

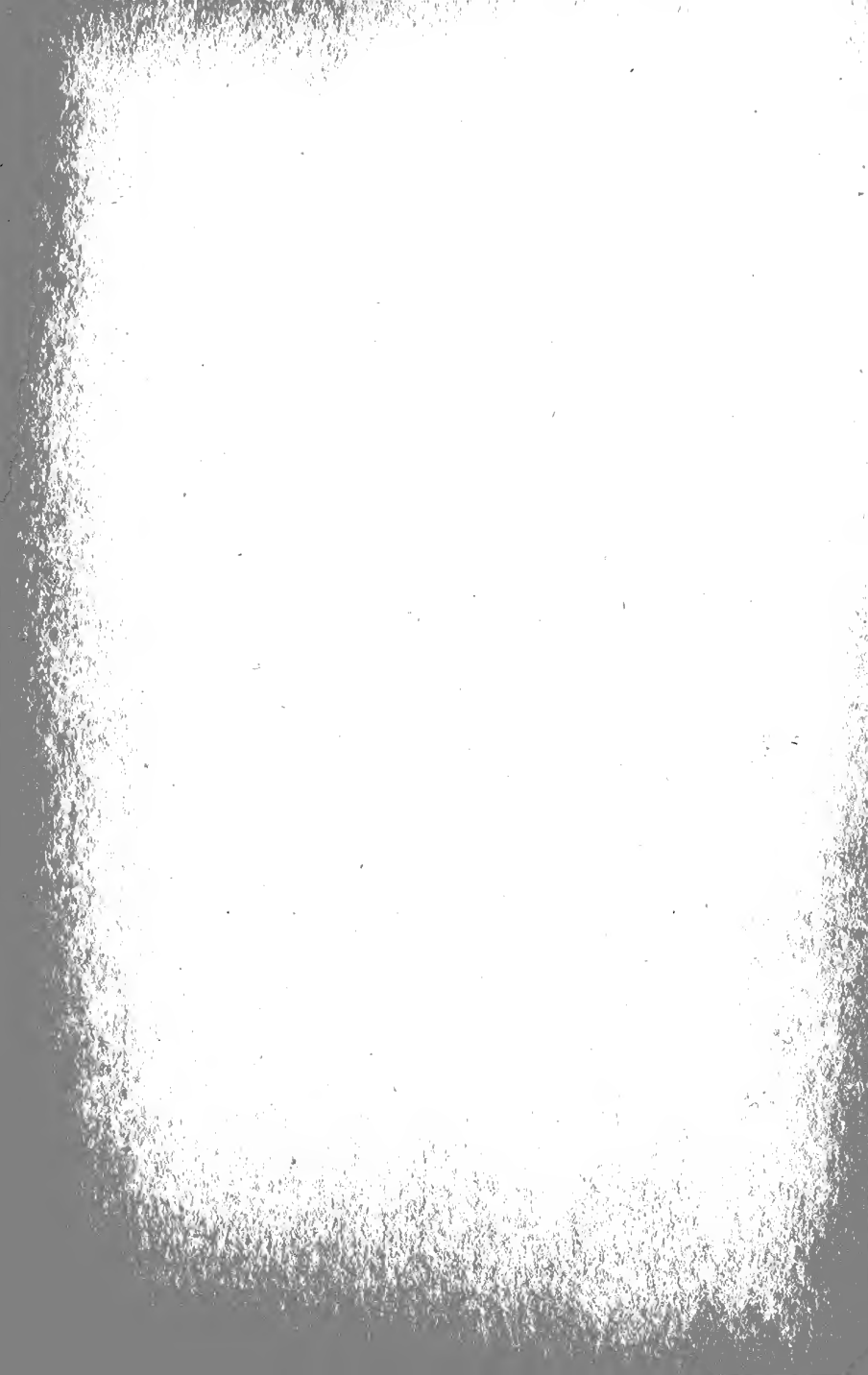


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EFFICIENT RELIGION

GEORGE ARTHUR ANDREWS



EFFICIENT RELIGION

BY

GEORGE ARTHUR ANDREWS

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PREFACE

THE temper of the present age is utilitarian. Everybody is looking for results. The question of utility is asked shrewdly by those who seek profit, sometimes cynically by those who indulge excessively in pleasures, and oftentimes desperately by those who struggle in the meshes of stressful conditions.

If the religion of Jesus is to maintain and increase its influence with the practical men and women of this century, it must do more than to demonstrate its truth, more than to reveal its beauty, more even than to point with becoming pride to its twenty centuries of successful history; it must show its present helpfulness.

“What is its use?” “What is it good for?” “What can it do?” These are the questions which men and women, too, are asking to-day. To suggest the answer to

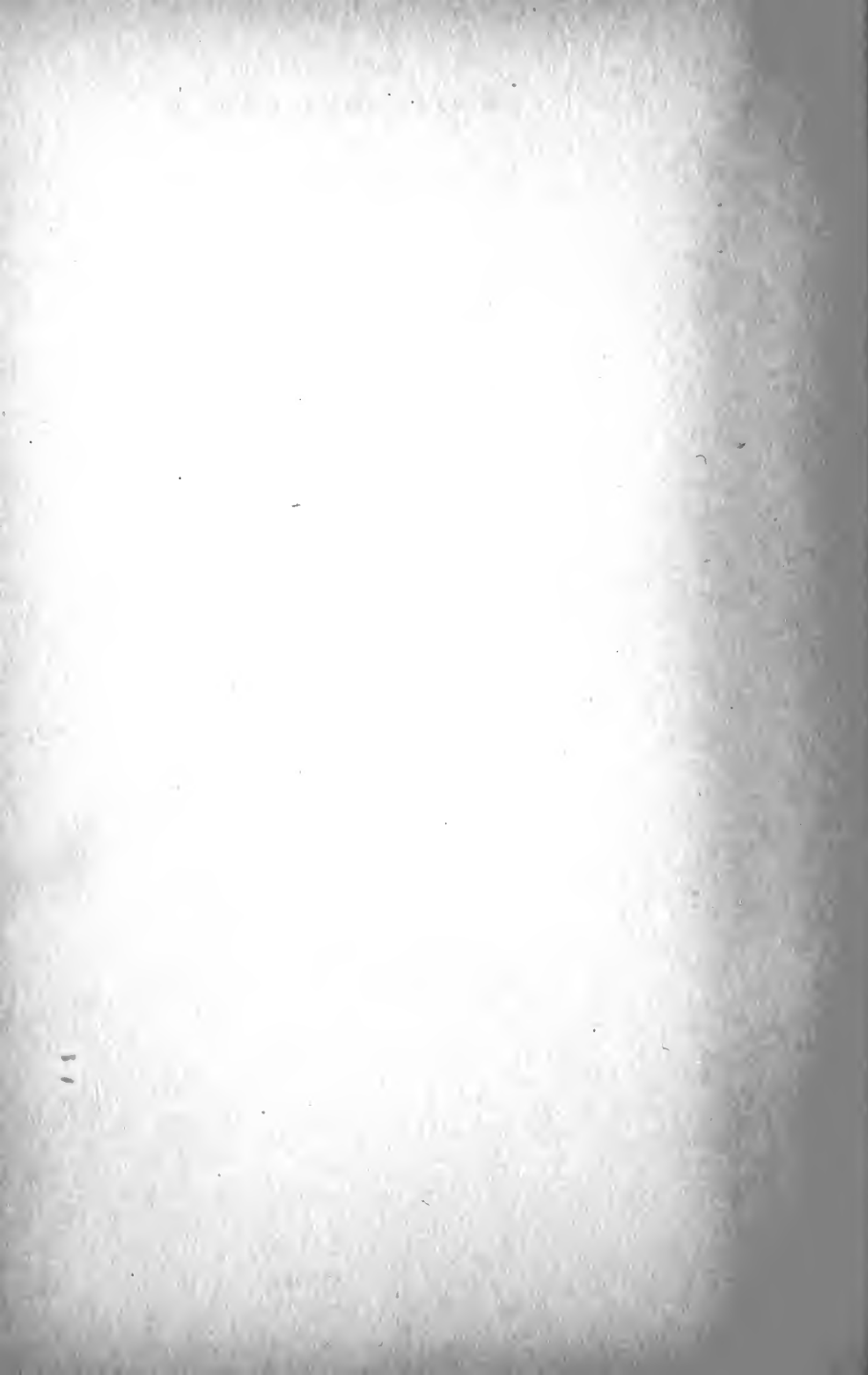
PREFACE

these questions is the object of this little book. No effort is herein made to add to the accumulating mass of evidential testimony to the helpfulness of Christ's religion. The aim here is to suggest a basis in reason for the acceptance of such testimony.

Our task is partly that of the sifter. We must seek to winnow the grain of the practically beneficial in the religion of Jesus from the chaff of those beliefs and practices which are pathetically unhelpful. But our task is also that of the moulder, and of the baker. For we are to try to shape the sifted grain into one homogeneous whole and to present it in a form that may, it is hoped, prove wholesome and nutritious to some doubting, careworn, sinful soul, hungry for the "Bread of Life."

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PROFITABLE FAITH

CHAPTER ONE

“If a brother be naked, and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto him, ‘Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled;’ and yet ye give him not the things needful to the body, what doth it profit? Can faith save him?”—JAMES 2:14-16.

EFFICIENT RELIGION

PROFITABLE FAITH

WHEN Henry Van Dyke wrote his true and compelling book, "The Gospel for an Age of Doubt," he spoke to thinkers of the intellectual appeal of the religion of Christ. But the blackest doubt is not the fruit of thought; it has its genesis in physical conditions and in moral conditions.

To-day the great multitudes of those who feel no concern for the religion of Jesus are people who never think very deeply upon any subject. They are those who are altogether unfamiliar with the written philosophies of men, some of them even unfamiliar with the deeper truths of the written revelation of God's Word. They are not so much thinkers as doers. They are not students, but actors.

The parts which most of these actors

must play upon the stage of life are very limited. Their relations to the other actors on the stage they do not very clearly understand, and their relation to the Author of the play is wholly uncomprehended. Indeed, they cannot be sure that the play has any Author at all. To these who see the stage only from behind the scenes all is litter and confusion. They stumble through their minor parts when by necessity they must, but they do not know what it is all about; perhaps, indeed, the most of them never even question what it is about.

Here is the dumb, unspoken unbelief, created not by intellectual questioning, but by untoward circumstances. It is the unbelief not of the profound scholar, but of the uncomprehending child. Yet this stolid, unthinking unbelief presents the most serious of all obstacles to the advancement of true Christian faith.

When a child has reached for the toothsome sweetmeat and has found his hand restrained, he is in no mood to be convinced by argument that his father is good. When

he has touched the bright thing that looked so pretty, and has been burned thereby, one cannot reasonably expect, while his body suffers, that his mind will readily comprehend the truth of love.

Just so when men in our present industrial system toil and sweat for a competence and find their hands held back, one cannot expect them, in the misery of their poverty, to believe very strongly in a God who loves them. And when other men have touched some sinful thing that seemed attractive, the immediate effect of their consequent suffering will not likely be a resplendent faith in a merciful Providence.

They do not think the unbelief. They feel it. It has become a part of their experience. They have become habituated to it. Exactly as they become accustomed to the indifference of the prosperous classes and of the moral classes, and to the stringent competition of the members of their own class, so they become accustomed to expect no help from any divine power, no help and no mercy.

This is only a partial view of the present day's practical unbelief. By the side of the many toiling, suffering, sinful people who experience an unbelief in God which they never express, we must place all those who, in prosperity, flippantly ignore God; and with both classes, if we would view the situation in its entirety, we must include the multitudes of those who are neither at the top nor at the bottom of the industrial scale, but who are necessarily busy with the affairs of the earth, and who must, or at least do, concentrate all their powers of effort in the struggle for material things. Finally, we must include in this great company of unthinking unbelievers the thousands of men and women of all classes and conditions whose lives are one continuous cry of bodily anguish, of soul loneliness, or, worse still, one unbroken stupor of sensuous indulgence.

Are all these people indifferent to Christ's religion because they have been reading Thomas Paine or Robert Ingersoll? Is it because they have discerned certain illogical conclusions in the prevailing systems of

Christian thought? Have they become estranged from religion because of the hard fought but now dead issue between religion and science? None of these reasons explains their indifference: It is appalling to think how many men and women there are in this world of God's who do not vitally believe in Him, not because they have thought themselves away from Him, but because they have never felt themselves in Him.

And the Church for centuries has been offering to these a system of thought, bidding them in the name of Saint Augustine or some other saint to believe something, instead of telling them in the name of the Master to receive something and to do something.

If Christian faith be only or principally a system of thought, it can never become efficient in the lives of these who cannot think, or do not think, or will not think. This is a proposition which seems self-evident. To present to these unthinking toilers and idlers, strugglers and sufferers, any

theological view of the atonement, is to offer them stones for bread. The attempt to demonstrate to them the love of God by a process of syllogistic reasoning is like the attempt to demonstrate a problem in the differential calculus to the child who can add two and two only by the aid of his fingers, or to the man who, in the stringency of his struggle for existence, or in the debauchery of his self-indulgence has long ago forgotten all the higher mathematics which he ever learned.

Herein is suggested the cause of the partial failure of the Church of Christ to win and to hold the great majority of the brethren of Christ. The Church has been prone to make the acceptance of Christ's religion dependent upon thought. It therefore has been powerless to promote the true Christian faith in the lives both of those who in the exigencies of their material conditions cannot think, and of those who in the absorption of their pursuit of material things do not think.

There are encouraging signs, however,

that the Church is beginning to rectify its mistake. One of the most encouraging of these signs is the modern interest of the Church in men. The "Men and Religion" movement of this present day, with its emphasis upon practical Christianity, must be considered as an attempt to rescue the religion of Jesus from the realm of intellectual thought, and to bring it into the realm of efficient action.

The definition of Christian faith towards which the Church of to-day most happily is tending is just this. Christian faith is simply the faith which inspired the life-work of Christ. It is the consciousness of filial relationship with God, the consciousness, therefore, of help from God and of duty towards God.

This consciousness may be only experienced. There may be those who cannot express it in words, those even who may not intelligently apprehend the thing which they feel. The child does not need to apprehend clearly the idea of motherhood in order to be conscious of filial relationship with his

mother. He may not know enough even to understand that the woman who succours him and who cares for him is his mother. Surely there will always be depths in her maternal love which his intellect can never fathom. But when the child goes to his mother for needed nourishment and comfort, and when a little later he goes out to obey that mother in loyalty and in true devotion, he is acting upon his faith in her. His inability to reduce the idea of motherhood to an intellectual formula in no way affects either the reality of his faith in her, or its efficiency in his own life.

We must separate the concept of Christian faith from all attempted theological definitions and intellectual systems, and we must make it something as simple and as efficient as the little child's consciousness of the care of the mother who loves him and whom, therefore, he must obey. We may admit that the intellectual definitions have their value to some people, but we must see clearly that if the religion of Jesus is to be of use to the multitudes who need it most,

PROFITABLE FAITH

it must be based only upon the child-like confidence in Him who nourishes and comforts and guides.

This faith, unexpressed in words, it may be inexpressible, unformulated and unsystematized, is the faith that is profitable. It will do for the children of the Heavenly Father just what it does for the children of earthly parents, it will send them to Him who they know will nourish and strengthen. It will, therefore, first of all, cause them to grow. In His nourishing care it will bring them out of the feebleness of immaturity into the strength of manhood and womanhood. It will take away the hurt of the pain, and the sting of the disappointment. It will make their lives purposeful and useful. It will bring them into that kind of a life which Jesus sometimes called the "life abundant" and sometimes the "life eternal," the life of vitality and helpfulness, the life whose service is of value now and whose influence never ends.

