

CHRIST THE WAY

by James Garrison

Garrison's exposition of Christ as the Way to God, examining how Jesus is the exclusive path to salvation, truth, and eternal life.

19 Chapters

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Christ the Way - 00.2-Introduction

Introductory

WE ARE living at a time which is marked by great and perplexing problems. Advancing civilization creates new situations and raises new problems. The greater the progress, the profounder and the more difficult are the questions it raises. The primitive savage had but few wants and, therefore, was faced by but few and simple questions. The civilized and Christianized man of today finds himself face to face with situations which tax all his powers, and with problems whose solution transcends all the power of human reason and philosophy. The chief problems of life are those which have to do with God, with our relations to our fellow men, with the moral and spiritual elevation of the race, with the proper correlation of forces working for human good, and with the destiny of mankind. Science and philosophy have helped us to answer many of the questions of life, but they are powerless when they face these supreme questions of the human soul. It would be strange, indeed, if there were no authentic guide in these highest ranges of human thought and of human needs. In the fulness of time there appeared One among the sons of men as pure as he was strong, as gentle as he was great, as gracious as he was wise, who declared himself to be the Way, the Truth and the Life. He was the Way, because he was the Truth and the Life. He was the true and living Way. Standing in the midst of a lost race, wandering in the mazes of sin and ignorance, and knowing not whither to go, nor the way thither, Jesus pointed to himself as the Way, by walking in which men could find both truth and life and reach the ultimate goal for which man was created. Never were such claims made by any other being in the world's history. Has he made good his claim as the Way?

It is my purpose, in a few chapters, to study this question in relation to some of the chief problems of life, with the view of making it clear to those who read that Christ is indeed the solution of all our most important problems, and the true and living Way to the realization of man's fondest hopes, desires, and aspirations. It is my firm conviction, growing more deeply rooted with the passing years, that Jesus Christ is the physician for our human ills, and the only safe Guide in the solution of life's most vital problems. We believe he is the Way in a profounder sense than has yet been realized by the religious world in general. There are signs, however, that he is coming to his own, and that men are seeing in him as never before the Way out of all our religious, social and industrial difficulties and the Way to the City of God--the goal of perfected humanity and redeemed society. May he, by his spirit, guide us while we seek to point out how he solves our problems, and how he becomes the Way by which the church may regain its lost unity and bring in the universal reign of the kingdom of God.

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Christ the Way - 01-The Original Conception of Christianity

The Original Conception of Christianity

IT IS an epoch in world-history when one appears who offers a new and improved way of life to mankind. If that way be demonstrated by actual experience to be the only true way for man to fulfill his destiny and attain to the highest development which is possible for him, and the only way in which society, government and civilization can be brought to perfection, then the introduction of such a way divides all the centuries into two great divisions--Before and After. Christ's way, having been demonstrated in the judgment of the most capable minds to be such a way, has divided all history into its two recognized divisions of B. C. and A. D.

Such was the unique character of his teaching, of his life, and of the life to which he called his disciples, that after his resurrection, when men began to accept him as their Savior and Lord, the new movement was designated as "The Way." Saul of Tarsus asked and received authority from the high priest "that if he found any that were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." (Acts 9:2) After Saul had been converted, he refers repeatedly to Christ and his teaching as "the Way." He departed from the synagogue in Corinth because "some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude." (Acts 19:9) At Ephesus, "there arose no small stir concerning the Way," when the number of converts began to interfere with the business of Demetrius, the silversmith, who made the silver shrines of Diana. (Acts 19:23) In his defense of his Jewish brethren at Jerusalem, he tells them that "being zealous for God, even as ye are all this day, I persecuted this Way unto the death." (Acts 22:4) In his defense before Felix, he said: "But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers." (Acts 24:14) Felix is referred to as "having more exact knowledge concerning the Way."

These quotations suffice to show how soon what we now call Christianity was conceived as a new way of life--so unique, so transcendent in its character as to be designated "the Way." Whether Paul's Roman citizenship, which had familiarized him with the great highways built by that empire, led him to choose such a name for the great spiritual highway which Christ had built for the earth's millions to travel upon, or whether the words of Jesus, in which he declared himself "the Way," had come down through the first disciples to Paul, matters not. The thing of chief importance is that in the very beginning of Christianity its most striking characteristic, and one which attracted the attention alike of friends and foes, was that it presented a new method of living; that it was a new life manifesting itself by the new motives which prompted it, the new principles which governed it, and the new goal to which it led.

It would be well, it seems to me, to return to that simple and original conception of Christianity. It would cure many of the ills and errors that hinder the progress of Christianity in our time. Christianity as "the Way" antedates the church, with all its questions of organization and government. It antedates the theological puzzles and problems which have since divided and weakened the church. Especially is it important to note that it antedates all that deadly formalism

which conceives of salvation as a matter of belonging to the right church, with the right creed, the right kind of government, the right kind of liturgy, and an unbroken chain of ecclesiastical succession. In those hale and undegenerate days, Christianity was a Way of life; it was following Christ. It was accepting him as leader, and identifying oneself with him in propagating his teaching, his life, his Way among men. It involved faith in Christ, submission to Christ, sharing the life of Christ, and walking in the Way which he taught and exemplified. That was so simple that a child could understand it, and yet involves all that is vital and fundamental in Christianity. Out of that have come the church and all the agencies associated with it that are doing Christ's work in the world. They are the stream, not the fountain. The cry, "Back to Christ!" needs a new and more vital interpretation than that which has been given to it by those who raised the slogan. Nothing is needed more than to get "back to Christ," not with the view, however, of undermining the authority of the apostles of Christ, nor the validity of the New Testament writings outside the gospels, but with the view of looking at the great problems of life through his eyes, of feeling the impulse of his supreme personality, of understanding his plans for world-wide conquest and his method of carrying out those plans, and of submitting more loyally to his Way than the church has done in the past.

Christ the Way - 02-The Way to the Father

The Way to the Father IN THAT upper room yonder in Jerusalem, on the evening when Jesus instituted the sacred feast which we call the Lord's Supper, and before he went out into the night to his betrayal and to his crucifixion on the morrow, he opened his heart in a wonderful way to his faithful disciples touching matters of supreme interest to the human heart. Among other things are these memorable words: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me. If ye had known me ye would have known my Father also. From henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him: Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" (John 14:6-10) Of all the subjects which have engaged the thought of man nothing is so vital, so fundamental, so revolutionary in its influence on the life and character of men as the questions concerning God. What kind of being is he, and what is his attitude toward mankind? This is not a question that interests certain classes, or races of people only, but it appeals to all men of every nation, tribe and tongue, and of whatever degree of culture. When William Duncan, "the Apostle of Alaska," went to the Island of Metlakatla to preach the gospel to the Indians, an old Indian chief said to him: "If your book tells us the heart of God we want to hear you." What this old, savage chief, with his dim and shadowy ideas of God, wished to know was, what kind of heart or disposition did this God have toward the Indians? Was he friendly, hostile, or indifferent? This is the same question, in substance, which has been raised by thoughtful men from the appearance of man on this earth until the present time.

