



THE
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE NECESSITY OF FAITH
IN CHRIST FOR SALVATION, IN THE
LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE.

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I. STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION.

WHAT does the Bible teach about the turning-point of salvation on the human side? On the divine side the decisive point is, doubtless, regeneration. On the part of God nothing preceding regeneration is decisive of salvation, though there may be much that leads to it; and nothing subsequent to regeneration defeats it, though there may be much that delays it. But what is the turning-point or decisive act on man's side? By what spiritual act or experience does the soul pass across the line from sin and condemnation to pardon and life? What is the destiny step? not what precedes it or follows it, but what is the essential step itself?

It is held by some that no sinful soul can be ripe for the judgment till it has rejected the supreme appeal of the Divine love; and it is assumed that this supreme appeal can come only in connection with the presentation of the historical Christ. Hence, it is believed that, as multitudes do not have an oppor-

tunity to know the historical Christ in this life, they will have it in the life to come. It is not claimed that this is the explicit teaching of Scripture, but it is regarded as following naturally from its general spirit and principles.

This reasoning assumes that the supreme appeal is in connection with the supreme object. If by supreme appeal is meant not an appeal in the highest sphere, but an appeal that makes the deepest and strongest impression on the soul just as it is in its sinful state, this assumption is not justified by the facts. An appeal on a lower basis, coming down to the ordinary experience and level of life, and throwing upon that the illumination of the Divine Spirit and the light of conscience and the natural reason, often makes a much deeper practical impression than the outward presentation of the Son of God. This is too remote from the ordinary currents of thought and motive. When presented in this way, Christ is "a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isa. liii. 2, *Rev.*). It is generally only when the soul has been instructed, made conscious of its deep spiritual needs and the meaning of its woes, and helped out of its ordinary moods, that the story of Christ becomes influential. As men ordinarily are, in Christian lands, and even in our Christian churches and homes, the supreme spiritual appeal—*i. e.*, the appeal that makes the deepest impression and is best calculated to lead to God and be decisive of destiny—is, so far as we can see, some practical question far away from the conscious presence of Christ. It is this prior vital decision that determines what reception Christ himself will have when he is subsequently consciously brought before the soul. Now, not to recognize that the supreme appeal is the one that comes with supreme power, rather than the one that presents the supreme object, and that this supreme power is, in connection with an appeal that comes down to the soul, most effectively in the actual stress and urgencies of its daily life, leads to the modern impeachment of the earthly probation, and the attempt to supplement it by an after-thought—an opportunity in the world to come.

Now, do the Scriptures teach that souls pass from the unsaved to the saved state only on the condition of an intelligent recognition and acceptance of Christ at the time? Is the decisive act, according to them, put forth, not only occasionally but uniformly, on a basis of a personal knowledge of the Saviour, and one of faith in him? In other words, is faith in Christ the one scriptural condition of salvation, and is there no other sufficient one? If the Bible teaches that souls quite often, even in the New Testament times, entered the saved state without any just or intelligent appreciation of the Saviour; and if, moreover, the sacred writers by the number and quality of their exhortations show that other spiritual conditions were quite as prominent before their minds as this one as the point and the means of transition; if, for example, they make a certain docile and receptive spirit, looking Above for saving help and welcoming it when it comes, or turning sorrowfully away from sin and imploring divine compassion; if they make sometimes this personal state of spiritual seeking and longing sufficient of itself to secure salvation, without requiring any intelligent knowledge of the scheme and method of salvation or of the Divine Person who saves and is the central figure of the gospel; if this is so, it goes far to show that it is not necessary, in order to vindicate the character of God and have a satisfactory theodicy, that men in our times and in pagan lands should have Christ presented intelligently to them in his historical story and divine personality, before they can be fully tested on the subject of salvation. If the settlement of the question in biblical times turned on one's relation to spiritual principles—on his own spiritual choices and sympathies, and not on his intellectual or even spiritual appreciation of a Person, however exalted or blessed—even though the Son of God himself, the Saviour of the world—then others in later times who have never heard of Christ may have a full and complete opportunity in this life, and not need an opportunity in the world to come. If the Bible teaches that, short of the knowledge of the fundamental facts of the gospel, there are many other entrances into the kingdom of God, on the human side—though only one, by the work and grace of Christ and re-

generation by the Spirit, on the divine side, where it is a "strait and narrow way"—then we may safely infer that this kingdom may practically come close to all human hearts with its gracious calls and helps, even if they have not the full true gospel light.

