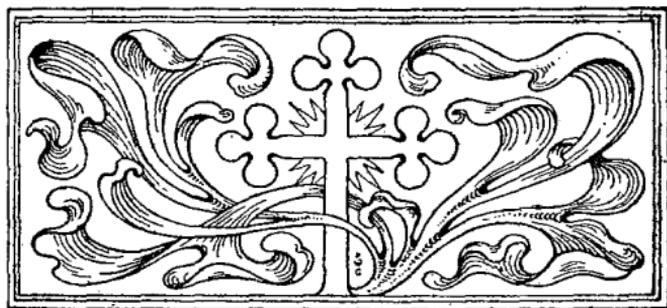


FUNDAMENTAL RELIGIOUS
TRUTHS APPLIED TO LIFE

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THE Committee on Arrangements and Exercises in its letter has stated that "the main idea of this symposium is to state the attitude and conviction of the writer toward the particular form of religious faith or worship with which he is connected." The Committee further stated, "If it should lead you into the field of social amelioration, philanthropy, education, or elsewhere, you will feel at perfect liberty to choose your own path."

I shall not attempt in this brief discussion to present a theological or philosophical statement of religious doctrine. The conclusions stated reflect my personal experience, and my observation of the experiences of men of various types. Giving

heed to the limitations of my topic to fundamental truths, I shall specify but five, referring thereafter to the fact and results of their application in the lives of men.

FIRST TRUTH. *There is a common consciousness of the continual presence of a supreme being, or God.* "In the beginning God." These are the primal words of the oldest book in use. The divine immanence of God is experienced in every human soul. The universal fear of, or devotion to, an over-ruling spirit, or aggregation of spirits, is significant. The idolatry, sacrifices, penances, and devotions of peoples of all races and ages testify most strongly to their inherent consciousness that over, and working upon the human life are controlling influences that have their center outside of one's self. In the sober moments of life every man instinctively appeals to, or leans upon, the larger and stronger spirit whom he, perhaps vaguely, regards as the original and final authority over the affairs of men.

Most men are conscious of a competition going on for the mastery of life, or the struggle between the higher and lower tendencies. Many consider this higher nature, or set of tendencies, as the voice and presence of God.

What disposition we have to love our neighbors and to minister to their needs, forgive their mistakes and wrongs, is the

manifestation of the presence of this supreme influence with us. "In Him we live and move and have our being."

SECOND TRUTH. *There is a consciousness of falling short of the expectations of God, or of direct violation of His will.* This is consciousness of sin. A most patent experience in the life of every man is his feeling of insufficiency, or shortcoming. The great unrest of the human race finds its origin in the inbred feeling that it has not attained, or has blundered. The sense of forgiveness, and of approbation, when one turns from the lower to the higher tendencies within him, is a real and personal experience; but no more so than the depressing sense of guilt and overhanging penalty when one yields to the lower tendencies at the sacrifice of the higher.

The commonly recognized distance between our real selves and our ideals, and the general sense of lack of complete harmony with the "best" marks the failure that constitutes sin. The self-willed life that breaks from a conscious harmony with the supreme will finds itself ill at ease and in hazard, and usually recognizes, even if it will not admit, that the trouble lies essentially in this lack of harmony.

THIRD TRUTH. *There is a realization that God is concerned about us.* The fact that we are His handiwork, that He has created us, is a fundamental indication

of His concern for us. It is impossible for us to conceive of God as having no interest in the highest type of His creation; nor can we believe that the divine law of economy would permit the persistence of forms with which He is not concerned.

Not alone has He created us, but He has made elaborate provision for all our worldly necessities, adding to the things we need a wealth of things to give us joy. Such blessings can be explained only by His concern for our welfare.

Another evidence of God's concern is found in our instinct of kinship with Him, constantly urging us to seek a closer relation with Him. The human heart craves for a deeper and more sustaining love than any earthly relationship can supply, and this craving is fairly interpreted as the attractive power of His love for us. Further, He has given us the capacity and the impetus to make progress in the attainment of that knowledge and power which have their origin in Him, and which constitute the glory and majesty of His personality. Dr. Crane says: "God has been in every age and race, brooding over His human children, slowly lifting them by the influence of His personality into a higher life." God must certainly care for those whom He thus develops into His own image.

FOURTH TRUTH. The correct view of life depends upon a recognition of Christ as the most potent and concrete manifestation of God. In the definition of this truth it is necessary that my views as a Christian man shall be differentiated from the views of those not professing such allegiance. We have the records of God's direct recognition of Christ at the time of His baptism. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; and at the time of His transfiguration, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." Christ himself said: "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me," "He that seeth me seeth the Father," "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

Testimony written later by a contemporary of Christ affirms "that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

So general is the recognition of the earthly existence and significance of the leader of the Christian religion that this morning's paper of London, Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, and Rome, was published in the year 1904 after the birth of Jesus Christ. No

man in the territory of the world powers, of whatever religious belief, or of no religious belief, can sign a legal document, or date a letter, and think what he is doing, without bringing Christ before his mind.

