what inspiration means. It means that this whole book and the men that wrote it were so redolent with the Spirit of God, that what they wrote will actually accomplish "that whereto He sent it,"—the redemption of humanity.

Inspired—yes, and inspiring. Lifting man from his lowest depths of sin and sorrow up into the life

of God. This is the purpose for which the Bible was given. As such it is infallible. It does not fail. That is what infallible means—"not failing." It does not mean inerrant,—without the slightest mixture of human imperfection. "Infallible as a rule of faith and practice." Not inerrant history and science! But, not failing of God's intended purpose, to give men a saving rule of conduct and life.

When we say the Bible is inspired we mean this: That in its writing the presence of the Holy Spirit is more apparent than anywhere else, for here He was preparing for the greatest act of His love—the salvation of a race. The presence of this Spirit of God in their lives enabled the writers of the Bible to see God's saving truth more clearly than their fellows. They wrote it down knowing that it was God's truth, and authoritative as a rule of life and the key to God's salvation.

When we say the inspired word is infallible, we mean that this inspiration secures for the Bible the accomplishing of the purpose for which God intended it. "My word shall not return unto me void." Void means failing of its intended purpose. The avowed purpose of God in the Bible is to lead men back to Him through the Messiah—Jesus Christ. It has no other purpose. In this purpose it *does not fail*. It is infallible. Use it to teach history, or science, and it *does fail*. It is not infallible.

The Bible is the inspired, infallible word of God

—a religious book destined to lead men into the life of God.

IV. What then are we going to do about it?

The wise man will put it to its intended use. He will search its pages reverently for the way of life. He will find enshrined in it the richest jewel in the diadem of God's love—the Saviour. He will learn of him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. He will learn, it is true, of the awfulness of humanity's sin, but this will only serve to set forth in clearer lines the grandeur of God's glad salvation. As he ponders more and more upon its pages, as the truths it reveals become more and more a part of his being, he will find himself growing gradually into a higher and better life. He will become "a new creature."

The Bible is the food of the soul. It is that Divine manna upon which, the spirit feeding, is builded into the ruddy health of a true child of God. We are living in a robust age. Lives must be grandly moulded to meet the great issues of the hour. Life must be full of bounding heartiness, it must be firm in enduring stability, it must be boldly aggressive. There must be also an infinite capacity for patience, a mighty power of reserve force, and withal a willingness to fling the life unreservedly to the service of the great causes that confront humanity. And these are the qualities of character the Bible is fitted, as no other force is fitted, to root and develop in the soul.

The Bible is a great Book; the "Imperial

Book," one has called it. We are just beginning to understand what a wonderful Book it is. It used to be a narrow thing; full of dogmas and stern decrees. It is now a living, breathing book, filled with the grand, transcendent messages of God.

So long as we keep it within its intended sphere, we need have no fear that any scientist or archeologist or biologist can ever rob us of its precious truth. It is a book both human and divine. The warm blood of human hearts is in it. The divine love of the Father for His lost child, burns in its pages an undying flame. Through it all the golden letters of a redeeming God are written.

What does it matter if the scientist can show us that its scientific teachings are all wrong; what matters it that the historian can show us some historic errors; what care we if the literary critic shows us that some of the things in it we have long thought were history, are poetry, or perhaps myths! These can never take away the one mighty truth for which the Book was given, that it is possible for men once more to enter the life of God, and that Christ died for us men and our salvation.

The world has many voices to tell it of God. Nature reveals Him as the Creator and Designer of all. The universe tells His infinity and His mighty power. The cup of the violet tells of His matchless beauty. The life of man reveals His wondrous Personality.

We may find God in many ways. But until we have found Him as a Father and a Saviour we have failed utterly to know Him as He is. This the Bible and the Bible alone, reveals Him to be.

“The Heavens declare Thy glory, Lord,  
From every star Thy wisdom shines,  
But when our eyes behold Thy Word  
We read Thy name in fairer lines.

The rolling sun, the changing light,  
And night and days Thy power express.  
But the blest volume Thou hast writ  
Reveals Thy justice and Thy grace.

The noblest wonders here we view  
Of souls renewed and sins forgiven.  
Lord, cleanse my sins, my soul renew,  
And make thy Word my guide to heaven.”

VI

IS PRAYER A RATIONAL OCCUPATION ?

“We hear in these days of scientific enlightenment, a great deal of discussion about the efficacy of prayer; and many reasons are given us why we should not pray, whilst others are given us why we should. But in all this very little is said of the reason why we *do* pray, which is simply that we cannot help praying. It seems probable that, in spite of all that ‘science’ may do to the contrary, men will continue to pray to the end of time. . . .”

WILLIAM JAMES, “*Psychology*.”

“Lord, I know not what I should ask of Thee. Thou only knowest what I want, and Thou lovest me, if I am Thy friend, more than I can love myself. O Lord give to me, thy child, what is proper, whatsoever it be. I dare not ask either crosses or comforts, I only present myself before Thee. I open my heart to Thee. Behold my wants, of which I am ignorant, but do Thou behold and do according to Thy mercy. Smite or heal, depress or raise me up. I adore Thy purposes without knowing them. I am silent. I offer myself in sacrifice. I abandon myself to Thee. I have no desire but to accomplish Thy will. Lord, teach me to pray. I beseech Thee, dwell Thou Thyself in me by Thy Holy Spirit. Amen.”

*A prayer of Fenelon, Archbishop of Cambrai.*

“Yes, pray for whom thou lovest; if uncounted wealth were thine,  
The treasures of the boundless deep, the riches of the mine  
Thou couldst not to thy cherished friends a gift so dear impart,  
As the earnest benediction of a deeply prayerful heart.”



## IS PRAYER A RATIONAL OCCUPATION?

*The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working.* James 5:16 (R. V.)

A Christian has been defined as an "enthusiast." When we think of some Christians we know, this at first seems a poor definition. But study it closely. ENTHUSIAST—one of the grandest words in any language. It comes from a Greek word that is made up of two others. One of them means "in" and the other means "God." An enthusiast is one who has *God in him*. Grand definition of a Christian! The essence of Christianity is just this: Enthusiasm, *God in us*. "In Him we live and move and have our being." "Abide in me and I in you." "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that His Spirit dwelleth in you?" "Hereby we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit."

Yes, the Bible abounds in the idea that the Christian is an enthusiast. That it is the indwelling presence of God that makes him what he is. Let us insist on this. Christianity is not a creed nor an emotion, a feeling nor a ritual. It is God abiding in the soul.

It is a false teaching that has magnified the transcendence of God, until it pictures Him seated on a throne in the highest heavens, an absentee King. God *does* sit on His throne of glory at the centre of His Kingdom. But His throne is the

human heart. "The Kingdom of God is within you," said Jesus. This is not Pantheism. *We* are not gods. The Spirit of God does not *identify* Himself with our spirits. He *dwelleth* in us, the Divine Companion and Fellow Worker. He transcends us, it is true; but he transcends as does the sunlight, entering every corner of the darkened room, driving away its shadows, purifying its damp and musty air, imparting new life, new strength.

Now, it is impossible that God should thus dwell in the life, and His presence there, go unexpressed in the world without. "Out of the heart are the issues of life." I heard the president of my college say once, that if one should take a lance and open his heart he would find the college there. One did not need thus to do, to determine what his pre-eminent temporal interest was. His whole life was an outward expression of the inner passion of his heart.

It is thus also in the *deepest* interests of the soul. A "God intoxicated man" dwells in no walled city. No chambered crustacean is he, living in a shell. The outward expression of the Deity that dwells within him is inevitable.

"So *must* our lips and lives *express*  
The holy gospel we profess,  
So *must* our works and virtues *shine*  
To prove the doctrine all divine."

In his famous book, "Quiet Talks on Prayer," Dr. Gordon tells us there are five outlets by which

the God in us is destined to make His presence known.

First, through the life—what we are. The spirit we carry, the character we possess, and even the look upon our faces, will tell men of the Presence within.

Secondly, through our lips—what we say. It may be said stammeringly and falteringly, but a heart burning with the Divine Flame, like Peter and John, “cannot but speak the things which it has seen and heard.”

Thirdly, through our service—what we do. It may be done blunderingly, but as with Jesus in whom “The fullness of God dwelt” we “must do the works of Him that sent us.”

Fourthly, through our property—what we possess. The way a man uses his money is one of the surest ways of telling what is the chief interest of his heart. A God-filled man means a God-emptied purse.

Lastly, through our prayers. One cannot have God dwelling in his heart and not commune with Him. Friends will not stay in our home long if we ignore their presence there. When a man ceases to pray he exiles God from his heart.

And prayer is the greatest outlet of them all. Time and circumstance put no limit on prayer. It opens the whole universe to the power of a man’s personality and enlarges his opportunity to the limits of the planet.

What is prayer? It is not a formula, nor a

liturgy. It is the soul of man reaching out after God.

“Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire  
Uttered or unexpressed,  
The motion of a hidden fire  
That trembles in the breast.”

Prayer is an instinct, that bids man in his need, seek the companionship of the Immanent Presence. The soul feels a longing. It cannot explain that longing. Instinct bids it seek God, and seeking, it finds.

The essence of prayer is communion, not petition. Prayer is not trying to wrest something from an unwilling God, who is “more ready to give good gifts,” than His children are to ask. It is communion. Something is always saying to the heart of man :

“Speak to Him, for He heareth,  
And spirit with spirit can meet.  
Closer is He than breathing,  
Nearer than hands and feet.”

Prayer is opening up the flood gates of the soul, that God may flow in and through them all. “Prayer is digging channels, through which the Infinite may flow to water the deserts of life.” Prayer is an attitude, that puts one into contact with God. It is a psychological act on the part of man whereby he enters into conscious contact with the Deity.

“Say, what is prayer, when it is prayer indeed,  
The mighty utterance of a mighty need?  
The man is praying who doth press with might  
Out of his darkness into God’s own light.”

When a man ceases to pray the contact is broken. Therefore, “we ought always to pray and not faint.” When they were laying the Atlantic cable it snapped one day in mid ocean. The broken end sank to the bottom of the sea. Now those on shore, who had been receiving messages across the wire, heard them no more. In their place was a continuous jargon of rappings picked up from the earth currents where the broken end touched the bottom. At last one day they noticed a change, and they listened. Slowly the needle spelled out the words “Got it.” And then they knew that human intelligence way out there in mid ocean had once more taken hold of the broken end.

Such is the experience of the man who does not pray. He had broken contact with Intelligence, and only vague and wandering messages can fill his soul. Let him begin again, and he is once more “in tune with the Infinite.”

But though the essence of prayer is communion, there is no denying that petition—asking God for things—is a large part of it. And rightly so. “Ask and ye shall receive.” “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that will I do.” The Lord’s prayer is full of petition, and asking for things in the name of Jesus is a part of every true prayer. “In the

name of Jesus"—that is the key to the petitioning prayer. "Thy will be done,"—such is the spirit of successful prayer. There is really but one true petition, "Thy will be done."

"I find it impossible to say that," a mother said, "for I am afraid God will do His will." "Suppose," said a friend, "your little Charlie should come running to you and say, 'Mother I have made up my mind to let you have your own way with me from now on. I am always going to obey you, and I want you to do just what you think best with me. I will trust your love.' How would you feel toward him? Would you say to yourself, 'Now, I have a chance to make Charlie miserable. I will take away all his pleasures, and fill his life with every hard thing I can find.'"

"No, no, no," exclaimed the mother; "I would just hug him to my heart and cover his face with kisses, and would hasten to fill his life with all that is sweetest and best." "Are you, then, more tender and loving than God?" And the mother understood.

The world is full of answers to true prayer. Most mysterious are its wonders. Its reality is a tested truth.

I have heard of a lawyer sent down into the slums to evict some delinquent tenants, but he returns to his client, his mission unperformed. He tells him the reason why. "I found the house and knocked, but nobody heard me. I stepped into the hall, and through the door I saw propped up on

the pillows of her bed, an aged woman. I was about to knock again, when I heard her say, 'Come, father, now begin. I am ready.' Then I saw an old, white haired man kneeling by her bedside. I heard him pray. First, he reminded God that they were still His submissive children, and whatever He saw fit to bring them, they would accept. It would be hard for them to be homeless in their old age, and would have been different if the boys had lived. Then he quoted the promises that assure the safety of those that put their trust in Him. Last of all he prayed God's blessing on those who were demanding justice. Then a thin, white hand stole out from the coverlet and moved softly through his snowy hair."

"I would rather go to the poorhouse tonight myself than stain my heart and hands with such persecution as that."

"I wish," said the client, "that you had not told me this."

"Why so?"

"Well, because I need the money that house will bring. Another time I would not listen to petitions not intended for my ears."

"My dear fellow, you are wrong. That prayer was intended for my ears and yours, too. God Almighty meant it so. My mother used to pray like that."

"And so did mine. You can call in the morning and tell mother and him that the claim has been met."

Ah, but someone says, that story savors too much of the old-fashioned days. Well, here is one out of the real red blood of today.

Tad Jones, the Yale quarterback, is making a speech at a banquet that celebrates a victory over Harvard. It has been a brilliant speech. Now he has stopped. But he does not sit down. Slowly he begins again: "It's a funny thing to tell here, fellows, but I want to say that this morning I felt that I did not have strength to go into this game. I went to my room and prayed, and when I came down, I had it. It was the best game of my career."

Yes, God answers prayer. Someway, somehow, the answer comes.

But are all prayers answered? What about those to which no answer has ever come?

Let us frankly admit that some prayers are NOT answered. God will not answer a selfish prayer. There have been times when the wicked have prayed in their extremity, not because of a heart longing to know God, but hoping to bribe God into removing the penalty of their wickedness. There are others who love to pray in the corners of the streets, to be seen of men. They do not go down to their house "justified." There are some who turn weary prayer wheels, calling "O, great adorable Budda," in endless repetition. Others finger beads upon a string, and utter the meaningless jargon of the Rosary, "Hail Mary, Hail Mary." Alas, from such prayers, the soul of man turns away empty. God has not answered.



But what of those thousands of sincere longings of true hearts that have apparently heard no answer? Many a soul has had the courage to say "thy will be done" over some fond desire, and cannot yet see the blessing of God. The longing is apparently denied. *Apparently*, we said. Yes, for many prayers have real answers that are not apparent.

Sometimes the answer is poured out in such abundance that the blessing is not recognized. I know a mother in whose home a beautiful girl, the sunshine of many a life, lay sick. And the mother's prayer was that her child might live, and in her good Christian heart she had the faith to say "thy will be done." The child was taken. God's will *was* done. Out of that experience there has come to many, enlarged life, for which earth is happier, and life itself sweeter and nobler. Now, that mother sees of the travail of her soul and is satisfied. The thing for which she really prayed—eternal blessedness and peace—is hers, and the answer has been poured out in such fullness that human eye cannot measure it.

Sometimes the answer comes in such a different way than we expect, that we do not recognize it. Augustine's mother prayed that her worldly boy might not go to Rome and face the temptations of the city. Notwithstanding her prayers he went. But through that visit he met Ambrose, and was by him led to Christ and became the greatest Christian of his day. In his Confessions he says of his

mother's prayer: "Thou, O my God, didst not give her what she asked *then*, but by refusing that, didst give her what she was *always* asking."

Sometimes the answers are long delayed that the blessing may be all the greater. That was the experience of Hannah. Her prayer was for a son. But alas, the woe of the Hebrew woman was hers. She was barren. Meanwhile her rival is taunting her with her barrenness until we are told "in the bitterness of her soul she wept sore." Long years of agonized praying went on. There was no answer. Then, in her old age a son is born. Now that the answer is given, she can see the purpose of those long years of waiting and suffering, when God had apparently forgotten her. God was in need of a great man. And great men must have great mothers. Wherefore the discipline of the years that gave Samuel to the world.

Yes, God answers prayer. Man's extremity is always His opportunity, and sometimes He waits till then to answer. Before Jerusalem are encamped the hosts of Sennacherib. For days there have been sounded in the ears of good King Hezekiah, the taunts of Gentile insolence. He can hold out no longer. Now he is discovered kneeling in the house of prayer. Before him on the altar is the taunting letter of Sennacherib. His voice is heard: "O, Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubim; thou art God, even thou alone; . . . save us from the hand of Sennacherib, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art God and thou alone."

Then with startling suddenness we are told, "Straightway an angel of the Lord went forth and smote the camp of the Assyrians, and they were troubled and hasted away."

"The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,  
His cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold.  
Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green,  
That host with its banners at sunset is seen.  
Like the leaves of the forest when autumn has blown,  
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown;  
For the angel of God spread his wings on the blast,  
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;  
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,  
Hath melted like snow at the glance of the Lord."

But this is not all. Prayer has also its blessed ministry on the soul of man himself. There is a reflex influence through prayer upon the soul of him who prays and those for whom he prays. "Prayer," says James Lane Allen, "will in time make the human countenance its own divinest altar; years of holy thoughts, like music shut within, will vibrate along the nerves of expression until the lines of the living instrument are drawn into correspondence, and the harmony of visible form matches the unheard harmony of the mind."

Prayer is the secret of the "Christian face." When Moses comes down from Sinai, his face shines with a heavenly gleam. He has been in communion with God. When the Son of Man is transfigured, we are told that "*as he prayed*, the fashion of his countenance was altered and his

raiment white and glistening." When Stephen stands before his persecutors in the sanhedrin, we are told "he lifted up his face, and they that sat in the council saw it, as it had been the face of an angel."

"Lord, what a change within us one short hour  
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make!  
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,  
What parched grounds refresh as with a shower!  
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;  
We rise, and all the distant and the near  
Stands forth, a sunny outline brave and clear,  
We kneel—how weak! We rise—how full of power!  
Why, wherefore should we do ourselves this  
wrong—  
Or others—that we are not always strong,  
That we are ever overborne with care  
That we should ever weak or heartless be,  
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,  
And joy, and strength, and courage are with Thee."

And again, prayer has a blessed ministry in the lives of those for whom we pray. No volume could contain the vast witness to the power of intercessory prayer. Telepathy is no new thing. The wireless telegraph was anticipated thousands of years by those spiritual currents that have been passing through the centuries from soul to soul. We cannot explain it. We believe it for the same reason we believe in this latest wonder of science. We see its effects. Amazing are its wonders. Jesters scoff at it and scientists deny it, but somehow the soul of man believes in it, tries it and finds it true.

“The weary ones had rest, the sad had joy that day;  
They wondered how;  
A plowman singing at his work had prayed  
‘God help them now.’

Away in foreign lands they wondered how  
Their simple word had power;  
At home, some Christians two or three,  
Had met to pray an hour.

Yes, we are always wondering, wondering how,  
Because we do not see  
Someone, unknown perhaps, and far away,  
On bended knee.”

“More things are wrought by prayer than this  
world dreams of.” The world is full of answers  
for him who has eyes to see and ears to hear. The  
soul of man can no more live without prayer than  
breathing creatures can live without air. It is the  
clear, pure ozone of the City of God.

“Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,  
The Christian’s native air,  
His watchword at the gates of death;  
He enters Heaven with prayer.”

Wherefore, Christian, “Watch and Pray.”



VII

CAN I GET BACK TO CHILDHOOD ?

“Grow old along with me  
The best is yet to be;  
The last of life for which the first was made.  
Our lives are in his hand  
Who saith, “The whole I planned  
Youth shows but half.  
Trust God, see all; nor be afraid.”

ROBERT BROWNING, “*Rabbi Ben Ezra.*”

“We cannot put back the clock, and no philosophy can obliterate the difference between seventy and twenty-one. Of each one of us, if we live long enough, the poet’s words will be true: ‘He heard the voice that tells men they are old.’ The march of physical processes is unceasing, and goes on without our consent being asked. The heart is a laborer to whom we pay no wages, with whom we hold no conversation, who gets his orders elsewhere, who elects to work, and at the end to cease to work without any say of ours in the matter. And so of the other organs. When their energies slacken we feel it, but cannot alter the situation. The body ages as a plant or planet ages, by a rhythmic, immutable process. . . . Juvenescence does not necessarily carry with it animal health, strength, or length of days. But it means throughout life a feeling of youth, a glorious exultancy, a growing and spiritual soul.”

