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RELIGION AND THE GROWING MIND

RELIGION AND THE GROWING MIND



BY

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PREFACE

NO attempt is here made to even suggest an outline of the full range of Christian belief. The aim is simply to endeavor to interpret a way of approach to Christian reality for the growing mind. If some earnest, and perplexed, minds are helped in finding a point of contact with the primary facts which produce Christian experience the end in view will have been achieved.

J. D. A.

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I

WHAT ARE WE?

ARE we bodies incidentally possessing souls, or are we souls having bodies? Which shall be supreme? Shall the physical house imprison the man, or shall the man possess the house? Shall the mind make soul or body its favorite? Shall the demands, the instincts, of the higher or lower nature have supreme consideration? Shall the soil smother the seed, or shall the seed gather strength from the soil and rise into blossom above it?

The problem is to place the emphasis where it belongs, and then to give soul and body their legitimate opportunity. For they are bound up together, they act and react upon each other. The body is not the enemy of the soul, and the soul is not the enemy of the body, so long as the rights of each are recognised. But that is the task, to give each its place. If we submit our thoughts to the cravings and sensations of the body, while we ignore the promptings of

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the soul, we go backwards, we become untrue to our destiny as human beings. That means we have, for the time, given up the real battle of life, we have hung out the white flag of surrender.

But if we steadily insist that the instincts of the higher life shall dominate the problems of the passing hour, if principle and not impulse has the clear right of way, then the soul is coming into its own. If we are content to wait for pleasure till duty is finished, or to find our pleasure in duty, if we are ready to contend with inclination in order to en-throne what is right, if we are prepared to suffer pangs of inner pain in the attempt to vindicate the supremacy of the soul, if we refuse to enjoy a cheap, and cowardly, passing peace at the expense of higher concerns, then we are on the high road of our destiny.

And when we give the place of emphasis to the supremacy of the higher life we are acting in accord with the best thinking of our time. For it is not only religion which is proclaiming this message, the tendency of modern philosophy and even of science is towards the spiritual interpretation of life. In the realm of scientific thought we have entered upon a new day in which a spiritual view of the

world in general, and of man in particular, is in the ascendancy.

But when we resolve that the angel in us must have the mastery over the animal part of us, we do not therefore despise the animal. There have been men who when they recognised the sovereignty of the soul, gloried in dishonouring the body, and they are not all dead. There are still a few who think they are all soul, and pay no heed to such things as fresh air, rational diet, and exercise. And they have their reward in depression, and irritability; and others besides themselves are made to suffer with them.

The broad tendency of our time, however, is to give a new and exalted importance to the care of the body, because of its intimate and vital relation to the higher nature. It is a false interpretation of the temper of our day to conclude that the keen interest in the physical life is wholly for its own sake. There is an earnest spiritual purpose behind much of the enthusiasm for physical tone. The modern passion for the social and physical wellbeing of the poor is not an attempt to ignore the soul and glorify the body; on the contrary, there is an ever deepening conviction that because men and women *are* souls, their bodies must

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therefore have the care and reverence which belong to them.

The humanitarian movement must become more and more a spiritual movement. We are gradually learning to make the care of the body a matter of conscience. And not only so, we are throwing down artificial barriers between one section of life and another, both in individual and social existence. We are fast coming to see that life must be unified, that it can no longer be lived in separate compartments which have no real connection with each other. It is out of date to paganise the body while we exalt the soul, and it ought to be out of date to exalt the body while we paganise the soul. And socially it is a worn out fiction to confine spiritual concerns to certain times and places, while whole realms of human concern and endeavor are left outside the pale. The home, the market place, the legislature, the institutions of amusement, must be brought under the sway of spiritual reality.

The modern spirit insists that the whole of life shall be made a unity, that the artificial divisions shall be swept away by claiming every sphere of human interest for the reign of the spirit. And it is just here that the first battle is fought in individual life, in

the attempt to maintain the supremacy of the spirit, and also the efficiency of the body as the outward means of its expression. The difference between a medicine and a poison often consists in the proportion of the ingredients, and the difference between the body as a servant of the spirit and as a tyrant over it is in the proportion of obedience given to each. The body, requiring rest and sleep in order to be at its best, may have so much rest and sleep that it is pampered into weak softness. The body requiring food may be so indulged that the animal suffocates the angel.

The difficulty in giving the body its true place is not so often a matter of lack of knowledge, it is rather a question of the conquest of inclination. We all have a fairly clear idea as to when we should get up in the morning, but after all it is sometimes inclination that settles the matter. There are multitudes of people who know perfectly well that the reason for the heaviness, the inertness, the inefficiency, of their bodies as instruments of their higher being is because they eat too much and too rapidly, but still inclination is permitted to control the situation. There are some young people who know as distinctly as if it were written on the sky that their bodies would be more

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agile, and competent, and radiant servants of their higher selves if they fought more heroically, if they got into resolute grips, with unworthy inclinations. They know that they do not get the smooth working power out of their physical life because they have not kept the animal under the tight rein of subjection to the spirit.

We all know that the body cannot be at its best except in the attitude of strict obedience to higher instincts. And we owe it to our souls to keep our bodies fit, for the physical condition exercises a distinct influence upon our spiritual nature. For example it was said by some saints of a former age, that they had periods in which God left them in spiritual darkness. As we look at it to-day we do not believe that God did any such thing; the explanation of the feelings of those good people may have been bad air, or feeble digestion, or lack of exercise. And to say this is not trifling with a serious subject, for the proper care of the physical life is a matter of definite spiritual significance because of all that is involved in it.

The condition of the physical side of our being not only affects its own efficiency, it not only influences the spiritual, but it permeates

our relation to everybody with whom we come in contact. We are continually bringing into our social relationships the results of our physical fitness or unfitness. We carry the victory over the animal which we gained at the table to our hour of companionship with a friend. The freshness, the zest, the buoyancy, which we brought to our friend was the fruit of self control. We helped to inspire and cheer him through our sacrifice. And we may depress and discourage him by means of our dulness and depression which are the result of our self indulgence. We owe it as a debt to the world to be physically at our best. For most of us, it ought to be a disgrace to come before the world physically below par. We have no right to charge the social atmosphere in which we move with the pessimism, and friction, and gloom, which are the direct result of our physical mismanagement. We have an obligation to bring to our fellows the alertness, the laughter, the poise, which in part spring from physical life tempered and controlled by the highest within us.

But when everything has been said for the influence of the physical upon the psychical aspect of life, we must not forget that the influence of the psychical upon the physical

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is still greater. There are some people who can never be physically normal; they are invalids, yet by the heroism of the spirit behind the body they are able to make triumphant souls shine through pathetic limitations to such a degree as to become at once a rebuke and an inspiration to those who are physically sound. This is why Christian Science, with all its questionable hypotheses, has won so many to its cause, it has insisted that the human spirit is master of the situation. We see plainly every day that mere sound physical health by itself may be a very uninteresting and useless thing, unless it is vitalised by an alert, strong, intelligent spirit. In fact, physical health in the highest sense is scarcely possible without the invigorating influence of a soul holding the reins of control. The soul vivifies the body. It pours health into it. It may actually deepen the breathing and give tone to the nerves, and curb the waste of nervous energy. Such a statement is not a mere vagary. Physical science teaches us that when matter is examined back to its minutest element there is spirit, that matter is a form of energetic spirit. And that being so it is easy to see how powerful the influence of the soul may be upon the body. We have hardly

dreamed of the enormous extent to which a forceful spirit may affect the bodily life.

And when we emphasise the supreme fact that we are souls, when we refuse to live in the mere sensations of the body, when the soul insists upon dominating the physical life with a firm, wise, and kind grasp, then we find ourselves. Moods and cravings of the lower self will be tamed, or wiped out, or harnessed to higher purposes. The dominion of the spirit will mean the unity, the efficiency, and the satisfaction, of the whole man.

II

WHY ARE WE HERE?

THERE are various answers which may be given to this question, different and yet not necessarily contradictory. It may be said that we are here to do our work faithfully, to serve our generation. Or the answer may be given that we are here for the purpose of developing character, to turn the potential soul with which we are naturally endowed into a growing personality. These statements instead of contradicting each other simply deal with two aspects of the same problem. The end of life is the making of a soul, and the means by which that end is achieved, among other elements, of which we shall speak later, is by doing our duty, by serving our fellowmen.

By the growth of a soul we here mean the same kind of growth as that of a seed into a flower. There are certain higher possibilities dormant within us which must rise up from

being latent power to become actual personality. But what is the stuff out of which personality is realised? It is not easy to answer this question. Why? Because much of our inner life is below consciousness, just as an iceberg is more under water than above it. The subconscious part of us has depths like the depths of the sea which may never be explored.

We get a hint of the deep currents and strong tides within our elemental selves when we suddenly receive a message which awakens great joy or sorrow. We realise that there are forces within us of which we had never dreamed. In our ordinary life we merely skim the surface of what is within us. It requires some unusual individual or social experience to reveal the awe-inspiring realities which slumber in human nature.

When we turn from our subconscious to our conscious life we find that there are three main channels along which consciousness runs, viz.: thought, feeling, and will. Conscience is the sense which arises out of the interaction of our thinking, feeling and willing, as these are true or false to the light which they possess. But where does this light come from? Light upon how we should act in life comes partly from

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within ourselves as the expression of the image of God in us, and partly from the social and religious surroundings in which we exist. And our thinking, our feeling or emotions, and our willing must be true to the highest light which we find within ourselves, mixed with the highest light we can find in the world. In this task the will is the captain of the ship of life, thought and feeling are officers, and conscience is the compass in various stages of accuracy or inaccuracy, according as the mind has been true to the light within ourselves and in the world. We start our moral career with the beginnings of a personality, part of which is below consciousness, and part of which is in the realm of consciousness, which moves along the three lines we have indicated.

The will is the primary force within us which secures the growth of personality. It is when the will is in an attitude of alert recognition of the highest possible light upon life which the mind can obtain, that it endeavours to relate that light to the actual facts of life. The supremacy of the will in mixing light with life is the process, on the human side, by which the highest in us reaches its true stature. As a painter mixes paint with what he sees in a landscape upon a canvas, so the

will mingles what it sees to be right with the common affairs of existence, and in the process makes personality a growing fact.

There may be perplexing problems connected with the will if we go into the metaphysics of the subject. But the supreme thing to bear in mind here is that we are conscious that the will has power to choose between what is right and wrong. We are conscious that it is in the exercise of that power of choice that there lies the opportunity to rise to our destiny or to fall from it. And all the world acts upon that assumption. Therefore it is enough for the present to know that we are consciously free to choose good or evil. And it is absolutely necessary that both of these should be open to us as a choice, otherwise it would be impossible for us to rise. Explain good and evil as we please, (and we are not concerned to seek explanations (the stubborn fact remains that it is through the presence of these alternatives confronting human life that there arises praise or blame as attaching to actions.

The possibility of good or evil as a choice must be before us, otherwise there could be no such thing as moral distinction between one act and another. And if the will were not free there could be no real growth of per-

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sonality. Wipe out good and evil, and the freedom of the will as actual facts, and there would be no difference between the actions of a life and the activity of a locomotive. There would be no moral distinction between the development of a life and the growth of a flower. But we do not believe anything of the kind, nor does the world at large. Why? Because we trust the reliability of our consciousness, for we are conscious that there is a choice of two ways, and that we are free to make the choice, and in the exercise of it, according to our highest light, we achieve personality. And in the achieving of personality we rise into inner freedom. By freedom we mean that we cease to be enslaved to anything except to light upon life. We become masters of our situation. As the enlightened will directs our course we rise into freedom from slavery to our animal nature. The will compels the mind to think according to choice, and not as suggestions are merely flung into the mind by outside influences.

We have a sense of freedom in the realm of duty, not from duty but in it. We may have tasks which press hard upon us and yet as the will is resolute we are conscious that nothing can harm the upward movement of

our essential life. Tasks may become more and more numerous and more exacting, but as the will maintains the supremacy we become increasingly conscious of inner freedom. It is in this attitude that we escape from the tyranny of the outward show of things, and enter into communion with all that is real. As the will retains its tenacity in the problems of translating truth into action nothing can crush our lives. All seeming defeat is only in appearance. For there can be no real defeat where personality is growing stronger and truer. All true success must be born in the inner life. The so-called success which contracts and degrades personality is spurious.

In the making of personality we are here to make connections with the seen and the unseen worlds, through the action of the will. And the fact that this is possible reveals our capacity for eternal life. And it is this possibility which is the main fact of our being. There are a great many things true of us, such as our physical frailty, our mental ignorance, our moral imperfections and transgressions. But while we recognise all these things, and give them their place, they do not convey the supreme truth concerning us. The most important fact which puts every other reality in

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its true relative position is that we have the capacity for God. We are potentially the children of God, we can grasp the overtures which God makes to us. As human beings we are naturally endowed with a capacity for becoming partakers of eternal life. And when we say this we are not here emphasising eternal life as endless duration of existence after this life is over, which is true enough. We are here laying the emphasis upon a fact which may be true at this moment. For we have a capacity for God here and now. Eternal life is a present quality of life as well as a future extension of life. It may therefore be a possession now as well as a hope hereafter. We insist that we possess the fundamental possibilities of that type of life within us, and when these possibilities have been joined to the provision which God has made in order to lift us higher, of which we shall speak later, then eternal life becomes an actual present experience.

Let us simply cling to the idea that our capacity for God is the fundamental reality of our life. There are many other realities, to be sure, but they are not supreme.

Some have contended that sin is the greatest

fact within us. But that is clearly far removed from the teaching of Jesus, as it is untrue to the facts of the case. Sin derives its terrible meaning from the greater reality of the Divine origin of man, otherwise there could be no such thing as sin. Sin can be sin only as it is recognised that human nature is made in the image of God. Jesus recognised the tragedy of sin with a discernment with which no other saw it, but He did not lay the emphasis upon sin as the supreme reality in human nature. When he spoke of sinning men as lost, the emphasis was upon *what was lost*. It was the essential value of what was lost that gave the fact of its being lost its solemn meaning.