This is an interesting inquiry. I have gone through the New Testament with this subject in mind, and have thrown the passages that seemed to me to be instructive on this point into groups. I have not intended to collate all ; but have tried to bring together some of all *kinds* so as to have the groups represent fairly the teachings of the New Testament. Of course it is admitted by all that the Old Testament furnishes us no reason to believe that most of those who were saved before the coming of Christ were brought into intelligent relations to the Son of God. They were saved short of a knowledge of the future historical story and the full gracious revelation. It concerns us, therefore, to inquire only whether something of the same spiritual conditions and the same breadth and facility of salvation on the human side continues into the New Testament times ; or whether there was then an abrupt transition, and ever after the soul must be brought face to face with the historical Christ before it could pass the critical line and settle the question of destiny.

The passages are grouped around the following points. In giving them I shall first quote one or more of the characteristic ones, and then refer to others corroborating the point. The quotations are from the *Revision*.

II. COLLATION AND DISCUSSION OF SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES.

1. *The fact that Salvation is by Christ, and without him it is impossible.*

The following are characteristic passages : "Thou shalt call his name Jesus ; for it is he that shall *save* his people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21). "Him did God exalt with his right hand to be a Prince and a *Saviour*, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins" (Acts v. 31). "And in *none other* is

there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). Similar also, in their bearing on this point, are Luke ii. 11; Luke xxiv. 47; John iv. 42; Rom. vii. 25; viii. 1; 2 Pet. i. 1; iii. 2; Matt. ix. 2, 6; xi. 28-30; 1 Cor. iii. 11; Eph. ii. 18, and 1 John iv. 14.

2. *Passages that show what Christ has done for all.*

Representative of this class are these: "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the *whole world*" (1 John ii. 1, 2). "There was the true light, even the light which lighteth *every* man, coming into the world" (John i. 9). This point is enforced by many other passages; as, Rom. v. 18; John xii. 32; Heb. ii. 9; John iii. 17.

From the focused light of this group we see that the world is altogether a different world from what it would have been were it not for the presence of Christ in it, and his relation to it as having redeemed it, drawing it, penetrating it, subduing it. He is in it now, every part of it, every individual of it—"the light of the world"—working, with the infinite patience of love, to carry on his great redemption and bring in the time when "he shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied."

3. *Blessings coming often unconsciously from Christ closely connected with the Initial Act, but not to be confounded with it.*

These are examples: (1) *Faith*: "Looking unto Jesus the *author and perfecter* of our *faith*" (Heb. xii. 2). If Christ is the *author* of faith, he must take the first steps before the individual knows them. The faith enters the soul without its consciousness of the Divine Source.

(2) *Spiritual Nourishment*: "Except ye *eat the flesh* of the Son of man and *drink his blood*, ye have not life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life: and I will raise him up at the last day, for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" (John vi. 53-55). This mysterious appropriation of spiritual nourishment from the sacrifice of the Son of man, relates obviously rather to the subse-

quent experience than the initial act. It is a part of the divine process of spiritual growths and outfit for the resurrection. And it often goes on without the soul's consciousness of the divine factors entering into it.

(3) *Divine Entreaty*: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. iii. 20). This gracious solicitation of the sinner is one of the experiences which he is very slow to trace to its source.

(4) *Mutual Indwelling*: "Abide in me, and I in you" (John xv. 4). This clearly is not the initial act. It is a high attainment of discipleship.

4. *The new movement which Christ started was to introduce the kingdom of Heaven.*

This was his object—a new spiritual order of things, beginning with individual hearts, running through them, bringing them into personal sympathy with the spirit of heaven, and at last working out, through this change of individuals, into a harmonious and coöperative social unity—a veritable kingdom of heaven on earth. Such words as these show the purpose: "In those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, saying, Repent ye; for the *kingdom of heaven* is at hand" (Matt. iii. 1, 2). "And as ye go [Christ's instructions to the Apostles], preach, saying, The *kingdom of heaven* is at hand" (Matt. x. 7). The significant word heralding the new movement was a *kingdom*, not a King: and the conditions requisite for entering it not an oath of allegiance to the Lord, but sympathy with the holy nature of the kingdom and disposition to conform to it (see Matt. iv. 17).