J. BRIERLEY, “*Problems of Living.*”



## CAN I GET BACK TO CHILDHOOD?

*Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon Jehovah shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40: 30, 31.*

In the month of February, 1512, a company of Spanish navigators landed on the flowery strand of Florida. They had braved a long and tempestuous voyage across an unknown sea, leaving behind them homes and loved ones in sunny Spain. They were indeed a motley crew. Most of them were well past middle life, and bore the marks of elegant refinement that marks the royal blood of a Spanish grandee. The gay colors of their silken trappings blended harmoniously with the splendor of the flower-laden shore.

Their leader was a man of high standing in the Spanish army. He had accompanied Columbus on his second voyage, and was now leading an expedition of his own to the new-found continent. His name was Ponce de Leon, and his was a daring scheme.

Halting for a few days on the beach, he left his ship in charge of a few sailors, and pushed into the heart of the swamps and everglades of the unknown land. He waded murky and muddy rivers; he penetrated deep glades walled with moss and overhanging shrubbery. Foes of every kind as-

sailed him. Poisonous insects harassed him by night; hissing serpents lay across the path, and alligators grinned from the marshes. The water they drank was alive with typhus and malaria. And worst of all, savage natives opposed their every step.

They died by tens and twenties. The food soon failed; their clothing was torn to shreds. At last, with only a remnant of the proud number that started a few months before, the leader himself sorely wounded with a poisoned arrow, a retreat was started. Only a few reached the ocean. They escaped in a small boat to Cuba. In a Spanish fort on the island was found a record of their fateful trip.

What was this all about? These men were searching for the *Fountain of Immortal Youth*. They were not the first to long for that mystic fountain where the scars of years might be washed away forever. The great lament of life has always been

“Ah, that spring should vanish with the rose,  
That youth’s sweet-scented manuscript should  
close!

The Nightingale that in the branches sang,  
Ah, whence and whither flown again, who knows!”

We want to get back to childhood and keep our youth forever. If men were given two choices of all the dreams they dream, one of them would be for the philosopher’s stone with which to turn iron into gold. The other would be for that fountain

of immortal youth which Ponce de Leon sought in vain in the everglades of Florida.

We want to get back to childhood.

“Backward, flow backward, O tide of the years!  
I am so weary of toil and of tears—  
Toil without recompense, tears all in vain—  
Take them, and give me my childhood again!”

Age has come to be regarded as an evil. It avails nothing that a wise man tells us that a “hoary head is a crown of glory.” What boots it that Cicero and a hundred other philosophers discourse beautifully on the delights of old age? We want to be young. We are “living in an age of young men,” and the dread of the “dead line” and Oslerism are ever before us. In comparison with life’s burdens, responsibilities and sorrows, how happy and free seem those days of long ago. Oh, that we could get back to the old home and roam once more the hills; sit by the fireside again and hear the voices of childhood’s friends.

“How dear to my heart are the scenes of my childhood,  
When fond recollection presents them to view;  
The orchard, the meadow, the deep tangled wild wood,  
And all the loved spots that my infancy knew!”

There is a legend among the fishermen of Brittany that tells of the buried city of Is. With its homes and temples and thronged streets it sank one day into the depths of the sea. The legend

says that the city's life goes on now as it used to, beneath the waves of the sea. Fishermen as they row across the place in fair weather, think sometimes they see the gleaming spires of the city, and fancy they can hear the chiming of the bells and the murmur of the city's life. Some men live like that, in a buried city, where all is submerged save the memory of far off joys they used to know.

“Deep under the waves of our hurried lives  
Lies buried the city of Is so fair,  
And we oft can hear on the still night air  
The bells as they toll with saddest notes  
The dirge of our hopes that are buried there.”

What then are we to do? We cannot get back to the days of childhood, as we used to know them long ago. Too many years of sin and sorrow lie between. Nor should we be happy if we could. Even if some magic potion could again transfer us to the old scenes, the meadows would have lost their charm, the orchard its luscious fruit, the flowers their perfume. The water in “the old oaken bucket” would be brackish and unclean. We are men now, and childish things can delight us no longer, no matter how fair the dream of them may be. What then, shall we do?

We can sit down in despair if we will and determine to make the best of a bad bargain. Or we can steel our hearts against advancing years and become soured cynics. We can fall back on the Fatalism of the Epicureans and “eat, drink and be merry.”

“Ah, my beloved, fill the cup that clears  
To-day of past regrets and future fears,  
To-morrow—why to-morrow I may be  
Myself with yesterday’s seven thousand years.”

But Stoicism and Cynicism and Epicureanism are poor philosophies for the restless heart of man. They do not satisfy his dream of immortal youth. The longing still abides. Must it always be so? When freshness fades, and the grass withers, is there no reviving rain? When the chord of youth is lost, is music gone forever from the soul? When one galaxy of stars sinks behind the horizon of the past, has light departed forever from the heaven of the heart?

No! There is a fountain of immortal youth whose waters never fail. When young men faint and are weary, there is a process of the soul whereby “they shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” There is a fountain of inexhaustible and immortal strength. There is a life that is young forever. No decay is there in its being, no weariness in its effort.

When we analyze this longing of ours, we discover that it is not so much childhood that we want, as childhood’s purity, childhood’s peace, childhood’s hope.

One day, toward the close of King David’s troubled reign, when his native village was infested with Philistine enemies, and he fleeing before them,

the old king looking back on the scenes of childhood, murmurs aloud, "O, that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate." Three of his mighty men hear his prayer, and risking their lives, they run to gratify his wish. But when they have brought the water, the aged king will not drink it. It is not water that this old soldier wants. He wants to get back to childhood. He wants to go to the well of Bethlehem, as he used to, when a shepherd boy among the hills. Then, with the water of Bethlehem in his hand, he comes to understand that it is not childhood after all for which he longs. But it is childhood's glad, free heart.

And just as David at last got back to childhood, so may you and I. "They that wait upon Jehovah shall renew their strength." Have we not seen them, you and I? Men to whom life has grown stale and sordid,—enthusiasm dead and hopes killed—aged men—suddenly flame with a new youth, a new strength. These men have been with God. Like Enoch, they have walked with Him who is the Fountain of Life. And just as the cold, dead wire flashes with a new genius when it touches the dynamo, these lives whom God has touched are born again. "With Thee is the fountain of life."

But how does this contact with God thus wash away the scars of years and kindle anew the fire of a joyous youth?

It gives one, first of all, *a new vision*. A man

can rise no higher than his look. And his altitude determines his perspective. When God touches his life, the call is first of all, "Get thee up into a high mountain." And the cry is, "Lift up thine eyes, now, Behold!"

To see life from the perspective of God's throne, is to rescue it from weariness and age. The eternal years are His. The oldest angels in His presence are the youngest. Linked to him who views the passing centuries as a day, there is offered the soul of man a vision, that keeps the heart young forever.

The touch of God kindles *new affections*. Say what we will about the glories of the head, it is the heart that is the man. As our emotions rise and fall, life is young or old. Not whitening hair nor dimming eye, but dying emotions, compel men to say, "He is growing old." Nothing drives away the wrinkles and fills the sunken cheeks like love. There is no cosmetic to compare with a new affection, a new devotion. What makes the heart of man grow old and tired is his cleavage to the fading dust of temporal things. But God quickens the heart with a spiritual life, warms it until it glows with love for eternal things, and under the spell of this new flame, that burns but does not consume, there is born a new and ruddy youth.

They that wait upon Jehovah have born in them a *new hope*. The secret of childhood's buoyancy is its hopes. We should reverse the old saying: "While there is *hope* there is *life*." When

hope begins to die, the candle of life flickers. I know one,—a mother. Out from her bosom and her home, a few years ago, there went a young man in all the pride of youth. A year passed, and men began to notice that the mother was aging fast. To me she told her secret. Her boy had become a drunkard. The months went by, and the furrows grew deeper and the hair whiter. Despair gripped the mother's heart. One day she sent for me. What a change! Ten years younger she seemed. A letter told the story of her renewed youth. Her boy had made a new start, and *hope*, burning in her mother's heart, had brought back the bloom of youth.

When God enters the heart new hopes are born; hopes that keep the life young forever.

Yea, there is a Fountain of Youth. It is not some magic pool where the marks of time may be washed from human bodies. The secret of it rather is in this,—that the true life God begets within, never grows old. Our true home never was back there amid the delights of youth. It is away beyond the hills of Bethlehem, far into the eternal hills of God. The "water of the well of Bethlehem," was good enough for the morning, but there is a well, whose deeper, purer drafts are the secret of immortal youth.

Behold the Son of Man as he sits in weariness by the well of Jacob in Samaria. A woman comes with her waterpots. "Give me to drink." The answer is contempt. "If thou knewest the gift of



God and who it is that saith unto thee, 'Give me to drink,' thou wouldst have asked him, and he would have given thee living water." "Whoso drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whoso drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst. But it shall be in him a well of water springing up into immortal life."

This is the water for which David longed three thousand years ago. This is that for which every heart is calling when it cries: "Oh, if I could only get back to childhood!" What we are crying for is not childhood. It is the water of life.

Have we lived long enough to learn the experience of sin? If we have, we are crying now for childhood's sweet *innocence* and *purity*.

Have we felt the aging burden of disappointment and sorrow and bereavement, until we are verily, feeding on ashes? We are sighing, then, for childhood's *happiness*.

Has fortune showered her gifts upon us till, sated with her pleasures, we are longing for the *freedom* and *freshness* of youth's *ambitions*?

Was there a day long ago when we came to Christ in a burst of loyal enthusiasm? And has that enthusiasm slowly ebbed, until it is gone? "Where is the joy that once I felt, when first I knew the Lord?"

It may be that we have come now to where the shadows lengthen. Earth's life will soon be over. Are we depressed as we sit alone and sigh for "the tender grace of a day that is dead?"

Let us then remember this: Our Father expects us to be children still. "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven." If we want the joys of childhood, we are not to look back, but upward and onward. The Father cared too much for us to leave us forever in the innocent realm of morning's fair dreams. But He led us into larger life, that through it and beyond it we might see the dawn of a new morning, the birth of a new childhood.

We may,—we can be young forever. Every summer the little German village of Hildesheim is crowded with tourists. There are many quaint and wonderful things to be seen in Hildesheim. There are houses there that were old when Columbus sailed into the unknown sea; a cathedral that was dedicated in the days of Charlamagne; and many other modern wonders. But that which causes all to wonder is "der tausendjährige rosenstock," the thousand-year-old rose bush. There it is, crawling over the chancel wall, running high up in the arches of the building, and every summer covering the place with creamy roses, just as it has done for a thousand summers. Aged, though it is, there is no suggestion of age about it. It is as full of freshness and vigor as it was three hundred years ago when the world first began to notice it.

What God has done for the rose of Hildesheim, God does for us. Somewhere we are standing to-

day along life's journey. Perhaps we are in the dawn and facing still the beckoning noonday. It may be we have entered the afternoon of life. Perhaps the twilight shadows are gathering. A strange longing oppresses us. It is the longing to be a child again. We may be,—every one. Let us turn our eyes from the backward look, away to the eternal hills, where shines on the clear waters of the river of life, the sun that heralds a new morning and a new childhood in the Kingdom of God.

“Can peach renew lost bloom?  
Or violet lost perfume?  
Or sullied snow turn white as overnight?  
Man cannot compass it; yet never fear;  
The leper Naaman  
Shows what God will and can ;  
God, who worked there, is working here;  
Wherefore let joy, not gloom, betinge thy brow,  
God who worked then, is working now.”



VIII

CAN I FORGET THE PAST?

"Many of you remember Mason's story of 'The Four Feathers,' the story of an officer in the British army, who threw up his commission just as his regiment had been ordered to the Soudan. He went immediately to visit the girl whom he expected to marry. While in her presence he opened a little box, that came from three of his fellow officers in the regiment, and out of it fell three white feathers. The girl wanted to know what they meant, and he told the whole story to her. It was what three of his fellow officers thought about him. Then she broke another feather from her fan and told him to go. He went out that night with four white feathers as his legacy, as the legacy of his past. He went out resolving that he would make each of those four take a feather back. He went to the Soudan disguised as a Greek minstrel. There, by risking his life to save some letters of Chinese Gordon's that had been buried under the walls of Berber, he got one of his friends to take back his feather. Another died before he got his feather redeemed, and one of the three went to the stone prison house of Omdurman. There Feversham followed him, shared his peril, and delivered him to freedom, and the third feather was taken back. And last of all the girl took her feather back, and the man became what he never would have been but for the failure of the past. And the grace of Christ in redemption can work greater miracles than that."

ROBERT SPEER, "*Simplicity and Complexity of Life.*"

## CAN I FORGET THE PAST?

*This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus. Philip-pians 3: 13, 14.*

The greatest discovery ever made by man was the discovery of himself. Whether "Minerva like" he sprang full orb'd from the lips of God, or whether he "rose at last in mere fortuitous hour," from the lairs of beasts, there was a time when he first said, "I am." That day the image of God was born in earth's highest creature. Man had discovered himself, and in the light of that sublime discovery he walked into a new day.

There have been times then when man has doubted the reality of his existence. But the very fact that he can doubt his existence proves his existence real. For to doubt is to think, and to think is to be. Augustine and Descartes summed it up in the classic axiom, "Cogito, ergo sum" (I think, therefore, I am). No idealism can wreck this fundamental belief in the reality of being.

But here is only the beginning of problems. Out of man's self-discovery have risen the problems of his origin, his aims, his end.

Among them all not the least is the question, "What makes me **WHAT** I am"—the problem of identity. "I am changing, and yet I am the same.

How do I know I am the same person I was ten, twenty, thirty years ago?"

Last summer in the attic of my mother's home, I came upon an old and faded photograph. I recognized it at once. It was mine own. I asked myself, "How do I know that I am the same person now as when that picture was taken a quarter of a century ago?" There is apparently no resemblance between me and that face that looks into mine from the faded photograph.

I am a different being physically. Several times since then I have put on a new robe of flesh. Not a particle of the physical fibre of my being in that far off day remains.

I am a different being intellectually. The motives and thoughts and desires of my life have nothing in common with this youth that claims to be myself.

I am socially a different being. Not a single companion or association or surrounding of that day remains. They are all gone, and I live in an entirely different social universe.

And yet I am certain that this face I see there is mine own. I remember it as if it were only yesterday! How miserable I felt all dressed up in my Sunday best, starched and ironed, sitting there looking into the mouth of a cannon! I remember the trials of my mother and the photographer to make me "look pleasant, please!" I recall how at a critical moment there rose from behind the camera a little squeaking bird, and while my eyes



were opened in wonder at this new mystery, the camera man snapped me, and snapped me forever!

Now I am looking into that face, and I know it is myself. How do I know it?

Last night I fell asleep, and lost myself in eight hours of oblivion. When I woke this morning, how did I know that I was the same being that fell asleep the night before? How did I happen to recognize myself again when for eight hours consciousness had been obliterated?

Briefly this answer—I REMEMBERED! So far as we can know, it is *memory* that makes identity. It is the one thing that is eternal. Aristotle calls it the "scribe of the soul." Another the "cabinet of the heart." Another the "golden warp of life's loom."

Memory is the process whereby we call up a past event or circumstance of which we have not meanwhile been thinking, and recognize it as our own. It is *recognition* of our own past *being* that makes identity. The river flows through the same banks century after century. It, too, is changing. We call it the same river, but the river does not know it is the same. IT HAS NO MEMORY. The second-hand on my watch has been ticking for a decade. Once every minute it goes through the same experience as on every preceding minute. But it does not remember. The mere repetition of an experience is not memory. It does not recognize the landmarks over which it passes as a part of its own past.

It is otherwise with man. I know yon faded photograph is mine own, because I can trace back the experiences of a quarter of a century, to the day when it was taken, and I remember them all as my own.

What a wonderful thing is memory! What is this grand gift of recall? How comes it that I can remember, and out of a past long since dead, identify its experiences as my own?

Let the psychologist unfold in part the mystery of this strange phenomenon.

Whatever may be the processes of thought in the life of spiritual being beyond this realm of body, certain it is that the BRAIN of man is the seat of memory now. There is a physical basis for our present memories, whatever may be the conditions hereafter. The brain is the centre and clearing house of all thought and all activity.

The brain is a bundle of nerve—living nerve—most delicately organized. It is the most sensitive thing known. A million times more impressionable than the phonographic disc, its business is to record spiritual impressions of infinite variety and number, and to send them vibrating throughout the whole being, along a network of nerves, that radiate everywhere like electric wires from a dynamo.

Examine a nerve beneath a microscope. It resembles a piece of gray cotton thread. Cross section it, and you discover at its heart a grayish substance, exceedingly plastic. It is this same

“gray matter” that is found to saturate the surface of the brain’s hemispheres. This is the vital element of the nerve. Along it sensations travel from every part of the body like telegrams along a wire and register themselves on the surface of the brain. Every experience of life, every sensation, every inner prompting, is thus flashed to this great clearing house of thought—the brain.

There is something hidden by the creator within that mystic substance, that has power to convert these sensations into ideas and register them there. And the idea thus formed, as it flashes in turn to the registering centre, wears a little pathway as it goes. The cortex of the brain is a network of these invisible highways. When the same idea enters a second time it travels over the same pathway as before. The wonderful thing about these pathways is that they persist. Once an idea has registered itself on the surface of the brain it is never wholly lost. Let the experience be repeated, and the corresponding brain path will be intensified, the impression strengthened and recall made more easy. That is why the constant repetition of a thing is the greatest aid to memory. The process is wearing the paths a little deeper and deeper.

What a startling conception the psychologist has given us. Here is the secret of habit! There comes a time when an idea, persistently recurring, has worn its entrance so deep that its passage along the brain path is without resistance, and its corresponding action involuntary! It is a habit!

It is these persisting brain paths over which recurring ideas pass, and our ability to recognize them when agitated again and again, that we call the phenomenon of memory.

But this is not all of memory. For these pathways cross and recross upon the cortex of the brain. And just as two railways at their junction, discharge passengers from one to the other, so do these crossing paths influence one another. Each idea travelling across its pathway awakens all other paths it touches. We call it the "power of suggestion" or "association." An idea enters the brain, and in its progress to the deliberating centres it touches many other pathways. No idea ever enters apart from association with other ideas. The pathways cross and intertwine. Let one idea enter and with it come a host of others that its power awakens. Thus we tie a string on the finger to aid in remembering an errand. We are compelled to see the string, and when the idea is flashed across its pathway, it stirs to life the idea of the errand, which has been associated with it when the string was tied upon the finger. Associated paths have aided recall.

"Lulled in the countless chambers of the brain,  
Our thoughts are linked by many a hidden chain;  
Awake but one, what myriads rise,  
Each stamps its image as the other flies."

What a wonderful thing is memory! With her are hid the treasures of knowledge. "We can reason," said Plato, "because we can remember."

With her are the treasures of character. The memory of pain's punishments and virtue's rewards; the hopes and dreams and delights of childhood's fresh young years, "when fond recollection presents them to view," put before the soul a gallery of pictures, that stir the heart to better things. With her are the treasures of love. What if memory should fail and we were to live in a world of strangers? There can be no love apart from memory.

"As the dew upon the blossom,  
As the bud unto the bee,  
As the perfume to the rose,  
Are love's memories to me."

What then of him whose memories are soiled and sordid? He wants to forget! Is there hope for him to whom memory is a dreadful nightmare; whose recollections rise like taunting fiends to mock him with their hellish thoughts? To him memory is judgment. Remorse is memory tinged with bitterness. Remorse is hell. Can we get away from a wretched past, or are we destined to hear forever across a FIXED gulf the words, "Son, remember." Is there no escape, then, from the spectres of the past?

"Come, psychologist, you have told us how to remember. Tell us how to forget! Help us to get away from memories that are sad, and sordid, and stained!"

"There is no way," he answers. "You cannot forget. The brain paths are worn, the associa-

tions are formed. You cannot forget your past, nor get away from it. You may push it into the background for a while, and by persistent effort of the will, hold other things to the centre of the stage, but the past is lurking like a wolf to rush upon you the moment you relax your vigilance. You may put memory to sleep with opiates, but it will awake with renewed violence." "The drunken Rip Van Winkle in Jefferson's play excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, 'I won't count this time.' He may not count it, and a kind heaven may not count it, but it is being counted, none the less. Down among his nerve cells and fibres, the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes."

The law of Karma is written on every page of nature, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

"Sow a thought, you reap an act;  
Sow an act, you reap a habit;  
Sow a habit, you reap a character;  
Sow a character, you reap a destiny."