Therefore we say that we have the possibilities of personality which may grow into triumphant relations with the seen and the unseen worlds. And as the will is set towards the choice of the highest the whole universe conspires in the *making* of personality. It is not the wind that determines the direction in which a ship shall move, it is the set of the sails, and it is so in life.

But there can be no real winning of personality if we live in detached separation from

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the higher realities of the spiritual world which urge themselves upon us from the unseen. The growth of a flower is possible as it is left in the soil and receives sunshine, and moisture, and air from above. And such has its counterpart in human experience; we simply hint at this now for we shall deal with it at length later.

The help which comes out from the eternal world to enable us to realise our destiny, finds its opportunity to work itself into our being as we surrender ourselves to it. But at the same time the help of God is not given in order that we may ignore duty, but that the will may be able to produce personality in the midst of duty.

As personality grows the horizons of life widen. We see a more interesting world, we comprehend more of the meanings of life. The veil is lifted from the face of nature, we enter into its deeper messages, we intuitively understand more than reaches us through our senses. We have new glimpses of the elemental realities of human nature, and the invisible world becomes invested with new interest and values. Its remoteness disappears. What seemed hostile is revealed as friendly. And what was dark begins to reveal gleams of light.

So that with the coming of Divine aid our whole being is able to take its place in the life of the world, and by so doing personality grows, and its instincts reach out to commune with the soul of everything.

III

OUR SENSE OF NEED

THE growing mind becomes conscious of a more or less keen sense of need, which expresses itself in a variety of forms. The acute stage of this sense of inner need is reached in most instances in the early teens. The predominant element in it may be an intellectual thirst, a desire to understand oneself, and one's relation to the rest of the universe. It is a craving to be able to bring rationality into life. And this stage of intellectual awakening is sometimes accompanied by remarkable insight, and an attitude of mental severity towards current opinions.

In seeking to help such it is necessary for older people to be in an attitude of intelligent sympathy, requiring the exercise of a mixture of candour, courage, tact, and patience. But the sense of need in the growing life may not be so definitely intellectual, it may be a vague, indefinite desire for something which cannot

be defined. It might be called a sense of elemental longing, of unrest, of dissatisfaction. Or it may be a clearly defined sense of moral need arising out of a sense of failure in duty, that one has not been true to the highest light, that one did not half try, that the will had not been really summoned to its work, that it had surrendered to inclination rather than to duty. And therefore one is conscious of having been untrue to his own nature, and consequently untrue to the Divine character of which one's own nature is the image. There is a more or less vague sense of having committed an offence against the Highest power in the universe.

As a result of this there arises in some a fear of death, and a fear of punishment after death, and consequently a longing for Divine forgiveness. In the case of others fear is not the stronger element, it is rather a longing for help in order to realise an ideal before which one has failed. Or the sense of need is manifested by a desire for a Divine leader in the conduct of the affairs of life, or for companionship and encouragement amid loneliness and misunderstanding. This variously expressed and variously felt sense of need may be called a sense of sin, so far as it is the out-

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come of a consciousness of not having been true to the highest light.

But let us clearly understand that a sense of sin is a fact apart from any particular view concerning the origin of man, and it is quite independent of any theory as to how sin came into the world. The sense of sin is a fact revealed in human consciousness. And we all trust the reliability of our consciousness; if we did not, life would be turned into chaos.

The fact of sin is recognised in the best literature of the world. It is recognised by the pilgrim on his way to Mecca, by the Hindu on his journey for cleansing in the waters of the Ganges. Of course, the deepest sense of sin is felt where Christ's revelation of the meaning of sin has had its opportunity to enlighten the human mind. For He showed that sin is first of all an inner reality, even although there may not be an outward expression of it in word or act. It consists in the impure thought controlling the mind, although the outward life may be blameless. Sin is the falsehood planned even before it is spoken. And the natural history of sin is that one sin leads to another. And there is no power of self-recovery. For it is of the nature of sin not only to multiply, but to bring the sense of guilt

with it. And the human mind cannot rid itself of guilt. The consciousness of this forms the agony point of some masterpieces of literature.

Thus it is from the facts of human need that religion arises. It springs from that instinct within us which refuses to be satisfied with the world, which seeks to rise above every obstacle in the quest for help, for recovery, for forgiveness, for guidance, for companionship, in the making of a personality. Religion is not an artificial interest introduced from the outside into human life; it springs from the heart of human nature and its urgent necessities. We have only to refer to the story of the religious aspirations of the world to see how profound the needs of the soul are, and how keen the longing for God. The long, tragic story of the world's search for God has not discouraged the world in its quest. Notwithstanding the false conclusions, the gropings in the black tempestuous night, the disappointing results in nation after nation, and age after age, the instinct for God has persisted, and is the freshest, and most elemental, reality in the life of man today.

It is not necessary for us, however, to go through the literature of the religions of the world before we enter upon a sound religious

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experience, any more than we must enquire into the styles of architecture prevalent in Africa, or China before we start to build a house. The study of comparative religions is a legitimate, and scientific, pursuit, and it has the reverent attention of expert thinkers, but it is not on the main line of concern for the person of ordinary training, and with limited time at his disposal, who is seeking spiritual satisfaction for the urgent demands of his inner life.

There are certain great conclusions in the realm of religion which have been reached in the progress of the world, which belong to us just as the masterpieces in art and literature belong to us. It is interesting to learn something about the beginnings of art and literature, but when men seek to produce art, or literature, they seek to be under the spell of the highest that has been achieved in their sphere.

And in the same way our point of contact with the religious knowledge of the world is at its highest point rather than at its lowest, or lower, points. We enter into the achievements of the ages in religion as well as in other things. Of course, the highest religion must be that which most profoundly answers the elemental needs of human nature. But there is one aspect of modern thinking to which we must refer be-

fore passing on to consider the satisfying answer which has been made to human need.

There is a school of thinkers in our day, divided into varying shades of opinion blending into each other, which contends that there can be no intelligent experience of God on the part of human beings. We are not here referring to Atheists who dogmatically deny that there is a God. We may dismiss them as being practically a negligible quantity in modern thinking. We refer to Agnostics, who do not deny the existence of God. They say that there may be a God, but the limitations of the human mind make it impossible to find out anything concerning Him that would be really helpful. Agnosticism, therefore, is a dogmatic philosophical generalisation of a negative character.

And it is only fair to say that this agnostic attitude of some modern minds may have been in part the expression of a protest against a former interpretation of God which was sometimes a grotesque caricature, and beneath the moral sense of the highest types of men. Or agnosticism may have been in part inspired by a former unreasoning attitude of hostility, on the part of many religious teachers of a by-gone generation against science, the scientific spirit, and scientific conclusions. And if either

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of these influences had a real part in driving scientific minds into the agnostic position, it is safe to say that both low, anthropomorphic conceptions of God, and hostility to the scientific temper, have to a very large degree disappeared from modern religious thinking. But the agnostic will contend that there is more in his position than that. He holds that the human mind cannot interpret the First Cause of the universe. He will admit the fact of a First Cause, a mysterious, persistent reality behind all created things, but he affirms it to be inscrutable, unknowable. But we must answer the agnostic that the human spirit cannot cease in its search for God because of a philosophical statement.

The tides of the ocean will not cease to rise and fall because barriers have been raised along the ocean front. Instinct is stronger than argument. And the instincts of a world of men and women are a more formidable reality than a generalisation from a small group of honest thinkers. Besides, we have a right to say that the First Cause of the universe may be interpreted as being all that we ourselves are at our best, and infinitely more. And even although God is infinite, it is not unreasonable for us to think of him as having moral qualities which

we recognise in ourselves as finite beings, and especially when we feel the instincts in our nature urging us towards God as a necessary counterpart for our rational and elemental life.

And beyond all that, and with even greater emphasis, let us say that when men declare God to be unknowable they put limits upon God's power and willingness to reveal Himself to the capacity and necessity of human nature. They deny to God those acts of self-expression of which a man is, in his measure, capable. A man may make a house, and write a book and love his child. He can express himself according to the variety of his natural endowments. And surely God can, and has expressed Himself according to the variety of His nature. If we find in nature an expression of God it is not a full expression. If we find an expression of God in the laws which govern the universe, there must be a still deeper revelation. There is no full and satisfying revelation of the highest that is in God until we have seen, in time, a manifestation of Him which answers to the highest in human nature and which is the response to its deepest, its most urgent needs.

IV

GOD'S ANSWER TO OUR SENSE OF NEED

WHILE God is above all that He has created, He is at the same time in the midst of everything which He has made. Science is preaching this truth with great impressiveness in our day. It is not only the poet who speaks of the presence of God in the "flower of the crannied wall," the scientist is also telling us of the Divine immanence in the small things of creation as well as in the large. The modern physicist interprets the physical world as an expression of the life of God rather than as a mere blind process of material evolution. Instead of explaining spirit as arising out of material elements, science is making it clear that material things have their origin in the spiritual reality behind them. And it traces that spiritual reality to be behind the electron which is the merest fragment of an atom, as well as in the midst of the vastness of the universe.

And if God is in what we call the material world He is much more in the inner life of man.

And the sense of God's presence has more or less persisted in the thoughts of men. They have felt that God was seeking to reveal Himself to them and through them, as they were able to fulfill the conditions in which He manifests His purposes. And some men in the course of history have heroically responded to the promptings of the spirit of God within them, and they have become leaders and inspirers of their fellows. But at their best those great souls of past ages were capable of being channels of the Divine mind and purpose to only a limited extent, and in many instances they mixed that partial revelation of the purposes of God with much that was false or crude. What those lofty characters revealed of the ways of God was not enough to satisfy the elemental needs and longings of the rank and file of humanity. And sometimes the revelation which they made was so adulterated with gross error as to mislead large sections of humanity.

While there were true and various glimpses of God's nature and will made through outstanding men and women, and while great progress was made, at the same time the partial

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manifestations of God, however impressive, were not enough. Human nature could not be satisfied until the deepest needs and longings of the soul saw a fuller, a richer, a larger revelation of the character and purposes of God. Has God answered those deep instincts of human nature? Has God made a fuller manifestation, in time, of His character, of His attitude towards men, and of His purposes in and through them? In trying to answer this question we must bear in mind that if God has made such a revelation it must be to man as man, plain men must be able to grasp the essential reality of it. If God has given a vision to the human mind of the essence of His nature, that vision must be open to a larger circle than is represented by scholars. Vision must not require to wait upon the findings of even patient and reverent Biblical criticism.

Success in seeing the answer God has given to the elemental needs of life must not depend upon the rise and fall of philosophical systems. There is a great place for scholarship in the realm of religion, but our contention is that God's message must come to human nature as such, for there are comparatively few scholars in the world, and they make mental demands

upon those who follow them for equipment which few possess, and their conclusions require time to study which few can afford to give. Besides, scholarship breaks up into separate camps, and the plain man has not the equipment, or training, to know which band of scholars he should follow.

And further, the revelation of God to man as man will require the whole man to understand it. If God has revealed His heart, it will be necessary for us to exercise heart, as well as head, in order to comprehend it. If God has spoken to human nature in the form of an historical manifestation of Himself, as well as urging us from within our own souls to seek Him, then our whole being must be summoned if the message of God is to be intelligible to us. It is in this temper we must look for the vision. We seek for a revelation which rises majestically above all interpretations of the ages, wise and unwise. And in seeking to enter into relationship with that revelation, we refuse to be captured by any, or every, council of definition. We insist that we shall not be caught amid the smoke, and noise, and distraction, on the theological battlefield upon which partisans contend. We dare not, the revelation of God is too urgent

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a necessity for our practical life for us to allow problems which are too much for us to stand between us and our heart's desire. Where then is the Divine revelation? Let us ask men who knew no theories regarding that revelation. Let us ask those who simply saw, and having seen, were satisfied. But does that not involve us in the whole question of Biblical criticism? When we turn to the testimony of the men of the first century as recorded in the New Testament are we not in the thick of controversy?

No, if we cling to the places of emphasis, if we seek in the first instance the broad fact rather than the minutiae of the records. For we are seeking a person; God revealed Himself in a life. And there is enough in the broad outline of the history of that life to lead us to Him, especially when we bear in mind that the testimony concerning that life is not confined to the experience of men of the first century. That testimony has an unbroken succession through the centuries until this hour.

If we insist upon wading through literature which gathers around the details of the record of the life of Jesus we may be confused, and mentally suffocated in the process. And many earnest growing minds have been side-tracked

into hopeless confusion in this attempt. There is enough beyond controversy to start with. The great fact of Christ is undisputed. And the experience which has grown out of the fact makes it possible for us to put it to the test. We do not need a great deal of testimony to lead us to Christ. We do not insist upon a great deal of it when we put anything else to the proof. If we seek a medical specialist the testimony which we get beforehand concerning him is not enormous, it may be very slender, indeed. And the more desperate our case is, the less insistent we are upon getting a great volume of testimony. We are ready to start for the specialist with very small hope, with a minimum of encouragement. Our friends may pathetically shake their heads as we go. But we know the great thing is not so much the testimony as the personal experience which we have at the hands of the physician. And an unpromising outlook may turn out to have a most wonderful result in actual experience.

And that is the principle upon which we approach Jesus as the revelation of God to human need.

The testimony of the men of the first century was that they had a completely satisfying revelation of God in Jesus. That was the ex-

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perience of one of the greatest minds of that early age. Saul of Tarsus may never have seen Jesus in the flesh, and his whole training and surroundings were against his ever seeing anything in Jesus that would interest him. The strong likelihood is that the first glimpse which Saul ever obtained was through the transfigured life and testimony of Stephen. And after that he saw his Lord as a person who had risen out of local history and had become a spiritual presence. No literature could ever have reached Saul of Tarsus, it was a testimony, it was the living Christ Himself. And he came to know Christ far better than most of the people who had seen and heard the Master during His life-time on earth. And from that spiritual knowledge of Christ Saul when he became St. Paul went back to assimilate all the historical knowledge of Jesus that he could obtain from those who had known Him in the days of His flesh. The point we emphasise here is that St. Paul did not rise from large historical knowledge to a spiritual knowledge of Christ. The process was rather that he first of all heard a testimony regarding Christ, then he had an experience of Him and after that he gradually entered into the historical facts of the earthly life of his master.

