



JESUS or CHAOS?



An Address Before The Sphex Club

APRIL 21, 1939

LYNCHBURG, VA.



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MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN :

Perhaps there is no subject of such universal interest that is so little understood as religion. While there are numberless sects or associations of religionists, it risks little to say that there are as many different religions as there are individuals, because each man has his own personal conception of what the common term signifies. This is another way of saying that religion is strictly between the individual and his God.

Religion is the sixth sense and its function is to furnish the connecting link between the finite and the Infinite. The reactions of this sense, in each individual case, are influenced by the intellectual and emotional capacities and their developments under a given environment.

Religion of itself is neither good nor bad. It is a natural, normal faculty that brings to every one, even the most debased, the perception that there is something greater than he. This superior power is God. Religion is the medium by which man finds his way emotionally and intellectually to God. It connects the seen with the unseen—the objective world with the unseen spiritual world. Religious reactions are without moral relation. Religious manifestations may be of all kinds from fiendish murder to the most ecstatic emotions of spiritual worship. History furnishes many examples of crimes, individual and collective, committed in the name of and under the urge of religion. The burning of heretics has at times furnished opportunity for the exercise of religious duty. This by no means is an indictment of religion any more than it would be to say that the sense

of sight was at fault because unpleasant objects came in the line of vision. The fault lies in the nature and character of the stimuli and not in the organ. So long as the organ truly reflects the stimuli it is performing its normal function. The sense of hearing may register the sweetest dulcet notes of entrancing music, or the distracting noises of a fanfare. The sense of smell may react to the most delicate and pleasing fragrance of the rose or to the vile, nauseating odors of the putrescent body of a defunct animal. The task of the individual is to improve the character of the stimuli which react upon the religious sense; to cultivate the emotional nature to bring it under the law of love; to develop the intellect, to know right from wrong and truth from error.

The emotional nature through the impelling power of the conscience will compel compliance with ethics as established by the analytical powers of the intellect. The greatest need of the world today is not for more religion, but for a better quality of religion, which will stir the soul to love more and the intellect to develop a keener perception of ethical relations between men.

Religious life is a process of building in which God gives the foundation and raw material and each individual must construct for himself, and his moral responsibility for results is measured by the sincerity of his efforts. The benighted animist, who sees God in the stone or reptile, if he acts the best he knows, has discharged his moral obligation provided he has done his best to know.

As the intellect and the emotional nature are developed, religious conceptions develop along with them. Religious life is therefore not static. It is in a state of constant change. It is either progressing or receding. It requires constant cultivation if healthy growth is to be maintained. Neglected, evil weeds choke it and eventually it atrophies. It seems probable that this process of deterioration unless arrested would end in total destruction of the religious sense.

The improvement of the quality of religion resulting from the development of mind and emotional nature carries

with it greater activity of the spark of divinity—the good spirit—which is the connecting link between God and man. This is the Holy Ghost which strives with man to lead him onward and upward. Man by resisting its appeal, can drive it out and once departed it may never return. The fact that man has free will and choice of course establishes his moral responsibility. He is endowed with certain capabilities and must therefore be held accountable for their custody and use. He must preserve the talents entrusted to him and account for their use. The individual being responsible for the results has the sole right to decide how he shall best discharge the duties imposed upon him, therefore, he has the inalienable right to formulate his own theology and believe whatever may appear to him to be true. It goes without saying that he is in duty bound to make diligent enquiry and faithful investigation to ascertain the truth, but all the instruction and advice that he may receive from others are advisory only. He is left free to accept or reject any or all of it.

Owing to low development of intellect and general inertia, man, in matters of religion, is reached more readily through feeling than through the intellect—for the reason that feeling requires less effort than thinking. For the same reason emotional appeal, with many avenues of approach, from deathbed scenes to mythological stories, descriptions of the beatitudes of heaven, or reflections of the horrors of hell, sways the masses as no rational process could possibly do. Whether the employment of such methods is conducive of best final results presents a question that each may decide for himself.

