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THE DIVINE RESPONSE

By J. B. Chapman

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The Touch of Jesus

Holiness Triumphant

Christian Living in a Modern World

Religion and Everyday Life

Singing in the Shadows

Bud Robinson, A Brother Beloved

Ask Doctor Chapman

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INTRODUCTION

It may be incongruous to use a text for an introduction to a book, nevertheless I am doing just that. When I contemplated the central theme of the messages in this manuscript I was struck

with the thought of how wonderful it is that God is accessible to sinful humanity. From there it was a logical step to Ephesians 2:18, "We have access unto the Father."

Amazing love, unspeakable mercy, infinite grace God not only deigns to listen but He encourages, He urges us to come. And best of all, in accordance with His many promises, He responds. While we are still afar off He sees, before our cry is articulated He hears our very yearning.

The emphasis in this volume is that God's coming into our hearts and lives not only brings a blessed consciousness of His presence, but it also brings a dynamic that changes, that impels, that motivates, that empowers, that makes a worm thrash a mountain, that out of weakness makes strength, that transforms a shrinking timid personality into a courageous, valiant soldier of the cross.

Doctor Chapman is no novice in the field of writing. His following totals into tens of thousands. His philosophical approach, his enlivening humor, his refreshing and seemingly inexhaustible store of anecdote are all employed here. However, my impression is that in these pages is a depth of thought and a keenness of analysis surpassing anything that has yet come from the pen of this gifted writer and church leader.

P. H. Lunn

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1

THE DIVINE RESPONSE

John Wesley had much contention with "humanists" who were willing to accept the most exacting definitions of faith, but who insisted on stopping at the limit where the human leaves off and the divine begins. And because Wesley insisted on going further, and testifying to a real, knowable, divine response, these humanists called him an enthusiast -- a term used as we now use the word fanatic. Wesley was patient, having himself come from the cave in which these opposers still lived. But he was unequivocal, and summed up by saying, "By the testimony of the Spirit, I mean an inward impression on the soul whereby the Spirit of God immediately and directly witnesses to my spirit that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me and given himself for me; that all my sins are blotted out and I, even I, am reconciled to God."

Wesley and his coadjutors preached their thesis with such force and effectiveness that it seemed for a time they had convinced the evangelical Christian world. But old heresies are forever arising in new forms and under new names, and truth must be reasserted for each succeeding generation. That the fathers knew and proclaimed the truth does not guarantee that the children know and receive the benefits of that truth.

Half truths often have the force of falsehood, and full truths wrongly applied sometimes serve to overshadow, and even to nullify truths of equal rank. Take the subject of the inspiration and dependability of the Bible; this is a thesis worth dying for. And yet it sometimes happens that

good men become so enamored with the theme of an inerrant Bible that they permit themselves to stop with this external witness, and refuse or by negligence fail to go fully after that personal certitude that can come only by reason of the Spirit's witness within. Or one may become so loyal to the fact of the atoning merit of the blood of Jesus that he comes to identify efficacy with efficiency, and thinks of provision as though it were possession. Or one may lay such emphasis on repentance that he takes this for forgiveness. Or he may enlarge so fully on consecration that this becomes a substitute for divinely wrought sanctification.

The curse of Phariseism, accepting form for power, was not alone an ailment of the ancients. It is the affliction of all in any age who allow any thing, be it ever so sacred and scriptural, to become a substitute for that definite divine response which God makes to the truly trusting heart when "the Spirit answers to the blood," and faith is justified by realization.

Sometimes grace is interpreted as some sort of provision by which God is enabled to account things different from what they really are, so that one may be "positionally" holy while yet in truth sinful and depraved. But this is just a revival of an old heresy. True holiness is imparted by the Spirit, as well as imputed through the blood, and there is a divine response by means of which the trusting penitent is really made new, and by reason of which the fully consecrated believer is sanctified and cleansed from sin.

Nor does the province of vital religion stop with crises. It is true that we walk by faith as contrasted with sight. But this does not mean that we walk in unconfirmed presumption. It is also true that we are always to be confident, but this does not bar the fact that we can also be conscious of God's presence as we live for and with Him from day to day. That which is called "the witness of the Spirit" in connection with the crises of experience becomes "full assurance" in constant form with those who "go on to know the Lord."

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2

OUR ANSWERING GOD

The eighteenth chapter of I Kings contains the story of the most remarkable contest ever staged on this earth. For three and a half years there had been no rain. There were those who said Elijah and his Jehovah worship were the cause of this judgment. Elijah himself claimed it was the idolatrous worship of Baal that was to blame. The proposition was to be settled by practical test. On the top of the ridge which ended in the brow overlooking the sea known as Mount Carmel the stage was set. On one side were eight hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and Ashtoreth. On the other side was the lone prophet Elijah. The eight hundred and fifty were assured of Queen Jezebel's favor, and they also had the tacit backing of King Ahab. And because of the royal favor; the court, the army, and the rank and file of the people could be counted on that side. The conditions were simple. Each side was to prepare his altar in his own way, and every provision was to be made, except that no fire was to be kindled. Then the question was to be decided in favor of the god who answered by fire, and such god was to be God. Elijah had proposed the plan. The King had immediately agreed to it. And the prophets of Baal could not refuse to accept, since Baal was the sun god, and fire was his special element. The test began:

Elijah gave way to the eight hundred and fifty, giving them the first chance, on the ground that "ye are many." All the natural advantages were with this group. The prophets themselves were a favored, well-fed, well-groomed, almost royal group. Their ritual was faultless. Their zeal was intense. There could be no question of their sincerity, for they cried aloud, leaped upon the altar, and lanced their flesh with knives, entreating, "Baal, hear us." Elijah made the situation the more exasperating by his taunts, and by his suggestions that Baal was talking, musing, on a journey or asleep. Everything was right but one -- no fire came down. And without this answering fire, the case was lost.

The time came for Elijah's part. The very fact that he was alone was a poor recommendation, for men honor crowds. The altar of the Lord was fallen down, and required to be repaired. But Elijah added to his handicap by pouring water in great abundance upon his sacrifice until the trenches about stood full. The ritual was simple. The prayer was only sixty-three words in length, and required no more than one minute to be spoken. But the decision went to Jehovah and to Elijah, for there was response from heaven whence fire came down to consume the sacrifice, the wood, the stones that made up the altar, the water in the trenches and to lick at the dry dust at the people's feet. It was this answer that made all the difference. Up to the point of the divine response distinctions were incidental. But with the coming of the fire Jehovah's claims were established, and the people fell on their faces exclaiming, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!"

Just on the basis of comparisons, the Christian faith has nothing to fear. The history of the Church in the world abundantly justifies the high claims Jesus Christ made for himself and for His people. No other religion can so freely and safely say, "Let results speak." The founding of the Christian faith involves miracles, but these miracles are reasonable, as far as reason is able to follow them. The Founder of the Christian faith was himself spotless, and even His enemies have to say, "I find no fault in Him." And all the ages testify that men have always been better men when they were Christian men, and that the faults and weaknesses of Christians have always been in spite of their religion, and not because of it.

The doctrines of Christianity present the noblest ideas about God and angels and men that have ever passed through the minds of men. The Christian philosophy of life is the most worthy that has ever yet appeared. And all who object to Christianity have to admit that it would be better if it were as Christians say it is, and to depart from fidelity to Christ is to become an infidel, and by all true logic, to become a pessimist.

The ethical standards of the Christian way commend themselves to men everywhere. The Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and the thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians present principles that are both superb and practical. To be a true Christian means to be good and to be useful, "Our enemies themselves being the judges."

The sacraments of the Church, baptism and the Lord's supper, are beautiful and full of meaning. They are exceedingly simple, and yet they are adequate symbols of both the inner experiences and outer implications of holy religion.

But even though its history is true, its doctrines unanswerable, its ethics of the highest standard, and its sacraments the most beautiful and full of meaning, the heart and substance of Christianity does not consist of any or all of these. Like the men on Mount Carmel, we come to the crux with the question, Does God answer? Is there a response to the call? We cannot properly ask, Does God hear prayer? for the answer to that is a secret in the Infinite mind. But we can boldly ask, Does God answer? and we may find the reply in our own consciousness. We must find it there if we are to be assured that the Lord is God.

Today, as on Mount Carmel, comparison of talent among leaders, of beauty of ritual, of popularity with the crowds and of human conditions in general do not prove anything. Based on these things, the decision may often go to the wrong side. But now, as then, it is the answer that counts. It is the fire from heaven that decides the debate.

But we must not leave this question on the broad plan of mere comparison. To say that Christianity is better than the others does not say enough.

To say that one Christian is better than another does not prove the point. For it might still be that all are false, and what is gained by simply being more nearly true, if the best must yet fall short? No church or group has any corner on the way to God, and that man who thinks of himself as being the only one who has attained has either rated himself too highly or has charged the Almighty with substituting concealment for revelation. Every group and every individual must meet the fire test. It is not the effort any one makes to awaken the unresponding Baal that counts. "The God that answers by fire" is our God.

We have known a man who was reputed to be a man of prayer." It was his claim that he prayed hours every day, and those who lived near him attested his claims. Still this man was the victim of tormenting doubt. His daily life bore witness to limited grace. He was critical of others, and bore something of the attitude of spiritual pride. To many he was a stumbling block, for they asked, "How is it that so much prayer does so little good?" The answer of course is that it is not the exercise of asking that makes the difference, but the measure of the receiving that counts. In its essential content every man's religion is a personal affair. Men do not apprehend God by the nation, race, family, or group. To every one the question is personal: Does God respond to my call?

A woman who had been a member of an orthodox church for forty years was aroused to the consciousness that she had never been truly born again. At first she was resentful, and wished she might have been left alone to take whatever consolation she could from her formal Christian life. But as she prayed, the Lord helped her so see His mercy in her awakening. She confessed her need, the Lord graciously came to her rescue, and she found joy and assurance in the inward witness of pardon and peace with God. It was not that her prayers were more meritorious at the last than in the beginning. The difference was accounted for in the fact that a new factor, the divine response to her call, came into her life.

We were sitting at the dinner table with Mr. and Mrs. Holmes. The host was called to answer the telephone. Putting the receiver to his ear, Mr. Holmes said, "Yes." After a short pause, he said, "No." There was another period of waiting, and then came the sentence, "I don't think so."

After time for some other conversation, Mr. Holmes said, "All right, then," and hung up the receiver. I was of course not at all interested, but soon Mrs. Holmes asked about the telephone conversation. The husband replied rather nonchalantly, "Oh, that was just a long distance from Mr. Jones out in the west side of the state." And when he did not seem ready to volunteer more information, the wife asked why Mr. Jones had called. "Oh," said the husband, "he was just talking about buying our farm out there in his community that we have been offering for sale." By this time I had become mildly interested, and furtively watched the face of Mrs. Holmes to see if she was satisfied. But after a pause, Mrs. Holmes asked, "Did Mr. Jones buy the farm?" Her husband answered, "No, he didn't buy it." The conversation drifted to other themes, but after awhile Mrs. Holmes said, "Husband, if you do not mind, I wish you would tell me what Mr. Jones said in that conversation about the farm. I know what you said, but I cannot figure out how you could say, 'Yes', 'No', 'I don't think so', 'All right, then', and yet Mr. Jones not take the farm." "Well," said Mr. Holmes, "when I went to the phone, Mr. Jones asked, 'Is this Mr. Holmes?'" and I said, 'Yes.' He asked, 'Have you sold your farm out here yet?' I said, 'No.' Then he asked, 'Will you take any less for it than you have been asking?' I said, 'I don't think so.' Then Mr. Jones said, 'Well, then, I have decided not to take it.' And I said, 'All right, then.' " The conversation was quite intelligible when one knew what was being said on the other end of the line, and it is like that with prayer and every thing that goes with search for God.

There are those of course who say that prayer and meditation and search for God find their advantage in their psychological effect upon the worshiper, and that we are not to expect a definite and knowable answer. Agnostics have even claimed that it is impossible for God to speak to man because man is incapable of hearing what God says. But the Scriptures answer all this by reminding us that He made man's mouth, and that He knows and understands all thoughts of the heart.

Well meaning people have reduced prayer to a formula and have ignored the Master's warning that the use of vain repetitions is to imitate the heathen. Many books have been written on prayer. Many sermons have been preached in the effort to tell men how to pray. But the crux of the whole matter is in the simple question, Does anyone answer back from the other end of the line? If there is no answer, the fault may be in a poor connection. The wires, so to speak, may be grounded. It may not help to simply "cry louder," although no one should be ashamed for others to hear him pray and to know that he practices prayer. But whatever the trouble, that trouble must be removed and an answer secured before prayer is really prayer. That is what is meant by the exhortation, "Pray until you pray."

It would not be fair to say that there is no difference in the degree of excellence of mere human religion. But it is true that the differences are incidental. The point of real distinction is the one where there is a divine answer. No matter how commendably men pray and worship, if there is no divine response, there is no fundamental differentiations between those who pray and worship falteringly and those who pray and worship faultlessly. But an answer from God makes all the difference. The humblest cottage becomes a throne room when God responds. "The God that answers by fire, let him be God."

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THE IMPLICATIONS OF OUR GODLIKENESS

The authoritative record says, "And God said, Let us make man in our image . . . in the image of God created he him" (Genesis 1:26, 27). We are not told in any instance just how much and how little is involved in this pattern, and we must always guard against the idea that there is any reference to physical appearance. God is pure spirit, and the limitations of the material do not appertain to Him. There was published a book (two generations ago now) called *Is Negro Man or Beast?* The gist of the argument was that God is white, and therefore the Negro does not partake of His likeness. But fortunately that book did not attain to popularity or wide circulation. But just as the idea here is ruled out by all fair-minded people, so likewise thinking will rule out all reference to physical appearance.

The lumbering guesses of men have injected so many things pertaining to the processes of creation into the story that there is danger we shall get lost and fail to keep the main idea in mind. The main fact is that God created man, and when processes are discussed they must all be held in strict subordination to this main fact. The fact must not be expected to yield to the processes.

There are some slight differentiations among men on the basis of race and degree of attainment in knowledge and efficiency. But all men are more alike, thinking of them as a whole, than they are different. God made "of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26), and "under the skin" all men are brothers in a common race, and all are alike creatures of God. All assumption of superiority of one race over another is a fallacy of human ignorance and human weakness. Extensive experimentation has established the fact that the best of any race are better than the worst of any other race, and that differences based upon color, race or other accident of birth are not great enough to entitle any group to pride nor any other to utter discouragement.

Aside from all other considerations, the fact that every man is a member of a race that was created in the image of God gives dignity and value to him that outlaws all crimes against persons, like slavery, adultery, oppression, murder, and all forms of maltreatment. And all crimes against persons are sins against God, and subject to His judgments both now and in the world to come.

We may not know all that is implied in the pattern of man's creation, but we can be reasonably sure it includes at least: (1) immortality, (2) moral purity, and (3) ability to know -- intelligence.

God is eternal. That is to say, eternity is a predicable of God, for there was never a time when He was not, and there never will be a time when He ceases to be. Man is immortal. That is to say, man did have a beginning, but he will have no end. Thus immortality is not identical with eternity, but it is like it.

God is absolutely holy. Man, as he came from the hand of the Creator, was relatively holy. That is to say, God is holy by essential moral nature. Man, as he came from the Creator's hand, was holy by the impartation of God's holiness. The sun is the sun and the moon is the moon. The sun shines by reason of its own light. The moon shines by reason of the light it borrows from the sun. Thus, in

the moral sense, man was not absolutely holy as God is holy. But he was holy with a holiness that was in quality like God.

God is omniscient. That is, God possesses all knowledge. In comparison, man knows very little. But man does possess the quality which we call intelligence (in contrast with instinct, which is a factor of the creation beneath), and he therefore is capable of learning, even to the point of having understanding and fellowship with God.

God has so identified himself with man as to make it impossible for any to have good standing with God without doing all within his power to also be a friend of man. Duty is so unitary as to make it obligatory to brand him as a pretender who professes to love God, if he does not also love his fellow man.

When one looks fairly at the psalmist's words (Psalms 8:4), he may discover that, after all, it was man's dignity and value, in contrast with his physical insignificance, that was the main cause of wonder. And if we weigh values as Jesus weighed them, we shall never see an insignificant man. The most forlorn, forsaken, ragged, little waif in the slums of New York is of a million times more consequence than all the skyscrapers, subways and overloaded bank vaults of that great city. In fact, all those vaults that we list as "intrinsic" depend upon people for their worth. Salt in the ocean, gold in the rock, oil in the earth, fertility in the soil and all "natural resources" are of consequence only when they are considered in connection with human needs and human desires.

Wise moderns smile over the simplicity of the ancients who thought the earth was the center of the universe, and man was the capstone of God's creation. But although science may be effective in revising our astronomical puttings, it yet remains that "our" earth is of more consequence to us than all the stars and their satellites put together, and it is yet to be shown that God has designed a position higher than that ascribed to him who was made in his Creator's likeness, and a destiny more glorious than that implied in the future the Bible outlines for man.