And that way of approach is just as open to us as it was to St. Paul. It is even more open to us, because Saul of Tarsus naturally repudiated the whole earthly career of Jesus, until the time that he had a spiritual experience of Him.

We have no such bitter repugnance to the story of the life of Jesus as Saul had. Besides, we have the witness of the ages to help us. Let us cling with the utmost tenacity to the fact that St. Paul had an experience of the living presence of Jesus before he made any explanations, or theories, regarding that presence. It was Christ himself who constituted the supreme revelation of God to the soul of the Apostle. It was that presence who gave him all that changed his life, and thought, and career. He had an experience before he made a theological interpretation. That is the supreme fact. Let that fact hold us before we get confused with other issues. Let us not lose the place of emphasis. Let us keep first things first. St. Paul testified that Jesus satisfied his soul, and his reason, as a revelation of the heart of God. And the testimony of the Apostle has been carried down to us by the accumulating evidence of centuries of experience. And the experience has expressed itself in a devotional and experimental literature

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which satisfies us, which confirms the essential harmony of the Christian witnesses.

Therefore we say that Christ as the revelation of God satisfies the inner needs of man. That is a fact to which countless thousands could swear in a court of law. And men and women have been so possessed of the passionate conviction that Christ answered the ultimate needs of life that they have hurled themselves against the difficulties, the cruelty, and the ignorance of the whole world in order to tell their fellows of Him. And they have met with a response, but the numbers who have responded are not the supreme sign of the revelation of God in Christ. It is the depths of hunger and of despair which He has answered, it is the transformation of soul which He has effected, that is the criterion.

We do not here attempt to interpret the consciousness of Jesus, as recorded in the Scriptures. We do not seek to put the teaching of Jesus into categories. We do not here endeavour to place emphasis upon any one or more aspects of His life or message. All that has its own important place. We simply seek to see the personality of Christ, with enough of an historical background to give clearness to the outlines of His abiding presence. We

appeal to the spiritual sense of the ages, and of our own times for witness that the presence of Christ is a reality, a reality as great as any other reality. Christ satisfies those cravings of the inner life, which are as real as any other cravings. We insist that He can be put to the proof to-day. The case for His presence and power stands or falls by what He can do for the enlightenment, inspiration, and recovery of lives.

We do not for a moment say that the fact of the living Christ is all that men will seek to know. They naturally seek to go back to read and appropriate all that He said and did. But they go back with an experience of Christ Himself. While on the other hand without an experience of Him there is great danger of being lost in the details of Biblical criticism, in controversies regarding places of emphasis. Let us steadily remember that the theological approach to Christ is one thing, the religious approach another.

There are comparatively few able to enter upon the theological approach, as we have already hinted. But multitudes have approached the living presence of Christ, both wise and ignorant men, those who were expert in theology and those who could not even read

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the Bible. We dare not turn God's revelation to human need into an academic question. And therefore anything that would tend to imprison, or bewilder, us, anything that would lead us along lines for which we have neither time nor aptitude, and regarding which even our teachers have not arrived at definite conclusions, we must put upon one side until we have seen the abiding Master Himself. After that let us go back to the details, to the discussions, it may be, if we have time and ability. But our spiritual sense will guide us, and then we shall assimilate such parts of the Scriptures as suit our stage of development, and thus enter upon a progressive appropriation of truth.

But the main thing is that we shall so assimilate the spiritual realities of the Bible, that we shall turn its literature into life, and what we thus make our own is beyond all criticism. The believer thus becomes independent of the critic. Let it be clearly understood that we are not here pleading for intellectual indolence, or timidity, when we insist upon steering clear of controversial matters upon which great and good men differ. We are simply pursuing a common-sense policy that our whole nature and not merely a section of our nature shall seek

Christ as the revelation of God. The needs of our soul are so urgent as to make it impossible for us to submit to being sidetracked by questions in scholarship which may not be settled in this generation, and which when settled by the few may never be accepted by many. Christ is not imprisoned in a segment of history. He is in the Scriptures and He is also here. He lives and satisfies the actual needs of men and women with whom we come in contact every day.

V

HOW DO WE ENTER INTO THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST?

THAT there are various ways into the friendship of Christ we are convinced by the experience of individual Christians. We may have an ideal way in our minds, but as a matter of fact there is no one method. St. Peter came to know Jesus along one path, and St. Paul by quite another. St. Peter approached his Master through the simple facts of the human life of Jesus. He followed on till the great personality mastered him. St. Paul came to know Christ from the opposite direction. He first entered into fellowship with the spiritual Christ, and thus was led to the human, the historical, facts in the earthly life of Jesus. St. Peter entered into the friendship of his Lord by what we would call the historical method, and St. Paul by the spiritual. And these two paths of approach are still travelled by true disciples, and they

are not contradictory, they are the counterparts of each other. Some in our own day have come into the knowledge of Christ through the study of the Scriptures. That is to say, through the story of the events by which St. Peter was led up to recognise Jesus as Lord. Some others have been introduced to Christ through a direct sense of His presence. A negro woman, a servant in the home of a theological professor, was a devoted disciple of Christ, but she could not read. When her master taught her to read the New Testament she said she had experienced, and already knew, the truths which she found there.

We must bear in mind that there are many true Christians throughout the world who cannot read, and there always have been. While we doubtless have in our minds a method of entering into the knowledge of our Lord which we consider to be the highest, and the most honouring to the Scriptures, we dare not dogmatically lay down our way as the only way, in the face of the experience of so many who have not come by our path into a discipleship which is quite as real as our own.

If we come to a knowledge of Christ through the testimony or saintly life of a believer we do not therefore dishonour the Scriptures. On

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the contrary, we go back to the Scriptures with a freedom of soul, with a spiritual insight which enables us to make the Bible increasingly our own, by a process of spiritual assimilation. And at the same time we are kept from being confused by perplexities which are not of primary importance and from bewildering discussions which gather around controversial points. Spiritual experience is thus the permanent basis of a vital relation to the Bible. And it is the establishment of experience between the needs of our soul and the living Master which becomes the guarantee of our abiding interest in the Bible in a spiritually free, and spiritually profitable way.

But having accepted testimony as it urges us to put the living Christ to the test for ourselves, how shall we proceed? How shall we make Christ real to our elemental life? How shall His presence be made real to us? We must believe that He is actually here with us at this moment, as really here now as He ever was with His disciples in the days of His flesh. When we say this the mind will at once seek for signs of His presence. For the mind may have preconceived notions as to certain sensations, certain experiences, which should take place when Christ is really present.

St. John the Baptist had certain notions as to what Jesus would do when He came, and when Jesus did not manifest Himself as St. John had expected, he began to doubt whether Jesus was after all the personality he had taken Him to be. This is a danger which besets us all. If we are to put Christ to the test we must believe that Christ is actually here, apart from all our preconceived notions as to how He will manifest Himself. We must believe He is here with us, even when we have no feelings whatever or in the possession of feelings within us which seem to absolutely contradict the reality of His presence.

We must not interpret His presence according to our moral deservings, for if we were to do that, most of us would put Him very far from us. His presence with us is not the result of anything which we have done to secure it. If we desire him, and if we are willing by His aid to make His will the rule of our lives, it is in no sense presumption to take it completely for granted that He is now present with us.

Of course, there is a strong natural tendency to look for signs of His presence. There is an almost irresistible temptation to doubt the actual presence of Christ unless there are some indications, some manifestations of feeling to

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verify it. Some seekers after Christ are misled by the unusual experiences of which they have read in the biographies of distinguished Christians, and unless some similar emotions spring up in their own lives they are inclined to think that their time of spiritual change has not yet come. But this is a grave mistake. We must believe that Christ is in our lives without anything to verify it except the testimony which we have read in the Scriptures, or the testimony of those who profess to have His presence in their lives.

And this venture of faith will justify itself very quickly. For we shall hear the voice of Christ speaking to us. We shall become conscious of His actual nearness. But we must not forget that the presence of Christ is one thing, and the outward sign of that presence is another thing. While Christ will give unmistakable signs of His presence, at the same time there will be periods when every mirror of feeling in which we have seen Him will be obscured, or it may be that every mirror through which we have beheld Him shall seem broken, and we shall be flung back upon trust that He is with us, without a single reflection of the fact in our feeling. If we interpret the presence of the living Master by certain sen-

sations, we are thus resting upon effects rather than upon the cause of the effects, consequently when the effects vanish we are in confusion. But if we gratefully accept all verifications of the nearness of our Lord without resting upon them, without thinking them to be absolutely necessary, then when they happen to disappear we are not in confusion for we have been walking by faith, and not by sight.

It is the will that is the point of contact with Christ, and not emotion. The feelings may be a very great aid to the will, but they must never have the mastery over the will. And will must learn to act very often without their help. Feelings may desert the will, they may be in rebellion against the will, but the will must determine to believe in the companionship of Christ. For as Professor William James contended we can will to believe. It is possible to put the will on the side of our beliefs, or of our doubts. And we do it consciously or unconsciously all the time in our human relationships. We will to disbelieve slanders against those for whom we have an affection and in whom we trust. And if we have a prejudice against anyone, it is not difficult, unfortunately, to believe an unkind rumour regarding him. The human will must always play an

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important part in our beliefs. And it is because the will is involved that ethical value attaches to the fact of believing. It is through the action of the will in relation to all the light that is shed upon us from the Scriptures, from Christ and from our surroundings, that we make personality.

And as we will to believe in Christ, He will reveal Himself to our need. For the living Christ is a Divine intelligence with a distinct message to the mind, the imagination, the will, the conscience, to the elemental life. Christ carries in His living personality now the fruits of every phase, and stage, of His earthly work of redemption. He brings into the present hour of our need the fruits from the harvest of His human experiences. He has left nothing of His achievements in the past. He has been bearing the spiritual results of His glorious work through the centuries unto this day. All that He did for man in the far away past, He offers to men now.

Whatever was necessary in order to make the free offer of forgiveness Christ fulfilled, and He brings the results with His own hand straight to the points of need in human life. And what Christ does for us and in us must be accepted as His presence is accepted, not in the

first instance through feeling, but by simple trust. We may have absolutely nothing upon which to rest but His promise, and the testimony of believers throughout the ages, who have lived and died in peace through believing. That attitude of faith will bear its own fruit of abiding peace, as it has in the lives of the redeemed who have gone before us, if we persist, if our faith fights its battle against all that seeks to overthrow it.

Christ seeks to cleanse the past, to enlighten, inspire, and empower, the present life, and to create hope for the future. He seeks to shew the meaning of life, the use of discipline, the wisdom of trust in a Divine providence in life. Beyond the intellectual satisfaction which Christ seeks to inspire, there is also the enlightenment of the mind upon the practical affairs of life. Christ would so lead those who trust Him, that they may become not the mere echo of their surroundings, but original contributors to the life and progress of society. For the mind inspired by Christ is part of the truly progressive element in human history. It has a freshness, a uniqueness, an originality, which makes it distinct and individual, rather than living in an attitude of mere servitude to social precedent.

VI

WHAT IS THE BOND THAT BINDS US TO CHRIST?

HOW shall the vital bond between personality and the living Christ be maintained? The answer of the New Testament and of the centuries of spiritual experience is that the means of abiding fellowship with Christ is through faith and obedience. We shall here consider only the first of these two conditions. Many people say they have not faith. They contend that this is their great lack. If they could in some way obtain more faith the spiritual life would become for them a working reality. But as a matter of fact faith is an instinct inherent in our human nature. It is the instinct which relates us to the world in which we live. Without the exercise of faith it would be quite impossible to get through a single day of life. It is necessary when we sit down to breakfast, when we take a train, when we conclude a bargain. Without it life would be reduced to chaos. So that it

is a mistake for any of us to say we have not faith. Of course the Bible says, "All men have not faith," but it is speaking of faith in God, and we all recognise the absolute truth of that statement. However, we all have the capacity for faith in God and in order to have faith in Him we do not require any new faculty added to our being.

While we all possess the faith instinct, it is capable of being developed or degraded. Just as ivy may be trained to climb up the wall, or to creep along the ground, so faith may be trained to rise from being exercised between man and man to express itself towards God, or it may manifest itself in purely earthly relationships and in few of those. Faith is not merely an expression of the intellect. It has a distinctly intellectual element. But it also proceeds from the imagination, from the will, from the elemental self. It is an outgoing of the whole personality, it is expressed at the focus point of the entire life. And the spirit of God is within us not to create faith, but to train it upwards. The Holy Spirit seeks to lead faith to its supreme object.

Faith is capable of various definitions according to the point of view from which we look at it. For our present purpose faith may

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be defined as belief in the unseen presence of Christ. It clothes with reality a presence, regarding whom our senses do not inform us, and our powers of ratiocination cannot wholly reduce the reality of His presence to a demonstration. Every venture of faith involves the element of risk. Risk is everywhere where faith is concerned. And faith has to be exercised in our relation to everything. The man who will not exercise faith because there is a risk, will not venture anywhere, for there is no such thing in this world as absolute knowledge concerning anything. Faith is the pioneer section of reason. It is reason without reasoning. But it does not fear reasoning. It invites it to follow, if reason recognises that faith has its own legitimate place, and if the reasoning powers recognise that they must possess the ability to handle the problems with which they undertake to deal. For it is not brave to go into a current which is too much for one's strength; it may be a form of suicide.

And some who have neither the mental training, nor the time necessary, become submerged in an intellectual current because they have tried prematurely to reason out that which in the meantime should be humbly accepted,

because of the lack of mental apparatus to do otherwise. The wisest men have mental limitations, and it is not cowardice but bravery to recognise the fact. It was one of the first things confessed by Descartes as he sought to build up his philosophical method. Faith has rights. And it is on safe ground when it asserts its right to believe, when it refuses to be swept off its ground, so long as it cannot be proved that its claims are irrational. And there is nothing whatever irrational in the faith of any man venturing to trust the unseen living Christ.

