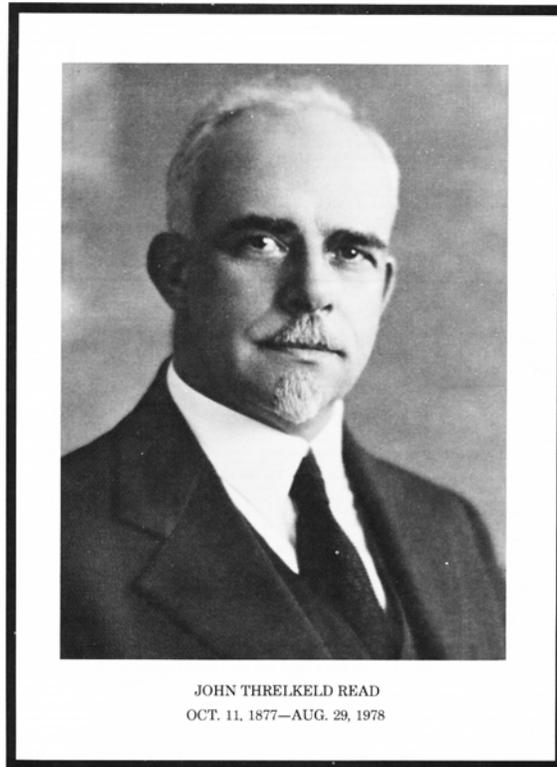


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JOHN THRELKELD READ OCT. 11, 1877 - AUG. 29, 1978

Our beloved Brother John Threlkeld Read finished his Christian course on August 29, 1978, at the remarkable age of 101; of clear mind until the last few days. Though mingled feelings of joy and sadness fill us, joy predominates as we recall his full and happy satisfying life dedicated to serving his Lord faithfully to the end. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord ... Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints."

In 1902 he was introduced to "Present Truth" thru the gift of a Tower form of Volume I, received at the door of the church he served in the choir. His keen mind heartily accepted this fullness of the Divine Plan

of the Ages, and the rich blessing of the Lord was evidenced in his enlarged Christian ministry, particularly since 1941 as writer, editor, director and Pilgrim under the auspices of the Institute.

He became well known to many thousands in his extensive travels in the United States, Canada and Europe. Gifted with an unusually rich bass voice, he augmented his spiritual sermons with beautiful hymns which endeared him to all who heard. We are glad a goodly number remain with us in tape and cassette recordings, precious memories of this dear saint of God. For our spiritual edification, and to honor our dear Brother Read, we reprint below one of his sermons.

- Directors and Editors

"What Shall I Render Unto the Lord?"

"His praise shall continually be in my mouth." - Psalm 34:1.

IN PSALM 116, the Psalmist tells of blessings he had received from the Lord. Realizing his responsibility to manifest gratitude in some way, in Psa. 116:12 he asks, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" Then in Psa. 116:13-14 he answers in the way that you and I answer if gratitude and the desire to do God's will are uppermost in our hearts: "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people."

In former ages as in this age, it required faith to recognize one's debt to God; for, as did Moses, we likewise must "endure, as seeing him who is invisible." Only a "faith that works by love" can prove the heart's devotion; faith itself constitutes the evidence of the unseen realities. Therefore faith, without which it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6), is highly regarded by him as being the evidence in us of a relationship to himself that is not possible to one who must have physical proof of his existence.

To a large extent God's blessings are the common things of everyday life, and are apt to be taken as a matter of course. The enumeration of his blessings would include everything that we have, are, and enjoy. The spark of life we possess is only a remnant of that perfect life which Adam enjoyed, but let some sickness or accident threaten its loss and we will go to any length in trying to preserve it. Our body members and functions may be greatly impaired; but how much we enjoy being able to hear, to feel, to see, to smell, and to use our hands and feet in the many things of daily life necessary to our comfort and happiness. How many ever stop to think that every temporal blessing, and everything that is good in life's experiences, has come to us from God: not very many, we feel sure, considering mankind as a whole. Furthermore, not many realize the significance or the greatness of the blessing bestowed upon us in our ability to look ahead, to hope and plan for the future. The realities of the life to come, which we can now visualize only by faith, based on the promises of God's Word, far surpass anything we have seen or imagined. Paul, quoting from Isaiah 64:4 says: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). Can we contemplate the innumerable blessings received, and the grace divine in making such ample provision for our eternal welfare and happiness, and not desire to make some return in service, in obedience and loyalty to show appreciation for the same?

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me"? Suppose that we put the question in a slightly different form, and ask: "What do I have that I can render unto the Lord that will be acceptable to him?" A similar question was asked in Israel by the Prophet Micah (Micah 6:6, 7), when, in showing the futility of their tithes and offerings as a means of pleasing God, and after recounting some of God's blessings to them, he says: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" God had been very meticulous about these offerings in the making of types. But Micah shows that they were of no value as evidence of personal worthiness on the part of the Israelites. Likewise, all that we possess in time, talent, and means, would be of no value to God; for he is rich, he does not need our mite.