Of course in comparison with God, the old French chaplain was correct when he opened the king's funeral oration with the words, "Only God is great." But, under God and the angels, we may with truth proclaim, "Only men are valuable." And this must not be twisted into the thesis that mortal life takes precedence over honor and purity. For, being a child of eternity, there are duties for man that overshadow the duty to preserve life in the mortal body.

Man's propinquity with God does not rest upon the fact of creation. For as Professor Henry Drummond has shown, we are every instant, by the miracle of preservation, subjects of as great a supernatural potency as that exercised in our original making. The universe, including ourselves, is no more capable of sustaining itself than it was able to come into being without cause. We may be at a loss as to why God continues to run this vast universe, and why He tolerates the race of man upon the earth, but we are witnesses of the fact that He does preserve the universe, and the poorest of us are examples of His continuous keeping power. We are His by preservation, as well as by creation.

That was a poor, idol-worshipping, non-Christian crowd to which Paul addressed himself on Mars' Hill and to whom he said, "In him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also

of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God . . ." (Acts 17:28, 29). And Paul's plea to these men to become Christians was based upon this propinquity -- this natural blood relationship. And on this very basis, he concluded that God is "not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27).

We were made to live in fellowship with God, to love Him, to be loved by Him, to commune with Him both now and forevermore; and to this end we are preserved from day to day.

Dr. H. C. Morrison used to tell about meeting an old sailor on the beach near Old Point Comfort, Virginia, and talking with him about the hull of a stranded and forsaken old ship that stuck in the sand not far off the shore. Dr. Morrison had never known this ship except as he saw it there, and besides he was a landsman, and not much blessed with imagination about the traditions of the sea. Pointing toward the old hull, the landsman said, "That is a forsaken and useless old thing." But the old sailor replied, "She does look bad now, but you should see her as I have seen her. I was present when she was launched. I went with her on her maiden voyage. I knew her when her hull was new, her paint was white, her engines were in trim, her furniture was well appointed and her record was without a flaw. The captain on the bridge was proud of her and of her record, and every sailor on the deck was glad to be aboard. She was a fast boat, and she was safe, and she was a delight for comfort. Ah, sir, you should have seen her then" (and the old sailor's eyes were moist and his voice broke) . "And what is more, it hurts me to see her out there stuck in the sand, her decks washed with the waves, her hull rusted and ugly, her furniture gone, her bridge and her decks deserted. It hurts me because I remember what she used to be, and it hurts me because of what she could be again. It's a waste, sir, an inexcusable waste, to let her lie there so ugly and so helpless. If only they would come to her rescue, pull her back into deep water, and give her another chance. If they would do that, sir, she would give a good account of herself again."

That is a picture of a man, made in the likeness of God, but now stuck in the sands of sin, broken by the waves of judgment, forsaken by angels and God, left to rot and to rust and to perish. The sight is forbidding, not only because of what he once was, but because of what he is still capable of becoming. No wonder a prophet like Jeremiah could ask that his head become a fountain of tears that he might sufficiently weep over a sight so deeply moving.

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OUR PROXIMITY TO GOD

The task of forming a concept involving all the excellencies of an infinite God is too great for the mind of a finite man. At our best we think of Him in limited mold, although it is our earnest desire to be balanced and true to the best our intellects and hearts can do. Words like immanence, transcendence, and all others that even the scholars employ are used more effectively in concealing than in revealing the true nature and being of God.

But it is always best for us to take some essential concept as our touchstone and allow adjustments in other phases. Take personality and omnipresence as examples. God is a person. That is essential to any sense of responsibility we may hold, and to any hope of help through

prayer and the exercise of the means recommended by any experienced people. We may not be able to give a definition of personality, but we know something of what we mean by the term. We mean that God is of the highest order of being -- that He is not an abstraction, a thing, but that He knows, cares, and wills. Whatever it is in us that distinguishes us from the stones at our feet and the animals and birds about us, we ascribe that to God in highest degree. Unless God is this, He is, to us, something less than He would be if He were that. Hence He must be that. And it is on the basis of this concept of Him that we conclude He knows us, cares what attitude we take toward Him, and is able to change both things and ourselves. Omnipresence means that God is everywhere. But how can God be everywhere and yet be a person? If we cannot answer this question to our own satisfaction, for our own good, we better stick to the idea that He is a person, even if we must think of Him as not everywhere present.

But I have thought of an illustration that has sometimes been a help to me. I have thought of myself as being "like God," as the Genesis account gives me the right to do. And I have thought of myself as possessing the predicables of personality -- intellect, sensibility and will -- even though on a very limited and finite plane. Then I have thought of "presence" and what it means with me. I sit here at this little table in a very small room -- a person, and hence (as is necessary to my mode of thought), here in a sense that I am not in the corner of the room ten feet away. That is, I am present here in a very limited space in essence. And yet I am, through the outreach of my powers of apprehension (my attributes), present even over there in the corner of the room, ten feet away. I am present there in such a sense that if anything worthy of note should happen there, and I were asked about it, I would say, I was there, and know what took place. It is therefore evident that I am present right here where I sit in a sense in which I am not present in the corner of the room, and yet I am also present there, since I am capable of knowing what takes place there, of caring what takes place, and under certain circumstances of making impression on what takes place there.

Now I have expanded these ideas in the direction of the Infinite. I have prayed, saying, "Our Father who art in heaven," and then I have gone out to say to my fellows, "God is here beholding us, He cares what we think and do and say, and He is able now to do things to effect changes in us and in the circumstances that surround us." This helps me to think of God as a person, in heaven as to His essence, and because of His infinite attributes, present everywhere, so that no place is beyond His ken, His love, or His power. The skeptic did not really miss the mark when he thought to write, "God is nowhere," but by a slight fault in the spacing of his letters led his little niece to read it, "God is now here."

When men have forsaken the concept of a personal God and gone too far in seeking to apprehend the meaning of His omnipresence, they have often ended up by concluding that since God is everywhere in general, He is nowhere in particular. One writer put it this way, "Men set in to make God so present in everything that they ended up by bowing Him politely out of His own universe.

It is also important that we do not accredit God with a relationship to the universe that practically identifies Him with the universe. God made the universe, and He preserves it every moment, but He is not the universe, but is above it, even as the inventor is above his invention.

But there is yet another sense of "presence" besides essence and attribute. It is that presence that Jesus spoke of when He said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). This refers to His presence in the sense of approval. Our fathers used to add to the scriptural promise the phrase, "and that to own and bless." And although the words are not in the text, our fathers showed themselves to be good interpreters of God's message by the use of them. In this sense, to say that "God is near," is to affirm His willingness to visit and bless those who call upon His name in penitence, consecration, and faith.

It is always easier for men to think of God as Lawgiver and Judge than to think of Him as Saviour and Friend. Atheists are relatively scarce, but unbelievers are too many to count. To the question, "Do you believe there is a God?" the great majority will answer, "I do." But to the question, "Do you believe that God saves you and fellowships you along life's way?" not many can answer with an emphatic "Yes." And yet it is in this last sense that God is truly near. That is to say, He "stands at the door and knocks." He is willing and waiting to be found of those who seek Him. The barriers between himself and us were not only not made by Him, but He has done all He can do without our co-operation to remove those barriers, and to come to an understanding with us. He is not willing that any should perish. There is room in His love for everyone. The "great God" seeks to become "our own God" (Psalms 67:6).

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THE SEPARATIVE

Tolstoy, in describing what life was to him, told the story of an oriental adventurer who was attacked by a tiger. Fleeing before his foe, the man came to a dry well into the mouth of which he instantly leaped. The man's hand grasped the stock of a small shrub that grew from the wall of the well and there he held fast. Looking down toward the bottom of the well, the man saw a mad dragon with mouth ajar to snatch and devour him as soon as he fell. With the tiger at the top of the well, and the mad dragon at the bottom, the man determined to hold on to the shrub as long as possible. But just then he saw two mice approach, one black and the other white; they joined labor to begin gnawing at the root of the shrub, and the man could not release his grasp to drive them away. There are many besides Tolstoy whose estimate of life is just as discouraging as this picture indicates.

When we say, "All things are possible with God," we mean only that there are no limits to His power. For we instantly acknowledge that "it is impossible for God to lie," and by full and happy intimation we say that it is impossible for God to do wrong in any way. It is not the will of God that is the basis of right and wrong, so much as it is the nature of God to will as He does. The demand is not that we should be holy because God wills it, but "Be ye holy for I am holy." All this means that it is not within the province of power to alter basic morality. Right is what it is because God is what He is.

Accustomed to force as we are, we are inclined to think of the sinner's separation from God as being physical. We may even think of a sinner's attempt to battle his way to heaven in spite of God's restraining orders. But this is not a valid picture. Here again the impossibility is a moral

one; for no sinner could ever find heaven in the presence of God. From such a presence the sinner must ever flee, preferring the weight of rocks and mountains to the face of a sinless and sin-hating God.

Crossing an open square in New York City, I came to a crowd of men and boys gathered about two policemen and two employees of the health department, and a poor, old, dilapidated specimen of the species homo whom some one had discovered on a park bench. The policemen were asking the men from the health department to take the man to the hospital. The health men, on the other hand, were saying the man was not sick, and that the police should take him to jail. As I looked upon the man, my pity went out to him and I longed to do something for his comfort and salvation. But as I mused, it occurred to me that the man's situation was the worse for being of his own making. He was thin of flesh, red of eyes, drawn in face, filthy of person, and unkempt in appearance. I imagined myself as taking this man on my shoulder, bearing him to the nice home of a friend, giving him a bath and a change of raiment, and putting him down to a nice table spread with fine food, asking him to listen to fine music and to elevating conversation, and expecting him to be happy. But although I could not put such an experiment into effect, it was evident to me that such a course within itself would be ineffective. A service like that might be an occasion in saving the man, but it could not be a cause. The real basis of such a change must be within the man himself, and unless that basis could be reached, the man would still be a tramp in the mansion, would not be happy there, and would escape to his former haunts at his first opportunity.

Joseph Webber was a tramp. He stood on the fringe of a crowd in a Cincinnati park and heard a preacher talk of life and death, of heaven and hell, of sin and holiness. The tramp made no outward motion, but within himself he lifted his heart to God in the first prayer he could ever remember praying. The sentiment was as simple as the unexpressed words. In later times, Webber thought his prayer was, "O God, if Thou wilt help me, I will not go to hell." That simple resolve was a beginning, and Webber followed it up with genuine reformation and true repentance, and he became a great Christian and successful soul winner.

It is sin, and sin only, that separates us from God. We may be sick, poor, unpopular with our fellows, ignorant, dependent, and unfortunate by every standard by which men are measured. But none of these nor all of these can keep us out of the favor of God either now or at the end of life's way. Sin is the only bar to God's favor, the only separative we need to dread, and sin to be sin, must involve responsibility. That is to say, the separative is there because we ourselves permit it.

In the old Hebrew theocracy there were more than twenty crimes the punishment for which was death for the offender. The reason for this seeming harshness is that all sin is crime against God, and takes on the character of treason against Him. The deed was not therefore measured alone by its bearing upon society, but by its character with reference to the Lawgiver. To sin against God is to rebel against the government of the universe. Sin is therefore a million times more far reaching in its destructive force than any atomic bomb which men have or may yet invent.

We are dependent upon deeds to indicate inner thoughts, and must therefore limit our condemnations to words and deeds. But in reality, sin is a malady of the heart, and the psalmist spoke for all of us when he said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me"

(Psalms 66:18). Regarding iniquity quite evidently means excusing it, making allowance for it, looking upon it with toleration.

We may count on God's being patient with our weaknesses, but we must not assume that He will be tolerant of our sins. In this matter His own purity is involved, so that His defenders must say, "If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (I John 1:6). If the claim that God approves and fellowships a man while that man yet lives in sin were valid, that would make our holy God a party to sin. The prophet Amos asks, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). We know without a doubt that the answer is, "No, they cannot." If a man would walk with God, he must agree with God, not only as to words and deeds, but also as to motives and purposes.

Of all that we have thus far said, this is the summation: God made man with the purpose that he might live in happy companionship with him forever. Man, by reason of sin, broke that fellowship, and is alien, but is still capable of renewing and making permanent that happy relationship for which he was designed. God is even now close to every man; not only in that He is man's Creator and Preserver, but in that He loves and longs for the love of every man. The bar to this re-established estate is man's sin, and nothing else.

Now sin is not an abstraction, and is found only in the attitudes and purposes of persons -- never in things or conditions. Sin cannot enter any heart through closed doors. Sin may lie at the door, but it cannot get in unless we ourselves lift the latch. Once sin is inside, if we "regard" it, it will guard the door against the entrance of any person or force that would cast it out until we ourselves repudiate it. Thus the whole scope of human unhappiness may be summed up as "the sin problem."

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6

THE HAND THAT REACHES DOWN

We of the Occident are accustomed to plain, unadorned speech, but in the Orient, metaphors and pictures are used very liberally. It was therefore no matter of surprise to a little group of Chinese Christians when one who had lived among them all his life, and who had never traveled away from his own community, stood up and gave his testimony as follows:

"I found myself down in a deep pit, in the slime and mud at its bottom. My distress was great, my plight was terrible, and the more I struggled, the deeper I sank in the mire. Then there came one who stood on the solid ground above the pit, looked down upon me with unpitying eyes, and said, 'The very fact that you are in trouble proves that you are a sinner. They who sin must suffer, and the only virtue is in one's suffering without complaint. If in time you suffer the full demerit of your sins, you may find a way out of this pit. But until then, there is nothing that can be done for you, and nothing that should be done.' I recognized this as the voice of Mohammed, the false prophet, and his words brought me no relief.

"But in time, the emissary of salvation by merit went his way, and in his place another stood. This one looked down upon me, and said, 'Your trouble arises from your struggling. The way to deliverance is the way of the renunciation of self. If you will quit struggling and just settle down to your fate, you will become less and less miserable as you become less and less contentious. In time you will be absorbed back into the great All-being, and then you won't be unhappy any more because, as an individual, you will cease to exist. Salvation is by the way of annihilation.' This I recognized was the voice of Buddha, and neither did his words bring me any help or any deliverance.

"By and by the prophet of Buddha went his way, and another came and stood on the solid ground above me. This one looked upon me with eyes that were full of pity and compassion. There were thorn wounds on His brow, blood and spittle on His face, marks of nails in His hands and feet; and when the breeze blew His garment aside, I beheld the place where a spear had pierced His side. I recognized this one as Jesus Christ. In measured words, and with gentle tones, He called to me, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' But to me in the pit, these seemed but the words of one who mocks. So I made reply, 'Ah, yes, you promise me rest if I come to you. But Thou art up there on the solid ground and I am here in this muddy pit. You promise rest, if I will come; but seeing I cannot come, your promise means nothing to me.' To indicate further the hopelessness of my plight, I reached up the hand in the direction of the much-scarred One, even though I knew He was far beyond my reach. But to my surprise and delight, He reached down and grasped my outstretched hand, and gently drew me from the mire and the pit to a place right by His side. Immediately there crept into my soul such peace as I had never known before. When I thought of my filthy garments, I thought of them with shame in the presence of One so pure as He. But when I looked, my old garments had disappeared, and in their stead I found myself clothed with linen pure and white. And that is how I became a Christian and why I am one today."

May we not all recall the words of Paul in connection with this wonderful picture? "And what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." It is the hand of God in Christ reaching down that splices out our reach sufficiently to bring about that touch that transforms. It is not in any sense the merit of our reach that saves, but still our reach is a condition. It is the hand that reaches down that lifts us up. "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).

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7

THE HAND THAT REACHES UP

The body does not more surely crave food and water, the mind does not more truly pine for knowledge, than the soul craves fellowship with God. For even as food and moisture are essential to the continuation of physical life, and knowledge is implied in the construction of the

mind, so God is implied in the constitution of our spiritual nature. God is complement to the spiritual nature, just as light is to the eye, music to the ear and pleasure to the touch. David was speaking for all men, as well as for himself, when he said, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Psalms 42:1).

In the days of feudal Europe, it is said, a certain old castle had changed hands so frequently that former owners and tenants were forgotten. On the wall in the great hall of the old castle hung a curious old harp, retained now as a relic, seeing no one had been found who knew how to play it. But one day a stranger who asked to warm before the huge log fire, espied this old harp, took it down, tuned it up, and then with trained hand brought from it such music as had not rung through the castle halls in the memory of any present. Asked how it was that he could play this harp when so many had tried and failed, the stranger answered, "I made this harp. I know what all its strings are supposed to do." There is a harp of life that is like that: It has hung there on the walls of time so long that many imagine it incapable of harmony. But God who made it can cause the chords "that were broken to vibrate once more."

Ask, as the schoolmen did, "What is the summum bonum (the highest good) of life?" and the answers received will be as varied as the stories that gathered about that old harp in the castle. Some there said it was never intended to make music, that it really had no purpose at all. But the heart of that old harp was all the time waiting only for "the touch of the master's hand." Just so, the heart of man waits for God.

The old atheists (we called them infidels, i.e. those who had departed from fidelity, when I was a child) were more fortunate than the modern agnostics in that they did profess to come to a place of intellectual rest in the conclusion that there is no God, no immortal principle in man, no judgment to fear, and no eternity of conscious existence ahead. The agnostic, on the other hand, must stand suspended, simply saying, "I don't know" to every thesis presented. Under the conception, man is made to wander like a lost star or a lonely dove, and is destined to miss God, if there is a God, since the position is that God, being infinite, cannot be apprehended by the finite.

