

A Kaleidoscope of Diamonds

Volume One

Finding a Pattern of Beauty in Life's Chaos, Pain and Passion

by Desmond Ford

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Dedicated to my captive audiences, mainly college students, across several continents — who patiently taught me so much.

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Introduction

The Miracle of a New Look

How long is it since you felt like cheering, singing and dancing? By the time you are less than halfway through this little book, we think that's how it will be with you. These pages have some tremendous things to say (not original, but mostly forgotten—the author's contribution being but a mite to the treasury), things that vitally affect you today, tomorrow and forever. What's more, we can even guarantee doing something about those yesterdays you would gladly forget. Impossible? Read and see.

An hour with a book would have brought to his mind
The secret it took him a whole year to find,
The facts that he learned at enormous expense
Were all on a library shelf to commence.

How to see from life's cul-de-sacs into infinity, a joyous infinity—that's the theme of this book. We offer you here Aladdin's lamp, Ali Baba's cave, Treasure Island, the Holy Grail, the Golden Fleece, the Apple of Hercules, Klondike's goldfields, the mystic philosophers' stone that could turn common metal into gold, and the Thread of Adrienne which showed the path through the labyrinth to the light.

A kaleidoscope suggests all of these. Bits of colored glass— that's what one sees when looking through a kaleidoscope. But lo, as you turn the cylinder, symmetrical patterns of wonder appear. Instead of chaos, there is beauty. Can it be that way with life? We each wander over life's battlefields and find it littered with the dead and the dying. We too are wounded and are desperately trying to find the answer to the question as to whether the disparate fragments of our experience have been projected by a universe of blind chance, or whether there is some pattern to it all. We do know that for some weary fighters, the battlefield has ultimately become the place of vision. They learned to see further through a tear than through a telescope. Can we learn that too?

Does not everything depend on how we turn the cylinder of vision? You have heard often of the two men who looked out of prison bars—one saw mud and the other stars. Two boys belonging to the same family can construe life so differently. One sees mainly the sordid and the sorrowful, while the other working by his own private compass is guided by shining orb'd idealism. Its gleam transforms for him all that is dark or dingy and enables him to labor on, whatever the discouragements.

Not only beauty, but truth is in the eye of the beholder. We habitually see with the eye and not through it. What is already present in the mind and heart determines what we make of all around us. Experience is not what happens to us, but what we do with what happens to us. Some, like Admiral Nelson, view all around them with their glass eye and misinterpret reality. Others choose to wonder rather than worry when their twist of life's kaleidoscope yields surprising and joyous patterns.

Most of us admit to being cross and crooked at times under the bludgeoning of our days. Does not life seem cross with us? Does not contradiction and ambiguity

characterize much of what happens to us? The inner eye needs a map of Treasure Island, an Aladdin's lamp for rubbing, an Ali Baba's cave for entering—a magic kaleidoscope which will make ordinary things extraordinary, common things glorious, cruel things kind and bewildering fragments a jeweled pattern.

And in case all that sounds too ethereal and idealistic, let us hasten to add: this book may be the most practical book you have ever read. In a country where 350,000 people a year die of tobacco-related diseases, and where ninety percent of heavy smokers wish they could give up the habit; in a country where the majority of people past their thirties are overweight, and many of them dangerously so, and where millions would do almost anything to regain a normal appearance; in a world where it is estimated that seventy percent of diseases are diseases of choice, and where untold millions die decades earlier than they need, and where the major cause of death under thirty is auto accidents caused by lack of self-control; a world where successful marriages are almost as rare as hen's teeth—in such a country and in such a world, a distillation of the wisdom of a great host who mastered the art of living offers priceless treasures of inspiration and motivation.

Most of us can do almost anything that we want to do, but it's that wanting that's so often missing. The "wants" of good sense are usually overridden by the "want" of physical or psychological desire. "Carve the granite with a razor, moor the vessel with a thread of silk, then you may hope by knowledge and reason to curb those giants—the passions and pride of man: So said John Henry Newman years ago, and his words were never more true than in our own day.

Grant us the will to fashion as we feel,
Grant us the strength to labor as we know,
Grant us the purpose, ribbed and edged with steel
To strike the blow.

New knowledge we ask not,
Knowledge thou hast lent
But, Lord, the will; there lies our bitter need.
Grant us to build above the deep intent
The deed, the deed.

—John Drinkwater

A large part of life is learning to tap resources of power to do what we ought. Only a totally new perspective from some magic kaleidoscope can offer the motivating powers of faith, hope and love which will transform the life of every possessor. Again you may be tempted to say, "I'm not interested in things I cannot see. Hope, faith and love are not tangible." True, but neither are ideas, and ideas are more real than anything else in our world. They literally make our world. Love is invisible and the presence or lack of it makes or mars each of us. In fact, all the real forces in the world are invisible, not just gravity, and electricity and thought.

Oh world invisible, we view thee,
Oh world intangible, we touch thee,
Oh world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we touch thee.

The man that wrote that (Francis Thompson) was a failure for years and enslaved by drugs. To survive, he held the bridles of horses on the curbs of London's streets and called cabs to earn a few cents. But by finding and exercising his gift of seeing the reality of the unseen world, he rose above his obscurity and became a poet of immortal beauty. The insights of this volume stress some of the realities he and others have discovered. They can change, wonderfully change, the most hopeless and discouraging situations. Read and see.

The real treasures of time and eternity can be yours. We invite you to invest an hour which will enrich all your future hours, to bestow on this volume now the attention which will multiply the benefits of all your subsequent activities. Rim the kaleidoscope, it's yours, and wonder, adore and rejoice.

We cannot kindle when we will
The fire which in the heart resides;
The Spirit bloweth and is still;
In mystery our soul abides.
But tasks in hours of insight willed
Can be in hours of gloom fulfilled.
With aching hands and bleeding feet,
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone;
We bear the burden and the heat
Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.
Not till the hours of light return
All we have built do we discern.

—Matthew Arnold

CHAPTER 1

A Crazy Scene—

The Dis-ease of Life Its Pressures and Problems

The ancient city of Pompeii had both a theater of comedy and a theater of tragedy. It is significant that all the really great plays are tragedies rather than comedies. The human heart is more conscious of its pain than of anything else. All of us continually experience trouble from within and without.

Not one of us is doing so well that he or she cannot do better. Some of us, unless we do better, will go under. The chief devils which haunt us and threaten to damn us include anger, alienation, boredom, doubt, debt, depression, disease, despair, fear, failure, foolishness, guilt, gloom, loneliness, pain, perplexity, poverty, redundancy, insecurity, impermanence and death.

Prominent in this list is the guilt which seasons all human experience, guilt which is often false, arising from my cultural traditions, and that guilt which goes deeper and is real, arising from defects within myself. The sense of inadequacy is well-nigh universal and guilt-creating. If you have never experienced it, you must be abnormal and insensitive. In the western world, it is usual to feel threatened or overwhelmed by having too many things to remember and to do, and too many people to please. In a culture that is increasingly complex and competitive, multitudes push themselves to the limit until it can become an overwhelming problem just to manage getting through the day.

Many face intensified guilt because of failure on two fronts—the home front and the job front. Such failure can be the prelude to collapse. At home there are no successful parents—not really successful. Ask the kids. All of them know that the others have better, more permissive parents. Even in the relationship between husbands and wives there are comparatively few who do not feel guilty because of failure at this center of home life. After all, who is loving enough, patient enough, responsive enough? Then there are our foolish failures at home and at work when we choose contrary to our own standards of right, and consequently experience fear of an advancing nemesis ¹.

We don't need convincing that trouble is as real a part of our lives as food and drink, breathing and sleeping. Some of us feel that we are slipping ever deeper into the quagmire, or going down for the third time in deep waters. Is there any help?

The disease must be properly diagnosed before the right cure can be administered. All our problems are really our symptoms. Although the problems are ever-changing, the disease remains the same. It is the path of wisdom to refuse just to hack at the tentacles of the encompassing octopus. Let us aim at its heart. Just to understand the nature of our disease places us halfway towards healing. So we will continue with "the bad news" yet a little longer—but we promise not only help, but victory and deliverance—total and complete.

When the requirement of bricks is doubled, Moses comes. When one wants help as much as a drowning, sinking man wants air and solid earth, then help arrives. After hitting bottom, there is only one direction to go. When it's dark enough, the stars shine out bright enough, and after the blackest hour comes the dawn.

DOUBT

Arms or No Arms?

Iron cages, screaming maniacs, gory slabs of beef, these fill the canvasses of Francis Bacon when he depicts what life is. On the other hand, when Heine, the German poet, knelt before the Venus de Milo, he cried out, "It is beautiful, but it has no arms." That's a second view of existence, that it is good but lacks the best and has no encompassing arms of compassion.

Bacon would have told Heine that the world does have arms—the arms of a cross to be crucified on. Is this true? Is life just a cross on which our body, mind and spirit are impaled without release till death?

When a Chicago street cleaner lost his balance on the ledge of the second floor, he hit the canvass top of a street stall and slid to a none-too-graceful stop on the sidewalk. The crowd gathered, and finally a burly policeman pushed his way to the center exclaiming, "What's going on here? What's all this about?"

The dazed cleaner could only respond, "I don't know, sir, I've just arrived." He was right, was he not? Most of us don't know what life is about because we've only just arrived and were confused.

For a sensitive soul, being alive can be a dreadful experience. By the time such a person has learned what existence is about, it's too late to crawl back into the womb and be unborn. From the moment of conception each soul has a definite date with destiny. We are all chained to a giant conveyor belt taking us to—where? And it is no good crying with the pop singer, "Stop the world. I want to get off." Suspended in an endless sea of space, this globe is a devil's island where all men are confined and condemned, unable to escape. Earth is a floating geographic death row where each and all await execution.²

Earth's Primary Disease

The primary disease of earth's prisoner is neither coronary heart disease nor cancer. It is meaninglessness—doubt of the reality of good at the heart of the universe. Viktor Frankl, a World War II concentration camp prisoner, has documented the way in which strong men collapsed if they had no sustaining philosophy of life, while weaker men with a "why" for living, survived. Today suicide is pandemic, and is more a problem among the young than the old, white than black, the educated than the uneducated, the rich then the poor—because none of life's apparent advantages give a clue to the riddle of existence. Therefore, 5,000 teenagers will suicide in the USA this year—400,000 other people will make the attempt and literally millions of U. S. homes are haunted by this specter of the sudden, despairing, self-initiated end of life.

Is life a disease for which the only cure is death? Is it a punishment for the crime of being born, a nightmare between two eternities, the bubbling, senseless flow of time and space of which man is a part—man being but a parasite on the epidermis of a midge-like planet, hardly perceivable, in the backwater of one of a trillion galaxies? "For what is it all but the murmur of gnats amid the gleam of a million, million suns" (Tennyson). Is human life no more significant than that of a fly which is born and dies in a single day? Is human existence just a dusty scuffle across a parched terrain? Is thinking only itching, and are values only feelings? Is love just a chemical phenomenon, even mother's love? Is death the great benefactor, releasing us from struggle and pain?

Is the world a ship or an iceberg, an egg or a bubble? Is it a planned place or an accident? Can anyone really discover the right answers? These questions plague us all unless already we have given up the battle and joined hands with the beasts. Berdyaev, the philosopher, has given his opinion that modern man has not only lost his way but also his address. Modern humanity is like that little dog in the parcel van of a freight van, which had lost its label and gone on to Washington with a new one: "Here is nobody, from nowhere, going no place."

Some things we can't overlook. If the world is an iceberg, it's melting; if it's a ship, it's sinking. The destiny of the whole planet is dicey. Warmongers are dying to kill each other, and we stand hip-deep in garbage. The garbage age has succeeded the stone, iron, and steel ages, and mankind is choking in its own waste. In the poorest parts of the globe, population is growing like crazy, multitudes are tripping on alcohol, gambling, drugs, marathon sex, TM, eastern cults, etc—all so many chloroform masks to prevent attention to reality. Huxley who predicted in his *BRAVE NEW WORLD* that the elite would live on a special drug soma was not far out. But at the root of all these follies is our doubt as to whether the universe holds meaning.³

Decisions

Why must I bother with the questions? Because I can't dodge making decisions. Every conscious hour, and many times an hour I must choose, and on my choices hang the future. Because every action has a corresponding reaction, because all sowing leads to reaping, because life continually echoes the choices I make and mirrors the forms I personally assume, decision-making is a serious business. Even failing to choose is a choice that can be fatal like a man being swept down Niagara towards the falls. If he doesn't struggle and lay hold of the rescue-rope, it's all over for him.

Limitation is a factor of life, but how it affects me depends on my decisions from moment to moment. If I choose to aim at being the president of the USA, I cannot simultaneously give myself fully to the project of being a disc jockey on a local FM station. If I decide to travel west, the east must wait. If I sleep now, I can't watch "Mash" at the same time. Life is demanding, inexorable, precise, rewarding and punishing. When I pick up one end of the stick I must also pick up the other end. To enter at a certain place determines where I'll come out. So pain and pleasure

are determined by who I think I am and what I think life is all about.

Some questions must be answered or else. And the frightening thing is that even smart people don't agree on the answers. Consider this letter which Will Durant wrote a generation ago to many thought leaders of the world:

Dear Will you interrupt your work for a moment and play the game of philosophy with me? I am attempting to face a question which our generation, perhaps more than any, seems always to ask and never able to answer—What is the meaning or worth of human life?... The growth and spread of knowledge, for which so many idealists and reformers prayed, has resulted in a disillusionment which has almost broken the spirit of our race.

Astronomers have told us that human affairs constitute but a moment in the trajectory of a star; geologists have told us that civilization is but a precarious interlude between ice ages; biologists have told us that all life is war, a struggle for existence among individuals, groups, nations, alliances, and species; historians have told us that "progress" is a delusion, whose glory ends in decay, psychologists have told us that the will and the self are the helpless instruments of heredity and environment and that the once incorruptible soul is but a transient incandescence of the brain. The Industrial Revolution has destroyed the home, and the discovery of contraceptives is destroying the family, the old morality, and perhaps (through the sterility of the intelligent) the race. Love is analyzed into a physical congestion, and marriage becomes a temporary physiological convenience slightly superior to promiscuity. Democracy has degenerated into such corruption as only Milo's Rome knew; and our youthful dreams of a socialist Utopia disappear as we see, day after day, the inexhaustible acquisitiveness of men.

Every invention strengthens the strong and weakens the weak; every new mechanism displaces men, and multiplies the horrors of war. God, who once was the consolation of our brief life, and our refuge in bereavement and suffering, has apparently vanished from the scene; no telescope, no microscope discovers him. Life has become, in that total perspective which is philosophy, a fitful pullulation of human insects on the earth, a planetary eczema that may soon be cured; nothing is certain in it except defeat and death—a sleep from which, it seems, there is no awakening. We are driven to conclude that the greatest mistake in human history was the discovery of "truth." It has not made us free, except from delusions that comforted us and restraints that preserved us. It has not made us happy, for truth is not beautiful, and did not deserve to be so passionately chased. As we look on it now we wonder why we hurried so to find it. For it has taken from us every reason for existence except the moment's pleasure and tomorrow's trivial hope

Spare me a moment to tell me what meaning life has for you, what keeps you going, what help—if any religion gives you, what are the sources of your inspiration and your energy, what is the goal or motive-force of your toil, where you find your consolations and your happiness, where, in the

last resort, your treasure lies.⁴

Some things we do know. We know that for almost all men there is a turmoil within. As Thoreau said, "The majority of men lead lives of quiet desperation." Much of that desperation grows out of inner as well as outer frustration. "I'm not a man, I'm a mess," says one fictional character. Another claims, "I'm not a man, but a civil war." While a third affirms, "I'm not a man, but a menagerie." We all have a tiger within as well as a hundred other cruel creatures.