It was this question that was in the heart of Philip when he said to Jesus: "Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us." It is as if he had said: "We have heard about God, the Creator, the mighty Ruler, and the Holy and Righteous One, who has enacted laws for our government, but we would like to see the Father. Show us the Father and we will be satisfied." "Have I been so long time with you," said Jesus, "and dost thou not know me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

It would be impossible to exaggerate the importance of the request made by Philip and the value of the answer given by Jesus. Philip was raising a question of the universal human heart, and Jesus, perceiving that, answered it accordingly. The answer contains the very core of Christian theology. It is an announcement, on the one hand, of his supreme mission as the revealer of the Father, and of the no less startling fact that there was no access to the Father except by himself. "No one cometh unto the Father but by me." Does the average Christian rise to the height of the great conception of God's Fatherhood? Can we think what it means to a sinning and suffering race, that the great and infinite ruler of the universe, whose laws we have trampled in the dust, and whose penalties we are suffering, is also our Father? Does it not remove from the world the shadow of orphanage and span with the rainbow of hope the dark chasm which separates us from God"? Can we ever fathom the meaning of that phrase which Jesus taught us to say, when we pray, "Our Father"? Does it not give us a new and revolutionary interpretation of the universe, and

of the whole history of the human race? If God be our Father, then love is the motive power that lies behind creation and all the infinite processes of nature. Love, then, is the key that unlocks the mystery of God's dealings with humanity in the past, as it is also the key to our interpretation of God's purposes in the future. Of course the perfect revelation of God as Father by Jesus Christ implies his own perfection as Son, for only a perfect Son could perfectly reveal a perfect Father; so that we not only have the core of a true theology in this statement of Jesus, but of a true Christology as well. It is only by giving to Christ his proper place and function in the moral universe that we come to a true knowledge of God, whom he reveals. Thus are bound together, as two inseparable hemispheres of truth, the Fatherhood of God and the Sonship of Jesus Christ.

Two questions of great significance emerge at this point of our discussion:

1. In what way, or ways, has Christ shown us the Father?
2. In what way, or by what means, does he make the Father accessible to us, since we can approach the Father only through him?

Let us ponder meanwhile the infinite grace of God in disclosing to mankind his divine Fatherhood, and the greatness of man's nature, and his responsibility, implied in this revelation.

Christ the Way - 03-How Christ Revealed the Father

How Christ Revealed the Father THE GREAT medium of revelation is personality. Even under the old dispensation, God spoke to men "in the prophets," as he has in the last days "spoken unto us in his Son." (Hebrews 1:1-2) As Christ is the only perfect character the world has ever seen, it follows that the only perfect revelation of God comes through him. As the author of the Hebrew letter tells us, he was "the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance." (Hebrews 1:3) Revelation, then, reaches its climax, its culmination, in Christ, the only perfect personality of all history.

Christ revealed the Father, first of all, by what he was in the perfection of his character, of his wisdom, and of his power. In his pure, sinless life, in his profound spiritual insight, in the transcendent influence he wielded over men, in his gentleness, in his divine compassion for the erring and the needy, in his clear and wide vision of the world's needs, men saw for the first time what is the human life of God, or the life of God under human conditions. To be holy while the companion of sinners, to be merciful while himself without sin, to be concerned most about those most in need, to have come into the world not to be ministered unto, but to minister--these were traits that marked him out from other men as belonging to a new order of humanity, even the Son of God. But if he were the Son of God, then these elements of character in him were the revelations of his Father in heaven.

Jesus revealed the Father by his works. His miracles, which many of us were taught in our earlier years to regard as simply credentials of his divine power, are an essential part of his revelation--the revelation of the heart of God. Read them again with this question before you: How does God feel toward our humanity? Does God care for the temporal wants of men? Read the miracle of the loaves and fishes, where Jesus taught that God cares for hungry men, and feeds them. Does he care for the sick, the lame, the blind, the halt? Let Jesus' works of healing be the all-sufficient reply. The miracles did, indeed, have evidential value, but their direct; and primary purpose seems to have, been to expose the heart of God toward our sinning and suffering race. They teach us, too, that the church is to concern itself not simply with the respectable and well-to-do classes, but with the outcasts, and the widow and the orphan. One of the hardest things for the average man to believe about God, is that he is concerned about the welfare of the lost and lowly classes of society, and that he has a heart of compassion for all classes and conditions of men. Jesus sought, by what he did, to convince men that God's heart was the heart of a Father toward his children. Incidentally, these works of Jesus indicate the kind of work by which the church can most recommend God and his religion to the favorable consideration of men.

Jesus revealed the Father by what he taught concerning God. It was his favorite designation of the Divine Being. Of all the names of deity which have ever been applied to him, there is none that touches the heart so deeply, and brings us so close to him as that of Father. Jesus spoke of "my Father," and "your Father." He claimed no exclusive right to call God Father. He wished all humanity to share with him in this glorious privilege. When the disciples asked him to teach them

to pray, he said: "When ye pray, say, Our Father who art in heaven." There is more inspiration to real prayer in that one sentence than in all the homilies on prayer which have ever been written. Jesus' revelation of God as Father revealed the mighty possibilities of prayer.

There is nothing in all the treatises on theology ever written by man that will compare in beauty, and in the power to comfort the human heart, with that part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount where he dwells upon the care of God for mankind. (Matthew 6:25-34) In connection with that, read Matthew 7:7-12. Here is such a revelation of God's fatherhood, and of his tender care for his earthly children, as should touch every heart with a new sense of the value of Christ's teaching about his Father, and with the desire to be worthy children of such a Father.

Jesus revealed the Father, then, by what he was in his own perfect Sonship; by what he did to relieve the sorrowing, the suffering, and the anxieties of men, and by his wonderful teaching concerning God's care and compassion for all his earthly children. The revelation of this supreme truth about God has been of unspeakable comfort and strength to men and women struggling with poverty, with sickness, with sin, and with all the ills of life. Without it, Christianity would be shorn of its chief power, and it would cease to be the conquering religion which it is today. We can never repay Christ for this marvelous revelation, but we can accept it, and be grateful and obedient children of our heavenly Father.

Christ the Way - 04-Through Christ to the Father

Through Christ to the Father

JESUS' work did not end with revealing the Father to men, essential and vital as that revelation is. His supreme end and aim was to bring men into filial relationship with God as their heavenly Father. He is not only the revelation of the Father, but the way to the Father. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." It is one thing to have a glorious ideal, and it is quite another to realize that ideal in our own experience. It was Christ's mission not only to show us the Father, but to show us how to realize the joy and benefits of oneness with Him in the relationship of loving and dutiful children. This he has done, and it is a vital part of the great gospel message.

Perhaps the most difficult thing which Christ had to accomplish in opening up the way of access to the Father was to convince men of the reality and the greatness of His love for mankind. In His own words: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." But that men might understand the infinite height and depth and breadth of that love, it was necessary that Christ should lay down his life for the sins of the world. This was the highest possible proof of God's love for a sinning world. This story of the Sinless One submitting to the, death of the cross that men might know the heinousness of sin and the strength of God's love, has melted the hearts and revolutionized the lives of millions of human beings in every land where the story has been told. In the light of that love of God in Christ--the Holy and Righteous One--men have seen their own sinfulness and have been brought to "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." In offering himself as the sacrifice for sin, the Savior of sinners and the Revealer of God as Father, Jesus becomes himself the object of that faith which carries with it the power to enable sinful men and women to become sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

It is the supreme manifestation of divine wisdom that, in the great plan of human redemption, the Infinite God offered to men, in the concrete personality of, Jesus Christ his Son, an object of faith. through whom they could be lifted up, not only to the knowledge of God, but into that communion with God which is the highest privilege that it is possible to confer on mortals. Many a soul has cried out in the midst of life's trials, with Job of old, in his search for God:

"O, that I knew where I might find him!

That I might come even to his seat!

* * *

Behold, I go forward, but he is not there;

And backward, but I cannot perceive him;

On the left hand, when he doth work, but I cannot behold him.

He hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him."

--Job 23:3; Job 23:8-9.

It was to meet this want of the human heart that God manifested himself in Jesus Christ as the Son of Man and the Son of God, that through him men might find their way to God and realize that communion and fellowship with Him which is life eternal.