But whether there is a supply for man's needs or not, one thing cannot be denied, and that is that men of all ages and conditions have this craving. Some reach up the hand in hope, some reach up in despair. Some lay hold upon something, some grasp at nothingness. But they all reach up. David, the shepherd lad, must have seen the hart risk its life in answering the call of the water brooks, and both he and we have seen men who risked all in their search for the living God. Inward craving, conscious or unconscious, reaching up! These may be properly posited of all men. If there be some who do not thus crave and thus reach up, these are the abnormal, yea, even the sub-normal, for they would be normal and better if they did thus crave and thus reach up.

Among all people, laughing at a man's religion is a crime. The penalties may not be so readily meted out in courts of justice, but men high and low are wont to place sacrilege in the same category with theft and falsehood, if not also with impurity and murder. A man's religion may be crude, it may involve a considerable mixture of superstition, it may clearly tend toward disintegration and deterioration, but it is still a proof that man is better than the beast, and no one should attempt to take this religion away except by offering what has proved to be a better one in its place. And this religion, whatever it is, and howsoever many its weaknesses, is a testimonial to

man's inherent (the word is used loosely, for this conviction is in reality the product of prevenient grace) conviction that he is capable of fellowship with someone higher than himself.

It should always be remembered that in religion, it is not alone the bad that is the enemy of the good, but also the good that is sometimes the enemy of the best. Lord Burleigh said, "Beware of the man of unsound religion; for if a man is faithless to his God, he cannot be trusted to keep his contracts with his fellow men." All this means to say that a man may be better or worse than his religion, but his attachment to his convictions in this regard is an almost infallible index to his essential character.

As a final word, and somewhat in anticipation of things which we are to emphasize later, faith (and we do not pause now to define the word) is the hand that reaches up, even as love is the hand that reaches down. Faith is the means by which men apprehend God, just as the hand is the means by which they grasp things that are intended for the body, and as reason is the hand by which they lay hold upon knowledge for the mind.

An ornithologist observed among his specimens a bird which had lost its bill. Knowing that to this particular kind of bird, the bill is his pick and shovel, his knife and fork and spoon, he would have expected this bird to be thin and starving. But it was not so. It gave the appearance of being well fed. Waiting patiently for the explanation, the ornithologist, at feeding time, saw another bird bring portions in its bill and thrust them far back into the mouth of the unfortunate one, and then turn to repeat the action, cheered on by chirps of thanksgiving from its beneficiary. Some months later, this feeding bird died, and although all that could be done by human hands was done to take care of the bill-less one, it soon died also. In our crippled estate, only God, through Christ, can meet the deep needs of our lives. Without Him, we perish.

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8

THE BRIDGE

Motorists may disregard some "road closed, travel at your own risk" signs, but the one that stops them all is the one that reads, "Road closed, bridge out"; for even the most foolhardy knows he cannot pass from one side of an abyss to the other without something solid beneath his wheels.

Bridge builders are, from the approach of the highway department, repairers of breaches. They do not fill up the streams and ravines, they just nullify them as barriers to travel by providing substitutes. A bridge is not the solid ground, but when in good repair, it is no less safe and dependable. The ravages wrought by the earthquake or by erosion are not entirely restored, but by means of bridges they are offset, and the original plan for travel is pursued successfully in spite of them. None would say that the barriers are advantages within themselves, but all rejoice that the barriers are surmountable, and that the engineers are not compelled to abandon their plans for safe and pleasant travel on account of them.

In the record of that greatest of all earth's catastrophes, when man, the companion of God, became separated and lost, it was God, the offended God, who came asking for further conference,

and who proposed repairing the breach, that fellowship might be resumed (Genesis 3:15). Sin cut an abyss that is wide and deep, and it runs right between man and his Maker. Jesus came and bridged that abyss with His own body, and made a way by which the creature may cross back to the favor of his Creator and Lord. This is a straight and unequivocal statement, true and real in meaning, even though couched in the language of metaphor.

It is assuring to know that thoughtful men, beginning with the Apostle Paul, have found it possible to work out by reasoning processes the logical operation of the atoning work of Christ as it applies to the reconciliation of man to God. But it is even more consoling to know that the benefits of this great plan are not confined to those who have ability to understand it. Only those blessed with superior measures of intellectual acumen may be able to trace the processes and purposes of grace through the narrows of systematic theology. But it is enough for the practical man that he believe that Jesus Christ so died for sinful men as to make it possible for them to return to God for reconciliation and companionship.

The philosopher asks of the doctrines of grace, "Do they satisfy the demands of constructive thinking, and do they merit by their evidence a settled conclusion?" The artist asks, "Do these doctrines satisfy the requirements of symmetry and beauty?" Even the expert Biblist wants to know if all the types and symbols have been fulfilled. But only the gifted and those who have leisure can apply these tests. The practical man's question is, "Do these doctrines work?" and that is the test we can all make. It is not said, "All who can understand and analyze the content of the gospel shall be saved." No, thank God, no! It says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." And there are more saved people who believe that they may know than there are who know that they may believe.

In the olden times, referring to the glory that surrounds the Infinite Being, it was said that no man could see the face of God and live. This saying gave rise to fear, for some interpreted it to mean that God would take vengeance upon any who might seek to penetrate the awful privacy of His person. But really, the meaning was, as I think a more careful reading will show, that mortal flesh cannot endure the glory of His full revelation which is reserved for the immortals. It is like saying that on one can look steadfastly at the sun in his full noontide brilliance and see. Such a saying is simply a testimonial to the glory of the sun, and is not indicative of any vindictive spirit or temper. Two chapters of our Bible suffice to tell of creation. Part of one chapter is enough to give the history of the first temptation and the fall. All the rest is given to the story of redemption -- to the story of the bridge and those who have used it in the highway of the centuries. The Bible is, indeed, by very rank, "a book on redemption."

Sin as a fact is altogether a matter of human responsibility. Redemption as accomplished in the life and death of Jesus Christ is altogether a divine provision. Just as God cannot be charged with guilt for sin, so man cannot be credited with provision for redemption from sin. But salvation has both divine and human elements in it. Man sinned, God redeemed, now man must accept redemption that God may save him.

The cross was once the symbol of shame. But since Jesus died on it to provide redemption for men, it has become the symbol of glory. That is why Paul could announce that he gloried in the

cross. Not any longer in his race or his religion or his pedigree, but in the cross where the blood for his redemption was shed.

It is said that the word bridge does not appear in the Bible, probably because Palestine is a relatively dry country, and bridges were not used. The Jordan was about the only stream that would ordinarily challenge the traveler, and it was crossed at fords. But Jesus used the idea of the bridge when He said, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6), for He was currently describing himself as a way or road, and He had come to the impassable abyss in describing any man's journey to God. And now He says in substance, "There is no other bridge across the abyss except the one that I have built." Thank God for our glorious Bridge-Builder! who made the bridge with His own body on the tree.

An ancient king is said to have ordered a bell of superior tone to be hung on his palace grounds. But the repeated efforts of the old bell-maker were in vain. Either faults showed up in the molding or accidents marred the usefulness of his product. At last the king became impatient, and told the old bell-maker that he could have one more chance. If his next attempt was not successful, the old artisan was to forfeit his life. When the time came that the metal was about to be run into the mold, the old artisan's lovely daughter who stood by watching, suddenly leaped into the pot, and her flesh and blood were mingled with the metal. In spite of his deep sense of tragedy and loss, the old bell-maker poured the metal, and the result was a bell of such superior tone that the king was not only content, but highly pleased, so that he promoted the artisan and gave him many honors. All the time the metal had needed something that human flesh and blood could provide. And that is a symbol of redemption. Not that God is represented by the king, but that we are represented by the bell, and that something that we lack has been provided for us by the flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the twentieth chapter of I Samuel is recorded the interesting story of David's and Jonathan's meeting in the field. David had incurred the wrath of the jealous King Saul, but Jonathan, the king's son, was torn between his respect for his father and his love for David. David had insisted that designs were against him in the palace, and that he must get away to save his life. Jonathan did not think it was that bad, and was reluctant to have his friend depart. Finally it was agreed that David should withdraw temporarily, and that Jonathan would observe the effect upon his father when David's absence was noticed, and that he would advise David accordingly. But since an open meeting between the two was not advisable, they agreed upon a sign. David would hide among the rocks in the field, Jonathan would come with bow and arrow as though upon a hunt. He would shoot an arrow, and send his serving boy to find it. If, in the effort to help the boy, Jonathan should say, "the arrow is on this side of you," then David would know that Saul was appeased, and that it was safe for him to show himself and return to the palace. If, on the other hand, he should call to the boy, saying, "Is not the arrow beyond thee?" then David would know that King Saul was wroth, and that he must take his leave. The signal was, of course, that David's life was sought, and that he must flee with all speed.

It is not always permissible to spiritualize the historic incidents of the Bible, lest the practice lead to our reading into the sacred Book things that were never intended. But we use this incident to illustrate, and not plainly to state the thought we have in mind, and no one should be misled into thinking that the history itself is not valid. The words, "Is not the arrow beyond thee?"

appear to be apt in urging upon us the fact that the goal we seek is beyond our human accomplishments. Let the question be, Where lies the essential content of that salvation which restores us to the right relation to God, and to the right state before God? Then the answer is, It lies beyond:

1. It lies beyond the limits of human merit. No matter how well one may have been born, no matter how carefully he has been trained, no matter how well he may have conducted himself since the beginning of his responsible years, still, "the arrow is beyond" him. There is not enough merit in all human excellencies to redeem the soul from death. This is evident from the conclusion that we can claim no credit for what has been given us by others, and as to ourselves, we owe it to God to live well always, and we cannot accumulate credit by means of which to check off the guilt involved in a single sin. There is no such thing as a work of supererogation." When we have done our best, we still must say, "We are unprofitable servants, we have done only that which it was our duty to do." We must have merit beyond the human, for all members of the race are just as we are on this point. We must have merit beyond that which any angel might give us, for the angels, too, owe all obedience, and can transfer no credit to another. In the fifth chapter of Revelation this story is given to us in sacred drama. God sits on the throne with the doomsday book in His hand, and the salvation of men depends upon finding someone worthy to take that book from the hand of God, break its seven seals, and read its contents. No such an one could be found "in heaven, on earth nor in the regions under the earth" (an expression meaning no one could be found anywhere). John, the observer, wept for what seemed now to be the hopeless lot of men. But an angel said, "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the Tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." Then as John looked, he beheld among the elders "a Lamb as it had been slain." This one came and took the book and proceeded to break the seal, and then all the redeemed of heaven took up the "new song," the song of redemption: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation: and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." Here, beyond us, in the shed blood of the Lamb of God lies the merit for our salvation.

2. It lies beyond mere creed and concept. No matter how orthodox one may be in doctrine, no matter how clear his intellectual concepts of God, sin, duty, and privilege, he must still possess the power of an inner life sufficient to make these concepts vital. Otherwise he will be grasping at shadows, and missing the substance; for realities are above and beyond their own definition. John Wesley in his preconversion days is a good example. In those days he was already a theological thinker in his own right, and the concepts of those days required very little revision even in his ripe years. But he himself said, "I went to Georgia to convert the Indians, and there discovered I had need that someone convert me."

3. The goal lies beyond mere formal religion. One may give his hand to the preacher and make his solemn vows before the people, he may be baptized by the most orthodox minister in the most approved mode, he may offer his prayers, pay his tithes, go to church, read the Bible, take part in the responses, and do every thing that is required by the most exacting ritual, and yet be a denizen of the house of the dead. Form, with the spirit, is all right. But form, without the spirit, is formality, and formality is represented by the human body after the spirit has departed -- it is a corpse.

4. The goal lies beyond the scope of good conduct. One is not made right by doing right. This is reversing the order. Jesus said, "Make the tree good and the fruit will be good." People who are right live right also. But living right as a method of getting right is like substituting whitewash for washing white. The story is that a hostel of uncertain reputation advertised on its display board, "The Inn of the Black Dragon." A young man bought the place, decided to transform it into a place where men would be glad to bring their families, and in keeping with the changed character, he rechristened the place as "The Inn of the White Lamb." The new name was placed on the display board. The board had originally been painted white and the words "The Inn of" were in black, followed by the picture of the black dragon. When the change was made, the board was painted over in black, the words "The Inn of" were painted in white and were followed by the picture of a white lamb. But the paint used was of poor quality, and one morning, after a storm in the night, the landlord looked up at his board to find that his place was again, "The Inn of the Black Dragon." Yes, the arrow of true righteousness is beyond the sphere of mere human conduct.

5. The arrow lies beyond mere profession. There are myriads of sincere people who profess themselves to be Christians, who, nevertheless, have never been touched by the regenerating Spirit of God. They have professed with their mouths, but have never truly believed with their hearts and been born again. The estate of people like this is called by Dr. E. Stanley Jones, "religious varioloid." Varioloid, you know, is a light form of small pox that never does kill anyone, but makes those who have it immune to the real kind. This is what profession without corresponding possession does. One cannot escape from this snare by ceasing to profess. Christians are supposed to profess to be Christians. No, profession is included, but the arrow of possession lies yet beyond that.

6. The arrow even lies beyond mysticism. The term mystic is often used in intended compliment, as in the instances in which people turn away from E. Stanley Jones' meetings, after hearing his impressive personal testimony. Some say in evident admiration, "He is certainly a mystic." But mysticism, wonderful as it is in some aspects, does not actually go far enough. It goes to the limit of human psychology, but it stops at the border line of supernatural. The mystic seeks to apprehend God by the process of meditation, rather than by the reach of reason; but, like reason, meditation stops just short of the goal; for if one goes on to the goal he is no longer a philosopher or a mystic, but is a Christian.

7. The arrow is beyond sentimentalism or emotionalism. There is indeed feeling in the process of finding God, but it is a form of feeling as high above mere emotionalism as reality is higher than shadow. Speaking of an apparent sentimental appeal in which people were exhorted to go to heaven to see their dear ones, a disgusted old-time religionist said, "That is all very well for those people to want to go to heaven to see their kinfolks. But I think some of them would have voted just as intelligently if they had been asked to go to Georgia to see their kinfolks." Rousseau, the skeptic, was a devotee of sentimentalism. He opposed corporal punishment in the training of children, and then allowed his own children to become wards in an orphanage. He was so sensitive that his critics said he had stripped himself of his skin. Nevertheless, he did not find God. Toplady was right when he sang, "Could my tears forever flow," for emotionalism is of itself no better than rationalism. Men who have found God "feel" that they have done so. But when one

makes feeling the touchstone, he has accepted wild fire for real fire. Wild fire has heat and no light. Fox fire has light and no heat. But real fire has both heat and light.

8. There is even a supernaturalism that does not find the arrow. We do not know how large an element of the human -- plus there may be in witchcraft and various forms of spiritism. But we do know that a supernaturalism that can exist divorced from moral requirements is more closely related to the devil than to God. And the supernaturalism that rings true is the kind that makes its possessor a new creature and causes old things to pass away and all things to become new. For us today, when Jesus says, "Behold, I make all things new," He puts His hand right on our hearts; for that is where the new creation begins for everyone of us.

Yes, the arrow of attainment for which we seek, and for which our hands reach up, lies beyond the human sphere. Call it what you will -- a supernatural religion, a spiritual miraculousness, a divine response, a revelation of God through the Spirit -- no matter what the name. The fact is what counts. And although the arrow lies beyond human merit, beyond human creed, beyond religious forms, beyond good conduct, beyond mere profession, beyond mysticism or any other process, beyond sentimentalism and emotionalism, beyond just undefined supernaturalism; it nevertheless is to be had on terms that the humblest of us can meet.

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9

THE PERSISTENT QUEST

"By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. I will arise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" (Song of Solomon 3:1-3).

John Calvin and many of his day believed and taught that all religions except Judaism and Christianity were of the devil. They believed the other religions originated with the devil, as ours did with God, and that they were in direct contrast with revealed religion. But later and more sympathetic studies in such matters have convinced students that religion, like the race of man, had a common origin, and that the religions of the heathen are just deteriorated forms of that worship which Adam and his sons performed at the gates of the garden of Eden.

Man has sometimes been defined as "a religious animal." Perhaps we do not like the word animal in such connection, but man is an animal, although he is also more than an animal, and at times it is proper to say in being more than an animal, he is worse than an animal. Isaiah put man in poor light in comparison to the animals, when he said, "The ox knoweth his owner; and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isaiah 1:3). Here the complaint is against man's sense of gratitude. The ox and the ass serve their master because he cares for them and feeds them, but people accept God's bounty all their days and never turn back to either serve or praise. Evangelist Sam Jones said, "The horse nickers his thanks, the cow moos her thanks, and even the sow grunts her thanks, but there are men who sit down to three square meals every day in the year and never so much as lift their eyes in recognition of the God who feeds them

and keeps them alive." But on this subject of religion: it is more nearly correct to class all men as religious, some truly religious, and some falsely religious, rather than as religious and irreligious.