Those who choose the easy way fall in with the theology of their environment. If born in a neighborhood in which a particular sect predominates, this class conforms to the opinions and beliefs of the vicinage. Their particular kind of theology is largely accidental.

Study of religious development leads to the conclusion that reactions of the religious sense are in accord with the development of the intellectual and emotional capacities of

the individual. There appears however, to be in all, whether of high or low capacity or whatever may be the stage of development, a recognition of the truth that something higher and greater than man exists. It has been suggested that this feeling of inferiority in man finds its origin in fear, but it appears reasonable that the appeal to this higher power for help in time of need must have been preceded by perception however slight that such a superior power existed.

Religion being an instinct, or sense, its reactions are strictly individualistic. Each has his own individual experiences. Each has his own conception of God and therefore no two of them are necessarily the same. The lowest savage worshipping some material object may be as religious as the most enlightened individual who conceives that God is an all pervading, ever present, omnipotent, and beneficent Spirit. The difference between them is not one of religious sense, but one of the quality of the respective reactions to it. The lower the scale of intellectual development of the individual, the more materialistic will be the conception of God and the more disproportionate will be the relation between reason and emotion.

As the individual's intellectual powers are developed his ideas and conceptions rise from the material toward the spiritual plane, and his theology will become more philosophic in character.

The religious faculty of itself is neither good nor bad. It will react either to good stimuli or to bad stimuli, as the one class or the other contacts it. In other words, it of itself, has no ethical judgment. It reacts to environmental influences, except to the extent that intellectual and emotional development controls it, whether these influences be good or bad. History is replete with reports of fiendish, atrocious acts, torture and human sacrifice among them, perpetrated in the name of religion. Religious life, being an expression of the relation between the individual and God, makes it of supreme importance that the former should devote his highest powers to ascertain the truest conception of God

possible to him and to discharge as best he can the duties which this conception imposes. He should strive to know the truth. Every available avenue leading to it should be explored and all evidence should be examined and evaluated. Preconceived opinion should be laid aside while this search and decision are in process. The sole aim should be to ascertain the truth about God and the individual's relation to him. It is true that the relation of man to the spirit world is more recondite than that to the material and of greater importance, hence the stronger reason exists that he should exert his best abilities to solve the problems involved. As an aid in this direction it is probable that better results could be obtained if man would devote more attention to keeping the daily life in accord with spiritual and ethical requirements even if less time were spent in the effort to solve the mysteries of future existence. The past is irrevocable. Neither God nor man can alter the record and the future is beyond us. Today is ours and it is ours to build our lives. The past has its lessons of experience to teach us what to do and what not to do in the present. The future is still in the womb of Time, and there is no authority that can tell us what will be the result in the future. Here lies the field of faith that the great Creator of all will be faithful to perform his part. Man can well afford to leave the responsibility for future provision to Him, where it belongs, rather than waste effort in drawing upon his own imagination to construct fanciful heavens or hells to suit his own peculiar ideas of what should be.

Man, like all mundane things, seeks rest—but his efforts to obtain it—to reach Nirvana—of themselves produce motion and unrest, just as water rushes down hill seeking an equilibrium, only to find under natural law there is no rest to be found. Man ever seeks authority where he can say that here is the final word upon which he can rely, only to find that there is no ultimate condition that his finite mind can grasp and he must continue to search for it, getting only glimpses of truth from time to time as he proceeds upon life's journey. In this struggle, if proceeding in the

right direction, he becomes stronger and better as experiences accumulate. God has blessed him in imposing upon him the ceaseless struggle for greater accomplishment. If he discharges faithfully the work that comes to him in the present, he need not concern himself about the future. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." "Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." Here lies the basis of true faith. Man in his supreme selfishness is too apt to waste valuable time in trying to assure himself of a desirable future existence to the neglect of the golden opportunities of the present to make himself worthy of the good fortunes he seeks.

COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

A review of religion with its comparative theology takes us back into a past that grows darker as we proceed. History, compared with the millions of years that elapsed before it came into existence is relatively young. At most it covers a few thousand years and the older it is the less reliable it appears to be. Notwithstanding this regrettable fact, examination of it may enable us to draw inferences and make deductions that may be helpful.

Religion appears to have engaged the attention of particularly gifted minds that have appeared from time to time. Their special mission or qualification appears to have been to carry the torch of truth to aid a benighted world in finding its way toward God. The work of these exceptional men deserves unprejudiced consideration by all who desire to arrive at a better knowledge of the way and the truth. Of the millions of years that preceded recorded history, the world knows nothing and even early history is an uncertain source of information since it is practically impossible in much of it to tell where mythical legend stops and history begins.

Examination of the records of some of the more prominent of the religious leaders of the past will demon-

strate that their teachings were not devoid of merit. Among the great teachers of theology, Zoroaster is perhaps the oldest. His theology was apparently new, succeeding the Iranian creed of folklore religion. He taught: The world came from Ormazd, the all father, who existed before the world was and whose guiding Spirit was the Holy Spirit. Ahriman, or the devil, was banished by the Good Spirit, and since then drags out an existence in hell. The good and bad spirits were the two great opposing forces in the world and Ormazd was placed above them both. The essences of Ormazd were truth and law, and the essence of Ahriman was falsehood. Zoroaster received his commission to purify religion from Ormazd himself. He raised it to a higher and purer sphere, leading to monotheism. The good must ultimately prevail. Ormazd was assisted by the Genii, which were personified ethical ideas. The good principle working in man inclining him to the good, truth, power and kingdom of Ormazd, reverence for the divine perfection, immortality, obedience and faithful hearing. The field of conflict between the forces of good and evil was the present world. In the centre of battle was man. The possession of his soul was the object of the war. Ormazd created man free in his determinations and in his actions, wherefore he was accessible to the influences of the evil powers. Man's life fell into two parts, before and after death. That which was assigned to him after death was the result and consequence of his life on earth. Strict reckoning was kept in heaven—a debit and credit account—which was settled when the soul reached the bridge between this and the future life. If the soul had a balance of good works he entered into heaven and the blessed life. If the account showed a balance of evil, he went to hell forever. If the account was balanced, showing neither good nor bad, he passed into an intermediary stage of existence and his final fate was decided in the final judgment.

Due to man's weakness and ignorance, Ormazd mercifully sent Zoroaster to teach him. Zoroaster believed that the fullness of time was near, that the kingdom of heaven

was at hand. He introduced dualism, angelology, the final judgment, hell and heaven and the ethical life, good thoughts, good words and good deeds. The theology of Mithraism, a later form of Zoroastrianism, when the conflict between it and Christianity arose in the Roman Empire, was so similar to that of Christianity that each side charged that the other was appropriating its doctrines. Historically, the side of Mithraism seems to have had the stronger claim of originality.

Mythical stories attach themselves to all religions. Though the teacher may start with high spiritualistic theory and doctrine, the imaginative raconteur and the overzealous priest will follow with additions and embellishments that take the subject into the realm of imagination and extravagant statement.

The tendency in religions of various kinds seems to be toward the establishment of authoritative bases for their cults. The more mysterious and supernatural these claims are made, the more these proponents seem to think that they furnish indisputable evidence of the truth of their theology. Man is expected, when reason can no longer accept the stories told, to enlist blind faith to support them. There is no apparent reason why man should not be as sensible in matters of religion as in any other of the many things that affect his well being. These transcendental claims embrace among many other things, the association of human beings with gods, angels, spirits, miraculous births, resurrection of the dead, driving devils out of men, commanding them to enter into swine, etc., walking upon the sea, and stilling the waves. As evidence of the authority and power of the proponent of religious doctrine, these miraculous things might satisfy those who believe them, but it does not appear that they have the remotest relation to the truth and efficacy of the doctrines taught. Though one might apparently possess supernatural powers it would not follow that his religious and ethical views were sound or beneficial. Doctrine should stand or fall by its own inherent qualities and character regardless of those of the

propounder. Attributing occult powers and marvelous performance to the teacher instead of affording proof of correctness of doctrine should invite more careful scrutiny of the grounds upon which it rests.