5. *The Gospel of Christ as unfolded by him, the Gospel of a kingdom.*

This is the character of the movement actually going on as it is described. "And Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the *kingdom*" (Matt. iv. 23; see also ix. 35). "When any one heareth the word of the *kingdom*, and understandeth it not, then cometh the evil one, and snatcheth away that which hath been sown in his

heart" (Matt. xiii. 19). "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the *kingdom* of heaven" (ver. 11). It is this new movement that Christ is speaking of when he says, "The *kingdom* of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field" (ver. 24); "Like unto a grain of mustard seed" (ver. 31); "Like unto leaven" (ver. 33); "Like unto a treasure hidden in the field" (ver. 44); "Like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls" (ver. 45); "Like unto a net that is cast into the sea" (ver. 47); "Likened unto a certain king that would 'make a reckoning with his servants" (xviii. 23); "Like unto a man that is a householder" (xx. 1); "Is likened unto a certain king, who made a marriage feast for his son" (xxii. 2); And "is likened unto ten virgins" (xxv. 1).

This kingdom is very frequently called the kingdom of *God*: as in Mark i. 15; iv. 11, 26; ix. 1; Luke iv. 43; viii. 1; ix. 27, and many other places.

Moreover, it is this conception of the gospel as the gospel of a *kingdom*, that Christ had in mind as that which was to be proclaimed down to the end of time, saying, "This gospel of the *kingdom* shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations: and then shall the end come" (Matt. xxiv. 14). And receiving this kingdom was equivalent to entering it: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein" (Mark x. 15). Moreover, it would seem that the great basal object which Christ had in view in the new order was to secure the moral and spiritual qualifications necessary for it. His desire was to change the character and lives of men, and so bring them into harmony with it. The spirit of the kingdom—that is what he sought. In the Sermon on the Mount—containing the foundation principles of his system—there is hardly anything laid down as necessary to give one a standing before God that is not simply ethical or spiritual—a right spirit. The one thing for the soul to seek, he says, is first, "the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. vi. 33): and the great and all-comprehensive thing to pray for, for the world, is: "Thy *kingdom* come, Thy

will be done, as in heaven, so on earth" (ver. 10). Everything revolves around the spiritual order, the spiritual movement, the spiritual kingdom. It is remarkable, also, that Christ, in his intercourse with the disciples, made himself, his Personality, his Nature, Divinity, so generally subordinate to that. And the apostle Paul, in telling Timothy the substance of the message he was to preach, gave this spiritual object: "The end of the charge is *love* out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned." (1 Tim. i. 5.)

6. *Other things than faith in Christ sufficient for Salvation.*

Among the many doors on the human side into the kingdom are the following:

(1) *Feeling after the Lord*: "That they should seek God, if haply they might *feel after* him, and find him, though he is not far from each one of us." (Acts xvii. 27.)

(2) *Calling on the name of the Lord*: "And it shall be, that whosoever shall *call* on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Acts ii. 21; Rom. x. 13.)

(3) *Fearing God and working righteousness*: "God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that *feareth him and worketh righteousness* is acceptable to him." (Acts x: 35.)

(4) *Self-surrender*: "He that *loveth his life* loseth it; and he that *hateth his life* in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." (John xii. 25.)

(5) *Repentance*: "*Repent ye* therefore, and *turn again*, that your sins may be blotted out." (Acts iii. 19; see also xi. 18; xvii. 30; 2. Cor. vii. 10; and the case of the Prodigal Son.)

(6) *Repentance and Baptism*: "*Repent ye*, and be *baptized* every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins." (Acts ii. 38.)

(7) *Receiving the kingdom*: "Whosoever shall not *receive the kingdom* of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein." (Mark x. 15; and Luke xviii. 17.)

(8) *Doing the will of God or the Father*: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth the will* of my Father which is in

heaven." (Matt. vii. 21; see also xii. 50; Mark iii. 35; Luke viii. 21.)

(9) *Doing good*: "For the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have *done good*, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." (John v. 28, 29; see also Rom. ii. 10.)

(10) *Ministering to the suffering Christ*: Christ identifies himself with the suffering ones whom he has redeemed; and helping them, he teaches, may be done with such a spirit that he accepts it as a service done to himself, even when they do not know it; and he regards them, on that account, as showing preparation for heaven. Thus, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, we read that among those who will be on the right hand at the judgment, are those who have thus unknowingly ministered to him when hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, and in prison; and they will "go away into eternal life."

(11) *The searching activity of a good conscience, symbolized, among other meanings of the rite, by Baptism*: "Water; which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even *baptism*, not the putting away the filth of the flesh"—not the outward rite—"but"—the spiritual fact symbolized—"the *interrogation of a good conscience toward God* through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. iii. 21.)

