

ever dreamed such loving sympathy and hearty partnership between God and men.

On man's side the Incarnation became the tragedy of all ages. Human folly and human hate and human sin are seen in their extreme degradation. Think how the Jews treated their Messiah! They were told continually of His coming. They were trained for the understanding of Him, and for the reception of Him; but they were blinded by selfishness and materialism. They made up their mind first that He was only a man; and they judged him accordingly. He said He was God, and persisted in His claim when they reminded Him how great was that claim. Their theology stood in their way. The goodness of His life was nothing to them. His love daily shone with the brightness of God, but they closed their eyes and shut themselves up into their vindictive zeal. They treated Him with all manner of disrespect. Like a stampede of the steers of Texas they rushed upon Him and His disciples; and they in mockery hung Him on the cruel and disgraceful cross. Judas led them on; and Peter was carried away for the moment with their blind fanaticism. God put Himself in the hands of men, and they hurled their inhuman fury against Him as the son of Beelzebub.

Jesus distinctly says that they had no power against Him, except as it was given them from the Father. They could not take His life. He "laid it down." He continued to the bitter end to leave Himself in the hands of men, that He might reveal the horrorableness of sin, that he might manifest something of His infinite love, and that He might bear "our sins in His own body on the tree." Such condescending love and unlimited self sacrifice are unparalleled. The marvellous power of Christ's spirit over Christians in every century finds its source in His putting Himself in the hands of men. The speedy conquest of the heathen nations to Christianity, as soon as they knew the truth, is the response of man to this magic touch of God upon their hearts.

Many to-day rail against the Pharisees, and yet commit their sin against Christ. Sin to-day is the same as it was 1900 years ago. Yet some roll deceit under their tongue as a sweet morsel. Others slander their brothers, as if their good name was worth nothing. Others, like Judas, kiss the Master publicly and then betray Him in secret. The wisdom of the world is foolishness with God because it will not learn a higher wisdom. Prejudice to-day is as unjust as when it crucified Christ. Ingratitude to Christ is as ugly to-day as it was in the Sanhedrin. To close our hearts against the love of Christ is the greatest of mortal sins. To open the heart to His Spirit is to be transformed; so that His forgiving love is not only the hope of glory, but it is the realization of that glory.

When the father puts himself in the hands of his boy of five years, his love is felt in every movement; and the love of the child springs up to meet that love with a rapturous joy. There is no transgression. The child is "on report" with the will of the father. So "sin is any want of conformity unto the will of God;" but when we feel the Father's love pulsing through the Gospel story, and in our life, our will is one with His. We know the sweetness of the indwelling spirit.

This gives us the true viewpoint of prayer. Many are perplexed about God's ability to answer. They imagine false conditions. They make a god to suit their own notions, and find him man-aeled by His laws. When Matthew Arnold died, Robert Louis Stevenson quietly observed, "He will not like God." It will be a great surprise to many when they do find out what kind of a God put Himself in the hands of man. It will not be a disappointment;

but there will be a great change in their theology. Only those that know the Father by the Son can understand His relation to the human race. Jesus had no scruples about prayer, because He knew Him. The machinery of the universe does not hear prayer; but it is different with the loving Father. Who puts Himself in the hands of man.

When the father lifts the son in his arms, he does not violate the law of gravitation. He merely introduces another power superior to it; and all men's triumphs in civilization are the fruit of his superior wisdom and power. He groups forces differently and brings other laws into play; and thus he discovers new forces and makes Nature assist herself to designed ends of good. God can do this infinitely better than man; and it is only a joy to us to answer the prayers of His children. The cry "the laws of Nature are inviolate" is the most absurd deification of Nature's forces. Those that sneer at our reverence for the "God the Father Almighty" show a far more superstitious reverence for material force. God has put Himself in man's hand that He may give us the benefit of unknown powers and a Father's co-operation.