A suspicious circumstance about such things is that the most of them are related of the past and the more remote the past, the more remarkable the stories. If it be true that men walked and talked with gods and the angels in the olden time, it would seem that they have got farther away now and instead of evolving toward a higher and better life, they are actually receding from it. Man should either correct his theology or change his direction.

BUDDHISM

Gautama, about 500 B. C., introduced this religion in India. It was an advanced theology as compared with Brahmanism. Love was to be predominant in this system. Ethical conduct should embrace Right Views, Right Aspirations, Right Speech, Right Conduct, Right Mode of Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Rapture. Among things to be avoided were: Devotion to attractions that depended upon the passions, and asceticism which was painful, ignoble and unprofitable. He deprecated craving for gratification of the senses or the craving for a future life or for prosperity. Buddhism taught of love: "All the means that can be used as bases for doing right are not worth the sixteenth part of the emancipation of the heart through love. That takes all those up into itself, outshining them in radiance and glory. Just as whatsoever stars there be, their radiance avails not the sixteenth part of the radiance of the moon." * * * "Just so all the means that can be used as helps toward doing right avail not the sixteenth part of the emancipation of the heart through love."

The hindrances were: Delusions about the soul, doubt, dependence on good works, sensuality, hatred, ill feeling, love of life on earth, desire for life in heaven, pride, self-righteousness, ignorance, bodily passions, becoming, delusion, hankering after worldly advantages, corruption arising

out of the wish to injure, torpor of mind, fretfulness and worry and wavering of mind. These were to be avoided by the cultivation of their opposites. Cultivation of love without stint was advised. Nirvana, or the state of perfection, was the end to be reached. This ethical doctrine, lofty in ideal, gradually receded toward Brahmanism, and they both in turn decayed and Hinduism succeeded them. Hinduism embraces so many different religious beliefs that the term may be said to be generic and in no sense descriptive. Mythology, pantheism and revolting religious practices are prevalent. Reincarnation and the trinity are taught. Strange to relate, in this, the home of religious absurdities, there are found sects which engage in abstruse and abstract thinking on religious subjects.

MOHAMMEDANISM

Mohammed, who propagandized with the sword, claimed to have received his commission direct from God. His sacred book, the Koran, lay upon the throne of God in the seventh heaven from which it was brought down to the first heaven and thence in installments by the Angel Gabriel to Mohammed. Its most important doctrines were the unity of God, the resurrection of the body and the future life. It had a heaven and a hell and a devil. It converted its followers by force if necessary. It accepted the virgin birth of Jesus, his healing the sick and raising the dead, but declined the story of his crucifixion and resurrection. It is distinctly the religion militant that spread its propaganda far and wide by force of arms all in the names of Allah and Mohammed, His prophet. Its theology was borrowed from many sources and its ethics were arbitrary.

CONFUCIANISM

Coming down from some prehistoric time the theology prevailing in China was a monotheism with a divine Ruler of the Universe to whom wickedness was an abomination and virtuous conduct a source of joy. If a man did his duty

toward his neighbor he might pass his life on earth oblivious of the existence of the Universal God. There was no devil to fear or serve. Later the worship of the sun, moon, stars, etc., was introduced and still later Buddhism, Taoism and Mohammedanism made their appearances.