"MY SON, GIVE ME THINE HEART"

But there is something which we can render unto the Lord that he will value very highly -- something that will mean more to him than would untold wealth if we had it to offer -- and that is the sincere love and gratitude of our hearts, made manifest in service, loyalty, and obedience to the extent of our ability. Through one of his messengers God says to us: "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways" (Prov. 23:26). If love and gratitude are the motivating characteristics that prompt us to dedicate ourselves and all we possess to the doing of God's will, even though it be little in material value, it is precious in his sight, and through the merit of Jesus it is accepted as a perfect offering.

In types under the Law, God made it plain that blemished and imperfect offerings were not acceptable. Therefore when we offer ourselves in a full consecration unto God, our sacrifice can be approved by him only through the merit of our great High Priest, whose blood makes our offering holy and acceptable. God's acceptance of our consecration has resulted first, in our being baptized into Christ through the anointing and begetting operation of his spirit, which was preceded by the drawing and enlightenment of the spirit (John 6:44, 45).

"THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS"

Then secondly, in coming into Christ we are figuratively decapitated, for he becomes our head; if faithful unto death, we are of the class seen by John under the altar (Rev. 6:9; 20: 4). Thirdly, we are given the great privilege of participation in his suffering and death (Rom. 8:17; Col. 1:24; 2 Tim. 2:11, 12). The death we die after coming into Christ could not be for our own sins, nor because of the sin of Adam, for the death of Jesus has satisfied that penalty (Rom. 8:1; Heb. 2:9). Paul says: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" His was a death of sacrifice on account of sin. "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection . . . For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. *Likewise* reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:3-11). Whatever interpretation we may give to portions of this text, it is clear that we share the experiences of our Lord, partaking of his death and resurrection.

By keeping the law Jesus acquired the right to human life and inheritance, and in accord with the purpose of God he will use this right to purchase redemption for Adam and his progeny. In reward; for his willingness to sacrifice himself in rendering full loyalty and obedience to the doing of the Father's will, Jesus has been given the Father's own nature and fullness, and has been exalted far above all else in Creation. Jesus knew that his Father always rewarded faithfulness but seemingly he did not know the extent of the Father's reward for himself, for he prayed to be restored to his former position, but instead was exalted far above what he had been.

During the three and a half years that he was proving his right to be man's redeemer, Jesus was also being developed and fitted spiritually to be a merciful High Priest (Heb. 2:10, 17, 18). But the really astounding thing in this beneficence of God is that the body members of Christ are to become joint-heirs with him in the great reward given him by the heavenly Father. If our faith is strong enough to lay hold of this gratuitous grace of God and to run with patience the race that is set before us, then God will deal with us as sons.

In coming into Christ, a fourth thing that occurs is the relinquishment of all earthly hopes of inheritance. Our sacrifice which takes place prior to our becoming the blessers of mankind was pictured by the Levites, who relinquished their opportunity of inheritance in the land of Canaan that they, in replacing the firstborn of Israel, might be used of God as priests and helpers of the priests to minister to their brethren (Num. 8:5-19). A fifth thing that occurred when we were baptized into Christ, was

the beginning of a development as "new creatures," with spirit life and the hopes of a heavenly inheritance as our prospect, instead of the earthly blessings we would have received as men. This was a radical change and is one of the "all things that have become new" to us (2 Cor. 5:17).

A sixth thing that came to us, was a change in our abode. While as human beings we still occupy the same body, and may continue to live in the same house, city and country, yet our abode has changed to where the mind of the new creature is, dwelling in intimate spiritual relationship with Christ in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6, R.S.V.), for we are delivered from "the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son" (Col. 1:13). "For our citizenship belongs to the heavens, out of which we are awaiting a Saviour also, the Lord, Jesus Christ, who will transfigure the body of our humiliation, to conform it to his body glorious, in accord with the operation which enables him to subject even the universe to himself" (Phil. 3:20, 21, C.V.). These human bodies are not transfigured. It is the Body of the Christ as a whole, that is conformed to the Head.

'TAKE MY LIFE AND MAY IT BE LORD, ACCEPTABLE TO THEE'

In an acceptable consecration we commit all that we have unto the Lord; we cannot reserve a single earthly -right or possession, for Jesus says: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). God does not deprive us of the use of these bodies, these wills, or the earthly things that were once recognized as belonging to us. He makes us stewards, servants that must give an account to him for the way in which we use them (Luke 16:1-11). As regards the things of this world we all, like Paul, "have nothing, yet possess all things" (2 Cor. 6:10). Having committed all unto the Lord, we will not attempt to direct ourselves but will look to our Head for direction. Some criticize the narrowness of this view, and admittedly it is narrow, for Jesus said: "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14).

Our Lord knew that it would be difficult for us to carry out our covenant of sacrifice, for he also found it difficult, and said: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished" (Luke 12:50). Realizing how his powers of endurance were taxed we might hesitate to consecrate and subject ourselves to the wiles of the adversary, who is adept in using the weaknesses of our flesh to trap and discourage us; but we have a power on our side that is equal to any emergency. The Psalmist recognizing this says: "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." Help through our Lord Jesus Christ is always available, and if we rely upon that help, we will be able to stand and to expect that victory will attend our strivings.

