

But as it was, while the feeling of surprise did not occur to me until hours afterwards, I went out into that Sunday morning's sunlight in an uplifted mood which I had not known for years.

For a long time I had hated the idea of the mystic, had scouted the miraculous, and had believed every canon of taste and reserve outraged by any form of worship that appealed to emotion, superstition or awe. And now I had witnessed a service which for me contained every one of the elements which once had offended me. There was no merit in my attendance because of the purely personal reason for which I had gone, yet the beneficent impression produced was to remain with me for a long time.

Furthermore, I had been surrounded, I could not help noticing, by a crowd of clean but, as a rule, not well-dressed persons; any of them evidently "uncultured" and of the "lower class." By every rule of my previous habit of mind I should have left that church feeling keenly conscious of my own intellectual superiority; thankful that such a worship and such a religion could not enslave me; glad that neither hell nor heaven were any concern of mine, and well satisfied that, while lights and symbols and images and prayers and incantations were all very impressive, they could not enchain my reason.

That was precisely the way I might have expected to feel. But I left that Mass engulfed in a deep peace that lasted for hours, and that was slowly succeeded by a profound regret that these people had so much that I did not have—an abiding sorrow that by birth, by training, and, finally, by unprayerful searching and wrong living, the precious gift of faith had been lost to me.

I started out that morning with the cumulated, callous irreligiousness of seven years. That night, too deeply moved even for the best companionship, I slipped off alone, and for three hours sat by the window of a dark room, looking out to sea and calmly searching my own soul as I had never searched it before.

And at last I went down upon my knees—because there was no place else to go!