The prophets of Israel divided people simply into worshipers of Jehovah and worshipers of idols, and this division is still valid, only we must widen the conception and definition of idols somewhat. Then idols were images of the gods the nations acknowledged, and idols today still include these; but idols include every thing that men allow as substitutes for God. Paul said that covetousness is idolatry, and John asked his "little children" to keep themselves from idols. If we were listing idols today we would have to include desire for popularity, love of praise, love of money, pride of position, and every thing which men allow to usurp the place that rightfully belongs to God as supreme.

Solomon is one of the most checkered men whose name appears in the annals of history. Ordinarily we speak of him as the symbol of wisdom, but we know also he was guilty of some of the most consummate acts of folly that are recorded of any man. As an example, think of his domestic estate -- seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines! And then remember that while he has given his name to the most remarkable religious house that has ever been built on the earth, he also led his people into the worship of false gods and lavished treasures in lifting altars to the religious relics of his apostate women companions.

But just now our thoughts are turned to the persistent woman in Solomon's Song. This woman must surely stand for the Church, the Bride of Christ, and in her persistence, for the individual who qualifies for membership in that Church. Her quest was long and earnest, and her search we find from following the story, was rewarded.

Years ago a southern city was visited with a genuine and far-reaching revival. There was in that city a group of blatant skeptics who could not take passively so faith-inspiring an affair as this. So one of the group, urged on by his godless companions, prepared and distributed a tract attacking the revival, and holding its leaders up to ridicule. Doubters have never been very original -- theirs is but a philosophy of negations. This man lifted out an expression he had frequently heard in the revival, and used it for the title of his tract. And there appeared an infidel tract under the title, "Praying Through." But the substance of the tract, and all that the skeptic could actually do, was a confession on the part of the skeptic that he had never prayed through, and that he did not believe anyone had done so. This instrument was confusing to the unthinking, but had no force with the thinking people. It has no more validity than an argument regarding some geographical position on the earth which I might argue does not exist and I can prove it does not exist by reason of the fact that I have never been there. Let us say the place is Singapore. I have never been there, so I say it does not exist or at least I do not believe it exists. But before my argument is valid I must be able to say that I have been right to the point of longitude and latitude where the place is supposed to be, and that I did not find any such place. Even then, my evidence would be lacking, for, first of all, my veracity is at stake; I must prove that I have actually been there. Then, even then, my evidence is not convincing, for it is possible to produce thousands who can also prove that they have been there, and their testimony is that the place is there all right. Then, if I, under these circumstances, assume the role of the persecuted, and claim that I am the victim of my intellectual honesty, and that these other witnesses are all prejudiced, I will not likely find a lot of sympathy. Then why not apply these same challenges in the matter of religion?

But the evidence of salvation is of necessity of a personal and private nature. In a general way, the conditions required are known to many. But we ourselves are the only ones who know whether we have met those conditions or not, and we know only when we receive from God the response that gives assurance. Observers may form opinions as to our sincerity or insincerity, but they cannot surely know by any tokens whatsoever.

It is well that we should be exacting of our own heart's sentiments. Newton proposed that this is a good test. He said, "I have observed that when men are getting religion, they are inclined to be hard on themselves and easy on other people. But when they are losing religion or are already backslidden they are inclined to be easy on themselves and hard on other people." The father of the afflicted child, brought to Jesus for healing, finding that faith was required of him, cried out, partly in confidence and partly in fear, "Lord, I believe! Help thou my unbelief!" But must we live and die without really knowing whether we truly repent and believe unto salvation? No, thank God we need not do so. The proof that the conditions are met is in the results obtained. We know we are children of God when His Spirit comes to bear witness with our spirits that it is so.

There are, it may be, a few over-conscientious souls who utterly refuse to believe, even after all legitimate hindrances have been removed. These need to be directly encouraged to put their instant trust in the Lord. But more commonly men's reluctance to believe is but the fruit of their reluctance to repent and to obey. There are those who have been dubbed "chronic seekers," who never seem to reach the point where faith lays hold. For these we have the deepest sympathy, and would do anything in our power to help them. But for the great majority, doubt springs from the taproot of unconfessed sin or hidden reservations. And for all there is a way through. At the risk of our being helpful to the few whose morbidity has become a chronic disease, we insist that there is just one way to get through, and that is to persist in the quest until the quest is rewarded.

Mr. Till, a tall, lanky frontiersman, came frequently to the altar seeking God. As the meeting neared its conclusion, I sought a private conference with him. He told me that he had "been a seeker after religion for thirty years," but had never been saved. At the very last service of the meeting he came again. As I held on to his hand, I made him this proposition, "You have been an unsuccessful seeker after God for thirty years. It has come to the place where your case is desperate for you, and where you are a stumbling block to other people. It is evident that you have either never sought God in real earnest or else God is delinquent in not coming to your rescue. Let's find out what the trouble is and have it settled before we leave this place. I am due in another place to open a meeting this coming Wednesday night, but I will have some one to wire them that I will be indefinitely late. Then you will kneel on your side of the altar, and I will . kneel on this side, and we will pray and wait before God until either He saves you or one or the other of us dies of starvation and weariness." The old man gripped my hand and said, "I've got you this time, preacher, I'll never get up from this altar until I'm religious." The prayer meeting was long, but not so long as our challenge had suggested. For at midnight the old man stood up high on his knees and said, "Oh, Lord, this is the best I can do. You will have to take me as I am or turn me down, I cannot do any better or any more." Someone had started to sing, "Look and live, my brother, live: look to Jesus, now, and live." The old man caught up the words, and said, "Oh, Lord, I look." Then he arose hastily to his feet and said, "And thank God, I live." Now there may have been other times

along that long road when that man could have been caused to "profess," but this was evidently the first time he ever did actually seek until he found. Physical demonstration is not the test, but it can always be said that "Man's extremity is God's opportunity."

We cannot justly leave this subject of persistence until we have observed that the initial answer or introduction is not the end of the theme. George Mueller of Bristol said that during a period of fifty-five years he found it possible to "gain audience with God every day without a single exception. Commenting on his prayer habits, he said it was his custom to select the time of the day when he could be most likely to have a period free from interference, and then he went alone with God, spending the time praying aloud, praying inaudibly, and reading his Bible. In these daily searchings for audience with God, he ordinarily read his Bible through three times a year. This he did not list as Bible study, and he did not use it as an occasion for finding texts for preaching. He read simply to seek God's message for himself, and he prayed, not so much in petition for things, but in the preparation of his own heart for the presence of the King. And every day, sometimes within a short space of time, sometimes after a longer period of preparation, the Lord brought him into His presence. Mueller, during this long period, recorded a thousand definite answers to prayer every year. But he said he did not spend much time making requests. His time was spent getting into God's presence. Once in that presence, he quietly and simply made his petitions and left everything with the Lord.

George Payne was brought back from spiritual delinquency and backsliding to a good experience with God, and was wonderfully baptized with the Holy Ghost. He lived in Pelham Cove in Tennessee, where I used to go with more or less regularity once or twice a year for special meetings. George Payne was a modest man, and always gave his testimony with diffidence and talked of religious matters in a shy manner. But one day he said to me, "Not so long ago I dreamed about you, saw you very clearly in my dream ,and talked with you. But you had an obsession. Pretty quickly after our greeting, you said, 'Brother Payne, how long since you really prayed through?' I told you that I prayed through in the meeting that you held here several years ago. But you were not content with that. You asked again, 'But, Brother Payne, you have prayed through a good many times since that. What I want to know is, How long has it been since you really prayed through until your assurance with God was all made clear right up to date?' Then I asked you, 'How often should one pray through in that sense?' You replied, 'We should do it every day.' That dream was so vivid it made an impression on me, and I have been trying to live up to the standard you set by praying every day until God blesses my soul."

This is not a dream. But let us ask ourselves, How long has it been since you prayed through? And let us set for ourselves the blessed goal of making it the daily practice of our lives to pray through until God blesses our hearts.

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Next to no religion, the greatest curse is a halfhearted religion. There are not only opposers of Christ and friends of Christ, but there are those who want to be classed as neutral. Of course, in

the end, all who are not for Christ must be listed as against Him, but in the attitude of the individual soul, it often occurs that one is concerned, but not sufficiently concerned. Jesus called upon His hearers to "Strive to enter in at the straight gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." The comparison between strive and seek in this passage is so strong as to almost amount to contrast. Weymouth brings out the force a little better by the rendering, "Strive your hardest to enter in by the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will try to find a way in and will not succeed." The Greek word here translated strive is *agoonidzomai*, from which we get agonize, and it is the same word used for contending in the public games (I Corinthians 9:25), or with the adversary (John 18:36), and in the Christian effort and persistence (Colossians 1:29). In the latter instance, Weymouth has the rendering, "To this end, like an eager wrestler, I exert all my strength in reliance upon the power of Him who is mightily at work in me."

But it would be a misapplication if we were to take the words of Jesus to mean that from first to last the Christian life is a doubtful struggle. His words apply especially to that striving that is involved in making the initial entrance into the kingdom of God. The reference is especially to that period in which the wrestler is still struggling in his own strength and is reluctant to turn the contest over to Christ.

A group of small boys sat under a tree eating the lunch their mothers had prepared for them. It chanced that practically every box contained at least one boiled egg, and one small hero proposed that they should test their nerve by breaking the eggs, sharp point foremost, on their foreheads. The inexperienced commenced with light taps and gradually increased the force of the blow until pain demanded that they desist. They then insisted that the proposer live up to the standard of his own trick, and show them how it is done. He drew back and gave one heavy, shell smashing stroke, while his companions commended him for his "grit." But being an honest lad, he explained that the feat is difficult only when you just try to do it, for when you actually do it, the shell takes the blow, and not your head, and it does not hurt your head.

Too often the Christian life is thought of in terms of requirement, to the overshadowing of provision and empowerment. It is indeed an exacting thing to be religious without the assisting grace of God. Rev. R. M. Guy used to say, "Trying to be religious without religion is like trying to pump water out of a dry cistern with a broken pump. The metaphor is strong, but the experience of those who have assumed the Christian obligations without obtaining the Christian empowerment fully justifies its use.

But Brother Guy also used to tell the story of a lifeguard at the beach. This man stood at his post until a drowning man out in the surf quit struggling and seemed to "go down for the last time." Then the guard went quickly and brought the man's apparently lifeless body to the shore, and by the use of proper means, brought the man back to consciousness. A bystander inquired as to why the lifeguard waited so long to undertake the rescue, and the guard replied, "If I had approached this man while he was struggling he might have drowned both himself and me. I had to wait until he quit trying to save himself before I could save him." It is like that with people who are trying to save themselves from sin, and it is only when they reach the end of themselves that they find peace and rest. However, it must be noted that indifference is inexcusable, and that deliverance comes only at the end of the striving, not at its beginning.

There is a concept of the way of salvation that consists of so many steps in a settled order, and the scheme is capable of being worked out on a blackboard, like a problem in mathematics. But the recital of these steps is one thing, and the actual doing of them is another. Take repentance for example: it is not a long task to learn the definition of repentance, but it is a grinding thing to be truly penitent, and many a person of forward bearing in the use of the term is too shallow in the practice of the virtue to obtain any results. Repentance involves contrition of heart, and that word contrition is derived from the Latin *con*, meaning "with", and *terere*, meaning "to grind." It, therefore, means to be bruised, and it involves true and deep sorrow of heart for having offended God, and it must grow out of love for God, as well as out of fear for His judgments. The sailor that prays when the ship is in the storm, but curses when the sun shines again has no contrition for sin -- his sorrow is based only upon fear of judgment. Out of two thousand people who professed to become Christians when they thought they were on their deathbeds, but who subsequently recovered, only three continued as faithful followers of Christ. The others, evidently, had only that sorrow of the world that worketh death. And this consideration justifies the definition that says, "Deathbed repentance is burning the candle of life to the service of the devil, and then blowing the dust into the face of heaven." And the only way anyone can truly know that he is contrite and penitent is by the springing up of faith for forgiveness and peace -- there is no human standard by which to measure such qualities.

I came one morning to the little junction railway station thirty minutes before train time, and asked the agent for a clergy ticket. The night agent had evidently put all the tickets and the money into the safe and locked the door, and mine was the first ticket called for since the new man had come on duty. So the agent went to the safe and commenced to work at the combination. He turned the knob so many turns to the right, so many back to the left, then back to the right again. But there was no sound within the mechanism of the lock, and the door would not open. Starting all new, the agent turned so many rounds to the left, so many to the right, then back to the left. Still nothing happened. Either there was something wrong with the lock or the agent had forgotten the exact combination. Patiently the man worked at his task, while I waited and looked on. Time was passing. Ten minutes were soon gone. Then fifteen. Then twenty. I began to make a mental calculation on whether I had sufficient money to pay the full fare that would be required if I boarded the train without a ticket. I had counted on buying the clergy ticket for half fare. But anxious as I was, there was nothing I could do. I sympathized with the agent, and prayed for his success. But he said never a word, and I answered him in the same manner. The agent showed no sign of nervousness, and I tried not to do so. I knew that any word from me or any motion on my part could do nothing but embarrass. The task was the agent's, and he alone must accomplish it. Finally, just five minutes before the train came to a stop at the little station, the lock gave a low "click," the agent pulled on the handle and the door came open. He prepared my ticket in silence. I paid for it, and stepped outside to be ready to board the train. There just was not anything that could be appropriately said. No use to say, "You had a difficult time." No use to say, "Well, you finally made it." These things were quite evident. If the man had stopped just before that last effort, all that he had done would have counted for naught. And of course if he could have found the combination earlier, the continued effort would not have been required. It was not trying so much that mattered. He just had to find that combination -- that was all.

Now of course I have never known whether or not there was anything wrong with that lock. My guess is that there was not. I think the whole difficulty was that the agent "knew approximately"

what the combination was, and that he just had, by process of elimination, to find out what it really was. It is easy to say that the agent should have known, and not to have been in any degree uncertain. But the fact is he was somewhat uncertain, and he had to be given time to make sure. And the only way he could be sure was to get the door open. There would be no use for him to insist that the combination he had in mind was correct -- not if the door did not open. He just had to get the door open to prove that he had struck the combination.

We do not even intimate that God is unwilling to be found, and we do not mean to say that the prerequisites for finding Him are uncertain or even difficult, just viewed within themselves. But the prerequisites are of such a nature that we must be absolutely sincere and earnest to the full limit to meet them. If doing certain things could merit the bestowal of God's grace, or if the observance of certain sacraments would bestow the realities the sacraments symbolize, or if saying prayers were really praying, or if affirming "I believe" were identical with true faith, or if saying, "I have found it" were just the same thing as actually finding, then the whole matter would be simple. And it is simple for some people, for some people come at once and do from their hearts just the things that "prepare the way of the Lord," and their conversion is instant and apparently "easy." We glory in the fact that conversions of this kind are genuine, and that the stability of many who did thus come in is ample proof. But what we are saying is that the combination must be found. If it is found easily and quickly, well and good. If it is not found until there has been an approach involving hours, days, weeks, months, years: well, it just must be found, that's all.

A person may appear to others to be just plain stubborn because he will not follow the advice of those who insist that he "take it by faith." But the truth is, he knows he has not found the combination, and that the door is not really open. Happy is the man who, under such circumstances, insists on praying on, seeking on, striving on until he does get the door open.

During the Charles G. Finney revivals, half a million people professed conversion and joined the churches of the communities affected by the revivals. A later estimate was to the effect that eighty-five per cent of these thousands from all walks of life made permanent Christians. There may have been other contributing causes, but one main factor in the abiding type of the work must have been Finney's own methods. Finney used often to preach twice a day for four full weeks before he encouraged any move on the part of his listeners. His theme was, "The law and the gospel," and he worked into the pattern all the essential doctrines of the Christian creed, proved their validity, illustrated their meaning and applied their force to the hearts, consciences and wills of men. If there were evidences that the emotions of the people were about to break forth prematurely, Finney would dismiss the service, and urge the people to go out quietly and go to their homes or places of business. He said that when emotional outbreaks came prematurely repentance was likely to be shallow (like the touching off of gun powder in the open), and that knowledge of God would be correspondingly faint and unenduring. Father Nash was for many years Finney's traveling companion. But he was a prayer, rather than a preacher, and sometimes did not attend the meetings for ten days at a time, spending the time that Finney was in the meetings in prayer in his room.

And, further, Finney instructed the personal workers in his meetings to plead and exhort, but to leave the question of testimony to faith and assurance to the seeker himself. Finney's

contention was that a mere "endeavoring to be a Christian" is altogether a mis-emphasis. It is being truly born of the Spirit and assured by the witness within that is essential.

Even in my boyhood days it was customary for evangelical churches to differentiate between "protracted meetings" and revivals. It would be announced that on a certain date a protracted meeting would begin, and the people were exhorted to pray that the meetings might result in a revival. At the close it would be said they had a protracted meeting. And then it would be added that they had or had not had a revival.

And in those old-time revivals it was customary, after the meetings reached the stage where people were publicly seeking God and asking for prayer, to set apart certain pews near the front of the church, and to ask that those who were seekers after God take places there. These pews were popularly dubbed "mourner's seats," and people often took their places there night after night and day after day, thus branding themselves as persistent seekers or "mourners," and by giving special attention to the preaching and other parts of the service, they sought to know and to do what is required of one who would be truly converted. It was expected that people from this section would come immediately to the altar of prayer when the invitation was given, and that they would continue so to do until they were "satisfied."