The Human Riddle

It is just not possible to make right decisions and to feel assured of their rightness until we know who we are. An ancient story tells of a monster outside the gate of Thebes, demanding of those who would enter an answer to its riddle—"What is it that goes on four feet, two feet, and when weakest on three feet?" The answer of course was "man," who as a baby goes on all fours, and when erect goes on two feet, and when old walks with the aid of a walking stick. In our own age, access to the path of progress and joy remains dependent on answering the same riddle. But in this era of crisis, the answer must be given in greater depth. According to Max Scheler, "We are the first epoch in which man has become fully and thoroughly problematic to himself; in which he no longer knows what he is essentially, but at the same time knows that he does not know." Brunner has assented by adding his diagnosis that "not only is the world full of riddles; he himself who asks the riddles has become a riddle."

What is the connection between answering that riddle and decision-making? That solemn humorist, G. K. Chesterton, gives the answer:

If I wish to dissuade a man from drinking his tenth whisky and soda, I slap him on the back and say 'Be a man!' No one who wished to dissuade a crocodile from eating its tenth explorer would slap it on the back and say, 'Be a crocodile!' ⁵

Are you a man or a crocodile? What makes the difference, and what makes you so sure? Why is man the only creature that kills for reasons apart from hunger? One sceptic concerning evolution wrote the following poem:

Three monkeys sat on a coconut tree,
Discussing things as they're said to be.
said one to the other, 'Now listen, you two,
There's a certain rumor that can't be true,
That man descended from our noble race!
The very idea is a big disgrace!
No monkey ever deserted his wife,
Starved her babies and ruined her life,
And you've never known a mother monk
To leave her babies with others to bunk,
Or pass them on from one to another
Till they scarcely know who is their mother—
And another thing you'll never see—

A monk build a fence round a coconut tree,
And let the coconuts go to waste,
Forbidding all other monks a taste.
Why, if I'd put a fence round the tree
Starvation would force you to steal from me.
Here's another thing a monk won't do
Go out at night and get on a stew,
Or use a gun or club or knife
To take some other monkey's life.
Yes, man DESCENDED—with all his fuss—
But, brother, he didn't descend from US.'

Even in circles dedicated to the rooting out of human crookedness, the perversity remains deep-rooted. Part of the strength of humor springs from the wryness with which we acknowledge our cross-grained nature. Spurgeon loved to tell the story of a mean congregation visited by a new preacher. He preached with might and main and at the end of it sent around his hat to take up the collection, When the hat returned to him, it was empty. He turned it upside down and then looked up to heaven and prayed, "Thank you Lord for making sure that I got my hat back safely from this congregation."

In our century which began with so much hope and promise and which now is filled with gloom and disappointment, a clue has come unexpectedly. Two world wars and over forty minor ones have forced upon man the conviction that the biblical writer was correct in saying that the "heart of man is desperately wicked. Who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) The former agnostic, philosopher Joad has recorded his new convictions thus: Evil is not merely a by-product of unfavourable circumstances; it is too widespread and too deep-seated to admit of any such explanation; so widespread, so deep-seated that one can only conclude that what the religions have always taught is true, and that evil is endemic in the heart of man.

I am claiming no credit for this conclusion. On the contrary, it is ground for humiliation to have come to it so late.⁶

Is this talk of human depravity dour, dismal and discomforting? Why dwell on the negatives of life? Because there is no cure without correct diagnosis, because to be wrong about one's self is to be wrong about all else. And because, surprisingly, this terrible shadow testifies to a light somewhere. There can be no evil unless there is good, no sickness unless there is health, no darkness without radiance. Shall we follow the gleam?

Death

The most awful anguish in the world is the certainty of inescapable death and the uncertainty of what follows. Many people rightly demand the facts before they make a decision of importance, but the most important fact for all of us is death—yet it is the most ignored. Today death is cosmeticized and almost all whirl on giddy merry-go- rounds of pleasure, or toil terribly in the effort to crush out the thought of the inevitable tragic finale.

It is the certainty of death that makes life and decision-making so important. If we had eternity and were immortal, a few mistakes here and there would not matter, but if I have but one candle, and when that is burned, I am through, the situation is radically different. The sooner I know how to make right decisions and keep them, the better.

Says John Baillie:

The ultimate sadness is that nothing lasts; that the bloom so soon disappears from all things that are young, that the vigour of maturity is so short-lived, while age brings weariness and forgetfulness and decay such as presage the oblivion and corruption of the grave. This is why 'our sincerest laughter with some pain is fraught.'⁷

Time is my enemy. It's a jailer coercing me along relentlessly, despite my kicks and struggles and screams.

C. Stephen Evans wrote:

I felt time dragging me inexorably towards death; I felt the panic of a man in a car out of control, hurtling towards a precipice on a dark night, the steering locked, the brakes useless. Ahead loomed a plunge into an unknown abyss. In view of my death, what's the meaning of my life?⁸

Earlier we listed impermanence as one of the devils threatening us. Most Americans move about every five years. Maybe we are not thinking of doing that. We are not contemplating moving. But impermanence is a threat to us nonetheless, because spiders' webs and bubbles are more substantial things than human life. There are a thousand gates to death. Our world is but a grave, a vast cemetery, where we transact a little business and indulge a little pleasure before lying down beside the dead. There is scarcely a household without its grave. In many places the dust on which we tread has been man. Our pulse continually beats a funeral march, and life itself is but a procession to that funeral.

Can you remember strolling along the beach at the time of an incoming tide? Have you not observed many a sand-castle doomed to collapse because vulnerable before the advancing waters? Whether kings, geniuses, millionaires, peasants, morons or paupers, we are all in the same boat—or should we say sandcastle? There's an incoming tide for each of us which makes our most well-planned structures of position, wealth or achievement inevitably temporary. Less than a century from now, author and readers will have all departed the scene. Is not that the most significant of all earthly certainties? In terms of our actual experience of time, the first twenty years are the longest half of anybody's life. While at the age of five, at Christmas time, the next great feast is a fifth of a lifetime away, at the age of fifty, it is only the fiftieth of a lifetime away. For life is now traveling ten times as fast. We are all children playing with sand and shells in the face of the infinite ocean and its irresistible messenger, the tide. In view of this, are there any rules for our game? Must the ocean be our enemy? Is it possible that we too might abide in perpetuity like those broad waters? Can we not also advance with the waves, but never to go out again?

The Twentieth-Century Scene

Let us glance briefly at the scene on the twentieth-century beach of our existence. In the last hundred years we have multiplied our speed of travel one hundred times, our power of military weapons a million times and the time of communication ten million fold. The unnatural mounting pressures of our cities where most of us are forced to dwell are too much for human bodies and minds. Forty-five percent of hospital beds are occupied by mental cases, at least seventy percent of city-dwellers suffer from multiple symptoms of stress and twenty percent have emotional diseases.

Few of today's statistics are encouraging. One out of every two men will die of heart and blood-vessel diseases decades earlier than necessary. One in four will die of cancer. Two hundred million people in the world suffer from V.D., and the scourge of herpes threatens at least one in every twelve. Accidents will either kill or cripple one in every eight. One in five is in need of psychiatric help, and about one in seven suffers from recurring depression. If you are a woman there is one chance in three that you suffer monthly to some degree from premenstrual syndrome, and one chance in six that your suffering threatens your marriage, your life or both. Middle age does not come at forty, but in the early thirties. Most people lose one percent of functional efficiency for every year after thirty. By forty, our stamina has been greatly reduced, by fifty our vision is impaired, by sixty our lung capacity is about half of what it was at thirty and we are three-quarters of an inch shorter. After forty, approximately one in every two has some kind of incurable (but not necessarily fatal) disease, which is incapacitating to some extent. The "joy of living" is vibrantly present only in a minority after forty years of age. By that time every normal person has contemplated suicide at least once.

If you are a male in the fifty-five to sixty bracket, you are also among the highest risk group for a fatal heart attack. There is a fifty-fifty chance of your marriage breaking up if you live in a large city and, unless you have special skills, there is a high risk of your becoming redundant as regards your employment. And if you are sedentary at work and at home, your chance of an early death is eight times that of a very active person. On the other hand, if you are under thirty, your most likely cause of death is a motor accident, and the second is suicide, unless you are black, when murder takes precedence over suicide.

We have not particularized the lesser problems such as the near inevitability of surgery for someone in your family before it begins to divide, the claim of up to half your earnings by the government so that the war machine can be maintained, as well as lesser services, and the ever-present threat from nuclear fission. Then there is always the continual threat to all of us of something far more likely than the disaster from nuclear warfare—tragedy resulting from a single, momentary wrong choice, the result of our stupidity or our inordinate passions.

How easily things go wrong,
A sigh too deep, a kiss too long,
A mist and a blinding rain
And life is never the same again.

Dr. Adolph Frenay has summarized some of the awful facts of existence:

Look at this world, as it actually is, exists and lives. Don't look at it through the mirror of your books, and rules and laws. Look at the world with a naked eye. Then you will see a world full of misery. You will see man struggling for the very essentials of life. You will see man crushed down by misfortune and adverse conditions. You will see man driven by hundreds of evils and ills to the point of despair. Open your eyes and see the number of ailing humanity, the prevalence of sickness and pain and witness the most horrifying types of death. Listen to the heartbreaking cries, see the agony and convulsions of hundreds and thousands of men and women. Gaze at the sight of the most terrifying accidents and number the slaughter of whole armies in time of war. How miserably they succumb. Listen to the men and women in pain and then ask yourself—Why all this? What is all this good for? Why this ocean of misery? Is it, after all, worth living in the midst of pain, agony, and despair? Is life worth living when man's body is torn by pain and his mind crucified by misery and despair?⁹

How should one live in a world like that? Or perhaps the question is, how **can** one live in a world like that? This little book suggests the answer. It offers a kaleidoscope on the now and the forever—new views and insights that constitute a bunch of keys for life's most urgent problems. We believe you will find it an Aladdin's lamp, a map of Treasure Island, an Ali Baba's cave, a talisman you can use to change your world.

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CHAPTER 2

Clues to the Diagnosis—A Pattern Emerges

(Part One)

No Chance—But Law

Within and Without

Law Within and Without

We take all sorts of things for granted. We expect the sun to "rise and set" as our planet continues to rotate. We never question that spring will follow winter and that radishes and carrots will grow upwards and not downwards. I always presume that anyone with me sees what I see and hears what I hear. If, however, you read some very ancient book, such as the *Iliad*, you discover a different situation. The men of those times did not take so much for granted. Almost anything could happen any time, any place, and these variant things resulted from the whims of a thousand gods. Only after monotheism came to dominate western society through the influence of Christianity did science as we know it become possible. Both life and philosophy were thus transformed. The key postulate of science became the assumption of the absolute and universal reign of law. Only such an assumption made research worthwhile and possible.

Forest Ray Moulton has said:

>From the tiny satellites in the solar system to the globular clusters, the galaxy and exterior galaxies, there is no chaos, there is nothing haphazard, and there's nothing capricious. The orderliness of the universe is the supreme discovery of science.¹

Once this discovery spread, mankind no longer expected just anything to happen at any time or at any place. Law was king. Long live law! Now it is vital to recognize that our happiness or lack of it depends not only on the stability of natural law, but also on personal relationships. For almost all of us, total rejection by the rest of our fellows would cause us to sicken and die. Therefore, it is essential to inquire whether what is often referred to as a universal reign of law also extends to humanity. In Virgil's *Aeneid* we have the famous line, "Even here in uncouth Carthage, men and women can weep; they feel things just as we do." People differ in backgrounds and culture, but in one thing particularly they are very much alike—strong convictions about justice and injustice, about right and wrong. William Barclay reminds us that:

A good man is a good man to almost any religion or philosophy—Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill, a Stoic, A Christian, a Jew—all agree on what honor, and honesty, and courage, and chastity are. C. S. Lewis spoke of 'the triumphant monotony of the same indispensable platitudes which meet us in culture after culture.' If it was just a matter of morals there was no great difference in the action of the Greek, the Roman, the Jewish and the Christian good man.²

In other words, though men and women have not been sure how nature might behave, they have believed that humans have obligations which cannot safely be avoided. Half of our unhappiness has always been the awareness that we are not fully responding to certain rightful demands being made upon us by the moral convictions of ourselves or others. Never is a normal person free from this tension.

The Inevitability of "Ought."

In the little word "ought," lies both our misery and our mercy, our grandeur and our despair. Ought one ever to use the word "ought"? Can anybody live without using it? Wherein lies the strength and the validity of the demanding term? Does anyone truly have the right to say "you ought," or "you ought not? There are three "oughts" in that sentence actually, for to talk of the "right" implies an "ought." It is evident that "oughts" dominate us in our society. Even in denying their existence or authenticity, we are forced to affirm them by saying in effect that there ought not to be talk of "oughts."

It is no use saying that "oughts" just come from the pragmatic will of society. No one is by nature convinced that he's obliged to submit his will to groups large and small, and furthermore all of us are convinced that society also has obligations which means that society itself cannot be the source of this sense of "oughtness." Says V. A. Demant:

The fact that man brings something to his social relations and is not completely a product of them, is, of course, the ground of both of his power to act anti- socially and of his power to act responsibly as a member of the social whole. It is the conviction that man has a status in the universe otherwise than through his place in the social order that is the reason for belief in democracy and also for the problems of that political faith. For it means that the human being, far from being free in himself and only under authority in his social relationships, is in fact within the sphere of authority in himself by virtue of his relation to the super-temporal order, and therefore enters his temporal relations responsibly.³

Interestingly enough, sometimes it is atheists and agnostics who wax the most indignant when vice prospers or virtue is unrewarded. They are often emphatic that embezzlers, liars, oppressors should be punished. Some even impugn God for what he permits to happen. On the other hand they deny the very existence of deity. "I'm an atheist, thank God," is representative of the inconsistent thinking of many unbelievers.

But at this point, it's vital that we see that no mere thing can make a moral or spiritual claim over us. For this reason, Dr. Emil Brunner reminded us that "It is so much more comfortable to have a pantheistic philosophy than to believe in a Lord God. A God who is neuter makes no claims. He simply allows himself to be looked at." It was Julian Huxley who voiced his tremendous relief on accepting atheism—now there was no one with sufficient authority to say "no" to him about anything.

Dostoyevsky was more correct when he affirmed that God above was just as

essential to man as the earth beneath. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, he has one character say, "If there's no God, everything is permitted." Precisely.

Law is Good News

This word of moral reign is not bad news. If there is no deity then the world is governed by caprice. That means two things—everything is a potential enemy and "do before you are done." Let me quote Thielicke and Tournier in succession, one for each of the items just mentioned.

If you don't believe in God, you no longer know about the fatherly backdrop to the world. Everything—your personal life, as well as all of world history—dissolves into the working of blind forces and meaningless accidents. And so the world itself becomes senseless to you. It becomes downright hostile.⁴

If everything is accidental, then the only rule of life is to let all considerations of life go and seize opportunity by the forelock. If happiness is no longer the blessing promised to those who obey the laws of God, but only a blind stroke of fate, then the greatest possible shrewdness is the best rule of life. And when everyone wants to be the shrewdest, existence finally becomes nothing more than intrigue, lies, and dodges. And the conflicts and injustices that result, far from causing men to examine themselves and become honest again, only drives them to resort even more to these poisonous weapons in order to conjure away their bad luck: they certainly are not going to be left holding the bag.⁵

On the other hand, recognition of law and morality and their source can be tremendously encouraging and strengthening. When Churchill dedicated his sixth and final volume on World War II, he wrote this: "How the Great Democracies triumphed, and so were able to resume the follies which had so nearly cost them their life." Simultaneously, however, he gave the moral of his account. "In War: Resolution. In Defeat: Defiance. In Victory: Magnanimity. In Peace: Good Will." In other words, the law brings destruction when it is ignored, but security when it is obeyed.

