

## Christ the Embodiment of Christianity

THE SECRET OF POWER.  
REV. JOHN CLIFFORD, D. D.

The power of Jesus was not chiefly in his ideas. Indeed, they were not new. Jeremiah had announced the coming of the "Lord our Righteousness." Isaiah had fallen prostrate before the vision of the all-holy. Out of a full assurance of faith Micah had asked, "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again and have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities under foot; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." Psalmists and prophets had joined in the declaration that God blot out sin, that he dwells with the spirit that is contrite, and is ready to respond to the soul that cries "Create within me a clean heart."

But "ideas," says George Eliot, "are poor ghosts until they have been embodied in persons." It is personality that counts. Christ revives and recreates religion by being himself the first Christian, the Author and Finisher of the faith. He casts a spell over a few fishermen in the north—Andrew and Peter, James and John—and they respond to his fascination, feel his power, breathe his spirit, absorb with difficulty his ideas, and at last are caught up and enthused with the new religion he has given them, and go forth as messengers of a revived religion to the ends of the earth.

A manufacturer wanted to get at the secrets of the production of honey. How did the bee do it? Could he not do it without the bee? He would try. He gathered the blossoms off a whole acre and reduced them to liquor, and found that instead of honey, he had simply got a vat of sweetened water. The bee, working in a similar acre of flowers produced honey. The manufacturer could not do the work of the bee. You cannot revive religion with a machine, a committee, a printing press, a big hall, a crowd. You must have your bee. It is Christ, himself, his charm, his devotion to his Father, his self-sacrifice, that we see filling this marvellous chapter in the history of the revival of religion.

But again, here is the law. When we look at the great awakening of the thirteenth century we see "the age of chivalry in religion," the figure of St. Francis, and his devotion to the poor, St. Dominic and his preaching or repentance, of Bonaventura and Thomas Aquinas Sabatier, speaking of the time of the Reformation has this passage: "Inflammable matter was everywhere scattered or concentrated, in the convents, the country parishes, the universities, in the closets of the learned, the courts of the kings, the castles of the nobles, the corporations of burghers and of artisans. It need only that a few strong individualities, concentrating in themselves the spirit and needs of the time, should arise and lift up their voices and instantly from north to south, a thousand incendiary centers would burst into flame, and the long suppressed fire would overrun every province and envelop all society in its blaze. There is no other way to explain the sudden and prodigious influence of Luther in Germany, of Zwingli in Switzerland, of Parel and Calvin in the lands of the French tongue. By the response which their voices awakened we may judge of the impatience with which they had been awaited." It is the universal principle. Are we praying "Wilt thou not revive us again?" Yes, says God, when you are willing to be utterly given over to me, entirely dedicated, a living flame, in my service.

Yes, we must go further inward still. Look at the record, and you see that what is at the bottom of this revival of religion is the

### DEATH OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS.

His teaching had done little; it had stirred hatred, opposition, scorn, persecution and rejection. His gracious and winsome personality had achieved more than his teaching, still not much. Lazarus and his sisters had left it and responded to it like flowers to the sun. There was a small group of disciples who admired and even adored, though they did not wholly understand him, and it seems that if his ministry had ended in the ordinary way, his name would have been as undistinguished as that of Hillel or Shammai. The revival breaks out after Jesus is dead. There is some stir in Jewish life prior to his crucifixion; his miracles startle. His preaching attracts and repels, but religion does not ascend to its new path till his death. Pentecost follows Calvary.

What does that mean? You have the answer in the Apocalypse. There is in the Seer's heaven a book which nobody can open. It is sealed. "Will nobody come," cries the apostle, "and break the seals and read the message of the book?" Only one is worthy. It is the Lamb in the midst of the throne, the Lamb slain, the Christ who suffered for human redemption, who is capable of taking this mystery of God and explaining it to men. "He was wounded for our transgressions," he entered into humanity, took the woes and curses and plagues of men upon himself, because one with men, bore their burdens and entered so completely into their lives as to make them his. He is obedient yes, but to what? To death; yes, to the death of

the cross. He is one, entirely one, with our humanity, with its lost causes, its sins and curses, and is buried beneath its heaped-up iniquities. He dies with it and for it, and into it. "God was in Christ," but Christ was in humanity, reconciling this sundered mass of sinful perverse manhood to himself; winning it, lifting it out of its despair, and filling it with hope and firing it with holy zeal for God and right.