"There is no magic that can change tares into wheat."

"The tissues of the life to be,  
We weave with colors all our own;  
And in the field of destiny  
We reap as we have sown."

The evil thoughts and deeds of long ago must

have their harvest in a bitter memory. There is no grace in nature.

“As the tree falls so must it lie;  
As a man lives so must he die.”

We cannot dissever ourselves from the past. What's done is done and done forever. We can drive nails into a clean, white board and pull them out again. But we cannot pull the nail holes out!

Is there, then, no hope for him who wants to close the book of the past and never open it again? Is there no gospel for him who wants to forget?

Well, here is one such—a woman, an adulteress, taken in the very act of her sin. What shall be done with her? According to the laws of Moses, she should be stoned. There is no forgetting a sin like that. But her captors have brought her to Jesus. “Here she is, Master, taken in the very act. What shall we do with her.” No reply. They are insistent! “Let him that is without sin among you cast at her the first stone.” Silently the accusers flee. The stones are not thrown. “Woman, hath no man condemned thee?” “None, Lord.” “NEITHER DO I CONDEMN THEE. GO, SIN NO MORE!”

What a startling sentence! Is Jesus approving adultery? No. But he is rising to the assertion of a law higher than civil law, beyond the natural law of Karma—a law that transcends all other laws—the law of SPIRITUAL REBIRTH. This

woman can forget her past. God can forget it. "I will blot out thy transgressions and remember them no more against thee." "I will put a new heart and right spirit within thee." This adulteress can be a new creature. She can start life all over again. She can close the book of memory, with its haunting nightmare of remorse, and open it to a new, clean page.

With Paul it is the same. He has a horrible past. The blood of martyrs stains his hands. His life is filled with wretched memories. What will he do? "This one thing I do. Forgetting those things which are behind,—I press on." He is going to treat his past like a closed book, never more to be opened.

Can he do it? Can this sinful woman do it? Evidently Jesus thought so. "Go and sin no more!" "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest, BUT RISE and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." When this adulteress went out from Jesus' presence, she went forth into the rosy dawn of a new day. The mystic waters of God's Lethe flowed through her soul. She forgot her sin, and forgetting it she began a new life, freed from the shackles of her past. Saul, the proud, vengeful persecutor, is transformed into Paul, the meek, loving apostle.

Whatever the laws of psychology may decree for these, there is higher spiritual law that transcends them—the law of a New Birth. The old being with its sordid memories may not forget.



But the "new creature" can forget. To say that one can never get away from memories of a wretched past, and that he is condemned to live forever by nature's laws, in the remorse those memories bring, is to ignore the greatest law of God—the law of Spiritual Rebirth. There is a divine psychology that eradicates the past, and puts new life, new manhood, new womanhood into the whole being. There is a process whereby men are born again into a new being—a new creaturehood.

We do not understand the marvellous workings of this law. We are asking with Nicodemus, "How can a man be born when he is old?" How can God so change a man that he can forget his past, and be a new man through and through? Jesus was very frank to say that it was a mystery, but he was just as surprised to find that Nicodemus had not observed its reality.

He drew a very simple figure from nature to show Nicodemus a startling parallel. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The wind is invisible, but its reality undoubted. Its effects are seen. So is this marvellous new Birth. Though little understood, its marvellous effects are seen in the millions of "twice born" men that walk the ways of earth in newness of life—new creatures.

Can the "wicked turn from his way" and walk

again the ways of Godliness and purity? Can he forget the past? Can the crawling worm ever rise to a higher life and bury the past? Apparently not, for behold him burying himself in a tiny casket, still a worm. But wait. It is Easter morning now. Out of that casket he comes, a beautiful fluttering moth, winged, soaring creature. He has been born again! Why is it deemed incredible that God who can change the worm into the "Polyphemus" moth can give to MAN a new life unshackled by the fetters of the past. If Luther Burbank can take the garden weeds and transform them into things of exquisite beauty; if he can take the poisonous fruits and make them sweet and good for food, why cannot God take the ugly and sin-cursed memory and turn it into a thing of beauty and purity? "Behold, I make *all things* new."

If Nature knows no way of erasing a stained memory, GOD DOES. It is His constant word to forget the past and press forward to better things. The sole condition of entrance into larger and better life is to forget the past. When Jesus said to the sinful woman, "Go, sin no more," he saw that it was possible for her to possess the new life. Her past did not concern him. He forgot it. And he bade her forget it, because it was the condition of putting on the new being. To others he said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." What he meant was that men must turn

their backs on the past—forget it—and let God blot out the memory of it all, before they could enter the highest happiness. It is a sign of worthiness to forget the past. It is an unmanly penitence that broods on a sin that God is ready to forget. It is lack of faith, not to take Him at his word and enter the full possibilities of a new life unhampered by recollection of an evil past. It is common sense to forget the past.

“Ah!” someone says, “all this is true. But how shall I start this process of forgetting? I would be born again and forget the past. How may I do it? What impulse is there that can start me away from the past forever into the way of better things?”

Behold then, Paul. He is journeying down to Damascus. He is a persecutor of the church. As he goes, he breathes out threatenings. He is proud, arrogant, a Pharisee. But he is not happy. The memory of the past is on him. He sees the dying face of Stephen and the stain of martyrs' blood is on his hands. He is a stubborn sinner. Then at midday a blinding light envelops him. He falls to the earth, trembling. Then for an instant he lifts his face up into heaven. He rises to forever “forget those things which are behind,” and to “press on toward the mark for the prize of his high calling.” What has transformed him? *He has seen the face of Jesus!*

Here is a woman grovelling in the dust. Hopeless, sinful, dreadful memories are torturing her

soul. Impurity has covered her with its filth. She has been caught in her sin, and the law says she must die. Then suddenly a new resolve, a new hope, a new life, thrills through her being. She rises to go and sin no more. What has happened? Why, as she kneels there in the dust, she has cast her eyes upward, and has seen in the face of this Rabbi something that transforms her. Here is one who believes in her, and in her possibility of better things. Her soul reaches out to his, and lo, she is born again. *She has seen the face of Jesus!*

This is the way of forgetting, for it is the way of new birth. "Except one be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." There is but one way to forget the past. It is to be born into a new life that does not know the old. The beginning of forgetting the past is in a look into the glory of the better life as it shines in the face of Jesus. "I, if I be lifted up will draw all men unto me."

Before every man there is the possibility of a new and blessed life. We can forget. It is God's counsel that we do forget. It is Christ's mission to make us forget the sin of the past, and to lead us into a life unstained by sordid memories of days that are dead.

With God "the best of life is yet to be." Grand possibilities are before even the worst of men. Let us rise and leave the dead past to bury its dead and face the glorious dawn of a new day in the Kingdom of God.

“Forward! be the watchword,  
Steps and voices joined,  
Seek the things before us,  
Leave the past behind.  
Burns the fiery pillar,  
At our army’s head;  
Who shall dream of failure  
By Jehovah led.  
Forward from the desert  
Through the toil and fight,  
Jordan flows before us,  
Zion beams with light.”



IX

WHAT IS IT TO BE SAVED?

"It is a very significant thing that Christ spent the greater part of His ministry explaining at length and in detail the nature of our earthly duties. . . . Never was there a great teacher who was so intensely practical, who dwelt closer to the concrete and palpable, and paid less attention to those metaphysical abstractions in which the subtlety of the human mind delights, and has always delighted. . . . But it is curious to observe how completely Christ's followers have reversed this process. That which has most completely fascinated the thinkers of Christianity is precisely those metaphysics of theology of which Christ himself said so little."

WILLIAM J. DAWSON, "*The Reproach of Christ.*"

"Jesus commands respect when He insists on a present Kingdom of God. It is not going to be, it is now and here. When Jesus said The Kingdom of Heaven, be sure He did not mean an unseen refuge whither a handful might one day escape, like persecuted and disheartened Puritans, fleeing from a hopeless England, but He intended that it might be and then was in Galilee, what should be and now is in England. 'To those who speak of heaven and seek to separate it from earth,' wrote Mazzini, 'you will say that heaven and earth are one, even as the way and the goal are one.'

"Jesus laid himself alongside a sinful people, and out of them He slowly built up a new Kingdom. If a man was a formalist, he must be born again; if the slave of riches, he must sell all he had; if in the toils of a darling sin, he must pluck out his right eye to enter the Kingdom of God. New men to make a new state. The kingdom was humility, purity, generosity, unselfishness. It was the reign of character; it was the struggle for perfection. Chunder Sen, the Indian prophet, described Jesus' Kingdom perfectly: 'A spiritual congregation of souls born anew to God.'"

IAN MACLAREN, Condensed from "*The Mind of the Master.*"



## WHAT IS IT TO BE SAVED?

*If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.* Second Corinthians 5:17.

*Jesus answered and said unto him, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."* John 3:3.

There is a great deal of misunderstanding about what it means to be saved. I used to think, when a boy, that it was a terrible thing to be saved. For when I heard men say, "Are you saved?" it brought to my mind dreadful experiences I had heard men speak of in testimony meeting. Of fire falling from heaven and burning out their hearts, of awful wrestlings and groanings, of sinners being led up at last to a mercy seat that was not a mercy seat at all, but the throne of a vindictive judge, who lashed and beat his victims along a thorny, tearful highway, called "this vale of tears." And in it all the goal of peace and happiness seemed so far away, and so painfully won as to make even the possession of it undesirable.

I went to some revival meetings. An evangelist came to me and told me I was going to hell, that I might die that night, and wake up in a place of fire and brimstone, if I didn't come up to the altar and be "saved." I wondered what he meant by "being saved." Could it be some terrible torture I must endure whereby I was to escape the agonies

of hell? I concluded so from the agonizing cries I heard of the few kneeling ones at the altar.

I didn't want to go to hell, and so with another boy I went to the "mourner's bench." The evangelist came to me and in sepulchral tones bade me pray. I thought of the prayer I said each night. But "now I lay me down to sleep" did not seem appropriate. "What shall I pray?" I asked. "Say," said he, "God be merciful to me a wretched sinner." I said it. "Now, don't you feel better?" he asked. I could not say that I did; I had not felt bad any of the time. So he had me say it again. There was no change. "I am afraid," said he, "you are a bad boy, but I trust God will be merciful."

God was merciful. He gave me loved ones who led me, step by step, at last into the service of God, and taught me the loving ways of His Kingdom.

I have told this experience, not because it is unique, but because it is very common. It illustrates the very hazy ideas men have of what it means to be saved. I do not deny that such experiences are not real, and that many men suffer great agony when they turn from sin to Christ. If a man has been walking a lifetime with his face away from God, and a thousand devils within are beckoning him into the realms of darkness, of course it costs effort and pain to turn himself square about. But this is not the process of salvation at all. It is conversion—turning one's self

around. There are two long words on which most men stumble—conversion and salvation.

Conversion is the *act* of turning around to face God. If a man is headed for the north pole and wants to go to the sunny land of Florida, he must, first of all, turn around. If one is headed for the cold glaciers of sin's frozen clime, and wants to get into the summerland of God's presence, the first thing he must do is to turn around. A man converts himself. He simply answers the call of God to his heart, "Come, follow me;" by turning squarely around and saying, "By thy help, O Christ, I will follow thee."

Is he then a saved man? Not a bit of it. He has simply begun the process of salvation. Now God takes him into His care. He first of all forgives him his former wandering, "blots out his transgression and remembers it no more against him." But he is not a saved man. Old habits cling to him, old temptations assail him, old troubles molest him. He is not a *saved* man. He is a *changed* man. He will not fully be saved until he has put sin forever behind him. Peter leaves all and follows his Lord, but Peter is not yet a saved man. When the cock crows, he will deny his Lord. It will be a long process before Peter can call himself a saved man. Salvation is not crossing a fire escape from hell to heaven. It is not covering a black heart with alabaster and entering a fool's paradise. It is a cure, a process of transformation, whereby the soul of man is made

into a new creature. God is still creating. And his choicest creatures are souls that bear his image. If we are to follow the analogy of nature, God will not make saved men in a day. He will start them on the path of salvation in an instant, but the process of salvation is the gradual lifting of the soul into "the stature and image of Christ"—the process of evolution, if you please.

Salvation does not mean an escape to a far off place of happiness, which one may win in the last moment of his life by any form of confession or unction of holy oil. Heaven is not a far off refuge whither a few ascetic souls shall flee some day. Hell is not a gaol, from which one may escape, by simply kneeling at an altar or bowing in a confessional.

Salvation means becoming a new creature; putting off the ways of sin and the habiliments of evil, and putting on the character of God.

It does not concern us as to just how God does this. It is a mystery. It is a spiritual process. Like the whistling wind, "we cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth." Like the birth of a child, the wonderful process that brings it to life is hidden. But it is real. We can "hear the sound thereof" and can see the "new creature."

Nor does it concern us if men can enter, in this life, the fullness of that new creation. Some men claim to attain that condition they call "sanctification," perfect holiness. Let us not deny their experience. It is the end of salvation. But we

can all attain enough of it here, to assure us that it is real. And it is possible even in this sin-cursed world for men to become "new creatures."

There are some who are distressed because they apparently never pass through that first step in salvation—conversion. They cannot look back and say, "On such and such a day I started this new life." Happy should such Christians be! One has only to read Harold Begbie's "Twice Born Men," to convince him that no two men begin the life of God in the same way. To some it is an ever upward march from the cradle to the throne of glory. Theirs is a blessed experience.

"When, passing southward, I may cross the line,  
     Between the Arctic and Atlantic oceans;  
 I may not tell by any tests of mine,  
     By any startling signs nor strange commotions  
 Across my track.  
     But if the days grow sweeter, one by one,  
 And e'en the icebergs melt their hardened faces,  
     And sailors linger, basking in the sun,  
 I know I must have made the change of places  
 Some distance back.

When, answering timidly the Master's call,  
     I passed the bourne of life in coming to Him,  
 When in my love for Him I gave up all,  
     The very moment when I thought I knew Him  
 I cannot tell.  
     But, as unceasingly I feel His love,  
 And this cold heart is melted to o'erflowing,  
     As now, so clear the light comes from above,  
 I wonder at the change, but move on, knowing  
 That all is well."

No, some never know the experience of conversion. "Except ye be converted and become as little children," said Jesus. What he meant was, that the little ones before him had their faces turned toward the Father. Blessed little children, if they never turned them away—never had to be converted.

But what then is *salvation*? What does it mean to be a new creature?

It means first of all, the possession of a *New Mind*. What we see in life depends on the mind we have. He was a wise man who said, "As a man *thinketh* in his heart, so is he." Last summer I fished among the woods of Northern Michigan. I had been there many times before. But now there was a companion with me, to whom the forest was an open book. With what new wonders the old wooded hills and lakes thrilled, as he pointed out their new glories, which I had passed with unseeing eyes before. I was given a new mind. Salvation means the possession of a saved mind. God, the world and men are seen in a different light now. Altitude determines perspective. We are up on the mountain with God now. We see things with the mind of God. We have that "mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus," and the whole universe is altered.

It means also the possession of a *new will*. Who has not felt the despondency that comes from a feeble will? We "will not yield to that temptation again." And lo, we *have* yielded be-

fore we know it. If we are to be victors, we must have a new will. God gives a new will. I watched an engineer the other day at his boilers. I saw him take some black lumps of lifeless coal and a few gallons of water. One he put beneath, and the other within some tubes of steel, and in a few moments he had generated a force that shook the building and turned a thousand wheels. If man can turn such dead things as steel and water and coal, into life and power, what cannot God do with the feeble will of man?

It means also the possession of a *new affection*. "Out of the heart are the issues of life." A man's desires, his feeling, his affections are changed. He loves now the highest and best things. In Mark Twain's "Prince and Pauper," chance at last puts a beggar boy on a throne; but he is not happy as a prince, for he has a beggar's heart. What we need above all is to have our "*universe of desire*" changed, not our *universe of activity*. "A new heart will I give thee, a new spirit will I put within thee."

But best of all there is given a *new dynamic*, a *new motive*. No man can rise higher than the ideal that moves him, nor faster than the dynamic that drives him. I remember an old slow-going steamboat that used to come into the harbor when I was a boy. One day we missed it, and it was gone for several weeks. At last one day it came steaming up the lake, proudly showing its spray to all the other craft in the harbor. Everybody

wondered what had happened to the "Joe." Someone asked the captain. "Oh, nothing, boys," he said, "only I've got a new engine." To be saved is to get a new engine, a new motive power. "The love of Christ constraineth us."

It will be readily seen from what I have said that the possession of a new mind, a new will, a new heart and a new ideal, means the possession of a new life. Have we been crawling like the worm? There is before us the possibility of a beautiful, free, winged, soaring life.

Having a life like this here and now, there is no occasion to worry about future happiness. Hell will lose itself forever. The question of being saved is not how to get *to* heaven, but how to *get* heaven here.

We are living, it is true, in a world far from heavenly. There is no lack of sin, and sorrow, and wrong. But from it all there is salvation. He who walked the path of our temptations without sin is able to save to the uttermost. He is here to save us, not from the penalty of sin, but from sin itself. "Thou shalt call his name "JESUS," for he shall save his people *from their sins.*"

I stood one evening on the rim of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado. Here before me, is an awful, yawning gulf, tossed, and torn and troubled in its chaos. Here with roar, and shock, and tumult in ages past the forces of nature have struggled for the mastery. But as the setting sun spreads its glow over granite wall, tortured cliff



and jagged pillar, a glorious beauty settles over all. It is as if I stand amid the minarets and towers of the City of God. I can but exclaim, "What hath God wrought?"

And still He works, not on barren rocks which shall be lost in the crumbling of ages, but upon souls, human souls, scarred by the warfare of evil. And when at last, time's evening glow plays on the ruins of the far away past, that which has been scarred and torn will catch the lustre of jasper and of pearl, and there will be ushered into the Kingdom of Light, which is forever, a "new creature," the ransomed, redeemed, saved Child of God—Man.

"So shall it be, that, when I stand  
 On that next planet's ruddy-shimmering strand  
 I shall not seem a pert and forward child  
 Seeking to dabble in abstruser lore  
 With alphabet unlearned, who in disgrace  
 Returns, upon his primer yet to pore—  
 But those examiners, all wise and mild,  
 Shall gently lead me to my place,  
 As one that faithfully did trace  
 These simpler earthly lessons o'er and o'er."



X

WHAT ABOUT OUR SINS?

“The germs of all things are in every heart, and the greatest criminals as well as the greatest heroes are but different modes of ourselves.”

AMIEL, *“Journal.”*

“Christianity is a religion of redemption. Jesus was not a reformer, but a Redeemer. His first appeal is not to the conversation, but to the conscience. He was manifested to take away sin, the guilt of it, the power of it, the love of it. Thoreau, when asked if he had made his peace with God, replied, “I have never quarrelled with Him.” And Heinrich Heine on his mattress grave, as he called it, and in the very moment of a very painful passing, said, “God will forgive, that’s His business.” But how flippant are such words. “Not quarrelled with God.” “God will forgive me, that’s His business.” Yes, He will, but can He without the cross? “It behooved Christ to suffer.” The cross is the very centre and core of the Christian’s faith. A gospel without a cross is an impotent gospel! The cross is like the sword of Excalibur in the Arthurian legend. It could not only wound, but being laid on the wound could heal. The cross makes sin known, but it also makes Him known who takes away sin.”

MALCOLM J. McLEOD, *“A Comfortable Faith.”*

## WHAT ABOUT OUR SINS?

*We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23.*

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16.*

The pathos of humanity's history is its sin. It is the one universal problem. "A serpent is crawling across God's fair creation." The devil's shadow blackens every Eden. There is a blight on every flower, and a blind spot in every eye. The rivers of evil run underground, but they break forth in polluting fountains everywhere.

No question holds us with such weird fascination as the question of human sin. Whence came sin? Why is it permitted to mar a world of such beauty as ours? How did it get into the universe? What will the end of it be? How far is man responsible for his sin?

These are questions before which the human heart is dumb. There have been many daring guesses and shrewd speculations to answer these questions, but they are as dark a mystery as ever. Homer takes us to the lower world, and there we see the spectre forms of departed spirits. Ixion is there, bound to his whirling wheel. Sisyphus is there, rolling his rock up the long hillside, only to see it roll back again. And he must do this forever. Tantalus stands in a river of pure water, but the waters recede before his

thirsty lips. Rich fruits quiver on the branches before him, but as he reaches for them they are snatched away.