In the Father's sight we are dead as human beings from the moment our consecration is accepted and our induction into the body of Christ through the operation of the holy spirit is accomplished. But in actual experience the flesh is only reckoned dead, and we find it to be very fearful of the fiery trials that consume it; therefore it must be securely anchored (Heb. 6:19). But what are the cords that will hold it? Will fear of consequences be effective? No! We have seen what a vain cord this has proven to be in the preaching of eternal torment. Will a sense of duty, a full knowledge of doctrine, or even faith and hope in themselves, be strong enough to keep the sacrifice on the altar? No! The only cord strong enough to hold the rebellious flesh in subjection to our covenant, is Godlike love. Faith and hope are also essential to the binding, but "It is the love of Christ that constraineth us." It is love that constitutes the tie that cannot be broken.

"Now abideth faith, hope, and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

- John T. Read

GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS

(We shall all long remember how our "Sweet Singer" of the Israel of God sang the following hymn)

"Great is Thy faithfulness," O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not,
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness,
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.
Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,

Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!
"Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!"

Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
-- "Great is Thy faithfulness," Lord, unto me!

- *(T. O. Chisholm)*

A "Faithful Saying" for the Christmas Season

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. " - 1 Timothy 1:15.

AT THIS season of the year it is our custom to meditate on the story of the Advent, to let our thoughts linger either on our Lord's birth itself, or on some of the remarkable incidents which attended it. While we may, and do, question the accuracy of the date, December 25, believing rather that his birth occurred in the autumn at the beginning of the Jewish year, yet as has been truly observed, since our Lord did not anywhere indicate his wish that we should celebrate his birthday at all, and since the general celebration takes place at this season, we may appropriately enough join with all whose hearts are in the attitude of love and appreciation toward God and his dear Son, our Redeemer.

In our meditations, however, while we invariably derive much spiritual profit as in spirit we accompany the shepherds to Bethlehem (Luke 2:15), it is not because we dwell only or mainly on our Lord's birth, or on any of the circumstances attending it, but rather because we endeavor, under the guidance of the Spirit, to penetrate to its inner significance -- to the *mind* of Christ Jesus, rather than to his *birth*, to the motives which prompted him to lay aside the glory which he had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5), to the purpose for which he emptied himself of that glory and took on him the form of a servant. For the mind of Christ must certainly be much more to us than any event in his history, however great. *That* may be the glory of an age: but *this* is for all time, for all eternity. And we know of no passage of Scripture which throws a clearer, stronger, light on the mind of Christ, on the inward significance, on the motive and purpose, whether of the Advent or of the Atonement, than the "faithful saying" we have quoted at the head of this article. And how suitable a "saying" it is for the Christmas season, for it exactly expresses the purpose of our Lord's advent -- the salvation of our lost and dying race.

OUR LORD'S PREEXISTENCE IMPLIED

That "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" is still one of the grandest sayings in the world, for all so simple as it sounds; and there must in very deed have been a divine grace and inspiration on the lips which first uttered it. It is only by a sustained effort of imagination that we can in any measure conceive what it was to those on whose waiting and prepared ears it originally fell. But even to us, whose ears are dulled by long use of the words, they grow impressive as we ponder them, taking on added meaning. Is there nothing strange, nothing startling, in the phrase, "Christ Jesus came -- Christ Jesus *advented* -- *into* the world"? That could be said of none but him. For it implies that his coming, his advent, was a conscious and voluntary act, a self-determining effort of his will. It implies his preexistence on some other plane; it implies that he did not begin to be when he came into this world; nor come, as we come, apart from his own knowledge and choice. Nothing less than the great secret of godliness is in these words, or in the New Testament use of them; the change of nature from spirit to human of the mighty Logos, who at all times was so completely one with the Father, in aim, in thought, in purpose, that when he was here he could truthfully say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," and of whom an Apostle could write he was "God manifest in flesh" (John 14:9; 1 Tim. 3:16).

No doubt this saying won wide acceptance in the Church, and was commended as a faithful saying by St. Paul, partly because it contained the confession that Christ Jesus had come in flesh; for thus it met and satisfied the test by which the Apostles had demanded that all spiritual

utterances should be tried. Yet surely it was not this alone, nor this mainly, which commended it to the general heart. Even we value the doctrine of the prehuman existence of Christ, and of his virgin birth, mainly because, holding those truths, we can see and believe that he possessed the ability to become our Savior if he would; mainly because, his willingness being also abundantly attested, we can and do rejoice in him as our Savior indeed. And therefore we may well believe that the early Church loved and adopted this prophetic saying, not so much for its opening as for its closing words. That "Christ Jesus *came into the world*" was much; but that he "came into the world *to save sinners*" -- *this* was the pathetic surprise, *this* was the mystery of grace, which broke men down into tears of penitence and love and rapture, before which Jew and Gentile fell on their faces and worshipped him.

HE CAME TO SAVE

That Jehovah would eventually, "in due time," send a Mighty One into the world to bless, to reward his loyal and obedient servants, was no more than a pious *Hebrew* would have expected of him. The great promise to Abraham that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed -- a promise reiterated and amplified by all the Prophets who followed -- assured him of this. That a god, a mighty one, should come into the world to aid and protect those who were specially devoted to his service, or even to gratify his own lust and caprice, was what any *Greek* would be prepared to expect; for had not his ears buzzed with such fables ever since he had seen the stately forms of his gods towering, in their white marble loveliness, above the altars in street and temple, or listened to the wandering rhapsodists reciting the Homeric strains? But that God in Christ, should come down into the world not to indulge his preferences and lusts, not to aid and protect his devotees, not even to succor and reward the righteous men who walked in all his ordinances and commandments blameless, but to *save sinners*, to bless his enemies, to redeem those whom the pious Jew denounced as "this people that is accursed," and the cultivated Greek scorned as "the foolish and wretched herd, debarred from wisdom" -- O, this was a marvel beyond all marvels; it was a truth, if indeed it could be true, to break and win all hearts, and to revolutionize the whole structure of human life and thought!

