

# THE CHRISTIAN.

"FAITH COMETH BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD."—Paul.

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## The Christian.

### JOINING THE CHURCH.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

Ought I to make a public confession and join the church? This most important question is, no doubt, agitating the minds of hundreds among the readers of these columns. The first person with whom you would be likely to discuss this question would be your own pastor. He would probably say to you, Yes, my friend, you had better do so, provided that you have already joined *Jesus Christ*. If the Son of God be within your heart, then you are spiritually alive; you have experienced the new birth; you are prepared to live the Christian life because He liveth in you. If you only make a membership of a church the main thing, if you unite yourself to nothing stronger than a company of frail, fallible fellow-creatures, and expect them to tow you along by the power of their prayers and fellowship, then you have but a poor chance of success in this world or of heaven in the next.

The first question for you to settle is,—Have you been born anew by the Holy Spirit? Have you, by sincere faith, united your heart to the omnipotent Saviour? If that be so, then your public acknowledgment of that fact by connecting yourself with a Christian church is the completion of *joining the Lord Jesus*. Heart-union first, then open confession. Christ demands both, and when both steps are taken, you have become one with Him. Your heart is, by a mysterious but real process, linked to His infinite heart of love. You join your weakness to Christ's strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your unworthiness to His merits, your frailty to His watchful oversight, your poverty to His boundless resources of grace. Your spiritual destiny is bound up with your Lord's; because He lives you shall live also; and you will be kept by the power of God through faith unto full salvation. A glorious conception is this; and if, by God's help, you are making this a reality, then go forward, the sooner the better.

But perhaps you may still be troubled as to the evidences of this inward work of the Spirit, and may enquire what they are. Just what it is to be a Christian, and "how ought I to feel, and what ought I to be and to do?" these may be the queries that are agitating your mind. My own habit as a pastor has been to place into the hands of all who propose to unite with the church a series of questions, of which the most vital and comprehensive are the following: Have you seen yourself to be a sinner against God? Have you not only repented of past sins and sought forgiveness, but do you hate all manner of sin, and desire and pray to be delivered from the power of evil? Is your hope of acceptance with God founded upon the Lord Jesus

Christ, and Him alone? Have you surrendered your heart to Christ, and are you willing to follow Him whithersoever He shall lead you? Is it your solemn purpose, in reliance on His grace, to cleave to Christ as your Saviour and Guide to the end of life? In order to maintain your Christian life, do you make conscience of secret prayer, and of the reading of God's Word as your rule of duty.

You will observe that these interrogatories embrace the two core-ideas of Christianity, which are to hate sin and love Christ, to turn from sin and to follow Christ. These are the Scriptural signs of a genuine spiritual life in the soul. That life may be, as yet, very feeble, it may be only the weak pulse-beat of a baby; the "blade" of grace may yet be very small, but if the *life is there*, then seek to strengthen it by prompt and hearty confession of your Saviour. In the New Testament cases, commonly a conversion to Christ was followed by a prompt acknowledgment of Christ. Open your hearts to God; ask Him to search you and to lead you. And if, after honest searching and self-testing, you are persuaded that Christ has begun to live within you, then take your stand for your Saviour. The church was not intended to be a pasture-ground, and a field of activity for mature Christians, but also a training-school for the young, the inexperienced, and the immature. The fold of Christ is a place in which not only the older sheep may wax fat and flourish. But the lambs also may be protected from hard winters. Do not come in with the idea of remaining always as a lamb—especially as a "cossot"—but enter the Church of the great Shepherd, to *grow* and to expand your lungs and to become strong in the Lord. The phrase "a perfect man" (in the fourth chapter of Ephesians) really signifies a *full-grown* man; yet how can you ever reach that unless you begin?

To join the church before you have joined the Lord Jesus is a solemn mockery, and will be a source of untold misery also. May your conscience, enlightened by prayer, keep you from such a rash and ruinous step! But if your soul has joined the Saviour, then give Him your whole self, your whole influence, your time, talent, and entire life. Not much can you give Him, at the best, but *give Him all* in a public and perpetual covenant. Join His Church for eternity.—*Evangelist*.

### WHAT IS FAITH?

BY D. L. MOODY.

One of the best definitions I can find of faith is in Heb. xi. 1: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." It is a dependence upon the veracity of another; and let me say here that it is a foundation stone. Christ is the foundation stone, but we build on that stone, and the first thing that we build upon is faith. We begin with faith. Peter, in his

second epistle and first chapter, says, "Add to your faith virtue, and then knowledge, and then temperance, and then patience, and then godliness, and then brotherly kindness, and then love;" but he puts down at the bottom, *faith*. We begin to serve God by faith. There is a passage of Scripture that says, "It is impossible to please God without faith," and you will notice that it is impossible to please man without faith. If any man tells you he has no faith in you, you cannot do anything to please him. One person cannot offer a greater insult to another than to tell him he has no faith in him. It means that he will not take his word, and that is what unbelief is; but faith takes God at His word.

Faith is the foundation of all society. Society could not exist if it were not for faith. There is not a bank in London but would close its doors inside of forty-eight hours if it were not for faith. It is the foundation of all commerce and social life. You would not allow friends to come into your house if you had not confidence in them.

Faith is an outward look—not an inward look—looking unto Jesus. All the bitten Israelites had to do was to look at the brazen serpent; but a great many people are looking at the wound. It is all right to see if you have a wound; but look at the remedy. I am so thankful it does not need an Oxford or Cambridge examination to learn how to look. You taught that little boy there before he was six months old to look. When his papa was coming home, you said, "Look, there is papa." The first thing you did was to teach your child how to look. Faith is so simple that the world goes stumbling over it. It is absurd to think men cannot believe; they can if they will. It is not because men cannot believe, but because they have mixed up other things with faith. They say, "I do not feel it;" but where does God say we are to feel it? I am so glad that God has not linked feeling with faith. If He had, I do not know what would have become of us. There is no place where God says, he that believeth and feeleth, shall be saved. If my friend Paton asked me home to dinner, what would he think if I replied, "I would like to go, but I don't feel it." He would say, "Are you sick?" "Never better in my life, but I don't feel it." People say they believe the Lord wants them; but there is no one who wants to become a Christian who does not know that he may take Christ; but he says, "I do not feel like it." And so this dear brother says, "Don't you think I want you?" Oh, yes. "Then what is the matter?" "I do not think I have the right kind of feeling." "What kind of feeling," he says, "do you want? Are you not hungry?" "Oh, yes, very hungry." "Then why don't you come and get something?" "Well, I think a man ought to have a certain kind of feeling." There is no person in this house but would say I had gone mad. Now, I will venture to say there are more than a thousand in this