“There Tantalus, along the Stygian bound,  
Pours out deep groans,—his groans through hell  
resound.

Even 'mid encircling food refreshment craves,  
And pines with thirst amid a sea of waves.”

Why are these men suffering here? They have sinned! Ixion has defied the Gods and tried to make thunder of his own. Sisyphus has made himself the equal of Jupiter. Tantalus has pried open the secret council chamber of the gods. Through all ancient literature sin is the black thread in the golden fabric of men's dreams. It is thus today. It has always been.

We cannot pluck the heart out of all the mysteries that surround it, but the ever recurring question, “What about my sin?” can have an answer that satisfies. There are four vantage points from which we may view the problem of our sin. Is sin real? Is it mighty? What are its consequences? Can it be forgiven?

Sin's presence, sin's power, sin's punishment, sin's pardon.

#### I. Sin's Presence.

We cannot touch this question without discovering first of all that we have touched a real kingdom. Sin is everywhere. No heathen land, however low, without its altars. No savage so degraded that the problem of expiation is not ever

before him. No culture so high, that the dread intruder has not entered. Hindus are crawling through the swamps of India to the Ganges; mothers are throwing their babies to the crocodiles of the Nile, the prophets of Baal are cutting themselves with knives and Buddhists are turning endless prayer wheels, and they are all crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." "We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Nowhere was sin's awful presence so realized as among the Jews. They had a grand conception of God, and it led them to a true conception of sin's terrible reality. The prophets, the psalmists, the priests, all echo the deep sense of sin's reality. "Woe is me for I am undone; I am a man of unclean lips," cries Isaiah. "Have mercy upon me, O God; blot out my transgressions. Wash me from mine iniquity, for my sin is ever before me. Against thee and thee only have I sinned." The man who wrote that realized the awful presence of sin. How deeply he sank in sin! See him, the aged David,

"So fallen! So lost! The light withdrawn which once  
he wore,  
The glory from his grey hairs gone forevermore."

And all through the Bible there is that same picture of sin's reality. "There is not one righteous, no not one." "If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves."

A man and woman are fleeing from Paradise.

They have sinned. A flood covers the earth. "The thoughts of men's hearts are only evil all the day." Cain is a wanderer and a fugitive. He has sinned. Israel is lost, forty years in a desert. Israel has sinned. Judas hangs himself on a tree. Judas has "betrayed innocent blood." Ananias falls dead. Ananias is a liar.

The pages of the Old Testament are bathed in blood. Blood is the expiation of sin. The Bible confirms what human hearts bear witness to in human history. Man is a fallen creation, a sinner.

"Like some ill-guided bark, well-built and tall,  
Which angry tides cast on a desert shore,  
And then retiring leave it there to rot  
And moulder in the winds and rains of heaven.  
So he, cut from the sympathies of life,  
And cast ashore from pleasure's boist'rous surge,  
A wandering, weary, worn, and wretched thing,  
A scorched and desolate and blasted soul,—  
A gloomy wilderness of dying, that  
Repined and groaned and withered from the earth."

SIN IS REAL. Belshazzar "and a thousand of his lords" are in the festal hall. No thought of danger is on them. But of a sudden their faces are blanched with terror. On the wall has appeared a hand writing the fateful words, "Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin." David sits upon his throne, secure in assumed innocence. He has soothed his conscience with a lie. But the prophet appears before him. "Thou art the man!" Sin may be



hidden, but it is real. Some day frivolity will make itself known in a wasted life. Some day the cancer of greed will eat its way to the surface. Some day selfishness and animalism and hate and impurity will come to their own and men will see sin as it really is.

“My sins, my sins—

Wild beasts that crouch around my door,  
Dread vermin filling up my dwelling’s walls,  
And crawling o’er my cabin floor.

O hateful sin—

Away, and let me see thy face no more!”

## II. Sin’s Power.

It follows from sin’s universal presence that it must be a thing of terrible power. Its black flag waves triumphantly over countless battlefields. Sin has armed himself with all the weapons of war, and no feeble hand can resist his power. An old knight’s tombstone bears this inscription:

“Here lies a soldier whom all must applaud,  
He fought many battles at home and abroad;  
But the hottest engagement he ever was in,  
Was the conquest of self in the battle with sin.”

Here is man’s most trying battle. Sin’s power is far reaching. It has touched every part of our being. Our minds, our emotions, our wills, our bodies, have all felt the sting of the serpent. We are totally depraved! This does not mean we are as bad as we can be. “Pravo” means “upright, erect.” Depraved means “turned down

from the upright." Total depravity means "turned down from the upright" in the whole nature. What wonderful power is this, to turn aside the aggressive, aspiring soul of man and leave it lying like a fallen monarch of the forest.

But sin's power thus to turn down is not confined to outward acts. Sin may be an act. But it is also a state of being. A life does not need to perform an overt act of sin to be a sinful life. We belong to a race of sinners. Sin's poison is in our blood. We are carrying our cradles on our backs. A stream of sinful tendencies is flowing through us. Sin is a part of our nature. It is Paul who says, "That which I would, I do not; and that which I would not, I do. O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death." What awful power is this which fastens its clutches on us, in the womb and the cradle.

Terrible is its power!

It is a withering power. "As an oak whose leaf fadeth." Behold us men! See our weak bodies, dulled brains and impotent wills. Blasted trees in the forest. Sin sears and dries the heart, stifles the bloom and freshness of life, and leaves it a withered leaf.

It is a consuming power. "He shall be as tow, and his work as a spark and they shall burn together." Sin at last wrecks the fair promises of manhood. It burns out the finest fibre of life and leaves a scarred ruin. It makes the soul inflammable and compels it to feed upon ashes.

“On that hard pagan world  
 Disgust and secret loathing fell;  
 Deep weariness and sated lust  
 Made human life a hell.”

No need is there for Gehenna with its fires. Sin itself withers and burns, and leaves man—imperial, immortal man—a charred ruin amid the wreckage of time. “The wages of sin is death.”

What awful power is this which has power to “destroy both soul and body” of the fairest creature of God’s creation!

### III. Sin’s Punishment.

Man is not a puny weakling. He is grandly free. Sin is a choice. For his choices man is responsible. Is he then, punished for the evil that he deliberately embraces? We know he is punished here. Nature punishes him. The drunkard’s woe, the miser’s fear and the libertine’s disgust are familiar pictures of sin’s punishments. Pain and disease may be numbered among them. Remorse is sin’s most common retribution. Yes, sin is punished, and punished terribly here. And our sense of justice tells us it ought to be so.

But does punishment exhaust itself on this side of the grave? There is a great deal of confusion about the doctrine of Hell. Most of us get our conception of it from the poets. Dante, and Milton, and Homer, and Bunyan are our authorities. It is not strange that we have a distorted picture. For these poets have shown us a crude and impossible picture of *spiritual* beings suffering *physical*

torments in a place of fire and brimstone. They are a travesty on the gospel, and a libel on God. And yet men have the idea that these are the sole argument of the evangelist.

Jesus does not say much of hell, but he declares again and again that sin is punished *beyond the grave*. There are some sins that cannot reap their full harvest here. Vanity, frivolity, envy, greed, hate, cruelty, selfishness, irreverence do not come to their full fruitage till the externals of the flesh are stripped away. Dives had a stony heart in life, but when death has burned his linen and his banquet table, and he stands, a *soul*—then he sees himself as he really is. And remorse, awful remorse, burning him like a consuming flame, causes him to cry out in agony for a drop of water to cool his thirst. But the same death cleansed the sores of Lazarus and burned his rags, and he, too, stands out alone as he is. *He* is in heaven. His soul is in the “bosom of Abraham.” He has lived the life of God.

How long will the spiritual punishment of remorse, separation from the good, and the absence of spiritual joy, endure? “Eternal,” said Jesus. “Age-long.” Ah, but how long ere the age is consummated? Will it last forever? “Do you mean to say God will send man to everlasting punishment for the sins committed in one short life?” No, the Bible does not say that. It does not even say God *sends* any man into hell. If he goes there, he walks through its dreary portals of his

own volition, turning his back upon the Father. There must be *separation* in a perfect Kingdom. The evil cannot live with the good. But if a man is *punished* forever it will be because he is a sinner forever. And it *seems* as if it were possible to resist the love of God forever. So far as we know, death crystallizes character. Behold, men resisting to the last the entreaties of a loving God, and going out into the dark night with curses on their lips. Who shall say that they may not thus live forever?

There is an air of finality about Jesus' word on future punishment. The gulf is fixed. The tares are separated from the wheat. Men are left, passing into outer darkness. Nothing is said of their return. To say that some souls may choose hell so long, that they can never get back to the Father's house, is neither preposterous nor foolish. "He that is filthy let him be filthy still, and he that is holy let him be holy still." The best psychology of today plainly declares that there comes a time when habits become so fixed, and character so crystallized that a change is impossible. Who shall say, that for some evil hearts, that very time does not come, when the last flutter of the eyelid tells that earthly life is ended. There is a sin that is not forgiven—the sin against the Holy Ghost. It is the sin of spiritual suicide. The soul is killed. It can no longer hear the call of God. It can never turn. Its punishment is forever. Its sin is forever.

## IV. Sin's Pardon.

Is there then no hope for man, stung by the presence of sin, slave to its power, burdened by its punishments?

Here upon the earth two pillars rise. One is built of human sufferings, sorrows, woes and sins. Its capstone is a yearning desire for deliverance. The other is built of holiness, purity, peace, wisdom, power; and its capstone is the infinite Love of God. These two pillars are stretching out their unfinished arms. Will they ever meet? Is forgiveness possible?

Here is man, a depraved creature, feebly groping his way among the dark spectres of his intended glory, passing out into the gloom of night and sending back the echoes of his retreating cry, "What must I do to be saved?"

Has Infinite Love an answer? Is "God sitting in his heaven and doing nothing?" Is humanity's experience to end in a tragedy? *God has an answer*: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have ETERNAL life." God has not forgotten. There is pardon and salvation. The unfinished arch has a capstone.

It is from God. "For God so loved." We know God can *think*. A reverent astronomer says, "Oh, God, I am thinking thy thoughts after thee." We know God loves. We are accustomed to say, "God is love." Can He "*so*" love as to forgive and redeem? Can He make the sacrifices

necessary to bring back the child from the far country? True forgiveness *never* is cheap. It will cost God sacrifice to convince, to forgive man, and save him. Will He make the sacrifice?

Suppose a mother, as she sits by her fireside, should hear in the storm without, the voice of her child lamenting. What would be the impulse of such a mother's heart? Would it not be to leave the fireside and its comfort and to go out and bring the wanderer home? And if love be the same in quality through all its degrees, why deem it a marvel that God should go out to seek the prodigal that has despised Him? Mighty is the mother love of God. "Come down from the cross; save thyself," shouted the priests at Calvary. But Jesus cannot come down from the cross. Jesus cannot save himself. When has love ever been able to save itself? It "suffereth long." It "layeth down its life for its friends." God "*so*" loved the world. There is a depth of meaning in that word "*so*." It is the grandest word, in the grandest sentence of the Bible. Because forgiveness is free to man it is not therefore cheap "Ye are bought with a price."

What shall the price be? What is always the sacrifice involved in forgiveness? When man forgives his brother, what sacrifice does he make? Is it not the giving up of self? Is it not the yielding of life? The boldest word in all literature is this which declares that God will send "His only begotten Son." He had sent prophets and

saints and priests, and all had failed to rouse man from the lethargy of sin.

Now the Son comes. The first great sacrifice is the Incarnation. Love—even Infinite love must lower itself to the object of its desire if it is to save. In uplifting it must get underneath. So Jesus identifies Himself with men, as their champion against sin. He offers the glad forgiveness of God. He faces every temptation men have to face, and is the supreme Victor, spotless, unique, alone. But still the miracle of forgiveness is not complete. Men's hearts are not touched. It is not until upon a *cross* he says, "Father forgive them," that he "draws all men unto Him."

The cross is the end of sacrifice. It is God's final gift that has led men to say, "Father forgive ME." One of the earliest pictures of the nativity represents the babe lying in the manger, and just above Him on the wall of the stable is the shadow of a cross. Holman Hunt paints Him in the carpenter's shop. The day's toil is over; the tired toiler, lifts his arms in weariness, and the level rays of the sun cast upon the wall yonder the shadow of a cross. The shadow of the cross was ever before Jesus. Even in the days of his highest popularity he knew what adherence to his mission of forgiveness and redemption would bring, and he said, "The Son of Man must be lifted up."

One painting of the crucifixion represents a group of angels hovering over the cross, and one



of them in wonder is reaching down to touch with his fingers the thorn points on the crown of mockery. Well may he wonder!

For never was there love like this. It is the sacrifice of God for man's forgiveness and redemption.

“When I survey the wondrous cross,  
 On which the Prince of Glory died,  
 My richest gain I count but loss,  
 And pour contempt on all my pride.”

And this forgiveness is for *me*. This sacrifice is to redeem *me*. Luther caught its deep significance, when in his dying hour, he held the crucifix before his dimming eyes and whispered, “Für mich, für mich.”

“There is a green hill far away  
 Without a city wall,  
 Where the dear Lord was crucified,  
 Who died to save us all.  
 We may not know, we cannot tell,  
 What pains he had to bear,  
 But this we know, it was for us,  
 He hung and suffered there.”

It will be said that this is old-fashioned. It is. Let us not despise old-fashioned things. The old-fashioned sun is shining in the heavens, the old-fashioned rain is falling upon the earth, the old-fashioned stars still deck the canopy of the night, the old-fashioned flowers are blooming in the meadows, the old-fashioned grass still grows on

the hillsides, old-fashioned love still stirs the hearts of men. The old-fashioned cross still saves.

To the toiler in sin's dark valley, weary and heavy laden, the message of hope is sounded.

Struggle upward—onward! The cross is reared upon the Alpine summits of life. And standing beneath it, one gazes far out over the flowered fields of heaven's sunny Italy.

“Is the way so dark, O wanderer?  
Is the hill crest wild and steep?  
Far, so far the goal beyond thee,  
Where the home-lights, vigil keep?”

From the toiling, from the striving,  
There at last shall come release;  
One shall bring thee past the hill crest,  
Home unto His plains of peace.”

XI

HOW NEAR MAY I COME TO HEAVEN  
AND MISS IT?

“Eye hath not seen it, my gentle boy,  
Ear hath not heard its sweet sounds of joy;  
Dreams cannot picture a world so fair,  
Sorrow and death may not enter there.  
Time doth not breathe on its fadeless bloom,  
For beyond the grave and beyond the tomb  
It is there, it is there, my child.”

FELICIA HEMANS, “*The Better Land.*”

“Not every one that saith unto me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in Heaven.” “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.” “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as a little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

JESUS, to His hearers.

## HOW NEAR MAY I COME TO HEAVEN AND MISS IT ?

*Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God.*  
Mark 12:34.

“How near may I come to Heaven and miss it?”

“Ah,” but some one says, “I do not believe in Heaven.” Oh, yes, you do. You may not believe in a city paved with golden streets, thronged with winged angels, resounding with the melodies of golden harps, and redolent with the perfume of blossoming flowers, far beyond the starry sky. But you believe in Heaven just the same.

You may not even believe in a better life of the spirit, after this house of clay shall have fallen back into the bosom of the earth. You may have no hopes beyond the narrow boundaries of this three score years and ten. But you believe that somehow, somewhere there is such a thing as perfect Justice. You believe that there is such a thing as perfect Love, absolute Honesty and unspotted Character. You believe that it is possible to be perfectly happy. The vision of better days is before you, and you are always longing for something which you think will bring you blessed joy. You believe in heaven. Heaven is

“That something which still prompts the eternal sigh,  
For which we bear to live, or dare to die.”

There is a universal longing to enter a fuller

and richer life than earth in its present condition has to offer. All literature is full of this longing for that better land to which we give the name of "Heaven." It may express itself very low in the scale of desire:

"A Persian heaven is easily made;  
'Tis but black eyes and lemonade."

Or it may rise to the lofty heights of most exalted communion with God.

"Alone, O Love Ineffable,  
Thy saving Name is given,  
To turn aside from Thee is Hell,  
To walk with Thee is Heaven."

But we tire of theories that try to speculate on the great question, "Where and what is Heaven?" For, after all, the question is not so much what and where it is, as how to get it for the soul.

Jesus himself seldom used the word, but when he did he spoke in very simple language. He spoke of heaven as a Kingdom. There are three things that make a kingdom: A king, a subject and a law. Jesus also used the word "Kingdom of God." By it he meant the same thing as "The Kingdom of Heaven." The Kingdom of Heaven to His mind was a condition of life where God was King, where His children lived in obedient recognition of His laws. When this should have been accomplished heaven would come to every heart. The thing for which he told his disciples

to pray above all was that Heaven's "Kingdom might come and God's will be done on earth," as it was in the very bosom of God Himself.

He very frankly said that he had come to earth to set up the Kingdom of Heaven here, and that all who followed him would enter that state of blessed joy which they sought. "The Kingdom of Heaven," said he, "is within you." It is a condition of soul, which a man carries with him. It is a present reality, which one may enter here and now. It is not a far off refuge whither a handful will one day escape. It is a condition of soul that permits one to live today in the Paradise of God. Omar Kayam echoes Jesus' thought.

"I sent my soul through the Invisible,  
Some letters of the after life to spell;  
And by and by my soul came back to me  
And whispered, "I myself am Heaven and Hell."

But Jesus did not stop there. While heaven's beginning is here, its end is not here. Jesus knew full well, that if the dream of the socialist should come true, and every child born into the world, should be clothed, fed, educated and well characterized, there would still be an unsatisfied longing. An immortal spirit will not be content to live in a house of clay. To try to make all of heaven here, is to take no reckoning of the "awful soul that dwells within." To Jesus the Kingdom of Heaven was also a future prospect. Heaven here is the bud of a flower whose bloom is beyond the tomb.

“A man’s reach should exceed his grasp,  
Or what’s a heaven for.”

“In my Father’s house are many—(not mansions)—but ‘homes,’” said Jesus. “I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am ye may be also.” The idea constantly in the mind of Jesus as he spoke to men who were longing for a heaven of temporal glories, was of a spiritual kingdom, here and hereafter where God should be King, and men should be His children, obeying His paternal laws. That Kingdom was a *present* reality. It was set up in the hearts of men. It was a *future* reality, where freed from the shackles of the flesh, the citizen would enter the full inheritance of eternal spiritual joy and perfect being in the Paradise of God.

The world has no simpler, saner teaching of heaven than this. If one believes in Jesus as the Great Teacher merely, he can ask for no grander conception of heaven than this; abiding, eternal happiness forever; satisfactions that never pass away, joys that have no end. This is the heaven for which we are all longing in our highest moments.

How near may we come to this, and yet miss it? I remember when a boy my teacher in spelling used to arrange the class in line before her, and when one spelled a word correctly, which the scholar before him had missed, he advanced one position toward the head of the class. The one who stood at the head of the class, when the day’s



lesson closed was given a point of credit, and the next day went to the foot to begin the climb again. At the close of the term a prize was given to the one having the most credits. It was my ambition to excel, and on the last day of the term it happened to be my turn to stand at the head of the class. Next below was a girl companion. We were tied for the prize. If I could only hold my place for today! The first word was "receive." Before I thought I had spelled it with the "i" first. I knew it! But it was too late! "Next" had already sounded in my ears. I had just missed!

May it not be that for some this dream of heaven is to be just like that? Is it possible that we may walk up to the very portals of eternal happiness and then be robbed of it forever? Let us see.

Here is Jesus talking to a curious throng gathered before him. He sees upon their faces a longing for a richer, fuller, more glorious life than that which they are living. Beneath their complacent exterior he sees the deep hungering of their souls.

At first glance it might seem that he has a hard audience to preach to.

The Herodians are there. They are the partisans of King Herod. They are listening to Jesus for political reasons. If they can only entrap Him into some statement that may be construed as a word of disloyalty to Caesar, they will

have an excuse for doing away with him as a possible pretender.

The Pharisees are there. They are the religious leaders of the Jews, and are studying scientifically and critically this new phenomenon in the religious world.

The Sadducees are there. They are the liberals of their day; speculative philosophers, who hold a theory that there can be no resurrection of the dead.

The scribes are there. They are the scholars of Israel, and have come to put this new teacher to the test of scholarship.