Confucius was born about 550 B. C. The nation at that time was in a state of decline and demoralization and his life was mainly devoted to the effort of bringing social life into accord with sound social principles, but it was only after his death that the results of his life-work became manifest. Apparently, he had no theological system, no appreciation of the relation between the seen and the unseen. "What one would not that others should do to him, he should not do to them," seems to have been the basis of his philosophy. His was a system of social ethics and in no sense a religion. He spent his life trying to bring governments and peoples into accord with ethical practices, but apparently failed to realize that the cause of sound ethics is to be found in sound religion. He addressed himself to the acts of men rather than to their motivation.

CHRISTIANITY

The name "Christian" was not contemporary with Jesus. It was first applied to his followers at Antioch presumably during Paul's ministry there. The term has become so general in its application that it has ceased to be definitive.

Jesus taught the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man. Love was the connection that bound the Creator of all to His creation. He was a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. Man was commanded to love God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." "Ye have heard that it hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy but I say unto

you: Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them for this is the law and the prophets." "The first of all the commandments is: 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 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 commandment greater than these." To the scribe assenting, Jesus said: "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God."

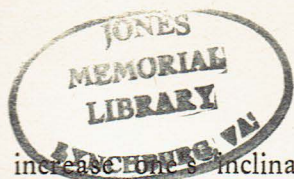
KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus taught that God the Father of all had a kingdom not situated in some unknown place in the skies, but existing in the hearts of men here on earth. Like the grain of mustard seed planted in the garden, the Kingdom of God implanted in the hearts of men would grow and its branches spread, or, like leaven, it would permeate all parts until the whole substance in which it was put would be leavened. "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the Kingdom of God is preached and every man presseth into it." The location of the Kingdom of God is not left uncertain. "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, lo here or lo there, for behold, the Kingdom of God is within you." The highest duty of man is to seek admission into this earthly Kingdom of God. "But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." It is only

under certain conditions that man can enter this earthly Kingdom of God. "Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." The Kingdom of God offers its rewards. "Verily I say unto you: There is no man that hath left home, or parents or brethren, or wife, or children for the Kingdom of God's sake who shall not receive manifold more in this present time and in the world to come life everlasting." While the Kingdom of God is open to all who qualify themselves to enter, it does not appear that those who are not qualified will be admitted: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God: For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." We are admonished that "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Finally we are told, "Verily, verily I say unto thee except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God. Verily, verily I say unto thee except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof but cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The demand is that this earthly Kingdom of God is to bear fruit as we are told: "Therefore I say unto you the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof." Repentance for past sins and a spiritual birth are necessary to qualify for the Kingdom of God on earth. "The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the gospel." He referred to his oral teaching since nothing had been written at that time. We are clearly

told that we must surrender wholly to this Spiritual life and that our aim should be to become perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. Jesus' gospel contemplated: 1st, Implicit faith in God; 2nd, the individual's repentance for his sins; 3rd, spiritual rebirth; 4th, ethical conduct; 5th, earnest effort to put the teachings into practical effect. The faith in God as the foundation, repentance, spiritual rebirth, ethical conduct, practical application of the gospel are the pillars of the structure. It does not appear that he paid much attention to theology but accepted that of his environment, which rested upon Judaical and Persian foundations. His mission seemed to have been to explore the heart of man, to go to the foundation of human nature and make plain the spiritual relation that existed between the Creator and His creatures. The simple doctrines he taught are sufficient in themselves to accomplish the salvation of the world. Therefore it would seem to be unnecessary to attach importance to the mythological incidents which are related of him. Neither does it seem advisable to accept "the plan of salvation" so elaborately worked out by theologians involving the fall of man, original sin, miracles, angels, devils, sacrificial atonement, the trinity and Jesus the God and intermediary between God and man.