Exactions are easy or difficult upon the basis of their relation to ability. A man called me on the telephone and invited me to go with him to some public eating place for dinner. I accepted, and when we had gone a little way down the street, I suggested that we turn in at a small eating place where I had frequently gone, and where an acceptable little lunch could be had for twenty-five cents. But my host insisted on going farther. At a cafe I suggested that we turn in, assuring my friend that we could get all anyone should eat there for forty cents. But he was not impressed. Next I named the cafeteria where one can see what he is getting, and where he can select whatever quantity he desires. But my host said he wanted to go somewhere where we could have leisure to talk. By and by he turned in at a high class dining room. I demurred, saying that the place was too expensive. But my host said, "It will cost you just the same here that it would have cost at one of the other places." So we went in. The menu was inviting, but the price seemed to me to be too high. Nevertheless, when we had dined, my host paid the tickets, left a tip for the waiter, and gave a coin to the girl who had checked our hats. There did not seem to be any strain about it, for while the price seemed high to me, it did not tax the resources of my friend. This is a picture of a Christian who has obtained the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. The moral law has been in no sense outmoded, but the happy Christian says, "His commandments are not grievous." The will of God is still our sanctification. But the Spirit-filled saint replies, "I delight to do thy will, O my God." The burdens of the way have not been directly diminished, but the Spirit-anointed soul speaks from the vantage point of abundant grace and power, and says, "His yoke is easy, and His burden is light."

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That philosophy which would make of man an eternal seeker after truth and reality is, when stripped of its verbosity, but an application of pessimism to the most precious phase of human interest. To say that one must seek on, even in the face of the conviction that he will never find, is to entirely ignore the limitations of human interest and persistence. Jesus was unequivocal in asserting, "Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Luke 11:10). The justice and mercy of God stand squarely against the idea that God would create a craving for himself in the hearts of His creatures and not provide a way for the satisfying of that craving or that He would inspire His creatures to look up and call upon Him when He had no intention of responding. To believe in a God as callous as that were worse than to have no faith at all. Our God is a good God. Even though it is not always possible to see the rainbow in the cloud, our confidence in Him is to the effect that somewhere the sun still shines, and that God still lives and answers prayer.

It is the unassured who are in quandary. At one point in his experience, Job is a good example of such a state. In his preface to the Book of Job, Adam Clarke, the noted commentator, says, "This is the most singular book in the whole of the sacred code, though written by the same inspiration, and in reference to the same end, the salvation of men, it is so different from every other book of the Bible, that it seems to possess nothing in common with them, for even the language, in its construction, is dissimilar from that of the Law, the Prophets, and the historical books. But on all hands it is accounted a work that contains 'the highest morality, the sublimest philosophy, the simplest ritual, and the most majestic creed.'"

In a later paragraph, Dr. Clarke says, "As to the Book of Job, it is evidently a poem, and a poem of the highest order; dealing with subjects the most grand and sublime; using imagery the most chaste and appropriate; described by language the most happy and energetic; conveying instruction, both in divine and human things, the most ennobling and useful; abounding in precepts the most pure and exalted, which are enforced by arguments the most strong and conclusive, and illustrated by examples the most natural and striking.

"All these points will appear in the strongest light to every attentive reader of the book, and to such its great end will be answered: they will learn from it, that God has a way everywhere: that the wicked, though bearing rule for a time, can never be ultimately prosperous and happy; and that the righteous, though oppressed with sufferings and calamities, can never be forgotten by Him in whose hands are His saints, and with whom their lives are precious; that in this world neither are the wicked ultimately punished, nor the righteous ultimately rewarded; that God's judgments are a great deep, and His ways past finding out; but the issues of all are to the glory of His wisdom and grace, and to the eternal happiness of those who trust in Him. This is the grand design of the book, and this design will be strikingly evident to the simplest and most unlettered reader, whose heart is right with God, and who is seeking instruction in order that he may glorify his Maker, by receiving and doing good."

We have made this lengthy quotation in order to set it clearly before all that we are not attempting an analysis of this wonderful book nor attempting in this instance an appraisal of its principal character. Rather, we present Job as an example of the quandary in which the unassured consistently find themselves. We do this the more freely because of the fact that the quandary does not represent the finale for Job. But during the process, and while yet unassured, Job cried, "Oh

that I might find him! that I might come even to his seat! I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me. Will he plead against me with his great power? No, but he would put strength in me. There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered forever from my judge. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: but he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food. But he is in one mind, who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doth. For he performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with him. Therefore am I troubled at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him. For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me: Because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither hath he covered the darkness from my face" (Job 23:3-17).

Job's so-called friends, calling attention to his misery and want of external evidence of acceptance with God, pushed Job into the fruitless task of all the divine mysteries involved in God's dealings with men. In this sphere Job could not succeed. He had to close his arguments, as all have to close theirs who seek to know God as one might know another man. He could not arrive, for he was on a dead end street. He could not know, for he was reaching out with the head more than with the heart.

Job found a better day, and of this we shall have occasion to speak at another time. But just now he stands before us as a striking example of the quandary of all who are as yet unassured, and who seek to know God by means of material and mathematical evidences. Having shared the experience of the old patriarch from Uz thus far, let us follow his example in going on into that full assurance that enabled him to say, "I know my Redeemer liveth"; for whoever does that is saved from the fears and misgivings of the unassured.

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12

THE GRASP OF THE HEAD

It is reported that an old Greek teacher, in an effort to awaken interest in the minds of his class of boys, said to his wards, "Young men, wouldn't you like to know what sustains the earth in its place?" The young men were all anxious to have this information, so the old teacher said, "Well, the earth rests upon the back of a huge turtle. And now that this is the principal thing you wanted to know, school is dismissed, and you need not come back any more until there is something else you would like to know." Not unlike youngsters of any other day, the boys were glad that school was over, and they went away thinking themselves quite well informed, seeing they knew now that the earth rests upon the back of a huge turtle. But in a few days the boys gathered about their teacher, and said, "We are glad to know that the earth rests upon the back of a huge turtle, but there is one more thing we should like to ask: Upon what does the turtle that sustains the earth stand?" The old teacher answered them briefly, "The turtle stands upon a rock." The boys went away satisfied for the moment, but returned later to ask, "What sustains the rock?"

To this the teacher replied, "The rock is in the water." But when they came to ask, "What holds the water?" the old teacher had to give up, and now he said, "It seems that you will never be satisfied (and this was the frame of mind he desired to produce of course). I have told you that the earth rests on the back of a huge turtle, that the turtle stands on a rock and that the rock is in the water. Now you come to ask me what holds the water. But this we do not know. We cannot follow anything to its ultimate beginning. We must stop somewhere, no matter what the subject of our pursuit."

Perhaps this story from the lecture room of the past sounds like foolishness to us today. But, really, with a few changes in terminology it could be modernized, and made to fit an inquiry in the college or university that your son or daughter attends. Suppose the question relates to man, and the student asks, "Where did man come from?" The learned professor may answer, "Man came from the higher animals from which group he emerged after millions of years of evolutionary process." Then the inquiring student asks, "Where did the higher animals come from?" The answer is, "The higher animals evolved from the lower animals, the lower animals evolved from the fishes or birds, and these came from the ocean ooze, the ooze came from the vegetable life, the vegetable life from the inorganic mineral and the mineral from the original fire mist." But now if the student persists and wants to know where the fire mist came from, the professor lamely answers, "We do not know that. Perhaps it always was or perhaps it came from something about which we can have no conception." Any way, the inquirer is left suspended, just as were the Greek boys who wanted to know what holds the water that holds the rock that sustains the turtle upon whose back the earth rests. If the world stands, the time may come when the logic of the modern scholar will sound as juvenile as that of the Greek teacher does to us now.

But our point is that all the intellect of man can do with any problem is to move it back -- it can never apprehend its source. God is not only a person, but He is the great First Cause for which the philosophers have always sought, but which they have never been able to actually find. Hence the mind of man can never find rest, but must always remain suspended until it is supplemented by another factor which is able to grasp God.

There is a humorous story of a talkative man who sat on the train beside a man of taciturn habits. The silent one did not warm up on the subject of the weather, the condition of business in the community, on politics or on any subject that the glib talker could bring up. At last, noticing that his companion had an empty sleeve, the talkative one said, "I do not want to seem personal or impertinent, but would you mind telling me how you lost your arm?" The other stared coldly, and replied, "It is a very delicate subject, about which I do not like to talk. But if you will promise not to ask me anything more about it, I shall be glad to answer your question." "Oh," said the talker, "that is all right. I will not ask you any more about it. I should just like to know how you lost it." "Well," said the sensitive one, "I got it bit off."

We do not need to have anyone prove to us that we have need of God. We scarcely need to have one spend time in adding evidence that there is a God. What we want to know is, How do we find God? The schoolmen used the word quidnunc, meaning "What now?" Men who burn incense at the altar of the intellect are inclined to make the powers of the mind their criteria, and to doubt the very existence of anything the mind cannot discover and hold. That is to say, anything that

cannot be intellectually known is non-existent. But this is as biased as though one should hold that the eye is more real than light, and the ear more fundamental than sound waves.

Within the strictly religious scope, the search for God with the head has resulted in the making and enforcing of shibboleths, and symbols that men may recite and endorse and in some measure explain. And by this process reality has been supposed to emerge or if not, then something in the nature of the shadow of reality is believed to appear, and the shadow is accepted for the substance. And in proof that men have taken such things seriously, we need only to recall the theological debates of the past or to think again of the books that have been written and the words that have been spoken in support of some special interpretation of the meaning of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper or the mode of water baptism.

But the truth is that one may be able to recite the lists into which the natural and moral attributes of God have been divided, and to discourse learnedly on the trinity in the godhead and yet have no certitude that God is. The truth of the propositions of philosophy and theology depend upon the correct reasoning processes of those who hold to them, as well as upon the correctness of the axioms with which the beginning is made. In like manner one may be able to define prayer, and yet not be able to pray. He may analyze repentance and faith and still not repent and believe. He may be orthodox in his thinking about the new birth, and still not be born again. He may discourse with heat on the subject of old time religion and yet not be vital in his own inner state before God.

Principle Alexander Martin says, "It is one thing to believe that in all probability there is a God with whom you count for something, and who cares for you, and it is another thing to know it; one thing to think that very likely He does hear prayer, and another thing to have the inward evidence of it; one thing to see that sin is a mischief which it would be well to be rid of, and another thing to feel it an intolerable laceration and dispeace; one thing to hold worship to be a reasonable duty, another thing to count it a delight; one thing to take forgiveness for granted and redemption for a word of quite indeterminate meaning, and another thing to find the one an everlasting wonder and the other the joy and strength of life; one thing to hope the best as to what may be beyond the grave, another thing to find the prospect of it as the years go on filling the heart with anticipation unutterable."

There is indeed an intellectual factor in the religion of Christian indispensable factor. Doctrine is important, and knowledge about God helps us on to know God. But the reach of the head is too short to make grasping God possible. Some have almost made it. Socrates, as death approached, said, "I think I can see the golden isles. But, oh that we had a stouter ship and a stronger hope!" Another of the wise old Greeks went out into the forest and asked the oak to tell him the source of its strength. He asked the little flower of the artist that painted its beauty. He asked the rock for the essence of its stability. But the tree and the flower and the rock had no voice that the intellect could hear and understand. "The world by wisdom knew not God" (I Corinthians 1:21).

The efforts of the intellect to grasp God are like the "theory of limits" in mathematics. According to this theory, no quantity can ever be completely eliminated by dividing it. Take a line of a given length: divide it in half: one half remains. Divide what is left in half: one half is still there. Continue the process as long as you will, and at the last calculation there will still be half of

what you had before the last division. Men get very close to God by the grasp of the hand. But they never do really apprehend him.

Jesus warned that it is difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. This does not mean that the rich are any less honest or benevolent than the poor. It means simply that men who possess riches have a tendency to be possessed by riches. In fact one of the versions has it, "How hardly shall they that trust in riches enter into the kingdom of heaven." And there is an analogy between those who are rich in money and those who are rich in mind. The parallel text on the second member of the couplet is, "Not many wise men after the flesh . . . are called" (I Corinthians 1:26). And here too I think it should be understood that the meaning is not that wise people cannot be saved. But, rather, "How hardly shall those who trust in wisdom enter into the kingdom of God."

No man ever tried harder to find God and the highest good of life through the mind than did Solomon. There is much beside in the Wisdom Literature with which the name of this famous king and scholar is connected, but at last there is a reasonable glimpse of the efforts he made to find his way by the light of reason in these books -- Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Solomon's Song. He followed the path of the mind to its end in many and varied fields. At times it appeared he was about to reach the goal. But at the critical moment every time he gave up, and cried, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." With the keenest perception that any human mind has shown, Solomon gave labor, capital, poetry, and speculation their days in court. But in each case he turned away and marked at the entrance, "Dead end street." On speculation itself, he did admit that it helped, but found that it could not heal; it could improve, but could not save; it pursued a journey, but did not reach the goal; it analyzed the cloud, but could not bring the rain; it detected the shadow, but could not grasp the substance; it reduced the fever, but could not eliminate the germ; it deadened the sense of fear, but could not kindle the light of hope; it praised the life that now is, but stopped stock still at the grave, saying, "We know not whether the spirit of man goes up to God or down to the beasts." But it must have been the faith of his father David, inculcated in the son in his childhood, that arose for the final conclusion, and said, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man." This was a treasure Solomon had before he set off on his long intellectual journeys, and like the old Arab in Conwell's Acres of Diamonds he left the very riches he set out to seek. Let us, then, not emulate his example in making that long and fruitless journey. Let us rather open up that diamond mine of grace which God has promised to the poorest on terms the simplest can meet.

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The desire to be considered meritorious is almost as universal as mankind itself. Even those whose regular business is outside the bounds of law and common decency, still cling to certain ideas of virtue which they are unwilling to have overlooked. A man on the way to commit a robbery compelled his would-be-companion in crime to go back, "Because," said he, "I do not have confidence in you. I do not believe you would be willing to divide squarely." A man pleading

guilty to murder explained that he left the victim's meat untouched on his plate "Because it was Friday, and my religion forbids eating meat on that day."

Much of the financial advantage that men have over their fellows come from inheritances from industrious forebears. But not many are willing to admit that this applies in their case. All like to tell how their prosperity is the fruit of their own industry, frugality, and good judgment.

This tendency is not so incongruous between man and man as it is when it enters into the relationship of a man and God. It has been said that the announcement of a plan by which one could exchange ten years of hard labor for a deed in fee simple to a mansion in heaven would be considered good news by millions who are unwilling to take free salvation upon the terms of the gospel. And it is exceedingly difficult for most men entirely to disconnect the merit of good works from the obtainment of good standing with God. Even those who profess that all they are they owe to the grace of God are often too ready to describe in detail their part in the transaction by reason of which they found "old time religion."

We have called the attempt to find God by good works "the grasp of the hand." For we have here one of the fundamental methods by which men of every religion have attempted to reach the goal of pardon and peace through assurance. In its crudest form, the idea is that God keeps books on our accounts, charging up against us all the evil we do, and crediting to our favor the good we do. The way of salvation then becomes a matter of balancing the evil with good, and presenting to God a favorable showing, and being rewarded with present peace and eternal glory as a consequence. This was something of the Roman Catholic view generally accepted in the days of Martin Luther. One's pre-conversion sins, it was held, were washed away by baptism, and for this reason some, including, it is said, the Emperor Constantine, put off baptism until the end of their lives that the record might be clear as late toward death as possible. Sins committed after baptism were to be balanced off by good works and by penance. The revelation that came to Luther was in the words of Paul, "The just shall live by faith." Luther henceforth refused penance as an unscriptural institution, and insisted that faith is not only the condition for initial pardon and peace, but for pardon and peace all through life thereafter.

It was the utter denial of good works as a means for obtaining the favor of God that brought Toplady to sing, "In my hand no price I bring, simply to thy . cross I cling." And made Fletcher say on his death bed, "I nothing have and nothing am, my glory's in the bleeding Lamb both now and ever more.

The classic example of those who have sought salvation by works is the Pharisee. The castigations of Jesus have so colored our thinking about the Pharisee that we have made him the synonym of all that is bad. But this is not what the Master said of him. His condemnation was based upon the fact that the Pharisee was a hypocrite -- an actor. That is, he acted as a good man should act, but was not strictly a good man, and therefore had to be judged upon the basis of his heart, as all have to be judged, and not on the basis of his outside appearance.

Let us think of some of the commendable things that are revealed in the scriptures concerning the Pharisee:

1. The Pharisee was orthodox in doctrine. He regarded the Jewish scriptures (the New Testament was not yet written) with reverence and piety, ascribing to them the highest origin and the most indisputable authority. He believed in God, in angels, in spirits, in the resurrection of the dead, in the temple and the institutions of the Jewish religion that gathered about the temple. He believed in a future judgment, and held tenaciously to the hope of life beyond the grave. He gave a high place to "the traditions of the elders" -- a symbol of "fundamentalism" for his day, and stood for the ancient interpretations of the meaning of the Jewish faith. He tolerated no heresy, and drew a close line barring out all who were careless in matters of doctrine. In these matters he stood in contrast with the Sadducees who were the "modernists" of their day.