Yes, my brethren, that is where the church fails.

### IT REFUSES THE CROSS.

We have it in the pulpit and the manuscript. It is in our literature and amongst our ornaments; but it is not in our lives. We preach "the cross," we talk of the "blood," but we choose the easier places in life, seeking the primrose path of dalliance and we will not take the sorrows and plagues of men upon our own hearts. We are as the world; we do not share the shame, the sacrifice, the toil, the loss, the death of Jesus. We are cowards, afraid to offend. It is not enough for a disciple to be his Master; we seek to be different. We must avoid his fate at all costs. We dare not like the Founder of Christianity, run the risk of being cast out of the very church whose religion he revives, put to death at the instigation of its priests and through the action of its political tools, and pass away without the slightest sign of a moral resurrection. No, no, we will not bear the cross, and so we sigh in vain for a revival of religion.

George Fox endured a great fight of afflictions. Jonathan Edwards bore an indelibly dreary banishment for his fidelity. Wesley was hissed, hooted, despised, persecuted, forsaken, thrust out of the church of his youth. James Morrison was condemned by the Presbytery for heresy, ejected from the United Secession Church, and excluded from ministerial communion. Yes! Were we only ready to enter into fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, we should soon enter the gracious influences of a revived religion.—Baptist Times.

## God is Here, God is Near.

BY JOHN T. WILDS.

It is the first Sunday evening in Jerusalem. It has been a day of strange anxiety, of fear and of hope. The disciples had heard that their Lord had risen, but they had not seen him. The chosen Mary of Magdala, she had loved so much, had seen him. "I have seen the Lord," was her glad cry in the early morning when she found the disciples. But Christ had not come to them, and the evening was drawing on fast. Already the shadow of Calvary's crosses was lengthening like a great arm of night over the city, while the Cross stood out in the midst of the other two, a reminder of that day of darkness darker than any midnight.

Strange things had happened in the city all this day. Out from their graves had risen the bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep, and they entered the holy city and appeared unto many. "The saints long ago departed have come back and the Nazarene is risen from the grave!"—such was the strange news talked about that day throughout Jerusalem. There never was a day like that first Sunday. Oh, the strange rumors of the stranger truths that filled the air of the holy city! They must have made hearts in Jerusalem to beat intensely, and summoned belief to exercise its strongest power. Speedily the story of the stone rolled away, and of the empty tomb, and of the quaking of the earth in the early morning light enlarged through much telling, until things stranger still were narrated, and all the city was stirred, far more than it was that other Sabbath when "Hosanna in the highest!" was sung by the children in the temple.

I wonder not that the disciples went off by themselves and fast closed the door. All are together on this first evening—minds and hearts throbbing between fear and hope, belief and doubt, uncertain and yet dreading to question the words of Mary. Alarmed they were, because they found themselves as sheep in midst of wolves and their shepherd had gone. John and Peter ply Mary with such questions as: "How did he look?" "Are you sure that it was not the gardener?" "What else did he say, and are you sure that it was his voice?" "Did you see his hands and feet, and were they pierced—and were the wounds healed?" We do not know what they felt or what they said—so filled was that first Sunday with such unheard of happenings. In the midst of it all Jesus came and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be unto you!"

And yet now like our dear Lord to do that very thing! Do we not know it from experience? Is not that the record of every life? Is it not the record of His life? How many, many times when we have shut the door, Jesus has come and stood in the midst? How many times when your heart has been filled with fear Jesus has come and stood in the midst? How often when you have been sad, when your friend has gone, your loved one gone, your staff and support gone, and you yourself left to the world and its Roman legions and its crucifying forces, Jesus has come and stood in the midst!