Faith is not an end in itself. It must not be taken up with itself. That is a form of self-consciousness, which results in confusion, if not in paralysis. Faith is healthy when it is taken up with its object, forgetting all about its own strength or weakness, its quality or quantity. Christian people are sometimes ridiculed or censured, from making much of the importance of faith. But if we say that we cannot get water from a well without turning the handle of the well, we are not giving undue prominence to the handle, we are simply stating the way by which we reach the water. We do not exaggerate the importance of a key if we say that we cannot get into a safe without

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it. And in the same way faith is the means by which we enter into that contact with Christ which secures for us what He has to bestow upon our need. But faith will not establish relations with Christ unless the life is possessed by genuine desire for what Christ has to give. To try to exercise faith towards our Lord while we still desire what we know to be wrong, is to have one part of our being cancel the efforts of another part of our being. The thing cannot be done. Our moral nature is governed by law just as much as physical nature, and if steam will not rise from water until the water has reached a certain temperature, neither will faith be able to make connection with Christ until there is a willingness to be made Christlike.

Let it be clearly understood that we are not insisting upon moral attainment, but upon willingness to be helped towards attainment. We may be too weak even to try to attain, we may be too discouraged. But that need not, should not, hinder faith. The only thing that will surely paralyse faith towards Christ is the desire to persist in what He disapproves. And that is surely as it should be. Christ cannot lend Himself to anything that is in open revolt against the spirit of moral progress. But He

will stoop to the lowest depths to rescue the weakest, the most sinful, who honestly desires to be made Christlike. This attitude may be nothing more than desire, it may be too absolutely feeble to be anything more. It may not express itself in tears, or even in deep sorrow. That will doubtless come later on. And it is a great mistake to withhold the exercise of faith until a certain amount of sorrow has been felt. Who is to say when a sufficient quantity of sorrow has been forthcoming? Repentance not necessarily in the first instance an expression of sorrow, it is the expression of the resolution to be wholly a genuine man, trusting that Divine power shall be available to turn that resolution into a growing fact. It is then that faith has the right, and the power, to claim what Christ has to bestow for the forgiveness, the recovery, and the expansion of a soul.

Faith then is not a mere intellectual assent, while the rest of the inner life clings to what is consciously wrong. That would not only establish a dualism divorcing religion from practical life, but it would be an immoral use of religion. And such a religion wherever it may exist is a travesty of the religion of Christ. It completely fails to recognise that our Lord lends His presence and

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His power only to the redemption, and the development of character. Faith is the outgoing of the whole man in a unified desire expressed through the will claiming and rejoicing in the help of Christ. The will must ever be the supreme element in the action of true faith. And Christ in His appeal for faith challenges the will. And when the will urges faith to cling to the unseen presence of Christ faith will be assailed. It will be harassed by various influences within our own life, and in the world.

If faith is to become a growing reality in our experiences it must fight in order to maintain its ground. It must maintain its position even when the whispers of unbelief tell us that our failures, our depressed feelings, and our fitful moods, are greater facts than the presence of Christ in our lives. Faith must simply persist until it conquers the suggestions which threaten to overthrow it. It dare not surrender to mere inclination.

We sometimes hear a man say: "I have no desire to exercise faith in Christ." But we answer that faith should be urged on by the will even when desire fails to inspire it. There is no need for us to wait for desire before faith becomes energetic. We do not wait for desire

in other directions of life. If we waited for desire before we took up our studies, our education would be in jeopardy. If we postponed physical exercise till we were in the mood for it we would experience serious consequences. And faith in Christ must be exercised on the same principle, it must wrestle with the inclinations which draw us in the opposite directions, until it has vanquished them. Many people are waiting until the longing comes upon them before they enter into relations with Christ by faith. But such an attitude is an utterly false view of the position of faith. It has a right, and a clear duty, to assert itself in the face of inclination, and to tame inclination into subjection.

And the same is true in the relation of faith to knowledge. There are a great many who are holding back the exercise of faith in Christ until they have a more or less complete knowledge of Him, and of the problems which gather around Him. But those people forget that the venture of faith is the inspiration of knowledge. Knowledge grows through action. While it is possible on the other hand to be ever learning, and never come to a knowledge of the truth. Christopher Columbus knew nothing about the New World before he crossed

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the Atlantic. His faith had to fight on through mutiny, storm, distance, and the lack of definite knowledge as to where he was going. But the heroic energy of a great faith brought floods of knowledge to his own mind and to all the world. And in the same manner the bold venture of faith impelled on its way by a courageous will is the true attitude towards Christ. And a knowledge of Christ will come to us as we maintain that attitude, which can never come to us in any other way.

VII

HOW DOES OUR FAITH EXPRESS ITSELF TOWARDS GOD?

PRAYER is the means by which the instinct of faith expresses itself towards God through Christ. Prayer is the activity of faith, it is faith articulated. It is faith making connections. So that prayer is simply the continuation of the faith instinct of relationship. It is like the ivy clinging by its tendrils to the wall. It is like the bee gathering honey. It is the manifestation of an instinct which may be aided and guided from within the life by the Spirit of God, in seeking its true spiritual environment, as we are willing to let the Divine spirit help us. Of course, this instinct, like every other, may be developed, or it may be perverted as we encourage, or defeat it, as we satisfy, or starve it. Every instinct has natural difficulties to overcome in seeking to reach its goal. The swallow seeking the summer climate must press through storms

on its way. The child encounters difficulties in learning to speak.

And prayer must conquer physical, mental and moral difficulties in its effort to express itself in the presence of our Lord. Prayer is therefore not an attempt to bring the power and presence of God in Christ down out of the natural order of the spiritual world into our mere arbitrary desires. It is quite the opposite, it is the effort of our lives to rise into the natural order of the spiritual world. Prayer is the lifting of our lives into normal relations with God. And in the process of rising into the mind of Christ through prayer some desires will perish, while others will be intensified. So that in the true order of prayer the first element in it is personal adjustment through confession. It is the acceptance of Divine forgiveness, by which we are thus brought up into the normal order of the spiritual world. But having been forgiven, having entered into normal relations with God, the supreme attitude of the soul in prayer is not asking things. It is the attempt to escape from self.

The highest element in prayer consists in freedom from all self-consciousness, as we adore, worship, contemplate, the character of God as revealed in Christ. The great changes

come in our character while we are in the attitude of worship. For Christian character is largely a by-product of worship and obedience, rather than through direct requests. Of course, requests for personal blessings have their place. But they have by no means the supreme place in the normal order of the spiritual life. Experience teaches us that it is quite possible to be self-centred in our praying, as in other things. And some earnest people continually thinking of their own souls, and their own needs, only succeed in becoming more and more self-conscious. And simply because they have followed a false order in their prayer life.

Many would enter upon a new day of spiritual experience, a new sense of freedom, of expansion, of joy, if they began the day by quietly contemplating God in Christ. For the time being, at least, forgetting all about their good, bad, or indifferent selves. Worship is the highest attitude of the soul in its relation to God. And as a consequence of worship thanksgiving would follow naturally as the next instinctive utterance of the soul in its prayer life. For it is impossible for us to worship without being possessed by a sense of the Divine goodness. And in the recollection of the goodness of God there inevitably takes

possession of us the spirit of contentment and joy. One can easily see this to be the psychological sequel. And that being so, an expansion, and enriching, of the inner life thereby takes place.

And no one can healthily experience a sense of the goodness of God, and of the contentment and joy which spring from it, without longing to have others share it. So that intercession follows with perfect naturalness. We become conscious that we belong to a large human family and we begin to realise that it is the Divine way to give the individual his spiritual growth as he seeks to carry the world Christward with him. When we are able to forget ourselves and identify ourselves with the longing, the groping, the ignorance, and the failure of others by intercession in the presence of God, and offer our personality as a channel through which God may minister to others, it is in such attitude that we receive the largest expansion of our souls.

Just as the attuned wireless instrument becomes the means of communicating a message, so may the attuned soul become a channel by which God conveys blessings to other lives. It may still be a mystery how this is done, how intercession for human souls achieves

results in the spiritual world, but the important thing to remember is that it is those who most deeply engage in intercession, who are most conscious of the effectiveness of it. In fact this is true in the whole range of prayer. Arguments for the reasonableness of prayer are not nearly so convincing as the consciousness of the reasonableness of prayer which springs from the practice of prayer. Indeed, it may be said that it is the persistent habit of prayer, and what flows from the habit, which are the supreme arguments for prayer. When we give the first place in our prayer life to worship, thanksgiving and intercession, it will then be evident that many of the things to which we had formerly given the first place will be received by us without asking. For our richest spiritual blessings come to us by indirection.

It is a law in the spiritual world that we receive most bountifully when we are most completely captured by thoughts of the character of God, and by the needs of our fellow men. Prayer is the outgoing of the whole life towards God, just as faith is the expression of the whole man.

And consequently prayer involves the human body. True prayer implies the con-

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quering of all physical moods. Jesus tamed the moods of His body, its depression, its weariness, so that it became perfectly obedient to the demands of the inner life in the exercise of prayer. It is weak surrender to bodily inclination which is sometimes the cause of the neglect of the prayer habit. And if that habit is to have its true place, there are many who must battle with their physical moods. And this might afford some an opportunity to practice very real heroism. For there is an appeal to the heroic even in the physical aspect of prayer, if the exercise is to be charged with reality rising above a mere perfunctory form.

There is far too much pandering to the whims of the body in connection with prayer. If some of the physical endurance necessary for a football match, or a boat race, were translated into the exercise of intercessory prayer great things might come to pass. It is the triumph of sheer will power that sometimes keeps a man at his oar. Is the same effort as often translated into prayer?

True prayer demands mental concentration. It requires that the mind shall steadily see what it is praying for, that it is not merely using a confused heap of ideas and translating them into words. It might be a mental aid for

some of us to write down what is to engage the mind while at prayer. But that is not enough. There must be a persistent exercise of the will to keep merely curious, irrelevant thoughts out of the mind while engaged in prayer. For there is continually a troop of unimportant, unnecessary, or foolish, thoughts seeking to claim the place occupied by the supreme ideas which should be in possession of our attention.

To surrender to the suggestions of unimportant, invading, thoughts is weakness. Because such surrender means the bisecting of thought, and that is the psychological basis of all inner weakness. And no amount of Bible reading or prolonged periods of the form of prayer can make up for a mind divided in its attention through a slack will. Mental concentration means the exercise of the will. And when it is secured it provides the psychological basis of inner strength. All real inner power must spring from a concentrated mind secured by the energy of the will.

Of course, the will may be greatly aided in the securing of mental concentration in prayer by faith working through imagination to make the presence of God a reality. For true prayer demands the exercise of faith, faith being the

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soul of prayer. Prayer is prayer only as faith is in it. And the prayer of faith makes Christ a near and present reality. It fights against every whisper in the soul that would deny it, it wrestles with everything that would suggest its impotence. Faith conquers in prayer by keeping the imagination fixed upon the transcendent, spiritual power working in co-operation with it. The prayer of faith shuts out all invasions that threaten to weaken its bold venture. That is the fight of faith. And it does its work through imagination. And thus imagination is able to aid the will, and the acquired strength of the will reacts on the imagination, in the achievement of victory. For every real triumph must first take place in the soul before it is actualised in the world. Faith must visualise success before it is achieved in the actual battlefield of life. The prayer of faith overcomes the world in inner spiritual conflict, and then summons all the powers of the being to go out to claim the victory among the cold, hard, facts of the world.

VIII

WHAT DOES CHRIST DO FOR OUR LIVES?

CHRIST is not an arbitrary imposition upon human nature. He is not a mortgage upon our already burdened lives. He has come to lift the mortgage from life, to endow it with power. Christ is the response which Divine love has made to the problems which we actually encounter in our attempt to realise the chief end of our existence. We greatly need to keep this steadily before our minds, because some have turned from Christianity thinking it to be another heavy load flung upon lives already staggering under burdens.

But such a view is a false understanding of the mission of Christ. Our Lord has come in order to make life liveable, to make it reasonable, to make it possible for us to attain to our own true moral and spiritual stature.

If there had been no deep need in our lives there would have been no revelation of Christ.

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“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” In all our interpretations of Christ Divine love must be the essence of them. Christ is in our midst to give us a knowledge of the character and attitude of God towards us, which shall be sufficient for the deepest needs of the best and the worst people in the world. The first thing which very many lives consciously require to know is whether there is forgiveness with God. Before they can face the question of a fresh start, of moral progress, they are desperately anxious to know whether there is pardon for past transgression. For it is only in the sense of forgiveness that they can ever hope to rise into glad and hopeful moral enterprise. If they must drag with them all the sense of failure and of guilt which pursues them from the past, into the problems which await them in the present and future, then they are convinced that real progress is impossible. And they are surely right. The past must be dealt with, if there is to be hope for the future.

The problem of forgiveness for past sins is part of the problem of moral progress. And it is the first part of moral progress, the most urgent part, in multitudes of lives. And Christ has come to reveal, in time, the attitude of the

heart of God, to all who seek emancipation from the tyranny of the past, in order to become what God meant them to be in the present and in the future. He has come in God's name to absolve oppressed souls, to make the new beginning gloriously possible.

In His own personality Christ reveals the holiness and mercy of God. It is not a mere good-natured message of pardon which He gives. The forgiveness which He offers springs from the depths of the holiness of God.

It is easy enough for a morally shallow parent to good-naturedly forgive the serious wrong done by his child, without in any way feeling the pang of the wrong in his own being. And such shallow forgiveness works a double evil in the life of the child, it gives him a sense of the weak moral nature of his parent, and a feeble sense of the horror of sin. It is only when forgiveness springs from the depths of a parent's moral nature, when forgiveness bears the marks of love that is born of holiness, and consequently is distressed because of the fact of sin, it is only then that forgiveness has a redeeming influence upon a child's life. It is then that a child sees there is self-sacrifice in a parent's forgiveness. He sees

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the depths of the moral nature of his parent, and also he sees the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

This is the vision which Christ gives of the heart of God in the attitude of forgiving sinful men. He not only reveals the infinite love of God but the essential holiness of God. And when love and holiness, which are one, forgive sin, by their very nature they suffer. Christ is the revelation, in time, of the self-sacrifice of a holy, loving God in the attitude of forgiving sin. And we are conscious in our souls of the fact of forgiveness, and also of the love and holiness from which the forgiveness springs. The consciousness of this is as real in the experience of people all about us, as their sense of the outer world. They live, and they are ready to die, in the firm assurance of it.