It was not enough for Job, nor is it sufficient for us, to see the manifestations of God's power and beneficence in the orderly movements of the heavens, in the infinite processes of Nature, and in the wide sweep of His law throughout the universe. God must identify himself with man in human history by becoming incarnate and dealing with the great spiritual problems which have to do with our higher nature on the plane of our humanity, before we can have such an interpretation of the universe, and of man's nature and destiny, and such a revelation of God, as will satisfy the desires and meet the needs of men. Because this has been accomplished for us in the life and ministry, in the sufferings and death, and in the resurrection from the dead, of Jesus Christ, He is indeed the "way, the truth, and the life." Through Him the great and Infinite Jehovah, the Creator, the God of Nature, the Ruler of the universe, becomes our Father, and we can come to Him with all the sweet confidence and trust of a child to his earthly parent, and commit ourselves and all our interests to Him. In this way we come to the Father through Christ--drawn by his life, won by his love, cleansed by his death, justified by his resurrection, and quickened and helped by his Spirit.

Christ is man's way to the Father. He is also the Father's way to man.

Christ the Way - 05-The Way to Ideal Manhood

The Way to Ideal Manhood

IF IT has taken the world a long time to rise to a true and worthy conception of God, the same thing is true concerning an adequate conception of man. If the former required the incarnation--the God-man--so did the latter. Not until Jesus Christ came into the world to show us the Father, did the world have an illustration of the sublime possibilities of our human nature. How mean a thing was the average man, and of how little value was human life in the public mind, when Jesus came into the world! Kings, those of royal blood, statesmen, generals, philosophers--these were worthy of consideration in varying degrees, but the average man, or the great mass of the common people--what was he--what were they--in the estimation of the ruling class? What rights had they that the emperor and the empire were bound to respect?

Power came down from the ruler, not up from the people. The extent and kind of slavery, the status of womanhood and childhood--the former divorced and the latter abandoned at pleasure--the cruelty of the amusements in which human life was sacrificed "to make a Roman holiday"--these were the outward badges of the low and unworthy estimate which prevailed at the time, in regard to the sacredness and worth of human life.

Then came Jesus upon the scene. Born in poverty and obscurity, among a people whose nationality had been swallowed up in the Roman Empire, and reared in an ill-reputed village, without the training of the schools, he developed such a personality, lived such a life, wrought such wonderful deeds, and taught so pure and sublime a doctrine concerning God and man and human duty and destiny, as to change the face of the world and inaugurate a new era in the history of mankind. Out of his life and teaching there came a new and infinitely higher conception of man, of his relationship to God, and of his dignity and undreamed of possibilities. On the plane of his divine manhood he met and overcame the most powerful and subtle temptations of the devil, healed all manner of human ailments, mastered and made his willing servants the laws and forces of the material and spiritual universe, and lived and moved in a spiritual realm in which neither sin nor death--man's two great foes--could have dominion over him.

Slowly yet surely this new revelation, in Jesus, of man's value and place in the world has been undermining thrones and dynasties, breaking the chains of human slavery, rewriting constitutions and laws from the new point of view of man's worth, building schools, hospitals, homes for the orphan and the aged poor, and creating a vast empire of democracy the world around in which the people are the source of power and rulers exercise only that which is conferred upon them for the public good. The ideal of character which Jesus gave to the world, has furnished a new goal for the individual, as his teaching concerning the kingdom of God on earth has given us a new conception of human society, as the goal of the church.

What is the new goal for the individual? "Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Be like your Father in heaven. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Christ, then, is the goal

towards which we are to aim. This ideal is brought within the range of human possibility by Christ's help. He came, he says, that we "might have life, and have it abundantly." What divine possibilities are opened to us in this word of Christ! How much life will he impart to the believing, obedient, trusting, striving soul? Is there any limit to the promise? None except that which we fix. To be a Christian is something higher, nobler and more exalted in privilege and possibility than many of us have yet dreamed of. It opens to us a radiant pathway growing brighter unto the perfect day. Its terminus is nothing short of transformation into the image of Christ. (Romans 8:29) As we have borne the image of the earthly Adam so shall we bear the image of the heavenly Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:49) What a magnificent destiny then does Christ open up to humanity! How rich are the treasures of truth and grace in him, by which he enables us to realize that destiny! What folly to turn away from such a goal, and from such a Guide and Helper, to seek the soul's satisfaction in any ism of our day, no matter what its name or claim. In Christ we are complete, since "in him dwells all the fulness of the God-head, bodily." He is man's goal and guide and in him alone we realize life's purpose and prize.

Christ the Way - 06-The Way to a Perfected Society

The Way to a Perfected Society IN A FORMER chapter it was stated that Christ was the goal of the individual Christian and that his teaching concerning, the kingdom of God was the goal of the church. This last truth is one that has been grievously overlooked and neglected by the church in the past. There are hopeful indications, however, that the church is awakening at last to its obligations to apply the teaching of Christ to all the relationships of life--to the home, to the city, to state and national governments, to business, to capital and labor, and to all our social relations. This opens up a new and magnificent field of activity for the church. It is not here in the world to engage in theological hair-splitting, in metaphysical discussions, or to indulge in elaborate rituals, or to scramble for ecclesiastical honors, but to incarnate and disseminate the principles of the kingdom of God. The failure of the church to recognize its real mission in applying the principles of Christ to the everyday affairs of life has produced a chasm between itself and a large class of the common people--the very class which heard Jesus gladly. It has produced, also, a spurious type of socialism that would leave out Christ and Christianity, seeing that the followers of Christ have manifested so little concern in relation to the condition and needs of the poor and the laboring classes. But Jesus Christ is the way to a perfected human society, which he called the kingdom of God here on earth. If the church will only be true to its Master--true to his spirit and teaching--it will not be long until the great mass of our toiling and suffering humanity will learn this lesson and gather under his banner, as the only Leader whose ministry includes both the material and the spiritual needs of men. It cannot be denied, however optimistic we may be, that our Christian civilization of which we boast, is threatened by the same dangers which have overthrown previous civilizations. When one thinks of the greed and ruthless struggle for wealth, in which the weak go down before the strong, of the graft and political corruption which go on almost unrebuked in our cities and in state and national politics, and pauses to consider the awful ravages of the liquor traffic which, even after it has been outlawed, continues surreptitiously with the connivance and support of many supposedly respectable people, one cannot fail, if one sees the connection between wrongdoing and national destruction, to tremble for the future of his country, and of its civilization. The only guarantee we have against this repetition of history is the promise of Christ's presence in his church, and the healing and regenerative power of his life and teaching in the world. But if the church is recreant to its sacred trust and fails to be the channel through which the saving truth and grace of Christ can reach the world, then what is to become of the church, and what of the nation and of the world? I am an optimist, but all my optimism comes from my faith in Christ and in the power of his gospel not only to save individuals, but to save society and civilization. I see no bright future for the church or for humanity, except in the triumph of the principles of Christ and his triumphant reign over men in all affairs and in all the relations of human life.

Jesus Christ is the only solution of our social problems. The church stands or falls according to its fidelity or infidelity to the program of Jesus for the establishment of his kingdom here on earth.

Christ the Way - 07-The Way to a United Church

The Way to a United Church OF ALL the problems which now confront the church of Jesus Christ, there is none more important and more vital to its success than how to restore its lost unity. Many theories and plans have been suggested and advocated, which I will not take the space here to even enumerate, for my purpose is to treat the question affirmatively rather than negatively. I believe with all my heart that Jesus Christ is the solution, and the only solution, of the problem of Christian unity.