(12) *The new birth*: "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 anew*." (John iii. 6, 7; see also Gal. vii. 15; Titus iii. 5.)

7. *Faith in God, or Faith without specifying the Divine object, sufficient.*

There are many passages indicating that an acceptable condition of salvation is the principle of faith. No doubt this faith, to have the right quality, must be directed to a divine object. It is not a pure ethical or spiritual state with no off-look to a higher Power. That would not be faith. Faith is not an introverted look, but an out-look—and an out-look to the Supreme One. But there are many scriptural proofs that God often

meets and honors a faith that is uninstructed, groping and defective, as to the knowledge of the sublime Object, crowning it with salvation. It is its internal spiritual quality, rather than its intellectual and doctrinal completeness, that gives it acceptance. Thus, Christ says: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that *believeth* hath everlasting life." (John vi. 47.) Observe, Christ does not say that his faith *is* everlasting life, but that he *hath* it. The everlasting life is the gift of God, and is wrought in the heart by the Divine Spirit. But salvation is so fully provided, the divine preparations and forces for its introduction are so abundant and pressing, that no interval of time exists between the needed faith and the resulting spiritual life; so that it is true that he that hath faith hath life. To the same effect are the following: Rom. i. 16, 17; iii. 30; v. 1; x. 4; Eph. ii. 8; Heb. xi. 6. The faith of Abraham, which was a faith unto righteousness, was faith in God only; and the Apostle argues that "they who are of *faith*"—faith simply, the object not specified—"the same are the sons of God," and "are blessed with faithful Abraham." (Gal. iii. 6, 7, 9; see also Rom. iv. 3, 5, 11.)

8. *Uninstructed or weak faith in Christ resulting in Salvation.*

It is probable that few persons whom Christ made whole on the condition of faith had a correct or definite estimate of him. Yet, on the existence of a certain docility and receptiveness, making them willing and responsive, he bestowed the desired blessing. In a similar way, doubtless, many became disciples, not on the accuracy and fulness of their knowledge of him, but on the possession of this spiritual docility, carrying their wills and making them receptive and obedient. In fact, we have an instance in which a person had his sins forgiven whose faith was so small a factor in the case, though [beyond question he must have had some, that it is not even mentioned, only the faith of his friends being recorded. It is the case of the man borne by four, and on account of the press let down from a roof into the presence of the Lord: "And Jesus seeing *their* faith saith to the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins are forgiven." (Mark ii. 5.) The narrative concerning the man born blind, whose eyes

Christ opened on the Sabbath, shows that he became a disciple before he knew that Christ was the Son of God. For it was after he had avowed his discipleship that Christ met him and instructed him, saying, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? And he answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and he it is that speaketh unto thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." (John ix. 35-39, compared with v 27.) The woman—a "sinner"—who went into the house of Simon, where Christ sat at meat, taking an alabaster-cruce of ointment, and washed Christ's feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head and anointed them with ointment, cannot be supposed to have a very intelligent faith; and yet Christ says of her unto Simon: "Her sins which are many are forgiven," and he added unto the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace" (Luke vii. 35-50).

So it appears that even the faith in Christ, which led clearly out into salvation, was often, at the decisive point, in its formal contents, of a very low order. The Lord was so anxious to save, to enter by his Spirit into the hearts of men and bring them into the kingdom, that he seems to have been strangely indifferent about the accuracy of the formal part of their belief before the initial radical grace was granted them.

9. *Faith in Christ required.*

There are many passages which, alone, would indicate that this definite personal faith in the Saviour is essential. Clearly, intelligent faith in Christ brings the believer into direct connection with the central divine source and aids of salvation, and into the most blessed relations and fellowships, taking him at once into the holy of holies of the gospel. Moreover, for those who were instructed and brought into the known presence of Christ as "the way, the truth and the life," faith in him was, beyond question, the only way to salvation. The sinner in that supreme presence, with the light of Christ shining on him, could not be receptive of divine aid, unless he was willing to take it in the form in which it came to him.