Giant Despair has often dealt hard with preachers on blue Mondays, and one of his chief victims was Frederick W. Robertson. Nonetheless, the latter could write:

In the darkest hour through which a human soul can pass, whatever else is doubtful, this at least is certain. If there be no God and no future state, yet, even then, it is better to be generous than selfish, better to be chaste than licentious, better to be true than false, better to be brave than a coward. Blessed beyond all earthly blessedness is the man who, in the tempestuous darkness of the soul, has dared to hold fast these venerable landmarks. Thrice blessed is he who, when all is dreary and cheerless within or without, when his teachers terrify him, and his friends shrink from him, has obstinately clung to moral good.⁶

Continually we resent moral obligation as an unfair intruder, yet simultaneously in

our heart of hearts we are aware that we are rationalizing in our grumbling. Release from obligation never brings everlasting joy. The prodigal son thought he had guaranteed his happiness by forsaking his domestic duties, but friendlessness and famine taught him otherwise. All great souls have known that peace and joy come only through treading the path of responsibility.

De Quincey who wrote *Confessions of an Opium Eater* was a pitiable figure. It was his habit to leave his room to itself. Never did he tidy it up but allowed it to become more and more cluttered and dirty. Then, when he could stand it no longer, he moved. For a lifetime, almost thirty- seven years, he regularly changed residence leaving his dirty work for others to clean up. Many are the souls who do morally what De Quincey did physically. Too often we think we can avoid the results of our lawlessness by just drifting away in time and space from its scene. But it doesn't work. The harvest is there as surely as the sowing.

When Gerald Kennedy wrote on what he called the most important book in the world," (the Gospel of Matthew), he called his essay "Good News of Law." At times we find his conviction hard to share. We are like the woman Spurgeon told about who refused to open her door to a visiting minister bringing a contribution towards her debts. "I heard the knocking, but I thought it was the man come to ask for the rent," she explained. Similarly the truth about reality, while often unwelcome, is actually designed to help us.

According to Emerson, "When God wants to win an argument, he puts the evidence in our instincts." Despite our resentment of obligations and responsibilities, our hearts testify against us and cast their vote on the side of the "oughts." Conscience still makes cowards of us all even in this late twentieth century. To refuse an educated conscience is, as Peter Forsyth affirmed, to cast away diamonds for paste, the substance for the shadow. It is like a lunatic emptying his pockets of gold in order to fill them with gravel, or turning from a crystal-clear, bubbling fountain of living water to drink from some broken cistern which is green with scum, stagnant and odorous. Obedience to law is liberty and disobedience is suicide after bondage.

The Reality of the Invisible

Of course, it must be confessed that no one has ever seen an "ought." But neither have we seen love, though we know its fruits. Nor have we seen truth, nor beauty, nor purity, though for these things men strive and die, knowing as they do so, that they "ought" so to do.

What are we saying? We are affirming that the most important things in life are the invisible, not the tangible, and that our success and joy in this life as well as in the hereafter will be proportionate to our awareness of that fact and our right relationship to it. There is the physical world and our bodies belong to that. Food, money, sex belong to that, and cars, and TV sets, and grand houses. But pigs also know the world of things, this realm of the tangible. Pigs also eat, drink, procreate and enjoy shelter. If a man or a woman lives as though the second world, the world of the moral, the intangible world of hope, faith, love, beauty, truth, purity—does not exist, wherein does such a person differ from a goat or a

donkey? Indeed, they are goats and donkeys! Mankind can never be at home in a universe made up of things alone. Said Martin Buber, "Without it (things) man cannot live, but he who lives for it (things) alone, is not a man."

Purpose Unlimited

Then besides the clue of "ought," there is the clue of "purpose." Purpose characterizes all we see and do twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year. Means and ends sum up our existence. If then there is purpose in my smallest acts, whether the cleaning of my teeth, or the writing of a letter—what is the purpose of my life as a whole? He who fails to prepare, prepares to fail. Is that true also of the longest possible view as well as the shortest? If at school, in my profession, in my family and in every other human sphere, I reap what I sow—what about life as a whole?

Intuitively all men know that it is insanity to believe that it does not matter whether a man has lived like the Apostle Paul or the Emperor Nero. The death of one Old Testament king is recorded in these words—"He departed without being desired" (2 Chronicles 21:20). What an obituary! We who prize diamonds over glass, and gold over sand, know that lives also should have quality. What are the years of Methuselah compared to the deeds of Jesus? What is the donation of our life?—not its duration—that's the issue. How much shall we be missed?

Coming—Ready or Not

When the plague struck London, King Charles fled in terror. While the citizens died like flies, he cared not. All his treasure went with him and there was no contribution given to the Relief Fund. But the day came when the plague was over, and the king left his refuge for the great city. Before him rode heralds with their trumpets, but Londoners went into their houses, shutting their doors and drawing the blinds. To the king came the word that the city was like a city of the dead, and that there would be no cheers to greet his return. It was under the shelter of night that the shamed monarch silently reentered his capital. Not one commoner welcomed him.

It was somewhat similar when Caligula returned to Rome after his voyage to England. The multitudes expected he would return with conquered kings, and samples of the wealth of the distant foreigners. But soon they learned that when Caligula landed in Britain he had contented himself with gathering shells and seaweed. These he showed to the crowds awaiting him by the Tiber, and they laughed the madman to scorn, prior to later dispatching him.

Instinctively, we apply the categorical "ought" to these royal fools. They ought not have so behaved. If we, like them, are so weak as to say we cannot behave other than we do, we should remember the words of Kant—"You Sir, who say you can do no differently, if I told you there would be a gallows for you at the end of the day if you did not change your ways, would you not change?" Dr. Samuel Johnson must have been of the same opinion when he remarked that the thought of death has a marvelous power of concentrating the mind. For, after all, men are not afraid that death is the end. They are afraid that it is not. "For it is appointed

unto men once to die, and after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). The Puritan tinker, John Bunyan, must have had something similar in mind when he pictured in his allegory a man with a muckrake, scraping together sticks and straws, oblivious of the angel over his head offering him a golden crown. Says Whittier:

What, my soul, was thy errand here?
Was it mirth or ease?
Or heaping up dust from year to year?
Nay, none of these!

Concluding an essay on the treasures available to every traveler on life's highway, F. W. Boreham wrote:

The old road literally sparkles with wealth that may enrich me through all the spacious ages that are coming. It will be sorrow's crown of sorrow if I insult these pure and priceless gems by hugging to myself the mere rubbish at the roadside.⁷

Yes, there is a purpose to life and the greeting at the end of the journey will depend on how we have regarded that purpose. That end is coming, want it or not, whether we're ready or not.

The Computer of the Mind

We began the chapter by commenting on the human idiosyncrasy that takes very important matters for granted. Let us end the same way. We have talked of "ought," and "purpose." But neither are possible without something else—that small computer on top of our shoulders without which we could make no sense out of life, nor live it. We have noticed that our computer is programmed—the software within our skulls has stored within it the convictions about right and wrong, beauty, truth, purpose. But we use our mind as we use windows—without thinking of the essential medium. Have you ever thought what life would be like if every now and again our minds went on strike and refused to interpret and calculate? Imagine, for example, that amnesia could overtake every man at any time, any place! How cavalierly we treat our memories with their marvelous store of infinite detail, some of which at least is indispensable for the simplest requirements of daily existence.

Were our minds the product of chance, their conclusions could not be trusted. This worried Charles Darwin, and in his autobiography he wrote:

But then arises the doubt—can the mind of man, which has, as I fully believe, been developed from a mind as low as that possessed by the lowest animals, be trusted when it draws such grand conclusions?⁸

In other words, if our minds are the pure product of coincidence and fortuitous causes, then its conclusions are likewise fortuitous and not to be relied upon. Therefore, Darwin had good grounds to suspect his own conclusions about evolution. The fact that our experience within corresponds for all practical purposes with reality without, testifies to the fact that the mind is a wonderful precision tool, invented and honed by the One who is himself righteousness,

beauty and truth in original essence. Only a mind could create a mind. If the mind were the fruit of chaos there could be no possibility of a mind choosing to believe in determinism, or atheism or immorality. And what is true of the world within is true of the world without. It too bears all the marks of creative genius.

The former president of the New York Academy of Sciences wrote:

Suppose you put ten pennies, marked from one to ten, into your pocket and give them a good shuffle. Now try to take them out in sequence from one to ten, putting back the coins each time and shaking them all again. Mathematically we know that your chance of first drawing number one is one in ten; of drawing one and two in succession, one in 100; of drawing one, two and three in succession, one in 1,000, and so on; your chance of drawing them all, from number one to number ten in succession, would reach the unbelievable figure of one in 10,000,000,000. By the same reasoning, so many exacting conditions are necessary for life on the earth that they could not possibly exist in proper relationship by chance. The earth rotates on its axis 1,000 miles an hour at the equator; if it turned at 100 miles an hour, our days and nights would be ten times as long as now, and the hot sun would likely burn up our vegetation each long day while in the long night any surviving sprout might well freeze.

Again, the sun, source of our life, has a surface temperature of 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit, and our earth is just far enough away so that this "eternal fire" warms us just enough and not too much! If the sun gave off only one half of its present radiation, we would freeze, and if it gave half as much more, we would roast . . .

It is apparent from these and a host of other examples that there is not one chance in billions that life on our planet is an accident.⁹

More recently other famous scientists have revised their earlier convictions by confessing:

We did not arrive all in a moment at the position described in this book. We had no thought in the beginning that the small track we were then following (organic materials in interstellar space) would broaden eventually to become a major highway. Only gradually with the discovery and dovetailing of many facts did the overall picture at last become evident. But in that dawn of certainty, in what might have been a moment of satisfaction, we hit a difficulty that knocked the stuffing out of us. No matter how large the environment one considers, life cannot have had a random beginning. Troops of monkeys thundering away at random on typewriters could not produce the works of Shakespeare, for the practical reason that the whole observable universe is not large enough to contain the necessary monkey hordes, the necessary typewriters, and certainly the waste paper baskets required for the deposition of wrong attempts. The same is true for living material.

We have received hints and even warnings from friends and colleagues that our views on these matters are generally repugnant to the scientific

world. We in our turn have been disturbed to discover how little attention is generally paid to fact and how much to myths and prejudice. It is not hard to find writings in which the myth is stated that the Darwinian theory of evolution is well proven by the fossil record. But one finds that the higher the technical quality of the writing the weaker the claims that are made. The imperfections are blamed in even the best texts, however, on the incompleteness of the fossil record. Yet if one persists by consulting the geological literature the truth eventually emerges. The fossil record is highly imperfect from a Darwinian point of view, not because of the inadequacies of geologists, but because the slow evolutionary connections required by the theory did not happen. Although paleontologists have recognized this truth for a century or more, they have not been able, in spite of their status as the acknowledged experts in the field, to make much of an impression on consensus opinion.... Yet if we are to maintain a proper scientific outlook, the numbers calculated in chapter 2 have to be faced at some stage. We showed there that a random shuffling of amino acids would have as little chance as one part in 10 to the 40th power of producing the enzymes.¹⁰

This world is not chaos. It is the creation of an infinite God. Our life need not be chaos either. That same God wants to guide our ways and days that we might have joy.

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CHAPTER 3

Clues to the Diagnosis A Pattern Emerges (Part Two) Surprised By Joy

The Undeniable Bad News

The sane mind can only rest in the acknowledgment of a creator. Law and purpose everywhere testify to a Lawgiver of infinite wisdom. But are power and wisdom enough to comfort our hearts? What sort of a Creator is ours? For centuries men have spoken of the problem of evil and have constantly affirmed that if there is a God, he is either not all powerful or not all good. A. E. Housman sardonically inquired as to "What brute or blaggard made the world?" And H. G. Wells wrote: "If I thought there were a God who looked down on battles and death, able to prevent these things, I would spit in his empty face." None can deny that our world is dark with grief and graves.

Actually poor God has gotten the blame for a long time and sometimes even from theologians. In the seventeenth century an intelligent Dutchman by the name of Robert Robbertz was cornered at the Synod of Dort and confronted by two strict Calvinists with the problems of sin's origin. Said he: "When the first sin was committed, Adam put the blame on the woman, and the woman put the blame on the serpent. The serpent, who was as yet young and callow, made no answer. Now that he has become old and confident he comes to the Synod of Dort and says that God has done it."

When J. E. Whale told that story in his book, he went on to say that God cannot be made responsible for moral evil, even though the possibility of it and the fact of it must ever be included within the divine plan. For if sin were necessitated by God, it could not be sin. A universe of sheer determinism would not be the moral universe of which our moral consciences are aware.

True Love Is Demanding

C. S. Lewis in *The Problem of Pain* reminds us that true love is more stern and splendid than mere kindness, though in our muddled thinking, we have almost equated them. Even Dante told us that love between the sexes is "a lord of terrible aspect." God is not just an indulgent, senile grandfather, but one who cares supremely about what we are or what we might become. He can be content with nothing less than our ultimate perfection though pain is involved in excising our blemishes of soul. At this point, clear-thinking is most essential. There could be no problem with evil but for our belief in God, and our moral convictions of purpose and righteousness. Most of human pain proceeds from human sin. Bombs and bayonets, greed and hate, not earthquakes, storms, or floods, are responsible for most tragedies. It is sin which "breaks hearts, blights homes, robbed heaven, and made hell the high capital of the universe." As Billy Graham has well summarized:

Sin is the most terrible and, the most devastating fact of the universe. It is the cause of all trouble, the root of all sorrow. The dread of every man lies in this one small word. It has reversed man's nature, destroyed his inner harmony, robbed him of nobility, caused him to be caught in the devil's trap. It is madness in the brain and poison in the heart, a tornado on the loose, a volcano gone wild, a madman broken out of the asylum, a gangster on the prowl, a roaring lion seeking its prey, a streak of lightning heading towards the earth, a guillotine cutting off the head, a deadly cancer eating into the souls of men, a raging torrent sweeping everything before it, a prostrating disease that demands a radical cure.

Because of sin every stream with human crime is stained, every breeze is morally corrupted, every day's light is blackened, every life's cup tainted with the bitter, every life's roadway made dangerous with pitfalls, every voyage made perilous with treacherous shoals. Sin is destructive of all happiness, darkening the understanding, searing the conscience, withering everything, causing all tears of sorrow and all pangs of agony, promising velvet and giving a shroud, promising liberty and giving bondage, promising nectar and giving gall, promising silk and giving the shirt of sackcloth. ²

It is also true that men frequently need the needle of pain to pierce the bubble of fantasy. It shatters two illusions, that all is well, and that all we have is our own and sufficient.

James Martineau wrote:

To judge from the Threnodies of the modern pessimist, he is chiefly impressed by the miseries which vice and wrong produce, Would he then prefer that they should produce happiness? Or would he have it make no difference to the eternal well-being of mankind whether greed or license prevailed or disinterestedness and purity?—sin being there, it would be simply monstrous that there should be no suffering, and would fully justify the despair which now raises its sickly cry of complaint against the retributory wretchedness of human transgression. ³

This is not to say, of course, that all pain proceeds from the sin of the sufferer. Vicarious suffering is not just a theological fact but a daily experience. Nor are we suggesting that Browning's insight into the benefits of some suffering fits all cases. He wrote:

Then welcome each rebuff.
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids not sit nor stand,
But go!

Be our joys three-fourths pain!
Strive and hold cheap the strain;
Learn—nor account the pang;
Dare, never grudge the throe!