Christ is the only Foundation.--Commonplace as this statement may seem, and universally accepted as it would appear to be, it is a truth that would revolutionize Christendom if it were practically carried out in church life. We sing it, and we preach it, and do everything but practice it. It means that Jesus Christ is the creed of the church, and that it has no right to require of men any other confession of faith than the confession of Jesus Christ. The practical embodiment of this truth in our church life would create the same kind of revolution in the religious world that was created in the scientific world by the Copernican theory of astronomy, which made the sun instead of the earth the center of our solar system. This Christo-centric view of Christianity is essential to Christian unity, and it is this new place of Christ not only in modern theology, but in the life of the church, that is behind the present-day movement in the direction of unity in the church and the solidarity of society. No matter how far separated men may be in their feelings, purposes and policies, if they are moving toward a common object, they move along converging lines and it is only a question of time until their elbows touch, and they stand together in a solid phalanx. Never since the apostolic age has Christ had the ascendancy in the church which he has to-day. Never were the eyes of men turned to him so intently as they are today. It is this view of Christ that is giving the church a new vision of its mission in the world, and making it feel the necessity of unity in order to the carrying out of that mission.

Christ is the Builder of his Church.--"On this rock I will build my church," said Jesus. This fact has been too much overlooked. Those who have built under him have not always recognized that he is the Supreme Builder. The actual organization of the church came after Christ's coronation; but it was effected under the direction of his apostles to whom he promised, and to whom he sent, the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth. Those who would disconnect the church from Christ's authority, overlook the mission of the Holy Spirit and the fact that he came to guide the apostles in the work of establishing the church and giving it the necessary instruction for its spiritual development and growth. We have in the New Testament a sufficiently clear outline of the early church to be able to understand what is the will of Christ in relation to his church so far as relates to its essential faith and its conditions of membership. Is it too much to say that the way for the church to regain its lost unity is to recognize Christ as the Supreme Builder of his church, and to return to the original constitution or organic law of the church as given by him and his apostles? This does not mean returning to the infantile condition of the church nor the imperfect and undeveloped views which may have been held by the church in its primitive condition, but only to that which is manifestly the will of Christ concerning the conditions by which men and women

might become his disciples, and members of the church, which is his body. Firmly planted on these fundamental truths and organic laws of the kingdom of God, there is room for freedom in thought, and in methods of worship and of organization, for the advancement of that kingdom.

Christ's life in the lives of his followers, is an essential condition of unity.--In vain do we create platforms on which the divided church may get together. It is only as we are vitally related to Christ that we can be vitally related to each other. We can have no unity in the church without first having unity in Christ. His prayer was that we might be one in him as he and the Father are one. Union is not to be promoted in the present stage of the church's development by the discussion of differences. What we need is to emphasize and to seek a closer conformity to the will of Christ, and a more vital union with him. When we come into the atmosphere of Christ, and under the dominance of his life and love, it will be an easy matter, comparatively, to sit down at his feet and so adjust our differences that we may live and work together as brethren under our common Lord and Master. All attempts to hasten unity by the compromise of honest convictions of truth, are efforts in the wrong direction. Any contribution which any religious body can make to the truth of Christianity and to the best methods of propagating that truth in Christian service, it is under obligation to make as a part of that full-orbed Christianity which the united church must possess.

There is now in progress in the church universal a silent and irresistible recasting of truth and a new distribution of emphasis coming from the wider vision, which is preparing the way for Christian unity and the triumph of the kingdom. This process is hastened only by the exaltation of Christ and by seeking a closer and more vital union with him, that we may see through his eyes, be animated by his spirit, and in the power of his might, come into that oneness by which the world may believe on him as the sent of God and the Savior of mankind.

Christ the Way - 08-The Way to Assured Victory

The Way to Assured Victory

GIVEN a religion such as Jesus Christ brought to the world, that meets the universal wants of man, revealing God to men and man to himself, furnishing regenerative power or spiritual renewal, forgiveness of sin, spiritual re-enforcements, such as the Holy Spirit, the inspired Word, and the church, with its fellowship and holy activities, whose dominant principle is love, and whose ultimate aim is the salvation of the whole world--and all this embodied in the personality, life and teaching of its Author, faith in whom is the supreme condition of discipleship--and we have all the essential conditions for world-conquest.

Such a leader is Jesus Christ. Such religion he has brought to the world. That religion is embodied and exemplified in his own life and character. What he taught, that he was. Other conquerors established kingdoms by force.

Jesus Christ established his kingdom by love. Other kingdoms dating back as far as his, or anyway near it, have long since crumbled to dust. Each rising sun witnesses the extension of his kingdom over an ever-widening area of the world and of human life. Other great world-rulers have sought to be ministered unto. He came to minister, and to be the servant of all. The empire-builders of the past have sought to keep their subjects down. He has sought to lift his subjects up to new dignity and power. Other rulers have loved their friends and hated their enemies. Jesus Christ loved even his enemies, and prayed for their forgiveness. Other founders of empires have slain their enemies to establish their thrones. Jesus Christ laid down his own life that he might save his enemies and all mankind. Is it any wonder that the prophet, foreseeing such a program, should exclaim: "And of the increase of his government there shall be no end"?

Only Christ and his religion can inspire men with a passion that will make them gladly give their lives to the service of humanity. Said a great magazine writer recently to a representative of the Men and Religion Forward Movement, "We magazine writers can uncover the corruption and abuses in the world, and even organize social movements to remedy them. But as soon as it becomes manifest that money, self-denial and hard work are necessary to carry out the program, our men fail us. If Christianity cannot inspire men with a passion, that will make them willing to give and to suffer for the redemption of humanity, then we may as well give up all hope." This is the lesson from nineteen centuries of Christian history. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ--the gospel of suffering love--has in it the dynamic adequate to cope with the evils of the world.

How slow the church has been to learn that Christ's way is the only way to permanent success in bringing in the kingdom of God? It has sometimes relied on external force, on its power to shut and bar the gates of heaven, on its ecclesiastical authority, and even today on its theological standards and its methods of organization. But Christ relies upon the power of truth and love to win its way over the mind and heart, making willing subjects of his reign. The program of the church has too long been to build up and perpetuate its power, and to prepare men to die. Jesus' method and

purpose was to lose life in order to save it, and to win men from sin that they might become the salt for saving the earth. It is his purpose that his will shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven. The church is at last, slowly but surely, accepting the program of Christ, and just in proportion as it accepts it and follows his way, it will become the strong right hand of Jesus Christ in extending his reign over all the earth.

Here, then, I repeat, are all the elements which assure the universal triumph of the kingdom of God on this earth. Everyone who accepts Christ's program is filled with enthusiasm and optimism as to its future triumph. A program that links itself so vitally with human welfare and happiness, cannot fail in a world over which God reigns. What the church needs now is to put away the false ideals which have hindered its power of growth, and the divisions and strifes which have weakened and neutralized its power, and with singleness of aim accept Christ's way and program and go forward to world-wide conquest under his leadership.

Christ the Way - 09-The Way to Universal Peace

The Way to Universal Peace

WAR IS one of the relics of barbarism. It marks a crude and imperfect stage of civilization. The prophets of God from of old have foretold the time when wars shall cease. The Psalmist exclaims:

"Come, behold the works of Jehovah,

What desolations he hath made in the earth.

He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;

He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;

He burneth the chariots in the fire."

Isaiah, the prophet, telling of what shall come to pass in the latter days, when the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established, says: "And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

It is declared of Jesus that he came into the world to "destroy the works of the devil." General Sherman defined war as "hell," and there can be no question that the word describes its origin as well as its character. It is, therefore, to be classed among "the works of the devil," which Christ was manifested to destroy. It is certain that he will destroy 'and is now destroying war as one of the great scourges of mankind.

