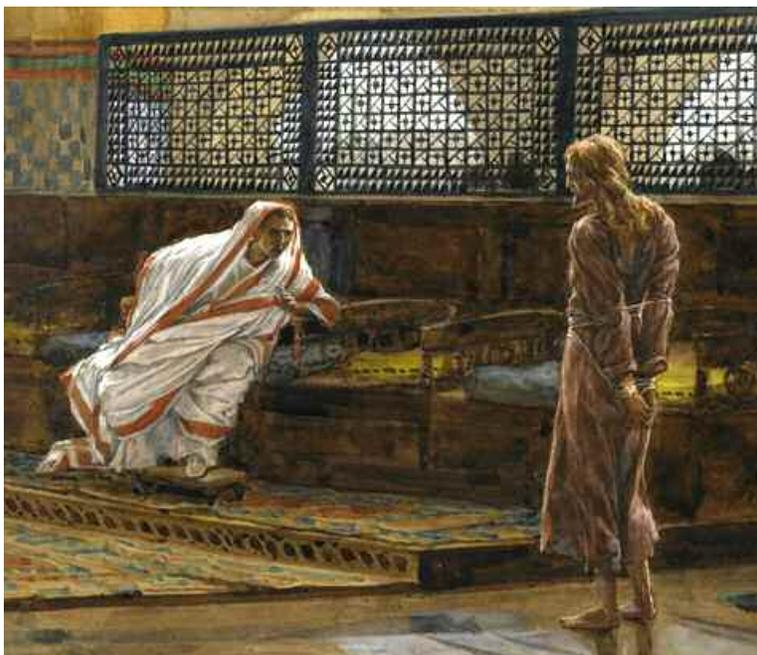


FROM MAX HEINDEL'S WRITINGS

The Keynote of Christianity



Watercolor, James J. Tissot (1836-1902), Brooklyn Museum

"What is Truth?"

The incarnate Word stands before Pilate as the Answer to his question.

WHEN CHRIST stood before Pilate the latter asked him a question which has been asked in all ages ever since man began to seek for knowledge upon the Cosmic problem, namely: What is truth? The bible answers the question by saying, "Thy Word is truth." When we turn to that wonderful mystic chapter in the Gospel of John and read that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; without it was not anything made that was made; in it was Life," we have wonderful food for meditation upon these synonymous meanings and the relationship of Truth, God and Life.

A great obstacle to the majority of truth seekers is that they aim to find a faith "once for all delivered," complete and unchanging. They fail to see that truth is the Word of God. The creative fiat spoken at the beginning of Evolution was the first syllable, and every word in that creative fiat which has since sounded for our upliftment is like the words of a sentence that slowly unfold the meaning of the speaker. It is still sounding the keynote of all advancement, and the whole Word will not have been spoken, the sentence completed and Truth revealed to us in its fullness, until our own career of spiritual unfoldment has given us the requisite spiritual power to understand Truth in the ultimate.

Thus we see that the great creative word of truth and life is reverberating in the universe today,

upholding and sustaining everything that is and revealing to us as great a measure of truth as we are now capable of comprehending. It is our duty to endeavor to understand this divine truth to the best of our ability so that we may live it and fit in with the divine plan. We are to keep our minds in a state of flexibility so that as greater and nobler visions of Truth unfold themselves before our spiritual eye, we may be prepared to take up the new, leaving the old behind, as the nautilus spoken of by Oliver Wendell Holmes, which builds its little chamber, then one a little larger, and so on, until finally it leaves the outgrown shell for a new evolution. So let it also be our endeavor to

*Build thee more stately mansions O my soul:
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life unresting sea.*

In pursuance of this divine policy of suiting the truth to our capacity for understanding, different religions were given to humanity at various times, each one fitted to that particular class of people who were to grow thereby. To the Chinese came Confucianism. To the Hindus was first taught the doctrine of trinity in unity: Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva—the creator, the preserver, and the destroyer—were aspects of the one all-inclusive Deity and analogous to our own Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then came Buddhism, which has been called a religion without a God because it emphasizes particularly the responsibility of man for his own conditions:

*Ask naught of the helpless Gods with prayer
or hymn,
Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruit
or cake.
Within yourselves deliverance must be sought.
Each man his prison makes.
Each has such powers as the loftiest ones.
Nay for with gods around, above, below,
And with all things, and whatsoever breathes,
Act maketh joy or woe.*

As Hinduism affirms the existence of divine power above man, so Buddhism affirms the divinity of man himself. We find also that Moses, the divine leader who guides a people toward the same attainment, similarly emphasizes this. In the so-called “Song of Moses” he calls their attention to how they have been led previously by the divine powers but from thenceforth they are given choice and prerogative that they may shape their own destiny. But he also tells them that they will be held responsible for the consequences of their acts under the laws given by their divine, but thenceforth invisible, ruler. Gradually other religions are evolved in Egypt, Persia, Greece and Rome. Also the Scandinavian countries in the north received their religious system, foreshadowing in a great measure the latest and the most sublime religion of all, namely the Western Religion—Christianity.