—*Rabbi Ben Ezra, IV*

Real life is sometimes more complicated than that, and those who think otherwise have been living alone in some unnatural cocoon situation. Nevertheless, Browning is right when he affirms that not all trouble means ill for us. Many of the virtues we admire such as compassion, sympathy, courage, patience are only possible in an imperfect world of trial and trouble.

The Problem of Good

Strange, how for every thousand complainers regarding the problem of evil, there is rarely one who raises the problem of good. Would we even notice the evil were our lives entirely pervaded by it, without contrast or challenge? That most of us find life chiefly benevolent is testified to by our resolution to continue living. Comparatively few of the grumblers commit suicide. As for the evil, as we have said, much of it cannot be blamed on God. It is men who invented bayonets and bombs, and raped the earth by a selfishness that refuses to plan for future generations. A great deal of my personal misery flows out of my self-centeredness and pride.

On the other hand, to what should men attribute the beauty, melody, sensory joy and love everywhere abounding in the world? It is obvious that when God made the human species, he wished either their joy or their misery. All the senses he gave us could have been sources of pain. Every smell could have been a stench, every taste bitter, every touch a sting, every sight ugly, every sound a discord. Why is it not so? Ask the animals. Is their normal existence in field, forest, stream and air miserable or joyous? Would not man's be the same but for his selfishness? We were made for joy and gladness.

Home

In this chapter we have surveyed some of the clues to the meaning of human life. We have looked at clues which help us to diagnose the human condition, such clues as the inner law of right, the evidence of purpose in not only human pursuits, but the computer of the mind and the ingeniously created world in which it functions. We have found that there are invisible realities testifying to a sphere more significant than our mere tangible world and furthermore that even in sensory experience, the existence of good is more pervasive by far than that of evil. Where then are we now?

We are children in our Father's house if we choose to believe it. Nothing about the real world can be proved for it would require perfect measuring instruments, complete objectivity, and an infinite number of observations. Only God could prove God or disprove him. If there is only one thing the atheist does not know, it could be the fact of God. If there was only one place he could not be God might be there. Omniscience and omnipresence belong only to him who has given us enough evidence for human certitude that neither doubt nor death nor any other enemy need conquer the children of the Eternal. It is time to sing! Life has meaning and the meaning is infinitely good. In conclusion, may I offer you two thoughtful statements—one from Frederick Buechner and the other from Bruce Barton? Says the former:

We all want to be certain, we all want proof, but the kind of proof that we tend to want—scientifically or philosophically demonstrable proof that would silence all doubts once and for all—would not in the long run, I think, answer the fearful depths of our need at all. For what we need to know, of course, is not just that God exists, not just that beyond the steely brightness of the stars there is cosmic intelligence of some kind that keeps the whole show going, but that there is a God right here in the thick of our day-to-day lives who may not be writing messages about Himself in the stars but who in one way or another is trying to get messages through our blindness as we move around down here knee-deep in the fragrant muck and misery and marvel of the world. It is not objective proof of God's existence that we want but whether we use religious language for it or not, the experience of God's presence. That is the miracle that we are really after. And that is also, I think, the miracle that we really get.⁴

The story of the Bishop by Bruce Barton illustrates Buechner's point:

Some upper classmen assembled one night in a college hall to listen to two speakers. A bishop of distinguished service and great spiritual power was one of them, and a public lecturer, widely advertised as a professional agnostic, was the other. The plan was for each man to present his own philosophy of life. The audience, while not large, was very earnest, and obviously looked for a spirited debate. The bishop spoke first. Grey-haired now, and a trifle bent, the old man had started his service in the foreign missionary field, and more than once in his youth had risked his life for the faith. On his return to this country he had held influential pastorates in many cities, becoming the friend and confidant of men of every sort. He knew all there is to know of human hopes and fears, suffering and joys, achievements and tragedies. Yet his fine face was ruddy and untroubled as the face of a little child. No one who looked at him could doubt that he had, in truth, "cast his burdens upon the Lord." His tone was deep and sympathetic.

"Nothing that is worth while in life can be proved," he said. "Men speak of depending on science, but science itself depends upon faith. It assumes that 'every effect must have an adequate cause'—a tremendous assumption which no one can prove. It assumes that the world which each man builds up inside his mind corresponds to the outside world of reality, that the universe which you see is the same universe which I see—another great act of faith. All scientific discoveries have been made by men who believed more than their eyes could see or their fingers handle. 'He who does not look beyond the fact,' said Darwin, 'will hardly see the fact,' by which he meant that the eyes of the imagination—of faith—must first see what may be before the eyes of the flesh can see what is. "I cannot prove to you that there is any purpose behind the universe. It may be that the whole thing is a mere happening, a jest of circumstances; that we and all who have been before us or are to come after us are no more significant than the flies that live their whole existence in a single hour, or the bubbles that appear on the surface of the stream and break and reappear. I cannot

prove to you that this is not so. But, my friends, no man can prove to you that it is so. The existence of Reason behind the universe, or its non-existence, are both beyond the power of finite minds to establish. Since, therefore, the choice is free between the two alternatives, I choose to accept the positive faith. For that faith gives significance to my life and to the lives of all men. It clothes me with conviction. It invests me with the right to go forward with firm step and head erect, as one who shall not perish. In place of worry and fear, it sets up hope and courage. It is the pathway to power."

When he had finished, the other speaker rose very slowly and looked down into the eager faces of those young men. He stood silent for what seemed a very long time, searching their eyes.

"I am going to surprise you, my young friends," he said at last. "Perhaps in a sense I shall disappoint you. I am an agnostic. Some of you have come here in the expectation that the Bishop and I should vigorously disagree. You had expected that I should call the great sceptics of history to my aid, and marshal the arguments which seem to prove that man is a creature of the moment, bound for oblivion in death. I confess that this was my purpose when I came.

"But I have changed that purpose. I am going to say only one thing to you young gentlemen. It is this: If you can believe the things that our friend the Bishop has been saying, then, in God's name, believe them! The texture of my mind is such that I myself cannot go farther than to say I do not know. If you can go farther, if you can have a positive faith, then with all my heart I congratulate you. I would give anything in the world if I could. For what the Bishop has claimed for his faith is true. Scepticism has no vitality; the motive power of progress is faith."

He sat down, and after a few minutes of rather embarrassed silence, the meeting disbanded. The students were surprised but the bishop much more so. He had expected a contest. Instead of which he had listened to a testimony far more moving than his own, the almost tragic confession of one whose honest intellect would not let him go a step beyond the things which can be seen and heard and felt, but who looked with hungry yearning into the richer lives of those who can believe and do.⁵

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CHAPTER 4

Who's Looking At Whom

Man is Sick

You'll either hate him or love him when I tell you that the man chiefly responsible for computers was the inventor of the calculating machine, Pascal, possibly the greatest genius of his era. But it is his conclusion about man, not numbers, that I here recommend to you. Here it is:

What a chimera then is man! What a novelty! What a monster, what a chaos, what a contradiction, what a prodigy! Judge of all things, imbecile worm of the earth; depository of truth, a sink of uncertainty and error; the pride and refuse of the universe!¹

The Patient Is Bored

There is another characteristic about man which should never be omitted—a negative which is a positive—man alone of all creation has the capacity for boredom. When Snoopy the dog, sitting dejectedly by his kennel says: "Shucks, I hate rainy days, I haven't anything to do," and a moment later adds, "Let's face it—I never have anything to do," we think it's funny, but we know it's not true. Only humans experience boredom.

The best of all books says concerning our Maker and us, "He hath set eternity in their hearts" (Ecclesiastes 3:10). Augustine's well-known comment is "Thou hast made us for thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in thee."

Have you ever been in a large store just browsing round among the vast array of goods and been approached by a smiling young lady with the query, "Can I help you?" And our usual answer has been, "Just looking." Much of life is like that. Often it appears loaded with myriads of opportunities and possibilities crying out: "Something for you?" But our acted-out answer is, "Not now, I'm just looking."

We have been doing it for years. Maybe in adolescence, Mom found us ransacking the old trunks or drawers, where there were letters tied with ribbon written by Dad when he was younger and more foolish. We thought we were prowling, but no, we were just looking. There's been that something vague and undefined like the voice in Kipling's Explorer:

One everlasting whisper, day and night repeated—Go:
Something hidden. Go and find it. Go and look behind the ranges.
Something lost beyond the ranges. Lost and waiting for you, Go!

That's where we're different from the animals—our soul-hunger is different from theirs.

Walt Whitman wrote:

I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-

contained. I stand and look at them sometimes an hour at a stretch. They do not sweat and whine about their condition; They do not lay awake and weep for their sins; They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God; Not one is dissatisfied.²

The Patient is a Thinker

Yes, man is the only creature capable of being bored. We are not made to be content with sensual things. We have minds and we must make sense of things, we have hearts and we must love. Again it was Pascal who said:

"Man is obviously made for thinking. Therein lies all his dignity and his merit; and his whole duty is to think as he ought. Now the order of thought is to begin with ourselves, and with our author and our end."³

For this reason Malcolm Muggeridge resigned as Rector of the University of Edinburgh rather than approve student requests for "pot and pills." Muggeridge believed that dope and bed suited old slobbering debauchees but not normal humans. Thinkers should think and acknowledge with Archibald McLeish that "our desperate need is to impose upon the world of chaotic phenomena an order of understanding."

If we are truly human we cannot rest in a chaotic world. We pine for the security that comes from order. Even the ancient Greeks had as their quest the resolution of the problem of the one and the many, and what was the underlying theme of philosophy has also been the quest of the great religions of the race. Man is not an animal. It is not enough for him to eat. He must know, and knowing is in order to love.

Because man is a moral being, he links knowledge and reason with right behavior. But behind these must be a personal supernatural Source. For, to quote Camus, "Why is there something rather than nothing?" Did an eternal matter make matter and mind, or eternal matter make mind, or an eternal Mind make both? If either of the first two are chosen, we have reduced the universe to a multiverse of anarchy en route to ruin, and ourselves to dirt.

Where there is no God, there is no man. If man is not made in the image of a personal Creator, there is no reason he cannot be forced into the image of an amoral society. At that point, truth, beauty, love, hope, duty become nonsense syllables. March on, new Hiders! Approach, more holocausts! Protest about nothing, for where there is no God, anything and everything is permitted. But then comes Camus' second question and only humans who believe all is nonsense can make sense of his challenge: "Why not commit suicide?" Why not, if all is chance and anarchy, any apparent good a chimera? Why not, if man is the product of matter, plus time, plus chance and the only difference between him and the caterpillar is more time and more chance (see the 500 doctoral theses written on the Piltdown skull, for example, before it was discovered to be a hoax).

That is the weary round of thought for the soul-hungry human inquirer until life becomes worth living, because he has found something worth dying for. What is that something? Ah, let us not travel too quickly. Let us first be sure we have

diagnosed the disease aright. Look again at our patient—the sufferer from boredom and other ills.

His unhappiness does not come chiefly from without but from within. His thousand conflicting desires and passions are so many confessions of unhappiness. His moral convictions burst like Samson's bonds when desire is aroused. Then he is more miserable still.

Also a Moral Mess

Now we will underline the beginning of this chapter about man's moral sickness. Why is it that man, who is wiser than the animals, is also more stupid and more cruel? Yes, more cruel. No beast can be as artistically cruel as man. Lions and tigers may tear and gnaw, but they mainly kill when they are hungry, never for sadistic pleasure. They would never nail people by the ears even if they were able to do so.

The source of the problem is not hard to locate. We are proud, selfish beings. There is no devil as bad as a fallen angel. Something must have happened to us, some fall that left us a confused mess of good and evil, a monstrosity sometimes grand and oftentimes despicable.

The evidence is clear. We behave as though all things were centered in humanity and then as though all humanity centered in us individually. How can a universe have five thousand million centers? We suffer from a perverted self-consciousness that never goes to sleep. Even if I become aware of my pride, immediately I become proud of that awareness. Should I reproach myself for this second sin, I continue by becoming guilty of a third, for I am immediately proud at being aware of being aware of my fault.

All of classical literature testifies to the universality of human depravity. The tragedies of Shakespeare are all tragedies of moral failure. Macbeth infallibly traces the nature and progression of sin. Macbeth is first blinded by yielding. Then his will is weakened and finally corrupted, so that what was once resisted now becomes a custom agreed upon and taken for granted. "Who lives that's not depraved or depraves?" Shakespeare asks in *Timon of Athens* 1:2. And in *Hamlet* man is likened to a dead dog which breeds maggots under the influence of the sun's rays. "We are arrant knaves all" (*Hamlet* 3:1). In *Othello* 3:3 are these searching questions about the human temple: "Where's that palace whereinto foul things sometimes intrude not? Who has a breast so pure, but some uncleanly apprehensions keep (meeting)?"

Thackeray showed himself a master in fiction by having no heroes, while George Eliot similarly rightly represented life by depicting only imperfect characters acting from mixed motives. Carlyle became disgusted with each of his heroes before completing that particular biographical sketch. From Dr. Samuel Johnson we have the insight that "every man knows that of himself which he dare not tell to his dearest friend." Goethe agreed by admitting: "I see no fault committed which I too might not have committed."

Most men are aware of having within them three selves. There is the first self that I show to the world— always a compound of truth and falsehood,

of sincerity and acting, of reality and conformity to the extraneous and largely irrelevant demands of society. Secondly, there is the self that I know that I could be, if I were always true to my own best insights and convictions as to the truth. Finally, there is the self that I know I really am, or, as the Christian would say, myself as I am in the sight of God. And that real self is so often the traitor self; the self that through laziness or cowardice betrays the ideals that it has itself professed; and awakes from the illusion of self-complacency to a disturbing realization of what it is and what it does.⁴

William Law described our situation aptly centuries ago, and as we read his words we are forced to admit that the main thing wrong with our world is the human species. For ninety-nine percent of us, our major perplexities emanate from our own wrong choices arising from passion or pride. Selfishness, lovelessness, cupidity and stupidity trigger off most of our problems. Here then is Law speaking:

Let but any complaining, disquieted man, tell you the ground of his uneasiness, and you will plainly see that he is the author of his own torment; that he is vexing himself at some imaginary evil, which will cease to torment him as soon as he is content to be that which God, and nature, and reason, require him to be. What can you conceive more silly and extravagant, than to suppose a man racking his brains, and studying night and day how to fly?—wandering from his own house and home, wearying himself with climbing upon every ascent, cringing and courting everybody he meets to lift him up from the ground, bruising himself with continual falls, and at last breaking his neck?...

Again: if you should see a man that had a large pond of water, yet living in continual thirst, not suffering himself to drink half a draught, for fear of lessening his pond; if you should see him wasting his time and strength, in fetching more and more water to his pond; always thirsty, yet always carrying a bucket of water in his hand, watching early and later to catch the drops of rain, gaping after every cloud, and running greedily into every mire and mud, in hopes of water, and always studying how to make every ditch empty itself into his pond; if you should see him grow grey and old in these anxious labours, and at last end a careful, thirsty life, by falling into his own pond; would you not say that such a one was not only the author of all his own disquiets, but was foolish enough to be reckoned amongst idiots and madmen?⁵

Today we might wish to use other illustrations. Take this one from Stephen Neill:

... men very often do things which they see perfectly clearly to be wrong and harmful to themselves and to others. I once had a friend whose more pious friends thought that it would be very good for him to give up smoking a pipe. He told me that his answer was: know it's expensive; I know it's bad for you; I know it's dirty. But I like it, and I shall go on doing it.' We are not always so admirably honest as my friend. There is more than a little painful truth in the accidental transposition of the child's prayer:

May my friends be all forgiven.
Bless the sins I love so well.