How is Christ the way to universal peace? First, by his great correlative doctrines of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. If God is our Father, then all men are brothers. If "the sky is the roof of but one family," there is no legitimate place for war beneath that roof. Surely brothers can find a better way than war for settling their misunderstandings.

Christ also teaches that we are to "love our enemies and do good to those who despitefully use us." How can we conduct war in harmony with that teaching And then there is Christ's "Golden Rule," teaching us that "whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." This rule absolutely excludes war.

Again, Christ's ratification of an older law requires us not only to love God, but also to love our neighbors as ourselves. This is the fulfillment of all law. Can we make war on those whom we love as we do ourselves? Not only is war utterly inconsistent with Christ's teaching, but it is no less incompatible with his example. Surely if ever man had justification for resenting human insults and injury, by violence, Jesus had; but "being reviled, he reviled not again." Having it in his power to summon "twelve legions of angels" to his defense, he submitted himself into the hands of his enemies, and with his dying breath prayed for those who crucified him.

Finally, the effect of Christ's gospel is so to regenerate man's nature as to remove the feeling of enmity, and replace place it with the spirit of kindness. Men who are enemies out of Christ, on coming into his kingdom become friends. This gospel of "peace on earth and good will among men" is being preached from the pulpits of all the churches, and, according to his command, is being carried to all nations. Wherever it goes it brings forth the fruits of peace and righteousness. It is weaving invisible bonds of friendship and of mutual interest, which antagonize war.

It is only a question of time, then, when the religion of Christ will be the dominant religion of every nation. This will cement and strengthen the ties of brotherhood between peoples of different nationalities, races and tongues, until war shall become impossible. It requires no prophet to foresee the time when the Prince of Peace shall have conquered all his enemies, and shall have ushered in the period, foretold by Tennyson:

"When the war-drums throb no longer, and the battle-flags are furled,

In the parliament of man, the federation of the world."

Christ the Way - 10-The Way to Certainty Concerning the Life Hereafter

The Way to Certainty Concerning the Life Hereafter

THESE are other problems of which Christ is the only solution which must be omitted from the present treatment. Among these is Christ the Only Interpretation of Nature and the Universe. It would not be proper, however, to close without at least a brief consideration of how Christ answers one of the most vital questions of the human heart, namely, that in relation to the life hereafter. Is there life beyond the grave? Is there in man a spirit which death does not and cannot destroy? Is there any ground for the fond hope that after the dissolution of this our mortal frame we shall continue our conscious personal existence in another sphere, where life shall have unending progress, and where we shall realize the high ideals which elude us here? May we indulge the hope that on some fairer shore we may renew the associations with friends and loved ones which have been severed by death? When our earthly homes are broken up by the grim destroyer, may we feel a certainty that there is a home beyond, upon which the shadow of death can never fall? If "the earthly house of this., tabernacle be dissolved," may we look forward to "a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens"?

These are questions which strike their roots into the very center of our being. They affect not only our future but our present well-being. How can we live the life that now is with proper dignity and with the necessary inspiration for the self-denials imposed by life's tasks, if we cannot answer these questions with an undoubting affirmative? Reason, philosophy and science may all suggest the possibility and even the probability of the life beyond, but only Jesus Christ has spoken the word of certainty and authority on this question, and followed it with a demonstration so convincing as to lift it forever out of the region of speculation into the realm of assured faith. The teaching of Jesus is so permeated with the spirit and atmosphere of the life which is eternal, and his whole religion is so completely based upon the reality of the spiritual world and of his continued existence and activity therein, that it would seem invidious to quote any one word of his on this subject, as affording more certainty than another. And yet it seems appropriate here to recall what he said about the life hereafter in that same discourse to his disciples uttered on the night of the Last Supper in the upper chamber, in which he declared himself to be "the way, the truth and the life." His disciples were greatly troubled and perplexed by his statement that he was going away. "Let not your heart be troubled," he said; "believe in God, believe also in me." How could their belief in Jesus comfort their hearts when he was about to be taken away from them? Hear the words which follow: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." (John 14:1-30) We cannot conceive of words more comforting, more assuring, than these in the presence of the great mystery of death and of what lies beyond. We lay great stress on the words we have italicized. In them Jesus, realizing the need of certainty on our part on a matter of such vital moment, pledges his own veracity and

candor to the truth of the life beyond. It is as if he had said: "If there were no Father's house with its many apartments beyond what men call death, I would have frankly told you so. I would not deceive you by holding out hopes which can never be realized." Like unto this word is that other of his "Because I live ye shall live also." In that blessed logic lies the certainty of our life hereafter. But that men might have something more demonstrable than the truth of any word, Jesus himself submitted to death, going the way which we shall all go, into that narrow chamber where the great and the small alike find a resting place; but unlike all the generations of men who had preceded him into that chamber, he came out of it at the appointed time on the immortal side and entered upon that life of which he had given assurance to his disciples. During a period of forty days he appeared to many chosen witnesses and at one time to a company of above five hundred brethren, most of whom were living when Paul wrote his first letter to the church at Corinth. When he had thoroughly convinced his disciples by "many infallible proofs," of his identity and of the reality of his resurrection, one day, out on the slope of Olivet, in the presence of his disciples, and under the clear shining of the Syrian sun, he was lifted up, with his hands spread out in parting benediction until he was lost to their vision. They stood gazing into the heavens until an angel announced to them that just as surely as he had departed he would come again. Pentecost with its glorious manifestations, and the whole history of the church with its widening activities have added confirmation to these indisputable proofs of the risen Christ, and of the reality of the life hereafter. So that when we "sigh for the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still," we find our comfort in the words and deeds of him "who conquered death and brought life and immortality to light in the gospel."

There is, then, life beyond the experience of death. There is the Father's house with its many apartments. There we shall meet the truest and noblest souls of all time. There will be room and opportunity for eternal progress. There the fondest hopes of this life will come to fruition, and the goal of all our earthly struggles will be realized. Of all this we have the divinest assurance through Christ--in what he was, what he taught, and what he did, and is doing in the world today. To him be glory and honor and dominion and power, now and forevermore!

Christ the Way - 11-Preaching Christ

Preaching Christ

THERE is but one positive message that can meet the wants of the sin-burdened SOUL. It is the message concerning Christ, who came into the world to seek and 'to save the lost. How can we so present Christ to those who are weary of sin and its wages, as to win them to his service and to a nobler life? This is the question which burdens the heart of every true minister of Christ, whether he be an evangelist or pastor. What is the message concerning Christ best calculated to win men to his love and service? Perhaps we can not better answer this question than by referring to the greatest preacher and evangelist of the first century--Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. When he went to the great and wicked city of Corinth he determined, as he afterwards wrote them, "not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2) What he meant by this is stated more fully further on, when he says: "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures:" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4) This message was "unto Jews a stumblingblock, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:23-24)

These wonderful facts concerning Christ, considered in their relation to human guilt and human need, constitute, the apostle tells us, both "the power of God and the wisdom of God." We have here that which meets the most fundamental requirements of the human soul--power and wisdom: wisdom to see the path of duty and of safety, and power to walk therein; wisdom to recognize in the Hero of the gospel story one who is both Savior and Lord, and the power by which we, commit ourselves to him for time and for eternity; wisdom to discern in Christ the solution of life's problems and the true ideal, and the power to put ourselves under his tuition and leadership; wisdom to see in him the remedy for our sins, and the power to accept the salvation that is offered to us freely in him; wisdom to understand what requirements he makes of us in order that we be reconciled to God, and the power to comply with these requirements. The wisdom is his and the power is his, and they are communicated to us to the extent that we believe the message concerning him, which Paul calls "the gospel."