It is Christ's message of forgiveness which has given us our fresh start, as it gave Saul of Tarsus and the redeemed in all ages, their new moral enthusiasm. And the fact of our forgiveness is as vivid to us as any other fact in our existence. The most tangible realities have their explanation in our sense of forgiveness—our joy, our zest in life, our passion for moral progress. Without our sense of forgiveness, our life would be like a garden of flowers which had been frost bitten.

There are very many whose immediate sense of need is not so much the need of forgiveness as an intelligible interpretation of God for which their minds have been instinctively searching. And it is a matter of actual experience that Christ has given them the answer. They are prepared to testify that their minds are satisfied with the vision of God which Christ has given. They are content to let Christ be their point of contact with all that is in the unseen world. Christ has gathered up the broken revelations of God made by prophets and sages and poets, and has unified them in His own personality.

It may be our own experience that we were bewildered by the vast realms of truth which we had neither time nor the ability to explore, and we observed that those who had given up their lives to speculative enquiry in those realms have in many instances reached no satisfying conclusions. There was therefore no encouragement for us to find intellectual peace in that direction. But through contact with Christ we found mental satisfaction. We become intellectually reconciled to the situation, in the seen and in the unseen worlds, because of the light which He has shed.

Christ gave us a working contact with the

universe. He brought God within the scope of our intelligence. He simplified ideas of God to the range of our capacity. And the result is that we are not paralysed by mystery, or vastness. We find ourselves at home in the midst of the immensity which astronomy reveals, and of the antiquity of the world proclaimed by geology. Our minds stayed upon Christ, we are at peace, and it is not a passive peace either, but a peace flowing from a positive, vital, contact with the seen and the unseen worlds. And we know this to be true, our experience in the matter is of the very essence of reality. And it is the revelation of Christ which has made it possible.

There are many who are not greatly troubled by the intellectual outlook but they are perplexed as to how they are to become sharers in the power that is necessary in order to live the highest kind of life. They are conscious that there is Divine power available, but the problem is to establish a point of contact with it for the practical purposes of life. Just as engineers long saw that there was power in the current of Niagara which might be transformed into electricity to drive machinery, and illumine cities. But the engineering problem was to make the power in Niagara available,

to obtain it in a workable form, and to transmit it to the point of need. That problem has been solved, the power houses on the banks of Niagara transform the energy in the river current into light, heat and power to minister to human need in distant cities. And Christ has gathered the power of God into Himself for transmission to the point of human need. He has become a power house, as it were, for the bringing of the energy of God into an approachable, practical, relation to the moral needs of men. He has become the point of contact with that energy which God has to bestow for the necessities of human life.

Without Christ the power of God is a vague, intangible, unapproachable, reality. With a sense of awe, we see Divine power at work in holding the speeding worlds in their courses. We think of it as present in the glowing galaxy of suns, in the renewal of nature upon our own planet. But how shall we come into contact with that power for the renewal of our staggering lives? How shall the exhausted energies of our being be replenished for the tasks of our existence? That is our practical question. And Christ is God's practical answer. Christ is the power of God. And it has become a working fact in our lives up to the

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measure of the reality of our vital contact with Christ. And it is the testimony of multitudes that the power of Christ has broken the tyranny of evil habit in their lives. It has renewed the exhausted, the weak, the diseased, will. It has endowed character with moral capital so that bankrupt lives have gone back into life with the zest of a fresh start. And this is just as true in spiritual experience as it is true in another sense in the world of business where men of large financial resources carry on gigantic enterprises. A great nation like the United States can carry out the task of making a Panama canal, because the national treasury is behind all the patience, skill, and courage.

And so the power of God is in Christ to be drawn upon for the small and the large moral enterprises before us all. Christ has thus become to us our point of contact with Divine forgiveness, enlightenment, and power. And these have become practical realities in the living of life. The feelings may be all the other way. One's mood may be so depressed and antagonistic to the will as to almost indicate the paralysis of the will. But Christ informs the will that it is not only possible for it to act in the most adverse circum-

stances, but that it is absolutely imperative to do so. The will dare not surrender to anything except to light upon the road of life. Any lower surrender defeats the end Christ has in view as He co-operates with us in the making of personality. And personality can never be developed except as the will recognises both its power and its duty to maintain the supremacy. Imagination may be a powerful inspiration, or hindrance to the will. It may be its very greatest ally.

And that has always been the intention of Christ. He always has insisted, that the imagination shall not be permitted to handicap the will. The will shall not move in one direction and the imagination in another. Christ inspires the imagination to paint hopefully the picture of the future, He insists that the imagination shall look out with concentration upon every situation, with that hopefulness which takes into account the Divine power, presence, and providence.

When Christ urged men not to be anxious about the morrow, it was not in order to weaken devotion to the practical tasks of life, but in order to have imagination undivided and consecrated to the problems which the will has actually to undertake. Christ was con-

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tinually busy upon the human imagination, inspiring it, so that it should become a strong ally of the will in the doing of the Divine will. It is when imagination becomes a co-worker with thought under the direction of the will and all of them inspired by Christ, that the elemental life within is stirred. It is in the elemental depths of being that we reach the heroic zone, it is there that heroisms are born. It is there that life is unified, so that its various parts like the various parts of a locomotive unified by the driving power of steam, become possessed by the dominating passion of doing the will of Christ. And in that attitude a Christian personality becomes a growing reality which is the greatest thing on this planet, finding itself in what we call time and eternity at the same moment, the facts of time and eternity acting upon it while personality assimilates both in the expansion of its ageless life.

IX

OBEDIENCE TO THE WILL OF CHRIST

OBEDIENCE to Christ is the outward expression of the reality of faith and prayer. It is the counterpart of the inner life.

Our Master has a universal programme to unfold, to incarnate, in human society. And He has His programme in His own hands. He alone can direct His vast campaign. For His purposes stretch from individual lives to the universal, and through all time. Such a programme is too immense for any other than Himself to administer. And in the administration of His world purpose He is seeking for those who will surrender themselves to Him, so that they shall become the instruments in the achievement of His plans.

Thus it becomes clear that the first step towards our co-operation with Christ in the bringing in of the Kingdom of God upon earth is not merely by our doing some good in the

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world, but in surrendering ourselves to Him, to do the good He would have us do.

It is only in this way that there can be any approximation to the carrying out of a plan that shall have unity of design in it. It is only through genuine surrender to Christ that His true programme can be unfolded, that a large, universal idea can sway the whole of Christian activity, it is only in this way that mere individual hobbies, and prejudices, can be conquered, and subdued, into one dominating purpose, plan, and spirit. Therefore we say that surrender to Christ is the point of contact between Christ and our souls, if we are to have some intelligent share in the coming of the Kingdom of God in this world, if we are to be something, and do something, that shall be in harmony with the spirit and the activity of all those who are true disciples of Christ.

For, after all, what this world needs is not only people who will do things, but who will do things without overlapping, and confusion, things that are of primary importance, which, when done, will make it unnecessary that other secondary things should be done, and that what is done shall be done in the right spirit. And surrender to Christ, to the spirit and purpose of the living Christ, means to move in this

direction. But this word surrender has been worn thin. It has been given a very narrow meaning by some, it has been interpreted to mean giving up a few things which have been disapproved by the Christian social conscience. But it has a much more profound meaning than that. Surrender to Christ implies giving up the life to His purpose, rather than to try to use His power for our small, and local ambitions.

When Abraham Lincoln said he was not anxious to have God on his side, but he was greatly concerned to be on God's side, he declared the principle for which we are here contending. Surrender to Christ means to let His Spirit control us, to be willing to be led by Him, rather than by our ambitions. And in order to make surrender a really strong and vital fact in experience, the summoning of the whole being will be necessary. Mere earnestness is not enough, it is an appeal for the exercise of hard thinking, and of a will that wills to translate the mind of Christ into conduct.

While we are in the attitude of surrender, Christ becomes responsible for the development of our spiritual life. There are some people who, in their earnestness, worry a great deal concerning their spiritual growth. They are continually consulting their feelings to see

whether they are just as spiritual, and just as happy, as they were on some previous conspicuous occasion, and if they are not quite up to the mark they are more or less distressed. Now we do not here criticise the motive in this performance, but we certainly condemn the method. For instead of helping the soul it discourages it, and it makes for morbid self-consciousness, and it identifies religion with emotionalism.

Our spiritual development is far too important a matter to be made to rest upon the state of our feelings, or even to be left in our hands. Our business is to fulfill conditions, it is the concern of our Lord to see that our spiritual development is realised. It is not a mark of faith to worry over it, it is rather a mark of sheer unbelief. And if we maintain the attitude of surrender our Master will take care of our influence. Influence is a by-product of fidelity. Genuine influence must always come by *indirection*. And it is because some good people fail to see this, that they keep awake at night thinking how they can make their influence more secure. And they consequently try too hard to make an impression upon others, and others detect the artificial element. For it becomes oppressive, self-conscious, strained

piety. And instead of exerting an influence, they have no influence simply because they took the matter into their own hands, instead of leaving it absolutely with their Master. And the pity of it all is that the motive may have been high, but the method hopelessly wrong.

If we are surrendered to the spirit and will of Christ, He will certainly preserve our influence against any ungenerous attitude of the world. But we must trust Him in the matter, for we may see no signs of such preservation. For the time being it may seem to be all the other way, and simple faith will be the only thing to keep us from panic. It is in this way we enter into freedom from bondage to self-consciousness, from the paralysing grasp of fears which contract personality into withered smallness.

We find our true life, our natural spiritual expansion, as we maintain a healthy self-forgetfulness in the attitude of companionship with Christ. And this attitude is maintained through the habitual exercise of the prayer of faith on the one hand, and instant obedience on the other. For obedience is the energetic sequel to the prayer of faith. They are two parts of one vital whole. And they act and

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react upon each other. And it is as we thus live in the companionship of the actual presence of our Lord that we become partakers of the forgiveness of God. And the depths of our nature are satisfied. What the world had absolutely failed to do for us in the direction of giving inner satisfaction and rest takes place as a result of fellowship with Christ. And in so far as we are able to maintain implicit trust in the actual presence of Christ, we are able to live above discouragement. For discouragement arises when we come to an end of our inner resources.

Discouragement is inner bankruptcy. But there is no such thing if we continually believe that there is with us a presence and power equal to all occasions. When we believe that there is actually behind us, and in us, a presence infinitely greater than our moods of depression, or our sense of personal weakness, a power which is sufficient for all our tasks and emergencies, we have found the antidote against discouragement. And not only so, but in the life of companionship with Christ there arises a sense of Divine providence overshadowing every step of our way. Whatever happens to us, as we live in union with our Master, and His will, is all right so far as our

highest interests are concerned. What comes to us may be the result of unreasonableness, stupidity, or cruelty, on the part of others. Yet they only succeed in making our own lives deeper, more patient, more charitable.

If we were not living in fellowship with Christ, with a sense of an overruling providence protecting our highest concerns, the same set of circumstances would probably drive us into bitterness, impatience, and hatred. We see every day the same experience producing totally different results, some are strengthened and purified, while others are weakened and made gross. The same fire which melts wax hardens clay. The same sun which ripens into fruit the blossoming branches of an apple tree, causes a branch which has been severed from the tree to wither.

We see therefore that Christ cares for our spiritual life in the largest way possible, as we abide in His presence by faith, and in the attitude of surrender to His will. He cannot do the best for us except as we forget ourselves in our willingness to obey Him in the bringing in of the Kingdom of God in the world. We cannot be spiritually developed by remaining in aloofness from the needs of the world. We cannot grow by losing sight of the larger pur-

poses of Christ, and by being concerned only for the peace and happiness of our own souls.

Such a method of spiritual progress is not the method of Christ, and it is not the method by which the strongest and most virile types of Christian character have been produced. The highest knowledge comes to us in doing the will of Christ, and it is not a mere intellectual knowledge which we lay upon the shelves of our memory and rarely use, it is a knowledge which becomes part of the working capital of daily life.

A deepening sense of the presence of Christ comes to us in the way of obedience. And the keenest sympathy with our fellowmen comes to us in our attempt to serve them according to the Divine will.

X

THE DANGEROUS WHISPER IN THE SOUL

WHEN the will resolves to co-operate with the mind of Christ in carrying out His purposes in and through us we become vividly conscious of antagonistic influences, subtle whisperings within us call us in other directions. We become aware that the spiritual life is haunted by a false voice, by suggestions which if followed lead to confusion, sorrow, dishonour. It is enough to know that temptation is a great reality of which we are painfully conscious. We cannot get away from the fact by the discussion of its mystery. The suggestion which the false whisper makes within us is not necessarily grotesque, outrageous. It may not be the suggestion of an absolute, black, falsehood, it may simply be a half truth. The temptations which assailed Jesus were half truths. They were twisted quotations from Scripture.

We are not all tempted to maliciously slan-

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der people, but we all know what it is to be inclined to utter a few mean spirited remarks. Or it may be an ungenerous silence to which we are tempted to succumb, or to a subtle cynical attitude. An observer would hardly notice it, but it registers itself upon our own inner life. Of course, there is no sin in being tempted, temptation becomes sin only when there is surrender to it. We are not thieves because a burglar tries to get into our house. And many young people who have sensitive consciences are sometimes greatly distressed, because they have not made a clear distinction between temptation as an involuntary suggestion made to the mind, and as an overture accepted by the will.

The fact of being tempted is something for which we are not responsible. Indeed, temptation plays an absolutely necessary part in our moral progress. There can be no real development, no moral refinement, without it. Without temptation Jesus would have remained unsullied but immature, spotless but not strong.