The later Christian theology, Pauline rather than Christian, seems to stem from the Judaic and Persian theologies as influenced by Grecian philosophy and Roman law, but it is apparently undergoing simplification as research advances. It is most regrettable that the teachings of Jesus have not come down to us in more complete form. Imperfect reports written from 50 to 100 years after his death and no doubt derived from folklore and legends give little basis for belief in their authority, hence one must rely upon the inherent character of the relation itself to indicate how much of it may be true. It seems to have been the common fate of all religious teachings that they should be very inadequately reported. The interpolations, additions and corruptions that have crept into these documents have done



nothing to increase one's inclination to accept them as authoritative. The most of the important religions have their bibles or sacred books, more or less interspersed with fact and fable.

We can readily discard the mythologies in those of other sects as they no doubt will reject those found in ours. The study of Comparative Religion leads to the conclusion that no sect has a monopoly of truth and that theologies like other human creations contain an admixture of truth and error, some good and some bad, and it is left to the individual to separate, as best he can, the true from the false. To the finite mind nothing is infallible. At best, an approximation to truth is the most that can be hoped for. Intellectual and spiritual light come to man through various media of varying degrees of conductivity—just as sunlight reaches us as affected by the media through which it comes. To change the figure, As man ascends, his range of vision becomes larger and he can then visualize readily that which from a lower level was imperceptible. No absolute authority exists for man. He can only acquire more truth by struggling for it. No where on earth is to be found the last word—the final authority—in matters of faith and doctrine. There is no doubt that there exists absolute truth, but the finite mind cannot grasp it. It can only approximate it.

Having an unwavering faith in God, and a sincere love of neighbor, one might well afford to displace the theories of authoritative theology and adopt in their place the simple teachings of Jesus, much to the advantage of religion and mankind. The greatest of teachers gives a plan of life on earth so simple that all from the densest moron to the most gifted philosopher may follow it. Jesus sought to reduce religion to its simplest terms, viz.: love of God, love of fellowman, repentance for sins, and human effort to enter the Kingdom of God on earth. This gospel, with the fact of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, with the Holy Spirit moving in all, makes it clearly imperative that the individual shall do his part in the preparation to

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enter the Kingdom of God on earth. The purpose of Jesus was to eliminate form and fashion in religion and make its reaction a direct response of the human heart to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Jesus emphasized that it was that which came from within which established man's status whether clean or unclean. He placed God in the most exalted position as the benevolent Father surrounded by his children—who should revere and love Him. The ethical conduct which resulted from such background must of necessity be the highest. The religion he taught was the highest that the world had seen. It exalted God and dignified man, making him a responsible being instead of an automaton.

That Jesus was the greatest religious and moral teacher of all time is not to be gainsaid, but there is no satisfactory evidence that he was more than that. He had his limitations. He was not a theologian or a prophet, but he was beyond question the world-master of the soul and its relations to its maker, God. That he was a son of God is admitted, but only in the sense that all human beings are the children of God, the Almighty Father.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIES COMPARED

There are two distinct kinds of doctrine in Christianity. They do not coalesce. They start from distinctly different premises and reach opposite conclusions. Jesus was the proponent of the one and Paul of the other. The human being, under the doctrine of Jesus, has a single God who is perfect. He is the Father of all and kind and benevolent to all His children. He only demands that they love and trust Him and love their neighbors. The individual is left free to choose his own methods assuming of course the responsibility for his choice, but under the risk of being denied access to the Kingdom of God on earth if he fails to prepare himself for entry into that kingdom. This preparation consists of true repentance, the spiritual rebirth, humility as that of a little child, ethical conduct and an earnest effort to translate the Gospel into the actions that make up life. It is a

plan under which God provides the theatre and the stage equipment and each individual plays his part. He is given every incentive to do his best since he is to enjoy the results of his labors. The measure of man's success shall be the results that follow his efforts. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Under this method, it is a reasonable assumption that man's highest service to God must find its expression in serving his fellow beings. The innate Spirit of God points the way and man must exercise his powers of mind and soul to follow the lead given. To those who neglect their opportunities, there do not seem to be any benefits promised either here or hereafter. "Every tree that bringth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." Jesus emphasizes the gospel of work—asserting that every man shall be rewarded according to his works.