Christ, with all his readiness to improve the opportunities furnished him by weaker and lower faiths, yet magnifies and emphasizes the one ideal way, in which the sinner comes directly to him. The apostles, also, frequently do the same. This turning to Christ trustingly and believingly, as the central and direct way, is made prominent in the Gospels. Thus Christ says : "Come unto *me*, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and *I* will give you rest." (Matt. xi. 28.) "Except ye *believe that I am he*, ye shall die in your sins." (John viii. 24; see, also, John vi. 53. John iii. 14, 18, and iii. 36 are of uncertain import, the language being ambiguous; and these passages cannot, therefore, be relied on to prove this point.) The apostle Paul, also, exalts faith in Christ as the one choice condition. He speaks of God as "just and the justifier of him that hath *faith in Jesus*." (Rom. iii. 26. See, also, x. 9; and Gal. ii. 16; iii. 26; Acts xvi. 31; and 2 Tim. iii. 15).

The apostle Peter, also, recognizes the same normal condition : "To him bear all the prophets witness that through his name every one that *believeth on him* shall receive remission of sins. (Acts x. 43). But this one central, royal way, for those to whom the Lord himself had come and to whom the apostles preached, and who had the full blaze of the gospel shining on them, does not close up the other ways into the kingdom which, the sacred writers have indicated, exist from those situated differently.

10. *Confessing and following Christ sometimes spoken of as sufficient without mentioning Faith.*

That all who have been brought into conscious relations to Christ as their Saviour should confess him and follow him grows out of the nature of the spiritual life; and the fact that all who are about to enter the new kingdom by the door of faith in Christ, should do it with the understanding that confession and following are to be the consequence was so prominent in the divine teachings that sometimes the involved faith is not mentioned, but only the confessing and the following; and sometimes only one of the two is specified. Thus Christ says : "Every one, therefore, who shall *confess* me before men, him

will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. x. 32 ; see, also, 1 John iv. 15.) "If we *confess our sins*, he is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us all from unrighteousness." (John i. 9.) Again: "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and *come after* me, cannot be my disciple." (Luke xiv. 27 ; see, also, John viii. 12, and xii. 26.) The vital connection of confession and faith, in the concrete whole of salvation, is brought out by the apostle Paul: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt *believe* in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Rom. x. 9.)

II. *The spiritual condition or state making salvation impossible.*

Light may be thrown on the subject before us by considering what the Scriptures teach about the specific things in men which prevent the saving grace of God.

Of course, the general thing is the love of sin—a will that chooses sin. But as there is a specific disposition that welcomes the spirit and the grace of God, so there is frequent mention of a specific disposition which excludes it and renders salvation impossible. Now it is quite remarkable that certain passages which, when describing the royal way of salvation, give prominence to faith in Christ, when going on to mention what prevents salvation, do not specify the want of faith in Christ, but either, in one class of cases, a positive *rejection* of Christ, or, in another class, a mere *want of faith*. It is either the denial of the Saviour or the absence of the general receptive believing disposition. That which leads to life in the most opulent way, taking one at once to the vitals of the gospel, is one thing ; that which makes salvation impossible, the sacred writers lead us to infer, is a violent repulse of this way, or something in the general disposition of the heart, its low spiritual seekings, the sinful determination of the will, that precludes the inflow of divine grace—a spiritual state that does not imply the presence of the knowledge of Christ. In the case of persons of this class, the decision of the question of salvation is actually going on without having Christ present as the object of thought ; in fact, where he may be unknown, as well

as among those who are acting on a basis of full knowledge. We cannot fail to note that in the Scriptural account there is very different color on the statement of the elements of doctrinal knowledge and the spiritual condition needed to bring one in the rich way into salvation, from the color resting on the representation of what absolutely excludes from it. Thus Christ says: "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life." (John iii. 36). But in stating who has not that life, he does not say, *he that believeth not the Son*; but "he that *disbelieveth the Son.*" The word is *ἀρεθῶν*; and that does not mean, we submit, "believeth not," as in the Received Version, nor "obeyeth not," as in the Revision, but rather, "disbelieveth," positive rejection. In Mark xvi. 16, if this clouded passage may be quoted, Christ states the way of salvation for those hearing the gospel in this way: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" but when he comes to the other side, it is "he that *disbelieveth*"—here, however is another word *ἀπισθῶς*—"shall be condemned." The omission of baptism is not fatal. Moreover, in the parable of the rich man, the one fatal omission, which our Lord refers to, is not specified as unbelief, but self-seeking and barrenness on the Godward side of the character and life. "So is every man that layeth up treasure for *himself*, and is *not rich towards God* (Luke xii. 21). In the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, that which our Lord mentions as excluding from salvation is not the want of faith, but the want of a Christ-like benevolence, of a spirit of practical love, shown in not ministering to the hidden suffering Christ in the person of his suffering children. The apostle Paul, who so preëminently proclaims the doctrine of salvation through faith in Christ, yet for those outside of the knowledge of Christ states the broader principle. God "will render to every man according to his works; to them that by patience *in well-doing seek for glory and honour and incorruption,*"—moral and spiritual qualifications,— "eternal life; but unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness,"—moral and spiritual disqualifications,— "shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew

first and also of the Greek" (Rom. ii. 6-9). And his one damaging indictment against all sinners is that they "hold down the truth in unrighteousness," when God has manifested it unto them (Rom. i. 18, 19).