Though human vanity finds it hard to admit it, the real reason that we sin is that we like our sins; if this is not true, at least on some occasions and in some degree, why do we go on sinning?⁶

Observe that we have suggested that mankind is stupid as well as proud. Sin is the one thing that the more we have to do with it, the less we know about it, and the more we are cheated by it. It takes a lifetime to learn the truth of three words: Possession brings indifference. We are born idolaters, greedy idolaters, never having enough and never content. And never does the natural man perceive the elementary truth that nothing, absolutely nothing, is as good in the hand as in the head. The imagination, partaking of the nature of its Creator, is infinite and can picture, if it wills a palace on the Riviera where every wall is studded with jewels most precious. But no such palace exists or ever will exist. No achieved ambition is ever as rewarding as it promised to be. Here is the main reason for divorce, for the unending social crawl, and for increasing avarice. Life as usually lived is a fraud. It never lives up to its word.

That writer with whom we began this chapter, Pascal, declared that all of man's ills arise from the fact that he is not prepared to sit quietly in his own room. By this, Pascal meant that by nature we are all engaged in a continual round of distraction doing anything or everything rather than think about duty, death and judgment. In his discussion Pascal says, "They do not know that it is the chase, and not the quarry, which they seek." The quarry never satisfies, so we seek another to chase, and then another and another. William James was an acute observer of men and summed up his conclusions about life thus:

All natural goods perish. Riches take wings; fame is a breath, love is a cheat; youth and health and pleasure vanish. Can things whose end is always dust and disappointment be the real goods which our souls require? ... We need a life not correlated with death ... a kind of good that will not perish, a good in fact that flies beyond the goods of nature.⁷

Shortsighted

What is it that perpetually triggers our folly and sin? Wordsworth warned:

Getting and spending we lay waste our powers
Nothing we see in nature that is ours
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon.

Whatever Gets Our Attention Gets Us

The sensory world, the tempting world, is too much with us and in us and through us. But once we recognize the truth that the major cause of our unhappiness is not events from outside but feelings from inside, we are well. on the way to recovery.

Man the Convalescent

Do you remember the heroine of the movie presentation of King Solomon's Mines? When she confessed her lack of love for her dead husband, it was as though a mountain had been rolled from off her soul. There was no longer any need for pretense and self-deception. She felt herself a better woman as soon as she acknowledged how bad she actually was. Similarly for each and all of us. Once we perceive that our excessive selfish desires are so many confessions of discontent, that, as Luther declared, our self-love is the root of all our disquietude, and recognize also that our conscience is like the police—capable of being eluded, stifled, drugged, bribed, but only at the price of devastating guilt and self-hatred—then the way is clear for the sickness to be healed. Admission of our selfishness begins the release from psychic shadows. But the positive factor is all important. Note it well.

The only motivation that can conquer selfishness springs from the conviction that at the heart of the universe is unselfish love, a love that is personal and which accepts our person despite our failures, provided we recognize in him our all in all, our Lord and our God. As Alexander Maclaren stated from his Manchester pulpit, "He is free whose will coincides with his outward law, who wants to do what he ought to do and whose Master is Incarnate Love."

Man Is a Triangle

Life is triangular. We have a relationship with ourselves, our neighbors and our Creator. Only if we accept the Creator's acceptance of us can we accept ourselves, and only if we accept ourselves can we accept our neighbor. That soul which is always critical and hateful, who gets on with nobody and nobody with him is a soul unforgiven and therefore unforgiving.

Now we have reached close to the heart of the invisible world. We were made by love, in love, for love. All of life's schooling points to that conclusion. The circle begins with parental love, then continues with love of one of the opposite sex and then love of children. What sort of love is thus taught by mother, wife and child? Self-sacrificing love—giving and forgiving, bearing and forbearing. Such love, when it leads to God, arouses faith to sustain the wrestler in life's troubled sea. With love and faith there is always the third sister—hope. "and now abideth faith, hope, and love, these three, and the greatest of these is love."

For life with all its weal and woe
Is just our chance of the prize of learning love.

True living means loving and sharing. Schweitzer found happiness when he found duty and so do we. Observe his words:

It struck me as incomprehensible that I should be allowed to lead such a happy life, while I saw so many people around me wrestling with care and suffering I could not help thinking continually of others who were denied that happiness by their material circumstances or their health. Then, one brilliant summer morning ... there came to me, as I awoke, the thought that I must not accept this happiness as a matter of course, but must give something in return for it ... living till I was thirty for science and art, in order

to devote myself from that time forward to the direct service of humanity.

In addition to the outward, I now had inward happiness. ⁸

Consider the testimony of Malcolm Muggeridge regarding the experience of conversion:

It happens. It has happened innumerable times. It goes on happening. The testimony to this effect is overwhelming. Suddenly to be caught up in the wonder of God's love flooding the universe, made aware of the stupendous creativity which animates all life, of our own participation in it, every colour brighter, every meaning clearer, every shape more shapely, every note more musical, every word written and spoken more explicitly. Above all, every human face, all human companionship, all human encounters, recognizably a family affair. The animals too, flying, prowling, burrowing, all their diverse cries and grunts and bellowings, and the majestic hilltops, the gaunt rocks giving their blessed shade, and the rivers faithfully making their way to the sea, all irradiated with this same glory for the eyes of the reborn. What other fulfillment is there, I ask, that could possibly compare with this? What going to the moon or exploration of the universe, what victory or defeat, what revolution or counter-revolution, what putting down of the mighty from their seats and exaltation of the humble and meek, who then of course becomes mighty in their turn and fit to be put down? This is a fulfillment that transcends all human fulfilling and yet is accessible to all humans, based on the absolutes of universality of brotherhood rather than the particularity of equality, on the perfect servitude which is freedom rather than the perfect servitude which purports to be freedom. ⁹

Man the Immortal

It took a mind to create mind. And what sort of mind? Immortal mind. He who invented time must be timeless. If all things are related causally, the first of all causes must have been a free uncaused cause—an eternal cause originating all else.

If the Creator has demonstrated purpose throughout his creation, should we not anticipate purpose for men—an eternal purpose? If zero is all there is at the end of life, then everything else along the way is but a zero also. If God in the end scraps individuals, why should not we do the same now? But such would be contrary to the "oughts" he has placed within us. Man was made for immortality. As surely as winter gives way to spring and night to day, so shall death to life. The caterpillar in his chrysalis giving ultimate birth to the butterfly is a parable of immortality.

Tennyson in *Locksley Hall* wrote:

The good, the true, the pure, the just— Take the charm "forever" from them, and they crumble into dust
Gone the cry of "Forward! Forward!" lost within a growing gloom;
Lost, or only heard in silence, the silence of a tomb.

If in this chapter we seem to have been rather hard on poor human nature and hinted that something beyond man is necessary to save man, consider what one French historian has written concerning the fruitage of that worldwide faith which teaches these things:

It is the theologies of the enslaved will which have saved liberty; it is the theologies of salvation by Another than man which have saved human morality; it is the theologies of renunciation of the world which have saved man's mastery over the world; it is the theologies of man's renunciation of himself which have saved human personality; it is the theologies that preached love towards God alone which have saved love towards all men; it is the theologies of eternal predestination which have saved progress—even political and social progress; it is the theologies of heteronomy which have conferred on man an autonomy so fully master of himself as to be master of all else; it is the theologies that said "God is all, man nothing" which have made of man a force, an energy, a power incomparable and divine.¹⁰

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CHAPTER 5

The Physician Appears

Next: (Part One) Ghost or God?

This book began not long after midnight one Sabbath morning. I knew I still had the sermon to prepare for that day and probably that's why I found myself lying awake hours before dawn.

As I worked on a sermon, suddenly I found a book. It began to come together of itself. I had been thinking of a sermon on why I believed in Christianity, when suddenly I realized that no one argues at noon as to whether the sun is up and that no one at noonday hunts for the sun with a flashlight. All that is necessary is to lead someone out of their darkness into the light. It was then that I knew this book must be written. At first I thought of calling it *The Answer*, for I believe that the presentation of Christ and him crucified as the light of the world is the answer to all our questions and the solution to all our problems. Later I decided on a title that might be more attractive to those without faith.

We believe in the sun, not because we see it but because through it we see everything else. That's the way it is with the Christ of the cross. Muggeridge was right!

The reality of Christ lies in the fact that through him the distinction between fantasy and reality becomes clear. Fantasy comes from seeing with the eye, from reflecting in your eye what is outside. Reality can be seen by looking through the eye. With Christ we look through rather than with.¹

The same writer also suggests:

All creation, even our sins, everything that happens, all doing and considering, a leaf falling, a nuclear bomb exploding, the total experience of living, individually and collectively, carries God's messages as it were encoded. But we need the key to decipher them, to be able to encode them and, of course, the key that came to us is the incarnation.²

The Christ who was born to die, that Christ in the act of dying—here is the key to all else. Here is the mystery that unlocks all other mysteries. Oswald Chambers wrote:

Everything a man takes to be the key to a problem is apt to turn out another lock. For instance, the theory of evolution was supposed to be the key to the problem of the universe, but instead it has turned out a lock. Again, the atomic theory was thought to be the key; then it was discovered that the atom itself was composed of electrons, and each electron was found to be a universe of its own, and that theory too becomes a lock and not a key. Everything that man attempts as a simplification of life, other than a personal relationship to God, turns out to be a lock, and we should be alert to recognize when a thing turns from a key to a lock. God Himself is the key to the riddle of the universe, and the basis of things to be found

only in Him.³

We would only wish to add the words "the Son" wherever Chambers has God, for there is no knowing God intimately except through his Son.

But perhaps we are assuming too much. Certainly large numbers would reject the idea that Christ is the key to existence. Christ—a good man, yes, a great teacher, yes— but God?—no! Can we even be sure he lived and whether we really know what he said? Until we attempt to clear up such issues folks will not leave their cubbyhole of doubt and trouble to look up at him who is both the first Christian and the Sun of Righteousness. Therefore, later in this chapter, we wish to address the secular man. That may not be you, but you are welcome to listen.

That the supremely good man should die a supremely agonizing death is a supreme mystery indeed. The last crisis of the greatest of all lives is the most scandalous affair in history unless we can find the key to it. If that key exists, once found it becomes the key to all else. Let none underrate the dilemma—if righteousness in its noblest personification was condemned at religion's center, and then crucified at that same capital, must one not be tempted to think the universe is run by a demon?

...we come on the secret that unlocks the whole mystery. The cross of Christ was either a tragic incident which meant that his kind of life was futile and impotent; or it was the supreme symbol of God's conquering presence in the world that he made, a mercy and justice and peace so closely akin to the Eternal that they could be nailed down and still win.⁴

There is an answer to the dilemma and it is glorious. The story of the cross is accompanied by its interpretation. The riddle is not left unsolved in the book which sets it forth. In the most well-known religious sentence of all time we find the clue—"For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whosoever should believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Let us summarize the biblical interpretation of the Calvary enigma. If we put Genesis 3 with John 3 and Romans 3 that interpretation is clear. Mankind in its first representative was put on probation to develop a character that would last forever. But mankind in its representative and head disbelieved the word and law of its loving Creator, disobeyed, and brought upon the whole race depravity, death and the curse. When man chose to be God himself, and to be independent of the real God, then the indwelling Spirit of God left him—left him a prey to all the forces of deterioration and disintegration of body, mind and soul. God had, as rightful sovereign, set forth his law of love as the condition of man's permanence. As a sign of obedience, man was to leave untouched but one tree of the garden of Paradise. But man refused to trust and obey. What should God do?

What could God do? If God makes a law and threatens penalty, that penalty must be executed or his law (which alone gives security to the whole universe as being a reflection of the character of God and therefore the blueprint of behavior for all personal beings and even nature itself) loses authority. If heaven threatened a penalty but refused to execute it, then it testifies that the original threatening was an error and we are left with a fallible government, and errant king. This could

lead only to universal anarchy.

In John 3, Jesus solves the riddle of the ages— humanity's hopeless plight. He tells Nicodemus that for a man to find heaven two things must happen—God must reconcile justice and mercy by an atoning death that witnesses to the terrible nature of evil and the immutability of law, and secondly, man submitting to the gracious moving of the witnessing Spirit of God must receive a new nature—a nature which henceforth trusts and obeys (see particularly verses 14-18, 3, 7, 36). Observe that the most well-known verse of Scripture is a world in itself comprehending the continents of deity, love, sacrifice, eternity and faith. These are the clues to the mystery of existence.

In Romans 3, the justice of God is the recurring theme. How can God be just if he forgives sinners? Plato long before had said that even God cannot forgive great sins, for he ought not. Hinduism and Buddhism are both based on the belief that retribution for sin is rightly inevitable. BUT THE CROSS SHOWS HOW GOD CAN BE JUST, UPHOLD HIS LAW AND YET FORGIVE THE LAW- BREAKERS IN SUCH A WAY AS TO BRING THEM BACK INTO HARMONY WITH HIS LAW OF RIGHT. This is the greatest marvel of the universe, and it is but the temple door to continued wonders.

Do not pass too quickly by this brief summary. Here is the key to life and death. Man lost all by failing to trust and obey. There came a new representative of the race, a new Adam and Head, who trusted and obeyed fully one who fulfilled the eternal law in both precept and penalty. The old hymns are true:

There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.

We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains He had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.

He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by His precious blood.

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven, and let us in.

O dearly, dearly has He loved!
And we must love Him too,
And trust in His redeeming blood,
And try His works to do.

When we walk with the Lord
In the light of His word,

What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

We must establish the foundations firmly. Earlier we talked of humanity's universal experience of "oughtness." It reflects the reign of law throughout time and eternity, universally. Nothing is so hard in life to contend with as suffering as a result of injustice. All of classic literature illustrates man's awareness of the reality of right and wrong. Even mob violence testifies to the elemental sense of justice and righteous indignation against injustice. Sin is "the eternal outlaw" as Milton put it, and the terrible Antichrist is "the mystery of lawlessness." HE WHO MINIMIZES LAW IS A TRAITOR TO HIMSELF AND THE UNIVERSE. We live in a universe, not a multiverse. Only One is God, and only his law proclaims what is right for all creatures. The underlying cause of all tragedy, pain, sorrow, tears and death is the failure to trust the Lawgiver and to obey his law.

Thornwell reasons that wherever men hold to moral distinction "they must likewise hold to a moral government. A moral government is a government of law, and every law implies a sanction, a reward for obedience and a punishment for disobedience. When God promulgates a law, He does it with a view of having it observed, and the object of the sanction is to supply a strong and adequate motive for the observance of the law. Now the force of the sanction depends essentially upon the certainty of its execution. Unless the sanction be uniformly enforced the law is a dead letter." Because the moral law is not detached from God, but "is the expression of His being," therefore, it is irrefragable and inviolable. Through the Holy Scriptures it bears this character and our own consciences give a testimony to it; and all the so-called moral world order, with its phenomena of responsibility, duty, debt, repentance, suffering, remorse and punishment, is built upon the inviolability of the moral law." The will of God is the expression of His character and the moral law which He promulgates is an efflux of the divine nature, a transcript of the character of God. Thus the holy character, the majestic sovereignty, and the glorious honour of God are behind the law, so that the law cannot be abrogated and its penalty must be inflicted.⁵

Spurgeon, the prince of preachers, agreed. He declared:

When my conscience was aroused to know the evil of sin, I felt that if God did not punish me, He ought to do so. I cannot help holding that atonement must precede pardon, because the little court within my own breast refuses to be satisfied unless some retribution be exacted for the dishonour sin has done to God.⁶

Krummacher speaks of what he calls the greatest and most wonderful victory achieved by Christ on the cross:

I call it the victory of the lawgiver over the law. There was no want of wish and will in heaven to save us. They existed abundantly; but the right to undertake the great work was wanting. The holy and inviolable law was the bolt which fastened the door of the treasury of divine mercy. The law put in its protest against our redemption. Its language was, No salvation for sinners till their guilt is expiated; and even eternal majesty felt bound by the protestation. But divine wisdom was able to loose their fetters. The eternal Son descended upon earth to change the negative of the law into an affirmative. He suffered himself to be "made unto the law," and fulfilled it, as our representative, in such a manner, as to enable him to stand forward, and say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" But this did not remove the barrier from the sluices of divine breach of the law. He submitted to this, likewise, and drank the cup of wrath. Did a drop remain? "Not one" was the law's decision. And when the voice of mercy was heard from heaven, the law had nothing to object. Divine justice resigned the scepter to its august sister, Love, without infringing its glory in the slightest degree. We admire the victory over the law, without violence, in the way of justice....⁷

We have been discussing what Christians call the Atonement—that death of God made man which enabled the sinful race to be restored to "oneness" with God.