PAULINISM

Paul subscribed to the doctrine of the fall of man by which sin and death came to all—and from these, deliverance could only come by divine interposition through the grace of God. This grace must come through Christ who alone could satisfy by his death the demands of the law. To complete the process of redeeming man from his sins, Christ must be raised from the dead. Paul made the personal Christ, the crucified and resurrected Lord, the center of his system. He deified Christ and made man's salvation dependent upon faith in him. This act of faith resulted in mutual interpenetration of each into the other so that the believer was in Christ and Christ was in him. Paul held that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

Paul's doctrine of propitiation or atonement seems to

prove too much. Who was to be propitiated? Manifestly God who must send His son down to suffer an ignominious death with criminals upon the cross to appease his anger against mankind for the sin of eating forbidden fruit millions of years ago!

If the story of the fall is to be believed, one might well prefer to have been Adam after rather than Adam before the fall. Henry Ward Beecher, I think, suggested that if he fell at all, he fell upward. Paul's doctrine of election may well comport with the tribal god of Jewish theology who would slay all the first-born babies of Egypt or who would give the Israelites favor in the sight of the Egyptians in order that they might borrow their jewels of silver and gold and raiment and spoil the Egyptians, but it does not agree with the conception of a Universal, Spiritual God, whose fatherly love and care extended uniformly to all His children.

Both Jesus and Paul founded their doctrines upon the existence of an all powerful God, but their conceptions of the nature and character of their respective Gods are not the same. The God of Jesus is one thing and the God of Paul is another and a different thing.

THE GOD OF JESUS

The following quotations will indicate Jesus' conception of God: "Men should love their enemies that they may be the children of the Father in heaven who makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and unjust;" "there is none good but one, that is God;" "be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;" "with God all things are possible;" "but love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend hoping for nothing again and your reward shall be great and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil;" "be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful;" "are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?;" "but

even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: Ye are of more value than many sparrows;" "I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth;" "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee;" "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."

THE GOD OF PAUL

The following quotations will indicate Paul's conceptions: "Now we know that what things so ever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus;" "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law;" "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit;" (God) "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before

the world began but is now made manifest by the appearing of our savior Jesus Christ who hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel;" "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life;" "For by grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves: It is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast;" "For when we were yet without strength in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some one would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood we shall be saved from wrath through him."

The basis of Paul's doctrine is the Judaical law with its sacrificial doctrine of atonement. His conception of God is a projection of the tribal God of the Jews who demanded sweet smelling sacrifices from men as atonement for their sins and these sins were breaches of Jewish law. By tortuous metaphysical reasoning he seeks, pharisaically, to uphold sacrificial law and therefore must provide a sacrifice that will propitiate God and save man by grace not by right. The first objection is that it reflects on God as being in the wrong attitude to His children. It fails to realize that God is perfect, and therefore His attitude toward mankind, His children, has always been right. He therefore needed nothing to change, by propitiation or otherwise, His position or relation to men. The change needed was in man not in God.

If, as Paul states, God's purpose and grace were given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, it was a predestined plan arranged before even Adam had eaten the fruit and brought sin and death down upon all. How then could Adam's act involve any sin when he was only carrying out a plan that God Himself had made before the creation of the world? The answer seems to be that Paul mistook the tribal laws of the Jews for the laws of God and there-

fore mistakenly assumed that in order to satisfy God an innocent person must be crucified so that the blood of the innocent sufferer would suffice to wash away the sins of mankind. It seems more consistent to believe that the death of Jesus came from the wicked and depraved men who slew him because he taught subversive doctrines that ran counter to those they advanced.

Jesus no doubt died for sinners, suffering vicariously just as every advanced teacher of purer doctrine has suffered, but there does not seem to be any reason to believe that the shedding of his blood has ever washed away any sins except in the metaphorical sense indicated above.