From this rapid survey we see there are practically many entrances into the kingdom of God besides faith in Christ. One sacred writer gives prominence to one thing as the initial experience, another to another; and the same writer sometimes specifies one entrance, and at another time another. Once in the new life, however, the individual, sooner or later, compasses the whole round of devout experiences. In fact, the new life has doubtless in itself at first the germs of the whole round of graces and virtues, which only wait their opportunity for development. And the Saviour's promise is: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come he shall guide you into all the truth".

On the divine side, the Scriptures teach us the gospel is *Christo-centric*. Christ is the central figure in the whole scheme of redemption, in all its supernatural agencies and forces. He is "the way, the truth, the life;" and he is "head over all things to the church." Not only this, but he is immanent in the world; "*the light of the world*;" "lighting every man coming into the world;" "drawing all men unto him." "He was *in* the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (John i. 10). This immanence antedated his coming in the flesh. "He came unto his own"—*τὰ ἴδια*, the neuter plural, the abstract for *all persons belonging to him*; that is, for *all men*—"and they that were his own"—his professed people,—*οἱ ἴδιοι*—"received him not" (ver. 11). The apostle Paul says the Jews in the wilderness "drank of a spiritual rock; and the rock was Christ" (1 Cor. x. 4). The world is thus a Christ-invested world, not only redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, but dynamically penetrated and solicited by his gracious presence. It is remarkable that the term by which Christ refers to the more signal manifestation of himself preceding the closing up of history denotes a *presence* rather than a *coming*. It is *παρουσία* (see Matt. xxiv. 3, and elsewhere).

It is a *presence*, that then will be apparent and acknowledged, come out from its previous lurkings. It is also a *coming* to human sight, but a coming from a previous hidden presence, and in the line of the gracious and glorious possibilities of the present unrecognized sway. The *παρουσία* is always a *presence*, but a presence ever going on towards the higher and fuller coming; and it is always a *coming*, but a coming ever revealing to men more and more fully what is already working in the world.

Thus every soul is reached and beset by the all-brooding, all-penetrating Presence. The world is alive on the divine side with the activities and solicitations of a prepared and offered salvation. The immanent Christ, by his Spirit and his providence, is everywhere and always plying men and testing them according to the methods of his righteousness and love—each soul in his own wise way.

On the human side, however, the gospel with reference to the conditions of salvation is ^{anthropo-}~~anthro-~~centric. While, on the divine side, Christ is the only Saviour, and there is no other way of salvation but by him, there are many different human ways of entering by him. To furnish this entrance the gospel revolves around *man*. It comes down to him with its divine forces and seekings, investing his personality just as it is in ignorance and guilt, in its circumstances of degradation and wretchedness. He is not required to rise up out of his lot, like an eagle looking with unscaled eye on the sun, or like an angel seeing the unveiled Christ, in order to find his way into new life. Where he is, heaven is arched around him: and at the head of the brooding influence is the Divine Lord himself, saying: "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10). I do not mean that every soul has the same or the equivalent amount of gracious help and opportunity. By no means; but that the way is open for each soul to find salvation, and that for this purpose saving influences are concentric about man. The conditions of salvation are spiritual, not doctrinal; and moral rather than intellectual. Those who have the proper state of heart to receive the soliciting grace are penetrated and

blessed by it. Nor, I repeat, do I mean that a knowledge of Christ and right views respecting him are not of great urgency. They are. They take one at once to the centre of the gospel, where he finds a much richer experience, where salvation is authenticated by definite assurances, and whence he goes forth with a song in his heart to work for the new found Master. The urgency of a full, rich presentation of Christ is seen by the fact that very many who have it—living in the most favored spots of Christian lands—fail to be won by it. Sin, worldliness, self-seeking, prevail over them. The ambitions, pleasures, and seductions of life absorb them, and they turn away from both the outwardly offered and the inwardly besieging Christ. How necessary, then, it is for Christians to carry the gospel, with all its outward persuasions and calls, to those both in Christian and pagan lands who have none of these advantages. But this knowledge of Christ is not essential in such a sense that none can be saved without it; for many other conditions that do not imply it lead to the blessed result.