Atonement meant "at-one-ness." It signifies that God forgives most, but condones least, that while pleased with little, he demands all. "Love is more splendid and more stern than mere kindness." It will settle for nothing less than the establishment of holiness and this the cross of Christ alone could do demonstrating that God would rather die than bypass the requirements of that law which reflected his own nature.

What Christians have called the Atonement is God's means of forgiving the unjust but doing so justly. Here is the remedy for mankind's woes. Is it not marvelous that the Heavenly Physician who devised this remedy entered our planet for a close, saving encounter with dying, despairing humanity?

But can we be sure that that has actually happened? As earlier promised we now address the natural doubts of secular moderns. We will ask concerning the man Jesus of Nazareth—Who was he? Good man, madman, or God- man? God or Ghost?

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CHAPTER 6

The Physician: (Part Two) The Shortcut

Is there a shortcut for solving the riddle of life? Is there some sure way of testing such pessimistic assertions about human life as Bertrand Russell's when he declared, "Man is nought but an eddying speck of dust, a harassed driven leaf?" or Sir Arthur Keith's pronouncement in answer to the question, "What follows this life?" — "Nothing. Life goes out like a guttering candle."

There is a shortcut. There is a simple way of solving all of life's profundities, those enigmas that must needs be settled before effectual living can begin. If Christianity is the truth of God on belief of which the salvation of his creatures depends, we would expect that God would have prepared evidence sufficiently simple and conclusive to convince the sincere seeker of average intelligence.

The most direct route through the labyrinth of religious and philosophical controversy is to answer aright the question, *What was the real nature of the man who appeared two thousand years ago in Palestine claiming to be a ransom for the sins of the world?*

The New Testament makes the startling claim that our relationship to Jesus Christ is a matter of life and death. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that bath not the Son of God bath not life" (1 John 5:12). The same book offers Christ as the Great Physician for the ailing human race, the One who alone can cure all maladies. And interestingly enough, the testimony of the ages has been that he has been a physician without peer, as far above all other men as the sun is above the earth.

It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world ideal character which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice. The simple record of these three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists.¹

He represents within the religious sphere the highest point, beyond which posterity cannot go; yea, whom it cannot even equal, inasmuch as everyone who hereafter should climb the same height, could only do it with the help of Jesus, who first attained it. As little as humanity will ever be without religion, as little will it be without Christ; for to have religion without Christ would be as absurd as to enjoy poetry without regard to Homer or Shakespeare. He remains the highest model of religion within the reach of our thought; and no perfect piety is possible without His presence in the heart.²

Let us inquire as to whether this impact by Christ has been mere chance or the inevitable result of his being just what he claimed to be. Christ is the only person known to history who has claimed divinity and yet who has been accounted sane by the human race. The founders of other religious systems such as Mohammedanism, Buddhism and Hinduism did not claim to be God incarnate. Here Christianity differs from all other religions. Christ spoke and lived as a Being whose dwelling place was eternity, and he alone of all mankind has convinced multitudes of all ages, races and walks of life that his claims to divinity were genuine.

Seekers for truth should not begin with secondary questions, such as difficulties in the Old Testament, or the origin of evil, or the problem of pain. The truth of Christianity stands or falls with the person of its Founder.

At this point we must stop to inquire regarding the historicity of the New Testament documents and then about him Who is at the center. Did Jesus Christ live? Do we have the substance of what he said? How reliable are the New Testament documents? These questions must be answered for all who consider the claims of Christianity seriously. Are we to side with Bultmann who claimed we do not know a single sentence that Christ ever spoke, and with those rare unbelievers of earlier centuries who denied that Christ was a historical figure? If not, why not?

Did Christ Live?

The battle over the historicity of Christ has been fought and won. No historian of note today denies it. The evidence from ancient documents has been marshalled by F. F. Bruce in his *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament*. Sir J. G. Frazer, no friend of evangelical Christianity, declared "The doubts which have been cast upon the historical reality of Jesus are, in my judgment, unworthy of serious attention." He cites the hostile evidence of Tacitus (*Ann.* xv. 44), and the younger Pliny (*Epist.* x. 96) as confirmatory of the Gospel record. In the fifteenth edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the many independent secular references to Christ are referred to and then this conclusion is drawn:

These independent accounts prove that in ancient times even the opponents of Christianity never doubted the historicity of Jesus, which was disputed for the first time and on inadequate grounds by several authors at the end of the 18th, during the 19th, and at the beginning of the 20th centuries.³

In addition to the twenty-seven documents of the New Testament, we have comments from Tacitus (Roman historian of the first century), Josephus (Jewish contemporary), Lucian of Samosata (second-century satirist), Suetonius (early second-century Roman historian), Pliny the Younger (governor of Bithynia early in second-century), the Jewish Talmud, and the Church Fathers, Polycarp, Eusebius, Irenaeus, Ignatius, Justin, Origen, Tertullian.

The Authenticity of the New Testament Documents

The manuscript evidence for the authenticity of the N. T. is far in excess of that which can be marshalled for any other document of antiquity. Over 5,300 Greek manuscripts of the N. T. , 10,000 Latin Vulgate and more than 9,300 manuscripts of other early versions are in our hands in contrast to the next most authenticated work which is Homer's Iliad and which has but 643 manuscripts surviving. Furthermore, in no other case is the time interval between the original work and the earliest extant manuscripts so brief as in that of the N. T. For example, the famous John Ryland's papyrus containing verses from John's gospel is dated at approximately 120 A. D. Says Hort "in the variety and fullness of the evidence on which it rests, the text of the N. T. stands absolutely and unapproachably alone among ancient prose writings."

As for the original N. T. text, the words of Westcott and Hort sum up that situation:

If comparative trivialities such as change of order, the insertion or omission of the article with proper names, and the like are set aside, the words in our opinion still subject to doubt can hardly amount to more than a thousandth part of the N. T.⁴

The Reliability (Historicity) of the Gospel Records

But what shall we say about the reliability of these ancient records about Christ? How historical are the Gospels? In answer to Bultmann and those sympathetic with him we would mention the dictum of Dodd that genius never comes out of a committee. Those who wish to repudiate Jesus as the author of the words put in his mouth in the Gospels have to settle for a group as unique as the central figure they reject. Not only are we challenged by the Gospels to consider this story of a miracle, but there is also the miracle of the story. It would take a Christ to invent a Christ. His words come to the unprejudiced heart today as the genuine expressions of One who was equal with God. And those words match the majesty of the events associated with Christ, and both together harmonize with the Old Testament prophecies and types. To quote the reformers of the sixteenth century, the words of Jesus are self-authenticating, they are attended by the witness of the Spirit to every humble listener.

The Honesty of the Gospel Writers

There are grave psychological problems for those who accuse the Gospel writers of being liars. The evidence is that they ran the risk of martyrdom for their "lies," and while men often lie to get out of trouble, few men lie in order to get into it. Consider the many evidences of the frankness of these men who chronicled the life of Jesus. Paley summarized some of these centuries ago in his *Evidences of Christianity*. He cites, for example, the comments of Lardner, Beattie and Duchal as follows:

Christians are induced to believe the writers of the Gospel, by observing the evidences of piety and probity that appear in their writings, in which there is no deceit, or artifice, or cunning, or design. "No remarks," as Dr

Beattie hath properly said, "are thrown in, to anticipate objections; nothing of that caution, which never fails to distinguish the testimony of those who are conscious of imposture; no endeavour to reconcile the reader's mind to what may be extraordinary in the narrative."⁵

For examples of the candor of the N. T. writers consider the following:

(1) There is no collusion among them, for they appear to differ in many details. This applies not only to the ministry, but the death and resurrection of Christ.

(2) The account of the cross is staggeringly unadorned. There is no attempt to underline the cruelty of the death of Christ, or to lay blame on specific contemporaries. There are no exclamations of horror or contempt. We are just given the plain, unvarnished facts about the most significant event in all history.

(3) The same is true of the resurrection. Christ is never presented as appearing to any but those who believed in him. What an impressive story it could have made to have had Christ visit Pilate or Caiaphas in the dead of night! While we are told he spent six weeks on earth after his leaving the tomb, we are only given an account of a tiny percentage of his deeds and words in that time.

(4) Again, of similar ilk is the fact that Christ is always presented as speaking on practical matters effecting conduct rather than esoteric matters of interest such as the nature of heaven.

(5) Many of the "hard sayings" of Christ almost defy invention. Those anxious about audience reaction would have omitted them. Such sayings as moving mountains by faith, and eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God abound and are never fenced about by elaborate explanation.

(6) Again and again we read of failures among his own followers. At his resurrection he is met by unbelief repeatedly, and even the closing verses of Matthew refer to that fact. John the Baptist is said to have had his doubts and sent inquirers to Jesus. His own relatives thought he was mad (see Mark 3:21).

(7) While John the Baptist is said to be the greatest of the prophets, no miracles are ascribed to him, yet many are credited to Christ.

Will Durant in his *The Story of Civilization* says of the Gospel writers:

They record many incidents that mere inventors would have concealed—the competition of the apostles for high places in the kingdom, their flight after Jesus' arrest, Peter's denial, the failure of Christ to work miracles in Galilee, the references of some auditors to his possible insanity No one reading these scenes can doubt the reality of the figure behind them.⁶

The Gospels Written by Christ's Contemporaries

The scepticism now associated with the name of Bultmann was common last century when many suggested that the N. T. accounts of Christ may have been written at least 100 years after his death, enshrining the imaginary sayings of some dead Messiah. But more recent scholarship discounts all such theories.

Observe the words of W. F. Albright:

...In my opinion, every book of the N. T. was written ... between the forties and the eighties of the first century A.D. . . .⁷

And Bishop John A. T. Robinson has recently exploded his literary bombshell entitled *Redating the New Testament*, even more conservative in its dating than Albright. These men thus provide us with an answer to a question which has long plagued some scholars: "Why does not book after book of the N. T. refer to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70?" Yes, Jesus Christ lived, and the N.T. records are authentic documents.

Consider now the words of Christ as though we, too, had lived two millenniums ago in the ancient city of Jerusalem. In imagination let us join the crowd that listened to the melodious yet earnest voice of the former Carpenter of Nazareth. His words are breathtaking: Pointing to the orb blazing in the heavens, he says, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). In thus comparing himself to the sun of the natural world, Jesus claims to be the Author and Preserver of all life and of all truth, the Fountain of energy, strength and knowledge, of all things good. On other occasions he claimed—

- (1) That "all authority in heaven and on earth" had been given to him (Matthew 28:18 RSV).
- (2) That he had complete control over nature (Mark 4:39,41).
- (3) That the angels of heaven belonged to him (Matthew 16:27).
- (4) That people should love him above their own family or their own life (Matthew 10:37,38; Luke 14:26).
- (5) That he was the Savior of mankind (Luke 19:10).
- (6) That he could forgive sins (Matthew 9:2).
- (7) That he will be the final Judge of all men (Matthew 25:31-46).
- (8) That he existed before Abraham, and, that he enjoyed glory with God before the world was (John 8:58; 17:5).

Here, then, are some of the claims of Jesus, claims believed in so implicitly that he was prepared to risk not only his own life, but the lives of his friends as they, too, advocated his gospel. He foretold that his followers would be persecuted and put to death, and yet he intimated also that such a fate was a light thing in comparison with the importance of establishing his sovereignty over the world.

Christ's claims even survived the test of apparent failure. On the cross, after being rejected by his own nation and religious leaders, he could still behave as King of eternity, promising heaven to a penitent criminal and interceding as calmly for his enemies as though he were walking the pavements of a country town on a sunny day.

Furthermore, it would appear that this Man's deeds matched his words. No man ever acted as this Man acted. Could one flaw be found in the fourfold narrative, the whole picture would be blemished and Christ's claims dissipated. No such flaw exists. Had Christ never lived, it would have required his equal to invent the unique story of his life. Despite his insight into the nature of man and his understanding regarding truth and morality, he himself seemed never conscious

of personal guilt. Here Jesus of Nazareth differed from all other good men. Thus it has been said of Christ that if he was good, then he was God, for good men do not lie regarding themselves.

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CHAPTER 7

The Physician: (Part Three) The Light of the World

The most natural explanation for Christ is the supernatural. A simple but effective way of testing the claims of Christ is to consider his predictions about the future. Think first upon his predictions regarding his own influence in the world as its spiritual sun (John 8:12). How does this tremendous claim survive the test of two thousand years of subsequent history?

That which has frequently distinguished progressive from un-progressive countries is that the former are or were Christian, and as Christianity advocates the physical and mental development of society as well as the spiritual, civilization has always followed in its wake. Barbaric communities have been entirely transformed by the efforts of such men as Livingstone, Moffat, Carey and Paton. Education has always been the aim of the followers of Jesus. At the time of the Reformation, Protestants aimed at placing a school by every church. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32) is the motto of true education.

Christ placed a high estimate upon men as the sons of God, and since the preaching of his gospel, efforts to protect and preserve life and to increase happiness have swelled an unceasing stream of benevolence. For example, in the degenerate society of Christ's time infanticide was a common practice of parents unwilling to support children. They murdered their sons and daughters without compunction. This is now a rarity. There were approximately sixty million slaves in the Roman Empire, the property of a privileged few. Today, slavery of that type is almost unknown. Organizations such as those fostered by Florence Nightingale, George Muller, Dr. T. J. Barnado and others had their mainspring in that love of humanity which succeeds a love for Christ.

The Sermon on the Mount and the example of the spotless character of Jesus have done more to enable men to overcome inherent evil tendencies and attain to righteousness than all the philosophy of centuries. Thousands from every generation have testified to changed lives, to the substitution of love for hate, temperance for intemperance, cleanliness for filth, purposeful and beneficial activity for aimless and sinful pursuits.

Those discoveries most beneficial to humanity can be traced to men who found in Christ their inspiration and their strength. Sir Isaac Newton, probably the greatest of all scientists, claimed that his findings came in answer to prayer. Lord Kelvin, famous for his nautical inventions and electrical researches, made a similar claim. Kepler and Herschel, famous astronomers; Lord Lister, discoverer of the antiseptic methods in surgery; James Simpson who introduced chloroform; and hosts of others who have forwarded civilization were energized by devotion to the Galilean who had declared himself the Light of the world.

The greatest literary, art and musical creations have been inspired by the religion

of Jesus. *Paradise Lost*, Dante's *Inferno*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, are the acknowledged classics of the world. "*The Last Supper*" is regarded as one of the world's masterpieces in art, and *The Messiah*, along with compositions of Bach and Beethoven are prominent in the world of music. All these found their themes in Christianity.