We can make this faith profitable to the lives of others, too. We can bring others

into this faith, to revert to our parallelism, precisely as a child is brought into the consciousness of his human parents' nourishing, strengthening, and guiding love. We can do it by ministering to men's present needs. The way is not by words, but by deeds, not so much by instructions and sermons as by sympathy and helpfulness.

This was Christ's method of bringing men into profitable faith in a Father of love. He fed the hungry. He healed the sick. He comforted the sorrowful. He forgave the sinful. By such a ministry to the existing needs of men, He revealed to them the love of God. He was not content to demonstrate God's love to those who were able and willing to think about it. He acted that love for those who needed to experience it.

The Church must insist upon Christ's method of promoting faith if it would make that faith profitable. Faith in God can be made an efficient force in the lives of the unhappy and the unsatisfied, the careless idler and the absorbed toiler, the discontented

struggler for wealth and the disappointed struggler for pleasure, only in this one way, by the Christian's imitation of the method of the Master.

This man in our community, this neighbour of ours, this brother for whom Christ lived and died, is caught and held fast in the grinding wheels of our industrial machinery. He can do only a certain kind of labour, but he is by no means free to labour where he will. He is in bondage on the one hand to the organization of capital, and on the other to the organization of labour. He is, as it were, caught between the whirring wheels of the increasing needs of his family and the increasing cost of everything that his family needs. Now the labouring man is not estranged from the efficient religion of Jesus Christ. It is true that labour organizations have sometimes expressed their antagonism to the Church of Christ. But the ideal of the real religion of Jesus was very like the ideal for which these labour unions are striving, the ideal of justice, equity, freedom, and brotherly love.

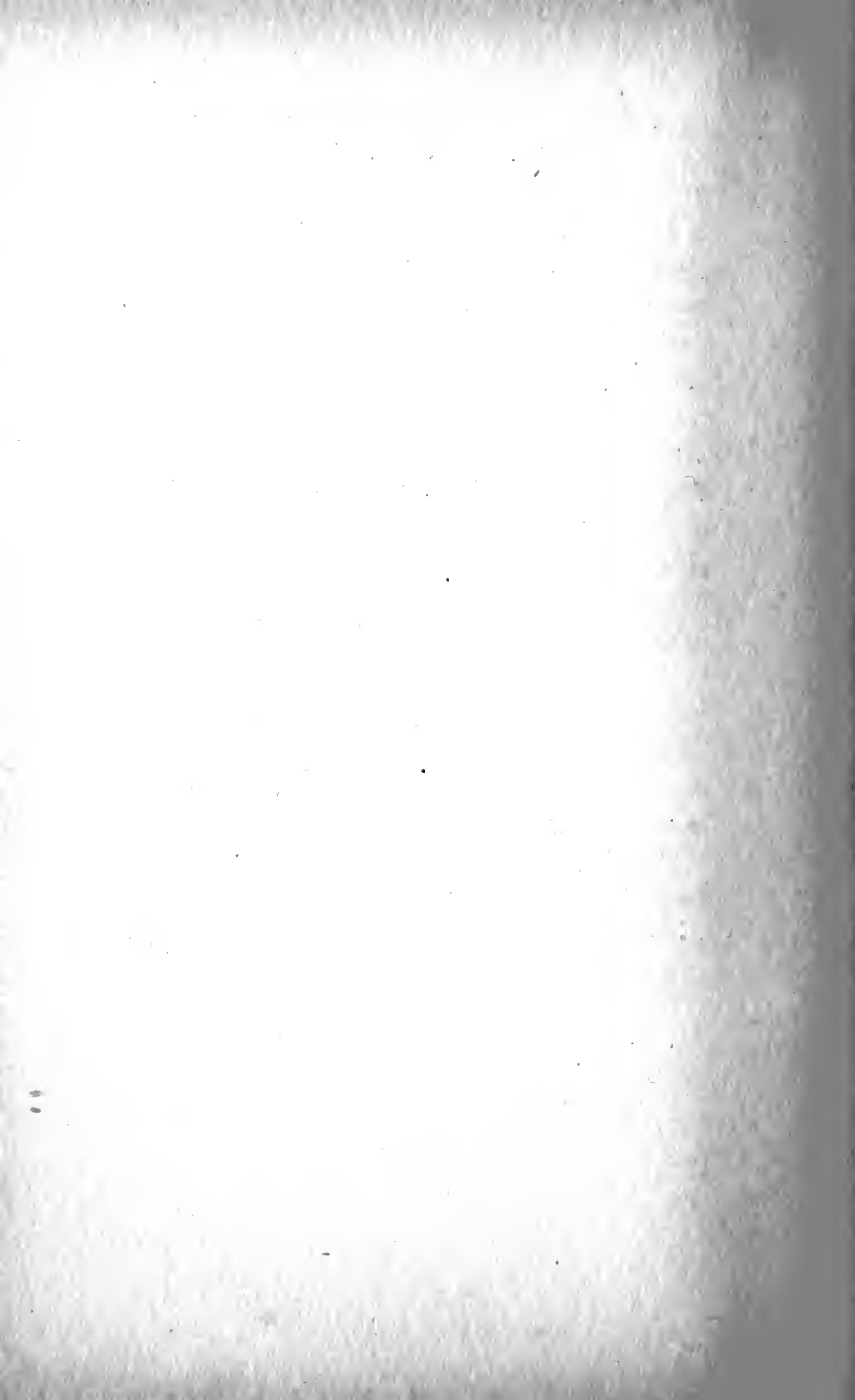
Christian faith can help this labouring man, the efficient faith, efficiently imparted. It is only that empty repetition of meaningless words, so sarcastically described by the author of the Epistle of James, that has failed to help him. Any man who will give his sympathetic attention to the stressful conditions under which this labouring man must live and toil, any Christian who will try to better those conditions, will help this man into that faith in God which will profit him both in this world and in the world which is to come. Help this man to what he knows he needs, and he will be helped to the satisfaction of the greater need which now he may not realize.

All about us, too, are the sinners; the brutalized, ostracized, flagrant sinners. These people are not so very unlike the rest of mankind, except that they are unclothed by social customs and unwarmed by social sympathy. It is because of the nakedness of their souls that they give license to their lower passions and appetites. The man who indulges in gross sins is probably not so bad

in God's sight as the man who deliberately plans to profit from that indulgence. Yet society, and sometimes the very Church of God, has shunned the man who sins and condoned the man who has enticed him to sin.

Can faith save both of these men? Yes, the efficient faith, efficiently induced. So long as Christians are content to say to such in mere words,—“be moral,” “be respectable,” “believe in Christ and get converted,” it will not help them to the life that is lived in God. But when Christians become ready to try to clothe their nakedness with the warmth of their sympathy and their sacrificing ministry, when they become ready to do for them and are no longer content to talk at them, then they will help them.

The faith of professing Christians having become profitable in their own lives will produce the profitable, developing, strengthening faith in the lives of others.



PRACTICABLE LOVE

CHAPTER TWO

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”
—JOHN 13 : 34.

PRACTICABLE LOVE

WHEN Jesus was teaching His disciples at Jerusalem, the government of Judea was controlled by the greed of an unscrupulous imperialism, and the religion of Judea had become the hollow form of a heartless and lifeless submission to law. By a system of unjust taxation the Roman Governor was robbing the people of their possessions, and by the pretense of religious authority the Jewish Sanhedrin was depriving them of their liberty. No wonder, then, that Christ's commandment to love one another was characterized by Him as new.

But the particular company of men to whom this strange command was spoken, though living in an age of political and of religious selfishness, had for nearly three years been in fellowship with the Man of Love. In His presence they had caught occasional glimpses of a re-

ligion more spiritual than the literal legalism of their countrymen, and glimpses of a government less oppressive than that of their conquerors. They had witnessed their Master's helpful sympathy for the sick and the unfortunate; they had seen His tender forgiveness of the sinful. More significant still, they had felt His love for themselves, and the love had had its inevitable effect upon the development of their characters. It had changed the "sons of thunder" into teachable and lovable disciples. It had made the doubting Thomas the loyal friend, who was ready to die with his Master in an apparently foolish and forlorn cause. It had surcharged the heart of the impetuous Peter so that he could confidently declare himself the unfailing champion, vowing that though he should stand alone, he would yet stand boldly by his Master's side to the very death.

Yet it must be remembered that there were some things that the love of Jesus had not accomplished for these men. It had made them neither omniscient nor omnipo-

tent. It had not taken away all the self-seeking from James and John, nor all the doubt from Thomas, nor all the cowardice from Peter. The disciples were still just mortal men with varying characteristics and many human weaknesses. They were still slow of understanding and slow of heart.

We know that they were slow of understanding because, in spite of their fellowship with the Man of Love, they had as yet no conception of His religion other than some slight modification of the worship of Jehovah, through obedience to Mosaic law. We know it, too, because they had as yet imagined no government other than the temporal government of Israel's expected Messiah and Deliverer. We know they were slow of heart because they were still selfish enough to desire for themselves the first places of honour and of riches in the new government for which they hoped; because they were weak enough to sleep while Jesus suffered alone in Gethsemane, and because they were craven enough to desert Him when He was taken captive in the garden.

Evidently, in spite of the years of association with the love of Jesus, the commandment enjoining their own love was somewhat new even to the disciples.

Is it still a new commandment in the twentieth century? The modern republican form of government has not removed from men all opportunity for self-aggrandizement. Political parties now struggle for the supremacy which once by inheritance was enjoyed by emperors, but the party in control still uses its power for its own ends. Under the pretense of government the oppression of the poor is even now legalized, and it makes little difference whether that oppression be accomplished by unjust taxation, or by the tariff-protected, money-bought power of corporations. Who would dare to say that our present age is not producing politicians who are as thoughtless of the rights of those whom they govern as was the cruel, greedy, and cowardly Roman Pilate?

And what about the professed religion of this twentieth century? What about the

slowness of comprehension and the slowness of heart of those who have behind them, not three years of association with the living Jesus, it is true, but twenty centuries of the history of the operation of God's love through Christ Jesus our Lord? Have the minds of these modern disciples completely grasped the truth that Christ's Kingdom is not the kingdom of the worldly prosperity, say of some Church? Have these no desire for the chief places of temporal power and of influence? Are not some of them still sleeping soundly while their brethren and Christ's brethren in agony sweat blood? Are all these free from the just charge of the desertion of Christ's cause when it has become unpopular, and of the denial of Christ's cause when its confession has entailed inconvenience and imagined danger?

Our religion can no longer be considered as a mere matter of punctilious obedience to ceremonial law. We have reached the time when it has become the proper and conventional thing for religious people to express their love for God and for Christ.

But just to love God and to adore Christ for His sacrifice is not precisely the import of Christ's new commandment. He said men were to love their fellows. Must this commandment still be denominated as something new and strange? Indeed, so new is this commandment because so very imperfectly has it been obeyed that many men to-day are declaring that it cannot be obeyed. Twenty centuries of the practice of perfect obedience to that command would have brought the entire world to complete recognition of its practicability. But twenty centuries of slowness of comprehension and of slowness of heart have brought us, God save the mark, only to the place where thoughtful men are questioning the commandment's practical utility.

We must ask, then, another question. Is the commandment, which is still new, impracticable in this twentieth century of apparent selfishness? Before we hastily answer this question in the affirmative, however, we must be sure that we understand what we mean by the term "love," and we must

be equally sure that we are looking in the right direction for the expected results from the practice of love.

If Christian love were only an emotion of affection, the commandment's universal application would indeed be an impossibility. Affection cannot be practiced by all men with reference to all other men. Men of antipathetic temperaments cannot have an affection for each other any more than an acid can have an affinity for an alkali. If Christ's commandment, to "love one another," means that we are to desire intimate, lover-like relations with all men, if it means that we are actually to long for the companionship of the dirty and the degraded, the diseased and the sinful, then, frankly, the command is impossible of fulfillment. Human affection is the natural product of human affinities. And affinity, a term which unfortunately is sometimes loosely used, the real affinity of human souls is something created by God. It is not something that can be commanded even by God's Son. Even Jesus Himself seems naturally

and inevitably to have had warmer affection for some people than for others. He seems to have preferred the society of John to that of Judas. He loved Mary and Martha of the little home in Bethany with a satisfying affection that He could not possibly have felt for the scribes and the Pharisees and for the publicans and sinners.

We are forced to conclude, then, that the love commanded by Jesus is not an emotion of affection, but only and always a principle of action. Let us make the definition complete and specific. Christian love is the principle of benevolent action. When a man has acknowledged to himself a desire to help others and has converted that desire into a motive of service, he has accepted into his life the love which is the very dynamic of the Christian religion.

We must seek the fruit of such love not in a man's feelings, but in his deeds. Though he may not naturally care to associate with the dirty and the degraded, does he try to cleanse and to elevate them? If he tries to help them he is obeying Christ's

commandment of love. If he is content to leave them alone in their unfortunate conditions, he is not obeying the commandment. The test of the practice of Christian love is just as simple as this.

It must be observed, too, that there are limitations to the effect of such love upon him who really possesses it and practices it. The possession and practice of Christian love will not make one omniscient and omnipotent. It will not destroy one's individuality, nor will it mould all men according to one fashion. The impetuosity of the Peters will still persist. The questioning minds of the Thomases will still ask, "Why?" and "How?" It may be that something of the desire for personal preferment may remain in the hearts of the sons of Zebedee.

This limitation, both of the nature and of the fruits of love, indicates that the possession of Christian love is not incompatible with the possession of a sturdy selfhood. A Christ-like interest in the betterment of one's fellows is by no means the contradiction of

a natural, God-commanded interest in one's own betterment. The former interest is not the contradiction of the latter, but its supplement. To seek for one's self is the demand of a law of human life. To seek for others is the added demand of a higher law of human life. The equable adjustment of these two God-given commands is alike the problem of the individual's life and the problem of the industrial and political life of nations.

Right here a ray of hope penetrates the dark picture of the world's selfishness. The apparent undue prevalence of self-seeking does not force us to admit that men cannot be actuated by love, nor even that they are not in some measure already actuated by love. The glaring selfishness is observable for the most part only because so many men have not learned how to adjust their clamouring love impulses to their insistent self-seeking impulses. Men are not in general indifferent to their neighbours' welfare, but by the exigencies of modern conditions they are forced to give themselves with ap-

parent forgetfulness of others to the advancement of their own welfare.

How to add the command of Christ demanding love for others to the command of Nature demanding self-protection and self-advancement, that is the problem which must be solved by those who would make the religion of Jesus of real value to the toiling, struggling, competing men of this busy twentieth century. It is a problem in addition, and not in subtraction. It is not how to make men think less of themselves, but how to make them think more of others. As the Golden Rule by implication expresses it, men are to be taught to treat others not better than they treat themselves, but as well. "Do unto others as ye would that men should do unto you." This "golden rule" commandment of Jesus is exactly synonymous with His "love" commandment. To love one another, that is, to desire to help one another, in its operation is just that treatment of others which squares with the Golden Rule.

