

"ARE YOU SAVED?"

BY REV. JOHN MAY.

THIS is a question frequently put to even excellent Christians by persons whose zeal outruns their knowledge. Its absurdity goes without saying. A captain passing another in mid-ocean might just as well ask "Are you in port?" Its prevalence in these days, however, serves one useful purpose. As the pass-word of the popular Christianity, it shows at a glance how far that Christianity has strayed from the religion of Christ. It originates in an utterly false conception of that religion, which, from centre to circumference is—not self-devotion, but self-sacrifice—a conception which makes *personal escape* not mutual helpfulness, the main object of life. I doubt whether even escape is possible on these lines; and if it is, is it not a beggarly, cowardly, selfish thing at best? What claim has he on a better world who has done no good in this? There is neither piety nor wisdom in aspiring to reach Heaven by the path of selfishness. That path is the farthest possible from the one trodden by the self-sacrificing Saviour of men, and marked out for them to walk in. "I am the way," saith the Christ. "I." Who? The One Man in all history whose whole thought, life, being, were absolutely and without reserve devoted to helping His fellowmen. When He says, "I am the way," He means much more than His death. He includes emphatically, also, His sacrificial life. It was one sustained act of self-expenditure. To walk in this "way" is simply to do as He did—live for others, not for self. The ideal Christian life is modelled on His. It is a life of pure, holy, untiring benevolence—self-annihilation. To reach this high standard is the noblest of aims, the most god-like and glorious of achievements. There would be nothing noble in gaining Heaven without bettering earth, in saving one's self, no matter how others fared. It just reverses the foundation principle of Christ's kingdom, of Whom it was once sneeringly but truly said "He saved others, Himself He cannot save." Had He saved Himself, He had lost the "others." He did finally save Himself by saving "others." And this is still the "way" of salvation. In saving others you save yourself. There is no other way. There is no path to Paradise save through the deep valley of self-sacrifice. Christ has not one road for Himself and another for us. He did not painfully scratch His way through the brambles of self-expenditure that we might trip gaily along the flowery heights of self-indulgence. Painful to the flesh, yet most sweet to the Christ-filled heart, is the one only road to Heaven.

"Have you saved?" This is the right question. It is our privilege, our duty, our felicity, if we will, to be sharers in the Saviourhood of Christ. Each may be a saviour in his degree: a "co-worker" with Christ. What earthly distinction can equal this? standing shoulder to shoulder with the Saviour-King, lifting with Him this painful woe-begone humanity? Lifting as the very condition of being lifted ourselves; and, in the ascension, ascending!

"Have you saved?" Have you ever tried to save? You are "converted" you say—"in the justified state:" but how about others? Have you tried to save them? "Yes," say you, "I have prayed for, and tried to convert them." My friend, that is not it. That is *cheap*. Have you helped any one for this life, here, *now*? Have you helped to save from hell by helping to save from *sin*? Have you saved any one from *sin* by relieving his bodily needs? Whose sorrows have you assuaged? Whose nakedness have you covered? Whose hunger have you appeased? To whose devouring passions have you said "Peace, be still!" Between what reputation and the blade of the moral assassin have you stood? What victim have you snatched from the oppressor? What blameless debtor have you helped to stand once more erect before his fellows? Who have you saved from the tongue of fire, and from your own? Whom have you helped to save by *not* wronging him, by *not* cheating, slandering, trying to crush him? Have you done the first thing towards helping a single fellow-creature to get on in *this* world? If not, hug your "conversions," your "justification," and other fancies as you will, your feet are not in that path He trod who did *nothing else* but help the needy. Quit asking others "Are you saved?" and begin at once to ask yourself "Have I helped, saved, or tried to save any one from *any* evil thing, and *so* to lift him up to *any* good? But it is easier to offer for nothing a heaven that costs us nothing, than to put our hand into our pocket, than to bridle our tongues, or set the iron heel on self. It is cheaper to abstain from wine, cards, the dance, tobacco, and profane language, and call *this* morality, than it is to deal justly, help lovingly, spend freely in the exercise of your saviourhood, tread down all manner of lying, scorn meannesses, and prove your love to God by your love to men, your love to men by substantial help, by habitual self-oblivion.

"Are you saved?" No; of course not. No man is "saved," or even *safe* while yet in the flesh. But some are safer than others. The safest life is one of self-sacrifice; the unsafest one of self-devotion. "Jim Bludso," not a "saved" man by any means, standing by his wheel in the flames that others may live through his death, is safer for eternity than the "saved" humbug who thinks only of himself. Selfishness is the antipode of God. All Satanism is enfolded in that one black word. Christian perfection would mean self-annihilation, self-will extinct; self-gratification forgotten; self-love swallowed up by love to God breaking forth all around in helpful conduct. The only way to save your life is by losing it: losing it as Christ lost His. When I behold Him, night and day, going about "doing good," in storm and sunshine, in hunger, weariness; a houseless wanderer, owning not a foot of earth, not caring to own it; feeding the famishing, healing the sick, teaching, uplifting, patient with perverseness or stupidity, helpful to all, dying to save, what am I to think of a religion which, indeed, bears His name, and has little else in common? a religion of frames, and

fancies, and dogmas, and shibboleths; a religion of froth, and words, and wind? a religion whose chief achievement is to make true religion suspected? To your orthodox "saved" people, what are good works but Judaism? what is self-sacrifice but Popery? An easier way have they discovered: "only believe?" Endless are the changes they ring on the words: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." So say we all. But this belief means simply *doing His will*. And His will is that we take Him as our model; that we strive to set our foot exactly where He set His. If we do not aim to do this by forgetting self and living for others, we may imagine ourselves "saved," but we are no followers of Him. If we do, whither shall His footprints lead us? Not along the flowery path of self-seeking, but down the dark valley of humiliation, lighted only by the Cross, where lie and languish all forms of suffering needing relief—hunger and thirst, and shivering nakedness, broken hearts calling for the healing touch of a friendly hand, sinful souls groaning to be free, want and woe awaiting the hand and the flask of the passing pilgrim. It is the true "Pilgrim's Progress," and thrice blessed he who achieves the journey in a Christ-like fashion, not half so much by tears, and prayers and hymns, as by words of health and deeds of love. To whom, even now, comes felicity nameless; and at last the approval: "Inasmuch as thou didst it unto Me of the least of these, My brethren, thou didst it unto Me." So grand a thing it is to be really and eternally "saved."

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

IN saying that speculations concerning the origin of the Christian ministry have for me only a historical interest, I had better give an illustration which will explain my meaning. The disputes between Charles I. and his parliament gave rise to controversies as to the relative powers of kings and parliaments, which continued to be carried on long after that monarch's death. In these controversies large use was made of arguments drawn from history, and the origin of parliaments was investigated mainly with a view to practical consequences to which the results arrived at were expected to lead. At the present day the investigation of the origin of the parliaments has a purely historical interest, and the conclusions which the student may arrive at are not likely to effect in any way his allegiance to the now settled constitution of the country. In like manner I count that the duty on the part of the individual to submit to the settled constitution of the Church is not affected, whatever be the true history of the process by which, in God's providence, the constitution of the Church was established. In any case, it is a sin to rend Christ's body by causeless schisms. I feel therefore quite free to accept any conclusions as to the history of the beginnings of Christianity to which the evidence may lead us, without any apprehension that I shall be thereby forced to alter my position with regard to mo-