These facts remarkably fulfill other words of Jesus— words which prove his foreknowledge: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). Christ did more here than predict his death by crucifixion. This ignominious fate, he declared, would result in the attraction to him of the men and women of all ages and climes. So it has been.

If this Man was not what he claimed, how can we explain his influence on the world? the fact that he has indeed been its sun? that he has drawn millions from all races to his banner? If he were only a Jewish peasant, how did he foresee the enduring and beneficial influence that his life was to shed over all mankind? Who revealed to him the revolution in morals, habits and social life that was to succeed him?

About three days before his death as a malefactor, the disciples heard Christ say, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). Thus Jesus claimed that for as long as heaven and earth would last, a peasant's words would be known and echoed from generation to generation. Civilizations would fade, empires would be overturned, systems and "isms" would appear and pass, but the sentiments of a penniless Nazarene were to shine as a beacon above the tumult of the centuries. Each passing year lends its witness to the fulfillment of this amazing prediction. Inscribed on the stones of edifices, printed in millions of books, indelibly written on the hearts of men, are the imperishable words of Jesus. At birth, marriage and death, in times of joy and in times of grief, his words flow, once more an inspiration, again a healing balm. Only one who was divine could speak as Christ spoke, only one divine could foretell the unfading influence of his words.

"Upon this rock (himself) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). This explains the previous statement. His words were to be preserved and his gospel preached by an institution that was to last as long as the world. Men and women of every generation would follow him, though opposition and fierce persecution ("the gates of hell") would continually threaten to extirpate them. Jesus further predicted the persecution of Christians in these words: Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you." "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (Matthew 24:9; John 15:20; 16:2).

The Jews were the first to persecute the Christians, whom they regarded as renegades. Next the Roman emperors sought to crush out the unorthodox sect, and Christians, captured and coated with tar, became beacons to light the streets of Rome. Later came the papal persecutions of the Middle Ages by sword and fagot. During the period of papal supremacy, the blood of at least fifty million martyrs flowed.

The dimensions to which his church would grow were no mystery to Jesus. "The kingdom of heaven (the gospel) is like to a grain of mustard seed, ... which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof" (Matthew 13:31,32). From the day of Pentecost when three thousand accepted the gospel, the church grew miraculously despite persecution, until in the days of Constantine in the fourth century, Christianity was so widespread that the emperor himself embraced it.

Christ knew also that many would enter his church without a genuine change of heart, and that the greatest peril of the church would not be from without, but from within. "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit.. then appeared the tares also (Matthew 13:24-26). Those who condemn Christianity because of churchgoing hypocrites have been forestalled by the Founder himself.

Just prior to his crucifixion, Jesus calmly promised his disciples that the day would come when his teachings would be published wherever there were communities of men and women. "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14).

This prediction is now being fulfilled. The nineteenth century was a century of missions. Prior to World Wars I and II, men on fire for Christ penetrated into Africa, Burma, India, China and the island groups of the South Seas. All nations are hearing the gospel preached to them in their own tongues, either through the living preacher or through communications media. One striking aspect of this prophecy is found by studying its context. This universal preaching was to occur suddenly, to take place in the last generation. Only the sixteenth-century invention of printing and the twentieth-century inventions of radio and television and modern means of transportation could fulfill this specification of the worldwide dispersion of truth in a generation.

Christ's view of the future embraced the face of his own nation. He foretold the destruction of the capital Jerusalem, the razing of the Temple, and the dispersion of the Jews among all nations.

Coming down to our own day, we find existing conditions outlined by the prophet of Nazareth. Speaking at a time when one empire ruled the world and the great Pax Romana held sway, Jesus described the days before his return: "Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places," "distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (Matthew 24:6,7; Luke 21:25,26). These words need no other commentary than our daily newspaper.

Only the Alpha and Omega of human history, the Author of creation and redemption, could describe so minutely the events of the Christian era. The Man of Galilee, who claimed to have existed before Abraham and who professed unity

with the Father, stands justified by the fulfillment of his predictions. Likewise, the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments are guaranteed as truth by his divine endorsement.

Here, then, is our desired "shortcut" for solving life's riddle. Christ and the Scriptures he inspired constitute "the way, the truth, and the life." Here is a Physician with a remedy that works! Listen to Oswald Chambers once more:

We get at Truth through life and personality; not by logic or scientific statements . . . Intellect asks, 'What is truth?' as if truth were something that could be stated in words. "I am the Truth," said Jesus. The only way we get at Truth is by life and personality. When a man is up against things it is no use for him to try and work it out logically, but let him obey, and instantly he will see his way through. Truth is moral, not intellectual. We perceive Truth by doing the right thing, not by thinking it out. 'If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine' Men have tried to get at the truth of Christianity head-first, which is like saying you must think how you will live before you are born. We instantly see the absurdity of that, and yet we expect to reason out the Christian life before we have been born into the realm of Jesus Christ. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." If ever we are to see the domain where Jesus lives and enter into it, we must be born again, become regenerated by receiving the Holy Spirit; then we shall find that Truth is not in a creed or a logical statement, but in Life and Personality.¹

Because of Christ every honest inquirer can confess with joy and exhilaration: "I believe in a God whose name is not religion but love, who makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends his rain on the just and the unjust, who came incarnate in his Son to be mocked, rejected, forsaken, that we might see his empathy with us.

I believe our life is to be like his, truth incarnate, to go about doing good, expecting only the cross, and experiencing that cross wherever the will of man, especially my own, conflicts with the will of God. My work, like his, is to proclaim the kingdom of heaven, a kingdom which is not food and drink but righteousness and joy in the Holy Spirit. To that end, like him, I shall speak and live according to the weightier matters of the law, love, mercy, faith, and not make an atom of a world or a world of an atom. Mint, anise and cumin, I will refuse as centralities and neither shall I ever consent to let faith, hope and love be treated as marginal.

Like Christ I shall live as seeing the invisible, refusing to seek glory from men, esteeming only that honor which is from above. Now life has meaning and it is worth living!"

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CHAPTER 8

Watching the Physician's Panacea At Work (Part One) New Views and Good News

Much that is said by some preachers sounds like sentimental pap to the average unbeliever. The real issues do not stand out starkly, challenging intelligent decision. No one with sense enjoys making choices amid hazes of obscurity.

What is Christianity all about? Can it be said clearly? What is this business about Calvary, this vague doctrine concerning a God-man who died "for" our sins? Whether believers or unbelievers, we have a right to understand this kernel and axis of Christian theory, and then to decide concerning its relevance.

A concrete illustration exists of the whole matter. It is three millenniums old, but has lost none of its pertinence. Consider then that ancient king whose tragic plight affords a microcosm of the greatest problem in the universe. He shifts uneasily on his throne as he worries about his two lost sons. One has been murdered by the other, and now the culprit is in exile, while the harrowed father frets over his duty to punish him who has been "the apple of his eye." He is a king as well as a father. There's "the rub." His appointed work is to maintain the gulf between right and wrong, to uphold justice and exact the penalty for every instance of violated law. Anarchy throughout the realm would be his fault if judgment were slacked and wrongdoers were permitted to escape scot-free. But now it is his boy who deserves sentence. Mercy and love contend with truth and justice.

Through the window the king perceives one who is evidently a stranger in the city. He is glad to divert his thoughts, and wonders who this woman, dressed in garments of mourning, might be. The question is soon resolved, for the stranger is bent on interviewing her monarch with a plea for help or so it seemed.

When the woman of Tekoa came to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, and did obeisance, and said, 'Help, O king.' And the king said to her, 'What is your trouble?' She answered, 'Alas, I am a widow; my husband is dead. And your handmaid had two sons, and they quarreled with one another in the field; there was no one to part them, and one struck the other and killed him. And now the whole family has risen against your handmaid, and they say, 'Give up the man who struck his brother, that we may kill him for the life of his brother whom he slew; and so they would destroy the heir also. Thus they would quench my coal which is left.'

He (the king) said, As the Lord lives, not one hair of your son shall fall to the grounds. And the woman said, 'Why then have you planned such a thing against the people of God? For in giving this decision the king convicts himself, inasmuch as the king does not bring his banished one home again. For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; yet doth he [God] devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.' (2 Samuel 14:4-13, RSV, verse 14,

KJV)

The woman's persuasive speech was addressed, not to conscience, but to pity and affection; and it aimed at giving effect, not to the convictions of duty, but to the promptings of inclination. Glad of any excuse to make the decision he really wants, David casts the die of royal decree. The word goes forth that Absalom may return from exile—unpunished.

The years that follow are years of intrigue as the impenitent prince schemes for his father's throne. No stratagem is considered beneath him as he creates dissatisfaction with his father's rulership throughout the realm. The record seems inevitable. "There came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom?" Rebellion was rife, and civil war imminent. The complete story may be read in 2 Samuel 14-18, but it is its conclusion which concerns us here.

The decisive battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim, and it seemed at the end of the day that each tree stood as a monument marking the presence of a corpse, or a heap of them. "There was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men."

"And Absalom chanced to meet the servants of David. Absalom was riding upon his mule, and the mule went under the thick branches of a great oak, and his head caught fast in the oak, and he was left hanging between heaven and earth, while the mule that was under him went on and he (Joab) took three darts in his hand, and thrust them into the heart of Absalom, while he was still alive in the oak" (2 Samuel 18:9,14 RSV).

What slew Absalom? What was responsible for the blood of these 20,000 fallen patriots? The answer—Mercy slew them! A mercy that was unjustified filled the kingdom with blood, bereavement and anguish. An irresponsible pardon brought multiplied sorrow and trouble. Had David punished his son, the rebellion could never have occurred. The king's failure to exact the penalty for his boy's crime wrecked the kingdom.

And if God had met the problem of sin as did David, he would have wrecked the universe! Now we can glimpse the significance of the cross, and the heart of the Atonement. Recall the final appeal of the old woman, so true in essence but so wrongly applied. For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; ... yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him."

To every creature the Creator gave the gift of free will in order that worship and obedience might ever proceed from loving, willing hearts. The abuse of freedom brought to God the same problem that David faced long afterward. How are justice and mercy to be reconciled? How can peace and truth kiss each other? How can the Father of those who have become rebels be a true king also, upholding right and punishing wrong? How can he forgive and save the sinner, and yet demonstrate that his law is immutable and that lasting peace and joy come only through perfect obedience?

Had God decided as David, to forgive without exacting penalty, he would have

filled the universe with anarchy. His eternal law would have appeared to all created beings as something "optional" rather than as the warp and woof of all true government and lasting happiness. When the rebellion of sin transpired, two things were necessary to safeguard all creation: (1) The law must be vindicated by requiring the punishment for its violation, and (2) the rebels must be transformed into law-loving citizens. Absalom's forgiveness but confirmed him in impenitence. He was a lawbreaker still. The King of the universe needed to forgive his erring sons in such a manner as to change their hearts and bring them into complete harmony with his will. Thus the cross!

The death of Christ was not the arbitrary placing upon an innocent third party the penalty belonging to another. No It was the offended God himself personally accepting the guilt of sinners and paying their debt. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Thus, and thus only, could he be just, and the justifier." He honors the law by exacting the penalty; he transforms the sinner by the melting display of his love. Thus the lost may be saved, and yet the "ninety and nine just persons" of the sinless universe not endangered.

As we behold the cross, the primary glimpse of a dying man is replaced by our perception of a suffering God. Love and hatred, good and evil, are revealed by contrast as the Creator endures what the creature deserves. As we continue to gaze, it becomes apparent that we are all there on that cross! As Adam represented the race in Eden, so Christ, the second Adam, represents humanity at the cross. "One died for all, therefore all died" (2 Corinthians 5:14 RV).

In Christ, all men legally died and paid the price for their sins. As by the sin of Adam all were ruined, so by the righteous life and vicarious death of the second Adam, all were redeemed potentially. Now "whosoever will, may come." Now "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Now "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," because the claims of the righteous, eternal law have been met, and we have died in our Substitute and Representative. God will not ask us to pay the price a second time if we abide in Christ. "Ye are complete in him," "accepted in the beloved." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Marvel at the wondrous means devised by God whereby we banished rebels might be welcomed anew to the heavenly courts!

If Calvary does not move us, God has no other resource. Here is found the logic and dynamic of Christianity, and to refuse it is to do despite to one's own soul. But glad- hearted acceptance begins life eternal.

"For we must needs die ... yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him."

Let us next see how the heavenly devising affects the rebel's life, and just how it removes his burden of guilt and grief.

CHAPTER 9

Watching the Physician's Panacea At Work (Part Two) Crisis and Transformation

In a famous short story by Edgar Allan Poe a valuable letter becomes lost even though prominently displayed in a card rack beneath the middle of the mantelpiece. The police spend a week exploring minutely the nooks and crannies of each room in the house thought to contain the lost document. Even a powerful microscope is employed to no avail.

The hero of the tale tells the prefect of the Parisian police that "perhaps the mystery is a little too plain, too self-evident." Later he muses, "The intellect suffers to pass unnoticed those considerations which are too obtrusively and too palpably self-evident." All of this is a parable of life itself. The clues to the meaning of existence are so prominent that few people "see" them. Just as we use eyes and brain, hardly aware that we do so, and gaze through windows at objects outside without perceiving the glass panes which make such perceptions possible, so some aspects of our nature and experience that give pungency and character to all the rest, escape our notice.

For example, Paul Tournier reminds us that the universal phenomenon of guilt (for normal people at least) is the seasoning of all living. In the little word "ought" lies both our greatness and our misery. According to psychiatrists and physicians, a major cause of breakdown is a burdened conscience. Certain it is that guilt continually attends our failures with time, money, personal relationships and opportunity in general. All human beings experience outrageous impulses, nonsensical inhibitions, temptations, complexes, obscene images and vague fears. Even the best of men acknowledge that they continually betray themselves, their aspirations, convictions and values.

Living means choosing, but the choices are too often those which seem the fruit, not of conviction, but of convenience, pressure and selfishness. As a result, we spend much time continually in rationalization and self-justification, as well as in the criticism of others which strangely brings in its train a perverted sense of self-worth. These things in turn produce the reflex of a more subtle guilt, and thus the vicious circle whirls unceasingly.

Even those moderns who jeer at "oughts" and guilt find themselves asserting that people ought not to be intolerant and judgmental. Man can no more dodge the reality of moral absolutes than he can lose his own shadow.

Guilt is imposed from without and wells up from within. The only way to avoid criticism is to die. Occasionally we meet young men and women who suddenly are transformed by the experience of human love. They become radiant, full of joy and hope, and it seems they could cross the world in new ten-league boots. What has happened? They have found temporary rest from guilt in the complete acceptance extended to them by another human being. For a short time guilt

subsides, and such a person inhabits a paradise bubble. But the pricking of that bubble is as certain as the sunset which follows sunrise.

To know our disease is halfway toward finding the remedy and being cured. Literature, the mirror to life, focuses with fidelity on the characteristic human symptom of guilt. Take murderess Lady Macbeth for an example. Shakespeare in *Macbeth*, Act V, puts into her mouth these words:

Out damned spot! out I say! One; two. Why, then, 'tis time to do't: Hell is murky! Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him? Here's the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!

And her husband questions the physician as follows:

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased, Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow, Raze out the written troubles of the brain, And with some sweet oblivious antidote Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff Which weighs upon the heart?

The melancholy answer is that no remedy for guilt is known to man. But here Shakespeare erred.

Thus the real clue to life's mystery and sorrow demonstrates Edgar Allan Poe's contention. Not the microscopic search of DNA or the atomic realm yields what is sought. The telltale element is much more conspicuous than anything like that.

Public Enemy Number One.

He who admits his own continual burden of guilt will recognize that Public Enemy Number One is none of the scapegoats selected by man. It is not the government, the weather or a faulty educational system primarily which plagues us. Neither is it ignorance nor stupidity.