When we thus understand the meaning

and the expected results of Christian love, let us not at all be discouraged by the evidence of the selfishness and greed that surrounds us. For in spite of the apparent selfishness, in spite of much real selfishness, there was never a time before this twentieth century when men were so generally engaged in obeying this new commandment of Christ. In answer to him who declares Christian love to be impracticable, show him the hospitals and endowed schools, the public libraries and the social settlements, the houses of refuge and reform. Tell this man of the renowned philanthropists who, it is true, have become great in self-seeking industry and powerful in the selfish accumulation of wealth, but who are sharing the product of their greatness and their power with others. Tell him, too, of the multitudes of the unknown philanthropists who are also competing with their fellows for their own advancement, but who nevertheless are sharing with others the products of their smaller achievements. Remind this cynic that men are working for themselves because

they must, but show him how, at the same time, they are working for others because they would. Admit that men are slow of understanding and slow of heart, mortal men all of them, of individual peculiarities and of many human frailties. But make this doubter see that the impulse of obedience to the law of love is inherent within them; and that the fruit of that love is not lacking in their lives, so long as they but try to give to a neighbour in need even the cup of cold water in the spirit of the serving Christ.

Christian love can be practiced because it is being practiced every day. It must be practiced, because it is a God-commanded law of life. It will be practiced to the benefit of all of God's children so long as God is God, for God Himself is love.

Here, enwrapped in the very nature of God, is the promise of the practical efficiency of every act of love. He who does a loving deed for his neighbour in need, accomplishes three things. He lifts himself nearer to the Father whose child he is. He brings re-

lief and happiness to his brother who is also God's child. And he helps to induce in his brother's heart the consciousness of the God who cares.

“Who gives of himself with his alms feeds three,
Himself, his hungering neighbour, and Me.”

PREVAILING PRAYER

CHAPTER THREE

“All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.”—MATTHEW 21: 22.

PREVAILING PRAYER

A RELIGION without prayer is an anomaly. A prayer without a reasonable assurance of its satisfying answer is an absurdity. The religion of Jesus, to maintain and to increase its influence among men, must not only teach them how to pray; it must give to them the assurance of the efficacy of their prayers.

There are current in these modern times two objections to prayer, whose statements must necessarily be in philosophical terms, but whose influence is felt by many people who have never even heard of their philosophy. The objections are both based upon the truth of the immutable laws of nature.

The first objection assumes that nature, in its immutability, is fatalistic. What is, must be. What will be, cannot be avoided. By the operation of the law of gravity, when a man steps out of the top-story window of one of our modern skyscraping buildings, he will fall to the ground. He will fall just

the same whether his last words be a prayer or a curse. By the operation of the law of the "survival of the fittest," the strong and the industrious will succeed, the weak and the indolent will fail, and both success and failure are apparently independent of men's petitions to God. By the inevitableness of disease and of death the man exposed to contagion is liable to become ill, whether he be a man of prayer or a man of sin; and when his time comes to die, each man, in spite of his piteous pleading, must go out alone upon the unknown journey. Since all men are in the hands of relentless, fatalistic laws, of what use is prayer?

The second objection based upon the same truth of nature's laws assumes the beneficence of nature and of nature's God. History has demonstrated that seed-time and harvest shall not fail. Experience has proven that the seed planted by the prayerless man is as productive as that planted by him who consciously communes with the Creator. The broken bone will knit whether the bone belongs to the irreverent sinner or

to the praying saint. Besides, we have it from the very teaching of the Bible itself that the God manifested in benevolent nature is the God of mercy and of love, and that He is no respecter of persons. "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Since God will do for men all He can do for them anyway, why should they pray to Him?

Of this latter familiar objection there is a slight modification induced by a most beautiful religious trust. This modification makes prayer to God not only unnecessary, but really unfilial. What human father, it is argued, who really loves his children, needs to be asked to bestow the blessings of his love? Is not the very petition itself a suggestion that the child doubts the parental care? Why, then, should a trusting child of God insult his Father's love by petition?

Those who call themselves Christians cannot avoid these well-founded objections to prayer. Nor can they evade the objection by the sophistical retort that prayer in its

essence is not petitionary, but only communal. To tell any man that he can commune with God, but that he cannot or should not ask God for the things which he needs and wants, makes the permitted communion most unreal and artificial. If the term "communion with God" has any vital significance at all, it must include the unrestrained outpouring of the human heart into the Heart Divine. Certainly no child can properly be said to be in communion with his human parent if the child's conversation with his parent must be limited to the discussion of the generalities of faith and adoration and love. The child must be able to tell his father all that is in his own heart. He must be free to name his specific distresses and his specific desires, and the communion is not complete unless the child can expect from his father specific sympathy and specific help. Leave petitionary prayer out of the idea of communion with God and we have no real communion left.

Here, then, is our dilemma. On the one hand, we Christians of the present day can-

not deny the truth of the changelessness and the beneficence of nature's laws. Our entire lives are lived in bondage to those laws. We are sustained, developed, and matured by their blessings. On the other hand, we Christians must assert the necessity and the efficacy of petitionary prayer, or we shall have no sure foundation for the fabric of our religion. We must therefore meet these objectors to prayer on their own ground. The challenge which they have laid down we must accept. If we are to make the religion of Jesus of real value to these doubters and to multitudes of others who, perhaps, have only felt the doubt which they have never formulated, we must show the profit of prayer not in spite of the immutability of law, but because of it.

When our task is thus clearly stated, we must admit at once that certain prevalent conceptions of prayer are both untenable and unhelpful. Prayer is not the attempt of the finite will to change the will of God. Perhaps too many of the prayers which are offered, both in public and in private, resem-

ble the petulant teasing of wilful and selfish infants. The expectation that God will make us His special favorites, immune from sorrow and sin and exempt from the punishment of sin, simply because we ask Him to do so is as foreign to the true conception of prayer as the selfishness underlying the expectation is foreign to the nature of God. No effort of the finite will can change the Infinite will. No petition of man can render null and void the operation of a single one of God's changeless and beneficent laws.

Again, prayer is not a substitute for common sense, nor for purposeful human endeavour. If we ask God for things which to us seem reasonably in opposition to His will, as it has been revealed to us in nature and by science as well as in religion and by faith, we cannot hope for such prayer to be efficacious. And if we ask God to do for us those things which He has very evidently intended that we should do for ourselves, we shall likewise find our petitions of little avail. Such prayer is based not upon the mutual understanding and the friendship

contained in the idea of communion, but upon an unsympathetic and unfriendly misunderstanding which makes real communion impossible.

Prayer is always the communion of man with God. It includes, therefore, that kind of petition which is in accord with man's understanding of God. Its results can be expected only in that kind of helpfulness which is in accordance with God's understanding of men. The ascending petition is human in its scope, and may therefore be faulty, both in matter and in manner of expression. The resulting answer will be divine in its nature, and its helpfulness may therefore be in terms not immediately recognizable by the human petitioner. Thus, when it is said that God sometimes seems to answer men's prayers with a "No" instead of with a "Yes," the truth in the saying is that the divine nature of the helpful answer is not immediately comprehensible to our human understanding.

We must seek for the value of communion with God exactly as we seek for the

value of human friendship. Only a child values his friend's love because of the play-things which the friend bestows. A mature person values his friends for deeper and dearer reasons. The true measure of the helpfulness of the friendship lies not in the things which the friend may bestow, but in the influences which communion with the friend engenders.

So the real value of prayer is to be sought in a certain new efficiency which is created by men's communion with the power of God. We must not think of this new efficiency as something which is granted by God's graciousness alone, but as something which inevitably results from men's conscious and voluntary co-operation with God's power.

There is really no power of God in all the world which becomes operative in its greatest efficiency without the co-operation of man. The sunshine and the rain may fall upon both the just and the unjust, but they do not accomplish a sufficient harvest until men till the soil and plant the seed. The stream runs merrily through the green

meadows and the shady woods, and anybody who will may see its beauty and listen to its music, but the stream does not grind the miller's corn without the co-operation of the man at the water wheel. Steam does not bear heavy burdens, carry its millions of passengers, and convey its tons of freight until the steam has become harnessed and controlled by man. Electricity does not perform its varied and helpful ministry to the world without man's assistance. Why, then, should we expect God's spiritual forces of health and strength and trust and love and life to become completely efficient in men's lives without their co-operation with God?

Here is the argument by analogy. Communion with God results in a more efficient operation of God's spiritual forces in men's lives just as co-operation with Him results in the efficiency of His physical forces. And the results in the one case are really as natural as in the other.

And here is the argument from experience. Whenever men have communed with

God, when, trying to understand His nature of love, they have gone to Him with their needs and with their desires, they have always been helped. That is the universal testimony of men whose word is trustworthy. When such men tell us that by turning a button on the wall of their room they can flood their room with light, we believe them. When they tell us that by putting themselves in touch with the force of God's love by communion they are able to flood their souls with the light of hope and of courage and of new efficiency, we should likewise believe them. In both instances they are accomplishing the helpful results in union with the power of God. In neither instance would or could the light come without their union with Him.

Prayer is the human touch upon the divine power. The result of that touch is the divine power made operative and efficient.

The divine power is always thus made operative. This is the conception of prayer and of its value which makes its helpfulness inevitable, just because of the immutability

of law. The laws of spiritual life are as changeless as are the laws of gravity and of evolution. God's love in the heart is a constant force exactly as is His power in nature. The man who touches the button must always receive the light, for the divine power which he is thus utilizing never varies.

But this conception of prayer, in accord with immutable law and love, suggests that the petitioner must act only and always in harmony with that love. A self-seeking petition is not prayer as it has been here defined, for the self-seeking petition is not in harmony with the immutability of love. When a man asks only for those things which shall make life easier for himself, he is asking for the light without the effort of the co-operating touch. He is asking, but not praying. But when the petitioner asks either by word or by thought for those things which shall make his life more useful, his friends' lives more useful, the entire family of God's children more in harmony with each other and with their one Father of love, then, so far as we can understand

the nature and the purposes of God's love, his petition is in harmony with that love. Then his prayer cannot be in vain. It must prevail. He may be mistaken in his estimate of the helpful value of the particular things which he desires. That mistake is the product of his human immaturity. But only let him be sure that he is unselfish in his petition, and he may ask in faith without wavering, assured from the truths of nature as well as from the truths of revelation that the divine power by his co-operation will become efficient, even in ways, it may be, that he cannot quite understand.

“Our Father,” so Jesus taught His disciples to pray, and the address necessitates on men's part both a filial confidence and a filial obedience. We can tell “Our Father” all our childish distresses and bring to Him all our childish desires, but the communion with “Our Father” will not be real nor will its results be efficacious unless we come to Him in humble consecration, saying, “Thy will be done.”

SAVING FORGIVENESS



CHAPTER FOUR

“And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight; I am no more worthy to be called thy son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat, and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again: he was lost, and is found.’”—LUKE 15:20-24.

SAVING FORGIVENESS

THE study of comparative religions reveals at least one element which is common to them all. Indeed, by many students this element is thought to be the cause of the very birth of religion. This common and perhaps causal element is due to the consciousness of all mankind of the need of what the Christian religion calls forgiveness. It is a consciousness born of the sense of unworthiness; and the sense of unworthiness in turn has been induced by the consciousness of variance from the will and purpose of the Deity.

In primitive religions the need of forgiveness found its expression in crude and oft-times horrible forms of propitiatory rites and ceremonies. As civilization advanced, the propitiatory rites became more refined. There was, for instance, the substitution of the sacrifice of the brute animal for the human individual, the slaughter of innocent

lambs and turtledoves, instead of the murder of innocent children and of hapless women, but the object of the propitiatory rite remained the same—to appease the wrath of the God who had become estranged by men's sins.

When civilization had so far advanced that men could no longer think of God as an angry Potentate, but only as a just Sovereign, the propitiation by the sacrifice of beasts became, in turn, displaced by the propitiation thought to inhere in the sacrifice of one man once for all. But even after this sacrifice, "once for all," we find men still praying for their restoration into that harmony with God which they felt had been broken by their own wrong doings.

At this day there are professing Christians who do not believe in the propitiatory value of the death of Jesus, but they all believe in the need of forgiveness. There are those who deny the reality of sin, but they admit the fact of the error of sin; and the need of the restoration of those in error to the mind of God is the same need which

most Christians call the need of forgiveness.

If we could imagine that the consciousness of sin could be universally obliterated from men's minds, we should not thereby imagine the necessary end of all religion; but we should be imagining a modification of religion which it is extremely hard for us to understand. This religion of the millennium would be so different from any form of religion with which we are now familiar that we should hardly recognize it as religion at all. The harmonious community of all men in the Spirit of God would be in comparison with religion as we know it, like the heaven of our anticipation to the earth of our experience.

Since in this state of existence we are but struggling upward to God, and in our immaturity are continually failing in our struggles, there must always be in the religion of this existence the desire for restoration into harmony with God. Until the human race becomes fully matured, whether in this world or in any world to come, the

consciousness of variation from God's will must always be a part of every man's experience, and the need of restoration will always be a causal, or at least a contributory element in every man's religion.

It has, indeed, become customary in these modern days for Christian preachers to neglect to address their own hearers as sinners. They have fallen into the way of talking to their hearers about the sins of those who never come to Church, and about the general sins of corporate bodies in society and in industry. Perhaps the Church has come to think of its own members and regular attendants as not like other men—extortioners, licentious, and openly corrupt—and to pray to God the Pharisee's prayer of gratitude for this self-righteousness, instead of the publican's prayer of penitence for sin.

But sin in its essence is not open immorality. That is only one of the expressions of sin. Sin is just selfishness. Sin is placing one's own comfort and ease and pleasure above the welfare of others. Sin is the self-

ishness of pride, and the selfishness of prejudice. Sin is the selfishness of narrowness and of bigotry. It is the selfishness of indifference and of unconcern. It is the selfishness of neglected duty and of postponed service. Sin is any kind of selfishness that is ever felt or in any manner expressed.

With this description of sin in our minds, we can but expect all men to admit their own sinfulness. But we do not, therefore, expect that the admission will to-day cause men's faces to blanch and their knees to tremble. Those people who are wont to look back with longing to the days of the anxious seat, and to complain that the present age has no sense of the enormity of sin, are mistaking the sense of enormity of sin for the fear of the enormity of sin's punishment. That which has brought us to the sense of our guilt is not fear, but love. With Jesus' teachings of the Father, we can no longer go to the anxious seat with pale faces, praying an estranged God to deliver us from eternal punishment. In our consciousness of sin we are only to go back to the waiting,

watching, loving Father. Our concern is not with the question, can we sinners, by any propitiation, become reconciled to an estranged Sovereign? This is our concern—can we sinners be restored to harmony with the Father who loves us?

One of the most searching objections to the value of religion is the denial of the possibility of sin's forgiveness. With the truth or falsity of this denial, religion as we know it will perish or live. Our religion must prove itself efficient for sinners or admit its total inefficiency, for it has only confessed or unconfessed sinners with whom to deal.

Here is the line of the familiar argument for the impossibility of forgiveness. The moral order, like the natural order, is immutable and inviolable. If it were otherwise, we should have no moral order at all. To believe that the moral order can be violated without disaster is to introduce moral chaos. Disaster must be as inevitable to the sinner as to him who breaks a natural law. The falling body will strike the ground.

The falling soul can expect only a similar destination. "The soul that sinneth, it must die."

We cannot disprove this argument by the mere revolt of our souls against its hopeless conclusion. The common answer, which unfortunately is sometimes made in the very name of religion, that the inevitableness of sin's disaster cannot be true, because all men instinctively shrink from its truth, is simply puerile prattle. Men also shrink from the truth of the inevitableness of nature. When it is the body of an innocent child who by the misstep of ignorance is dashed to the ground, who of us does not revolt at heart from the seemingly harsh inexorableness of nature's law? But in spite of our revolt, nature goes serenely on its determined way. Because we do not any of us really want to die in sin is no valid argument against the inevitableness of that death.