In the early Church, too, not many wise, not many "righteous," were called. It was the foolish and the wicked, the peasant and the slave, sinners of the Jews and sinners of the Gentiles, to whom, for the most part, the Gospel was preached, or preached with vital and saving effect. And what a Gospel it must have been to *them*, shut out as they had been from all self-respect and hope; held incapable of wisdom or of goodness, banned and scorned from the cradle to the grave! What a Gospel to learn that the very Son of God had pitied them whom no man pitied, loved them whom all men hated and despised; that he had emptied himself of his glory, and come down into their low and sorrowful conditions, not to judge and condemn them, but to save them from their sins, infirmities, sorrows, to give them wisdom, to make them righteous, and to restore them to self-respect, to kindle in their hearts the cleansing and illuminating fires of an eternal hope! In a Church composed of men who had been lost but were found, who had been dead in trespasses and sins, but were now alive unto righteousness, and who felt that they owed this wondrous change and transformation, this new life, to Christ alone, is it any marvel that the saying, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," was held to be a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance; a saying more precious than all the sentences of the wise or all the ethical maxims of the good; a saying which set itself to the music of the joy it inspired, and which deserved to be had in everlasting remembrance?

"THE CHIEF OF SINNERS-WE"

Nay, though it be so simple and familiar, is it not most precious even to us, full of a divine consolation, an unfailling spring of hope? Which of us has not sinned, try ourselves by what standard we will? Which of us, despite our penitence and faith, does not at this moment sorrowfully confess that he is still a sinner, most unworthy of the mercy of God? If any man think otherwise, what need we further proof that he is the most hopeless of sinners? If any man think otherwise, let him listen to one, even St: Paul, whom even he will confess to possess a better title to saintship than himself. Even in St. Paul's writings there is no more humbling and pathetic stroke than the words he appends to this "faithful saying. Although for more than twenty years he had endured the loss of all things for Christ's sake; although he had been, and knew that he had been more abundant both in labor and in suffering than any other of the Apostles, he cannot say, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," without adding, "of whom I am chief"! Nay, without going on to explain that he, the chief of sinners has obtained mercy, not for his own sake, not simply that *he* might be recovered to life and hope, but also that in him, as the greatest of transgressors, "Christ Jesus might show forth the whole of his long-suffering as a pattern for those who should afterward believe on him unto life eternal"! And if such a one as Paul -- the apostle, the prisoner, the martyr-held himself to be "chief of sinners," which of us must not account himself more sinful than he, and less worthy of eternal life?

SALVATION FROM DEATH

But what is the extent of the salvation which our Lord came to achieve, and how far has his mission been successful? Ah! it is in the answer to these questions that we see the superiority of the Gospel over all the various plans and devices of men for the uplift of our race. Not that we would be understood as speaking against any of these. No doubt many, if not all of them, are laudable, at least in their intention. But they are lacking both in scope and power. Their scope is limited to the present life. And even within this limit they are powerless to accomplish much. None of them even pretend to point out a way whereby we may escape death, or for those of our race who have already entered the grave, a way whereby they may be awakened from the sleep of death; while even if they could do this, they would be powerless to strengthen anyone to walk in that way. And what end do such plans serve but to blind men's eyes to the truth that they are dead, and that'; their only true hope lies in the wisdom, power, and grace of that God who raiseth the dead?

Man's first need is not moral philosophy (which may indeed have its place and value afterwards) but a pathway out of the realm of death, and power to enable him to walk in that pathway. And the salvation Jesus came to effect includes both. He is the "Way" out of death. He is also the "Life" which enables those who lay hold of his salvation to walk in that way. Many are the plans for human uplift, but there was only One who ever made or could make, in sincerity, an offer of eternal life. None other has ever truthfully said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead yet shall he live." But, praise be to God, these wondrous words of life *did flow* from his lips, although they could be said truthfully even by him only in contemplation of the sacrifice of his life which he was about to make.

SALVATION FROM THE POWER OF SIN

Commencing then, with salvation from the depths, even from death itself, Christ Jesus proceeds to save "to the uttermost." A work of transformation is begun in us. This work is accomplished by a further appeal to our hearts, for while it by no means ignores the intellect, the gospel of God in Christ Jesus makes its chief appeal, with all the attraction of a personal love, to the heart—the center of the will and affections (Prov. 4:23).

It is the heart and not the brain,
That to the highest doth attain

Not content with explaining to a man what it is right to do, our Lord undertakes to make him disposed to do it. This he accomplishes by revealing to his wondering eyes all the beauty of his own loveliness. As the Apostle declares: "We all with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image." The poet has well expressed the heart sentiment of those to whom the Lord is thus gracious, in those well-known lines:

Show me Thy face -- one transient gleam
Of loveliness divine,
And I shall never think or dream
Of other love than Thine;
All other lights will darken quite,
All lower glories wane,
The beautiful of earth will scarce
Seem beautiful again.