There is no such thing as Christian character except as the highest is chosen in the presence of the temptation to choose what is lower. The greatest enemy of the highest is not necessarily the lowest, but the lower than the high-

est. The arch enemy of the best is not the worst, but the second best. And a part of the subtlety of the temptation is that nobody seems to keenly observe the difference between our choice of the highest as against what is lower than the highest. But there is that difference which exists between chivalry and mediocrity.

And the difference is always indicated upon our own souls, however blind the outside world may be to it. While we are always haunted by temptation, there are times when we are especially exposed to it. One of those times is after hard strain at work or play. The hour of reaction is a dangerous period, just as after a shot is fired from a gun, it recoils upon the shoulder and will blacken it, if one is not prepared for the recoil, so must we be prepared for inner reaction. Our greatest temptations may come to us after our most exalted, our most spiritual, experiences. It was so with Jesus. And we must not think that our experience at a communion service, or on some other hallowed occasion, was spurious because it was followed by suggestions that were of a different order. The thing is not surprising and it is wisdom to be prepared for it.

The days after a prolonged college examination, after a convention, the hours after a

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day's hard work, these experiences call for places of refuge for the inner life in the grip of reaction. There must be the provision of some pure, healthy occupation or amusement in which the relaxed mind may rest, and be refreshed, without being weakened or strained.

While temptation presents itself in a wide variety of forms, we have a comprehensive classification into three phases in the temptation of our Lord, which indicate the lines along which the false whisper comes to us. The first phase is the suggestion to satisfy physical craving by surrendering the claims and rights of the soul. For example, we may have had a day of exhausting toil and the body needs rest. But the soul also requires spiritual contemplation, communion, prayer. Shall the mood of the body conquer the rights of the soul? Shall we permit the interests of our higher life to be defeated by the pleadings of physical desire? Shall we allow the will to surrender to mere physical inclination simply because it is easier?

The second phase of temptation as illustrated by the experience of Jesus is to trust to the help of God in an act or career of self-will. To obey the whisper of the sinister voice within and then to say that God will take care of us upon the self-chosen path. To cast our-

selves down from the place of duty to the abyss of self-will and to be deceived into thinking that in so doing God will give His angels charge concerning us. That is the temptation which has a firm grasp upon a man when he says that even although he lives a careless life, the love of the Divine Father will protect and save him.

It is a plausible half truth, and consequently a most dangerous error. The love of the Divine Father is a great fact, but it can do nothing for us except as the human will co-operates with the Divine love. The redeeming love of God makes it possible for us all to make a fresh start in a life of obedience to the Divine will, but it does not, and cannot, save us except as we rise to it by definite choice. The love of God is not a substitute for human character, it is the opportunity which we embrace in order to achieve character. The love of God cannot redeem a life until that life through the energy of the will co-operates in the redeeming programme.

And the third phase of temptation which is emphasised by the experience of Jesus is to seek success by a short path across forbidden ground. Success is a perfectly legitimate ambition if it comes honestly and

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naturally. But if we obtain it by surrender to what we know to be wrong, even although the surrender may be ever so brief, we have paid a terrible price for what must turn out to be a bad bargain.

If one should succeed in an examination by surreptitiously getting help from a neighbour at the examination what a miserable thing the success must turn out to be. If one should make a fortune by misrepresenting a competitor the situation would not be saved even if the whole fortune were given away to philanthropic causes. The generous act could not wipe out the stain upon the inner life, nor could it atone for the injustice done to the neighbour. The modern mind is terribly tempted by this sinister suggestion to win success at the price of a surrender of moral principle, and then to make up for the surrender by giving away the fruits of success to good causes. But we greatly need to revise our ideals of success. There are few things the rising generation require to keep more steadily before the mind than the fact that genuine success must spring from the inner life in remaining true to the spirit and mind of Christ.

The elements out of which a satisfying success is made must include a clean conscience,

a kind spirit, a clear head, and an iron will. And if we should find that we cannot make a great worldly success by insisting that all of these shall go into our scheme of life, then we must simply follow our Master in being content with what comes. After all, the man who gets all he desires, by the surrender of his higher self, does not really possess the things he has obtained. He must often feel that the deadening of his inner sensibilities by being untrue to them, has taken the keen edge off his power to enjoy what he has gathered about him. While the man who retains the keen sensibility and the power of enthusiastic appreciation, which spring from keeping the native pieties of the soul unsullied, may get far more real satisfaction out of his humbler lot. Besides, those who are true to their deepest selves in their life, and work, in this world are doing far more for the solving of the intricate and urgent social problems of our time.

No amount of mere philanthropy, or mere mental brilliance, which winks at wrong, can make up for simple, transparent, conduct, in the solving of the modern social situation. Christ is seeking to bring in the Kingdom of God upon earth, and He will do it through those who are willing to carry out His spirit

and will in life at any cost, and in so doing, are ready to resist plausible temptations to seek success apart from the Christian temper. For the Kingdom of God on earth is simply the spirit of Christ, the plan, the purpose of Christ, reigning in human society. And if we are willing to take our ideals from Christ, our spirit, and programme, from Him, and all the consequences which may fall upon us personally for weal or woe as a result of such an attitude, then we march with those who shall yet bring in a new day of brotherhood and peace upon the earth.

XI

THE DIVINE WHISPER IN THE SOUL

IN our attempt to translate the mind of Christ into conduct, we have the aid of the spirit of God within us. It is not necessary for us to ask Him to come to us. He has come already. The human soul is the central sphere of the overtures of the Divine Spirit. Since He is everywhere present, He is supremely present within ourselves. The difference between lives is that some possess the spirit, while others are possessed by the spirit, as it may be said of some that they possess ideas, while others are possessed by them. And the way by which the spirit gains the ascendancy within us is through permitting Him to get possession of our next thought. It is the next thought that is the highway along which the spirit enters into possession of our growing personality. He waits for the human will to admit Him through the concentration of the mind upon what He would have us

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think, and do. For it is possible for us to attempt our part in the programme of Christ, either in our own way or by the help of the Divine Spirit. The Holy Spirit seeks to aid us in carrying out the mind of Christ.

The Holy Spirit within us moves along certain psychological lines as He seeks to co-operate with us in the doing of the will of Christ, just as electricity must have wires along which it moves. And as wires of certain metals are better conductors of electricity than others, so there are certain attitudes of our inner life which lend themselves most advantageously to obtaining the aid of the power of the Spirit in doing the will of Christ. Or there are certain attitudes which the Spirit creates when we surrender to Him.

As we have already remarked mental concentration is the first psychological condition of the Spirit's co-operation with us. Or we may say that the Holy Spirit helps us to attain to the concentration of the mind and in this He becomes the inspirer and educator of our intellectual life. While at the same time all straining, all over-anxiety, defeats the Spirit in His attempt to help us to live and act. We mean by straining that same temptation to which the golfer is exposed when he tries too

hard to strike the ball, and drives it only a short distance. "Relax," "Do not press," these are the expressions used by the experienced golfer to the novice. And they apply in every phase of life as well as in golf. Strain is a non-conductor of spiritual power. It is so in the matter of anxiety for influence; it applies in speaking; some people even strain too much in listening to others, they try too hard to show their interest. It is a habit which has become chronic in some instances, for even while sitting still there is no mental attitude of repose, there is an unnecessary expenditure of psychic force which causes physical exhaustion.

It is this habit of straining which is a frequent cause of nervous prostration, and it may take place in lives which have not a great deal of work to do. We may strain over anything, we may expend, as it were, the energy necessary to cut down a tree in the act of driving a nail. And in trying too hard we shut off the real power which should find expression in our lives. It is like applying the brakes on a train while the steam is full on, which means the expenditure of power in opposite directions and the result is not only friction but enormous tear and wear.

If we are therefore to experience the help

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of the Holy Spirit in our life and work we must give Him an opportunity to express His power. We must not apply the brakes of over-anxiety about anything, for however high our motive may be, we simply succeed in defeating the end we have in view. It is possible for us to counteract all this, to bring ourselves into a state of repose, into a relaxed psychic condition, by the habitual exercise of the will, reinforced by the aid of faith, informing the will of the presence of the power of the Spirit who is our ally in the difficult task.

Hurry is also a non-conductor of spiritual power; we here speak of hurry as a mental attitude. Hurry is too keen upon the next thing or the thing after that, it has no past or present. It lives in the immediate or remote, future. Hurry does not treat the present moment and its task with adequate seriousness. It is apt to be disrespectful to the thing in hand.

That is why people are apt to resent our hurry, that is why they look upon hurry as undignified. Because in the attitude of hurry we have surrendered the present to the future. That is to run away from the spirit of God, it is to get out of step with the true rhythm of life. Consequently it not only cheapens the

work in hand, but it vulgarises our own soul. If there is to be true vision of the things that really count in life, if there is to be a place of honour for the memories and friendships of the past, if there is to be a spirit of contentment within us, if we are to translate the mind of Christ into life, hurry must give place to concentrated leisureliness.

Deliberate leisureliness is both the fruit of the presence of the Spirit, and the condition of His control over us. It is by this means we approach our work with our whole being, and in our living we carry into the future our memories of the past, our obligations to friendships and our inspirations from them. But in the case of the mentally hurried both the memories of the past, and the obligations of the present are in the way of being sacrificed by a process of elimination. In making for leisureliness in living the Divine Spirit thus seeks to keep us faithful to our friendships of the past, to the memories of the past which should have an influence upon us, and also faithful to the sacred importance of the work of the present hour.

A great man said he was too busy to be in a hurry. For it is the present hour which is the most sacred hour in our

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lives, it is the one hour which we can make vital with reality.

Fear is another non-conductor of spiritual power, the fear of people, of circumstances, of the consequences of a decision, or of a step which we know to be right. It arises through the imagination being uncontrolled by the will, or misdirected. The imagination instead of being an ally to the rest of the life in its effort to advance has become an enemy, its influence tending to repress and contract personality, rather than to encourage and expand it, so that the powers of the inner life are paralysed. And the result is far reaching in its effects. The spirit is depressed, and joyless, and even the body suffers from the benumbing influence.

We greatly underestimate the influence of fear upon our physical life. It may be that some chronic fear which has no right whatever to be in our lives is the only cause of our remaining physically below par. And in this condition we spread the contagion of depression. But fear cannot be dispelled merely by willing. The will must be reinforced by an energy capable of dispelling it. And that energy is love, sympathy, the outgoing of our elemental life in unselfish contact with others.

As light dispels darkness, so "perfect love casteth out fear."

Of course, we are here speaking of love as a working force, not as a mere gush of feeling which may be neither ethical nor rational.

It is that power which is the soul of life, and in which all the activities of our mind find their highest possibility. But how are we to get love started as a working force?

The Spirit of God as we obey His promptings in the common tasks of the day, sheds abroad within us the sense of the Divine love towards us. It is a matter of experience that as obedient souls we become increasingly conscious of living in the encircling love of God revealed through Christ.

The Divine Love becomes the sun of our soul. And while we are in the attitude of obedience in the ordinary affairs of daily life, this sense of the Divine love to us works out into our relation to others as the light of the sun is reflected from a window. Only it is not a mere reflection in our case, it is the actual working out of a divine quality. As we allow the spirit of God to guide our thoughts, in that normal attitude of mind, the essence of the Divine being which is love takes possession of us. And the Spirit seeks to arouse our will

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to translate the Divine deposit in our lives into conduct.

The will is also stimulated in its work by imagination picturing to us what others have a right to receive from us, by imagination putting us in other people's places, by our seeing with clear vision the needs of other lives. When we hear of some case of dire poverty or terrible suffering, it is imagination which inspires our will to action. Therefore we say that if our imagination is under the control of the Spirit of God it becomes a powerful aid to the will in the direction of the expression of sympathy. If, on the other hand, imagination is not under the guidance of the Spirit, playing the part of an uncontrolled faculty, then the power of the will may not only be neutralised, but also uninformed as to what to do.

· For thoughtlessness towards others often simply arises through lack of imagination. The imagination has been engaged, it may be, in foolish and harmful work, when it might have been busy informing the will of the needs of others. It is clear then that the Divine Spirit may aid us in establishing the psychological conditions of spiritual power, and we also may aid Him in gaining the ascendancy in our lives by exercising the will upon these psychological

points. For His purpose within us is to completely unify our being so that we shall be able to carry out into life the spirit and programme of Christ. Our Divine helper seeks to make us fit for our task, by making the inner life a unit, and by that unit becoming a channel of the energy of Divine love, and thus throwing off the paralysing influence of fear. This is the way in which we achieve our spiritual freedom.

XII

WHAT IS OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS LIFE?

WHEN we have entered into companionship with the living Christ, inspired by the indwelling presence of His Spirit, we become conscious of having a definite part in the world programme of our Master. Our life and our local duties may be very obscure, but that need not alter the fact that we have a distinct part to play in a universal plan. It is our privilege when we live in union with our Lord to be in the rhythm of His world purpose. This does not depend in any sense upon the largeness of our sphere, nor upon the importance of our work, viewed from a worldly point of view. We become cosmopolitan in our outlook upon life because our lives have become keyed to the cosmopolitan note which is the genius of the programme of Christ. Through the keyhole of a certain garden gate in Rome it is possible to have a most impressive view of the Church of St.

Peter. And from the narrowest lot in life it is possible to have a worldwide outlook and sympathy, to have a distinct part to play in the most stupendous scheme that has ever claimed the attention of the human mind.

Through our relation to Christ we have become cosmopolitan in the very highest sense of that word. We have a relation to the life nearest to us, and to the last man in the islands of the seas. We are related to the whole world, and to the Eternal, at the same time. But our relation to the world moves from the centre outwards. Our bond with the large affairs of the universal is through fidelity to the small affairs of our particular sphere. The duties of the hour provide our point of contact with the vast concerns which are in the mind of Christ. The work of the present hour may not be congenial to us. The life work to which many find themselves bound may not be the work that they would choose for themselves.