We can reasonably refute an argument which is solidly based upon fact only by the interposition of other solid facts. Believing as we must in the inviolability of the

moral order, we cannot reasonably believe in the possibility of forgiveness unless we can show that forgiveness is not a contradiction of that order, but indeed a very part of it.

This must be the line of our argument of refutation. The moral order is immutable and inviolable. But what is the moral order? Is the moral order malevolent or benevolent? Is it the product of unintelligent and heartless force, or the expression of a thoughtful and loving will?

When we seek a reply to this fair question, we note that even the natural order is not relentlessly malevolent. A close scrutiny of nature reveals the presence everywhere of healing, remedial agencies. The man who breaks a law of nature does not inevitably perish. If his violation of nature's law makes him sick, there are remedies in nature and power in the God of nature to cure him of his sickness. If his body is wounded by his violation of law, coagulation will stop the flow of the blood from the wound, and by nature's healing process the new skin will be formed.

By analogy we should expect to find, not outside of the moral order, but within that order itself, some provision for the cure of the sinful soul. And when we see every day men, now happy in the assurance of sins forgiven, who were once miserable in unforgiven sin, we ought reasonably to regard this spectacle just as we regard the spectacle of the healthy man who was once sick in body. We ought to regard it as evidence, not that the moral order itself has been abrogated, but that the benevolence of the moral order has been vindicated. Instead of the assertion that because of the immutability of the moral order no sin can be forgiven, we must assert that because of the immutability of the benevolence of that order sin can be forgiven. Over against the sombre words of the decree of immutable law, "The soul that sinneth, it must die," we then are permitted to read the glowing words of the decree of an equally immutable love, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." The moral order, like the natural order, is the expression of the will

of God, and everywhere we read the truth that God is love.

But while we find the place for the forgiveness of sin in the changeless moral order and not outside it, we must note that there is a prevalent idea of forgiveness which is wholly untenable. It is the idea that forgiveness means only the remission of the deserved punishment of sin.

Such an idea is unreasonable from the very argument which makes forgiveness credible. Forgiveness is credible, as has just been indicated, only on the basis of the immutability of the benevolence of the moral order. To remit the punishment of sin would be as destructive to the idea of benevolence as to the corresponding idea of immutability. If sin did not always end in punishment, the educational force of the moral order would be altogether wanting, and there really can be no conceivable benevolence which is not educational. Fire burns; it always burns; it always must burn; not only because nature is changeless, but also because nature is benevolent. There

is no other way for a benevolent nature to teach men to keep away from the fire except by the way of the inevitableness of the consequence of fire. When men expect God to take away from them all the natural and inevitable consequences of their wrong doing, they are really expecting Him to act contrary to His nature of love. This, indeed, would be the introduction into the world of God of moral chaos.

But this is not the kind of forgiveness which the children of God need. This conception of forgiveness is as unhelpful to men as it is unreasonable. No idea has done more harm to the religion of Jesus than this. Embracing this false idea, men have called themselves Christians only because of their fear of punishment. They have minimized the value of Christ's love and sacrifice, "accepting Him" only as the scapegoat upon whom their own sins have been unjustly visited; and they have settled down into a life of ease and content, sometimes to a life of continued sin, indulging the enervating delusion that the "blood of Jesus" has paid

their ransom price, emancipating them only from the punishment of sin.

This conception of the forgiveness of sin had its logical development in the sale of indulgence to sin. And though "indulgences" are no longer openly purchased, the debilitating influence of the idea is still present in the lives of those who cling to their darling sins in the hope that by and by, perhaps by means of a hasty deathbed confession, they may find immunity from deserved punishment through reliance upon the sacrifice of Christ. The forgiveness promised by the religion of Jesus will not become a real saving power in men's lives until this false and emasculating idea is completely abandoned.

Forgiveness is an act which requires the voluntary co-operation of two persons. There must be both the person who grants and the person who takes. He who has been wronged, must be willing to bestow mercy; he who has done the wrong, must be willing to receive the mercy. It does not follow, therefore, that all sins must be for-

given because God has revealed to men His invariable mercy. Before the forgiveness promised in God's love becomes actual, there must be added to the willingness of God a willingness in men.

The man who does not confess his sins, truly repent of them, and heartily determine to turn away from them, cannot reasonably expect forgiveness, not because these things are arbitrary conditions to God's offer, but simply because they are the only adequate expression of the man's willingness to receive. Confession avails for the sinful soul what the recital of symptoms avails for the diseased body. It is the acknowledgment of the inharmonious condition. Repentance avails to the sinner as a trustful submission to the physician avails to the sick. It is in reality the disavowal of the inharmonious conditions. The determination to turn away from sin avails as does the acceptance of the physician's prescription and the obedience to the physician's orders. It is the attempt to co-operate with the healing and restoring agencies.

Without this co-operation of sinful men with the loving God, in spite of the immutable benevolence of the moral order, which is only another way of saying, in spite of the eternal willingness of God, the sin will remain unforgiven.

We are ready now for a definition of forgiveness. Forgiveness is the restoration of the sinner into the redemptive, strengthening love of God. It is accomplished by the voluntary co-operation of man with God. Through physical suffering and through mental anguish, through sorrow for the irremediable wrong done to one's self and to others, some of the inevitable punishment of sin must persist; but through the confession and true repentance of the sinner, through his willingness and determination to come back into harmony with the moral order which has been violated, God's eternal willingness to grant forgiveness is made operative and the harmony is restored. The restoration of the harmony through confession and true repentance is as inevitable in the law of God's love as the unpleasant con-

sequences of sin are inevitable by the same law.

Forgiveness, thus defined, must be considered not as a mere possibility. When the necessary conditions are fulfilled, it becomes an unavoidable certainty. The truth which Jesus taught and lived of the Fatherly care of God, makes it possible for no man to believe other than that his truly repented sin *must* be forgiven. The "unforgivable sin," sometimes called the sin against the Holy Ghost, must be considered only as the sin of continued impenitence. Whenever any man, however far he may have wandered, "comes to himself" and comes back to his Father of love, he will always find the Father waiting to restore to him his lost sonship. Whenever, like the prodigal son in the parable, he is ready to say, "Father, I have sinned, but I want to come back home, and I want to be more worthy," then the kiss of forgiveness will be immediate and the restoration will be complete.

By whatever motive the sinner may be induced to come back into harmony with the

Father's love matters little. The prodigal of the parable seemingly "came to himself" just because his body became weary of the unsatisfying husks. Perhaps his motive was the lowest of all. It may be that the highest motive is the soul's dissatisfaction with the uselessness of the life of sin, due to the soul's awakening to the virile desire to be of some use in the world. But whatever the motive, only let the prodigal go to the Father in penitence, and the Father will forgive, aye, must forgive, for the Father's very nature is changeless love.

It is true, too, that the restoration will be complete by whatever road the penitent sinner may return. He may accept some philosophical statement of the truth of Christ's sacrifice for him. Or, without any definite knowledge of the philosophy or of the theology of Christ's religion, he may come directly to the Father Himself, led by the hand of some human friend who loves him. Or he may come back to the Father, guided thereto by the echo in his heart of some single word of hope and of encouragement.

There are many ways to the heart of the Father's love, and no single interpretation of Christ's religion can justly claim a monopoly of those ways. The mercy of God's forgiveness is ready for all those who come by any of the different ways, provided only that they come in penitence, willing to receive the forgiveness which God is ever willing to bestow.

And this is what the forgiveness will always accomplish in any man's life. It will give him new efficiency for helpful service in the world. One could wish that Jesus had carried the story of the prodigal a little farther. We should like to know what happened to that wayward son after his restoration to his father's home. Was he never again tempted to go away into new scenes of prodigality? But we are left to answer this interesting query only by reference to our own experiences and to the experiences of our friends and acquaintances. From what we know of ourselves and from what we observe in others, we cannot believe that the father's ready forgiveness completely

eradicated from the son's heart all sinful tendencies. Forgiveness is not the end of salvation, which in its essence is the development of noble and serviceable character. It is just the beginning of salvation. After the forgiveness there may come new temptations. But the restoration to the lost sonship in the Father's love gives new powers of resistance. The practical value of it all to any man is just this new power of resistance and this new power of helpfulness. It is the reawakening of the heart of the sinner to consciousness of his obligations, his privileges, and his powers as the son of God. It is the restoration of his sonship.

The forgiveness that will save us is the assured forgiveness of the Father's love co-operating with our willingness, enabling us to live not merely in the hope of future bliss in His mercy, but in the practice of a present usefulness in His service.

ABUNDANT HEALTH

CHAPTER FIVE

“He called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them forth . . . to heal the sick.”—LUKE 9:1, 2.

ABUNDANT HEALTH

It is narrated in the Gospels that the imprisoned John the Baptist, in a moment of doubt, sent two disciples to Jesus who asked Him this direct question, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" Jesus did not meet the question with a dogmatic assertion, nor with a metaphysical argument. His answer was couched in the form of a visible demonstration. "In that same hour," the narrative of Luke states, "He cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits; and on many that were blind He bestowed sight." After He had performed this helpful ministry to men's suffering bodies, He turned to the emissaries of the doubting Forerunner and said to them, "Go, tell John what things ye have seen."

As we proceed with the biography of Jesus, we discover that not only did He Himself claim to demonstrate God's power by healing the sick, but He bade His disciples to do likewise. The inference from

this extension of the healing ministry is quite plain. Jesus did not believe that the power to cure the sick was a peculiar power resident only in Himself, but that it was a power universally practicable by all who should follow His example and become imbued with His spirit.

The history of the development of Christ's religion, however, reveals the fact that all of the followers of Jesus apparently have not accepted His view of the inevitable relation between God's power and men's bodies. The professed Christians of the first century, it is true, are reported to have cured diseases, but the twentieth century Christians are accustomed to denominate such powers as "miracles," more or less incredible and altogether inexplicable. Some of the "saints" of the Middle Ages are also said to have performed "miraculous" cures; and the twentieth century is wont to look upon these reports only as the evidence of the credulity and superstition of an unscientific age. So far have we of the present day divorced ourselves in this particu-

lar from Christ's teaching and practice, that when a certain sect of Christians now claims to demonstrate God's power by healing men's bodies, the great majority of Christ's professed followers are moved either to jeers or to bitter denunciation.

What is the reason for this departure from the practice and the evident thought of Jesus? Here are the commonly offered explanations.

Christ cured diseases, it is said, not because such cures were an essential part of His ministry, but only because in the age which looked for signs and wonders these miracles were the only way by which He could attract men's attention and win their confidence. This explanation makes the Christian care for the bodies of men only an incidental and temporary manifestation of God's power, a first century means to an end, the end, of course, being the manifestation of God's forgiving love applied to men's souls.

A second explanation of the cures of Christ and of His immediate disciples sug-

gests that this ministry to men's bodily needs was performed only because there was in Christ's time no adequate scientific treatment of diseases, and that cures in Christ's name are no longer possible because now they are unneeded. By the logic of this explanation, the science of medicine is conceived as having usurped this particular work of Jesus. Drugs and tonics have abrogated the power of His healing word and touch.

There is truth in both of these explanations. Undoubtedly the spectacular and seemingly miraculous method by which Jesus performed His cures was both a demand and a product of the age in which He lived. It is also undoubtedly true that had Christ's age possessed our modern, God-inspired equipments for the treatment of diseases, at least the manner of His cures would have been modified.

But neither of these explanations is quite sufficient. The cures of Jesus were something more than "miracles." They were benefactions. The significant element in

His healing ministry was not the incredible wonder, but the pitying love. And science never can abrogate the need of the healing ministry of love. It seems that Jesus loved the whole man—the soul which his body but dimly revealed, and the body which was the soul's medium of development and of expression. The sick man, like the sinful man, was to Jesus out of harmony with God's plan, therefore he was to be pitied and saved. It was Christ's desire and attempt to make men "every whit whole."

If the followers of Jesus have lost any part of that desire, they have lost a part of the Christ-like breadth of sympathy. If they have ceased to make the attempt to save any part of the man that needs salvation, they have ceased to perform a part of the Christ-like ministry. To the followers of Him who came to save the whole man to his best estate the sick must still arouse pity, and unless the religion of Jesus can help the sick in body, it will ever have hard work to prove that it can help the sick in soul.

But when we admit that the twentieth

century disciples of Jesus should, like Christ Himself, demonstrate the power and the love of God by healing the sick, we must not limit these modern disciples to Christ's exact method of healing. We call Christ's cures miraculous because we do not quite understand the manner of their accomplishment, and we are prone to limit the use of the term "Christian healing" to similar, unusual, and apparently inexplicable achievements. Thus we say that a physician cures by science, but that a Christian must cure by "faith." We call the results of the ministry of the country doctor natural, and the results of the ministry of some "faith healer," or "Christian Scientist healer," supernatural. But, as a matter of fact, one kind of cure is no more wonderful than another. No cure is explicable except it be attributed to that unknown redemptive power which some people call nature and others God.

In all cases of cure the necessary condition and the contributory cause is an obedient and reposeful trust. The healer, to

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whatever school he may belong, who can command such trust, creates the condition under which the redemptive power of God, or nature, accomplishes the beneficent result. And any philosophy or so-called "Christian Science," or religious belief which can induce this essential condition to health, has as much right to the claim of healing power as has any accredited physician the world has ever known.

Right here is where the true religion of Jesus Christ makes its claim to the continued power to minister to the bodies of men. The religion of Jesus, when rightly understood and truly appropriated into one's life, can and does induce this essential condition and cause of health. If a man has truly accepted Christ's religion, he believes that God is his Father, and that his Father doeth all things well. He practices obedience to his Father's will, as made known to him by the discovered laws of hygiene as well as by the revealed laws of love. He therefore lives, or at least the Christian should live, in obedient and reposeful trust. This

causal condition of health in himself he makes operative in the lives of others by the power of his influence.

It would, indeed, be a sad thing for the world if the health-producing confidence in God were the possession only of those who believe in the teachings of Mrs. Eddy, or of any other modern exponent of a single healing cult. This health-producing confidence is the heritage of all who, through Christ's teachings, have come vitally to trust in the Father's love. And wherever, under the particular name of whatever sect or cult, that trust becomes a reality in the life, its influence upon the health of the body is inevitable. The religion of Jesus still makes and keeps men well, because that religion is based upon the Christ-taught confidence in God.

This apparent generalization is not an evasion of the issue before us. At first thought it may seem that the Christian who is merely obedient and reposeful in his confidence in God falls very short of obedience to Christ's specific command to His dis-

principles to heal the sick. And the somewhat general health-giving atmosphere which such Christians create by their influence may seem very different from the specific cures which the earlier disciples performed, and which certain sects of modern disciples still perform. The apparent difference, however, is due to the fact already noted, that we are wont to limit the operation of the Christian's healing power to the first century methods. But really in the Christian's healing power as well as in Christ's power the significant element is not the miraculous method of the cure, but still just the benefaction of love. It may be doubted whether the disciples were commanded to perform miracles when they were sent out to heal the sick. They were commanded only to help their fellow-men in their present needs. With unwarranted assumption we have called their obedience to that command miraculous, but we must remember that the obedience had been as real and as efficacious, even though we could explain all the details by which the cures were performed.

It is quite possible that the science of psychology, in its relation to therapeutics, may sometimes reduce the cures of Jesus and of His disciples to natural effects from natural causes. Indeed, the only way we can reasonably believe in the cures which to us now seem miraculous, is to believe that the miraculous element is present only because we do not know enough of the operation of spiritual laws to understand just how the cures were accomplished. But if the happy day comes when the "miracle" shall be explained away, the cure itself will have lost none of its wonder as the evidence of the power of God's pitying, saving love.