2. The Pharisee was a zealous practitioner of religious requirements. He fasted twice in the week, gave tithes of all he received, even so much as to include the small vegetables and grasses that grew in his garden or on his lawn, prayed punctually wherever the hour of prayer found him, took part in the synagogue services and made religion his vocation, his daily calling, his avocation. He followed the ritual of his religion carefully, never eating food until he had scrupulously cleansed his hands, taking care to purify (ceremonially) his table, his dishes and his household effects; and he kept the Sabbath with unflinching fidelity and to the finest detail of the injunction. The testimony made by means of a border of blue upon the garment of a "faithful son of the law," he widened out, and the lather phylactery enclosing a portion of the Scriptures for the forehead (to indicate one's constancy in meditating upon the law), he made large. He did not take any religious observance lightly. Out of the Ten Commandments, the ceremonial law, and the traditions of the elders he drew for himself 615 rules by which he sought to direct his life in all its minor details. These rules were largely prohibitive, and they covered all that might come into a man's life from birth to death. Great moralities like veracity, purity, and honesty were enjoined, and small things like preparing one's food over a fire kindled by a Gentile were prohibited.

3. The Pharisee was looked upon by his less scrupulous countrymen as somewhat of a fanatic. Nevertheless, he was held in high esteem, for he was believed to be of benefit to the community, as well as to be wise in choosing the highest good for himself. When he appeared in a public place, his standing was known by his garb, and it was customary for the people to make way for him. To be a Pharisee in the days of Jesus was to be known as the best man in the community.

But Jesus said, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). I once heard a minister make a very mistaken application of these words of the Master. He outlined the Pharisee's righteousness very much as I have done in this chapter, and then said, "You will have to do better than the Pharisee or you will not get to heaven." The Pharisee, he said, fasted twice in the week, we must fast at least three times. The Pharisee paid his tithe fully and promptly, we must pay more than a tithe. The Pharisee kept the Sabbath, we must keep it even more punctually than he did, and on to the end of the list.

But a little more attention to the Master's words reveals that this was not the thought at all. The standard Jesus set here is just the same as the one He set for Nicodemus, when He discounted all that great man's virtues, and said, "Ye must be born again." The Pharisee, like Nicodemus, was not on the right plane at all, and no amount of increase in his kind of righteousness would fill the

bill. Urging one to do more of the Pharisee's righteousness is like encouraging speed for a man who is on the wrong road. What such a man needs is not greater speed, but a correct beginning.

As the standard hypocrite, the Pharisee was not necessarily insincere. He was an actor, and as such he may have been very proud of his art. The charge against him was not so much positive wickedness, as it was want of principle. He spoke well with his lips, but his heart was not right, and his religion did not demand that his heart be right. His righteousness was in word and deed, but not in heart. His standards are suggested by the examples Jesus gives in that section of His Sermon on the Mount in which the condemnatory text appears. In summary these are, "Thou shalt not kill (though hate, the root of murder, is not touched upon); Thou shalt not commit adultery (but lust in the heart is unproved); Thou shalt not forswear thyself," etc., all outward words or deeds, and Jesus said, "Your righteousness must be inward as well as outward or you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven."

In further elucidation in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, Jesus likened the Pharisee to a dish that has been washed on the outside, but not cleansed within where the food is to be placed; and to a sepulcher which is whitewashed on the outside but is inwardly full of dead men's bones and all manner of corruption. By these words the Pharisee was not condemned for his slightly exterior, but was forcefully reminded that the heart too must be right. The Pharisee may be said to have had the highest grade of purely human religion. But even this is infinitely too low to count when it comes to acceptance with God and to happiness in His presence.

Although a religious man, the Pharisee's righteousness was in truth but human or self-righteousness, and often this sort of righteousness is a great hindrance to the receiving of the kind that is sent from heaven. It was so in the days of Jesus, when harlots and publicans (men and women who knew and confessed themselves sinners) pressed into the kingdom more readily than the Pharisees. And in our own day the demand for taking one's place in the list of sinners undeserving of aught but judgment is the highest hurdle men have to leap in coming to Christ. Men will tolerate the highest claims, so long as their attainment is classed as a human accomplishment. But right away they stumble at the demand for supernatural religion. Blood, social standing, and race are advertised unblushingly, and men are allowed to boast of their moral excellences so long as they either take the credit or give it to other finites. But at the line of the new birth by the Spirit of God men instinctively stop, and brand all that lies beyond as "fanaticism." The religion of the Pharisee, now, as in the old time, is the world's highest standard (ruling the supernatural out), and it falls short now just as it did then; for the highest level of human goodness is yet a step lower than the lowest plane on which a soul can meet and know God.

What, then, are the particulars in which one's righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Pharisee in order that he may enter the kingdom of heaven? We cannot of course offer an inclusive list, but the complete list must at least include the following:

1. The Pharisee's religion might include repentance for sin in some measure as a human act, but to this must be added divine pardon and spiritual adoption before one can enter the kingdom of heaven.

2. The righteousness of the Pharisee might include reformation in conduct; but the righteousness that gets one into the kingdom of heaven demands regeneration and the renewing of the heart by the Holy Ghost.

3. The righteousness of the Pharisee might secure the approval of the human conscience; but that righteousness that exceeds involves and includes the inward witness of the Holy Ghost.

4. The righteousness of the Pharisee required frequent washings with water in ceremonial cleansing; but the righteousness that exceeds demands the purifying of the affections that we may love right as well as live right.

5. The righteousness of the Pharisee did require the sayings of prayers by lips and words; but the righteousness that exceeds demands right relationship and state before God resulting in understanding and fellowship with Him.

6. The righteousness of the Pharisee required faultless outward conduct; but the righteousness that exceeds proposes pure thoughts and clean, commendable affections.

7. The righteousness of the Pharisee was based upon the unrenewed heart of man for its source and foundation; but the righteousness that exceeds is inwrought in the heart and life by the divine Spirit. And if by any chance the Pharisee did rise from that human plane to the plane of divine light and life, then he is no longer a Pharisee, but a Christian.

Saul of Tarsus had every advantage that any could claim. He was a Pharisee, and a son of a Pharisee. He knew his pedigree, being able to trace it only to Abraham and to Israel, but (what many Jews could not do) also to the particular tribe from which he sprang -- the heroic tribe of Benjamin, from which that other Saul, the King, also sprang. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. His parents had him circumcised when he was eight days old, and he was unconscious of ever having broken the outward law. When the opportunity came for him to prove his fidelity to the religion of his fathers, he scrupled not to persecute the followers of the Nazarene, even unto death. Brought up at the feet of the great Jewish teacher, Gamaliel, he was informed in doctrine, and he was an acknowledged leader at one of the chief synagogues in Jerusalem. What a sensation he must have been in the testimony meetings among the Jews when the grounds of claims were exhibited!

But what did all this net in the way of finding God? Not anything at all. This proud Pharisee met Jesus on the road to Damascus, and thereafter described his former estate as one of blindness and deadness, and classified himself as "chief of sinners," and made a heap of all his great claims, as one might pile up the emblems of idol worship, and cast them onto the dunghill -- "counting them but refuse." Once he had counted the things in which he might glory as many and weighty. But henceforth his cry was, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but in a new creature" (Galatians 6:14-15). And when he did have occasion to look back upon those things which once seemed to him to be of the essence of the divine, they now took their place in true contrast with Christ, who had become his righteousness, and in such light they were no longer good, but evil by reason of their inferior classification -- as far below the level of salvation as men are below the level of

God. And henceforth and forever his appraisal was, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Philippians 3:7-11).

In summary, Paul says, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Romans 3:20). And since this comes right in the midst of his masterly demonstration of the universal sinfulness of man, there can be no doubt of its universal application. "No flesh!" Not the best Gentile, not the best Jew, not the most consistent moral man, not the most commendable church member who is yet on the plane of attained human goodness! To the most worthy person alive, the message of the gospel is, "Ye must be born again. The grasp of the hand (good words or deeds of the law) may lay hold upon the shadow. But the substance awaits the call of the heart.

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14

THE GRASP OF THE HEART

Surface appearances often belie inner realities. Men are wont to make sport of death, but this sham deceives no one into believing that sane men do not fear to die. Likewise, men often assume an air of complete indifference to cover up the fact that they are beset by a deep soul craving that cannot find consolation in any of the things the world of time and sense has to offer.

The inclination is to identify the real with the material, and to account that things which cannot be measured with a yardstick, weighed in a balance or computed in terms of money do not exist. But this inclination gives away before the second thought, for immediately we begin to list things like love and honor that we say are above and beyond the values of time. Character we say is not for sale, and purity and friendship we hold cannot be quoted on the markets.

Generalizations are always difficult, and are frequently unjust. To say that men are so and so and women are so and so -- to the detriment of either group in the comparison -- is to ignore the dignity of personality by subjecting it to sex. Likewise to say that certain races are so and so is usually to pass undue compliment, if our wish is to praise, or to pass unjust censure, if our purpose is to slander. Every man is an individual, as well as a member of a group, and generalizations cannot take thought of the very qualities that make every man a miniature universe.

But we do find a generalization that is valid and complimentary in the fact that all men have capacity for seeking and finding and knowing God. All men may not have the capacity for democracy, all may not have the capacity to compete, and make a good showing beside their fellows, in the pursuit of knowledge. All may not have the capacity to attain to "economical security." But all do have the capacity to find and know God.

There is no want of testimony to support the statement that only a small fraction of men ever find satisfaction in this world. Most of us are quickly moved by the appearance of physical want, but the deepest cravings of the human personality cannot be measured either in terms of the physical or the intellectual. There is a depth to human nature that neither the physiologist nor the psychologist can fathom, even as the heavens above baffle the astronomer and the nature beneath the biologist and geologist.

Moses speaks for us all when he cries, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory" (Exodus 33:18). We want to approach God, and we want to be safe and happy in His presence. We do not want to be told there is no God. Such a word may serve to relieve us from fear of positive punishment, but it has no force to bring us assurance that all is well in life and death and for eternity. Without God our estate is like that of the lonely dove which Noah sent forth from the ark, and which could find no resting place for its feet on the flood-covered earth. And like that dove, we long to return to our Noah in the ark of safety and rest. We want to believe there is a God, and that He is on our side. Our cry is for the manifestation of the supernatural. Atheism breaks down. Agnosticism is of even less value. We want "the full assurance of faith." A mere cold "First Cause" is of insufficient consequence. Our cry is for a living, personal, loving God who knows about us, is interested in us, and plans to take care of us forever.

In terms of the creature, it is the glory of anything that it perform the function for which it was made, and it is the glory of a person that he fulfill that which is reasonably expected of him. And, by transference, from our approach, it is the glory of God that He shall meet the deep soul cries which He has implanted within us. "Show me thy glory," therefore, means, "Help me to know Thee and to be all that Thou dost design me to be." It is in reality a prayer for a change within ourselves, for it is we who cannot see, rather than God who cannot be seen. When the artist's concept of a sunset was placed upon a canvas, a cold critic said, "I never did see a sunset as beautiful as that." The artist answered, simply, "Don't you wish you could?"

Apart from God we are poor amidst plenty, lonesome in the largest crowd, wretched in the most comfortable surroundings, hungry even when well fed, weary before we labor, and disconsolate even when health is good and weather is fair. For, after all, our world is largely within us, even as Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is within you."

But as truly as God himself proposed to be the portion of Levi, when allotments were being made to the other tribes, so truly is the Lord our God anxious to be the portion of our cup. "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us" (Psalms 123:2). "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Psalms 42:1). And God's encouraging response to this is, "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

It was one of the last times Jesus ever met with His disciples before His crucifixion. He talked in low tones and familiar form to the little group. It would seem He had hoped that His subject matter was fundamental and easy to be understood. He spoke, I think, evenly and with facility. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." And here, it seems to me that the Master made as though He would go on, as He did that night when He reached the home of the disciples of Emmaus. But Thomas spoke up, saying, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" Gently the Master answered, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Here again was an intimation of attainment that the disciples were not prepared to profess. So Philip called out, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Here was a reversion to the sensuous -- the idea was, "Make us see God with our natural eyes." Now it was the Master who showed surprise, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me. Believe me that I am in the Father." From the eyes of the body Jesus passed quickly to faith -- the eyes of the soul. God is apprehended by faith, not by the sight of the natural eyes. Faith is the soul's eyes for seeing, and its hand for apprehending. Then the discourse continued smoothly for a little, until the Master said, "I will leave you . . . I will come to you . . . the world shall not see me, but ye shall see me . . . I will manifest myself." Another disciple, Judas by name (not Iscariot), interrupted to ask, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" Here was a plain putting of the question, By what means shall a man reach out to God and God be found of him? And Jesus gave the unequivocal answer, He must reach out with his heart -- "If a man love me we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The grasp of the hand, in "works of righteousness," could not apprehend Him. The grasp of the head, in speculation and reasoning, could not hold Him fast. But the grasp of the heart, the reach of love, makes God our own.

We pass from provision and promise to the sphere of realization. In illustration let us recall that God had promised Canaan to Abraham and his seed after him. Abraham believed the promise and it was accounted unto him for righteousness. But one day it occurred to him that he had no deed, no evidence of vital title. And although he did not stagger at the promise of God, he felt that the time had come for him to be assured. There were no recorders' offices, no human institutions to which appeal could be made for sealing the agreement. So out alone with God, Abraham inquired, "Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" And that question is valid for us, too. God has willed our salvation, Jesus has provided the plan for us, love is the motive, faith is the condition, good works are the fruit, heaven is the reward: but, whereby shall we know that the great transaction is done? Well, the Master said, "If a man love me, we will come to him, and take up our abode with him." But how does one know that he truly loves God? He knows it by the fact that the Lord comes and takes up His abode in him. And in this saying we have no thought of arguing in a circle. We simply mean that when the degree of one's love reaches the proper stage, God will respond. It is just as though I were calling to one from a distance, and taking for granted that that one wants to hear me, I can tell when he hears by the fact that he answers. I can never with truth say, I love God, and desire His favor with all my heart, but He takes no notice of me. I cannot with truth and justice ever say this, because it is never true. The definite and unbreakable promise is, "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."

A few of the disciples met Jesus on the shore of the sea for an early morning breakfast. To one who had as much reason as any to think himself unwanted on the basis of his deeds and who had never become known in the company as a man of brilliant intellect Jesus addressed the leading

questions that were to characterize that closed class meeting. And the questions were not, What hast thou done for me? What dost thou understand about me? But, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" This question being answered, Jesus passed to the second question. It was the same as the first, only the question of comparison with bread and fishes was left out, and the probing query was, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" And yet the third time the question was asked and answered, and the Master was content. Perhaps Peter had expected to be checked up on his recent declension or on his slowness to understand. But, no, the Master checked only on his heart. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." And, "Ye shall seek me and find me when ye shall search for me with all your heart." This grasp of love breaks the grip of sin, drinks the dregs of repentance, and gives spring and energy to faith. All hindrances are overcome, and all shortcomings are spliced out when the full force of the heart grip is exercised.

If the grip of the hand were the one required, only the good could be saved. If the grip of the head were it, only the wise could enter the kingdom. But since it is the grip of the heart that counts, no one is left out.

Dr. H. C. Morrison was famous for his "daydreams" with which he used to illustrate his sermons. Once he said, "The other day I dreamed I was in heaven. At first I was quite happy. But after a time people who had known me on earth commenced to gather about and accuse me of many faults and shortcomings. At last my situation became oppressive, and I wondered that I could be so nearly miserable and yet be in heaven. But then I noticed that the people in front of me were beginning to draw back and to turn away as though they had seen someone approaching from behind me. Looking back over my shoulder, I saw the blessed Master. I hoped He had come to defend me against the charges of my fellows. But all He did was to look at the others kindly, and say softly, "Nevertheless, he loves me." But that is not a picture for heaven only, but for the earth also. It is love that gets the Master's response.

Back and beyond the high passes of the lofty Andes from the Pacific coast, on the upper reaches of the mighty Amazon, I sat one Sunday morning behind the little table in the grass-thatched chapel at Suntsuta, among the Aguaruna Indians. Beside me sat Missionary Walworth. By his side stood a sixteen-year-old Indian boy. I spoke in English. Walworth interpreted into Spanish. Chuta did the best he could to make the Indians hear in their strange language. The meeting was long. The sermon was simple, and amply illustrated. At the close the old chief knelt for prayer. There too the meeting was different from any I have ever seen. But at the close, the chief stood, extended his hand, and said simply, "My heart is good." Pressed for a proper response, I asked him to make it his daily habit to come to see the missionary and tell him whether his heart always remained good or not. The missionary wrote me later that the chief was faithful to these directions for eight months. Then one day he did not come. The next day the missionary heard the chief was sick. Three days later the missionary stood by while the old chief "crossed the river." His last words to the missionary were, "My heart is still good." Said the missionary in his letter, "I have just been speculating on the wonderful and glorious surprise the old chief must have met when he found himself in the city of gold."