FIFTH TRUTH. Reconciliation with God and a fully successful life depend upon individual adoption of the principles of Jesus Christ as determining one's attitude, development, and service. The principles of Jesus Christ find their perfect exemplification in His own personality. To become a Christian is to become a student of Christ's life, to pledge allegiance to Him, and to incorporate in life the principles of His kingdom.

Webster defines Christianity—"The system of doctrine and precepts taught by Christ." He defines a Christian—"One who professes to believe, or has assumed to believe, the religion of Christ; especially one whose inward and outward life is conformed to the doctrine of Christ."

The principles of Christ are concisely stated in what He called the two great commandments: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment, and the second is like, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other command-

ment greater than these." The man to whom Christ had spoken these words, replying that to keep these commandments was "more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices," was answered by Christ, "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."

In carrying out His first great principle, Christ established and held himself unflinchingly to an attitude of absolute obedience to God's will, and consequently enjoyed a perfect communion with God. As conspicuous means of maintaining this communion, he made constant use of the holy scriptures and direct prayer. Any one adopting these principles or seeking this same communion will use the agencies, Bible study and prayer, enjoined by the teaching and example of Christ.

In the fulfillment of the fundamental principle of love to God and love to men, we find Christ's development into a symmetrical perfection. "Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favor with God and man."

One's adoption of these principles makes for the salvation of the whole man, body, mind, and spirit, harmonized with the will of God and prepared for service to one's fellows. The face of the Christian believer is toward the goal "of the measure of the stature of Christ." "Citizenship in the Kingdom of God is not a set of negations;

it does not consist of long fasts, nor the absence of innocent pleasures; it is not to worship a set of opinions. It is a well-rounded character; it is health of the whole man; it is living in true fellowship with the spirit of the manliest man that ever lived." One of the most mischievous fallacies disproven by Christ is the attempt to separate the physical and mental sides of our being from the immortal soul, for one cannot fully love God or men with only part of his nature.

Christ's exemplification of His second great principle, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" is found in the fulfillment of His mission as he described it, "For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." Our adoption of this principle makes service to our fellows a dominant characteristic of life. Conspicuous among the forms of Christ-inspired service are mighty educational, philanthropic, and social betterment movements, making for the broader establishment of "the Kingdom of God on earth."

The adoption of Christ's principles, by yielding to the Holy Spirit, the pervading presence of God, makes us at one with Christ, and hence, through his at-one-ment (atonement) gives us reconciliation with God, for He and the Father are one.

Is it a fact that these fundamental religious truths find acceptance among men of various types?

For nearly twenty-five years it has been my privilege to be closely associated with young men of widely different types and conditions with exceptional opportunities for ascertaining their religious convictions and needs. I have found that college and university students are as a class responsive to such religious truths as have here been stated. More than fifty per cent of the college men of the country have openly expressed their allegiance to Christ, and a large majority of students, not openly making such a confession, do not seem to be averse to this religious viewpoint. The men of varied nationalities and occupations in city life are largely and increasingly responsive to these principles of Jesus. The working-men, so-called, in the main believe in the principles of Jesus. The oft-quoted incident which occurred in the labor convention at Boston some time since, when the mention of the word "church" brought forth the hisses of the delegates, and the words "Jesus Christ" brought forth their enthusiastic approval, was an indication of the attitude of such men to Christ himself. The rapid advance of Christian ideals in so-called heathen lands, as indicated by the open allegiance of many, and the receptiveness of mind in

general of the educated classes in India, China, and Japan, testify to the inherent power of Him who is the truth.

The application of these fundamental truths to life, results in a growing regard for spiritual things in the increase of community of interest, or the practical application of the Golden Rule, and in the magnifying of the dignity and rights of the individual. This is seen in respect for the Sabbath day and for the religious agencies which are held to be essential for the promotion of pure morals, and the betterment of personal and civic life. The benefit of the application of these truths is manifest in the great constructive power of the Christian home, the Christian school, and the Christian church. It is also seen in the increasing respect for, and use of, the Bible as a divine revelation of the nature and will of God, and the proper relations of man both to his Creator and to his fellows.

The application of these truths eliminates much of friction and evil from society by promoting the discharge of one's duty to his neighbors. Jesus did not spend much time in tirades on the existence of evil, or in organizing crusades against the wrong. He established great principles of action, which, when incorporated into human life, steadily and permanently eradicate the evil in society. As the acceptance of these

principles of Christ has become more widespread, the more earnestly and loyally the interests of common humanity have been conserved, and the rights and freedom of each individual have been advanced.

“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”