And so if we say concerning the modern power of Christ's religion to cure that the power is becoming, in some degree, explicable by the modern understanding of psychologic conditions, we do not detract one whit from the truth that it is still God's power of pitying, saving love that performs the cure. When we say that real confidence in God will produce the conditions of obedience and repose essential to health, and that

such obedience and repose must have their inevitable influence upon the health of others, we may be talking in the language of modern psychology, but we are none the less talking also the language of the healing power of God.

We cannot reasonably discredit *in toto* the claims of the modern "faith healer" and the "Christian Scientist" any more than we can discredit the cures of Jesus and of His early disciples. For what evidence have we that God is limited as to the method of the operation of His healing power? But, on the other hand, we must not limit Christ's healing to any of these particular ways in which cures have been or may be accomplished. In so far as these methods result in good, in so far are they evidence, not that God's power works in any one exclusive method, but that many methods may accomplish the necessary condition of health.

Mrs. Eddy, evidently upon the foundation of other thinkers who had preceded her, built up a system of philosophy which she called a science. She said that God was

all and that God was good, and that therefore nothing that was not good could exist. Disease and sin to her were unreal, the "errors" of "mortal mind." To demonstrate the truth of this philosophy she claimed the power to make sick people well. "Here is a man who once believed he was ill; now he believes he is well. Therefore, the truth of my assertions of the nothingness of disease and of the allness of God has been vindicated." That was her argument. But really Mrs. Eddy not only claimed too much from her "demonstration;" there was a certain sense in which she claimed too little.

This man, who by the acceptance of her interpretation of religion has been brought into buoyant health, has not demonstrated the truth of Mrs. Eddy's philosophy, but he has done much more than that. He has demonstrated the energizing, health-giving power of a simple confidence in God. Once he lived in dread of the omnipresent germs of disease. Now he trusts the omnipresence of the divine love. Once he worried about his work and about his friends, about the

possible ill-effects of what happened yesterday, and the probable ill-effects of what he was afraid would happen to-morrow. Now he dwells securely in his trust in the God of love who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Is it any wonder that his health has become energized? Is it in any degree remarkable that his physical powers have become strengthened?

But he who has accepted any other of the many prevailing interpretations of Christ's religion can have the same health-giving trust in the changeless, omnipotent, and omnipresent God of love. He ought to have it. He must have it, if his Christianity be real. And when he has that trust, whatever may be his accepted creed or his denominational preference, he has all that the professed Christian Scientist has or can have. He has that which can and must energize all his physical powers to the efficient performance of all his required physical labours; for he has that which dispels all disease-producing fear and worry, and that which promotes a health-producing obedi-

ence to the laws of physical well-being. He has been made whole by the religion of Jesus, and if he lives in his confidence in God and inculcates a like confidence in others, he has helped to make them whole.

It is confidence in God, then, and not confidence in any of the interpretations of religion, which creates the abundant health.

The truth of this assertion of the healing power of confidence in God is reasonably based upon the revealed truth of the Holy Word. It is re-enforced by the conception and practice of Jesus Himself. It is strengthened by the modern discoveries in psychological and religious therapeutics. But the truth of the assertion cannot be proven to any individual except by trial and success. It cannot be disproven except by trial and failure. Try it for yourselves. Live obediently, unafraid, and undisturbed in the confidence that God is love, and see what that confidence will do for you. Live in that confidence and see what, through its influence, you can do for others.

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C H A P T E R S I X

“I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever. . . . He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.”—JOHN 14: 16, 26.

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APPARENTLY many people believe that the principal use of religion is to be found in its promised consolation. This mistaken notion is seemingly held not only by the multitudes who never think of embracing religion at all except in time of sorrow, but also by many of the very exponents of religion who are wont to present it, dressed, as it were, always in the garb of mourning. Thus preachers of the religion of Jesus have been known to tell the happy youths in their congregations that though they may not feel the need of religion now, when sorrows and troubles come, when they get old and when they must think of death, then they will need religion for consolation and for help. It is, perhaps, only natural that these happy youths, thus instructed, should indefinitely postpone their acceptance of religion, while for the present they continue serenely to amuse themselves as they please

so long as the dreaded troubles are delayed. For why should funeral flowers be purchased while life is still vigorous?

Of course, this is an inadequate conception of the value of religion, and doubtless it is not at all the conception held by those whose words and acts seem to imply it. Unless the religion of Jesus has a universal application to all phases of human life—to life's joys as well as to its sorrows, to its youthful aspirations as well as to its ageful reminiscences—then we must consider that religion is at best only of temporary value to men, and we must admit that its temporary value is due altogether to the continued presence in the world of the evils of sin and of sorrow and of death, which Jesus came to overcome. For, indeed, Jesus came into the world not merely to console those who were miserable, but to remove the misery that needed consolation. The greater part of His ministry was in vain if His religion is only a consolation for the sorrowful and the dying.

But on the other hand, while we vehe-

mently deny that the only or even the principal value of religion lies in its consolatory power, we must admit that unless the religion of Jesus can and does console, it becomes a failure just where its success is most needed. To those who have come to the extremities of life, the religion of Jesus must be able to furnish a sufficient consolation, or all the other promised blessings of that religion will become null and void.

Consolation is only one of the helps of religion. Like the life-preserver thrown to the man who has fallen overboard, it is a help immediately demanded by the exigencies of the situation. But if the help be denied to the struggling, perishing man in the deep waters, the Christian assurance of God's love and God's care will avail only as "sounding brass or a clanging cymbal."

It may be true that there are some few souls who are never forced to struggle in the deep waters. Possibly there is now and then one who is born into kindly surroundings, whose youth is carefully guarded, whose maturity is serene, and whose death

is peaceful and hopeful. If there be such an one, he is the type of what ought to be, and of what would be if all mankind should come into right relations with God and with life; of what will be, we can reasonably hope, when the religion of Jesus shall have reached the maturity of its influence in the inauguration of the millennial age of health and of joy, of trust and of love.

But meanwhile these types of what ought to be, if they exist at all, are very exceptional cases. As yet the millennial age has not dawned. Now most people who are normally alive are at some time or other engulfed in the dark waters of sorrow. It may be true in some instances that they have fallen into the water themselves. Their own ignorance, their carelessness, or their sinfulness may have caused the fall. It sometimes seems, however, that some one else has pushed a fellow-man into the water. Indeed, the weak and the incompetent are always being thrown overboard by the strong and the capable, and one cannot readily see how, in this world of competition and in

accord with the law of the "survival of the fittest," it can be otherwise.

But sometimes it really seems as though God Himself had thrown men into the waters of affliction, which are far deeper than the height of their puny human intellects. It is true that under the head of "the mysterious Providence," we are all too prone to catalogue many sorrows which are brought upon us either by ourselves or by other human beings. But when we make all due allowances for this common tendency to blame God for what men themselves are responsible, there remains a considerable residue of human sorrow in which the human intellect is unable to trace the hand of man.

Of all the "mysterious Providences," the most mysterious, perhaps, is the inevitableness, but withal the unexpectedness of death. As a general axiom, every man knows that everybody must die, but the normal man is never quite ready specifically to apply the axiom either to himself or to his own loved ones. It is always at an unexpected moment that our dear ones are snatched from

the arms of our protecting love. And though we well know that the same fate awaits ourselves, the inevitable Angel is still the unexpected Angel when He comes to take us, too, away. Who is it who thrusts us beneath these overwhelming waters of bereavement and of death? Who, unless it be the God whom we call the God of love, but whose ways we do not, cannot understand?

Now if the basal proposition of the Christian religion be true, that God is love, we must believe that whatever the cause of the sorrow, the cure of the sorrow is certain. If God Himself is responsible for the sorrow, He surely is a God of cruel caprice and not at all a God of love if in some way He does not make the harsh experience a means to a benevolent end. If the deep waters engulf the soul because of the thoughtlessness or selfishness of other men, we have reason to expect that the mere justice of God, to say nothing of His mercy, would not permit the innocent to suffer inconsolably. If we find that the man has

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been plunged into the deep waters because of his own sinful neglect, even then we cannot believe that a God who is love could watch his dying struggles and offer no help. If God could conceivably excuse Himself from helping that struggling man with the declaration that the suffering and sorrow are self-inflicted, God's compassion could conceivably become less than man's, for no real man can complacently suffer another to drown, however careless or sinful that other has been.

We are not, then, forced to diagnose each case of sorrow before we can expect the application of the Christian remedy of consolation. We cannot say that some sorrows are consolable and that others must be considered as inconsolable. We must boldly declare that in the religion of Jesus there is consolation for all sorrow, whatever its cause, or we must logically admit the religion of Jesus to be a pitiable failure.

It is necessary here that we understand exactly what is meant by the term "consolation," for certain prevalent, mistaken ideas

of the nature of the consolation of religion have brought confusion to many and have plunged some into the darkness of cynical despair.

There is, first of all, the mistaken idea of the Christian fatalist, who believes that consolation may be found in an unreasoning and uncomplaining submission to God. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," replied Job to the friends who sought to comfort him in his distresses. And in spite of Christ's clear revelation of the God of love and compassion, there are many of the professed followers of Christ who attempt to find consolation in the religious fatalism of this semi-pagan. This is the black philosophy of fatalism tinged, but not beautified, with the color of religion. Considered as consolation, it is cold and comfortless. It assumes that God, in His unknowableness, is an arbitrary, autocratic Sovereign, and that man is at best only the creature of God.

At the opposite extreme of religious thought we find the mistaken idea that con-

solation is to be obtained not in stoical submission, but in insensible forgetfulness. "The sorrow that comes to us cannot be helped: therefore we will seek to forget it." Not all of the people who embrace this philosophy proceed to "eat, drink, and be merry." Perhaps the most of them just keep on attending to their daily business and performing their daily duties. When the sorrow which they cannot wholly overcome obtrudes itself upon their memories, they plunge all the harder into their absorbing labours. The people of this philosophy who have learned to call themselves Christians, have found in Christianity no substitute for the philosophy, but only a slight modification of its expression. These Christian philosophers say: "Our hope is in toil—not merely for ourselves, but for others. We must seek the forgetfulness of our own sorrow in incessant, thought-absorbing service of others."

To many Christians this appears to be the very ideal for the sorrowing soul to pursue. Indeed, there is an element of true

and Christlike greatness in this attempt to assuage grief by a self-forgetful service of others. Nor can anyone who has not tried it deny the efficacy of this method of the treatment of sorrow.

The contention is here made, however, that the surcease of sorrow, which may be induced by the way of forgetfulness, is not really consolation at all. The man who takes to drink may find surcease of sorrow in the exhilaration or the stupefaction of his indulgence. And what more does he obtain who seeks relief in incessant toil, aye, even in unselfish toil for others?

This proposed remedy is at best a sorry makeshift. It is like the prescription of a drug to heal a painful wound. The drug may cause the pain of the wound to cease, but it unfortunately does not help to heal the wound itself. If the drug-produced insensibility be continued long enough, of course, the wound may become healed by nature. And some people, carrying out the analogy, have hoped, by work and service, to continue their insensibility

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to sorrow until Time shall have had opportunity to heal the wounded heart. But is Time the only healer which the Christian religion has to offer to the distressed and suffering soul? Is there no balm in Gilead that can soothe the pain of the wound by healing the wound itself? Must we always and only try to forget? But really we know it is impossible to forget. It is not only our minds that will not permit the forgetfulness; our hearts forbid it. Our yearning love craves the boon of memory and will brook no denial of the boon, even though the memory be accompanied by bitter anguish.

We are brought by these considerations to this statement of the truth. No consolation can suffice the reasoning mind and the loving heart of man which demands even the temporary disuse of any of his God-created faculties. The sufficient consolation must be that which satisfies both his mind and his heart. It must bring comfort not by the denial of his reason, but through his reason. It must soothe not by the ob-

iteration of his memory, but by the very use of his memory.

The offer of consolation through reason and through memory is the offer contained in Christ's promise of the "Comforter." The "Comforter" was to be the Teacher. This is the consolation offered to sorrowing men available through their reason. And the "Comforter" was to "bring to remembrance all things," whatsoever He had said unto them. This is the consolation offered to sorrowing men available through their memory.

A great deal of valuable time has been wasted by theologians in their discussion of the nature and of the office of this "Comforter." But stripped of all its theological terminology and of its mystical significance, Christ's offer to sorrowing men is simply the offer to them of the continuance in sorrow of a reasonable faith and of a dauntless trust.

Some of the specific things which Jesus had said to His disciples and of which the promised "Comforter" was to remind them

were these. He had told them that God cared even for the sparrows, and that they were of more worth in God's sight than many sparrows. He had told them that the Father was more willing to give them blessings than they were willing to ask. He had declared that it was not the will of the Father that anyone should perish. But also He had told them that in this world they should have tribulation. By His own example, more forcibly than He could possibly have shown them by mere words, He had made it quite clear to them that love in a sinful world must suffer, and that obedience to the will of the loving God is not always easy.

But some of these things, perhaps all of these things, Jesus evidently thought His disciples might forget unless they had a reminder. Let us repeat. The "Comforter" is the divine reminder to men of the truths spoken and lived by Jesus, the basal truths of faith and of trust.

In the dark it is not always easy to remember the truths which have been

learned in the light. When a human father has proven his love for his child by many blessings of which the child is conscious, there may come a time when the blessing is hidden from the child's understanding. The way, then, is dark to the child. The loving face of the father is temporarily hidden. But in the natural fear of his loneliness let the child hear the voice of his father. It will be the voice of reassurance coming to him in the darkness. It will be the tender reminder of the father's proven love. It will be the sweet assurance that that love cannot fail.

This is the "Comforter" promised by Jesus to sorrowing souls. The "Comforter" is the voice of God speaking to men in the dark, bidding them to remember His unflinching goodness in the past, and reasonably to trust Him now that they cannot see.

How different this consolation promised by Jesus from the consolation of the persecuted servant of Jehovah in the poem of Job! Job said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." The consoled Chris-

tian says, "Because He loves me I know He cannot slay me." "I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him."

And how different this consolation from the hoped-for consolation of absorption in self-indulgence or even in work and in service! The man who tries to deaden his sensibility to suffering says, "I must forget." The Christian consoled by the divine reminder of God's love says, "I need not try to forget, for I can trust." He who tries to deaden his sorrow by forgetfulness, always becomes doubly bereaved. He is bereaved not only in the present, but he is bereaved of the sweetness of the past. But he who has found consolation in a reasonable trust, finds the sweet and painful memories themselves added inducements to that trust. How can the remembered, precious moments of soul communion eternally cease? How, if God is love? The answer is this. Because God is love, the precious experiences cannot cease, the soul communion cannot

stop. The continuance of the memory of the past is, after all, the promise of the fruitfulness of the hope for the future. He who has blest us cannot really discontinue His blessings, for He is changeless love. So though for a moment the way may be dark, reminded by the "Comforter," in reason and in sweet memory we can still trust and hope.

"I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air,
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

SUSTAINING STRENGTH



CHAPTER SEVEN

“My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”—2 CORINTHIANS 12: 9.

SUSTAINING STRENGTH

WHEN "Christian" in Bunyan's immortal allegory started from the City of Destruction, he bore upon his back a heavy burden. At first the purpose of the pilgrim's flight was but to rid himself of the burden which no man in his own city could loosen. The burden remained, however, until, on his way to Mount Zion, he came to the cross and the tomb. There, at the foot of the cross, the burden loosed itself. It rolled into the tomb and was seen no more.