It is not surprising that the Apostle Peter says of Paul that in all his epistles are somethings hard to understand.

The striking difference between the positions of the two are: Under Jesus, man must love God and neighbor, repent of his sins and believe the doctrines taught by Jesus and strive to qualify himself to enter into the Kingdom of God on earth. The assumption is that God is a loving and benevolent Father and the emphasis rests upon man to do his part. This done he could ask the rewards as a right. Under Paul man is dead in sin and trespasses; it is only after the sacrifice of Jesus that God through grace could pardon man's sins, provided he believes in Jesus Christ as a savior. Man in such case, at best is a suppliant for favors. The psychologies of the two cases are in striking contrast in that the way of Jesus would develop men while that of Paul would make slaves.

Paul's doctrine of vicarious atonement is contrary to the natural order under which man is endowed with certain faculties and is responsible for their development and use. He rises in the degree that he successfully overcomes obstacles and gains wisdom by observation and experience or falls to lower levels if he fails to do so. The fact that his growth, materially and spiritually, depends upon his efforts is a source of encouragement to do his best. This plan which is basic in every one, makes human progress

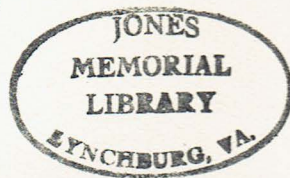
possible. If this be true regarding matters of human relation, it would be passingly strange if God had reversed the process and denied His children the benefit of this salutary principle in their spiritual affairs! If vicarious atonement, under which the blood of a god must be shed to appease the anger of another god, leaves man a helpless dependent, suppliant—a beggar without hope in the gifts with which God has endowed him—a beggar for favors, imploring that his sins may be washed away by the blood of a human god, who himself was innocent of wrong doing, what incentive is left to man to struggle onward and upward? Is the mere saving of a selfish soul regardless of human conduct and character building to be the compelling purpose to be achieved coupled as it is with the belief in an unreasonable theology that impugns the character of the merciful, beneficent God who loves and cherishes His children?

It should excite no surprise that Calvin, following the theology of Paul, should from a false premise argue with irrefutable logic to the shocking conclusion that babies dying in infancy would be consigned to an eternal hell! Logically, Paul's premise of the fall of man justifies Calvin's conclusion. I choose to follow Jesus rather than either of them.

Jesus would govern by the consent of the governed and admit all to a share in the benefits. His invitation is: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Paul's principle is totalitarian. The permission comes to the select or elect class and then only as an act of grace for which innocent human blood had been shed.

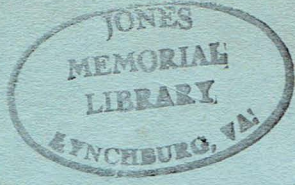
I am deeply impressed that these two principles, that of consent and that of force, are, today struggling as perhaps never before for the mastery and that advance in all lines of human development has reached a point where, without necessary readjustments, it can go no further. I am equally convinced that unless man adopts the doctrines of Jesus, the world's social system must break down. This fundamental change can only be made by bringing man's soul and all his

organizations and activities, political, economic, social and industrial, under the motivation of love. This done he can then develop the Kingdom of God on earth which a beneficent Father has placed within his bosom. To accomplish this great work man must first substitute honest, loving service for the game of grab that now prevails. Unless he makes this change in motivation, he not only cannot make further advance but will be forced to begin the retreat to the jungle from which he came. Jesus asked the question: "For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Man has gone far toward gaining the whole world, but it is to be feared that much of his success has been at the expense of his soul. He has traded gold for dross. The soul is demanding to be heard in defense of its right to exercise its proper influence in the conduct of human affairs. Human relations have become so intricate and complex that man must act in accord with fundamental morality or perish. The choice that evolution offers mankind today is: The adoption and practical application, by individuals, associations, states and nations of the world, of the doctrines of Jesus or be forced to recede into the hell of savagery and chaos.



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