

Christianity the Greatest Fact in History

A Christmas Meditation

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CHRISTIANITY is the only religion with a world-program. Christianity asks for a map as large as the earth. In every conflict between the nations the wise statesman consults the missionary. He is everywhere to be found. He is omnipresent. The standard of the cross is the universal ensign. Jesus is the universal character. Behold the world has gone after Him!

Christianity is the religion of the most enlightened civilization known to history. George J. Romanes wandered off into the broad fields of doubt and unbelief and coming back to his first religious experience, he exclaimed: "It is Christianity or nothing."

Christianity leads the vanguard of the nations. The simple fact is that the great nations of the world are the Christian nations. Education, science, invention, discovery, sanitation and advanced legislation—these are all the instruments of a Christian civilization.

Christianity has inherited great tracts of virgin soil. Canada, United States, Mexico, South America, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and a thousand islands of the sea, are big enough and vast enough to provide room and food for one thousand million people. Geographically the world belongs to Christianity. To her has been given the kingdoms of the earth for an inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession. We have room, here, on the Continent of North America, for five hundred million souls. What a vast heritage. Mighty mountain ranges. Rushing rivers. Splendid inland seas. Vast prairies. Garden spots fit for the gods. And the encircling seas of history and prophecy.

Give us men to match our mountains,
Give us men to match our plains;
Men with empire in their visions;
Men with purpose in their brains.

Christianity is the only religion which has encircled the globe. It suits itself to every country, climate and condition. The Bible of the Old and New Testament, fits, wherever it falls. The Bible was written in Palestine and Palestine, geographically, is the whole world in miniature. Summer and winter, mountain and valley, desert and plain, hill and dale, sea and river—there is not another bit of territory like Palestine. A book written there is "readable" anywhere. Therefore a gospel written in Palestine is a gospel written for the world. There is no country like Palestine, no book like the Bible, no character like Jesus and no religion like Christianity. Christianity "fits" the world.

Christianity has in its possession the best expression, in character and literature, of the accepted ideals of the race. All men and nations, to-day are judged by standards of morality which are Jewish and Christian in their origin. All men are measured by the Perfect Man. All books are measured by the Book of Books. All law finds its root in the Law of Moses.

Matthew Arnold was placing his finger on a great fact when he said: "If any man will show me, outside of Christianity—outside of a Christian country—ten square miles, where infancy is regarded, old age respected, womanhood revered, and where human life is held sacred—I will surrender my interest in the religion of Jesus Christ."

Christianity is built on the deepest natural instincts of the human heart. It has the best answer for the unanswered questions of the soul. It provides the doctrine of God as nature's fundamental fact. It opens the door of prayer as the way of admission into the presence of the Invisible. It flashes upon the pathway of man the light of Truth. It enthrones the law of Love as the rule of life and the standard of Character as the test of experience. And it lifts up the goal of Immortality as the master motive of the soul.

No other religion has dared to combine three such ideas as the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man and the Immortality of the Soul. Immortality is the brightest gleam that ever spanned the river of death. Victor Hugo, in his old age, exclaims, "I begin to feel within me the throbbings of an immortal life." Christianity has shot its roots down deep into the soil of history. Christianity rests on the solid granite of historical fact. Our faith is founded on fact. The Bible is a gigantic fact. The Church of God is a stupendous fact. Christianity, as a moral force in history, is a colossal fact. The character of Jesus is a majestic fact. The regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, by which bad men are made good, good men made better and bettered men made even more

blessed, is an all glorious fact. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, on the third day, according to the Scriptures, is the one great fundamental fact of Christianity and the turning point in history. Toward that event all history converged and out from that event all history radiates: "Up from the grave He arose, Jesus my Lord!"

Robert G. Ingersoll, the famous agnostic, once met his friend, General Lew Wallace, and immediately opened a discussion with him on the subject of religion, with special reference to the historical authenticity of Christianity: "Lew, you are not a professed Christian, are you? Certainly a man of your intelligence is not a believer in such doctrines as the divinity of Jesus and the inspiration of the Bible," said Ingersoll in his bold, brusque way. And, for the moment, Lew Wallace was stalled. He had no answer for the brilliant orator. But the question stirred his sluggish soul and set him thinking. Then he began to ask himself the question: "Is Christianity creditable from the standpoint of history?" The answer to that question is revealed in that wonderful book which Lew Wallace laid on the centre table of history, "Ben Hur, or The Tale of The Christ." The literary and historical investigations which led to the writing of that book also led the author into the real presence of the real Christ. The mental process was an evolutionary one. First he exclaimed, as the facts began to array themselves: "There certainly was a Christ!" Then, as the facts began to marshal and organize themselves, he said to himself, within himself: "This is of a surety the Christ!" And, last of all, as the thought of the re-discovery of the foundations of his religious convictions entered into the fabric of his soul, he exclaimed, triumphantly, "My Christ!" "A Christ!" "The Christ!" "My Christ." History leads to Christ. Any man who knows enough to read, and has read enough to know, knows this, if he knows anything, that the religion of Jesus Christ rests on the quarried blocks of history's granite.