Jesus is preaching to them the Kingdom of Heaven, for he knows that beneath the exterior cloaks of the names they wear, there is a deeper longing for the secret of blessedness.

It is not strange that one of those learned scribes, perceiving how wonderfully Jesus had apprehended the truth, approaches him in an honest effort for more light. "Which is the first commandment of all?" Jesus replies giving him the two fundamental laws of the Kingdom of Heaven, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." The scribe agrees. "Indeed, Master, thou hast spoke the truth." Jesus answers, "Oh, scribe, thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."

The story ends. "So near and yet so far."

This word of Jesus was a word of ENCOURAGE-

MENT. Not far! I remember reading last summer of a workman at work on the lofty steel frame of a skyscraper. He was a riveter and it was his business to lie flat upon the iron beams, a hundred feet above the street and fasten the rivets to the steel girders. One day he was crawling out along a heavy timber, riveting it in place, when suddenly a heavy beam from above fell down with terrific force and crushed his feet. With the grip of death he hung to the beam and slowly crawled across it. His friends were powerless to help him. They must stand and wait till by his own efforts, he should reach their outstretched arms and be drawn to safety. In his agony his brain reeled; he felt his fingers relax; his nerves grow dull. Then, across the narrow space that still lay between him and safety, he heard the voice of a friend calling, "Only a little way, Charlie, not far, not far!"

Across the narrow girder of the intellect, yonder scribe has been making his way upward to Heaven. Now with the prize almost within his grasp, Jesus' voice of encouragement is ringing across the narrow space that still separates him from eternal blessedness, "Not far, not far."

But Jesus' voice is also a word of WARNING. He is still in danger. It is just before the moment of possible victory. It is when Braddock is marching through the New England forests with guns unloaded, and ammunition gone, that rout overtakes him. I know of one, a traveller, who

had braved the snow of Siberia, the jungles of Africa and the typhoons of the Indian ocean, and returning to his quiet village home in Ohio, was killed by a car in front of his own door. The greatest danger is just before the goal is reached. Then the exertions of the journey mass themselves in a final effort to snatch the prize away. Not half the dangers face the railway train out upon the open prairie, that confront it when it begins to face the crossings and switches of the terminal city. The rocks are not out in the open sea. They are just outside the harbor. It is to the man with his hand upon the homeland gate that the Master says, "Take heed lest ye fall."

When is the danger past? How close may one get to heaven and miss it? This scribe was very close to the heaven he sought.

He had the right conception of heaven itself. "To love God with all the heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, and one's neighbor as himself is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." He knew that heaven was a thing of the heart.

He was near to heaven in recognizing Jesus as the Great Teacher, and the one of authority in life. He called Him "Master," and he was willing to leave the whole decision to Him. "He perceived that he answered them well." He knew that if any man ever had Heaven in his heart it was this Galilean peasant. He saw in Jesus the Way.

He was near to Heaven in his religious practices

and life. If there had been any serious flaw in his life, Jesus would not have allowed this opportunity to slip by, for awakening an accusing conscience. He was a moral man. He was a religious man. He was not far from the Kingdom of Heaven. That highest blessedness all men seek was not his. But he was near to it! There was only one step yet into Heaven. Jesus had taken it.

He had taken it many times. He was destined to take it many times again. On that night when he entered the shadows of Gethsemane, he left his disciples, and his biographer tells us "he went a step further." That step was the last step into the Kingdom of Heaven.

When the rich young ruler came to Jesus HE was not far from the Kingdom of Heaven. There was but one step for him to take. "He went away sorrowful."

What is that step which we may take with Jesus through Gethsemane's shadows into the Kingdom of Joy?—that step which refusing to take, we go away from its very portals, sorrowful? IT was the step of FINAL, FULL AND COMPLETE CONSECRATION. It was the surrender of the life completely to God. When Jesus at the very beginning of his ministry said, "Get thee behind me Satan," angels came and ministered unto him. He had conquered self and enthroned God completely in his heart. And though the same temptation, "All these will I give thee if—" confronted his whole career, his supreme consecration

filled his soul with an unheard of calm. And at last when he emerged from the shadows of Gethsemane, having said finally, "Thy will be done," there was a supernatural peace about him that made even hard Roman soldiers exclaim, "Truly this was a righteous man."

The great commandment that Jesus gave to the rich young ruler was not, "Go, sell all thou hast," but "Come, follow me." And if he could have done that, the mere incident of giving up his wealth would have been a trifle. If he could have knelt with Jesus in Gethsemane, and have taken that last step, "Thy will be done," he would have found the heaven he sought.

And, Christian, it may be you have not yet found the kingdom of heaven. Your Christian life has not brought all the happiness it ought to bring. You are sighing for a richer, fuller experience, of heavenly joys. "You are not far from the Kingdom of Heaven." There is one way to get it. You must follow your Master in that last step into Gethsemane.

Or perhaps you are one who has never taken the first step into the kingdom of happiness. "You are not far." For though a wide gulf separates the ultimate Kingdom of Light, and the ultimate Kingdom of Darkness, their earthly portals are side by side. It is a choice between "the lady and the tiger," between God and the devil. But it is no blind guess. "I am the door; by me if any man enter in he shall be saved." "Enter ye into

the joys which God hath prepared for *them that love Him.*"

Come children of the Holiest, Heaven is not far from any one of you. Reach out and grasp its eternal joys. The key that unlocks its door is the key of consecration. It is too bad to be so near and yet so far.

"Be strong;  
We are not here to play, to dream, to drift;  
We have hard work to do and heavy loads to lift,  
Shun not thy battle; face it, 'tis God's gift.

Be strong;  
Say not, I'm satisfied; there is no blame;  
Nor fold your hands and idly sit—oh shame!  
Stand up, speak out and bravely, in God's name."





XII

WHAT IS THE SUPREME MISSION OF  
THE CHRISTIAN?

“One small life in God’s great plan,  
How futile it seems as the ages roll.  
Do what it may, or strive how it can,  
To alter the sweep of the infinite whole!  
A single stitch in an infinite web  
A drop in an ocean’s flow and ebb!  
But the pattern is rent where the stitch is lost,  
Or marred where the tangled threads have crossed;  
And each life that fails of its true intent,  
Mars the perfect plan that the Master meant.”

SUSAN COOLIDGE.

## WHAT IS THE SUPREME MISSION OF THE CHRISTIAN ?

*Ye are the salt of the earth ; but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? Matthew 5 : 14.*

*Ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Acts 1 : 8.*

Out of the visions of the past four scenes arise before me.

The first is laid upon the hills of Judea overlooking Jerusalem, in the year 29. Already the early and latter rains have kissed the parched soil of Syria into fertility, and the bright sunshine is lifting bulb and bud and seed into the bloom of summer. Syria is either a garden or a desert, and now her hills and valleys are just putting on their rarest beauty.

Jesus is seated here with his disciples. There is a touch of sorrow and perplexity in their hearts. He has just told them that his work is ended. Soon they shall see his face no more. The scenes through which they have so recently passed are fresh before them. The last supper together, the betrayal in the garden, the trial with its frenzied bigotry and confusion, the cross with its black darkness and its death, the burial in the rock-hewn tomb, the glad joy of resurrection morning—all are ended.

For three years Jesus has been bearing witness of Himself. Now he is to leave them alone in a heathen world. But just before he departs there fall from his lips, the words, "Ye shall be my witnesses." Henceforth his case is in the hands of his disciples. What he says to them there, is the echo of a far-off word he had sounded at the very beginning of his ministry, "Ye are the salt of the earth."

And if this scene on the slopes of Olivet had compelled a prophecy, it would have been, that these eleven men would go out into that wicked world, in vain. That after a few years they would pass to ignoble deaths, and the world would hear of them and their message no more.

Again, there rise before me three scenes of early American settlement.

I behold a little company of exiles in the name of God, hewing the New England forests. They have just landed on an inhospitable coast. A long and dreary winter is before them. They are tremblingly on the defensive against savages and starvation. I think they will die there in the snows of the winter of 1620. Then, I cast my eyes southward to the mouth of the James river in Virginia. Here is gathered a little company of men. They are sick and dying of disease and nostalgia. Savages and starvation are thinning their ranks, and even as I look they fade away. And yet further southward, there is another company of settlers at the mouth of the St. John's

river in Florida. They have fled from burning homes in France, and are flung half naked on a flowery strand; but lest they survive, the sword of slaughter falls upon them and its sharp edge does clean work.

If these visions of eastern settlement had compelled a prophecy it would have been that three more companies of shivering exiles had been added to the history of the world's fruitless martyrdoms—that the faint and fluttering light on this new continent was about to be extinguished forever.

But lo! The twentieth century has dawned since the scene on Olivet. I behold that little company of eleven men turned to four hundred million. I see following them through the deserts of Asia and the dark forests of Europe, the blessings of a new civilization and a new life everywhere.

And three hundred years have passed by since these three companies of Christian exiles perished in the forests of the new world. I follow them, as for three centuries they trail their garments of light and victory across the land. I behold Christian commonwealths arise as by magic; I see a forest wild in desolation and a desert rocked in sand, made to rejoice and blossom as the rose; I see the countless blessings of Christian civilization follow in their wake as the waves of darkness recede.

And as I contemplate these visions turned to history, I realize that it was no idle word the Galilean spoke to those disciples of his, and through

them to Christian hearts in all the ages, "Ye are the salt of the earth." The supreme business of the Christian is to bear witness to this Jesus, by a life that *savours* and *saves*.

When this mission was first laid upon the eleven the world was in sad need of a preserving force. Its corruption was not superficial, but extended to the very heart of life.

"On that hard pagan world,  
Disgust and sated loathing fell,  
Deep weariness and sated lust  
Made human life a hell."

No wonder as man gazed on the vanities of time they had been asking, "Is life worth living?" Many a heart in those days *felt* the despairing philosophy to which Omar Kayam afterward gave utterance,

"Myself when young did eagerly frequent  
Learned doctor, teacher, scholar, saint;  
And heard great argument, about it and about,  
But ever came out the same door wherein I went."

The world was in need of the witness of the salt. And the souls that heard the divine commission, went out into the great dying, rotting world, and scattered over its desolate wastes the salt that brought a new vigor to the life of men, and a new day to the dark world of sin.

The need of this salt is ever present. Today the call of Jesus is, "Ye are my witnesses—Ye are the salt of the earth." Behold the present

world. Here are men bowing before things fleeting and ephemeral. Here is wealth deified and poverty disgraced; virtue thwarted and vice enthroned. Here are the weak oppressed in sweatshops and alleys, and the strong dwelling in palaces of marble. I see the miser's greed, the libertine's disgust and the drunkard's woe. I see a generation of thoughtless men and women issuing from crowded theatres and ball rooms, apparently satisfied with these fleeting things.

My daily papers tell me of suicides, of bribery, corruption, extortion and fraud. I see selfishness triumphant and greed reigning. Thoughtless, careless, characterless, godless world! It needs the witness of godly men and women as never before. It needs salt to preserve its decaying fibre.

It needs a satirist like Juvenal to show its follies; it needs a preacher like Paul to herald the gospel of light; it needs a defender of pure womanhood like Frances Willard; it needs mothers like Jane Wesley to train their sons even in poverty to lead millions along the upward trail. Salt bearing is the supreme mission of the Christian. "Ye are the salt of the earth." The Master's "witness" is to go like a grain of salt and make his presence and his power felt in this dying world. There is on him the debt of power. Having the salt of life, he *must* make his savour felt.

I. He is to witness first of all to the salt of TRUTH.

“Half the woes of life are born of error,” says one. Who then can measure the power of a single truth let fall, like salt, into a dying soul? We never know the possibilities of any time nor place for making the power of truth felt. In the lonely village school, away up in the hills of Germany, a teacher taught a class of ragged miners’ boys. That teacher was alive with the truth that men ought to be free. Years passed, and one of those boys, climbing the steps of the Sancta Scala in Rome, suddenly exclaimed, “The just shall live by faith.” With that truth, whose seed was planted, by that teacher in the days of youth, this young man turned the world upside down. There is not a school, nor shop, nor home, nor store anywhere that has not within it the possibility of scattering truth that shall enrich and beautify the world. “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” was the question Nathaniel put to Philip; and something good did come. Truth itself came out of Nazareth; that Truth which has enriched the world with fullness of blessing.

“Knowledge is Power,” said Paschal. It is power for evil as well as good. But the knowledge of Truth is salt, that scattered into the lives of men redeems, saves. “Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”

Life may never offer to the soul a wide range of possibilities, but the value of a life, like the value of a well, is not measured by its circumference, but by its depth, and by the waters that are



drawn from it. No soul lives that has not attained some truth. It may be one talent, or it may be ten, but that truth has a mission to perform. It is salt, full of savour.

The world wants men who know. It is tired of men who reason of time and eternity and write "agnosco" above their toil. It wants men who see the invisible, as Moses saw it, and endure in it though the heavens fall. Never has the world so stood in the need of the salt of truth as today. Deceit and error are everywhere, and the heart of man is crying, "O, that I might know the truth."

"But," someone says, "what can my knowledge of the truth do in a world so perplexed with doubts and so steeped in error?" "What can I do?" the raindrop asked as it fell on the petal of a flower that was parched and dried. What it did was to cause the flower to revive and bloom again. A traveller, weary and sick of heart saw it, and it awoke in him the truth of God's love once more. And he became the apostle of a brighter day to thousands of lives. And all because the raindrop by its faithfulness taught him one little truth.

It is a law of physics that the brilliancy of a light depends on one's ability to focus it to a point. The beauty and power of truth depend upon the ability of its possessor to centre and focus that truth on the heart of another.

What wondrous power has truth! Goldsmith

tells us of its power in the lips of a lowly son of toil,

“Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway,  
And fools who came to scoff remained to pray.”

If men only knew the truth, if they understood true life, if they understood each other; if the films of ignorance could be lifted, and we should behold the fullness of “things as they are,” what a glorious world this would be! “Go ye into all the world,” bearing the salt of Truth.

II. Again, the Christian is to bear the salt of CHARACTER.

“Character is greater than intellect,” says Emerson. Character is truth *lived*. A man may know, and his knowledge count for naught if it be not backed by life. “Actions speak louder than words,” and character, which is the regulator of men’s actions, is more important even than the salt of truth. The influence of character on life in an old theme, and upon it volumes have been written; and yet it is ever new. The living epistles men read, are they which energize and fructify.

The opportunities for character to tell upon the world are wider and deeper than those of truth bearing. One need not speak to have his character felt; wherever he moves there will fall from him unconsciously, influences—salt—to affect the lives of those he passes, even as Peter’s shadow falling on the sick of Jerusalem, healed them. The poet Gray was wrong. No “flower is born to blush

unseen and waste its sweetness on the desert air." The flower of character, no matter how obscure, is an unconscious blessing to the world.

But character will reveal itself in conscious acts as well. Its outward deeds will be a living expression of its inner worth. The heart of true character is sincerity, the inner and the outer life in perfect correspondence. Sincerity is a grand word. It comes from two Latin words. The ancient makers of vases used to fill the flaws in their imperfect vases with wax to hide their defects. But occasionally there came a vase from the furnaces, flawless. And they labelled it in the market *sine cera*, without wax. That is what true character is, the same through and through.

Paul used a different word when he prayed that his converts might "be sincere." The figure is also from the market-place, and the word means "tested in the sunlight," just as merchants today put their cloths to the test of the sunlight.

And it is in the realm of character that is set woman's throne of glory. "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." It will be a sorry day for earth when womanhood forsakes her highest mission,—that of scattering abroad the salt of sincere character in a tempted and sinful world. One has only to read the history of the past to measure the power of womanhood in the realm of character. Madame de Stael in France, Florence Nightingale in England, Frances Willard in America, and Ethelberga of the Saxon days, are shining marks of woman's power for good. And

what possibilities of evil rise before us when we think of Jezebel and Herodias and Catherine de Medici!

The influence of character is immortal. It is salt that never loses its savor, but sends its preserving forces into each succeeding generation.

In one of the parks of New York there is a statue of Nathan Hale, and beneath it are those last words of his, "I regret that I have but one life to give for my country." As each succeeding generation looks upon them it is thrilled to a new patriotism; and Nathan Hale being dead, yet speaketh.

Benedict Arnold, the traitor, dying in obscurity said, "I was born an American, I die an American, but in America I have not one friend." How different these two messages out of the past, and yet they both live—are unconsciously immortal.

When the noble, gentle-charactered and persecuted Wyclif died, his enemies exhumed his body and burning it, scattered its ashes in a brook near the Avon. Wordsworth has beautifully told us of the rapid spread and universal influence of Wyclif's character in the symbol of this deed.

"As thou these ashes, little brook, wilt bear  
Into the Avon, Avon to the tide  
Of Severn, Severn to the narrow seas,  
Into the main ocean they; this deed accursed  
An emblem yields to friends and enemies,  
How their bold teacher's life, sanctified  
By truth, shall spread throughout the world dispersed."

III. The Christian is to bear also the salt of the GOSPEL.

The supreme need of the world is salvation from its sin. The universal question is, "What must I do to be saved?" Jesus said, "I am come to seek and to *save* that which was lost." "Ye shall be *my* witnesses." As he spoke, there flashed across his vision the picture of a hopeless world, dying in its sins—a lost world. With daring assurance he declared Himself to be the Saviour of the world, and his Gospel the message of salvation. "Go ye into all the world and preach my gospel to every creature." "Ye are the salt of the earth." The word gospel means "good news." And the good news these salt bearers were to carry was of God come down to live with men, and to "give his life a ransom for many," "that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Civilization has had many ebbs and flows since then. She nowhere moves forward in solid phalanx. Her ascent is spiral. Sometimes she passes through the same scenes, only a little higher up in the scale of life. But in times of darkness, when moral and intellectual light has been almost extinguished, this *gospel* has been the one preserving force—the salt of the earth. Whatever of good there was preserved in those dark ages from 476 to 1453, was preserved in the hearts of men who carried this gospel, planted deep within.

The key to the Christian's power is in the gospel

he carries. The trouble with many of the world's movements for betterment today is that men have gotten away from that gospel of Jesus as the key to all betterment. There are all kinds of altruisms and schemes of sociological and psychological fol de rol, that aim to uplift humanity without recognizing the gospel of God. It is asking men to lift themselves by their own bootstraps.

There has actually been started a *religion* without a God. Men would have us believe that religion consists in reciting beautiful poems and going into ecstasies over twittering birds and blossoming flowers. There is a false liberality, that prides itself on its intellectual and cultured religion, but is still in its spiritual and intellectual swaddling clothes.

It is because at heart the true Christian still clings to the real gospel that the church is a factor in life today. True religion will be altruistic, but altruism is not religion. *Religion is living the life of God.* The only true "good news" is that which lifts humanity into the bosom of the Father.

Such is the gospel of Jesus. Its aim is an at-one-ment of man with God. Its aim is not to dominate life, but like salt to permeate it. It is an engrafted power, that takes the wild grapes of human life, and changes them into the muscatel; that joins the frail June rose to the character of Jesus until it becomes the American Beauty.

The Christian is to bear the salt of the gospel, a message of "good news," to men who are long-

ing for some dawn to break on the darkness of a hopeless, Godless life. A gospel that answers the question of the jailor of Philippi, "What must I do to be saved?" by saying, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

IV. And lastly, the Christian is to bear the salt of OPTIMISM.

Cheer and courage and a solid faith in one's mission are the secrets of a life that bears salt. In the bearing of Truth, Character and the Gospel the way it is borne is sure to count.

Shakespeare's Hamlet was a marvellous character, and the world has not ceased to wonder at the mind that created him. He had a noble mission, a keen intellect and a wonderful plan. YET HAMLET FAILED! And he failed because he lacked a sturdy optimism to bear him up in defeat. He lacked decision; he lacked faith in himself; he lacked faith in his fellows; he lacked faith in God.

It was otherwise with Paul, the mighty man of history. He went bearing the salt of truth, character, the gospel, with a cheerful countenance and a calm heart. Before a mob that seeks his life, imprisoned, in storm and shipwreck, his one message is, "Be of good cheer." Always he was the same smiling, optimistic Paul. He could say at the close of life, "I have fought a good fight."

His eyes were never on the dust. His song was

“I look above, my eyes are there attracted  
 By one at God’s right hand, divinely fair;  
 And as I look my soul finds satisfaction;  
 Oh! let me gaze forever, only there.”