III. FUTURE PROBATION AND THEODICY.

We are now prepared to return to the theory of Future Probation, and to consider it in the light of this subject. This hypothesis, we repeat, is urged in the interest of theodicy. It is alleged that the character of God cannot be vindicated short of such a supposition. It is claimed that none can be saved short of knowing Christ: that salvation turns in all cases on acting on such knowledge, and, hence, it is inferred that all men will have a chance to have this knowledge before the judgment. "If Christ was given for the whole world," we read in *Progressive Orthodoxy*, "and if no one can be saved except by faith in Christ, we are almost driven to the conclusion that Christ will be made known to every individual of the human race in all the generations, past, present and future, and that everlasting destiny is determined for every person by his acceptance or rejection of Christ" (p. 242). Professor Smyth, before the Visitors, says:

"God, as revealed in Christ, is to me central in theology. Whatever encourages hope that all men will have opportunity to be influenced by the motive of an offered Saviour, is chiefly valuable in theology as a reflection of the character of God. That this opportunity does not come in any intelligible way during this life to very many of our race, seems to be evident. That it will consequently come to such beyond this life, is a reasonable inference. It seems to be implied in the universality of Christ's Person, Atonement and Judgment" (*Boston Journal*, supplement).

The belief that only those can be saved who know Christ and have faith in him may be considered either as a play on words or the expression of the supposed truth. As a play on words it refers to the belief, universally accepted among Christians, that no one will reach his final state of heavenly felicity without knowing and loving Christ. However ignorant he may be of his Saviour when he dies, he will come to know him in the other world and be in full sympathy with him. If this acquaintance with Christ is defined to be salvation, of course no one can be saved without knowing and believing in Christ. But this is a jugglery of words: for it is not this acquaintance that decides the question of salvation, but something that takes place long before. What we want to know is, by what door, on man's side, souls actually enter the new life. Those who answer, "By a conscious knowledge of Christ and faith in him," and then, in the case of those already started in the gracious way, put the beginning of their salvation off till they have come into conscious relations with their Saviour, carry their point by a trick of definitions. The decisive act is the state of heart or will that lets the grace of Christ in; not the future blossoming and ripening of this experience in the graces and attainments through the realms and æons of the world above. What if some one, still more fanciful and ambitious of carrying a point, should refuse to call a soul saved till it has plucked the highest fruit of knowledge and grace conceivable by a Paul in his present range of vision, would that make it that it is not saved till then?

As an expression of the supposed truth, the belief that only those can be saved who know and believe in Christ, is altogether too narrow. It does not harmonize with the scriptural teachings that there are many avenues on the human side leading to

salvation short of this. It takes one of the successful ways—the best one, the most central and direct one, the one leading up to the very heart of the kingdom, the one that lies open for those in the enjoyment of the fullest light and opportunity—and then, closing its eyes to all others, makes that the exclusive one. It makes the normal way for those who live in Christian lands, and under the most favorable conditions there, the only way for all—for those who live where Christ is never favorably spoken of, and where his name is never even heard, as well as for those born in the very cradle of Christianity! What a shrinkage from the breadth and catholicity of Scripture! What arbitrariness of human theory in comparison with the elasticity and freedom of the divine plan!

The belief in question does not agree with experience and observation. Many persons start in the new life, start beyond question, and yet at the time have no realizing sense who Christ is, or even that he is their Saviour. Like the man born blind, they can say, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see;" and like him, too, they may not have any just estimate of their Saviour till afterwards. Very few, indeed, of our young children, of those converted from outside worldly circles in times of revival, and even of those who become Christians who have long listened to the gospel, consciously look Christ in the eye and grasp his hand at the moment of transition. If we are going to rule out all experience but that of this exalted personal sort, in conscious relationship to Christ as the way of entrance into his grace, we shall make sad havoc with the Christian hopes of a large part of the fresh converts. The theory is too narrow and cribbed for the facts.