But we rise above slavery to our work, by doing it for Christ. That motive emancipates our souls from the despotism of circumstances. And that motive secures the development of personality in any sphere of work or suffering, and it is consistent with enterprise, fairness to our neighbour, and the progress of the world.

Our union with our Master may not free us from the uncongenial task, but when we do our work for Him, in His sight, we find that we are free. The difficulties of our lot instead of throwing us into chains of servitude, only tend to make the emancipation of our souls more complete.

The man of largest Christian personality found his spiritual expansion in a hard place. We maintain this attitude of inner freedom by steadfastly refusing to be ensnared by the influence of past failures, and shortcomings. If St. Paul had permitted his former mistakes to invade the enthusiasms of his apostolic life, he would have been paralysed into fatal depression, and discouragement. But in the forward march of his life he dared not to think of his past mistakes except through the forgiving love of God in Christ. The presence of Christ saved the new enthusiasms of the Apostle from being frost bitten by the wintry blast of past memories. 'And if we are to persist in our part of the programme of Christ it must be through the resolute exercise of the will as it insists upon our thoughts being taken up with the Divine will for us in the present rather than by being intimidated, and weakened, by memories which would turn enthusiasm into despair.

In this attitude of working upon our part of the programme of Christ, and in doing it for Him we find ourselves at peace with God, with ourselves and with our fellowmen. For peace is not something that comes down to us like apples shaken from a tree. Peace is the result of the fulfillment of certain conditions, as heat or cold is. The peace which the presence of Christ creates comes through our being brought into normal relations with our environment, as a dislocated joint brought back into its normal position may result in peace. In so far as we are obedient we find ourselves at home in the presence of God. We are reverent but unafraid, there is no strain or shrinking in the relationship.

It is so natural that we increasingly find Christ becoming the home of our thoughts, they return to him for inspiration and adjustment. The Eternal does not strike terror within us, the solemn realities of the unseen world become the source of our strength rather than of perplexing dread. For we have nothing to hide, nothing to fear, we are at one with the Divine will. And we are at peace with ourselves, in the sense that we have found a dominating purpose, a ruling passion. The will of Christ acting upon us both as a vision

of practical duty, and as a motive in doing it, secures for us the unification of our inner life in doing our share of work. It is just this lack of a ruling passion which is the cause of inner dissatisfaction in many instances.

For example, a young woman comes home from school or college with a magnificent mental equipment, and her life is taken up with a few light duties at home, some reading, exercise, and amusement, but if there is no supreme aim, if no one thing really dominates the mind, then the working unity of the inner life has not been secured. Several interests of equal strength cancel the effectiveness of each other. Conflicting motives unsettle and harass the soul. The result is that while there may be a very real culture of the faculties, there is no deep peace, no abiding contentment, no fusion of the faculties, in the pursuit of a dominating aim. But the will of Christ, accepted as a programme to be realised in practical life, as well as a motive power in carrying it out, will bring inner peace, contentment, and spiritual liberty.

No one, of course, dare say for another what the programme of Christ shall be. We must individually find that out for ourselves. It may be that the things we are now doing from day to day will remain the same. It may be

otherwise. But whether or not we shall be able to bring the spiritual motive into what we do, we shall be able to bring our lives into the mind of Christ, and by so doing we have made possible the inner unity of our being.

Another element in the peace which the presence of the will of Christ in our lives establishes springs from being in sympathetic relationship with our fellow men. There can be no deep peace for us if we live in cynical, or even pious, aloofness from the problems of humanity. An anti-social attitude of life or mind makes peace a psychological impossibility. Shrewd worldly detachment from the cares of humanity, looking out only for personal advantage, is a tragedy in the soul. So long as love does not reign within us in our relation to our fellows, however perverse their actions towards us may be, there can be no genuine abiding peace.

It is as we fit our lives sympathetically into the jolt and jar, into the plain and rude facts of practical existence that we experience the final element of peace. It was from the very heart of such life that Jesus spoke of His peace. It was while men repudiated Him, and flung His sympathy towards them back into His face that He maintained the attitude of

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unbroken kindness. And it was because He thus patiently persisted in loving that He had perfect peace.

It is as we face the problems of our lot, set free from self-consciousness, our life in harmony with God, ourselves, and the world, finding our work, and our supreme motive in doing it, through obedience to Christ, it is in this attitude we are able to continue our task, to keep steadily on our way. There are voices calling us in every direction, some urging to put the emphasis of our life and work on one point, some on another, until multitudes are confused and shift the emphasis of their life from one point to another, back and forth, according to the most recent or most powerful influence brought to bear upon them. But when we seek to take our direction from the living Christ we are thus steadied in mind against the bewildering distractions of our time.

And this is one of the supreme needs, that we shall persist in that type of life, and service which we believe to be inspired by the mind of Christ. For there is no guarantee whatever of the continuance of that type of life or work which is the mere echo of surroundings. It is in this way all kinds of hobbies are taken up

enthusiastically for a time, and then abandoned for something else. And in such activity there can be no real approach towards anything like unity of purpose among workers, nor towards the deepening of the convictions of those workers. If our work is to have a sacramental influence upon our personality, the impulse of that work must be born in the deeps of our own rational and spiritual life. And it is as we abide in Christ that what we do for Christ and men becomes the expression of our deepest selves, and not the mere impact of current opinions stirring us into activity for a brief season.

XIII

SERVICE FROM CENTRE TO CIRCUMFERENCE

IN our relation to the world programme of Christ our immediate sphere of activity will, of course, depend upon our natural gifts, our education, our circumstances, and our willingness to be led by the Divine will. Whatever may be the work that shall engage the largest amount of our time, and thought, the thing of first importance in connection with it is that we shall there be able to be true to the Spirit of Christ. That being understood, we can serve the purpose of Christ in any sphere which, so far as we can see, is the place for us. For the first contribution which we make to the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth is that which springs from the incorruptible integrity of our own being. As we live in fellowship with our Lord in any form of enterprise, whether it be commercial, professional, or whatever it may be, we throw off all unconsciously an influence which is the most

powerful and uplifting reality in the coming of the Divine Kingdom.

Nothing can be more important than the Spirit of Christ in a life as a contribution to the solution of the problems of human society. No amount of cleverness, or industry, can make up for the lack of that Spirit which is at once both strong principle, and an atmosphere of kindness. It is the first thing which we owe to this world, to our families, our friends, and to the outer circle of our obligations. Our patriotism is not genuine unless we are genuine. A man owes a contribution of personal integrity to the concern of which he may be a member, or an employee. It is an entirely false view of corporate life to say that a man's private character is a purely personal affair. It is nothing of the kind. If the national expense incurred by the sins of men and women, the evil example of their lives, the false standards, and precedents they have set up, the discouragement of other lives through their brutal actions, if the whole black mortgage upon society could be wiped out, if every man lived a straight and Christlike life we should begin to see the outlines of the Heavenly Kingdom on earth.

The Kingdom of God must first come within

ourselves. And it has come as we remain in the attitude of surrender to the mind of Christ. This is the first contribution which we bring to our family life when we leave our room in the morning. And if we do not bring that contribution into the heart of our family life, it is not likely that we shall genuinely bring it elsewhere. For the unit of Christian Society is the family. And no civilisation can ever ignore the stability of the family life which is its base.

In our modern haste for large results, for conspicuous successes, let us solemnly ask, have we paid the obligation we owe at home? have we brought the spirit of Christ to the breakfast table? Have we brought our share of conviction to the establishing, maintaining and vitalising of family religion? Have we brought as much of our intelligent, patient, interested selves to the hour of leisure around the fireside as we have brought to outside causes? Have the members of our families received from us what we have imparted to others? Many clever answers are given by us to such questions when we try to vindicate ourselves in embarrassing moments of conscious neglect of our own inner circle. But the fact remains that it is because of the improv-

erishment, the weakening, of family life through absorbing interests elsewhere that our social problems are aggravated and made more intricate all along the line.

Family life as an institution is a moral achievement of the centuries and to neglect it, to disfigure it, to dishonour it, is to go backwards. It matters not what kind of act it is that mars the beauty, the peace, the moral progress of the family life, it is a blow struck at an institution which is the bulwark of civilisation. And the attack comes from the most various quarters. It is occasionally made in a modern novel. While from another direction, from those who are earnestly and honestly engaged in the uplift of the world, there is sometimes, unconsciously, an attitude of slackness in regard to family obligation arising from excessive engrossment in outside affairs.

And there is a temptation before the minds of many young people to think that they have no definite obligation to bring a contribution of enrichment to the family life. They only require, however, to give the matter some little thought to realise that the whole responsibility in the matter does not rest upon their parents. Even the lack of cultivating the habit of regular and frequent writing of letters to

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inform the home circle of what is of vital concern, while at school or college, is a thing of more serious injury to the family relation than appears on the surface. If we are living in obedience to the mind of Christ it must be that we shall bring more to the family life and not less. For His presence imparts to us exactly those qualities by which the family existence is sweetened and unified.

But while Christian charity begins at home it does not end there. We have a direct relation to our community, our country, and to the world. And as we are faithful to the Spirit of Christ we shall recognise that however small our contribution of interest and service must inevitably be, yet that can be no reason for ignoring our obligation. The temptation in this direction is naturally great. Since public opinion does not always demand our interest and service, in fact it sometimes is most ungrateful and ungracious to those who give themselves unsparingly to the public good. Nevertheless, it is the will of Christ that has become the law of our life, and the gratitude or ingratitude of a society or community cannot determine our actions.

It is not the amount of service which we are able to render that is the important thing, it is

the moral influence upon others of our intelligent interest. That interest on our part may inspire others to do that for which we have neither time nor capacity. It might be a very great service to a community or to the nation if we would devote some of our leisure to informing ourselves upon the processes by which things for the public good are brought to pass. A course of reading upon parliamentary law, the function of the primary, the methods of legislative procedure, informing ourselves upon the dark ways of those who seek to defeat the decrees of public sentiment, such pursuit would redeem the mind from the effeminate influence of so much of our reading that leads to no practical result. There can be no real enthusiasm for public service until there is more widespread information upon the ways by which the public mind can be enlightened, and its enlightened will carried into effect.

Christian people, too often in the past, have looked upon life as divided into two sections, sacred and secular. It is this unspiritual view of life which is in part to blame for the deplorable condition into which politics, and commerce, have sometimes fallen. What can we expect the spheres of human enterprise to become if they are paganised by Christian people,

if so-called followers of Christ have no conscience upon the translation of the teaching of Sunday into the business of Monday? Christ seeks the sanctification of the whole of human life and its institutions, that is what He meant by the coming of the Kingdom of God upon earth.

And this will be accomplished not by the secularising of religion, but by the spiritualising of the whole realm of life. And that is the glorious and difficult task He has laid upon His disciples in our day. It is to unify and exalt, and baptise into the Kingdom of God every sphere of human activity. It is to Christianise every sphere of human interest so that there shall be no pagan spot in the institutions of our civilisation.

And this crusade, this holy war, cannot be carried on without its martyrdoms, without men having sometimes to appear to fail in order to all the more succeed. We have a place of honour for those who have given their lives for their country in battle. We do not say that because they did not come home from the war that they failed. Their names are inscribed on brass in our public places. The social conscience has yet to be educated up to honour him who is too courageous and honest

to grasp a cheap success with the iron grip of greed. The spiritual discernment of the mass of men has yet to be trained to see the martyr in business, in politics, in art. We are not here apologising for weak incompetence in the work of the world, we are not seeking a laurel wreath for indolence and stupidity, but rather for those who could easily escape martyrdom if they ran away from absolute principle in the conduct of affairs.

But the programme of Christ stretches beyond nationality, it knows no geographical limitations. And He appeals to the heroic instincts of every disciple to have a share in His universal purpose. The day is swiftly coming when the sublime heroism and the profound wisdom of Christian missionaries will be recognised through what they have achieved in the spiritual, intellectual and social life of nations. We would not narrow that work to what has been done by heroic missionaries, for the Christian diplomatist, the merchant, and the mechanic have had their share in the triumph of the will of Christ in foreign lands. And they will increasingly have their spiritual opportunity.

But it is not only the workers on the actual field who are permitted to take a definite part

in the coming of the Kingdom in the distant parts of the world. There are people living in the United States and England who either have their own missionary representative, or combine with two or three others in the privilege, through their Church Boards. There are women busy in other directions who gather information regarding the progress of the Divine Kingdom in foreign parts and tell it to their friends. There are circles of Christians who gather to forget their own spiritual needs, in the attitude of passionate and intelligent intercession for workers and work in the dark places of the world.

Such action is helping to make the whole world a neighbourhood, the various parts of which seem to grow less remote every day. And some of those who once sneered at the enterprise of Christ in the largeness of its world grasp, are beginning to be ashamed as they see the marvellous results of quiet, patient toil, looming up into gigantic social facts, sufficiently dramatic to inspire the imagination of Christendom with a vision of worldwide triumph.

XIV

PLACES OF EMPHASIS IN SERVICE

THE places of emphasis in service, according to the programme of Christ, are both individual and social, both spiritual and material. There is no contradiction between them, they are the counterparts of each other. The individual life influences society, and society affects the individual. The spiritual aspect of life powerfully affects the material, and material conditions exercise an influence upon spiritual conditions.

The unfortunate thing in the past has been that earnest people have tried to separate what Christ has joined together. Some have clung to the individual element in the programme of Christ, while others have chosen the social side. Many have insisted upon the spiritual aspect, ignoring material conditions, and others have emphasised material conditions to the exclusion of spiritual concerns. The result has been disastrous, for it has to a large degree

separated workers who should be working in the unity of one dominating purpose. It has had the effect of setting up false and arbitrary divisions, which Christ never intended should exist.

The disrupting of this vital unity has incalculably weakened the work and the workers in both spheres. It has tended to shut off spiritual work from the practical facts of social reality with the result that spiritual work has sometimes not been preserved because it had no social atmosphere in which to thrive. There have been revivals which have not been survivals. On the other hand, social workers have sometimes lacked spiritual inspiration, and their social work has not been maintained because the individuals who have been socially and materially benefited by their work have not had spirituality enough to keep hold upon the benefits they had received. So that by ignoring each other workers in both spheres have too often sadly to witness the undoing of a great amount of their work.