It is the optimist who lifts humanity out of its sorrows and its sins. It is he who “loses himself in the lives of other men,” and by losing his life finds it again. The world has sorrows enough to overwhelm it. It *would* be overwhelmed if it were not for the salt of a glorious optimism that the disciples of Jesus are scattering everywhere in the despondent hearts of men. Riley tells us beautifully of the power of this salt.

“When a man ain’t got a cent, and he’s feelin’ kind  
 of blue  
 An’ the clouds hang dark and heavy and won’t let  
 the sunshine through,  
 It’s a great thing, oh, my brethren, for a feller just  
 to lay  
 His hand upon your shoulder in a friendly sort of  
 way.

It makes a chap feel curious, it makes the tear drops  
 start,  
 An’ you feel a sort of flutter in the region of your  
 heart,  
 You can’t look up into his eyes, you don’t know what  
 to say,  
 When a hand is on your shoulder in a friendly sort  
 of way.

Oh, the world’s a curious compound, with its honey  
 and its gall,



With its cares and bitter crosses, but a good world  
 after all,  
 An' a good God must have made it; leastways that's  
 what I say  
 When a hand is on my shoulder in a friendly sort of  
 way."

There is a sad alternative before us, "If the salt have lost its savour." How often does it happen that lives, like the washed sands along the shore of the Dead Sea, have had all their savour taken away. Of course they are "good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of man." Lives must themselves be sweet if they are to sweeten others. To keep them sweet and pure and holy, the soul must go often to the Fountain of all sweetness which emerges from beneath the throne of God.

This is a strange world in which we live. It is a world that professes and does not practice; a world immoral and a world unjust; a world of shame and a world of crime; a world of sorrow and a world of sin; a world of doubt and a world of despair. It is a world that cheats and lies; a wicked world, heedless of God; a selfish world; a conceited world; a world that scoffs at holy things; impious, hateful, ignorant, diseased, decaying, dying, lost.

Of this world, Christian, ye are the salt. Into it go ye, bearing that precious sweetness the Master alone supplies; that glorious witness of noblest life, which He has so fittingly called "the salt of the earth."

“O God of my heart, by Thy grace divine  
Let Thy Spirit within me flow;  
Bid my soul in Thine its love entwine,  
That my life may gleam with a light not mine,  
And the savor of salty sweetness show.”

XIII

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF A  
CHRISTIAN ?

“A Hindu trader in Keerwara market once asked Pema, ‘What medicine do you put on your face to make it shine so?’

Pema answered, ‘I don’t put anything on.’

‘No, but what do you put on?’ again asked the Hindu trader.

‘Nothing. I don’t put anything on.’

‘Yes you do. All the Christians do. I have seen it in Agra, and I have seen it in Ahmadabad and Surat, and I have seen it in Bombay.’

Pema laughed, and his happy face shone the more, as he said, ‘Yes, I’ll tell you the medicine: it is a happy Christian heart.’”

LOUIS ALBERT BANKS, “*Problems of Youth.*”

“Major General Charles George Gordon, C. B.,  
who at all times  
and everywhere gave his strength  
to the weak,  
His substance to the poor,  
His sympathy to the suffering,  
His heart to God.”

*Inscription on the tomb of General Gordon.*

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF A CHRISTIAN?

*Ye believe in God, believe also in me.* John 14:1.

*Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Matthew 5:20.

*What do ye more than others?* Matthew 5:47.

I sat one summer evening in a boat on one of our northern lakes, beneath the glory of a cloudless sky. The moon had not yet risen to dim the splendor of even the smallest and furthest orb of light. The heavens were alive with fire. It seemed as if there were not an inch of space from horizon to horizon that did not boast its twinkling star.

I had long ago forgotten most of my astronomy, and should not have been attracted to any special portion of the heavens, had it not been that in the east, only a little way above the horizon, there shone a star, distinguished far above its fellows in power and brilliancy. I knew that it was many thousand miles away, but it seemed as if a child, longing for some new plaything, might reach up its hand and pluck it from the jewelled robe of night.

Its brightness seemed to bring it very near, and its unusual splendor marked it as unique. In vain I searched the heavens for its equal. Then I realized as never before why men had named it "*the evening star.*"

I began to wonder what it was about this star that attracted my attention instantly. Further away than many others, the same medium between us, it was outshining them all; and a little later when a film of cloud crept over the heavens, and not another star could be seen, yon star still gleamed. One who understands the heavens has told me since that there is something peculiar about the *structure* of that star that gives it its unusual brilliancy and marks it in the heavens.

Here is suggested a wonderful thought. Not a few Christian hearts are troubled about the "signs of the Christian." They say they "hope," they "trust" they are Christians. But they are not sure of it. How may the world know that they are really the Master's? How may they know it themselves? What are the distinguishing marks of a Christian?

Evidently the Christian, like "the evening star," is to be unique and distinguished from all others by the peculiar brilliancy of his light. For here is Jesus, at the very beginning of his ministry, not at its close, saying to his disciples: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "Ye are the light of the world—a city set upon a hill (which) cannot be hid." "Verily, verily I say unto you, except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of God."

“You see yon publican there. You consider him the most degraded man among you. Yet he is kind, and good, and just, to those who are kind, and good, and just to him. If that is all you are, what better are ye than the publican? What do ye *more* than others?”

Evidently Jesus expected the Christian to be a man of mark; to carry with him qualities, that would at once identify him as “Christ’s Man.” He intended the Christian to shine like the evening star, a unique creation. There was never to be the slightest doubt in the minds of others, nor in the mind of the Christian himself, that he was Christ’s—a Christian.

That was true of His life. Wherever He went men came running to Him and saying, “Master, Master.” John has been preaching the coming Messiah to a crowd of his followers by Jordan. Suddenly in the throng, one day, he points to a man standing there, and says, “This is He of whom I spake.” There was something about Christ that challenged men’s attention instantly and marked Him. There was never any doubt in His mind as to the reality of his Deity. He never said he “hoped,” he “trusted,” he was the Son of God. His one word was “*I am.*”

The early Christians were like Him. They became marked men. People “took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.” They knew they were Christians and their persistence in that knowledge led them to the arena and the cross.

They possessed a certain something that marked them as more than ordinary men. At Antioch that difference became so marked that the finger was pointed at them as they passed, and men whispered to their companions, "CHRISTIANS!"

What was it that marked these men? You remember sometime going to hear some man of great reputation speak. But when you saw him you were disappointed. He was not a handsome man; he spoke with none of the gifts of oratory, and you wondered why it was that his words burned into your very soul, and sent you away like one of Demosthenes' hearers, saying, "Let us go and fight Philip." Then long afterward you discovered that, unknown to men, this man had been giving up his life to the service of a great cause. Then you knew the secret of his power. He was *doing more* than others. You call the eagle the king of birds, because he soars the highest into the blue.

Such is the Christian—the *real* Christian. Wherever he goes men fall down before him saying, "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God?" The religion of Jesus is a religion of doing. "Do ye, do ye," are words most often on the Master's lips. And it is not a religion of *mere* doing, but of DOING MORE. It deals in comparatives and superlatives only. A Christian is one who does more than others, no matter how much others may do.

Men say to me often, "There is So and So, just



as good a man as your average Christian." This ought not so to be. The Christian is Christ's man. He has God's image and superscription on him, and the severest indictment that can be brought against him is that you cannot find him in a crowd.

"What do ye more than others?" Let us ask ourselves that question. What are the things that are going to indicate to others and to convince our own hearts that we are real Christians? Why, OUR DEEDS! Yes, but there cannot be *doing* without *being*. We must *be* something before we can *do* anything. A Christian will *be* more than others. "Out of the heart are the issues of life," and one must have an enlarged heart before he can hope to enlarge his deeds. But to get an enlarged heart, he must have an enlarged *belief*. The Christian will believe more, be more, do more. The three things that are to mark him are his Creed, his Character, his Conduct.

I. His creed is first. He must believe more. There is a great deal of foolish talk against creeds today. It is assumed that the creedless man is a superior sort of creature, of loftier vision and larger mold. The real truth is that every intelligent being must have his creed. A ship cannot be steered without a rudder of some sort. One cannot say, "creeds are foolish," without declaring by those very words that he himself has a creed. He who does anything, from the very nature of the case must first believe he can do it.

And he who has the largest and most comprehensive creed is he who is going to do the greatest deeds.

I well remember the words of one of my good old professors. We were a group of young students just ready to take up the active service of the Christian ministry. He had called us aside on that beautiful spring afternoon for a final heart to heart talk. Could we ever forget it? The grand old man of seventy years of service! Some of us had dabbled a little in popular science and criticism—just enough to undermine our faith a little. Now his last word to us was an appeal to be men of lofty creed, and exalted beliefs. "I tell you, men," he said, "you must believe in the things you preach to the very bottom of your souls. You must have a mighty creed, and believe it intensely, if you are ever to do anything for the world."

The creed of the Christian has no peer. "Love your enemies and bless them that curse you." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." "Resist not evil, but overcome evil with good." "Judge not." "As ye would that men should do unto you do ye even so to them." "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." "Be content, be patient, be sincere, be meek, be holy." "Be absolutely thorough; enter in by the strait gate." "Never deviate from the rule of right, no matter what befall." "Aim to get away from the

dust and soar into the presence of God." "Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect."

The ancient religions all have their creeds, but nowhere is there a creed like that. There are hints of delicate virtues here and there. But ancient faith lived in a little world, and ancient morality like ancient knowledge was narrow, nebulous and negative. The creed of the Christian soars into the highest heaven of self-attainment and altruistic service.

The Christian has the creed of Christ. He has more. He has the creed of Christ, plus Christ himself. Christianity is not a system of teaching. It is a system of teaching, lived. The added conception of Jesus Himself, furnishes the Christian creed with a new life-giving power.

The creed of the Christian is a bolder creed. It says more, promises more, professes more, hopes for more. Its conceptions are always larger and loftier than mere convention demands. It differs from all other creeds as the mariner's compass differs from a weather vane. Its claims are more stupendous than the visions of any prophet and its program of triumph beyond the dreams of any conqueror.

"Ye believe," said Jesus, "believe *also!* "Believe more, Christians!" "Greater works than I do shall ye do, but you must believe *also!*"

"In tumult loud, and battle shout,  
Amid the war of world and state,  
When rabbles flee in utter rout

And none are reckoned great;  
Above life's low and ordinary flow  
Beyond its crags and mountain snow  
Shines bright the star that 'believes also.' "

II. But this Christian creed will fulfill itself in a Christian character. Believing more is the first sign of the Christian. And just as surely as water seeks its level, will believing and doing become one.

The real Christian *is* more than others. He cannot help but be so; he believes more. His character is always better than his reputation. He is not merely a reformed sinner. He is more. He is a new creature. A change has taken place in his life, not at its circumference, but at its heart. "A new heart will I give thee." The stream of his character is purified not only by its ordinary flow, but it has a new fountainhead, from which gush new and crystal waters. A little leaven has entered the meal until the whole is leavened. Through and through a new power is at work in him, and he is a new creature.

His character now is like the purity of the snow crystal, through and through, gleaming whiteness. He shines like the flawless diamond, with pencils of clearest light. His clean exterior is no pale coating of alabaster over a black heart. You can turn the X-rays on him and you will find the same material throughout his whole being. This is the secret of Christian magnetism. This is Jesus' secret, about which men marvel. "I, if I

be lifted up will draw all men unto me." It is not strange. It is the drawing power of highest character.

"These Christians are a very obstreperous lot," wrote Pliny to Caesar, "and I would fain be rid of them; but I can find nothing whereof to accuse them, and so justify their death." Oh, Pliny, you are juster than another Roman governor, who sending one to the *Cross* said, "I find no fault in Him."

Wolsey once wrote of Lee, "I shall never forget his sweet, winning smile, nor his clear, honest eyes. I have met many great men, but Lee alone impressed me with the feeling that I was in the presence of a man of grander mold and finer metal than others I have known. I have met with only two men who realize my ideal of what a true hero should be. Charles Gordon was one and Lee the other." Did it ever occur to the great Englishman, that those wonderful qualities in these men that challenged his admiration were due to the fact that they were living characters born of the Christian creed?

"One prayed in vain to paint the vision blest  
Which shone upon his heart by night and day,  
But homely duties in his dwelling pressed,  
And hungry hearts that would not turn away,  
And cares that still his eager hands bade stay.  
The canvas never knew the painted face  
But year by year, while yet the vision shone,  
An angel near him, wondering, bent to trace  
In his own life the Master's image grown."

The superlative conceptions that make the Christian creed are bound to reflect themselves in a superlative character.

III. But believing and being are only incident to doing. Creed and character are the steps that lead to conduct. "What do ye more than others?" was Jesus' question. And he had a right to ask it. If the Christian believes more and is more, it is a fair question, "What do ye more?"

"I give as much to charity, and am just as honest as my competitor across the street," said a Christian business man to me once. But his competitor was not a Christian. It is too bad if Christians are going to measure their standards of doing by the standards of the world. There are not many Christians like this, for a Christian is bound to do more than other men. I mean the real Christian. Not the Christian who lets religion end with baking a cake for a church supper, or attending a Brotherhood banquet. There is no Christianity in that.

The criticism is often made of the Christian that he is not a man of large service. The criticism is false. The real Christian is the only true altruist. And if one will get beneath the exterior of all the great movements of uplift in the world, he will discover Christian deeds behind them all. The world expects and knows the Christian to believe more, to be more, to do more.

Let us press this question home upon ourselves. How shall we and the world know that we are Christians?

How about our home life? Is there more of tenderness, forbearance, self-denial and real love in our Christian home than in the ordinary home? Is there a light shining there that marks it as a Christian home? Would a stranger entering there know it to be a Christian home? "What do *we* more than others?"

And what of our pleasures? As we move among our fellows in the social world, is there something about the kind of amusements we enjoy, and the way we enjoy them, that marks us as Christians? Even in an evening's pleasure do men say of us, "He has been with Jesus?"

How about our business life? The Christian man is not merely to be honest. As a matter of policy all good business men are honest. The Christian is more. His business methods are keyed higher than the standards of the street if he is a true Christian.

I have heard of two lawyers, one a Christian and the other a Jew. They were employed together on a case in New York. When they came to decide what their fee should be, the Jew suggested that \$5000 would be a fair amount. The Christian laughed. "Leave that to me, and I'll get you \$10,000 in twenty-four hours." Next morning he put a check in the Jew's hand for \$10,000. The Jew took it, smiled, and said with a sneer, "My friend, 'almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.'" How may a Christian business man know he is such and convince the world of it? "What do ye more than others?"

What of our public life as citizens of the state? The voice of the real Christian will be heard in the caucus for clean men. He will not need arguments to convince him that he ought to vote for righteousness. He will be a leader in righteousness, and will despise so small a thing as party when truth and purity and honor are at stake.

This is a sober question for the Christian. The real Christian cannot hide his light under a bushel. The signs that mark him will be seen of men. I have said the *real* Christian, for I know that there are many Christians at whom the world points the finger of scorn. Their religion is not real!

But the world knows the real Christian, and it believes in his superlative worth. He lets his light shine before men.

"Ah," but someone says, "that kind of Christians are so few. What can they amount to in a world so full of sham and pretense? Of what avail a few lives that bear the marks of real Christian power?"

Christian, it is no part of the lighthouse keeper's duty to sail the reeling craft upon the ocean. The sailors are responsible for that. It is his business to trim his lamps and let them shine. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works."

There is a river in the south. Its waters are black and unclean. But at frequent intervals along its course clear, crystal streams from the mountains pour their waters into it. Were it not for



their sacrifice to this muddy river, its waters would stagnate and rot. The clean currents from the upland are its salvation. Like a clear mountain stream, is the real Christian life, emptying into the miasmatic flood of humanity, purifying, redeeming, saving.

What are the signs of the Christian? How are we to know when the real life of the Master has entered our hearts? How is the world to know it?

When spring comes after the long winter, the frozen earth bursts into new bloom and fragrance. When the night is over and the morning dawns, the world is filled with a new light. When health comes back after illness, the signs of health appear in the ruddy face, the brightening eye, the buoyant step. When Christ enters the heart, the signs of Christ appear in a loftier creed, a purer character, a nobler service.

Our religion is not a thing of orthodoxy, ceremonialism or church membership. It is a *life* that believes *more*, is *more*, does *more*.

“Ye bear the name of Christians,  
His name and sign ye bear.”

Christian, do you? If Christ has really entered the heart there will be something about your very presence that will compel men to say as one did to Peter long ago, “Thou art also one of them.”



XIV

WHAT 'SHALL I THINK ABOUT JESUS ?

“There have been many noble characters in this world,—glorious heroes, patriots, philanthropists, reformers, martyrs—men and women before whose names Christendom bows, and bows justly. It is around such transcendent characters as these, towering like mountains above the plains of common humanity, that the reverence of the ages loves to wrap the robe of spotless purity, even as virgin snow enwraps the distant Alpine ranges. But as the actual attempt to climb these snowy heights discloses, here and there, huge gorges and beetling precipices, so also does a nearer inspection of these transcendent characters disclose many a defect and deformity which mars and hides the general beauty. . . Only one character in all history has endured all tests of keenest scrutiny,—Jesus of Nazareth.”

BOARDMAN, “*The Problem of Jesus.*”

“There lives at this time in Judea, a man of singular character, whose name is Jesus. The barbarians esteem him a prophet, but his followers adore him as the immediate offspring of the immortal God. He is endowed with such unparalleled virtue as to call back the dead from their graves, and to heal every disease with a word or touch. He is modest, temperate and wise; in short, whatever this phenomenon may turn out in the end, he seems at present a man of excellent beauty and divine perfections, every way surpassing the children of men.”—*From a letter of Publius Lentulus to the Roman Senate.*

## WHAT SHALL I THINK ABOUT JESUS?

*Can there be any good thing out of Nazareth?*  
John 1:46.

“A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.” The truth of this aphorism of Jesus seems to be recognized in those words of Nathaniel, “Can there be any good thing out of Nazareth?” Nathaniel was a city man, and he had all of a city man’s contempt for that insignificant little village of Galilee, which was all but unknown, and whose very existence even, the historians of his native land had passed over, as unworthy of a historian’s notice. Nazareth was a place of rare natural beauty, but that was all that had ever been said to her credit. From her no great thing, nothing eminent and worth while, had ever come to offset her insignificance. No wonder the name “Nazarene” was one of contempt. The light of God shone over her hills, and the “darkness apprehended it not.”

It is, therefore, not surprising that when Philip comes to Nathaniel with the words, “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph,” Nathaniel should say, “Can there be any good thing out of Nazareth?”

John Douglas Adam, in the Record of Chris-

tian Work, tells us that there are three possible attitudes that one may take toward Jesus of Nazareth; the attitude of Hostility, the attitude of Perplexity and the attitude of Devotion.

Nathaniel was in the attitude of perplexity. He was "an Israelite indeed in whom was no guile," but he did not know what to make of this strange new phenomenon in the religious world. He was prejudiced against him because he came from a town with a bad name. The shadow had become confused, in his mind, with the substance, and he did not know what to think. Philip wisely says to him, "Come and see!"

There are very few today who are openly hostile to Jesus himself, whatever they may think of his church. In ever increasing numbers, but still few, are those who are really devoted to him. The great crowd of men is with Nathaniel in the attitude of perplexity. If one asks them, "What think ye of Christ?" they frankly tell you they do not know what to think. There has been so much confusion in men's thought about him that the heart is perplexed, and finds itself asking, "Can there be any good thing out of Nazareth?" This attitude of perplexity is born of false or insufficient light. And it is not a case where "ignorance is bliss, 'twere folly to be wise." For here is one who, for two thousand years has exerted a most tremendous influence on the world, so great indeed, that the whole trend of humanity's experience has been altered. Here is a person who

makes the most stupendous claims, which if true, must alter completely the activities of all men here, and their destiny hereafter and forever.

There is one way of clearing up this attitude of perplexity. It is the method that Philip proposed to Nathaniel, "Come and see."

And we shall have to study this phenomenon from Nazareth, in the light of his own claims to the world's recognition. As we turn to the gospels, which are the only biographies we have of him, we find him claiming to be unique, and differing from all other men in three aspects of his being—as a Person, as a Prophet, as a Priest.