But by this time the purpose of "Christian's" journey had become more clearly defined. The removal of the burden proved to be, after all, not an end in itself, but only a means to an end. It made the pilgrim free not to lie down and rest, but to run forward with increased buoyancy toward the Celestial City.

There are many burdens incident to the busy life of this twentieth century of which John Bunyan made no account. The bur-

dens upon the backs of the Christians, in this age of competition and of conflict, are social in their nature as well as personal. They exist not only because every man is responsible to God, but also because every man is a part of the social order, and because no man, in justice to his friends, his neighbours, his country, and his God, can escape from the City of Destruction just to save his own soul. He must live in the city wherein he was born. He must dwell amid the earthly conditions that surround him, and so long as he remains upon the earth an earthly burden must be bound upon his back.

But surely this burden with its included social significance can be of no less concern to the God of love than "Christian's" burden of the weight only of his own sins. Somewhere on the hard road of ministry that leads to the Mount Zion of the earthly Kingdom of God, somewhere there must still be the place of the cross and the tomb where the burden shall be lightened.

But where shall the modern Christian find

relief from his burden? Obviously, our answer to this question must depend upon our conception of the nature of the desired relief.

There are two ways by which the oppressiveness of any burden may be lightened. There is the method of subtraction, the decrease of the load itself; and there is the method of addition, the increase of the strength to bear the load.

When the former method has been exclusively pursued by Christians in the attempt only to decrease the weight of the burden, it has always ended disastrously. The result of this method is weakness and inefficiency. If a child is relieved of all responsibility by his over-indulgent parents, the child will never, in any real sense of the word, become mature. If he is never compelled to fight his own battles against temptation, if he is never obliged to make a choice for himself, if he never knows disappointment and grief, and if he is never urged to make the sacrifice of unselfishness, this child indeed finds relief from some of

the burdens of life, but the cost of the relief by this process of subtraction is the very usefulness of his life.

Thus it is only at the cost of their usefulness that men in religion seek to rid themselves of the burdens of conflicts and of choices and of sacrifices. That period of Christian history which was dominated by Christians' refusal to bear the burdens of a social life with their fellow-men, was a period of personal piety at the expense of social helpfulness. If all Christians, like the monks of the Middle Ages, had sought relief from social burdens by the selfish process of their entrance into monasteries, no Christian would have grown to maturity of influence and of efficiency, and the world outside the monasteries would constantly have sunk lower into the depths of licentiousness and cruelty.

Let the selfish Christian who seeks only to be rid of his burden be clearly described. He is the one who seeks relief from the obligations of his God-created personality. He may seek the relief from God Himself.

Perhaps instead of depending upon his own volition he may expect God, by a special revelation, to relieve him of the necessity of choice. It may be that instead of developing his own power of resistance to evil he may expect a miracle of God to furnish him with the requisite power to resist in time of need. It is possible that without the trouble and anxiety and the sacrifice of his own love he may expect God to guide and to guard his relatives and his friends. It is even conceivable that he may be like the "Christian" of Bunyan's imagination, so intensely interested in the salvation of his own soul that he may expect God to save everybody else without his heart-burdened assistance. This is the man who "casts his burdens upon the Lord" with startling literalness. The inevitable effect of such an unwarranted, literal interpretation of the Scriptural command is his disobedience to that other command, "Let every man bear his own burden." And the disobedience creates inefficiency and destroys personality.

Or this selfish Christian who seeks only to be rid of his burden of personal and social obligations may be he who tries to find relief from his fellow-men. Some people, for instance, are prone to throw the burden of their own sins upon their ancestors. They have inherited weaknesses which, they think, relieve them of the burden of personal blameworthiness. Or it may be the conditions of society are held responsible for their wrongdoing. Environment has made them bad. Many people, too, are wont to throw the burden of their responsibility for others upon the teacher who trains their children, upon the Church that is supposed to care for the spiritual concerns of their neighbours, upon the preacher, the social reformer, and the philanthropist. "It is the business of other men to promote the welfare of my family and my community," these declare. "I pay others for this work. It is my business only to take care of myself."

It is sad to admit that even professing Christians are guilty of this attempted eva-

sion of the burden, both of personal and of social responsibility. "They have their reward." There are some of the burdens of a sensitive conscience and of a grieved love which these do not bear. But for this immunity they pay the tremendous price of a hardened conscience and of a calloused heart. They are rid of the burden only at the expense of their very manhood and womanhood. And upon all of these who attempt to get rid of the burden of responsibility there falls always the heavier and more oppressive burden of inefficiency.

The fact is that in life as we know it there are some burdens that are absolutely necessary. All of these necessary and irremovable burdens are reducible to one general class. They are the burdens of love. Perhaps a complete enumeration of the love-burdens would be impossible. A few suggestions, however, will suffice for their recognition.

The burden of right living is a love-burden. In this world all the children of God are burdened with the responsibility for pu-

rity and righteousness, both of thought and of conduct, not because they are in this world to save themselves for another, but because here they must order their own lives in the way that shall best help those whom they love.

The burden of sorrow for wrongdoing is a love-burden, for wrongdoing is an evasion of one of the responsibilities of love. It cannot be possible for the burden of the sorrow for sin to be wholly removed so long as the sinner is blessed by God with the power of memory and with the more divine power of love. It would not be well if the burden could be removed. The cross and the tomb of Christ mean to the Christian not the place where the sorrow of the sin is rolled away, but where the strength to bear even this burden is imparted by the merciful forgiveness of God.

The burden of the service of others is an irremovable love-burden. And this burden includes all the lesser burdens of grief and of sympathy, of disappointment and of patience. For the wrongs of those we love

we must always grieve. In their sorrows we, too, must sorrow. Because of their failures, we also must be disappointed. With their willfulness we must be patient. It is true for the Christian as well as for Christ Himself that there is the cup of love's sacrifice which cannot pass away, and so for the love-burdened Christian there always will be the agony of Gethsemane and the sacrifice of Calvary.

But there are many burdens which are absolutely unnecessary. These unnecessary burdens may all be included under the general head of burdens of fear.

The burden of the distrust of God's forgiveness is an unnecessary fear-burden. Though the sinful man of God-endowed conscience cannot reasonably hope or really wish to be relieved of the burden of the sorrow for sin, he can and should be relieved of the burden of the fear of sin's consequence. The former burden can be borne by him who is strengthened by God; the latter can be removed from him who really trusts in God.

Worry of any kind is an unnecessary fear-burden. Worry is the over-anxiety created by distrust. It is begotten of the fear of what is going to happen to-morrow either to ourselves or to others. This burden men bind upon their own backs, and the weight of this removable and self-inflicted burden is bearing many of the professed followers of the trustful Jesus to the very ground.

Here in connection with these removable burdens is where we must interpret literally the command to cast our burdens upon the Lord. The command means not that we are to throw away our self-reliance, but just to throw away our fear. We can be rid of all of the self-inflicted fear-burdens by the way of trust.

From the preceding résumé of the different kinds of burdens we deduce this general statement of the burdened condition of all of God's children. They all must bear the God-entrusted burdens of love; none need to bear the added self-inflicted burdens of fear. The strength that can sustain the burdened children of God is the strength that sup-

ports the love and destroys the fear. Greater love and less fear, these are what we all need.

The supply of these needs of all men is promised in the religion of Jesus Christ. In the words of the Apostle Paul to the Church at Corinth, the twofold assurance of the Christian religion is concisely stated. "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Sufficient grace! Divine strength!

His grace is sufficient. The religion of Jesus brings us into filial relations with the Father who is gracious. The complete idea of God's graciousness includes not only His mercy and His forgiveness, but His care and His protection. Ever ready is He to forgive our repented sins, and ever watchful is He over our best interests and the interests of our friends and loved ones. If we really trust the love of our Father, all our fear-burdens will roll away. At the foot of the cross of Christ's sacrifice, if the cross means to us all that it should, our trust in the Father who so loves us will take away all

those burdens which we needlessly pile upon ourselves. His grace is sufficient.

And His strength perfects our weakness. The appeal of Christ's cross is not only an appeal to trust, but an appeal to love. As He has loved us, so we are to love one another. In fellowship with the spirit of His love, the love-burdens will not grow less, but we shall grow stronger. It is only when our love falters that these burdens seem unbearable. When we take His yoke upon us and learn of Him, we become united with the strength that enables us to bear. His strength makes perfect our weakness.

But after all, the end of our pilgrimage through life is neither the removal nor the lightening of our burdens. When at the place of the cross, where our trust is renewed and our strength increased, we see so many of the burdens roll away, and find those remaining so much easier to be borne, then we are to remember that the lessening of the load is but to increase the buoyancy of our onward journey in the path of service. We have come to interpret the Celes-

tial City as the Kingdom of God upon the earth. We seek, it may be, not so much the heavenly city of bliss as the earthly city of righteousness and of justice and of brotherly love. The way we travel is not the way of mere personal salvation so much as the way of social service. But this way, too, has its Slough of Despond, its Hill Difficulty, its menacing Apollyon, and its threatening lions by the way. We crave not the ease from our burdens which will enable us to rest in idleness, but that buoyant strength and that lightness of burden which shall enable us to press onward, conquering and to conquer, serving and to serve.

The grace and the strength offered in the religion of Jesus will not be sufficient except for those who are determined to use that grace and strength in the continued service of their fellow-men and of God. The place of the cross and the tomb of Christ must be to us all the place of renewed consecration.



SATISFYING JOY

CHAPTER EIGHT

"Your joy no one taketh away from you."—JOHN 16: 22.

SATISFYING JOY

THE right of all men to the pursuit of happiness was not granted by the Constitution of the United States. It is a right granted to them by their divine birthright. All that constitutions and laws can do is to seek to protect the right. Exactly as all men in God's world have the right to eat and to sleep, so they have the right to be happy, and for much the same reason. They have the right to eat and to sleep because their physical natures demand sustenance and refreshment. They have the right to be happy because their spiritual natures demand sustenance and refreshment. The appetite for happiness is as normal a characteristic of the human being as the appetite for food, and both appetites are God-created.

But it is the tritest of all trite truths that the appetite for happiness is not universally satisfied. There are many of God's children

who experience very little of the fullness of joy; perhaps there are some who know nothing at all of such fullness; probably there is no one who has ever been completely filled. Here is one of the many apparent contradictions between what should be and what is. According to the plan of the Creator, revealed in men's inherent appetite for happiness, all men should be happy. Because of existing conditions, both within themselves and without themselves, they all fail in the attainment of that right.

So prevalent, indeed, is the unhappiness, and so inevitable does the unhappiness seem that some pagan thinkers have found the chief end in life to lie not merely in the subjugation of all desires, but in the very annihilation of them. While even some Christian thinkers, and these not all of mediæval days, have been able to offer to men only the expected joy of an anticipated future life to reconcile them to the inexplicable misery of the present life.

The contention is here made that the substitution of a promised future happiness for

a demanded present happiness is a confession of the inefficiency of Christ's religion, and is in fact an evasion of Christian responsibility. If men cannot find satisfying joy now, they cannot reasonably expect any satisfying joy by and by. If God in this world has been so overcome by any spirit of evil that He *cannot* here make His children happy, we have no ground for believing that He will be any more powerful in any world to come. If God in this world, which is admittedly His, *will not* make His children happy now, we cannot credit any greater willingness on His part for the future existence. There cannot be two Gods—one to rule upon the earth, and one to rule in Heaven—and it is high time that Christian people should cease talking and acting as though they believed such an absurdity.

Is there joy in the religion of Jesus Christ which can satisfy those who have the God-given right to the pursuit of happiness in this world as we know it to-day—this world of sorrow and of suffering and of sin?

That is one of the most persistent questions which concern the efficiency of the Christian religion. Countless multitudes are awaiting the answer, multitudes of the miserable and the disappointed and the disheartened children of God. They stand before us with bent bodies, with careworn faces, their eyes wet with tears or hardened with hopelessness, and with uplifted, pleading hands they cry, "Give us the joy that no man can take away from us." And what shall be the Christian's answer to these souls pleading only for what is theirs by divine birth-right?

Let the answer to this demand of unhappy souls be spoken in the words of no other than the Master Himself. "Your joy will be full," He said to His disciples, "when my joy is in you."

His joy! What did Jesus mean? Tradition has appropriated the words of the Second Isaiah as descriptive of this Saviour of the world, "A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Christian art has painted the Christ with sad, unsmiling face.

But Jesus pictured Himself as the Man of Joy. He spoke of that joy as something so real, so abiding, so satisfying that the possession of it by others could be described only as the very fullness of joy. Whence the apparent discrepancy?

A casual review of the biography of Jesus would seem to indicate that tradition and art had been right in their picture of the Man of Sorrows. We read that He was born of poor parents and that He had not where to lay His head; that He was tempted in the wilderness and tried in the garden of Gethsemane; that His body was wearied by His ceaseless ministry, and that His soul was sickened by men's hardness of heart; that He was betrayed by one of His household of disciples, denied with oaths by another, and deserted by them all; that He was made the butt of the cruel horseplay of rough soldiers; that He was crucified in the company of criminals; and that even in the agony of His dying hours His countrymen for whom His loving heart yearned, passed by the foot of the cross, wagging their heads

and reviling Him. Surely if any man was ever acquainted with grief it was this lonely, rejected, crucified Son of Man.

But delve deeper into the biography of the Saviour. Read between the lines. Find the spirit that sustained Him. Study this life not as it was seen by others, but as it was experienced by Himself. When we try to catch something of the deep, spiritual significance of that life, we read something like this. He was born of good parents who loved Him. He became early conscious of His filial relations with the eternal God. He resisted the temptation in the wilderness and overcame the weakness in Gethsemane. He knew the inner spirit of willingness of those who were weak in the flesh and slow of understanding. He made the maimed to walk and the blind to see, and to the sinful He gave hope and courage. He was conscious of the remorse of Judas, the quick penitence of Peter, and He could hope for the restoration of the faith of those disciples who for a time had distrusted and deserted Him. No mockery of homage could de-

stroy within Him the sense of the worthiness of real homage, and the cross on Calvary was to Him but the place where He could happily say that His work, the faithful performance of God's will, was finished. Surely no man had ever such cause for joy as this Son of God who had overcome temptation in Himself, who had served and saved His fellow-men, and who had finished the work God had given Him to do.

This brief review of the life of the Man for whom joy was a real possession in spite of His acquaintance with grief, suggests to us that the real and lasting joy of life is something independent of all outside conditions.

If we should limit the use of the word "happiness" to its derivative significance, and define the word as the pleasure derived from favourable happenings, then we must admit that the religion of this Man promises happiness to His followers only incidentally. Primarily, Christ's religion cannot be expected to smooth the waters of the troublous sea of life. But it does something more

and better than this. It supplies the ballast which enables one to sail serenely through the troubled seas.

When we take "joy" from its derivation to signify an exultant leaping forth of the spirit, and when we modify the word with due reference to Christ's own joy by the adjective Christian, we have for our definition of Christian joy the following: Christian joy is the Christlike consciousness of victory over self, of service for others, and of harmony with the will of God. The possession of such joy will not make the sea of life all smooth, but it will make all the angry waves surmountable. It will create the happiness of external conditions not so much by ameliorating the unfavourable conditions, as by minimizing their untoward influence.

It is pitifully true that many men, perhaps most men, are pursuing happiness by the futile method of the attempt to smooth the sea. They demand that the conditions shall be made favourable for them. They expect ease and luxury and idleness. The true Christian method of the pursuit of hap-

piness is the method of overcoming the roughness of the sea by an increase of ballast. If the tempestuous waves of sorrow and of disappointment are in danger of overwhelming one, the sure way to decrease their violence is to increase one's own stability. It is only the small, unballasted craft that feels the high seas and the adverse winds. The great, heavily ballasted ocean liners are unmoved by the sea's roughness.