In our old school reader was a story drawn from the lives of Queen Anne and her husband, Prince George, of England. The Prince was not King, even though married to the Queen, occupying the same relation in this respect as did Prince Albert as the husband of Queen Victoria at a later

period. Prince George was fond of simple ways and of simple people. It was his joy to take more or less extended excursions on foot, accompanied by a single plain court attendant as companion. The common people with whom he conversed in the fields and market places had not the slightest idea that he was a man of higher station than themselves. Once the Prince and his companion dropped into a meeting of the merchants at Bristol. Here the meetings were carried on in orderly fashion, with a chairman and other necessary officers. The Prince and his companion sat in back seats, but the permanent chairman espied them, recognized the Prince, and reasoned thus within himself, "The Prince will expect to be invited to my home for dinner. If I had known he was coming, and could have made proper preparation, I would have been glad to have him. But to have him go when the house is not prepared would be to embarrass both him and me." And so, finding excuse for leaving, the chairman turned the meeting over to one of the vice-presidents. This man had something of the same experience, and followed out somewhat the same reasonings as his predecessor. So he too left the meeting. This method continued, the rumor that the Prince was present somehow making the rounds, until, without formal adjournment, all the members were gone except one man. This man approached the Prince, bowed courteously, and said, "I am told that you are the husband of our noble Queen, and that this is your traveling companion. My name is Huddleston. I am but a poor bodice maker, and scarcely worthy to be classed as a merchant. We live in a humble cottage, and this is our day to have plum pudding for dinner. But despite the modesty of our fare, I can assure you of a welcome, and in this I am sure I speak for Mrs. Huddleston, as well as for myself. We shall be pleased and honored to have you." The Prince acknowledged the kind words, accepted the invitation, and accompanied Mr. Huddleston to his humble home. In the midst of the substantial meal, the Prince said, "I am so glad to have met you, my kind friends, and now we shall be expecting you to return the visit. When you, Mr. Huddleston, come up to London the next time, bring Mrs. Huddleston along, and be dinner guests at the Queen's table." The poor man tried to excuse himself, saying, "We have no one to present us at the palace gate. We shall be unable to get in." "I will take care of that," said the Prince. Handing Mr. Huddleston a card with something of a code written on it, he said, "When you approach the gate, show this to the guard, and you will have no further trouble." "But," insisted the poor man, "we are very poor people, and shall be unable to dress as becometh guests at the Queen's table." "That," said the Prince, "need give you no concern whatsoever. The Queen always provides garments for her guests. Everyone at the table will be dressed in clothing belonging to the Queen, and you will be dressed as well as the richest of them." In due course the Huddlestons presented their card at the palace gate and were admitted with the honor reserved for royal guests. They sat at the Queen's table in comfort and ease. At the close of the dinner, the Prince said to the Queen, "These friends honored us with their very best when we were at their house in Bristol. Might it be the Queen's pleasure to bestow some special honor upon them?" The Queen was pleased, sent for the ceremonial sword, laid it upon Huddleston's shoulder as he knelt before her, and said, "Rise up, Sir John." Thus were the humble people who made the Prince welcome in their humble home made Knight and Lady in return.

And the way into the heart and favor of God is as simple as that. It is not the caliber or station of the individual that counts. It is the sincerity and simplicity with which He is welcomed. He passes by the palaces of the rich and great where selfishness, pride, and worldliness reign, to take up His abode with the humble and contrite of heart. His word is, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

When the artist finished his masterpiece, "Jesus at the Door," a friendly critic observed that he put no knob on the door -- not even a string that one might pull to lift the latch. But the artist replied, "That door is the door to the heart. There is no knob or string on the outside. The bolt is on the inside. The Master stands without knocking, but only the man within can lift the latch and open the door."

"If any man love me we will come to him and take up our abode with him."

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15

CONSCIOUSNESS OF GOD

Sometime ago we talked of Job as an example of the quandary of the unassured. But you remember that Job qualifies also for a place among those who, like Fanny Crosby, can sing, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine." For, unwilling to live always in the quandary, Job broke through to a brighter day. And this was his permanent testimony. He was willing, apparently, to let all others of his sayings perish with the using or wash away with the floods. But this word he wanted made lasting. "Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!" And here is the summary of the words he wanted made imperishable, "For I know that my redeemer liveth" (Job 19:23-25).

St. Paul, likewise, said, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Timothy 1:12). Anticipating our question as to how one may know, Paul says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16). He even goes into details to tell us that this testimony of the Spirit comes at the beginning of the Christian experience and life, and that it is not therefore to be confused with the "fruit of the Spirit" which involves time and progress. The time of the Spirit's witness, as at the beginning of the Christian experience, is indicated by his words, "Ye received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15). "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). Only one other time is this word "Abba" used, and that is in the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane (Mark 14:36). This is not the usual word for Father, but is the child word, agreeing with "Baba," or "Papa," the words babies use in the first efforts they make to indicate their recognition of their father. Jesus used it in an endearing sense in His prayer in the Garden, and it is used in both the other instances to indicate the dawn of a new consciousness -- the consciousness of sonship that comes to a penitent believer the moment he truly believes.

Our fathers used to say they "felt" the witness of the Spirit, and although the usefulness of that word is somewhat marred by reason of its association with the bodily sense of touch, it still remains as true a putting as has yet appeared. Psychologists speak in doubtful terms of intuition, and when they admit it, it is associated with something like a "sixth sense," and is more or less assigned to the sphere of the psychic or even to spiritism. Consciousness, I think, is about as free from objections as any word that has yet appeared, and therefore I have adopted it in describing the result of the witness of the Spirit upon the person who receives it.

We call upon God in prayer, He responds in the direct compact of His Spirit. This is the summary. And just as prayer has content that comes out in connection with its analysis, so the Witness of the Spirit may be constructed into an orderly doctrine. But our purpose here is rather to emphasize the fact, than to explain the doctrine.

It is easy for one to overlook the fact that the Spirit witnesses to facts, not to theories. No one should therefore extend the scope of the Spirit's witness to include evidence in connection with an argument as to the truth or falsehood of any concept of the mind. John Wesley held to the doctrines of James Arminius as relating to the scope of the atonement, the will of man, divine election, the inescapable nature of grace and final perseverance. George Whitefield held to the views of John Calvin on these matters. The two used to debate, matching argument with argument. In such matters Wesley had the advantage, being a more finished scholar, although Whitefield was the more eloquent preacher. But when Whitefield returned from the continent to claim that while he was in meetings over there "God gave me the witness that Calvinism is the correct doctrine," Wesley would not debate with him any more, and he held, rightly, that a subject of this kind does not yield itself to proof of this nature. The witness of the Spirit is not to be sought as a goal within itself. The sinner is to seek pardon for his sins, and when pardon is granted, the alien will be adopted as a son into the family of God, and then the Spirit will witness to the fact. But even so, that pardoned sinner must not conclude that the exact things he believed when he was seeking pardon, or even the exact things he did are part and parcel of the Spirit's scope of assurance.

Rev. A. L. Whitcomb used to tell about a man who believed that everyone is destined to be saved or to be lost before he is born. If born to be saved, he is one of "the elect." If born to be lost, he is one of "the non-elect." It is the redeeming thing about this doctrine that most of those who hold to it believe that they themselves are of the elect. But this man was different. He believed he was one of the non-elect, and that no matter what he did, hell would be his portion in the end. But when he was mightily moved by the Spirit, he called on the preacher for consolation. He told the preacher how miserable he was, and how much he regretted that he was of the non-elect. At first the preacher tried to disabuse the man's mind of his ideas, but finding that he made little progress, he proposed that they pray. The smitten man said, "I can't pray, I have no prayer. I am one of the non-elect." The preacher answered, "I will lend you my prayer. I am one of the elect." They knelt together. The preacher said, "Now you follow me, and use my prayer: 'God I thank Thee that Jesus died for my salvation.'" "I can't pray that," cried the man. "Jesus did not die for my salvation. I am one of the non-elect." But the preacher said, "This is my prayer, and we are to pray my prayer today." After some further urging, the poor man prayed the preacher's prayer, but only as a borrowed prayer. Then the preacher went on to thank God for His love and willingness to save. The man objected at each petition, but followed after the preacher urged. At last the preacher came through, saying, "O Lord, I believe that through the merits of Jesus' blood Thou dost pardon my sins and save me now. Hallelujah!" But this time the man forgot that the prayer was not supposed to be his own, and he followed right through in faith to the hallelujah. Then standing quickly to his feet, he cried, "Why, as sure as you live, he does save me now. I feel it and know it. I have been mistaken all this time in thinking I am one of the non-elect, for, thank God, I am one of the elect." Now changing the man's heart did not change his doctrine, neither did it prove that his doctrine was true or false. It was the man who had been changed from an alien to a son, and the Spirit bore witness to the fact.

Can one know he is a child of God by an inward consciousness brought about by the witness of the Spirit? He can, and he should insist on pressing his claims as a seeker until this assurance comes to him. To stop short of this assurance is to remain in the class of quandary, where Job was when we looked at him the first time. How does one obtain this inward consciousness of which you speak? He obtains it by seeking God with all his heart, and by knocking at the door of God's mercy until the door opens. How will one express the joy that assurance brings? That depends very much upon one's individual temperament. Some will shout aloud. Some will laugh. Some will weep. Some will find the attitude of great quietness to their liking. But this outside demonstration is not the fundamental thing. The fundamental thing is the inside manifestation. And regardless of the temperament, the inward manifestation will be adapted, and the one as well as the other will be able to joyfully say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and he will know He lives, because He "lives in my heart."

Fanny Crosby wrote several thousand gospel songs and hymns. But the one that evidently expressed the blind poet's own sentiments in the fullest manner was:

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

Here is the sublimest testimony in a minimum of words. But no one need be content with anything less satisfying. The facts of Christian standing and state are so completely knowable that one who has them impressed upon him and infused within him by the Holy Spirit has no need that any man teach him, for he knows within himself that he has passed from death unto life, and that God, the great God of the Bible, is his own God.

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16

EXPERIENTIAL DIFFERENTIATIONS

Many doctrines that we hold to be true beyond question, are not subject to direct conscious proof. Take for example, our Christian belief that God created the world and all that therein is by the act of His power. We base our belief in this entirely upon the teachings of the Bible, which we believe to be the Word of God, and true beyond all doubt or cavil. But our thesis on creationism is what we call "a fact of the Bible," and we cannot say, "I have the inward witness of the Spirit that this is the way it was done." Or take the doctrine of the trinity of the godhead: the Scriptures teach that the Father is God, that the Son is God, and that the Holy Spirit is God: but that there is one God. Now all these facts cannot be reconciled except by positing that there are three persons in one godhead. This explains why the word trinity does not occur in the Bible, and also why it is used in Christian literature. We believe in the trinity because we believe the Bible. But we cannot say that we are conscious of three persons in the godhead. We say only that the doctrine of the trinity is necessary in order to construct an orderly doctrine out of the revelation given us in the scriptures regarding the facts of our infinite God. Trinity has no analogies in nature, and it is purely

"a fact of the Scriptures," not subject to the inner test of the human consciousness. This same thing may be said about the doctrine of the second coming of Christ, and some other things which we are sure the Scriptures teach, but which cannot at the present become the subject of conscious experience with us. In like manner, subjects like church polity, the mode of baptism and the constituency and purpose of the Church which have been the center of much debate, are not subjects on which a truly careful person will claim to know he is right to the point of outlawing the ideas of all others. For on such matters, we have the Bible and the interpretations and reasonings of men, and others have the same sources. That we do not reach the same conclusions that they do is not remarkable after all, and proper consideration of the factors involved should take away our pride in such matters, and make us subdued and tolerant. It is in such matters as these that mottoes like "think and let think" have their application. And those who are so exercised over Protestantism's "divided front" should know that the only way to make all men think alike on such matters is to establish an intellectual dictatorship under which the thinking of the few is forced upon the many. Personally, I believe the alternate is a greater evil than the one it would cure. Union is a good thing if it does not attempt to get too far away from unity, but when it assumes the proportions of an intellectual colossus it is just as dangerous as too large a combination of capital or labor or any other feature or factor in human society. It is my privilege to explain to my neighbor why I think as I do, and to try to make him "see the light." But if my arguments do not convince him, it will not do him any good to say he agrees with me; and neither will my cause become stronger by the attachment of such disciples. Among the freedoms; none is more fundamental to human happiness and progress than intellectual freedom, and those who would curb it in the interest of their own doxy (and no others want to curb it) are taking a short cut in substituting authority for conviction, and are therefore trying to cut the throat of their own liberties, as well as to destroy more quickly the freedoms of others.

From all this it will be seen that the scope of our Christian experience is quite limited, being confined to facts, as distinguished from theories, and even as distinguished from truths as they relate to history, prophecy and the experiences of other people.

Boreham suggests that autobiography is distinguished from biography in that it relates to the inside of the house, while the other describes the outside. Therefore one should not begin his autobiography by saying, "I was born." There is no doubt that he was born, but for the facts concerning that occurrence he is dependent upon the impressions and recollections of others. His story should start with the first conscious experience he can recall; and he is the sole interpreter of that experience, seeing it is his own impression and experience he is describing, and not that of some observer or of some critic who saw the house from the outside approach. Our theme, likewise, has to do with spiritual autobiography, and not with biography. Our sphere is the inside of the house, not the roof, cornish, walls, doors, windows or any other of the essential exterior of the place. We are using the term consciousness, rather than the term Witness of the Spirit, because we are thinking not alone of the fact of the divine communication, but also of its reception and effect on us. Meditation on the text, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit" (Romans 8:14), men have sometimes asked: Are there two witnesses, His Spirit and our own human spirit? The answer is that it is the mode of communication that is being described. His Spirit communicates directly with our spirits, not by an indirect course as would be the case if He came by way of the natural senses. But the result of this direct communication of Spirit with spirit is what we are now calling consciousness, and by the term we mean practically the same thing that is

elsewhere in the Scriptures described as "the fruit of the Spirit." We strive not to be either profound or exhaustive. Rather, we would be direct and practical. Our general thesis is that there is a divine response to the human search for God, and that this response is direct from God to the seeking soul, and that it is of such a nature that its significance is known to the soul to which it comes, and that, like the white stone and new name of Revelation 2:17, is not intelligible to any other. Christian experiences is of necessity a private and personal matter, so that the fathers were absolutely correct when they said, "It's better felt than ["telt"] told." In fact, theirs was the emphasis of understatement, for although it can be felt, it cannot be told. And now in the differentiations of this consciousness, we would stick to the Bible, and to the simple lines which are plainly marked in the experiences of the many. We would leave subordinate distinctions to those who delight in analysis, and special revelations we would let rest with apostles and those to whom they were given as supplying personal necessities, and would give our thoughts only to the factors which are indispensable to us all. At the risk of being repetitious, we would impress the fact that our thesis does not include the objective life which is properly designated demonstration, and has to do with conduct -- words and deeds -- and with expressional matters. Our topic has to do with manifestation -- the subjective phase of the Christian experience. It is that realm into which Upham entered two generations ago in his book, *The Interior Life*. Three things are distinctly included in the Christian consciousness, and of these we would speak in order. They are: (1) consciousness of relationship; (2) consciousness of state or condition; and (3) consciousness of direction. And the three items in differentiation, I think, largely, if not fully, cover the subject.

I. Consciousness Of Relationship

The term "universal fatherhood of God," and its corresponding term, "universal brotherhood of man, have been used in such a loose manner as to blur proper lines and remove ancient landmarks to the detriment of all concerned. It is a fact of course that God is the Father of all mankind in the sense of being their Creator, and that all men are brothers in the sense that they are members of a common race. But in the New Testament sense, it is not creation that makes one truly a son of God, but the new birth that establishes this vital relation. Likewise, there is a brotherhood in Christ that is vital and real, and it is to this that more reference is made than to that natural relation that grows out of the common origin. It is not the blood of Adam in our veins that unites us to God, but rather the blood of Jesus applied to our hearts.

We are born into the world with our faces away from God, and the universal experience of man is that at the dawn of responsibility we walk away from God into transgression and guilt. To this also the holy Scriptures bear abundant witness. A man in his sins is an alien to God, and not a son in the New Testament sense. This is not only the unregenerate man's legal and logical relationship to God, but it is also his conscious relation. For in whatever other characteristics men may differ, in one thing they are all alike, and that is in their consciousness of sin -- their sense of blame and guilt. But from whence does this consciousness arise? Some say its source is the natural conscience which the Greeks called "the voice of God in the soul," and which Shakespeare says "makes cowards of us all." But Jesus accredited this witness to the Holy Spirit. In the sixteenth chapter of John, speaking of the coming of the Holy Spirit to the disciples, as He had promised was to take place, Jesus said, "He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of Judgment." Herein is listed the three essentials of conviction for sin: the sense of guilt, the sense of responsibility for that guilt, and the sense of ability to find a way out of the plight. Some, in reading

this passage, have added two words in interpretation, and have said, "and of judgment to come." But a more careful reading shows that it was not a future judgment, so much as a present judgment that was intended. For he says, "Of judgment because the prince of this world is judged." No man can hold himself in very deep loathing so long as he can say, "there is no remedy." That sense of oughtness that is the quintessence of personal guilt is born of the realization that there is somewhere available resources that would make the wrong right. The elements in this first sense of relation known as conviction for sin is: consciousness that you are wrong, consciousness that there is a way to be right, and consciousness that there is power to make the change from wrong to right somewhere available. Truly, by the witness of the Holy Spirit in what the theologians call "prevenient grace," the sinner knows he is a sinner, no matter how much others may tell him he is not so.