We have just been celebrating the close of the cosmic drama, which recurs annually—the commencement being the mystic birth at Christmas

and the mystic death at Easter its close. And just before the final act of crucifixion in the drama as portrayed in the Gospel, we find the Christ partaking of the last supper with His disciples. It is stated that then he took the bread and broke it and gave them to eat saying, “This is my body.” He also took the wine and they all drank of that mystic blood. Then came the injunction which we will particularly note, namely: “This do in remembrance of me, until I come.”

As a consequence of this injunction we find that through the centuries Christian communities every Sunday celebrate the Lord’s Death “till He comes.” They are performing the sacred mystic rite in remembrance of Him. Let us now suppose that a stranger unacquainted with the Christian religion and its customs came to our land and visited church after church, finding everywhere these devout communities gathered around the table in fond remembrance of their Lord and that this was explained to him. How would the actions of devotion and devout remembrance on Sunday compare with the actions of the same communities during the other six days of the week, when “every man’s hand seems to be against the hand of every other,” in direct contravention of the commandment given by that Lord to whom we seem to pay homage on Sunday?

He also said, and in that commandment He sounded the keynote of Christianity, “thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and thy whole mind, and thy neighbor as thyself.” It is easy to go to the Lord’s table on Sunday to eat and drink with Him, but alas, alas, how difficult to bear His cross on Monday, to deny ourselves that we may serve and help others, instead of so acting that we more than merit the accusation of the poet that “man’s inhumanity to man makes countless thousand mourn.”

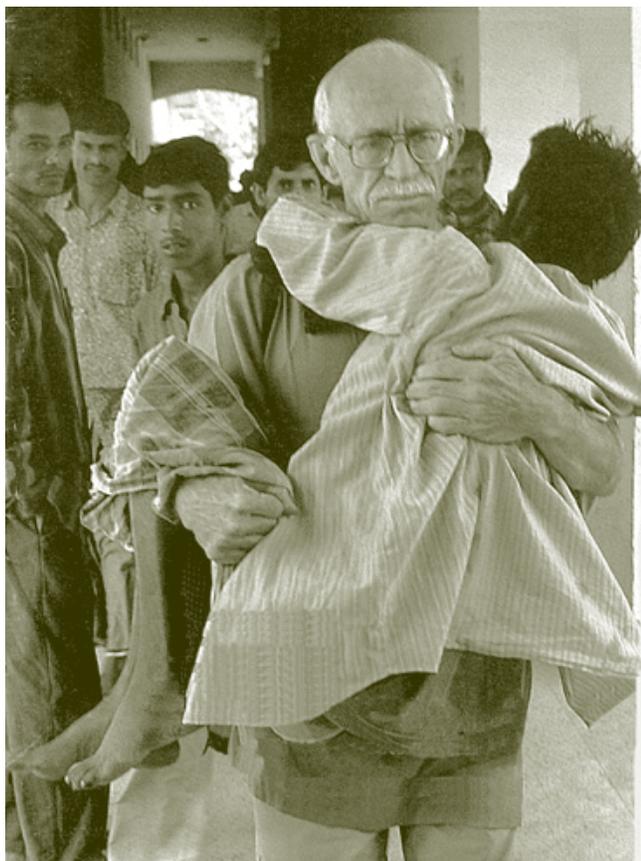
The question: What is love? seems difficult to solve. That wonderful thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians gives us an idea, but that is rather abstract. We need something more concrete that we may work upon it and bring it into our lives. Let us therefore take as an illustration the brotherly love in a family. There the children are the offspring of the same parents and thus in the actual

blood relationship of brothers and sisters. Within the family circle we may find some excellent material for guidance in the larger circle of human fellowship.