That, at least, is the first result in those who "behold" him. But we have this treasure in an earthen vessel, and it is not long before we learn from experience the truth of the Apostle's words: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). "Here," as Brother Russell has observed, "is the great and continual battle, for although the new will asserts itself and puts the body under and compels its subjection to the new mind, nevertheless, the mortal body, not being actually dead, is continually coming in contact with the world and the Adversary and is continually being stimulated by these and reinvigorated with earthly cares, ambitions, methods, strivings, conflicts, and insubordination to the new will. No saint is without experiences of this kind—fightings without and within."

"MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU"

But while our transformation is not instantaneous, but gradual, and progresses more or less rapidly, depending upon the degree of our consecration, and steadfastness in "beholding" him, it is nevertheless sure, in all whose hearts are right. Little by little, as our gaze is fixed upon him, the old traits and dispositions which are unlike him are replaced by his own characteristics. Thus the Living Word (Christ Jesus), operating through the written Word and the holy spirit, becomes the Regulator and Transformer of the minds of those who diligently seek him. Under his powerful influence confusion of thought, perplexities, sinful propensities, self-occupation (a sure breeder of unhappiness and discontent), morbid tendencies, craving for excitement and sensation, evil imaginations, appetites, tastes, inclinations, and desires, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God (as he may be known *in* the person of his Son) -- all these are displaced; and a new mind substituted. We come to possess "the mind of Christ." His serene

tranquility and repose of mind are actually reproduced in those whom first he redeemed by his precious blood.

This is peace on earth, amongst men of good will, indeed! Alas, those who share this peace, "My peace," are few in number -- in all but a "little flock" Yet faith's vision looks beyond the present tumult and strife with its intermittent "Peace, peace, when there is no peace," to the time now near at hand, when the Master shall speak with authority, rebuking the fierce and angry passions of men as he did the winds and the waves of yore, and bring in everlasting righteousness and peace. In that day the "government shall be upon his shoulder: and his Name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. And of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end" (Isa. 9:6, 7).

-P. L Read

Behind the Scenes

"The voice of a gentle whisper." - 1 Kings 19:12, Rotherham

IN THE springtime of the year Mother Nature calls the birds from the Southland. The snow has melted away, and the days are growing warm. The earth is waking from its long sleep. We do not see the forces that are operating, but they are there. There is a wonderful world of invisible things, natural things, behind the things that are seen. Throughout nature chemical action and reaction are going on continually, yet without a sound. Behind the flowering of innumerable plants the cells are doing their work, and down in the moist earth the roots are drawing up the water that is essential to plant life.

Always the force of gravitation is working soundlessly, and so are the actinic rays of the sun. We behold the visible manifestations of these operations, and that suffices us; but we know that some great divine power has brought all into being.

Behind the bark are saps that run
In power to life and limb.
Behind the sap the glowing sun,
Far off in spaces dim.
Behind the sun and its shining way,
The arm and the guiding rod,
Is the law of the orbs of the nebulae,
And back of the law is GOD.

Behind the gleaming fields of gold
Are sun and rain and soil,
That give reactions manifold
To man's directed toil ;
And every ripened grain that's packed
Within the harvest broad,
In embryo avers the fact
That back of it is GOD.

Behind the act is thought's rich gleam,
Behind that is the brain,
Behind the brain is the red blood stream,
From heart to the heart again.
Behind the blood as its courses go,
Whether we wake or nod,
Are the vital currents that ebb and flow,
And back of these is GOD.

Great things come out of the silences. From the silence of space come the mighty orbs that adorn the heavens through the hours of night. From the silent factories of the trees come oranges, peaches, apples, and other fruits. Somewhere out of the silence come the winds that roar upon the deep and lash the waters into foam. The silence of the mountains is big with suggestions that appeal to the winged and soaring fancies of men. An English writer has suggested building temples to Silence. But why build such temples when we can find them already built out in the mountains, or in the prairies, or in the pathless woods?

When Abraham was traveling in the wilderness, he spent much time in the silence. So did Moses when he kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law. And evidently these men acquired an increased greatness by getting in touch with great, silently operating forces. It would seem too that Jesus loved the silence, and frequently "stepped behind the scenes" that he might enter the more fully into the invisible workings of His Father's power, and might hear His Father's voice assuring him of His paternal care.

Said a writer: "Thinkers brood long in the silence, and then come forth, and their eloquence sways us. So it is with art. We look at a fine picture and our hearts are warmed by its wondrous beauty. But do we know the story of the picture? Years and years of thought and of tireless toil lie back of its enrapturing beauty. Or here is a book which charms you, which thrills and inspires you. Great thoughts lie in its pages. Do you know the hook's story? The author lived, struggled, toiled, suffered, wept that he might write the words which now help you. Back of every good life-thought which blesses men, lies a dark quarry where the thought was born and shaped into the beauty of form which makes it a blessing to the world. All our acts are first thoughts. The artist's picture, the poet's poem, the singer's song, the architect's building are thoughts before they are wrought out into forms of beauty." So, then, they first existed in the silent chambers of the mind, and they constitute one kind of power that lies Behind the Scenes.