In describing what takes place for and in the believing penitent sinner, scholars have found it necessary to use several words, as: pardon, regeneration, justification and adoption. Pardon is the method by which God justifies, regeneration is descriptive of what takes place in the heart of one whom God pardons and justifies in bringing him into spiritual life and cleansing away his guilt, and adoption describes the method by which God changes the relationship of the justified and regenerated soul from that of alien to that of son. These discriminating terms are for the intellect, and are not essential in the experience of the heart. In consciousness, one is pardoned, justified, regenerated and adopted all as one operation of divine grace, and to this changed relationship the Holy Spirit bears witness. It is in the first moment of this blessed consciousness that the new-born soul cries, "Abba, Father." They err who say the relation has been there all the time. It was not there at all until the penitent's faith took hold of the promise of God and released regenerating grace upon and into the heart. That Jesus died to provide for this does not argue that it has existed from then until now. That argues only that it was provided once and for all. But the possession of the new relationship had to wait for the co-operation of the penitent himself, and thus breaking into the new light, the new light is so radical and so knowable that it is by strong analogy called "the new birth," for it is to the spiritual life what birth is to the physical life -- the true beginning.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God!" Nothing could be more unequivocal than that. It does not say that by a proper adjustment of psychological functions we are made to feel better. It does not say that by some inward impressions we are caused to believe that our estate is not so bad as we had once feared. It does not say that God intimates to us that he might, at the end of life, admit us to His presence. It says without leaving any room for doubt or quibble, "beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God." This is a relationship that no man or angel -- none except the "only begotten Son" on earth or in heaven will ever be able to better. It is the highest of all relationships that finite beings can ever possess. And by the unmistakable witness of His Spirit we may know that this relationship is ours.

If any still hold back and ask for the "code" in which the Spirit speaks to the adopted son to assure him of his standing in the Father's family, we have to say, "There is no way but the way of experience."

I cannot tell thee whence it came,
This peace within my breast;
But this I know, there fills my soul

A sweet and tranquil rest.

Nor should this be surprising, for the witness is altogether a personal assurance. It is not a group assurance at all. It is a white stone that no one knows save him that receiveth it. And everyone that receives it is able to decipher the code. Ask the scholar, ask the illiterate, ask the moral man, ask the drunkard, ask anyone from any class who has received this witness, and he will say, "I have the witness in my heart."

Jesus said, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

Two things are emphasized here: mystery and certitude. The mystery applies especially to those who stand without, the certitude belongs to the one within. If therefore we find ourselves lame at the task of explaining, let this not confuse us; for we are talking of something that belongs in another world from the one of time and sense in which unregenerate people choose largely to live. But the certitude is what we cherish. The old countryman, urged to explain how he knew he was a child of God, said simply, but in tone of finality, "I know because I know." We do not know because of a vision we have seen with our natural eyes, nor because of some word or voice we have heard by the power of the physical ears, we know because the Holy Spirit has told our spirit. This consciousness of sonship in relation is the due of every child of God. Let no one be content to live and die without it.

II. Consciousness Of State Or Condition

Being is more fundamental than doing. This saying applies to moral and spiritual life, as well as to other forms and spheres. If we may speak immediately of the point in mind, we would say that consciousness of right relationship to God as sons gives us right to the fellowship of God here and throughout eternity. But the right does not always involve and include the preparation. However, it is evident that the right does involve responsibility for making the preparation, and therefore the two cannot remain in perpetual differentiation. It devolves upon a son of God, not only to pattern after his Father in words and in actions, but to conform to His likeness in inner character. Therefore the command, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Peter 1:16), is addressed to all God's children. A shortage of grace to realize the ideal does not invalidate the demand. No matter who falls short, no matter whether any attain, the standard remains. God cannot change that, for it is founded upon His own inviolable and immutable character.

Charles G. Finney's thesis in which sanctification was identified with a perfectly adjusted will does not cover all the ground involved. Men have affections, as well as will; and love, as well as choice, is capable of being mixed. After all has been said in attempts to explain (and sometimes to explain away) Paul's predicament as he describes it in the seventh chapter of Romans, it yet remains that what he says of his own experience there is applicable to the conscious experience of many who in loyalty would die before they would deny that God has witnessed to their adoption as sons. We are not interested just now in theological terminology, and do not feel called upon to discuss the arguments by which good and learned men have sought to analyze and make clear the disease and the remedy for the disease. We are concerned just now for facts. And

since we have no disposition to pass judgment upon any one, we shall confine our words to acknowledged facts, and we shall not even seek to extend our scope to any who are reluctant to be included.

But the fact is that every Christian's heart is either pure or it is not entirely pure. And our thesis is that each may know for himself what the truth is. There are those who will say that no Christian's heart is altogether clean, and there will be those who say every Christian's heart is so. But since we are confining our thinking to the realm of conscious facts, we stop at saying that in the case of every Christian, it is either true or it is not true, and that he has a right to know how it is with him, and that God vouches to tell him.

There are many cases, like that of Hazeal (II Kings 8:7-15) in which one's heart is worse than he confesses it to be, but such self-deception is far removed from that willingness to see the worst there is in us which is characteristic of the true Christian who sincerely cries, "Search me, O God, and know my thoughts; try me, and know my ways, and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting."

You remember how ugly the self-seeking of the disciples appeared when they came into the Master's presence? Out on the road, away from His presence, they had argued heatedly as to which of them should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. But when they came into the house where He was, not only did their arguments cease, but they even tried to turn His thoughts to an instance of narrow loyalty in which they had been principals. Well, it is when we come fully into the Master's presence that all desires and intents of the heart that are not in full harmony with holiness look so ugly. But when this sense of incompleteness and unholiness becomes the deepest, the soul is nearest to the place where the cleansing fountain can be found.

It is an axiom of the Scriptures that God's people can be clean and holy in heart. To say this is not so is to make light of the commandments, to nullify the promises, to make void the prayers, and to deny the testimonies of the holy Book. Yes, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification" (I Thessalonians 4:3). And while there is a human phase of sanctification implying and involving consecration, there is also a divine phase implying and involving purification. The human side is the call. The divine side is the response. Our emphasis now is upon the response. No matter how forcefully anyone may preach consecration, he is not preaching Bible holiness unless he also emphasizes purification. It is not enough that the will should be entirely yielded to God. It is essential that the affections be "purified and alienated from sin and the world and exalted to a supreme love to God."

Daniel Steele, of Boston, used to call the Holy Spirit "the executive of the godhead," and the expression is full of merit. In fact nothing relating to the salvation of man is effectively changed except by the Holy Spirit. God's love is the motive of our salvation. The blood of Jesus is its meritorious cause. The faith of the individual is the conditional cause. The Word of God, the Bible, is the instrumental cause. But the Holy Spirit is the efficient cause. In plain language, only spirit can change spirit. And in the sense in which we speak, no one is changed and made better except by the Holy Spirit. This is why it is said that we are "sanctified by the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:16). It is the Holy Ghost, operating under the symbol of fire, that purifies the heart of the fully consecrated Christian.

But we are to speak of the resultant consciousness, rather than of the process. Can one who is sanctified wholly have the consciousness that such is his state and condition? He can, and should. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us" (Hebrews 10:14). It was with reference to this close connection between the provision of holiness in the atonement and the bestowal of holiness in the baptism (cleansing) of the Holy Ghost, that the poet testified, "The Spirit answers to the blood."

By what token does the Holy Spirit indicate that the Christian's heart is pure? By direct witness, not by any outward demonstration. This is important and far from being a demotion; this is giving the witness of the Holy Ghost to the purity of the heart the highest possible rank. If demonstration were the proof, then the evidence would be indirect. But the Spirit himself being the witness, the evidence is direct. There is no "game of gossip" or form of deduction involved. "The Holy Ghost also is a witness to us."

God has habitually ignored our bent toward ostentation. He leaves to us to tell all around what a wonderful Saviour we have found -- He Himself stops by simply telling us. By this we mean that the witness of the Holy Ghost to our sanctification, like His witness to our sonship, is altogether subjective and personal. Like the countryman of whom we spoke, we can do no more than to say, "I know because I know." But this is saying that we know it with the highest degree of certitude of which we are capable.

When Paul returned from his visit to the third heaven (II Corinthians 12:1-6), he declared he saw things there which it is not lawful for a man to utter. But the previous phrase says he heard "unspeakable words." So I think there was no formal prohibition against his telling what he saw and heard. He was just held back by that higher law, the law of impossibility. I can imagine that he did sometimes attempt to tell a friend about his vision. But when he approached the description of what he saw, he could find no units of comparison in the beauty of this world, and when he would attempt to imitate the music he heard, his voice sounded like a tinkling cymbal in comparison, and when he would seek to impart the meaning of the message someone gave, he just quit in utter discouragement, and said, "It can't be described."

Now that is the way it is regarding the consciousness of a clean, pure heart. The consciousness is a personal matter -- glorious beyond words, and unlawful to tell because impossible to tell. But just as holiness of heart is the universal heritage of all God's children, so the conscious witness to the presence of such a blessed estate is clear and satisfactory to all who will not be content until they press on and possess it.

III. Consciousness Of Direction

The Bible, the Word of God, has been called our Guide Book, and it has been truly said to contain all that is necessary to our faith and practice. But man is a composite being, and requires the providences of God for his body, the Word of God for his mind, and the Spirit of God for his spiritual nature. To be without any one of these is to be a pilgrim without full equipment for the journey.

In his book, called Impressions, which I read when I was a young Christian, Martin Wells Knapp, said there are three elements in the content of divine guidance: the Bible, inward impressions by the Holy Spirit, and providences. He said that it is only in rare instances that one should be governed by only one of these factors. Ordinarily he thought it reasonably safe to proceed on the basis of two of them. And whenever all three are in agreement one can feel assured. Knapp especially warned against the danger of following impressions when they are out of harmony with the general tenor or the specific teaching of the Bible. Such impressions, he thought may be assumed to be either of mere fleshly origin or else from the devil and evil spirits. Also, he thought that to ignore divine providences is to be irrational, and make way for the devil to lead us astray.

But it is notable that the Bible is primarily a book of principles, and not a handbook of details. For example, the Bible condemns dishonesty, but it does not give details in the application of this principle, let us say to the relation of employee and employer. It is required of us in this enlightened day that we resolve, if we are an employer, to pay a full day's wage for a full day's work. And if we are an employee it is ours to give a full day's work for the full day's wage.

Likewise the providences of life are useful in a negative way, but not fully in a positive way to the purposes of direction. For example: a man who has lost his right arm in an accident should know by this that the calling of a blacksmith is not for him. But for another to conclude that he should be a blacksmith just because he has a strong right arm would not be justified, since there are many other callings in which such an arm is useful.

When the Children of Israel came out of Egypt, a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night directed them. But in the wilderness, Moses persuaded his brother-in-law, Hobab, to continue with the tribes to "be eyes" for them in the desert. The explanation evidently is that the guiding pillar indicated the direction that should be taken, but they needed also a trained scout to tell them how far to go on a given day that they might find water and food and fuel for the night. The pillar was for general direction, Hobab was for detailed direction, and both were needed for a safe journey.

By the Bible we know that a career at law, medicine, agriculture, or business is honorable. But we cannot find out without some more detailed guidance which of these callings is the place God would have us fill. We know that marriage is honorable in all, but it is easy for us to make a mistake, not by getting married, but in whom we choose for a life's companion. In the callings of the gospel there are many forms, all owned and blessed of God-like teaching, preaching, missionary activity, and others. But we need specific direction to know which way to take.

And let us not think that we need direction only in the so-called great things of life. George Mueller was preaching in Richmond, Virginia. At the close of a morning service, a brother asked Mr. Mueller if he would not like to go out for a drive in the afternoon to visit the historic points about the city. "When would we go?" asked Mr. Mueller. "About three o'clock," replied the friend. "Would it do if I let you know at two o'clock whether I can go or not?" "Yes," replied the friend, "that will be all right." At two o'clock Mr. Mueller said he would go. He was much interested in the places visited, and showed every sign of pleasure during the drive. At the close of the drive, the gentleman asked, "Why could you not let me know at noon that you would go for this drive?"

"Why," replied Mr. Mueller, "I had had no opportunity to pray to know whether God wanted me to take the drive or not. But when I prayed I found that He would be pleased to have me do so." The gentleman expressed surprise that Mr. Mueller would take the matter so seriously, but Mr. Mueller said, "I cannot judge of the importance of matters. This drive this afternoon might just as readily be a matter of life and death with me as a trip across the Atlantic Ocean, and I could not think of undertaking anything important enough for me to think about without making it a subject of prayer that I might find out what God thinks about it."

You recall that Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would "guide" those who received Him (John 16), that Paul was forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach in certain provinces (Acts 16:6), and that John made the strongest possible statements regarding the dependability of the Spirit's direction in the ways of life (I John 2:27). Not only is there no want of scriptural justification for our faith that the Spirit will guide wisely those in whose hearts He is permitted to dwell, but our credulity is taxed by the scope and detail that is given to the matter in the holy Book.

Careful people are reluctant to say, "God told me to do this thing." They are especially modest about using any such expression in advance of the action involved. We have heard a preacher say God led him to preach a certain thing, and it was no help to us because we could not believe God would lead anyone to say things so weak and doubtful of purpose. The fact was, the preacher was seeking an alibi for his folly, and his sense of reverence was not deep enough to save him from the snare of insolence toward the divine.

But because people are reluctant to talk about their experiences in this matter does not mean they have no experiences. It means only that these experiences are of so private a nature that to talk of them is like betraying a secret. And besides there could be little purpose in talking of them, since the wisdom or unwisdom of a deed or word is itself a testimonial to the facts involved, be they good or bad.

There is here one of the most important hemispheres of God's grace to us -- the place of divine direction. The prime condition involved is to be filled with the Spirit, and to be sensitive to His indications. Just as hob-nail shoes are out of place in the temple, so coarseness is a bar to divine direction. "Mind the checks," was the old admonition. And to it we would urge, "Mind the urges." Stop short when He says stop. Move quickly when He says move, and He will check and urge you more frequently and with increasing force.

A radical man once said, "I have not made a hurtful mistake since I was sanctified." Not long after that his wife died. After some months, he married again, married a woman altogether unsuited to him, and within a year there were separation and divorce. But someone remembered his former boast, and faced him with it. His reply was, "I will change the saying just a little, and make it this: I have not made a hurtful mistake when I was sanctified." The change in words was a tacit confession of a loss of grace as a prelude to the heartbreaking mistake. But cannot we all say that our hurtful mistakes are made when we are low on grace, and that we are wise beyond our years when we are truly filled with the Spirit and led by the Spirit?

We all appreciate human advice. But it is disconsoling to discover, as we can easily do, that most of our friends are like Mark Twain, who said he was very popular as an adviser, because

his practice was to find out what his friends wanted to do, and then advise them to do it. We need one who will direct us as we ought to go, whether at the moment the course suits our fancy or not.

A Christian man had a very important decision to make a decision which would affect the whole course of his future life. He was in a quandary whether to go or stay, and he seemed not to be able to reach a decision. But he was a good man, a Spirit-filled man. A well known Christian minister was due to visit his section just before this decision was to be made, and the man decided to advise with this minister about it. The minister heard the man's story, and his reasonings pro and con. Then the minister asked, "When does this decision have to be made?" "It has to be made by ten o'clock this coming Friday night." The minister said, "You continue to pray, and I will pray. And by ten o'clock Friday night you will know what you should do." The man continued in a state of uncertainty, and was much troubled. Friday came and he had reached no conclusion. The telegraph office closed at ten o'clock, and he had promised to give his reply by that time. He stopped his carriage in front of the telegraph office at five minutes until ten, and stepped out, still as uncertain as he had ever been. But by the time he reached the desk in the office where he was to write out the words that meant either to stay where he was or to leave for a distant land -- a matter of gravest moment -- he was as clear as to what he should say as though an unseen power had directed his hand. Twenty-five years later the man was able to look back over his life without regret, and marvel that he had been so wisely led in such a strange manner.

In summary we urge that every seeker for the standing of sonship with God pray on and press on and believe on until the witnessing Spirit comes into his heart. That every Christian make holiness his goal, and pray on and believe on until the "Spirit answers to the blood" and assures him that every vestige of sin is gone and his heart is clean and holy within. And finally, that every Spirit-filled Christian study to show himself approved unto God by seeking to be always led of the Spirit in things both great and small. Let the question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" be asked in expectation of an answer. Learn to know the voice of the Lord in direction. Learn to obey the Spirit's gentlest touch. Learn to trust His guidance for daily life. Do not give way to any temptation to expose his secrets. Let the wisdom of your course be evidence that you do "walk with God." And in this final stage give warrant to your claim that you are a son of God by the scriptural test, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

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THE END