It was God's method of bringing these two elements--wisdom and power--within the reach of men by embodying them in the person of his Son. But in order that this wisdom and power might be available for man's use, it was necessary that Christ should suffer for our sins--the just for the unjust--and, being buried, should arise again from the dead, in order that man might see in him the love of God and the wisdom of God. Love is the greatest dynamic force in the universe. It is the love of God in Christ, seeking man's salvation, that breaks the hardened heart of the sinner and brings him to repentance. There is no story so wonderful, so attractive, so powerful in winning its way to human hearts as the story of Christ, who, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich." The story of Christ's birth and youth and

ministry, as he went about doing good, ministering to the manifold needs of men, dying at last, not for sins which he had committed, but for our sins and transgressions, and rising again from the dead, is the story that is transforming the world, and putting a new emphasis on human life and destiny. Kings and potentates, philosophers, statesmen, poets, and scholars of renown, have yielded their hearts and their lives to the magic power of this story, as well as the millions of men in the humbler walks of life, who find in this simple gospel message a power which has given new hope and inspiration to their lives. Behind the story itself there lies the sublime, the amazing truth that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." No man can ever receive this truth into his mind and heart and live thereafter the old life of sin and indifference, because its transcendent power, working in the heart, brings forth the fruits of righteousness.

Christ the Way - 12-Christ's Place in Revelation

Christ's Place in Revelation IN PREACHING Christ and him crucified, and presenting the gospel facts concerning Christ as both "the power of God and the wisdom of God," it will be found exceedingly helpful to give him his true place in revelation, and in the divine order of things, which, from the beginning, has looked forward to the redemption of the race from the power of sin and death. Where does Christ belong? Was he an interloper, interfering with the divine process of the moral and religious education of the race, or was his coming, character and mission, an essential part of that process? The people of his own nation crucified him, regarding his teaching as subversive of the law which they had received, instead of being its fulfillment. "He came unto his own and his own received him not." A large section of the people, even in the most enlightened Christian lands, have refused to receive him. Is this because he has no legitimate place in the divine plan for the moral enlightenment and spiritual regeneration of the world? This cannot be. Whoever reads thoughtfully the literature of the Old Testament, from Moses to Malachi, cannot fail to discover anticipations, fore-gleamings, prophetic intimations, of a coming One, whose advent and reign were to be marked by wonderful outpourings of the divine blessing, and by new and startling revelations of God's will. Moses, the man of God, while giving laws for the moral government of the people of his time, was conscious of the transient nature of much of this legislation and looked for One to come after him whose requirements would be the reflection of perfect wisdom, and whose dominion would know no end. David sang of him in his most exalted strains, and Isaiah and the other prophets rose to heights of unparalleled sublimity when they foretold the glory and majesty of the coming King of kings, and of the splendid triumphs of his kingdom. Indeed, it may be said that the Old Testament is an index finger pointing forward to the coming of One who should fulfill in his own great personality the offices of Prophet, Priest and King--the three functions which had been found necessary for human needs under the former dispensation. Where prophecy ends in fulfillment, history begins. The story of Christ, as told us in the four Gospels, is the most wonderful of which the human mind can conceive. Nothing foreshadowed by the Old Testament had prepared the world for such marvelous developments as began with the birth of Christ, and characterized his whole ministry, culminating in his crucifixion, burial, and resurrection from the dead. And yet, when the scenes are enacted, and the personality of Christ is thrown upon the canvas of history, it is clear that he was the fulfillment of the prophecies, fore-gleamings, and longing hopes of the holiest men and women of the old dispensation. It is manifest, too, that he must needs have come, and have suffered, and have risen again from the dead, to accomplish all that the prophets had foretold concerning his reign, and the blessings which would flow therefrom to the whole human race.

These considerations make it plain that Christ was not an accident, nor an afterthought, but that he "stood as a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." His coming had always been a part of God's infinite plan, and law and prophets and psalms were but preparatory for the great drama of human redemption enacted by Christ. One of the inspired writers of the New Testament, looking back at the whole process of God's unfolding plan, and its culmination in Christ Jesus, summed up

the meaning of it all, when he said: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17) The law was but a pedagogue to lead men to Christ, the world's great Teacher. God had a revelation for men which could not be adequately conveyed through lawgiver, priest or prophet, and so he sent his only begotten Son into the world that he might embody in his own personality, and show forth in his life and teaching, the true character and will of God.

Philip expressed a universal human desire when he exclaimed: "Master, show us the Father and we shall be satisfied." Jesus told him that he that had seen him had seen the Father, for the Father was in him, and he was in the Father. His chief business here in the world was to "show us the Father." That is the profoundest meaning of his incarnation, his doctrine, his deeds, his death on the cross for the sins of the world. This revelation of his Fatherhood, God could only make to man through his Son. Hence, Jesus Christ was the culmination of God's revealing process, and of his plan, which had been unfolding through the ages, for the redemption of mankind.

This, then, is the place of Jesus in God's revelation, and in the development of his plan for the world's salvation. How irrational to refuse the claims and the offered salvation of One who has come to the world to carry out God's beneficent purposes concerning us!

Christ the Way - 13-Christ's Place in the Life of Humanity

Christ's Place in the Life of Humanity

JESUS CHRIST, as we have seen, was the supreme factor in God's revelation to men. He was that because he was God manifest in the flesh, the divine life lived under human conditions. For the same reason, no doubt, he was the medium of life for man. As Adam stood at the head of the race by generation, so Christ stands at the head of a race by regeneration. "In him was life, and the life was the light of men," says John. "I am come," said Jesus, "that ye might have life and that more abundantly." He also said to the Jews, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." He is, therefore, the life-giver for humanity. The life here meant is the life of God in the souls of men, the life eternal. It is the life referred to by Jesus when he said, "And this is life eternal, to know God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." To know God as Christ has shown him to us, not theoretically, but in the actual experiences of the soul in vital relation with him, is for the soul to have entered upon a new career, and into the life which is life indeed. It is the life which triumphs over death, because it does not depend on physical conditions and relationships. It is the life which made it impossible for Christ to be held in bondage to death, and which is shared by all who have entered into union with him. As separation from God means death, so union with him means life. Science tells us that life is "harmony with environment." This is rather the condition of life, and it is as true of spiritual life as it is of material life. As the plant or tree lives only as it maintains union with its environment of earth, air and water, from which it derives the elements necessary to perpetuate its life, so the soul of man lives by virtue of its union with God in Christ, which is its environment, "for in him we live, move and have our being." As disobedience, through unbelief, produces separation from God, which is death, so obedience, through faith, produces union with God in Christ, which is life. The evangelistic message that deals simply with negations, and fails to give emphasis to the positive life forces which abide in Jesus Christ, which widen, deepen, enrich and ennoble human life, giving it a scope, dignity, beauty, value and conscious aim which it cannot otherwise possess, omits a most vital and winning feature of that gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. Salvation is something vastly greater than escape from the consequences of sin, important as that is. It is sharing the divine life. It is being equipped for life's mission. It is the consecration of one's powers to worthy ends. It is to enter into partnership with God to work out one's own salvation and to seek the salvation of others. It is to receive spiritual vision by which one sees God and invisible realities, and gets a true view of life's meaning and mission. It is to open one's heart and mind to new tides of life and light, of joy and peace which flow in from God. It is to attain such love for God and for one's fellow men as makes suffering and sacrifice in their behalf a privilege and opportunity. In a word, it, is character, patterned after Christ and receiving its inspiration from him.

All this is included in God's gift to the world, of his Son Jesus Christ, and to receive him is to be potentially enriched with all the blessings he brings for humanity, to be progressively appropriated as we grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. Such an equipment enables one to challenge death, as Paul does, saying, "O Death, where is thy sting! O Death, where is thy victory!" It has

"the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." It fits him for citizenship in the kingdom of God here and hereafter. The same principles which make for the enlargement of life here, and fit us for the greatest usefulness in this life, prevail beyond that change which we call death.

