

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

WOULD YOU BE A CHRISTIAN?

By Theodore L. Cuyler, D.D.

I wish to say a few plain and affectionate words to those who are agitating the vital question: "Ought I to become a Christian? And if so, how shall I become one?"

Yes, you ought to be a follower of Jesus Christ, and for three good reasons:

It is your duty; for God both commands and invites you. It is for your interest; if you choose Jesus Christ as your Saviour and guide, you will be better, stronger, happier and more useful in this world. You will secure the salvation of your immortal soul.

Whether you become a Christian or not depends upon your own choice; no one else can decide for you.

A loving God says to you in His Word, "I set before you life and death; choose life." When Joshua submitted the alternative, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve," he addressed his hearers as free mortal agents, and such are you. When Christ said to James and John, "Follow me," He talked to them as rational beings; for if they could not follow Him, why did He ask them?

You have the power of choice; choose life! By that expressive word, in the Bible, is meant—the favor of God, the pardon of your sins, the sustaining strength to do right; it is the union of your heart with Jesus in this world and an unending heaven beyond the grave. "Death" is the absence of all these, it means the dominion of sin in this world, and the punishment of sin in the world to come.

But you may say, "I am not choosing death; it is inconceivable that any sane person should deliberately decide to be eternally wretched when he or she might be eternally happy." I admit that people do not usually set success and happiness on the one hand, and ruin on the other hand, and then deliberately choose to be ruined. Yet it is equally true that multitudes are selecting and nursing courses that inevitably lead to ruin.

Here is a young man setting out in life. Of course his preference would be to become rich and prosperous. But he chooses to lead a career of indolence and thriftlessness, which inevitably brings him to poverty and keeps him there.

In like manner, my friend, when you decided to refuse that loving Saviour who is even now knocking at the door of your heart, you choose to risk the consequences. When you choose to continue on in sin, to follow the devices and desires of an unconverted heart, to refuse to be all that Christ would make you, and to grieve away the Holy Spirit of love, you are deliberately choosing eternal death: for you choose the path that leads to death.

You are not, and you cannot be in a position of neutrality. Not to accept Jesus Christ is to reject Jesus Christ, and thus throw away all the infinite advantages and blessings which He offers you. Instead of asking yourself the question, "Ought I to become a Christian?" you had better face the other question, "Have I refused to be a Christian?"

It is no unkindness to say to you that the only effectual hindrance to your becoming a Christian and securing eternal life, is your own sins. Until you break off from them, you cannot lay hold on Christ by faith, and come into heart union with Him and obedience to His commandments. No man can serve two masters; you cannot go in two opposite

directions at the same time. Every day you spend away from Christ is a lost day. The longer you live as you are, the harder will it be to become a strong, happy and useful follower of Jesus. Your habits of thought and action will become the more deeply rooted. You will have just so many more weeds to pull up; sin is terribly self-propagating.

Some persons may tell you that it is a very easy thing to become a Christian—as easy as lifting your hand. Yes; it is an infinitely easy thing for the omnipotent Spirit of God to renew your heart in answer to honest prayer; and it will be a very simple thing for you to become a Christian if you are willing to cut loose from your old sinful self and fasten your heart hold on the divine Saviour.

Do not ask for an easier salvation than that; it will not be worth the having if it does not bring you a new character and a new style of daily conduct. Thorough weed pulling and thorough plowing are essential to a good crop. "Some people," said quaint Scotch Rutherford, "want to have Christ for about nothing and never have had a sick night over their own sins. This maketh loose work." It is just such loose work that produces the half converted Christians; and it takes a great many half Christians to make a single whole one. The gate into the path of purity and peace and power is too narrow for you to stumble in a whole backlog of sins, even if conscience would let you attempt it.

Repentance and cutting loose from the dominion of sin must be attended with a cleaving to Jesus Christ. A single contact of the soul with Christ has made many a one a Christian. The first honest approach to Him—the first sincere prayer for pardon—the first act to obey and please Him—these have been like the touch of that woman who had the long malady; they have brought the blessing.

A man who had shamefully wronged a neighbor was brought under conviction of sin and could find no peace. Attending a religious service where he espied his neighbor, he called him out into the vestibule and begged his pardon for the wrong committed. That was the beginning with him of a Christian life.

Conversion is the act of turning to Jesus as the only Saviour—the Saviour who died to redeem you. As soon as you begin to trust Him and to obey Him the healing comes. You must understand that faith is vastly more than an opinion or a right feeling. It is a transaction—it is the contact of a person with a divine Person, of a weak, sinful, penitent soul with an all-sufficient Redeemer. You need to be shut up to this one tremendous truth—either Jesus Christ must save me, or I am lost!

Attendance upon church service, Bible reading, or the best of sermons, or an "inquirers' meeting," or prayer, or any other good thing will be useless if you attempt to put them in the place of a personal grasp on Jesus Christ. Faith is indispensable if you wish to draw up water from a deep well; but it is the water that you are after.

True faith puts your soul into loving contact with the loving Son of God. A touch is enough to begin with; it must be followed by a strong and constant cleaving. The craft that is in-erted in the cleft bough of an apple tree must become united to the tree before it yields fruit. Abiding in Christ, and only through that abiding, will you be

a vigorous, fruitful and joyous Christian.

And if you become such a Christian, your wonder and your sorrow will be that you never became one before. Men have lived to regret almost every conceivable step, but I never heard of a person who repented of loving, obeying and serving the Lord Jesus Christ.
—Presbyterian Standard.

NORTHFIELD ECHOES.

Thrilling Review of the World-wide Situation

Mr. John R. Mott spoke as follows:

"It has been my responsibility and privilege during the past sixteen or seventeen months to visit all of the continents of the world. I have come back from these recent journeys with one overwhelming conviction, and that is that the time is actually at hand when there must be an unprecedented advance on the part of the forces of pure Christianity, and more especially of the British Islands and North America, on behalf of the multitudinous inhabitants of the non-Christian world.

"I do not recall having visited a single country in these journeys where I formed the impression that Christ and His cause are meeting with defeat.

"I saw the streams of light breaking into the Dark Continent in the darkest places. I found that South America was an awakening continent. I have learned that in India not only among the educated classes but among the most depressed masses Christ is being enthroned. I found in the Philippine possessions nothing less than an ethical revival in progress, even within the great Catholic Church. I found as I came up into the great Chinese Empire that, whereas on the occasion of my visit about ten years ago to China I was told there was 80,000 Protestant Christians, a few weeks ago I was told there are one hundred and eighty thousand Protestant Christians and that the largest ingatherings into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour have been, not before the Boxer uprising, but since that awful catastrophe.

"I discovered in Japan that although there are only about sixty thousand communicants of Protestant churches, and possibly not as many members of the Roman church, and certainly not as many of the Greek Catholic church, making in the aggregate something like one hundred and fifty thousand Christians, and over forty millions of Buddhists—these two religions are spoken of among educated men of Japan as equals, and when any distinction is made I discovered that it was always made in favor of Christianity.

"And in Korea a nation being moved upon from one end to the other by the Almighty Power of the Spirit of God. In one denomination in Korea last year there were ten thousand accessions to the Church, or more than in all Japan in connection with the work of thirty missionary societies in the same period. In my judgment if the attack in Korea is properly sustained by the Christians of North America and Great Britain, in less than half a generation Korea will take its place in the Christian columns among the nations, and will have the unique record of being the first non-Christian nation in this modern missionary effort which has become an evangelized nation."

Words are always actions, and actions are a kind of words.—Emerson.