The Way of the Truth-Seeker

And it is Behind the Scenes that we find the elements of that truth which builds us up in God-likeness. This comes not to us in life's hurly-burlydom but in the silent places where we grasp mighty facts that at first almost stagger the mind. The impartation of truth comes from divine revelation, from investigation, from analysis, from synthesis, and from comparison. The world's way is to pin its faith to a man and blindly follow a leader; but that is not the truth-seeker's way. In arriving at his conclusions he employs both induction and deduction, both the a-priori and the a-posteriori methods. He leaves no stone unturned. Truth to him is the most sacred thing in the universe, and he knows that its substances and its mighty potentialities lie behind its visible manifestations.

If we could only see a thought! If we could but hear the music of a thought! If we could travel clown the stream of time with a thought as soon as it is born! If we could see the great finger of a

thought's possibility pointing to the future achievement that is to come out of it! Oh the power of a thought! And at times it comes to us arrayed in vestments of silver and gold and sparkling with beautiful gems. It may be suggested by a single word. The English language contains some inexpressibly sweet words, such as God, Jesus, mother, home, love, mercy, truth; and each one of these is calculated to inspire great thoughts in the mind.

The Apostle indicates some things that lie Behind the Scenes. He says, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." That is to say, he would have us look out for the things that lie Behind the Scenes, for the very scenes of our lives are brought into being by them.

Behind natural things both visible and invisible lie spiritual things. "The things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen [the spiritual things] are eternal." The glory of God is one of them. "But we all, with open [unveiled] face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The glory of God is the glory of His character—His wisdom, His justice, His love, and His power. But the quality that means the most to us is His love. His love is the greatest transforming power in the universe. What the conception of divine love will not do for a man's mind and heart, nothing will do. The life of Jesus on earth preeminently stood for God's love. The world could not understand it because the world could not enter into the sanctuary where Jesus stood. Behind the Scenes in the life of our Lord this love was operating, but the world could see it not.

"And the Greatest of These is Love"

When we see a man living and operating in the spirit of love, the spirit of Christ, we know that somewhere God is Behind the Scenes. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16.) "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." (1 John 4:7, 8.) It is, therefore, contact with God that supplies power to the life. To maintain this contact means to overcome the world. It means to have the spirit of Christ working in us. And ultimately it will mean the gaining of our great goal.

One time a man went in search of love. He entered a busy factory and said, "Love is not here, for the noise of the machinery would drown out the voice of love." He stood in the market place and said, "Love is not here, for such an atmosphere would stifle the breath of love." He gazed out over the lordly main and said, "Love is not out yonder, for the sea is too cruel for love." He looked this way and that across the land and exclaimed, "I see not love. Oh to find it! Oh to catch a glimpse of its bright pinions of gold!" But all was silent, and there was no vision. And then a storm came on, and the darkness grew about him, and he lost his way.

The wanderer was guided by a good angel to a lonely cabin, and entering therein, he found an old man, whom he told of his quest. Then the old man said to him, "Love cannot be found by seeking for it in any land. Love comes into the life when all obstructions are removed. Selfishness is its deadly foe, and dishonesty militates against it. Go home and open all the windows of your mind to God, and God will send love to abide with you and to lead you on to the heights of victory."

And ever we find that love walks in the common ways of life. It is plebeian in its tastes. It walked the hills and vales of Judea and Galilee. It ministered to the sick, the lame, the palsied, and the blind. And it has been doing good ever since. "If any man . . . loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" All the philosophical and religious theories

in the world are worthless if they lead not to the practical workings of love. The following is an actual occurrence. A lady said to a tramp, "You look tired, but I haven't time to bother with you just now. My son lives in the next farmhouse, and I'll telephone him to give you something to eat." However, the man did not arrive at the next farmhouse, and the next morning he was found on the roadside frozen to death.

Love is not mere sentimentality but is life's working force. It is the power Behind the Scenes. "Our love or lack of love for the brethren will prove the extent of our love for the Lord. When we appreciate what it means to love God and to love Jesus, our hearts will increase in love for the brethren. Jesus said that the proof of our love for Him and for the Father would be made known by the manner in which we keep His commandments. Among His commandments is a very important one. He said to His disciples, 'A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another. . . By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.' (John 13:34, 35.) To what extent shall we love another? Jesus answers: 'This is My commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.' (John 15:12.) The love of Jesus for us was an unselfish love, a sacrificial love, a desire to do us good, with no thought of reward from us. And He did this at a great cost to Himself. This is the kind of love He says we must have for the brethren -- a sacrificial love." - Z., Sept. 1, 1917.

Professor Henry Drummond said: "Love is not a thing of enthusiastic emotion. It is a rich, strong, manly, vigorous expression of the whole round Christian character-the Christian nature in its fullest development. And the constituents of this great character are only to be built up by ceaseless practice. Do not quarrel, therefore, with your lot in life. Above all, do not resent temptation; do not be perplexed because it seems to thicken around you more and more. That is the practice which God appoints you, and it is having its work in making you patient and humble and generous and unselfish and kind and courteous. Do not grudge the hand that is molding the still-too-shapeless image within you. It is growing more beautiful though you see it not.