"The mind of the Spirit"—no matter how it comes about—"is life and peace" (Rom. viii. 7). And, "what God hath cleansed," we are told, "make not thou common" (Acts x. 15). Moreover, it dishonors Christ. This theory, which starts with the claim of lifting Christ up into his central position as the sum and substance of theology, the explanation of the worlds, and the soul of Redemption, ends with crippling his power and limiting his grace in the world, and then resorts to

an annex to save itself from shame and vindicate the character of God. In the first place it makes too much of a *knowledge* of Christ as a condition of salvation. It does not make too much of *Christ*, but too much of a *knowledge* of him for *this* purpose. It erects it into such a position that moral and spiritual conditions without it go for nothing in securing salvation.

This makes knowledge a kind of fetich—having a charm in itself beyond its intrinsic value. It is a talisman to settle the question of destiny with outside of the state of the heart—its seekings, trustings, yieldings. Christ, taking his whole ministry through, shows that he demanded no such theological retainer before he gave his saving help. As in the case of the blind man whom he asked only: “Believe ye that I am *able* to do this?”—not, Believe ye that I am the Son of God? or, Believe ye in me?—mere belief in his *ability*; so, in the case of souls, as soon as he secures the spiritual condition, he enters with his retinue into them and saves them.

In the second place, it makes too little of his saving power and grace outside of those who know him. It presents a hard and exacting Saviour, stipulating for difficult conditions of doctrine or knowledge before he meets the soul in its stress of conscious need and yearning. It loses sight of his immanence in the world—which in a previous breath it has extolled—and limits his ability to do anything practically effective till sinners have had intellectual help granted them. It permits the ignorance of man—ignorance, theological-wise and doctrinal-wise to stifle his omnipresent love just as it comes to the supreme point and object of its appeal, and makes it wait till the requisite slow and uncertain human acquisition can catch up. It interprets in an outward and superficial way the great spiritual process described by the apostle in Romans x. 10: “The same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon him; for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?” (ver. 12–15.) For

it restricts this preaching and hearing to that which comes through the agency of men, while the apostle has a very different and more spiritual thought in mind, viz. that there is a preaching and hearing that comes to men without this human intervention, as "the word of Christ." For he goes on to say, in reference to those who lived before Christ: "They did not all listen to the glad tidings. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So belief cometh by hearing, and hearing by *the word of Christ*. But I say *Did they not hear? Yea verily*, their sound went out *into all the earth*, and their words unto *the end of the world*" (ver. 16-18). Here, then, is a preaching and a hearing, that is "the word of Christ," and comes to all men—the immanent Christ speaking through the teachings of nature, conscience, and his Spirit and providence, proclaiming glad tidings to souls.

In the third place, the belief we are examining is too mechanical and rigid for a spiritual religion. When the conditions of salvation turn on something that is not at least ethical, something in a still lower realm, having no intrinsic relation to character, involving no necessary movement of the will or the heart, we are mixing things mechanical and things moral: we are twisting a coil out of strands material and strands spiritual; we are making an earthly bridge to carry souls over into the kingdom of righteousness and love! In the name of spiritual religion, we protest against such a degradation of the gospel, and such an interpretation of the essential conditions of entrance into its blessings. A knowledge of Christ is good; it cannot be overestimated, when it is kept in its proper place, when it throws light on Christ, the way of salvation, when it lures to the very heart of the gospel; but when it is weighed out or measured out in outward bulk as an absolutely indispensable commodity of salvation, its place is mistaken and it becomes a charm to conjure with in a system of superstition. God has given us a freer, larger, more catholic system; whereof we should be glad, and we should not be willing to part with it for any narrow, mechanical hypothesis of men.

The theory we have been considering is an illustration of the tendency of speculation to go in great waves, and to go to extremes. At present the movement is to exalt Christ, to make him the central figure, not only in speculative theology, but also in cosmogony, providence, redemption and practical religion—to make everything in the realms of creation and history Christo-centric. As long as this is regarded as an attempt simply to get at the secret cause and explanation of things on the divine side, this speculative tendency is harmless, and has its elements of truth; but it does not stop there. Those who lose themselves in the drift are not satisfied. They go on and resolve all practical religion, all evidence of piety, all devout experience, all preparation for heaven, into conscious Christo-centric elements. They do not stop where the Bible stops, where experience and observation stop, where the very nature of spiritual religion stops, where the honor of Christ stops, but require all men to have a Christo-centric knowledge and faith in order to be saved by Christ. The popular world-current carries them away and leads them to put hypotheses in the place of facts, and blinds them to the real state of the case as made known in Scripture and the experiences of life. Those who have on them the delirium of a new hypothesis, and are vying with one another to see who shall be first to reconstruct all human thought around it, need to pause now and then to ascertain how God is going to change his grand revealed laws to suit their fancies.