The only joy that can really satisfy is this joy of the greatness of personality. The three elements in the attainment of such greatness are the elements of victory over one's self, of service for others, and of obedience to God. This is the trinity of joy—the joy of self-mastery, the joy of brotherly love, and the joy of filial obedience. And this is the Christian joy, for this was the joy of Christ.

If we are forced to admit that only Christ Himself ever perfectly attained the greatness of personality which alone could make His joy full, we must yet declare that the approach to the fullness of joy is by the one

way of this Victor's attainment. We must understand that when Jesus expressed His wish that His joy might be in His disciples, He was wishing for them the same kind of a life of self-mastery, of service, and of obedience which He Himself had lived.

So when these multitudes of God's children, who by the divine right of their inheritance should be happy, but who are not, come to the Christian teacher with streaming eyes and trembling lips, asking for the joy that satisfies, this must be the Christian's answer: "Such joy, dear suffering, disappointed friend, you can have if you will seek it in the right direction." Has your unhappiness come as the inevitable result of sinful indulgence? Your joy will be restored when with God's promised help you have overcome the temptation and mastered yourself. Has your unhappiness come as the result of selfishness? You will find joy again by the way of the helpful service of love. Are your eyes wet with tears because of disappointment and of bereavement? Ah, here is the promise of

the joy that can sustain even in these untoward and humanly inexplicable conditions. It lies in trustful obedience to the will of the Father, who knows and who cares.

But when all is said to the unhappy soul that the Christian can say, there will be a remainder of inexplicable and seemingly irremovable unhappiness, so long as the life of each individual is closely associated with the lives of all other individuals, and so long as there remain in the world some children of God who do not try to overcome their sins and their selfishness, and who are not endeavouring to fulfill in themselves the will of God for them. Vicarious unhappiness! The world seems full of it. Unhappy parents, unhappy husbands and wives, unhappy children, unhappy friends, sorrowing, grieving, suffering for the sins and selfishness and wilfulness of others. Can the religion of Jesus remove this unhappiness? Only by the way of a Calvary. Like Jesus Christ Himself, no follower of Jesus in this world of ignorance and of selfishness and of sin can expect to be other than "acquainted

with grief." But like Jesus, every Christian who is strong enough to take up his own cross can find, aye, will find, joy in the very suffering of sacrifice.

Here, then, is the satisfying joy offered to men by fellowship with the spirit of Jesus Christ, the joy of self-mastery, the joy of loving service, the joy of the fulfilment of God's will. That was the joy of Christ. That is the joy of every one who is truly trying to follow Jesus. That can be the joy of all who will fight and serve and obey.

ATTAINABLE PEACE

CHAPTER NINE

“My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”—JOHN 14 : 27.

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NO THOUGHTFUL student of the life of Jesus can fail to notice the apparent contradiction of His utterances concerning peace. At one time, quite early in His ministry, He distinctly declares: "I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matt. 10:34-36.) But when we turn the pages of the narrative to the very end of His life, we find in the last address to His disciples the promise of this bequest: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you." (John 14:25.)

There are several ways by which we may seek escape from the difficulty of this seeming contradiction. We may say, as some

have said, that the same word is used in its different connections with very different meanings, that the peace which Jesus denied to be the result of His ministry is the peace of an outer social harmony, and that the peace which He bequeathed His disciples is the peace of an inner personal repose. History has seemed to substantiate the truth that the religion of Jesus, with its various and sometimes antagonistic interpretations, has not always tended towards social harmony. At the same time, the testimony of the saints of all ages has been to the effect that their faith in Christ has produced a personal and an indwelling peace. Thus Christians who have been cast away by their family, ostracized by their friends, and excommunicated by the Church, have gone jubilantly to their martyrdom, testifying to the possession of the inner peace. While other Christians, fighting not only against the manifold evil of the world, but quarrelling with their very brethren in Christ over matters of theology and speculation, from time to time have paused in their wordy

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battles and their disgraceful squabbles to speak triumphantly of the peace of God in their own hearts. Perhaps Jesus meant that His religion could bring to men objectively only conflict, and that it could give to them peace only as a subjective experience.

Or we might seek to reconcile the diverse statements of Jesus, as others have done, by reference to the different times when the statements were uttered. We might interpret Him to mean that the beginning of the Christian life is tempestuous, that its continuance in this world of trouble and of sin must be with combat, and that peace can come only at the very end of life as we know it here. There are doubtless many toiling, struggling, troubled Christians who in this conception try to content themselves with the mere hope of a peace that shall be theirs when they are ready to die.

Each of these explanations, however, destroys something of the efficiency of the religion of Jesus. Subjective experiences may be more valuable to their possessor than corresponding objective experiences, but

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they certainly are not of great value to others. It surely is better for a company of men to dwell together in harmony, than it is for each member of a quarreling and disputing company to be possessed of a mere subjective equipoise. And unless the religion of Jesus can stop the objective quarreling, the world, as a whole, will be but slightly impressed by personal testimonies to subjective peace.

Again, the efficiency of the religion of Jesus is immeasurably decreased by any and all attempts to postpone the blessings of that religion to some future time. It has been the great source of weakness in Christ's religion that for nearly twenty centuries the most of its blessings have been relegated to an eternal future. Really, the present is as much a part of eternity as any future can be. Men are not suddenly changed into immortal beings when they die, or when they are about to die; they were all created immortal beings when they were born. The present belongs to God as well as the future. And unless it can be demonstrated

that there is an inevitable disconnection between God's present and God's future, we must necessarily demand a present as well as a future realization of the peaceful condition of life with God. We may not reasonably demand that the blessing of peace shall be as fully appreciated now as we hope it may be by and by, for the present appreciation of the blessing depends upon our mortal limitations. But in so far as we, in our immaturity, are now able to accept the blessings of peace, in so far must we believe that exactly the same kind of peace may be ours with God to-day as can possibly be ours when we come to die, or even after we are dead. The peace of the God who is the God of the living, must be a present peace.

The logic of this course of reasoning compels the conclusion that the apparent discrepancy in Christ's teachings concerning peace is due only to the different degrees of men's acceptance of peace. It was not Christ's fault that the immediate result of the entrance into this world of His evangel should be conflict. The conflict was caused

by the unwillingness, or, if one prefers, the inability of men to receive that which He was offering them. There is nothing that makes a company of angry, quarreling men more angry and more quarrelsome still than the unsought and unwelcome attempt to pacify them. Christ's offer of peace has been and always will be an apple of discord to those who do not want peace at His proposed terms.

And by the same token Christ's offer of peace cannot be expected to become compulsorily operative in the lives of all men at any particular future time. His peace will become operative in the life of each man when, and only when each man becomes ready to accept the terms of the offer.

There is, then, no discrepancy in the teachings of Jesus concerning the object of His ministry. He came to offer to men the peace of God, subjectively to bring to each man the inner quietude of trust and confidence, and objectively to bring them all into harmonious social relations with each other. His offer is as available for this

present moment as it can be for any expected future moment. His offer creates discord only when it is rejected. The sword will be sheathed and the differences forgotten when the offer is accepted.

No one can accuse Jesus of arbitrariness because the bequest of His last will and testament is thus seen to be conditional. Artificial conditions may be imposed by men only in the bequest of artificial property. The testator, for instance, may impose any condition he pleases upon the bestowal of his money and his real estate. These are extraneous things, things which exist apart from the testator's own personality. But there are many things which every man must bequeath to his successors without condition. Something of his own disposition, for example, he must bequeath to his children; certain good or evil effects from his life he must leave to his friends and acquaintances. And there are some things which every man may include in his bequests whose appropriation is essentially conditioned by the very nature of the things bequeathed.

Thus real success may be bequeathed by a father to his son only on the essential condition of the son's industry and perseverance. So the father's strength of character will become, by inheritance, the possession of the son only as the son imitates his father's example in the resistance of temptation and in the practice of self-control. The successful man and the strong man bequeath to their children an incentive to success and to strength, and the example of success and of strength, but the bequests do not and cannot become available unless the incentive empowers imitation.

The bequest of peace by Jesus must be catalogued in the last mentioned list of bequeathable possessions. The condition of its inheritance is contained in the very nature of the thing bequeathed. It was really only the incentive to peace, and the pathway to peace which Jesus left to His disciples. These were all that He could leave them. The peace itself could not become the full possession of anyone of these disciples except the inducement of Jesus should lead

him to follow his Master on the charted way to peace.

The essential condition then to the full possession of the peace which was Christ's last bequest, not only to His immediate disciples, but to all His followers, is the Christ-induced imitation of the Christ way of the attainment of peace. Jesus attained peace by the two pathways of trust and love. By trust in God He came into that peace which is the subjective experience of calmness and repose. By love for His fellow-men He came into that peace which is the objective condition of harmony with His fellow-men. When men have been induced by Jesus, both to trust their God and to love their fellows, they have come into the possession of His bequest of peace.

Only one part of the peace promised by Jesus is subjective. The subjective Christian peace is the repose of trust. Sometimes this peace has been mistaken for the rest of cessation of labour and of temptation. Such rest, which means the absence of toil and of conflict, is as foreign to

the religion of Jesus as it is foreign to the idea of the development of manhood and of womanhood. When one turns to the religion of Jesus for relief from any of the developing experiences of life, one will always be disappointed. Religion is not a substitute for human development; it is a means to that development. So instead of the rest of absence from toil and conflict we must expect the personal experience of peace to give us something of more worth, namely, an equanimity in toil and a repose in conflict.

The peace of Jesus subjectively considered is the equanimity and the repose which enables one to do efficiently the work of life and to meet victoriously the temptations of life. Certainly this peace will make the toil apparently less arduous, and the temptations seemingly less strenuous. The man of mental equipoise can always accomplish a given task with much less effort than that needed by the irritable, impatient man; and he who meets temptation with an inner repose, in the assurance of God-em-

powered victory, must ever, by this sure armour of defence, diminish the force of the temptation. It is a terrible thing for any man to have no work to do in the world; and no enemy could wish a man any greater harm than the removal from his life of all temptation. But it is a splendid thing for any man to be able to do his work easily; and the best friend of that man can wish him no greater blessing than the power to resist. The indwelling peace of the religion of Jesus is the bequest to every man from every man's best Friend. This peace creates the ability to perform with comparative ease the hardest tasks. It creates the power to resist the severest temptation. Surely no single equipment for efficient life can be worth more to its possessor than Christian peace in the heart.

This helpful equipment for life is born of implicit trust in God. It comes to men as the bequest of Jesus because Jesus revealed to men God's trustworthiness. He who really like Christ and through Christ comes securely to rely upon his Father's

love, comes into the peace which enables efficient toil and which empowers victory, the peace, in short, which energizes and ennobles life.

There is a certain sense, however, in which the possession of the inner peace of trust is but a means to an end. The end towards which the efficiency of individuals must contribute is the objective peace of social harmony. "That all may be one," was the way Jesus described the complete, desired end of His ministry. Not just that some men might have the indwelling peace of trust, but that all men might dwell together in the outer peace of harmony.

It is easy to misunderstand the nature of this outer peace. Social harmony has evidently been thought by some to be synonymous with the eradication of all social differences. But in religion and in society, as well as in music, there is a vast difference between the meaning of the words unison and harmony. It would be the worst imaginable catastrophe to the world if all differences between individual tastes and be-

liefs and practices should be obliterated. A unison of all the members of society would destroy personal ambition and personal responsibility, and society thus would become not a living organism, but an inert, lifeless instrument. The music of humanity must be played upon living personalities, not upon soulless mechanisms. It is a music comparable to the oratorio rendered by human voices, and not to the single note of insensate instruments all attuned to the same pitch.

The cause of the discord, which is observable in society, is not too much individuality, but too little sympathy. Each member or class of society is too prone to ignore the essential relations to other members or classes. Thus industry, which for its best efficiency requires the harmony of capital and labour, is made inefficient by the jangling discord of each party's insistence upon just its own rights. So the religious efficiency of the world which requires the harmony of different beliefs and practices is made inefficient by the

discord of different creeds and different rituals, each struggling vociferously to drown the sound of all the others.

What the religion of Jesus can do for men is this—not to make them all think and act alike, but to make them all sympathetic and tolerant. It can bring to each individual the recognition of the worth of all other individuals. It can take away the discord of the insistence of each individual's necessary note and bring all the notes not into unison, but into harmony.

The way Christ's religion can bring men into this outer peace of harmony is by way of obedience to His love. When men come really to love one another, in any degree like the manner of His love for them, the difference between individuals will be as marked as it is now. The responsibility of each individual for his own part in the oratorio of humanity will remain the same. There will be no unison of voices singing the same words and the same notes. There will be the different words and the different notes, but the differences by the magic of

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directing love will be softened into exquisite harmony. And the theme of the oratorio which men will sing in one grand chorus will be, "Peace on earth, good will to men."



ACHIEVING POWER

CHAPTER TEN

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do.”—JOHN 14 : 12.

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IN Christ's brief parable concerning the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, the great Teacher does not specify exactly what "the pearl of great price" represents. He has been generally understood, however, to refer to the inestimable value of personal salvation. This somewhat vague and often misunderstood term is a sufficient description of the "pearl" only when we understand by the term all that Jesus evidently meant to convey by its use.

Personal salvation, according to Jesus, is personal development for service. It includes, therefore, all those processes of education and of discipline and of exercise which help in the creation of character and of efficiency. The chief value of personal salvation thus defined lies not in what may result to the saved man himself, but in what through his salvation must result to others.

If this "jewel" be kept hidden in its individual case it may, indeed, give a certain satisfaction to the owner of a miserly disposition, but the real value of the "jewel" consists in its power to beautify and to adorn. If the saved man would make his "jewel" really valuable, he must wear it continually. He must use his "jewel" in such a way as to make himself more attractive to others, more attractive and so more winsome and more serviceable.

In the discussion of the values of the Christian religion we have come at the very last to the consideration of that value which of them all is the most priceless. We are to think now not of any personal satisfaction which may and must come to him who embraces the religion of Jesus, but of the personal power that must be his. Health, forgiveness, strength, joy, consolation, and peace—these are all pearls of value, and it would be worth one's while to try to be a Christian just for these and the like personal satisfactions. But "the pearl of great price" is nothing less than the personal

power of the Christian, which is to be estimated not at all in terms of his own satisfaction, but always in terms of his service for others.

The power of the Christian life is derived from two sources. It comes in part from the energizing of one's own resident but latent forces, and in part from the superhuman force which is the result of the union of the Christian with the omnipotent power of God.

In the first place, the Christian religion furnishes the dynamic of latent, unused human forces. Our best method of approach to the understanding of this truth is by way of illustration.

In the early morning after the terrible disaster which destroyed so great a part of the city of San Francisco, a man was rushing frantically about in the vicinity of his devastated home. He was searching among the débris for his missing child. Suddenly he stopped and put his hand to his ear. He had heard a faint cry coming to him from beneath a pile of torn lumber, overthrown

bricks, and shattered mortar. A moment later the man was feverishly throwing aside the heavy pieces of refuse, digging down in the direction of the summoning cry for help. Soon he came to a heavy beam.

“Wait a minute!” sang out an approaching officer; “You cannot lift that alone.” But the man did not wait. Before the officer could reach him he bent his puny back to the apparently impossible task, and the heavy weight moved. The imprisoned child crawled out to safety. And the man, with his dear one clasped in his arms, sank down upon the mass of débris and sobbed his thanksgiving.