"Love itself cannot be defined. Light is something more than the sum of its ingredients-a glowing, dazzling, tremulous ether. And love is something more than all its elements-a palpitating, quivering, sensitive, living thing. By synthesis of all the colors men can make whiteness; they cannot make light. By synthesis of all the virtues men can make virtue; they cannot make love. We brace our wills to secure it. We try to copy those who have it. We lay down rules about it. We watch. We pray. But these things alone will not bring love into our nature. Love is an effect, and only as we fulfill the right conditions can we have the effect produced. Contemplate the love of Christ, and you will love. Stand before that mirror, reflect Christ's character, and you will be changed into the same image. There is no other way. You cannot love to order. You can only look at the lovely object and fall in love with it, and grow into likeness to it. Love begets love. It is a process of induction. Put a piece of iron in the presence of an electrified body, and that piece of iron for a time becomes electrified. It is changed into a temporary magnet in the mere presence of a permanent magnet, and as long as you leave the two side by side, they are both magnets alike. Remain side by side with Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, and you too will become a permanent magnet, a permanently attractive force. That is the inevitable effect of love."

When love is strong, faults are few. When love rides forth to conquer, all barriers must fall. Love will not be robbed of its final victory. In all its beauty, in all its effulgence, in all its strength, it is accomplishing its purpose, although unperceived by the natural eye. The poet Browning said, "God's in His heaven; all's right with the world." What he meant was that because God exists, and God is love, all will eventually be right with the world. Love, wisdom, justice, and power do not arrive at their objectives in a day but take their time. Therefore, it is that God's Word uses the

expression, "in the fulness of times." (Eph. 1:10.) Ah, yes, in the fulness of times love's sway will be assured, and love will hold the scepter both in heaven and on earth.

One met Love in the morning at the breaking of the day. He met Love near the fountain, and Love wooed his heart away. Love took his hand and led him out and down life's leafy lane, and he forgot about his lot, his sadness, and his pain. And as they walked, awhile they talked, and then they sang together, a mellow song that cheered him long like fragrance of the heather. They sang of Faith the fearless, and they sang of Hope the true, that never leaves one cheerless and whose wine is ever new. He did not shrink when at the brink they stood beside a river. Its water stole around his soul, its charm was his forever. He launched his skiff, he floated out and down its silver breast. The hills looked down in solemn peace, the waters tuned of rest. With beaching of his boat he looked and saw Love's palace home. He is now so satisfied with Love he ne'er again shall roam. He's now so overjoyed with Love his life has "caught the gleam." He found the glory place of Love far down Truth's crystal stream.

"And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three but the greatest of these is love."

And love is, and always will be, the mightiest of all the forces that operate Behind the Scenes.

- *Contributed.*

That I May Win Christ

"Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may win Christ." - Philippians 3:8.

WE NOTE that this is a letter written by Paul long years after he had found Christ as a Savior. He had *found* Christ, but he had not yet *won* him. In this letter he is revealing the great objective underlying all of his reactions in the service and fellowship of Jesus. To many, Christ is made a means to an end, but to Paul, Christ was the end to be gained, and all phases of the Christian life were looked upon as means to that end. Overtake Paul where we will in all the long years of his after life, and we will always find him reaching forward to this attainment. Let us observe that he is not revealing that his thought is focused primarily on gaining a place in the Kingdom, attaining a crown, etc., but that "I may win Christ."

In all undertakings, even in temporal things, so much depends on a proper beginning. Any one starting out in a business life without some definite plan of action will be almost certain to make a failure of the attempt. Our Lord teaches that this is sure to be true of any one attempting to live the Christian life. The cost is to be carefully considered, and the goal clearly understood.

It is worth while noting the two questions asked by Saul when he met Jesus:

Question No. 1: "Who art thou, Lord?" This question was never fully answered to Paul. Throughout his whole life he was asking that same question. Oh, "That I might know him and the power of his resurrection." Like the Psalmist, who was so eager to know God that he too could say, "As the hart panteth for the water brook, so panteth my soul for thee, O God." What a blessed thirst after a knowledge of God. Jesus' definition of eternal life was "Knowing God."

Question No. 2: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And the answer to that question was not forthcoming in a day, nor in a year. Paul discovered a further and greater answer to that question the longer he lived. His longing to know God, and his fervent desire to learn more and more of what the Lord would have him do, made Paul the outstanding example to us that he is. Progress in the Christian life is an utter impossibility to us, too, unless we are constantly asking these same questions.

The difficulty with most of us is that we "came into the truth" all too suddenly. We go back to some date in the past when we first caught sight of some of the outlines of truth, and there "we came into the truth." Ask Paul after his years in Arabia, perhaps fourteen, "Paul, when did you come into the truth?" Ask him the same question ten years later, twenty or thirty years later, and fancy him smiling at us and saying, "When did I come into the truth? Why, my dear brother, I am only *just coming into the truth* as yet." True, he came very quickly to a knowledge of the fundamentals of the truth, the doctrines constituting the faith once delivered; but this was not the end of progress. It was merely the beginning. To obtain a full knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord, was to Paul, too great a matter to be fully grasped at once. He liked to write about "unsearchable riches" and of "love surpassing all understanding," and to urge all to seek "all the fulness of God."

Very early in the new life he grasped the fact that sin was the one great problem -- the effective barrier to fellowship with the Lord -- and that as a foundation of all progress, knowledge, and

fellowship, the question of sin must be given the needed attention. Paul did not offer many excuses for sin, but he constantly emphasized its sinfulness, and he insisted on holiness as the standard of the Christian. In his ministry to the Church he preached the facts of a full deliverance from sin through faith in Christ. To the ungodly his ministry was by no means calculated to "strengthen the hands of the wicked by promising him life." Felix trembled, when Paul reasoned "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment. " He was able to say after years of preaching, "I am free from the blood of all men"; "I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God."