#### I. As a Person.

I turn to the gospels first of all to see what claims this personality makes as to himself. I assume that these books are historical documents. There may be few errors in them, but they are not such as to affect the general truth of the narrative they give. They tell us as fairly as any history could, the facts concerning this man from Nazareth. The best scholarship of the world is agreed on this.

I find that they tell the story of a wonderful person. Men marvel at him; others gnash their teeth. They who hate him are saying, "Never man spake like this man." He says to men as he passes, "Follow me," and they leave all and follow him. Multitudes of the common people throng him so that he has no time to eat or rest. Wicked men cower before him, and cultured scholars seek

him in the night, only to marvel at his superior wisdom.

He is making stupendous claims. "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." "Come unto ME all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." "If ye love father or mother or wife or child more than ME, ye are not worthy of ME." "Ye have heard it is written in the Scriptures, but I—I say unto you." "I am greater than your father Abraham." "Behold a greater than Solomon is here." "I am unique. Other men do not belong to the same order of being as I." "I am from above, and ye are from below." "I do always the things that are pleasing to the Father." "The Father and I are one." "All authority is given unto me in heaven and on earth." "When *ye* pray say, 'forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors;' but 'which of you convicteth ME of sin.'" "My kingdom is from everlasting to everlasting." "I ascend to my Father, and the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." "He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him." STUPENDOUS CLAIMS!

But there are deeds as wonderful as his words. He deprecates miracles, and signs, and wonders. He says to men with something of sadness in his voice, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." And yet to relieve their sufferings, and to calm their fears, I behold a marvellous



array of wonders at his hand. "The deaf hear, the blind see, the dumb speak, lepers are cleansed, the lame walk, the dead are raised." His life begins with a miracle and ends with another.

And in it all, amid these gigantic claims, and marvellous deeds, there breathes from this life a spirit so meek, a love so tender, a compassion so deep, a fragrance so pure, as to make it for twenty centuries, the symbol of earth's fairest and best. Surely if this life is not all the hearts of Christians think it to be, it is a life we might well wish were true.

If we are to judge it by human standards only, and simply say this Jesus is a *man*, yet have we something unique in manhood. Here is a person unique in his claims, unique in his deeds, unique in his influence on the world, unique in the achievement of a perfect life.

"Alone," says Carnegie Simpson, "absolutely alone, among leaders of the soul, Jesus absorbs the highest principles into his own personality. No other ever dared thus. Who else has said of truth, not that he teaches it, but that it is he; of the vision of God, not that he has seen it, but that it is the sight of himself; of that which supplies all man's need of rest, of spiritual food, of pardon, of strength, not that he can point to it, but that it is all in him? Not Moses nor the prophets, not Plato nor the Buddha nor Mahomet spoke thus. But Jesus did so deliberately, habitually, pronouncedly."

And his life expressed all it professed. Sidney Lanier calls it "The Crystal" life.

"But Thee, but Thee, O Sov'reign Seer of Time,  
But Thee, O Poet's Poet, Wisdom's Tongue,  
But Thee, O man's Best Man, O Love's Best Love,  
O Perfect Life, in perfect labor writ;  
O all men's Comrade, Servant, King or Priest,—  
What *if* or *yet*, what mole, what flaw, what lapse,  
What least defect or shadow of defect,  
What rumor tattled by an enemy,  
Of inference loose, what lack of grace,  
Even in torture's grasp, or sleep's or death's,—  
Oh, what amiss may I forgive in Thee,  
Jesus, good Paragon, Thou Crystal Christ?"

But Jesus' claim is not alone to unique manhood. Though entering fully into the life of humanity, he will not for a moment allow himself to be classed as a mere man. He never stops to argue with men the question of his Deity. He assumes it. Others are not like him. He deems it an axiom that he and the Father are one. He declares himself to be the Son of God with as much of assurance as he claims to be the Son of Man. He was always saying, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" And when he found one who could say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," straightway he cried, "Upon this rock I will build my church." Jesus claimed to be Deity. There is no question about it. A thousand theologies have been framed to explain that assertion of his, and a thousand more to prove it false. It was the fundamental claim of Jesus. In

his eyes it explained the marvel of his life: "It is not I that *do* the works, but the Father that worketh in me, He *doeth* the works." "I *speak* unto you the things which I have heard of my Father."

It is plain beyond question that the New Testament, and especially the words of Jesus himself, teach his essential Deity. But the Deity of Jesus is not established by proof texts and an elaborate theology. *Human history* since that day has been a different thing. This Galilean has gone everywhere and "turned the world upside down." The calendar has been altered. The waves of darkness have receded before the "light that never shone on land and sea." In countless millions, men have heard his call, "Take up thy cross and follow me," and the only reward promised them is the approval of this Man here and hereafter. As the horizon of humanity widens, this unseen Presence leads the way. On every shore men fall before Him crying, "My Lord and my God!" "What shall we do," cried ancient scoffers, "the whole world is gone after him?" The charge that ancient Pharisees made against him, "Thou being a man makest thyself God?" is in part true. Jesus *does* make himself God. Through twenty centuries he has been forcing men to say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Jesus in History! History without Him is a riddle.

“The eternal step of Progress beats  
To that great anthem, calm and slow  
Which God repeats.”

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word  
was God, . . . and the Word was made Flesh  
and dwelt among us.”

The “heathen in his blindness” cries:

“If Jesus Christ is a man,  
And only a man,—I say  
That of all mankind I will cleave to him  
And to him will I cleave always.

If Jesus Christ is a God,  
And the only God,—I swear  
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,  
The earth, the sea and the air.”

And the Christian, unable to sound the glories  
of this “God-Man,” with all the raptures his  
heart feels is singing,

“Oh for a thousand tongues to sing  
My dear Redeemer’s praise!  
The wonders of my God and King,  
The triumphs of His grace.”

Out in the wastes of the great American desert,  
with its weary stretches of sand and cactus, there  
blooms a white flower. Men call it the “desert  
rose.” The remarkable thing about it is that it  
seems to be self-nourished. Pluck it from the  
parched soil and it blooms as fair as ever. De-  
prive it of the moisture of the dews, and it still  
lives. Put it away in a dark cellar and it blos-  
soms on, with no dimming of its beauty.

So is He. In moral deserts parched by passion's fires, seared by the hot winds of unbelief, unwatered by any stream of love, he blooms a "desert rose," self-creating, self-energizing, self-accrediting, alone!

## II. As a Phophet.

Jesus laid claim also to being a prophet. It is the prophet's business to speak for God. Jesus came with a message. Men recognized Him as a true prophet. Said Nicodemus, "We know thou art a teacher come from God." He came by prophets foretold. Isaiah calls Him IMMANUEL—God with us. That is the mission of the true prophet—to bring God down to men. When the first prophet came down from Sinai, it was with God's law in his hand and God's celestial light gleaming on his face. He was the "shadow of Him to come." "The law came through Moses, but grace and truth through Jesus Christ."

Jesus asserted his superiority over all other prophets: "Ye have heard it is written," said he, "but *I say unto you, I say unto you.*" "For I speak not from myself, but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak." "He that heareth *my* words and doeth them is like unto a man that built his house upon a rock."

He allowed no peer as a teacher, and men were compelled to say, "Never man spake like this man." There are many jewelled thoughts in Plato, many beautiful maxims in Confucius. The

Vedic hymns contain many exalted thoughts. Aristotle and Kant and Paschal, sound the depths of human wisdom. But the wisdom of Jesus is above them all. It is more than beauty, it is more than truth. It is *life*. It "bringeth life and immortality to light." It is beauty plus love. It is truth plus power.

The message itself rings with the realities of God. Others had taught the Kingship of the Creator. Jeremiah, "the prophet of tears," had taught His awfulness as a Judge. Moses had revealed Him as the Great Lawgiver. Ezekiel as the Guider of Destiny. The psalmists had caught a faint, far-off vision of Him as the Father and Redeemer of the Jewish race.

In the fullness of time, Jesus comes to tell of the Personal Fatherhood of God to every living soul; and of a love determined to redeem and save to the uttermost. There is nowhere, save in Jesus' teaching, the story of the lost sheep and the prodigal son. Jesus reveals God as a Father and Redeemer of the soul of man. These two conceptions lift his teaching into a realm, where no other could ever enter. He is the "Peerless Prophet."

Jesus is not without his message of Judgment. "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets and garnish the tombs of the righteous. Ye serpents, Ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell!" "Ye are like unto whited sepulchres which outwardly appear beautiful, but

inwardly are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." There is nothing weak nor effeminate about that. It has the ring of a true prophet.

But Jesus' message of judgment only serves to throw out in grander relief his message of mercy. Sin is an awful thing, and it requires a wonderful redemption. Wherefore the surpassing message of Jesus is the message of the redeeming sacrificing Father. He tells of the Father going out to meet the returning prodigal. He tells of the shepherd going out through the mountains "thunder-riven" to search for the lost sheep "until he find it." Then he tells the sinner of the way back home. "I am the Way." "By Me if any man enter in he shall be saved." "I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

Never was there prophets's message sounded into the longing ears of man like the message of Jesus. It breathes the air of heaven's hope. It is water to the thirsty soul and bread to the hungry heart. It is the word that "returneth not void."

### III. As a Priest.

The heart of Jesus' prophecy is Himself. His supreme mission he declared to be the mission of redemption. He was the God-man, and the prophet, in order that he might be the Saviour. "The Son of Man is come to give his life a ransom for many." "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever be-

lieveth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life." This is the heart of Jesus' gospel. It is the heart of all "good news."

For the thing for which men have always been longing is salvation. The cry of the jailor of Philippi is the echo of that universal longing. No matter how far man has wandered, he is longing to be at one with God once more. He wants an at-one-ment.

In the dramatization of General Wallace's Prince of India, the most dramatic moment of all, is when upon the ruined walls of Constantinople, at night, the Wandering Jew appears alone. As he sits there in the darkness, realizing that the passions of men have thwarted the atonement he has sought to make, there appears in the eastern sky a golden cross, but failing to catch its deep significance, he sees in it only the sign that he has failed, and he totters from the stage to another hundred years of wandering, hoarsely crying, "I must atone, I must atone."

How expressive is this scene of the universal feeling of the need of an atonement. On heathen altars incense fires are burning; heathen mothers are sacrificing their children, ascetics are disfiguring their bodies, and Indians are bathing in the filthy Ganges. They are seeking to atone.

In the ritual of the Jews, the priest slew upon the altar the sacrifice of atonement, and became the people's mediator. Jesus declared himself to be the true Priest and Mediator who became Himself, the people's sacrifice.



There have been many theories to explain the simple fact that Jesus is man's atonement.

We must get forever away from the idea that Jesus was a ransom, paid by God to the devil; that the evil one had such a hold on man that it was necessary for God to buy him back at the price of Jesus' sacrifice.

Nor is it true that Jesus interposed himself between God's wrath and man; that God demanded so much blood, for so much sin, and that His avenging hand fell upon His Son. Watts was mistaken when he sang:

“Rich were the drops of Jesus' blood  
That calmed God's frowning face,  
That sprinkled o'er the burning throne  
And turned His wrath to grace.”

Nowhere does the Bible represent that Jesus by his sacrifice bought the love of God for men. God's love is not the effect of Jesus' sacrifice, but the occasion of it. “God so loved . . . that he gave.” God's love is first.

And again the Bible does not teach that Jesus' suffering was endured to reconcile the Justice and Compassion of God. The idea that God had to punish sin, to satisfy his sense of Justice, but to save men the pain, decided to punish Jesus, is contrary to the Bible as it is to common sense. Jesus did not come to earth to save men from the punishment of their sins, but from the sins themselves, and so from their punishment. “He shall

save His people from their sins." To say that Jesus' death was a punishment for man's sin, is as absurd as to think that the bad child of a household can be saved by punishing the good one.

To get the true view of Jesus as an atonement, we must reverently enter the very counsels of God.

Here is the Father. And yonder in the far country is the prodigal. All in vain have been the warnings of prophets, and the calls of the still small voice within. Man will not heed. He chooses the evil and not the good. Longing love is reaching toward him, but all in vain. Shall not the Father forgive his child, and let him go on? Shall he take a slight view of his sin and offer him an easy forgiveness?

Would that kind of forgiveness save man from sin? *Not a bit of it!* If man is to be saved from sin he must be made to realize sin's awfulness. He must learn to hate it as God hates it. How can God, an invisible Spirit, reveal to man the awfulness of his sin, and His hatred of it, and at the same time convey to man His desire to save? There is but one way—to go to man Himself.

And so in the fullness of time, Jesus is born in the likeness of men. From the first He recognizes that it is His mission to save men from their sins. He proceeds straightway to tell them of its awful blight. He faces all men's temptations, and overcomes them—every one. He lives a perfect life, free from sin. He shows men the possibilities

that lie within them as sons of God. He does perfectly the will of God. He proclaims God's universal love and He exemplifies it by a life of supreme sacrifice and service.

But as the days go by He comes to realize more and more that there is going to be demanded of Him the supreme sacrifice. Man will not see the folly of his sin, and turn from it until that sin has led him to the most awful depths of blasphemy, even to the slaying of the Son of God. So Jesus walks along the pathway of the cross. At last there comes a time when He has to choose between being true to His mission and renouncing it forever. He sees now that men will not turn from their sins, except they have set before them the example of perfect Love enduring the ultimate sacrifice. He must be "lifted up" ere the hearts of men will be touched and turned to God. His final loyalty to his mission, is to bring upon Him the hatred of sinful men He has come to save; and that hatred will bring Him to the cross. But as He hangs there men will at last see the awfulness of their sin, that has led them to a deed like this; and they will see how wonderful is the love that endures all this for the sake of showing to them the way of life. They will see as they look upon the cross, what they have never seen before—that this victim of their sin is the Saviour. Then they will say, "I will take Him as my Redeemer, and I will follow in His footsteps back to God."

Wherefore He says to his disciples, "I, if I be

lifted up will draw all men unto me." Then He determines to drink the cup which His Father has given Him to its very dregs, and to be "faithful unto death, even the death of the cross." He "sets his face steadfastly toward Jerusalem," and never wavers nor falters till he cries with his breaking heart, "It is finished."

And all through the centuries what Jesus foresaw, has come to pass. Sinful men looking on the face of that dying Redeemer, have been moved to sorrow, by its suffering, for the sin that brought it there. They have said, "O, Rock of Ages, cleft for me,"—and by me,—Thou art the Saviour. I will arise and follow Thee into the Kingdom of God." "I will take Thy humble, sacrificing spirit for mine own, and by Thy grace I will live Thy life."

"Jesus, the very thought of Thee  
With sweetness fills my breast;  
But sweeter far Thy face to see  
And in Thy presence rest."

Oh, glorious atonement! Oh, perfect priest! The veil of the shekinah is rent in twain, and there is revealed the sacrifice that saves. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

"Alone, O Love ineffable,  
Thy saving name is given;  
To turn aside from Thee is hell,  
To walk with Thee is heaven."

XV

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN FAITH?

“Nothing worthy proving can be proven  
Nor yet disproven. Wherefore be thou wise,  
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,  
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of faith!  
She reels not in the storm of warring words  
She sees the best that glimmers through the worst,  
She feels the sun is hid but for a night,  
She spies the summer through the winter bud,  
She tastes the fruit before the blossom falls  
She finds the fountain where they wailed ‘Mirage!’

The clouds themselves are children of the sun  
And day and night are children of the sun,  
No night, no day!—But night enough is there  
In yon dark city. Get thee quickly back;  
Let be thy wail and help thy fellow men,  
And lay thine uphill shoulder to the wheel,  
And climb the mount of blessing, whence, if thou  
Look higher, then perchance thou mayest see  
The high-heaven dawn of more than mortal day  
Strike on the Mount of Vision.”

ALFRED TENNYSON.

## WHAT IS CHRISTIAN FAITH?

*Now faith is giving substance to things hoped for, and the test of things not seen.* Hebrews 11:1.

*Faith without works is dead.* James 2:26.

There has been an age-long controversy in the Christian church as to whether it is what a man believes that saves him, or what he does. The theologian and the moralist have always been in conflict. The conclusion of the former is that it makes little difference what one does so long as he is orthodox. Two young men came not long ago before the examining body of their church for ordination into the Christian ministry. There was no question as to their character or spiritual fitness for the work before them. But they came within one vote of being rejected because they would not conform to a certain mechanical view of the inspiration of the Bible; while an orthodox companion of theirs against whom there was a very serious moral charge, was unanimously approved, because he was sound on doctrine. The theologians were in a majority.

On the other side, the moralist would have us believe that it doesn't make any difference what one believes, so long as his deeds are right. Beliefs are dead things, and creeds are the mummies of souls that have perished centuries ago. Deeds are the only things worth while, and a charitable atheist is a better man than a stingy believer.

Now, both these men are right and both are wrong. They are right in conception and wrong in emphasis. They are extremists, and it is the extremists are responsible for most of the error that has crept into human thought. "No truth is so dangerous as a half truth," or an over-emphasized truth.

In the middle ages the Roman church sank to such a low level of spiritual life that it offered men the practical purchase of heaven by the most senseless acts. Let him only say so many "Pater-nosters" and "Ave Marias," attend so many masses, pay so much into the treasury of the bishop, and he could do about as he pleased, and would be freed from all the pains of hell here and hereafter.

When the Protestants revolted from Rome, they went to the other extreme. Deeds amounted to nothing. A man could not do anything that was pleasing to God. He was a "worthless worm" and all that he could do was to believe and tremble.

This trouble arose in the church almost at its beginning. Paul, after his conversion had made a wide circuit of the heathen world, calling on men to "repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and they should be saved." Faith in Jesus as a personal Saviour, he declared to be the essential of salvation.

The men who heard his message were heathen, and had lived long in heathen practices. They had been given over to lust, deceit and idolatry.



What now should they do with these practices? It was here that cunning theologians came to them and said, "Has not this Paul said that by your faith you are saved? Your life has nothing to do with it. Your creed is all. Christian liberty in Jesus makes you free. Christ has liberated you from the bondage of the moral law. Now you can do anything you like, so long as you believe on Christ."

Then it was that practical men like James and the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, seeing the danger, wrote their circular letters to the new converts, explaining to them what Paul meant by faith.

Christian faith is still a thing little understood. There is an idea prevalent that it is something opposed to reason. That it is a synonym for superstition, credulity, ignorance. The opponents of Christianity have tried to make men believe that Christian faith is something that crushes out the reason. Thomas Paine said: "A Christian is a crazy fool who never relies on his reason, but goes stumbling along in the darkness of priestly superstition."

There are some who think faith is a mysterious something which is won by a few believers after a long process of preparation; a quality of soul granted to the favored few, which none else can understand.

As a matter of fact, Christian faith is not opposed to reason. It is an expression of the high-

est reason. Nor is it a mysterious quality possessed by the few of an inner circle. When the Bible speaks of faith the word has the same meaning it has in any other department of human experience—no more—no less. Faith in Christ is the same in quality as is faith in any other friend. Faith underlies all life. On it is built the business of today. Credit is another name for it in the business world. It is the root of our friendships, our knowledge, our progress.

It is also the principle behind all religious life. Jesus was always looking for faith. It was with him the secret of all power. He himself "could do no mighty works there because of their unbelief." Faith was the primal condition to all his marvellous cures. "According to your faith be it unto you." Nothing gladdened his heart like the discovery of one possessed of faith. Faith was to be the thing he should seek when he came again. Evidently faith is the key word to the religion of Jesus.

Let us ask ourselves three questions about it. What is it? What does it do? How may I know if I possess it?

Faith—its meaning, its mission, its measure.

I. What is it?

Is it just mere belief? Turn to the apostles' creed. Read it sincerely and thoughtfully. "I Believe in God the Father Almighty." Is it faith to say that? Is that what Paul meant when he said: "Ye are saved by faith?" Does faith mean

the giving of our intellectual assent to a truth of God? Well, that is what a great many people think it is. If you only believe so and so, God will overlook all your faults. "He's a good fellow and 'twill all be well."

I have talked with men about entering the responsibilities and duties of an active Christian life, and they have said to me: "Oh, I believe all that your church people believe. There isn't a church that I can't go one better in the matter of belief. I belong to the Odd Fellows, the Masons and the Grand Army, and you know you have to have faith in God to belong to these orders."

What does he mean by "having faith in God"? He means giving intellectual assent to the principles of God. Is that faith? Will that save? Not a bit of it. When has intellectual assent to a principle ever done anything for anybody?