Christ's place in the life of humanity, then, is that of Leader, Life-giver, Savior, Example, Helper of all who put their trust in him, and the fulfillment of man's dearest hopes and truest aspirations. With such a Christ to present to men, the minister of God has a message of life and hope that ought to win the thoughtful and favorable consideration of all who value their own destiny or feel any concern for the welfare of the race.

Christ the Way - 14-Christ's Place in the Christian Faith

Christ's Place in the Christian Faith THIS subject might be stated variously as "Christ's Place in Christianity," or in the "Christian System," or in "Theology." There has been a vast amount of confusion in the religious world on this subject. Sometimes a human creed or formulation of doctrine has been considered the object of faith; sometimes a metaphysical definition of the Trinity has been regarded as the faith without which no one can be saved. Others have presented the whole Bible as the object of faith. We all know how frequently we have heard men declare their inability to believe because they had not mastered some speculative doctrine in theology which they regarded as a test of faith. While the clouds are clearing away, to some extent, it is still important to emphasize what has been a cardinal truth of this reformation from its beginning, namely, that the faith of which salvation is predicated--the faith that brings deliverance from the power of sin and death--is a personal, vital faith, not in a set of doctrines, however true, but in the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

While the above truth will be readily acknowledged now by intelligent believers generally, there is yet in many parts a fear that, unless the confession made by Simon Peter in the Christhood and Sonship of Jesus be hedged about with other statements, it might not be adequate. In a recent conference with some religious leaders, a distinguished bishop urged what is known as "The Apostles' Creed" as a better statement today than the confession of Simon Peter. In support of this, he mentioned the fact that Simon Peter himself did not know all that was involved in his confession, such as the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Christ from the dead, his ascension, etc., which facts are embodied in the Apostles' Creed. He was reminded, however, that Peter did not originate the confession, and that the same Father in heaven who inspired that confession doubtless knew all that was involved in it. And, certainly, in the light of the New Testament the followers of Christ today know all that was involved in that confession, regardless of any so-called Apostles' Creed.

It was a great step in advance of the religious thought of the times when it was proclaimed anew a century ago that faith has for its object a divine person--the Lord Jesus Christ--and not any system of doctrine or theology. It was a revolutionary step. The change involved, making Christ the center instead of our theological opinions, has been compared to the change which took place in astronomical science when the sun, and not the earth, was discovered to be the center of our solar system. That truth relegated to the scrap pile all the maps, charts and textbooks on astronomy which had been in use up to that time. Christ was brought in from the circumference of the circle to the center, and men were taught that faith in him, and obedience to him, brought one in right relations to God, to each other, and to the work which God had called men to do through the church. This greatly simplified Christianity. To become a Christian now was not to master a set of metaphysical and speculative dogmas, but to put personal trust and confidence in Jesus Christ because of what he was, of what he did, and of what he taught, and to follow after him. In a series of evangelistic services this great truth should be kept well to the front--that whoever believes on Christ and is willing to confess him before men, and to obey him, may be his disciple, and,

following in his footsteps, may rest in the confident assurance of the life everlasting. The deductions that flow from a great fundamental truth like this are numerous and important. To make Jesus Christ the object of faith instead of a human formulation of doctrine, is to give infinite scope to faith, hope and love, and to give freedom for growth in knowledge according to all the treasures of wisdom in Jesus Christ. "Whom the Son makes free is free indeed."

It draws the distinction between faith and opinion, and between faith and theology, in the first of which there is to be unity, and in the latter, liberty. This divine creed of Christianity shows that its Author knew what was in man, and knew the utter impossibility of making uniformity of thinking a condition of Christian fellowship. But there is "one faith," as there is "one Lord," and "one baptism." The road to unity is clearly indicated by this same truth of the place of Christ in the Christian faith. As long as we think of the various conflicting doctrines of the creeds as objects of faith, we shall never come together. It is only when we turn our eyes to the central Sun of our Christian system, and think of ourselves as coming to his light, and walking in his light, that we can have fellowship with each other, and that his blood will cleanse us from the sin of our divisions. That the eyes of the Christian world are turning more to the Christ today than at any time since the apostolic age, and that they are thinking of him as the object of our faith, the center of all our thinking, the basis of our unity, who is seeking to draw all men unto himself--this is the most inspiring fact in the religious life and thought of the time in which we live.

Christ the Way - 15-Christ's Place in the Church

Christ's Place in the Church

THERE is a general complaint, both in the Old World and in the New, of a lack of interest in the church, indicated in many instances by an actual decrease in membership, while in many other cases the growth is very slow. There is a cause for this, as for everything, and I believe a potent cause for this evil is the failure on the part of many Christian teachers to appreciate and emphasize the vital relation which exists between Christ and his Church. This is a subject that needs more emphasis. In the first place, Christ is the Founder of his Church. "On this rock," he said to Peter, "I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." This does not mean merely that he would lay the foundation and begin the structure, but that the entire building would be under his supervision. His church is not yet completed. It is still in process of building. Every year witnesses new and living stones placed in its growing walls. He alone determines what material should go into this structure. He has never transferred this authority to any man or council of men. His will is the supreme law governing the matter of membership in his church. Any appeal, therefore, to creeds, or to ecclesiastical councils, tradition or custom, to settle the question as to terms of church membership, is vain. What does the Lord himself say, either directly, or by the mouth or pen of his ministers plenipotentiary? That is the only legitimate appeal. The recognition of this fact will be a long step toward the desired unity for which Jesus himself prayed. The Church is called "the body of Christ," Christ himself being its Living Head. As the head governs the body, so Christ himself governs his Church. On no other ground could he give the assurance in the statement above quoted, that "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." He is the Preserver, therefore, as well as the Founder of the Church. But he preserves it by keeping it under his authority; by remaining its Living Head, keeping in vital touch with all its living members. It is clear that if the members of the human body should get up an insurrection, and the foot should refuse to co-operate with the hand, or the hand with the foot, and both of these with the eyes, and the eyes with the ears, that the body would be in a bad way. But these members are not endowed with volition, but are governed by the head, and all the members cooperate one with another. The Church is a different kind of a body. Its members have volition and a certain amount of freedom. But both their volition and freedom are designed to be in subjection to the authority of Christ, who is the Head of the Church. Because this has not always been the case, there has been schism in the Body. There is no cure for the schism except in complete subjection to its Living Head which is Christ. In view of this vital relationship between Christ and his Church, it is pertinent to ask, What is the difference in the process of becoming united with Christ and in becoming united with his Church? In the popular mind, there seems to be a great distinction. Men say: "I can be a Christian and live outside of the Church." Not if by "the church" is meant the Church which Christ founded, and of which he is the Foundation, the Head and the Life. The process of becoming a Christian is the process of becoming united with Christ, and, therefore, of becoming a member of his body, which is his Church. The unhappy fact that his Church is divided, while it furnishes the occasion, does not furnish justification for anyone remaining outside of local churches that meet together for

worship in the name of Christ, observe his ordinances, teach his doctrines with more or less fidelity, seek to live his life, and to carry out his will in the world.

If this fact were understood, such a phenomenon as a great revival, with several thousand reported conversions and only a hundred or so uniting with any of the churches, would be impossible. The fact is, many popular revivalists do not exalt the Church in this way, by showing that it is the Body through--which Christ must conquer the world and bring in his kingdom. A mere emotional conversion, that does not result in the confession of, and surrender to, Jesus Christ in his appointed way, and in active church membership, falls thus far short of New Testament conversion.

It is only when we come to this conception of the church as Christ's body that we can say, with Paul: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord;" and "Unto him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus, unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen."