Rather it is that ancient disease which the Bible calls sin—that thing which "blights homes, breaks hearts, and digs graves, which insulted God, killed the prophets, robbed heaven, and made hell the high capital of the universe." The giants which stalk us are sin, sorrow and death, and they must be felled in that order.

To be an ethical animal in a nonethical universe is agony to the mind and heart, and as Carlyle asserted, "The ultimate question posed by life is, 'Wilt thou be a hero or a coward?'" The coward endeavors to flee from the pressures of oughts and inevitable guilt by pursuing such escapes as sex, alcohol, tranquilizers, the hard drugs or the respectable Meccas of wealth, power and possessions. But at best all of these are but chloroform masks, substitutes for living.

Importance of Values.

Another common approach is one which is pseudo- intellectual and therefore fashionable and acceptable. One can deny the reality of right and wrong and thus attempt to give the quietus to guilt. But this can be done only at the price of destroying all values. Human love becomes a mere biological sensation, and all

hope a deception. It becomes impossible to use the words good, better, best, as we no longer have a justifiable scheme of values. Life becomes nonsensical, and with the death of hope comes the hope for death.

Should one then assert, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die"? That sham prescription has often been exposed. Its Achilles heel is the fact that usually tomorrow finds us alive and with a dreadful hangover. We find that he who seeks "kicks," experiences repeatedly a "kickback." Omar Khayyam, in *Rubaiyat*, voiced the supposed cure of life's concerns:

Ah, fill the cup! What (profits) it to repeat
How time is slipping underneath our feet.
Unborn Tomorrow and dead Yesterday,
Why fret about them if Today be sweet!

But Robert Browning, In *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, says:

Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
Since life fleets, all is change;
the Past gone, seize today!
Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure.

A Cure for Guilt

A vital question, then, for all men is, "How can a man be reconciled to God?" Or, put another way: is there a cure for guilt's alienation and sin's compulsion?"

The good news for today is that the confession of the real problem can result in an immediate discovery of healing. Every needy person can be "surprised by joy." The burden of the N.T. is that man's Maker, aware of the human dilemma, has already intervened to solve it. The Scriptures declare to guilty men that he who is both Lawgiver and Judge has lived their life (except for sinning) and died their death in order that by way of exchange they might be credited with his life and righteousness. According to William Tyndale, these truths constitute the "good, glad, and merry tidings, which make a man's heart sing, and his feet to dance for joy."

Says Holy Writ, "One has died for all; therefore all have died. ... Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself . . . For our sake he [God] made him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 or 5:14-21).

If One died for all, then all died! We died at three o'clock, black Friday, A.D. 30. We were ruined ages before, without our personal participation, by the first Adam. At Calvary, again without our personal participation, we were redeemed by the second Adam. As Adam represented the race in Eden, so Christ, the second Adam, represented humanity at the cross. In him all men have legally died and paid the price for their sins. Thus, "whosoever will, may come." Now, "all manner

of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." God is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins" because the claims of the righteous, eternal law have been met, and we have died in our Substitute and Representative, Christ. God will not ask us to pay the price a second time if we abide in him, for he tells us, "Ye are complete in him," "accepted in the beloved," and "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Christ was made what he was not that we might be made what we are not.

Therefore, despite a million sermons to the contrary, the gospel is not good advice. It is good news! Advice is about something I should do, but news concerns something already done, and done by someone else. The gospel is the good news that in God's sight, sin—my sin— has been made an end of and that everlasting righteousness has been brought in, for me. All that God requires of me for time and eternity has already been achieved by himself in the person of his Son. That achievement is credited to anyone, however vile, who believes the news and accepts it.

Despite my sin and selfishness, there is no need for me to try and reconcile God. He is already reconciled, and he urges us, "Be ye reconciled." God is offering something, not demanding something. I need not be anxious about what God thinks of me, but only what God thinks of Christ, my substitute. I must not blaspheme his grace by thinking that I must be free from sin before trusting his power to save. I must come to him, just as I am—sinful, helpless, dependent.

The divine plan involves our complete rescue from sin and guilt, from sorrow and death. Our acceptance of Calvary brings freedom from sin's guilt; our dependence upon the living, interceding Christ brings freedom from sin's power; and his return will bring freedom from sin's very presence. The work is his, though received by our simple trust.

Objectively Christ is all; subjectively, faith is all. For an illustration, consider the story of the adulteress as recorded in John 8. She is the cowering center of a jabbering, accusing crowd. How she longs for an enveloping earthquake or destructive lightning! But better than either to her is the healing presence of Christ. Note the instructive comments on the situation by Paul Tournier:

This woman symbolizes all the despised people of the world, all those whom we see daily, crushed by judgments which weigh heavily upon them, by a thousand and one arbitrary or unjust prejudices, but also by fair judgments, based on the healthiest morality and the most authentic divine law. She symbolizes all psychological, social, and spiritual inferiority. And her accusers symbolize the whole of judging, condemnatory, contemptuous humanity.

It is as if the presence of Christ brought about the strangest of inversions: he wipes out the guilt in the woman who was crushed by it, and arouses guilt in those who felt none.²

The scene is the world in miniature with ourselves at the heart of it—ourselves and him. The light that shows us our sins becomes the light that heals. Christ is that light. Confronted with him we learn that sin is not merely the transgression of

a law, but it is the rejection of God himself. Salvation also is not an abstract idea. It, too, is a Person—that same Person.

Now we can see that the purpose of the universal phenomenon of guilt is not to condemn and to destroy, but to save. "Neither do I condemn thee," says Christ; "go, and sin no more."

Let it be carefully noted from this story that the woman was not the only one with a problem. Christ, too, seemed in a dilemma. He claimed to be both the Friend of publicans and sinners and the Upholder and Ratifier of the divine law. How could these be reconciled? It would seem that in this situation he must choose one role or the other. It mirrors God's eternal problem before his universe. How could he maintain his law of justice and right and yet save the transgressors of that law?

Note how Christ dealt with the situation of the adulteress. With his finger he wrote in the dust. Only once in the N.T. do we read of Christ writing, and only once in the O.T. do we read of writing by the finger of God. It is as if Christ said to the woman's accusers, "You talk of the law's requirements to me. Don't you know, I wrote the original law!" But that same law required that the witnesses of evil assist in the carrying out of the death sentence for its violation (see Deuteronomy 17:17). This, of course, implied that the witnesses were themselves innocent of such transgressions. Christ, therefore, admonished the cruel crowd, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." And the record declares that "they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one."

On what grounds could Christ forgive the woman? That law of the Ten Commandments which had been written by the finger of God resided in the sanctuary under the mercy seat, which once a year was sprinkled with the blood of sacrifice. Above the mercy seat, in the glorious Shekinah, the One who was both Lawgiver and Redeemer could look with compassion at that broken law through the mercy seat because of the sprinkled blood. And that blood was a symbol of the sacrifice at Calvary. God can be both just and the justifier of the penitent sinner because he has exacted the penalty of the violated law—he has not only required the penalty, but provided it.

We close where we began. The solution to your problem and mine is not obscure. We need not climb up to heaven or down to hell to find it. No great IQ is needed. The most well-known words in the world contain all we seek. Hear them again. But not only hear—receive! "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

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CHAPTER 10

Watching the Physician At Work (Part Three) The Look Becomes a Gaze, and the Crooked Become Straight

It has become an old joke to refer to the statement that years ago people who missed a stagecoach were prepared to relax and wait a week for the next one, whereas today some of us almost have a nervous breakdown if we miss a section in a revolving door.

Take the country in which I was born—Australia. One would think that this land is sufficiently removed from western culture to represent a more relaxed way of life. But not so. A well-known anecdote here concerns one who came from the outback to the city of Sydney, and whose first words were, "What is everyone running for?"

Yet, it is not really a twentieth-century disease to which we refer. An ancient Chinese parable tells of one who promised a flock of wild geese, "If you will all be quiet, I'll tell you something which will turn you all into human beings." Thereafter one was quiet and then another, but never all at once. The sage is said to have waited and waited, till he grew gray and old with the passage of the days and years. Eventually all the geese were caught and eaten. The right relationship between work and rest is a fundamental problem. Our proverbs on the matter contradict each other:

Labor conquers all things.
He who hesitates is lost.
Look before you leap.
Rest awhile that you may finish the sooner.
Beware of activity without achievement.
Step back in order to jump farther.

Physically speaking, life consists of a rhythm of work and rest on a daily and weekly scale. Even our yearly holidays are a concession to this fact. What about spiritually? Does the same principle apply? As regards our eternal salvation, do works, or the rest in faith, count the most? What is the relationship between God's part and ours in genuine Christian life?

Scripture gives us many illustrations of the issues involved. There is Martha, cumbered with much serving, and Mary, sitting in calm adoration. There is Ahimaaz, who ran without a message, and the Thessalonians, who had a message, but who stopped running (2 Thessalonians 3:11). One Old Testament parable tells of a man who was so "busy here and there" that he lost what had been entrusted to him (1 Kings 20:40), and consequently lost his life as well. Another passage also from the Old Testament condemns those who in complete relaxation are "settled on their lees" (Jeremiah 48:11). We read of some (the Galatians) who insisted that salvation had to be earned, and of others (the

Corinthians) who said that mere faith was enough and that behavior did not matter.

Yes, at first sight even the Bible is confusing on this issue. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." "Strive to enter in." "Fight the good fight." "By works a man is justified." And on the other hand: "A man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." "Come unto me ... and I will give you rest." "We which have believed do enter into rest." "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." "Wait on the Lord."

Church history tells a similar story. There have been the Calvinists and the Arminians, the Quietists and the Pietists—those who believed God did it all, and those who seemed to believe that man did it all. Theologians discuss the same issue as they talk of faith and works, justification and sanctification, prevenient grace and the labor of love.

How to harmonize faith and works? Can the truth be said simply? Can it be easily grasped? Let us try. To many observers the Jewish race has seemed the most energetic in the world. They have ever been great workers. On one occasion they asked Christ, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" (John 6:28). Years later the Gentiles also voiced the same query, for in the following book we find a European jailer exclaiming, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

Both inquiries received a similar reply. Jesus told them, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him that he hath sent" (John 6:29). Paul said, "Believe ... and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

But it isn't always that way. While the woman at Samaria was told to ask for the gift of salvation, which was already available, Nicodemus was informed that he needed to be born again. While Zaccheus was told that salvation had come unbidden to his house, the rich young ruler was admonished to sell all that he had and give to the poor before he followed Jesus. Many despairing invalids were graciously informed that their sins were forgiven and that they might rise up and walk, whereas a certain lawyer was ordered to keep the commandments and live. We are still mixed up.

The key lies at the door, as is usually the case in the Scriptures. In the beginning God gave man everything; nothing was earned. All was the result of divine love and grace. Man rested before he worked, according to the Creation record. But after the Fall, we find man feverishly working to remedy his nakedness, till God came and told him to halt his activity while a lamb was slain and its skin made into the gift of a new wardrobe (Genesis 3:7,21). Later, however, Cain reverts to his parents' activism and offers God his own sacrifice of fruit—he feels no need of a blood sacrifice—and his offering is rejected. Apparently no sacrifice of our own to God is acceptable until we have accepted his sacrifice.

The scriptural truth can be summarized as follows: *Effort is essential, but it is of value only if it springs from faith's adoration of Christ and his cross.* Consider, for example, the wonderful story of the Good Samaritan in its context. The parable is wedged between two other stories. The first of these concerns the lawyer who asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25). He was told, "This do

(keep the commandments), and thou shalt live" (verse 28). The second story, on the other side of the parable, tells of the rest of Jesus in the home of Mary and Martha. Mary also rested. Sitting at his feet, she listened adoringly, while Martha, busy in the kitchen, became furious at being left alone to prepare lunch. Her anger boiled over as she urged the Lord to rebuke her sister. "But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her'" (Luke 10:41, RSV).

Now we can understand our Lord's words, not only to Martha but also to the lawyer. Love's activity can spring only from love's contemplation. Our very first duty is adoration. By beholding we become changed. Only he who has meditated upon Christ hanging upon the cross as the gospel incarnate is able to truly love his neighbor and keep God's commandments.

Martin Luther in 1520, at the dawning of the Reformation, wrote:

A good or a bad house does not make a good or a bad builder; but a good or a bad builder makes a good or a bad house. And in general, the work never makes the workman like itself, but the workman makes the work like himself. So it is with the works of man. As the man is, whether believer or unbeliever, so also is his work—good if it was done in faith, wicked if it was done in unbelief.

Luther's statement, of course, was but a commentary on Romans 14:23:

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." If we are not "in Christ," all our good deeds, as well as our bad deeds, are an abomination to God. All such "righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). They are "dead works" (Hebrews 6:1).

The gospel is good news, not good advice. It tells us that Christ has already redeemed the whole world and borne the brunt of all our sins—past, present and future. God is reconciled to us and invites, "Be ye reconciled" inasmuch as, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21, RSV).

All who believe the good news are "accepted in the beloved." They are "complete in him." Christ is made unto them "righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

The Scriptures declare, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1, RSV). We are not under the law as a means of salvation, and the knowledge of such marvelous grace delivers us from the dominion of sin (Romans 3:20; 6:14).

The fruit of our new relationship with God must ever be distinguished from its root. We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone. We are not saved by a mixture of faith and works, but by that true faith which inevitably works. God justifies no man whom he does not proceed to sanctify.

I would not work my soul to save,
For that the Lord hath done.
But I would work like any slave
For love of God's dear Son.

The believer works from the cross, not to it. True Christianity has ever taught that union with God by faith brings holiness, but heresy affirms that a self-achieved holiness can result in union with God.

Man's part in salvation is comparatively minute but nevertheless indispensable. While objectively Christ is all, subjectively faith is all, and it is a faith which ever yields holy fruit. We are to prove we live by our actions. Our words, ways and tempers should tell the same story. We should not live the torpid life of a tortoise or sloth, but the energetic, vibrant life of a deer. Christians are not meant to be like insects which grow to a certain point of development and then stop. Rather, we should be like trees which ever increase in strength and influence. Now we can reconcile the apparently contradictory Scriptures mentioned earlier. Yes, we must work out our own salvation, but the rest of the text says, "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). We can work out only what we permit God to work in as we look to the crucified and risen Christ.

Whatever contribution men make to their own salvation is made by the grace of God. If there is in our celestial robe of righteousness, but one stitch of our own making, we will be lost. If there is but one link of salvation's chain of ten thousand links that is of our own devising, we are hopelessly lost. God is both the Author and the Finisher of our salvation as we look to him in adoring faith. It is our part to cultivate faith by study, meditation, prayer and obedience, remembering that while it is the look which justifies, it is the gaze which sanctifies. To believe is to receive. As we trust, the Holy Spirit fills; if we cease to trust, he ceases to fill, and his presence is ever evidenced by the abounding works of love.

The learned Bishop J. C. Ryle puts the whole thing in a nutshell as follows:

The plain truth is that men will persist in confounding things that differ—that is, justification and sanctification. In justification the word to be addressed to man is believe only believe; in sanctification the word must be 'watch, pray, and fight.' What God has divided let us not mingle and confuse.

According to the degree of his faith the Christian fights well or ill, wins victories or suffers occasional repulses, comes off triumphant or loses a battle. He that has most faith will always be the happiest and most comfortable soldier. Nothing makes the anxieties of warfare sit so lightly on a man as the assurance of Christ's love and continual protection. Nothing enables him to bear the fatigue of watching, struggling and wrestling against sin like the indwelling confidence that Christ is on his side and success is sure. It is the 'shield of faith' which quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked one.¹

To the fray! D-day is past, V-day is sure!

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