The point is just this: We must have proper views of sin and God's attitude toward it, and understand his remedy for it, if we are to enjoy a real, intimate fellowship with, and *win* Christ. Paul made a sharp distinction between being in contact with Christ and being "in Christ. "

Many of us have fallen into the habit of using some important texts in a rather superficial way. For example: "For me to live is Christ." The meaning, some would say is "to live for Christ"; "that I might win Christ" -- "win a place in the Body of Christ." This was not the meaning Paul placed on these statements. He meant exactly what he said. The thought of many is really limited to "contact" with Christ. Paul's objective was nothing short of "union" with Christ, and not merely contact with him.

The difference between contact and union may be illustrated thus:

Place an indissoluble substance in a glass of water, and you can have all the contact possible, but no union. Place in that same water some dissoluble substance, and at once you will have perfect union. That is what Paul meant in the above and other similar texts. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This thought should be clear enough to us. We have little difficulty with the words of Jesus when he teaches the same union with the Father. He declared that none of his words and works were his own, but those of the Father, who dwelt in him. As Jesus could say, "The Father liveth in me," so Paul desired so to be in Christ and Christ in him that he could say, "Not I, but Christ." And what will all this lead to in Christian experience? It will lead to the sweetest and most intimate fellowship with Christ.

Let us look on another picture provided in the Word of Inspiration for us: The Book of Canticles depicts two lovers vying with each other in expressions of adoration and love. Love, consuming love, has a language all its own, a language of the heart. Our Lord is here brought before us as a Lover. "He is seen as manifesting his love to those who appreciate it and to whom it is more precious than all else." By the use of this love story we want to raise our voice once more in a plea for greater emphasis on the devotional life of the Christian.

The Song of Songs, as another has said, is a book for the heart. . . . The inspired title of the book, *The Song of Songs*, indicates its surpassing excellence.... No subject could be greater or sweeter than the love of Christ, and those responsive movements which it awakens in the hearts of those who know it. To have the personal enjoyment of the love of Christ transcends all other joys This song delineates in a figurative way the affections that are in the heart of Christ towards his own, and the affections which have place in their hearts towards him."

We fear there is more emphasis put upon the head knowledge and far too little upon the heart devotion to the person of Christ.

THE SECRET OF THE STAIRS

"O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs." (Song of Solomon 2:14.) It is the espoused bride that speaks. We have learned many important secrets, the mystery hid from ages, etc. Have we learned the secret of the stairs? Stairs represent a means of rising from lower to higher levels. If we went into the Empire building or any skyscraper structure and desired to go to the top, we could ascend by the stairs. We would not find one continuous flight of stairs leading to the top. Perhaps ten or twelve steps, then a landing, and so on to the top. Those landings would represent the different attainments of professing Christians. Many have climbed only a few flights and have reached their heaven. They have contact. Others may climb a little higher and learn a little more "about Christ." Others who entered the high-calling lost sight of everything but Christ himself. Not until they have reached the top by the last flight of stairs revealed to their devoted eyes will they rest content.

And is there really any secret about these stairs? There must be, for we observe that when one talks about some of the higher possibilities of the Christian life, many are disposed to consider he is merely indulging in some flights of fancy. There is more than one saint who has been "caught away" into blessed visions of Christ, and in that heaven has heard things that cannot be uttered. There are some very vital features of Christian experience which must remain matters of personal experience. They cannot be written in a book for others to read, nor spoken audibly for others to hear. These thrills are to be found in the secret of the stairs.

This, beloved friends, is the life that is lost *in Christ*. He is "the chiefest among ten thousand." "Yea, he is altogether lovely."

- J. J. Blackburn.

Isaac Newton on the Book of Revelation

“It is part of this Prophecy that it should not be understood before the last age of the world; and therefore makes for the credit of the Prophecy that it is not yet understood. The folly of interpreters has been to foretell times and things by this Prophecy, as if God designed to make them prophets. By this rashness they have not only exposed themselves, but brought the Prophecy also into contempt. The design of God was much otherwise. He gave this, and the prophecies of the Old Testament, not to gratify men’s curiosities by enabling them to foreknow things, but hat, after that they were fulfilled, they might be interpreted by the event; and His own providence, not the interpreter’s, be then manifested thereby to the world. For the event of things, predicted many ages before, will then be a convincing argument that the world is governed by Providence. For, as the few and obscure prophecies concerning Christ’s first coming were for setting up the Christian religion, which all nations have since corrupted, so the many and clear prophecies concerning the things to be done at Christ’s second coming, are not only for predicting, but also for effecting a recovery and re-establishment of the long-lost truth, and setting up a kingdom wherein dwells righteousness. The event will prove the Apocalypse; and this Prophecy, thus proved and understood, will open the old prophets; and all together will make known the true religion; and establish it. There is already so much of the Prophecy fulfilled, that as many as will take pains in this study may see sufficient instances of God’s promise; but then, the signal revolutions predicted by all the prophets, will at once both turn men’s eyes upon considering the predictions, and plainly interpret them. Till then we must content ourselves with interpreting what hath been already fulfilled.”

Entered Into Rest

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