Christ the Way - 16-Christ's Place in the Home

Christ's Place in the Home

CHRISTIANITY cannot go very far until Christ finds his place in the home. In his boyhood and young manhood he honored his own humble home at Nazareth by being subject to his parents. He gave the most impressive sanction to marriage, which is the foundation of the home. The home is the center of our earthly affections, and the seed bed of every virtue, as it is of every vice. It is the foundation whence flow the waters, sweet or bitter, which determine the character of men and the course of civilization. In this holy place, where life has its beginnings, and where character in its plastic state is molded for good or evil, Christ should hold a central and vital place. He should be recognized as the silent listener to every conversation, the unseen Guest at every meal, and the potent Inspirer of all the household's plans and ideals. In such a home, parents will speak his name with reverence and tell of his wondrous love and power. Little children will lisp his name in their evening prayer; the morning and evening sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving will be offered in his name and rise like incense from its altar.

One often calls to mind the scene of Christ in the home of Martha and Mary and Lazarus, at Bethany, to get a realistic view of Christ's place in the home. He was ever a welcome Guest. He was the Instructor of the members of that family in the things of God. Who of us would not be glad to take Mary's place and sit at his feet and hear him talk of his Father, or Martha's place and minister to his needs? He was with them in their glad and happy hours to sanctify their joys. He was with them when the dark shadow of death fell upon that home to dispel its gloom and restore the lost brother. How that humble home on the Mount of Olives shines out through all the intervening centuries with the radiance which Christ's presence gave to it!

Christ's place in the home must not be nominal and formal, but central and controlling. He must decide every question of business, of amusement, of literature, of education, of expenditure, of visitors in the home, of discipline and training, and of its relation to other homes and to society at large. That is to say, in determining all these questions, those who are responsible for the home are bound to ask, What would be pleasing to Christ, what would be in harmony with his will, what would conduce to the development of a life like his own, and to the advancement of his kingdom in the world? There is nothing too secular on the one hand, nor too sacred on the other, to be brought to the tribunal of the Master for his decision. The location of the home in the midst of proper environment, the occupation, the kind of education to give to children to fit them for life, the kind of books and papers to be read in the home, the kind of people we invite to be associates with our children, and the kind of marriages the sons and daughters are to contract, looking to future homes--all these questions, the right determination of which is of more importance than human mind can see, should never be decided without bringing Christ into the problem and asking,, ourselves what he would have us do. On joyous and festive occasions, such as birthday anniversaries, or the joyful festivals of the year, Christ should be among the invited guests that his presence may sanctify all the joy and gladness of the occasion. His unseen, yet recognized,

presence, will exclude all that is unholy and all excesses which would injure body, mind or heart. In times of trial, or of darkness, when some great sorrow shadows the home, we shall be sure to crave the presence of the divine Guest who brightened and blessed the home in Bethany. He can dry our tears, dispel our fears, and fill our hearts with his own peace as no other can.

Indeed, it is more blessed to have sorrow in the home, with Christ present, than to have joy there with the Master absent. Let the name of Jesus be among the first that infant lips are taught to pronounce, and songs of praise to him be among the very first they are taught to sing. So shall his image be engraved in their young hearts so deeply that no future evil influence can ever fully erase it.

We sing, "What is home without a mother?" and surely it would be lacking in one of its important elements. But what would home be without Christ at the center of it? No one has ever realized the blessedness of marriage, and the sacredness of the relation between man and wife, until Christ comes into the home, sweetens all its duties, sanctifies all its relationships, and interprets to husband and wife their mutual obligations and responsibilities; nor does the relation of parent and child ever attain its real sacredness, beauty and tenderness, except in the light of Christ's presence and teaching. There is no greater responsibility resting upon society than the protection of the home from its outward enemies, such as the saloon, the gambling house and the brothel; and the church has no more sacred task than to instil in the hearts of the people higher ideals of what the home should be; and, above all, to use its utmost influence in getting Christ enthroned in the home. The home that has Christ enthroned therein is the greatest evangelistic agency in the world, and the mightiest factor in the building up of the kingdom of God on earth.

Christ the Way - 17-Christ's Place in the Program of World Progress

Christ's Place in the Program of World Progress

IT WOULD be a great mistake to limit the influence of Christ to what is technically known as religion, or to the church. He has a wider program. He came into this world for the redemption of the whole world. His is to be a universal kingdom. His plan is nothing less than that of controlling the entire machinery of the world's civilization. Governments, institutions, laws, customs, courts of justice, parliaments and legislatures, social usages and industrial systems--all are to be brought under the transforming power of Christ before the coming of the time foretold by prophet and seer, when there shall be a "new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Jesus Christ, then, is not simply the central figure in the church, or in the Christian system; but he is the central personality in the world's history, and to him shall the gathering of the nations be. There is to be a world-unity as well as church unity, and Jesus Christ is the center of the former as well as of the latter. It follows from this that not only individuals, but nations and civilizations, and society in all its corporate forms, are brought face to face with "the strong Son of God," and must stand or fall in accordance with their relations to him. He has a message not only for every man, but for every institution, whether civil, religious, political, social, or industrial, that concerns its very life and its power to be useful in the world.

What a commanding message, then, is the gospel of Jesus Christ! No wonder one of the greatest preachers in the world, in contemplating the height and depth and breadth of this gospel, exclaimed: "Who is sufficient for these things?" And again: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." The minister of Jesus Christ, who has a clear grasp of the dignity of his calling' and of the supreme value of his message, may well stand unabashed before kings and potentates, presidents and parliaments, and speak the word which Christ has commanded for all classes and conditions of mankind. He has no apology to make for his message. He is the King's messenger, and utters the word from him before whom earth's mightiest no less than her humblest must bow in subjection.

What, then, is Christ's place in this mighty program of world-progress? He is humanity's tried and trusted Leader. He alone of all the sons of men has met the fiercest assaults of temptation without sin. His love for mankind exceedeth that of all other men. His knowledge of God is complete, for he is the perfect revelation of God. He knows humanity perfectly, because he was man at his highest and best. By every test which can be applied, and by every consideration, he, and he alone, is fitted to lead humanity forward to its supreme goal of righteousness and blessedness. Our churches, our preaching, our worship, our statecraft, our laws, and all the forms of our modern civilization, must be tested by their conformity to his will, as manifested in his teaching and in his character. The world can go forward in no department of its manifold life, except by a growing conformity to the high ideals of Jesus Christ. Whether there shall be war between nations for the settlement of their misunderstandings, whether human slavery shall exist, whether marriage is to be regarded as a secular contract that may be dissolved at pleasure, whether the traffic in

intoxicating drinks shall be legalized for the sake of gain, with all its deadly and demoralizing influences upon mankind, whether great corporate interests shall trample under their feet the rights of toiling men and women, whether the church shall continue to exist in a divided condition, wasting its precious time and strength in building up denominational walls, instead of joining hands and hearts to remove these great evils out of the world--these, and a hundred similar questions, are to be submitted to the supreme test of Christ's wish and will. No man who knows Christ can be in doubt for a moment as to the fate of all these evils which obstruct the progress of the kingdom of God on earth. Thank God! Christ was never so potent in the affairs of men as he is today. Never were the eyes of humanity turned more longingly and hopefully to him than today, and never were there so many earnest prayers that he would lead the world onward and out of the shadows and sorrows of the great evils which afflict it. Never was the manhood of the race so stirred by the call of Christ as it is today. Never, since the dawn of the great apostasy, has the church realized the authority of Christ and the power of his personality as it does today. Lead on, thou Conquering Hero, till the kingdoms of this world shall be thine, and thou shalt see of the travail of thy soul and be satisfied!

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