Did not Christ do so unto others in the days of his flesh? Read again the story and sympathize with the widow of Nain. The doors of her home were fast closed; and the mourners were following the bier. They were outside the

city walls, nigh unto the place of burial, and Jesus came and stood in the midst of them and said: "Peace!" and brought peace.

At another time Jesus had gone on the mountain to pray to his Father. Down on the lake were his disciples in a storm-tossed boat. Jesus came and stood in the midst of them. In the sixteenth chapter of John's Gospel we read that "straightway" the little ship was "at the land whither they were going." Immediately the boat was at the port, safe and anchored, for when Jesus comes, immediately there is peace. The storm-tossed heart immediately finds the calm when Jesus comes.

We do not believe that Jesus is ever far from us. We are happy in the faith that our dear Lord is  
"Closer to us than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet."

We believe with Farrar, that

"Our God is never so far off,  
As even to be near."

God is always so close that he cannot closer be and more near to me than I am to myself. God is here, God is near—there where the stars shine, and here where the flowers bloom, there where the winds make music, and here where the birds sing; there where the angels are holy, and here where the man sips; there where they do his will, and here where men disobey. He is the bird's life, and the star's light, and my breath.

What then do we mean when we say, "When Jesus comes?" The Master is near when we find him, when we turn aside and see him, as Moses turned aside to see the burning bush and heard the voice of the Lord telling him his name. Jesus comes to me when I shut to the door of my soul and realize that every movement of love, that every spark of trust, that each motive to do good, is not I, but he within.

Do not wait for Jesus to come to you as though he and you were apart. Jesus was in the storm that rocked the boat upon the sea, but it was the peril in the storm that brought the disciples to see him come to them. Jesus was in the loss and grief that carried the lad out of Nain's gates but it was the sore suffering from that loss that brought him within the mother's vision. He who is in the sun's brightness and the flower's fragrance and the child's smile and the mother's kiss, is also in your night of woe and trial, and sorrow and loss. He comes to you in your affliction and trouble. These are, as it were, his voices calling to you, saying, "I am here!" These are, as it were, his knock within, at your heart's door saying, "Open to me, beloved, and come in where I am!"

You will not see God anywhere until you first see him in your heart. When you see him therein you will behold him everywhere and in everything. Look in! Your soul has a soul. The soul of your soul is God. Look in! Let your soul see God in this moment's peace and blessing. Know him in the cry of your soul after him, this very moment. Realize him in the going forth of your love unto him. Shut to thy door here and now. Be alone with God within your heart.

"Be still! Just now be still!"

There comes a Presence very mild and sweet;  
White are the sandals on his noiseless feet;  
It is the Comforter whom Jesus sent  
To teach thee what the words he uttered meant—  
The willing, waiting spirit he doth fill;  
If thou wouldst hear his messages,  
Dear soul, be still!"

To bear about within me God—the God who is all love, all power, all grace—to know that I am in him who is in me, is not something I understand, but that hope in which my faith is well anchored, and that which is the blessed every day experience of my life. It is as I realize this rich truth that Jesus comes to me and stands in the midst.  
—The New York Observer.

## Talking of One's Ailments.

"Thy trouble, loss, or greatest grief,  
May in thy darkest day  
Fill black despair with no relief,  
Find in the gloom no ray;  
But struggle on, be brave and strong,  
And to the front look forth;  
This world is not completely wrong—  
Press on and test thy worth."

Some persons seem to enjoy being miserable. At least, they make far more of life's discomforts than of its pleasant things. They say very little about their mercies, but a great deal about their miseries. When you meet them some bright morning and ask, "How are you to-day?" you will have to listen to a long recital of personal ills; and you will escape well if you are not favored also with a dismal catalogue of the distresses and sufferings of all the members of your friend's family. You learn by and bye, if you are a busy person, not to make inquiries which will lead to such extended confessions of wretchedness.

These people seem to think there is some sort of merit in having ailments or afflictions to speak of to others. It appears to them to be an altogether undesirable and unworthy state to be in, when they can say they are very well with nothing to complain of. They appear to be happy only when something is wrong with them, so that they can make appeal to the sympathy of their friends.

What is the real secret of the commonness, the almost