Christianity has proved to be the greatest revolutionizing force in history. Liberty, Fraternity, Equality, Humanity, Democracy, and Socialism are all the echoes and re-echoes of the divine artillery of Christianity sounding out over the hills of Time. Mightier than nitro-glycerine, mightier than gun powder, mightier than dynamite, mightier than the earthquake and all planetary upheavals is the revolutionary force of a genuine Christianity sweeping over the earth.

The moon of Mahomet arose
And it shall set, while blazoned
On heaven's immortal noon,
The Cross
Leads generations on.

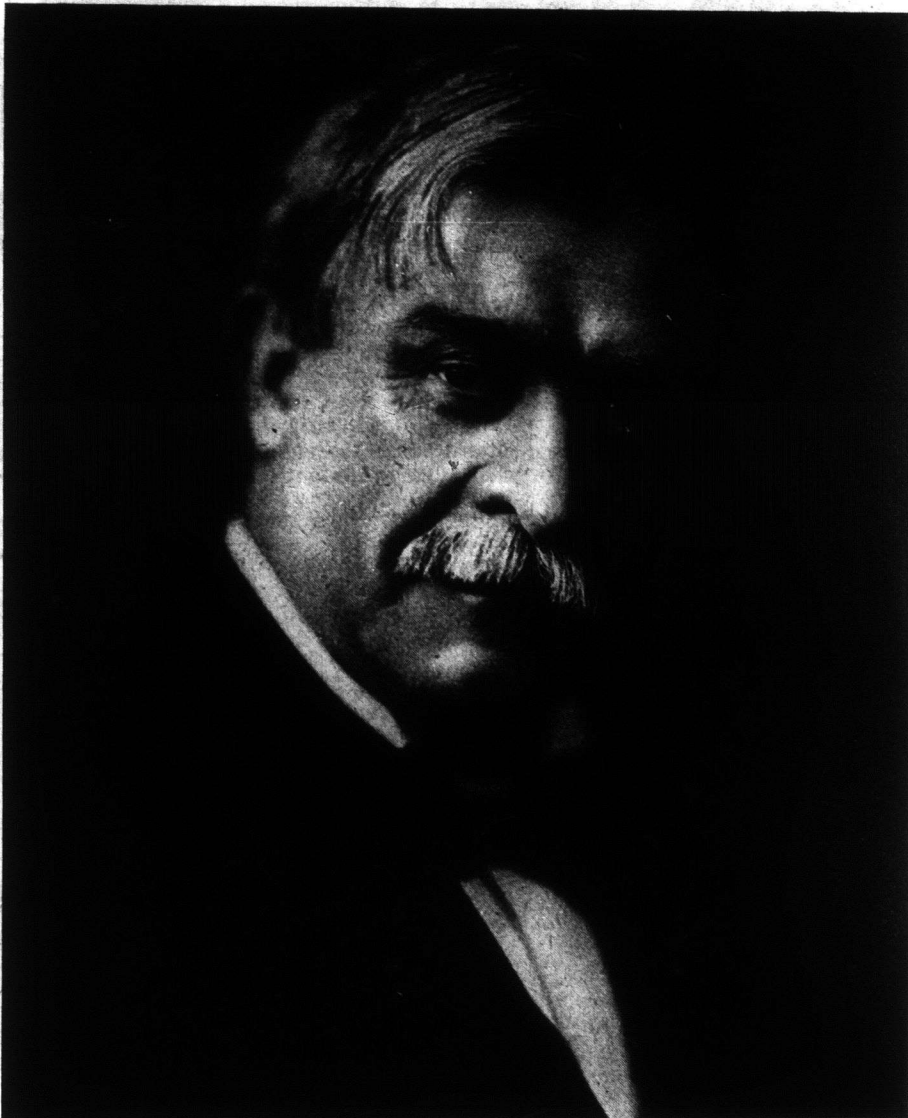
There has always been in Christianity a revolutionary force. "These men who have turned the world upside down, have come hither also." Mark the procession. The Covenanters. The Huguenots. The Waldenses. The Puritans. The Pilgrim Fathers. The Abolitionists. The men who have moved the world, have been the men whom the world could not move.

Christianity has robbed death of its sting and the grave of its victory. What a sad world was this until Christ spoke. Listen:

"And all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years—and he died." Death reigned till Christ came. Then Christianity began. To the Christian this world is but the vestibule of the eternal. Off with the crape! Let the mournful dirge cease! O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Samuel Rutherford turned to a weeping mother and said: "Do you think that she is lost who is sleeping on the bosom of eternal love?"

Christianity lives by an actual experience in the lives of men and women. Sir Isaac Newton, the Christian astronomer, said to an unbelieving member of his own calling and profession: "Sir, I am glad to hear you talk about astronomy—that's your particular line of study, but you know nothing about Christianity; that's a matter of experience." Somebody asked Coleridge: "Is Christianity true?" His answer was expressed in two words: "Try it." "Don't question me about the evidence in favor of Christianity, try it." Christianity lives as a spiritual force in an inward experience.

Christianity is the hope of humanity. The guarantee of Christianity and the hope of humanity is Jesus Christ. "Lord to whom shall we go—Thou hast the words of eternal life." In the city of Paris, I found the Arch of Triumph, standing like a focal point enthroned in granite and bronze, at the exact spot where twelve great avenues converged. Every avenue of light in our Christian civilization leads up to an imperial Christianity and to an enthroned Christ.



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