Jesus by word and by example has made it plain beyond dispute that the Father makes believing prayer the condition of the highest blessings. The Father wants to draw out his boy's love and confidence; and so he makes asking and faith conditions of receiving. He thus puts himself in the hands of his boy to win his hearty partnership. To give promises and then not fulfill would not merely be showing weakness, but deceit. But God's promises are "yea and amen in Jesus Christ." "If ye shall ask anything in My name, He will give it you." "Ask and ye shall receive." To say that these prayers only secure a subjective answer, is to treat Christ as the Sanhedrin treated Him, when they condemned Him to death. The child cannot reach the water and he asks his father for a drink; and he has promised it to him. What would you think of the Father if he said, well, you cannot expect me to give you a drink; but the asking will bring you something, namely, greater thirst? God does not mock His loving, trusting children when they call upon Him.

Since God puts himself into such relations with man for such purposes, then it is just and right that He makes the answer to prayer depend upon the degree of faith. If Jacob had said, Well I think you might give me a blessing before you go, but I shall be glad to get a rest, the blessing would have been small. He said, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me; and He blessed him there." Elisha told Joash that his arrow was the "Lord's deliverance." "Take them and smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice and stayed." And the prophet was disappointed, because he did not smite at least five or six times; for then he would have defeated Syria until it was completely subdued. So Jesus was praying continually to the Father, with the Father; and when the turmoil of the world or the weariness of the flesh interfered too much He withdrew to a quiet place to be alone with Him. By such implicit faith Jesus secured for Himself the joy of the Father's presence, so that He could rejoice though "a man of sorrows." Once only did the Father hide His face, that Jesus might be completely in the hands of man, on the Cross. Then the answer came, and Jesus said, "Into Thy hands I commend My Spirit."

God thus placed Himself in the hands of man that man, by clinging to Him may be raised higher and higher. The Spirit of God dwells in the heart of those that put their hand of faith in the great hand of the Father. Some material blessings may be denied and some

given; but the greatest of all blessings is the abiding presence of God, lifting us from one degree of grace and glory unto another, until we appear before God, spotless and unrebukable.

The teacher comes down within the range of the pupil's understanding. He puts himself into the hands of the one he wishes to lift to higher standards of living. The boy rises in proportion to his admiration and faith and yearning. The father can do this very much more efficiently. God with infinite wisdom and love puts Himself in the hands of man, made in His image, that that image may be brightened, and worked into every part of human life. When man understands this glorious truth, his prayer is the prayer of Jacob, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." The blessing is sure. "If a man love Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."

God could not confer a greater honor upon humanity. He could do His work in the earth with angel and archangel; but to honor man and by honoring him exalt him, He puts Himself into man's hands, committing His work and His interests on earth to us. It fairly takes one's breath away. Kindly think upon it till it makes an indelible impression upon your mind and heart. We have not time to elaborate this thought. And, if this is God's way of working with man for man's good, it ought to be ours. There is no better way than this to educate and culture man than to honor him, taking it for granted he is worthy. If man has any manhood left that manhood will respond and the beginning is made. In the end it will be seen that God's method is the best; and His triumph even at the hands of man will be worthy of the infinitely wise God.

One other thought, arising out of this, we cannot pass over. It is the climax. It is the fruitage of this marvellous truth in the life of man. Think of our responsibility. We cannot grasp it. Few have dreamed of it. Have we all? God's work in this city and in every city and town and country depends upon His children, upon you and me. Ponder it for yourselves. This is getting to the heart of things. Let us keep that truth as a great motto on the walls of memory. Let us engrave it on our heart; and then we gladly will get entirely right with God, and live out in our daily life our portion of the image of God, our proportion of His life wrought into us by His Spirit. The world will stand amazed as this truth possesses the hearts of Christians the world over; and

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
Does His successive journeys run."  
Millinocket, Maine.

#### WHAT A GOOD START IS GOOD FOR.

A good start may become a dangerous snare. This is not the fault of the good start, but of the person who, having made it, rests back comfortably on the idea that things will now take care of themselves. Almost anybody can make a good start. About one in a hundred holds it. Printers know this by costly experience. They know that the good pressman is not the one who can turn out a faultlessly printed sheet just after the make-ready and the color and the register have been satisfactorily adjusted, but the one from whose work you can pick out at random a sheet after a thousand, or ten thousand, or a hundred thousand, have been run, and find it difficult to say from what part of the run it came. The man who holds out through the entire job, whether it be printing, or preaching, or living life in any other of its searching, testing forms, is yet in the minority. A good start is good for just as long as it lasts,—no longer.—Sunday School Times.