When we say that the place of supreme emphasis in the coming of the Kingdom of God is the spiritual life of the individual, we do not thereby minimise or dishonour the importance of material and social service, nor do we

thereby separate the two counterparts of one whole. We simply declare what clearly is the method of Christ in establishing the Kingdom of God in human society. It was through Christian individuals that a Christian Society was first created. It is through individuals that social changes are continually taking place. Those who are working most vigorously for social redemption are making their impression upon society as individuals.

So that while they may realise it or not, all workers in practice put the supreme emphasis upon the inner life of the individual. For it is through the individual worker the social message is proclaimed, the social work achieved. And it is through the soul of the individual worker, for whatever his message may be, it springs from his spiritual vision and sympathy. Therefore we contend that experience proves the spiritual life of the individual to be the supreme place of emphasis in the coming of the Kingdom of God. And when we say the spiritual life of the individual, we mean the individual at the earliest possible period of his life. Scientific investigation has shown that the lives of the vast majority of Christian people were most profoundly influenced spiritually before they reached eighteen years of age.

And the family life should be the chief centre of spiritual influence.

No institution whatever can take the place of the home as the sphere where the most lasting spiritual impressions may be inculcated. And if parents are to exercise their high privilege of having the opportunity to most powerfully determine the spiritual future of their children they must get their work done early. For sooner than they can realise there are competing influences in an entirely opposite direction at work from the outside. The most influential element in the making of the Christian character of children is the sincere, natural, joyous, Christian life of their parents. Every form of instruction is second in importance as compared with consistent example. But not example which is self-conscious, trying too hard to make an impression. It is the unconsciousness of the example which is the most telling part of it.

Self-conscious piety which strains after spiritual results must defeat the end it has in view. For professional goodness strikes the youthful life with horror. It is dangerously possible for an earnest parent to try too hard to spiritually help his child. In the attitude of over-anxiety there is little or no faith in the

Spirit of God as co-operating in the holy work. Of course, there is the opposite extreme of doing nothing, of careless, self-centred, unconcern which is alarmingly evident everywhere, a chronic, thoughtless, indolence arising from minds soaked through by the atmosphere of worldliness.

Our hope for the large coming of the Kingdom must find its central inspiration from homes where the eternal life is lived in happy, beautiful contact with the common facts of existence; and where intelligent, prayerful aid is given to young, growing minds, to find the places of emphasis in belief and conduct. If parents fail to seize the opportunity which the family relation affords of affecting society at its foundation, then an elder brother or sister may find that what can be done at home in spiritually helping younger members of the family, without cant or superior airs, may prove to be the greatest possible service that could be rendered. St. Andrew did his greatest work for the world when he brought his brother to Christ. And in doing that he not only saved a youth, who had combustible stuff in his make-up, from an uncertain future, but he had a distinct part in giving St. Peter to the service of the Christian Church.

After our obligation to the home circle we stand committed to loyalty to all disciples of Christ.

We owe our fellow Christians our presence and our worship with them of our common Lord. The programme of Christ has a vital place for the recognition of the unity of believing souls. The Christian who says he can worship alone, who has no sense of need for the contemplation of God in Christ in company with the other Christians, has forgotten that he is living under a régime in which his personal inclinations and needs are not the main question. We belong to the whole Christian fellowship. For the sake of that fellowship we must forget ourselves. We are members one of another, and as such we must come together for common worship. When we think supremely of our individual good, we have lost the Christian accent, and emphasis.

The Church of Christ stands for the recognition of the essential unity of all true Christians, it means the subordination of the purely personal element to the universal attitude and function. Our relation to the Church is first and foremost the fulfillment of our part in recognising our vital relation to all who are our brothers in Christ. That is a service we owe

to the family spirit in the Christian brotherhood, as well as a high privilege which we possess. It is as we worship together we give concrete reality to the fact of our common union with Christ, and also to our united obligation to co-operate in carrying out His programme.

Not only is this solidarity the genius of Christianity, but the idea is one of the most powerful in our time. Everywhere common interests and pursuits are combining. Groups of people gather around even the most trivial interests, as well as the most momentous. The uniting of forces is a working reality in every sphere of enterprise. And can we ignore this principle in the carrying out of the mind of Christ? We need an enlightenment of conscience upon what we owe our fellow believers in the direction of fellowship in worship as well as work. We dare not let the question of our advantage, or of our inclination, determine the attitude in which we shall stand to those who, like ourselves, are seeking to bring the will of Christ to reign upon the earth.

The Sunday school, with all its limitations, its imperfect methods, is the immediate sphere of activity which the Church affords to the Christian worker as he seeks to influence the

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spiritual life of the individual. And as the Sunday School is modernised in its outlook, as its teachers are taught the true places of spiritual emphasis, as the Church gives more time and recognition to the enormous importance of the work which the Sunday School is trying to do, it will enter upon a new era of achievement. How much efficiency for extremely difficult tasks can we expect from a body of devoted men and women who have been toiling hard all through the week at other work, as they come, often at great sacrifice, to instruct and inspire classes of young people? They have not had enough assistance from the various quarters which might have rendered help to make our Sunday School teachers efficient, and effective in their great opportunity.

We need, with a new seriousness to see that the work which the Sunday School is trying to do, next to that in the home and in the ordinary Church service is the most important in the world. Its lack of efficiency may be criticised, but the work to be done, the place which it holds for the spiritual enlightenment of the rising generation, must have a clear right of way, as of surpassing strategic importance. In the meantime, if we enter the Sunday School, having a definite growing spiritual

experience in our own lives, determined to put conscience, faith and prayer into our work there, it will be our privilege to bring some into the conscious fellowship of the living Christ. In so doing we shall make spiritual truth all the more real and vivid to ourselves, and those whom we have helped may look back upon what took place in those early days as the most influential reality in their history.

Of course, every one cannot serve in the Sunday School, and there is work to be done in society, which if not done will react with harmful effect upon the work of the Sunday School. And when we say this we are not now stepping down into a lower sphere of activity. If we are led to devote our spare time by helping to create public sentiment against places in our community which are a menace to public morality we are still working with Christ, we are still bringing in the Kingdom of God. If we are impelled to work patiently for clean methods at a district primary, we are still doing spiritual service, if we retain the high motive. If we go into a city council, or a state legislature, with the same guidance and motive we are still workers together with Christ. If we make a study of social conditions, or of economic theories, in the same spirit of obedience

to what we believe to be the mind of Christ, we have *not* departed from the high purpose of our Master. And there is need for Christian people not merely to believe this, to assent to it in a lukewarm way, but to hold it as a passionate conviction.

It is when personal ambition directs our choice, it is when the love of money cankers our motive, it is when envy and jealousy become working forces in our activities, then we are out of step with the programme of Christ. And it matters not what we are doing, whether it be preaching, teaching, legislating, or hammering at a new social order, we have fallen out of the ranks of the faithful, if our spirit is not Christlike. But if we are honestly seeking to do the will of our Master as He has revealed it to us, endeavouring to bring in His Kingdom with high motives, we have thus exalted our work to the highest level and we share in the exaltation.

And at the same time we come closer to every other worker who is toiling in a similar temper and all such work moves towards the triumph of the mind and spirit of Christ in the life of the world.

XV

THE GROWING MIND UNDER CROSS- EXAMINATION

AS disciples of the living Christ endeavouring to enter into joyous friendship with Him, and into obedience to His plan for us, let us try to put ourselves in the attitude of answering some of the questions which are put to us by some representatives of various aspects of opinion in our day. As we pursue our work in the world, in study, in business, in service, in friendly intercourse, we come into contact with those who question us concerning our faith. As perfectly normal members of society who read current books, and are in sympathy with all sound progressive movements, we must be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh for a reason of the hope that is in us. For we are sometimes put upon the witness-stand.

We hear the question of the Scientist, who asks us if we believe in the scientific spirit and method, if we have read the works of modern writers upon scientific thought as it is related to religious belief. And the answer we give is that we most heartily believe in the scientific spirit and method, and that there are few books which appeal to us with greater interest than those which deal with the relation of science to Christian truth. The Scientist asks us whether we believe in the reign of law, and if so, whether we think it consistent with the practice of prayer. We find no difficulty in answering that we believe the reign of law to be a fact throughout the universe, law meaning simply the orderly method by which God does His work. And that there are more laws in the universe than those which we see in operation. And one law is frequently able to cancel another law, as the law of death which is at work when one has taken a poison is cancelled by another law working through the antidote administered by the physician. We see no breach of the reign of law in the practice of prayer, for prayer is not the attempt to bring God down to our arbitrary desires, it is rather the process by which we are lifted up into the realm of spiritual reality, and in that realm we

become spiritual channels of what may be the will of God.

The philosopher sometimes asks us how we come to translate the First Cause of the universe as expressed by such writers as Herbert Spencer into the idea of a personal God. And we reply that we have a perfect right to interpret the First Cause in terms of the highest which we find in ourselves. And when we see God revealed by Christ we instinctively know the revelation to be a true one, in the same way that we know a picture to be beautiful. And more especially when we find our intuitive sense confirmed by the convictions and experience of so many others, who have impressed us by the elevation of their character.

We cannot prove our contention, but we are able to prove it quite as much as we can prove many other things which we accept implicitly.

We are occasionally cross-examined by the moralist, by the man who believes in a good, straight life, but not in the Christian message of the forgiving Grace of God which we accept by faith. The moralist asks us if we believe in salvation by character and when we answer in the affirmative, he continues his question to enquire whether we believe in salvation by faith. And when we insist that we emphat-

ically do, he enquires whether we do not think that to be an inconsistent position. Is it possible to believe in salvation by character and by faith at the same time? We certainly are convinced that the two statements are the counterparts of each other. They are no more inconsistent than rowing a boat with two oars.

Then we are asked what we mean by salvation by faith? And we reply that salvation by faith is simply trusting in the forgiving love of God manifested to us through Christ. For we find that it is impossible to find salvation by character until one obtains a fresh start through forgiveness. And it is not necessarily the worst types of people who are discouraged by their past failures; on the contrary, they are quite often the very highest types morally. But they realise that when the past is forgiven, in the companionship of Christ they are able with a lighter heart, with a keener enthusiasm, to try to do the Divine will in thought, word, and deed. So that forgiveness has an inspiring influence upon the production of character. There is the possibility of growth in character as a result of salvation by faith, which could not be realised by any other means. And we are convinced that many have neither the encouragement nor the power to achieve char-

acter because they have no light upon how past failures may be forgiven.

We are sometimes interrogated by the theologian. He asks us if we believe in the inspiration of the Bible. Again we answer that we do. But we have no theory of inspiration. If some one were to point out an error in it, we would not in the least be disturbed. We begin with that part of the Bible which finds us, which speaks to our elemental needs. And it is a matter of experience so far as we are concerned that no other book so answers the needs of our soul, besides our experience is verified by the testimony of multitudes of believers. And we expect that more and more of the Bible will find us as we go on growing in mind and soul. The inspiration of the Bible will become an expanding reality as we live, as we suffer, as we are tempted, as we are guided. And as we make the Bible increasingly our own by the process of spiritual assimilation, that which we so make our own cannot be taken from us, for it has become part of our spiritual existence.

In the meantime, when we meet difficulties in the Bible we simply lay them on one side. We do exactly with the Bible what we do with the things which we find in the physical world for the nourishment of our bodies. If we eat

a nut, although the whole of the nut is a product of nature, we do not partake of the shell. It would be folly to break our teeth on the shell when there is enough to satisfy hunger in the kernel. So just as we lay aside part of a nut we lay aside that part of the Bible which we cannot make our own for the present; it may be that what we cannot appropriate now, we shall be able to make our own at a later stage of our experience. In the meantime there is enough spiritual food for our immediate necessities.

Our theological friend is anxious to know why we believe in the Deity of Christ. And we reply that we believe in His deity because He finds us, He satisfies our elemental longings. We are further asked how we define Christ, and our answer is that we are not able to define Him. Nor do we consider it necessary to define Him, since He is a living person with us in the present. While we contend for the historical reality of His earthly life, we would not at the present stage of our experience lose the actual nearness of Christ to us in the present hour by becoming confused by discussions concerning Him which are beyond us. If He were merely a memory, if Christ had ceased to live in the midst of the realities

of human life with the close of His human life, then the case would be vastly different. But since we are conscious of His friendship here and now, we go on our way undisturbed by questions with which only expert minds of the highest order have the capacity to deal.

The practical man asks us why we need Christ in our life, why we cannot get along by ourselves doing the best we can. Our answer is that we need a wiser and stronger power than ourselves to get out of our life what is there. Self-government is a delusion, when we think we are ruling ourselves we are deceiving ourselves, for it may be our baser selves, it may be our surroundings, which are managing our lives. For absolute freedom is impossible. And in Christ we find a ruler who knows our nature and who can get the most out of us. Christ satisfies our inner life, and saves us from the paralysis of discouragement.

The rationalist questions us as to whether we can reason out all our positions. And when we answer that we cannot he asks us why we hold them. And we simply inform him that our positions are not unreasonable. We accept things in other realms which we cannot reason out. Pure reason is not the only part of our being which has rights. Psychology tells us

of a sub-conscious self, which is not unreasonable, and which acts instinctively without the process of explicit reasoning. There is a distinct place for intuition which outruns knowledge, and creates its own verification. Almost every forward movement in the world might be expressed as an act of faith. Religion is one among many spheres of enterprise where the venture of faith is of the essence of reality.

The cynic asks us if we are the disciples of Christ in order to be happy and to obtain at last a heavenly reward. We answer him that we get these. But they are a by-product. Christ fits us for service. Christ encourages us to turn our thoughts from ourselves. It is in the attitude of devotion to His will, in the attempt to realise brotherhood in human relationships, in the effort to bring in the Kingdom of God, that Christ answers the ultimate needs of our being.

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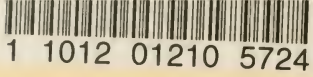
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