Here is a drowning man. His companions throw him a rope. He may believe in the power of the rope to save him. He may assent to its strength, its nearness to him; he may believe that by it his fellows intend to drag him to safety. But his beliefs in that rope are worthless. The thing that will save him is to reach and take it.

Christian faith is not giving intellectual assent to the principle of Christ. It is not even assenting to HIM as the Saviour of the world. There were plenty in his day who said to him "Lord, Lord," whom he plainly declared had no part in his kingdom. The world today is full of men who are say-

ing, "I believe in God," and are going to their graves, practical atheists.

Belief is not faith. The margin of the revised version tells us what it *is*; "Faith is giving substance to things hoped for and the test of things not seen." Faith is action. It is not believing *in* nor hoping *for* something; it is "giving substance" to that belief, that hope. It is believing something, but it is more; it is doing something to make that belief real.

"I believe in God the Father." That is intellectual assent. It becomes faith, when you begin to act like a child of God—giving substance to your belief in His Fatherhood.

Here is a miner. He has been searching for gold. At last the indications have convinced him that there is a ledge of ore beneath his feet. How shall his belief become a living faith? Dig a shaft, O miner!

Here is a man who has never been on a farm before. But all the books he has read and all the testimony he has heard have convinced him that if he puts good seed into the ground, it will grow and return him thirty-fold. How is he to become a farmer of faith? Plant your seed, O farmer! Give substance to the thing you hope for; test the things you cannot see. Then are you a farmer of faith.

It will thus be seen that the theologian and the moralist are both wrong. Neither belief nor works is faith, but a combination of both. Faith is a

*working belief.* It is a combination of intellect and action.

A colored slave and his master were crossing the Mississippi in a terrific storm. The master was rowing. Suddenly he ceased. Hope was gone. "Sambo, shall I row or pray?" "I guess you bettah mix 'em," was the reply. That is faith. The heroes spoken of in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews as examples of surpassing faith were great believers. But they were men who gave substance to their belief and tested the things they hoped for.

"By faith, Noah, warned of things not yet seen, BUILT AN ARK." "By faith Abraham, being tried, OFFERED UP ISAAC." "By faith Moses, REFUSED TO BE CALLED THE SON OF PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER AND FORSOOK EGYPT," "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, AFTER THEY HAD COMPASSED THEM SEVEN DAYS."

Believing—doing, these are the component parts of a working faith.

II. What does a faith like this do? What is its mission? Its mission is to save. "By faith are ye saved." "Thy faith hath saved thee." Faith is always a saviour. It is the faith of the farmers that saves our country from famine every year. They believe that if seed is put into the ground there will be a harvest, and they give substance to that belief. It is the faith of parents and teachers, who believe that every child born into this world has the germ of an intellect, that saves us

from intellectual death. For they give substance to that belief by sacrifices of time and money to educate the youth. It is the faith we have in one another that makes possible business and political life. We give substance to our belief that men are essentially honest and law abiding, by organizing empires and founding industries.

And what so readily applies to our bodies and our minds and our relationships one with the other, applies also to our immortal spirits and our relationships with God. We are saved to immortal life by our faith in Immortality. Not by our belief in it as an intellectual fact, but by our willingness to do immortal things and acquire immortal qualities, giving substance to our belief.

If instinct and revelation teach us anything at all, they teach us plainly that Immortality is bound up in our relationship to God, and faith in Him which does His works is what saves. It will not save a man to say, "I believe in God the Father," and then act like a child of the devil. Such a man is not saved. He is lost. His belief has no substance. A business friend of mine used to tell me occasionally that he believed in fire insurance. A year later I stood with him beside the charred ruins of his store. I asked him what his insurance was. "I haven't any," said he, "this building was new and fireproof, and I didn't think there was any need of being in a hurry." Poor fellow, he believed, but he did not have faith. The labors of years were lost.

A certain evangelist has a card and on one side of it is written, "What must I do to be saved?" And the answer is, "Have faith in God." On the other side is the question, "What must I do to be lost?" The answer is, "Nothing." It is true. The faith that saves is the faith that is doing something. And salvation is not being saved hereafter from the penalty of sin; but is the salvation that saves from sin itself, both here and hereafter. "This is the victory that overcometh THE WORLD, even your faith."

This is why Paul is so insistent on faith in Jesus Christ as a Saviour from sin. This Jesus who was crucified and rose again was a mainspring of action. Belief in Him not only filled the heart with saving beliefs, but it put into the heart an undying dynamic that worked them out into life. That is why Paul said, "It is not I that do the works, but Christ that worketh in me." Faith in Christ is a saving faith because it impregnates the mind with saving beliefs, and offers the dynamic that gives them substance. This is why the Master could make the bold claim, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." This is why he branded as hypocrites those who said, "Lord, Lord," and did not the things which he said.

By faith the world is saved. By faith souls are saved. By faith we are saved.

"Despise not then thy father's ancient faith;  
Of his pure life it was the golden thread.  
It worked bright glories in his every breath

Till death laid low the dear and reverend head.  
 From olden faith how many a glorious deed  
 Hath lit the world; its blood-stained banner led  
 The martyrs heavenward; yea, it was the seed  
 Of knowledge, whence our modern freedom spread.  
 For never hath man's faith been proved a snare,  
 But a deliverance, a sign, a flame  
 To purify the dense and pestilent air,  
 Writing on pitiless heavens one pitying Name  
 And 'neath the shadow of the dread eclipse  
 It shines on dying eyes and pallid lips."

III. We should like to possess a faith like this. How may we know that it is ours? What are the tests of a saving faith? There is but one test, and it is very simple: "Faith without works is dead." When a man dies he looks much the same as he did before. But the thing that distinguishes him from other men and makes him a dead man, is that he is doing nothing. He is not even breathing. A dead faith is like that. It simply lies still and makes no move. It is not faith at all, any more than a dead man is a man.

How may you know you possess a saving faith? Well, what are you doing? Are you doing nothing? Are you just believing, saying your prayers, going through the forms of worship as a matter of habit? You may be sure of it, *your faith is dead.*

"If faith produce no works, I see  
 That faith is not a living tree.  
 For faith and works together grow;  
 No separate life they e'er can know;



They're soul and body; hand and heart;  
 What God hath joined no man can part."

Or, on the other hand, if you are living in a gospel of good deeds only, and despise the sturdy beliefs that are behind every true character; if you think the external performance of perfunctory charities is the key to heaven here and hereafter, you are mistaken. The motive, the character back of every good deed, determines its worth. Altruism and morality, apart from character, have no saving quality. The real test of faith is character. It is character that saves.

What is my character? Is it honest through and through? Are men impressed by what I am and do with the TRUTH of God? Do they get a vision of His PURITY and HOLINESS by what I am and do? Do they understand more of the LOVE of God when I pass them? Do they "take knowledge of me that I have been with Jesus?" If I have a living faith they will. They will say, "There goes a man who professes to love the Master, and he *does* love Him, for he does the things the Master commanded. He believes what the Master taught, and he does what the Master asked him to do. He is kind, gentle, forgiving, patient, loving, brave, meek, full of service. Wherever he goes, men feel as if Jesus Himself had been there. He lets his light shine that men may see his good works. He goes into all the world bearing his Master's 'good news.' He is a man of faith."

When a man dies the last test to determine if

life still exists, is to place a mirror over his lips. If a film ever so slight gathers on its surface, it is a sign that there is still hope. Will your faith meet the mirror test? If it will, all is not lost. You are calling, "Lord, Lord." Yes, but are you "doing the things which he says"? Remember

"We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;

In feelings, not in figures on a dial.

We should count the time by heart throbs. He most lives

Who believes most, feels noblest, acts best."

This is the kind of a faith that "hath subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness hath been made strong, waxed mighty in war, and turned to flight the armies of aliens."

"Oh, for a faith that will not shrink  
 Though pressed by many a foe;  
 That will not tremble on the brink  
 Of poverty or woe.

Lord, give me such a faith as this,  
 And then, whate'er may come,  
 I taste e'en now the hallowed bliss  
 Of an eternal home."

XVI

DOES THE WORLD NEED A NEW  
RELIGION?

"We ought to discern the real strength of Christianity and revive the ancient passion for Jesus. It is the distinction of our religion: it is the guarantee of its triumph. Faith may languish; creeds may be changed; churches may be dissolved; society may be shattered. But one cannot imagine the time when Jesus will not be the fair image of perfection, or the circumstances wherein He will not be loved. He can never be superseded; He can never be exceeded. Religions will come and go, the passing shapes of an eternal instinct, but Jesus will remain the standard of the conscience and the satisfaction of the heart, whom all men seek, in whom all men will yet meet."

IAN MACLAREN, "*The Mind of the Master.*"

"Be not the first by whom the new is tried,  
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside."

POPE, "*Essay on Criticism.*"

"Christianity is the only religion which is adapted to meet them (the higher needs of man), and, according to those who are alone able to testify, does so most abundantly. All men, of every sect, nationality, etc., agree in their account of their subjective experience, so as to this there can be no question. The only question is as to whether they are all deceived."

GEORGE J. ROMANES, "*Thoughts on Religion.*"

## DOES THE WORLD NEED A NEW RELIGION?

*When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. First Corinthians 13:10.*

Religion has been variously defined. Gruppe declares it to be "the invention of priests," who hoped by the advantages they could offer to men through its practice to gain power over them. Seneca says it is "to know and worship God." Kant says, "Religion is our recognition of Divine duties as commands." Martineau, "Religion is the belief in and worship of Supreme Mind and Will, directing the universe, and holding moral relations with human life." Goethe, "A feeling of reverence for what is above, around and beneath us." Newman, "The knowledge of God, of Will, and of our Duties to Him." The author of "Faiths of the World," "Communion between worshipping subject and worshipped object—communion of man with what he believes to be a God."

We might multiply these definitions to infinity, and yet fail to grasp the real essence of religion. Some are too high and some are too low. All lack comprehensiveness. Most are theoretical and impractical.

Acting on the principle that the simplest definition is the clearest, we may define religion as *an effort on the part of man to live the life of God.*

This definition is all-inclusive. It recognizes the lowest fetichism, and the highest Christianity. It takes note of the progressive character of revelation, and admits a wide divergence in men's views of God. It is intensely practical, making religion a life; while it in no way sets discounts those many methods by which men have tried to come into that life, which in common language we call "the religious."

That external form of religion, then, is the highest, which best enables us to "live the life of God." All through the ages men have been "feeling after God, if haply they might find him." As they have reached out after Him, the voice of Deity has not been silent, for at "sundry times and in divers manners" the Infinite has drawn the veil of mystery aside and a voice has cried, "Behold your God." In it all we have been rising, steadily rising.

At last, about two thousand years ago, there was born in Bethlehem of Judea, one who claimed to be a perfect Son of God. He told men the secret of his life, and offered them freely the blessing He possessed, as his gift of love. "I am," said he, "the Way into the life of God; I am the Truth that life embodies; I am the Life itself. He that followeth after me shall have this Life."

For more than nineteen centuries this Man, His life, and His teaching, have shaped the history of civilized humanity. Indeed, He has been the Maker of civilization, and the key to that higher

plane of living we call Christendom. Countless millions have found Him to be the way into the life of God, the key to the heaven of their heart's desire.

Of late not a few voices have been telling us that Christianity has outlived its usefulness—that we need a new religion. The magazines, the newspapers and not a few of the scholars of our day are pleading for what they call “the religion of the future.”

It is not surprising that of late a great many religions have been born, nor that their followers are many. Many Christians are in a panic, for they think that the Rock of Ages has been blasted, and the religion in which their fathers lived and died set aside forever. They are calling, “If the foundations be destroyed what can the righteous do?”

It is fitting that the Christian should face this question fairly. If the world does need a new religion, by all means let us have it. We should not cling to old things because they were good enough for our fathers. Our ancestors travelled through the forests in an ox cart; they lighted their homes with a tallow dip, and bathed in a teacup. But we must have Pullman trains and electricity and porcelain baths. There is no sense in our singing, “’Tis the old time religion and it's good enough for me.”

Nor should we accept a thing simply because it is new and more attractive than the old. There

is no virtue in mere novelty. The flying machine offers us very fair promises, but unless it can furnish us the three things we want in travel,—speed, comfort and safety,—better than the old way, it will never be universally adopted. The faddist in religion is especially to be despised.

What then is this “New Religion?” Do we want it? Is it better than the old?

So varied are its forms that a definition is impossible. Some of the names by which it goes are “Christian Science,” “The New Thought,” “The New Theosophy,” “Modern Spiritualism,” and a dozen others. In spite of these varied names a kinship may be discovered in all. They are religions of culture. Their philosophy of life is, “Be good and you will be happy.” Seek to lift yourself out of the physical, and live exclusively in the realm of the spiritual. Think beautiful thoughts and do beautiful deeds, and your life will become the beautiful thing it was intended to be.

How very attractive all this is! It is, we are told, to be the “religion of the future.” Surely we should grasp at anything that is an advance over the past. What do we expect of our religion anyway? What is an ideal religion? A religion, to win our acceptance, must have some definite qualities that commend it to our sense.

It must first of all be Practical and not Theoretical.

We do not want our religion to give us beautiful theories about things. We want it to do things



for us. The religion we accept must have a dynamic that shall help us to live the life of God. A religion of beautiful theories only is as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. Poetic raptures, aesthetic revels and dreamy contemplations, that satisfy our intellectual yearnings, are at best a poor religion. History offers us no sadder picture than the theologians spending days of precious time discussing how many spirits could stand on the point of a needle!

From our religion we expect results, not theories. The paganism of Greece and Rome passed, because with all its Gods and Goddesses, it was doing nothing for men.

What dynamic has the new religion to offer? It offers the dynamic of culture. "You ought to be good and live the life of God because it is ethically beautiful. . . . It will help you to self-realization and improve the social fabric."

That dynamic may serve the purposes of the cultured few, but what kind of a power is it to transform a loveless world, which does not care for self-realization and the improvement of the social fabric? There have been plenty of religions of culture. The Appian Way of history is strewn with the tombs of dead religions that have told men they ought to "be good." The dynamic of theory and culture has failed utterly.

What is the dynamic of Christianity? LOVE—DEVOTION TO A PERSON. Than this, the world knows no higher force. It has conquered the wil-

derness, fought battles, built kingdoms, nerved men to heroism and patient suffering. Tennyson tells us of the power of this dynamic. A soldier stands facing the foe and across his fancy comes the picture of wife and home

“Thy voice is heard through rolling drums,  
That beat the battle where he stands;  
Thy face across his fancy comes  
And gives the battle to his hands.

A moment while the trumpet blows  
He sees his brood about thy knee;  
The next, on fire, he meets the foe,  
And strikes him dead for thine and thee.”

For nineteen centuries now Christianity has been offering men this surpassing motive—devotion to a Perfect Person, Jesus Christ. This is the dynamic that has “turned the world upside down” and has led men everywhere to cry out of renewed and transformed life, “the love of Christ constraineth us.”

The second element in the ideal religion must be a recognition of two facts of human experience.

First, the fact of sin and evil. There is the echo of a universal longing in the cry of the jailor of Philippi, “What must I do to be saved?” The greatest hindrance to living the life of God is “the sin that doth so easily beset us.”

Secondly, the ideal religion must concern itself with the social fact—our relationship one to an-

other. We want a religion that will solve the problems of labor and capital, the poor, the criminal, the race question, the home, social morality, and a hundred others. Whether we like it or no we have to live together here. "No man liveth unto himself."

What is the attitude of the new religion to these problems? "There is no sin" it frequently asserts. "Sin and evil are only a feeling of unattainment." Disease, death and the other marks of sin's havoc are a "disease of mortal mind." Concerning the great social problems, the new religion is silent. It has no motive to send out to the hovel and the den. It is a religion of self realization, and it will not admit that the problems of life are real.

On the contrary, the religion of Jesus abounds in the idea that sin and evil are real, the one hindrance to living the life of God. And it addresses itself to the task of ridding the world of both. Its dominant idea is an at-one-ment, whereby men shall live the life of God. It aims to make man's life and God's one, by lifting man up to God. It does not do it by telling him to be good and pull himself up by his own bootstraps. It presents us God himself co-operating with man in achieving his Divine destiny.

Christianity addresses itself also to the social problem. In the two great commandments peculiar to her teaching, unselfish love for God and man, is found the secret of social Utopia. And all

these centuries Christianity has gone definitely about the task of bringing men to live in right relationship to one another, not by offering society palliatives, but a cure. And the final recognition of the supreme laws of the religion of Jesus is the only means of ushering in that perfect society men are pleased to call "the Kingdom of Heaven."

The third element of the ideal religion is that it be universal in its character and application.

We want no provincial or class religion. The religion that abides must fit the needs of the bushman of Australia as readily as those of his Anglo-Saxon king. It must be equally potent for the drunkard of the lower Bowery and the millionaire on Fifth Avenue. The ignorant laborer must find it as inspiring to his soul as does the college president. It must answer the cry of "the heathen in his blindness" as readily as the most gifted child of light.

Does the proposed religion do this? It does not. It is destined always to be the possession of the cultured few. It has no missionary motive that will carry it to the ignorant and the outcast. Even if it did it would fail miserably. It has no appeal to men in the common walks of life. It will never control China, India and Africa. The religion that wins these lands will be one that flows with the real, red blood of Divine love and yearning affection. It will never save the drunkard and the harlot, nor touch the thief upon the cross.

On the other hand, behold the religion of Jesus. There is not a corner of the globe where her banner of love is not already planted, and wherever she goes, in marble palaces or bush huts, among savages or the cultured, there are men made better by her presence—there men learn to live more nearly the life of God. Following her entrance into men's hearts have come the blessings of civilization, of happiness, of love, of peace. Wherever the name of Jesus is sounded, there is born new hope, new life.

Lastly, the ideal religion must be constructive and not destructive.

Religion is more than getting rid of things. It is "living the life of God." Not only getting rid of evil, but putting on positive holiness. A religion that does not build the sterner qualities of character is a religion of mush—worthless. The religions of heathenism and Judaism have passed because they spent their energies on the problem of Expiation. The true religion will not only refute error, but it will establish truth. It will not only destroy evil, but it will construct a new society.

The *new religion* is not a builder. Its followers are concerned more about "ringing out the old" than they are "ringing in the new." They walk like Vandals through the temple and tear down our most precious beliefs and hopes, and offer us nothing to take their place save a few hazy dreams. Their creeds are negative. They deny the most

common experiences of the heart,—the sense of a personal God, of forgiveness, of sin itself. They leave the city of God in ruins and build no better city. They take the King of the universe from His throne and leave it empty.

Meanwhile, by the power of its constructive gospel, the religion of Jesus has quietly, persistently been building up a kingdom of love among men. It offers a positive faith. Its commands are not, "Thou shalt not," but rather, "Do ye." It plants itself by the side of other religions, and by the sheer grandeur of its constructive life builds a kingdom, above, beneath, around them.

The flowers once held a council together, and a discussion arose as to the merits of the sun, as a producer of fragrant and beautiful blossoms.

The trillium was heard to speak: "I think we need a new sun in the heavens. For years now he has been shining in the sky, and I cannot see that I am one whit better for it. My petals are just as pale as ever; I have no more fragrance than my ancestors generations ago. Let us have a new sun in the sky."

"But I," replied a beautiful red rose, "have found this same sun a wonderful help to me. It is he who warms my petals, puts the color into them. His breath is my fragrance. The trouble with you, trillium, is that you stay there in the darkness of the wood and never let him shine upon you. You do not need a new sun. You need to get into the light of the old."

The religion of Jesus grows and expands as the ages roll, but at heart it is the same. What the world needs is not a new religion, but a more consistent application of the old. The world has yet to see a religion that offers men the power, the hopes, the comforts, the satisfactions of the religion of Jesus. "The religion of the future," says Nietzsche, "will be a religion of golden laughter." If so, it will be the religion of Jesus, for His religion is the one key that unlocks the gates of the City of God where there is "joy forevermore."

"When in scenes of glory  
We sing the new, new song,  
'Twill be the old, old story  
That we have loved so long."















MAY 5 1917

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.  
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide  
Treatment Date: May 2006

**PreservationTechnologies**

A WORLD LEADER IN PAPER PRESERVATION

111 Thomson Park Drive

1112  
125

One copy del. to Cat. Div.  
MAY 5 1911

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 017 579 039 1