One of the most striking facts is that although sometimes brothers and sisters disagree and quarrel among themselves, love still remains and they will defend one of the family members with whom they are temporarily offended as readily as any of the rest of the family. When one is attacked it seems to act as a call to the rest to rally to the rescue, and they always respond in the normal family. If one of a family does a disgraceful act, his brothers and sisters do not go out and publish it, nor do they gloat over his misfortune, but they seek to cover up his misstep and to find excuses for him, for they feel a unity with him.

So also would we feel toward the larger family, if we were imbued with the Christian sense of love. We would seek to excuse the missteps of those we speak of as criminals, to help them, to reform rather than retaliate, and we would, should, and ought to feel that what we call their disgrace is really and truly partly ours as well. When one of our countrymen achieves a notable feat, we feel that we have the right to bask in his honors. We point with pride to all the notable sons of our nation, and in the name of consistency we ought also to feel the shame of those who have failed through conditions in our national family, for we are truly responsible for their downfall, perhaps even more than for the honors of those who achieved.

In the little family, when one of the members show talent, usually all unite to give him or her the opportunity and education that will develop them, for all are prompted by true brotherly love. We in the national family generally obstruct and smother the precocious ones under the heel of the economic necessity of earning a living. We leave them no leisure for the attainment. O that we might understand our national responsibility and seek out by means of commissions those of our little brothers and sisters who are talented in any direction, so that we might foster these talents to the eternal welfare of humanity as well as succor those who we now trample down as criminals.



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“Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”

“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”—Matt 12:50, Matt 25:40
Father Robert McCahill serves his sick poor Muslim brothers in Bangladesh with “disinterested love.”

But love does not consist in indiscriminate giving. It takes into consideration also the motive behind the gifts. Many people feed a tramp at their back door because it makes them uncomfortable to think that a fellow being is hungry. That is not love. Sometimes indeed it may be a greater love to refuse a professional beggar food, even though we suffer at the thought of his present predicament—if we refuse for the purpose of forcing him to seek work and become a useful member of society. Indulgence of bad habits in others without discrimination may indeed lead a brother or sister to the downward path and it may therefore be necessary, even if distasteful, and unpleasant, to restrain such ones from following foolish desires. The point is that whatever our actions may seem from a superficial standpoint, they should be dictated by the keynote of Christianity—Love. For the lack of

this, the Church is languishing, the light upon the altar is almost gone out. Many have left to seek the light elsewhere.

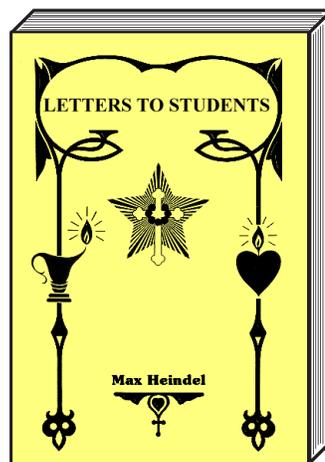
And therein lies another grave mistake: such conduct is analogous to that of the crew on a sinking ship which takes to the boats rather than standing by the pumps as long as possible to save the ship. It is alright to seek the light, but there should be the purpose to use it properly. Did you ever stand close to a railroad track on a dark night and see a train approaching? Did you notice how the gleaming headlight sends its powerful rays ahead upon the track for a great distance? How, when it approached you these rays were blinding to your eyes? How it rushed past and then in a moment you were in utter darkness? The light that shone so bright in front gave not the slightest ray to the rear and thus the darkness seemed all the more Egyptian.

There are many people who seek the mystic light and acquire a great deal of illumination, but like the locomotive engine spoken of, they focus and concentrate it upon the track which they themselves are to pursue. They take every possible care to let no ray stray from that path so that every vestige of light may be used to brighten their own way. They work only to one single purpose; namely, to attain spiritual powers for themselves. So concentrated are they upon that object that they never even suspect the Egyptian darkness that envelops all the rest of the world. But Christ commanded us to let our light shine, to place it as a city upon a hill which no one could fail to see; never to hide it under a bushel, but always to let it illuminate our surroundings as far as its rays will reach.

Only insofar as we follow that injunction are we justified in seeking the mystic light. We must never keep one single ray for our own particular use but we should strive day by day to make ourselves so pure that there may be no obstruction to the divine light within, that it may flow through us in its fullness, to all of the human family who are suffering for Light and Love. Many Indeed are called, and few are chosen. Let us take this to heart and be so zealous for Christ in all our dealings and doings, so that indeed we may be chosen; chosen to do His work of Love. □

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