But how could he move the weight that was apparently too heavy for the strength of two ordinary men? The evident answer is this. The love of his child empowered him.

Consider another illustration. Turn back the pages of the history of the American nation nearly one hundred and fifty years. Look at the picture of the distraught colonies waiting for the voice that should arouse

them to united action in resistance to the oppression of the mother country. The first Congress had already met and had accomplished nothing. Massachusetts and the other northern colonies were waiting for Virginia to take the lead, and Virginia was waiting for the man who would speak the word to inspire her action.

It was in St. John's Church, Richmond, at the meeting of the new Virginia Convention, that the word was spoken. There were wealthier men in that Convention than the speaker, men more highly educated than he, men who were destined to play a seemingly more important part in the coming struggle for independence. But when Patrick Henry had finished his impassioned oration, declaring that "An appeal to arms and to the God of hosts is all that is left to us," a human voice had spoken the words which touched with fire the waiting fuse of American patriotism, and the fire did not go out until Cornwallis had surrendered at Yorktown.

But whence the power in the words of this

comparatively uneducated lawyer? Again the answer is evident. He was empowered by the love of his country.

These illustrations from the many that might be enumerated, must suffice. They are examples of the power of a selfless devotion to energize unused and quiescent forces. Most men probably never use more than a fraction of the force which is resident in themselves, because to most there never comes the necessary dynamic to action. So an emergency call always finds a man with more strength than he really knew he possessed. Under the impetus of a sudden and pressing need, the forces of the man—physical, mental, and moral—are apparently wonderfully multiplied. In reality, his forces are not multiplied at all, but his unused forces are made operative. He is, as we say, “carried out of himself” by the call of some one else’s danger or need, and in self-forgetfulness he is able to lift the heavy weight, to speak the inspiring word, to perform the needed service. Unselfish devotion is the dynamic which can call into

efficient action every atom of a man's inherent capability.

This is the dynamic furnished by the religion of Jesus. The Christian hears the words of his Teacher telling him that God loves him. He hears Christ declare that God loves all other men, too. He hears God through Jesus, in accents of tenderest pity, calling for the stronger and more fortunate of His children to help those who are weaker and less fortunate.

Here is a man in need. He is ignorant. He is sick. He is morally incapable. He is wilfully sinful. He is exactly like that child beneath the débris of the San Francisco earthquake. He is incompetent and inefficient, and because of his incompetence and inefficiency, he is in imminent danger. Now, the religion of Jesus declares that every other man is bound to this one man in danger by the ties of relationship in the family of God. God loves that man in danger. So, too, if we have recognized our relationship to God, do we love him. When that truth really grips our hearts, when we

come to know that it is our brother and God's child who is in this danger, then in self-forgetful love we bend our backs to the task of his salvation, and lo, the devotion of our love energizes us and makes us efficient.

Or here is a whole class of people in need. This class is exposed to disease-infected conditions. This other class is the victim of the oppression of iniquitous industrial conditions. This third class is enslaved by tyrannous political conditions. Christ's religion teaches that these classes of people, like every individual in every class, belong to the one family of God. God loves these people, and by the same token He hates the untoward conditions which threaten and oppress and enslave them. The love of God is here demanding that the destructive conditions shall be removed. The disease germs must be annihilated. Iniquity in industry must be vanquished. Slavery in government must be abolished. Our brethren, all of them God's children, are waiting inertly for the leader who shall incite them to a

united effort for their own deliverance. Let a man really come to feel this truth and he will open his mouth to speak the protesting and defiant words; and lo, his selfless devotion to the cause of the oppressed so empowers his efforts that he becomes enabled to lead his fellow-men into liberty. Thus are reformers always created, and the religion of Jesus has done very little for any man until it has made him a reformer, until it has aroused in his bosom a Christlike anger against injustice and abuse, until it has engendered within him the self-forgetful courage of the bold championship of the cause of the oppressed.

The religion of Jesus fires a man's heart, stiffens his backbone, strengthens his sinews, and empowers his efficiency. Such an one no longer stops to say "I can't," but with Paul he is always ready to declare that through the dynamic of the spirit of the loving, serving Christ, "I can."

But there is something more which the religion of Jesus can do for any man. It can give to him the control of a power outside

himself, a power which we can describe with no other word than that of superhuman.

When Jesus was preparing His disciples for His approaching death, according to the narrative of the Fourth Gospel, He declared that after His departure they would do greater things than He Himself had accomplished. We are not to understand by the "greater works" that He meant that His disciples were to perform deeds more miraculous than His own. The greatness of even Christ's works did not consist in their miraculousness, but in their beneficence. His declaration concerning the "greater works" of the disciples was the promise of the enlargement of His work to the accomplishment of a wider beneficence. The disciples' service for the world would be greater than His, not because they could be really greater men than He had been, but because they would have the greater efficiency which His greatness had made possible.

The scientific achievements of modern times furnish us with many illustrative parallels to this spiritual truth spoken by Jesus.

We consider only one. Doubtless we all should admit that the original discoverer of the power of steam must be ranked as greater than all succeeding investigators in this line of physical demonstration. But just because of the revelation of this first great man the succeeding men, by the use of the revealed power, have really accomplished much greater works. We cannot truly say that James Watt made the modern, gigantic, and powerful locomotive, but Watt gave to the world the initial revelation which made the locomotive possible.

Now Jesus stands in the world of moral achievement as does the discoverer and first exponent of physical forces in the world of scientific achievements. Jesus was the revealer to men of the power of love. He did not come into the world just to show men what love could do for them, but to demonstrate to them what they could do through love. By His revelation and exemplification He gave to men what really proved to be a new moral and spiritual force. By no means did He Himself accomplish

the very last thing which that force could accomplish. He left to others to carry on His work of revelation and exemplification by new methods of application. These others, through the new power which He had revealed and inaugurated were, according to His program, to do even greater things than He had been able to accomplish—greater in extent, not greater in content, greater in the farther reaching results of a continually widening application of the new power.

The history of the development of Christ's religion is proving the truth that Christ's astounding promise is becoming fulfilled. Compute, if you will, the "greater works" by the numbers influenced. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, made more converts to the religion of Jesus than his Master Himself had made during all the years of His ministry. And to-day there are preachers and evangelists who are influencing more people than Peter was able to do. The followers of Jesus, at the time of His death, numbered at most but a few hundred, per-

haps not so many as one hundred. To-day we must estimate the followers of Christ with the million as our unit of numeration.

Or estimate, if you choose, the "greater works" of the followers of Christ by the geographical extent of the out-reach of His religion. Paul carried the gospel into regions which Jesus never attempted to visit. And the modern missionary successors of Paul are successfully promulgating Christ's religion in lands wholly unknown to the "Apostle to the Gentiles." The provinces of Judea and of Galilee were the scene of Christ's ministry. The entire world has become the scene of the labours of His followers.

Or value the "greater works" of Christ's disciples by the increasing variety of the applications of the principles which He inculcated and exemplified. Jesus made but little, if any, attempt to apply the moral power of love to social, industrial, and political conditions. He was apparently not interested in the subject of the public education of the youth, nor in the settlement of

labour disputes, nor in the establishment of a just and righteous government. Even His concern with men's bodies was limited to the cure of isolated cases of sickness and did not extend to any attempt to prevent disease. But the followers of Jesus now are applying His revealed power to all sorts of problems, problems which Jesus Himself seemed not to recognize. By attention to hygiene, they are making absolutely impossible some of the diseases which were in sporadic instances only cured by Jesus. By the maintenance of schools and colleges and endowed libraries, the modern disciples of Jesus are preventing many forms of sin which Jesus only occasionally forgave. By the introduction of the principle of brotherhood into industry and into politics, these later followers of Jesus are making impossible the oppression of the poor and the unfortunate, whereas Jesus Himself was content with but one exhibition of the holy wrath of love, when He overthrew the tables of the greedy grafters in the temple of the living God.

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Jesus rescued an occasional individual from some of the effects of ignorance and disease and sin. The followers of Jesus are keeping whole classes, whole nations, one might almost say the whole world from ignorance and from disease, from crime and from sinfulness.

If some of these "greater works," perhaps all of them, are being accomplished today by scientific methods which are comprehensible to the human intellect, their greatness is not thereby diminished one whit. To help any man in any of his actual needs is great work, however that help may be accomplished. The "greater works" promised by Jesus are the applications of His revealed moral power of love to more people, to a wider field, and to a greater variety of activities. The "greater works" are possible because of the greatness of Christ's initial revelation. That the work, in its extent, must be greater than Christ's, is inevitable because the power which He revealed was a living, divine power, and therefore its fruits must grow.

We must not hesitate in our description of this power, revealed in its fullness by Jesus and by Him made available to men. It is a superhuman power. By this we cannot mean that it is a miraculous power, nor even a supernatural power. But it is superhuman. It is a power outside and above the man himself, a power greater than any potency which can be energized into his own latent capabilities.

We have reached the limit of man's unassisted power, however disinterested may be his energizing motive, long before we have reached the end of his possible achievements. A man under the stress of an imperative call of love may lift a much greater weight than he could possibly lift without that empowering incentive. But, after all, he can lift much more by the intelligent use of the steam derrick. When he uses the steam derrick, he is utilizing a power of God which is superhuman. That a man who is endowed with the spirit of Jesus should be able to accomplish results utterly impossible to him without Christ's spirit, is no more

miraculous or supernatural than that a man, by the use of the steam derrick, can utilize a power superhuman. We must consider the spiritual power of divine love in the world to be as natural as the physical power of what we call natural forces. And we must note that the great results which have been accomplished by men inspired by love are explicable only on the assumption that they have been using love's steam derrick. Their selfless devotion has enabled them to use a power divine. The power of their human endeavour has been multiplied by the power of God's omnipotence, and lo! the "greater works" have been accomplished.

Now if this omnipotent, divine power of the love of God, like all other powers of God, be a real and a natural power, it must be reducible to certain definite and comprehensible laws. There must be a way by which any man can avail himself of this superhuman power just as there is a way by which he can avail himself of the superhuman power of steam or of electricity.

The way marked out by Jesus is the way of fellowship with His ideals. He Himself was the Way, He declared on one occasion—the Way and the Truth and the Life. By this we must understand Him to mean that anyone who would accept His truth and live His life must, by that way, come into possession of His power.

To be more explicit, to accept the truth in Christ is to accept not merely in an intellectual sense, but in an ethical sense the truth of the Fatherhood of God, with all its implications of the brotherhood of men, and of love's compulsion to service. To live Christ's life means the attempt to serve and to save one's fellow-men by self-forgetfulness and sacrifice. Given a man who will really take this truth of Christ into his life and try to live it, and you have a man who can no more avoid utilizing the superhuman, divine power of love, than the man who has come into practical possession of the truths of physics can avoid utilizing superhuman and also divine power when he

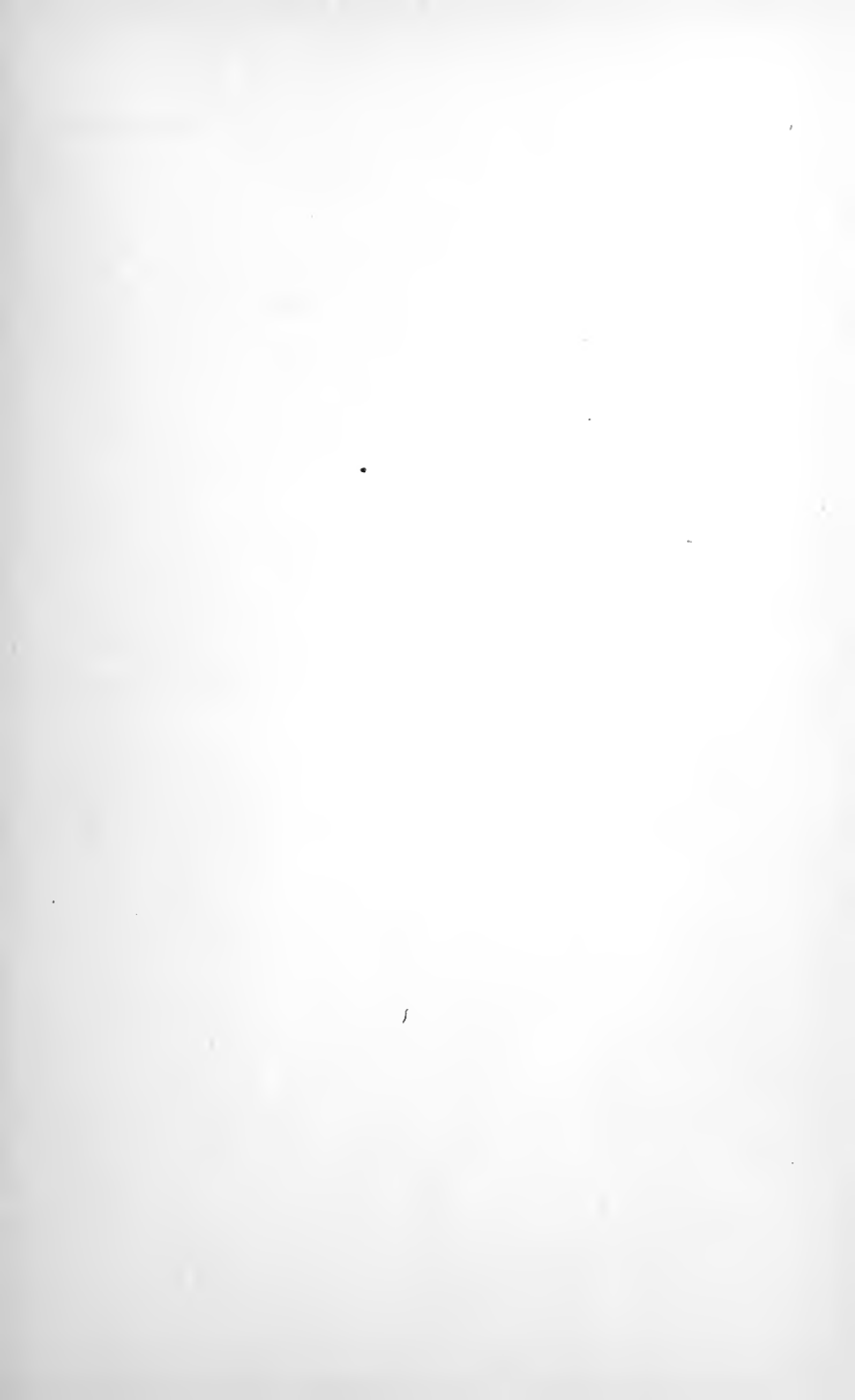
controls a steam derrick or when he touches the electric button.

That superhuman physical power can be used by man is a matter of fact which we observe every day in our lives. That superhuman spiritual power can be used by man is not merely a truth to be logically deduced; this also is a matter of fact. That all men may, if they will, use the power which some men are manifestly using, is a truth which cannot be denied except by the denial of the unity of God and of the inviolability of God's law.

Achieving power! This is the promise of the Christian religion. And this is the end of the Christian religion, of which the consciousness of filial relation with God is only the beginning.

The way of progress in Christ's religion is the way of faith in God and love for men. All along the way there will be brought to the traveler the blessings of forgiveness and of health, of consolation and of strength, of joy and of peace.

But no Christian can be content with any of these blessings which may come just to himself. The Christian has not come into possession of the great blessing promised by Christ's religion, the "pearl" of priceless value, until in the selfless devotion of his life his whole being becomes energized, until by the inevitableness of the operation of the laws of love he makes use of the very omnipotence of love for the accomplishment of superhuman achievements, until he says, "In Christ's strengthening power I can," and until by the use of that power he achieves.





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