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## THE CHALLENGE OF FAITH.

A sermon preached at All Saints Church, Winnipeg, on Sunday morning, Sept. 6th, 1896, by Rev. Dr. Green, Dean of Eastern Iowa.

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables." II Peter; 1: 16.

"Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ," is nearing the end of a long and arduous life, that is soon to close in martyrdom.

Beginning at Jerusalem, on that strange and wondrous day of power when the inspiring Spirit set in motion the pert up energies of the Apostolic band, his life has been given to the proclamation of the Gospel of the Nazarene. He has seen multitudes in the Holy City won by the mysterious power of the Story of Calvary; he has seen it leap the barriers of Judaism and creep as a kindling flame from city to city, from nation to nation, until the sound has gone forth throughout the world.

It has been his, to be one of the pioneers in the proclamation of this new philosophy of life. Inspired by its spirit, he has met the faiths and creeds of earth's philosophies, in full confidence of triumph. That his ascendency had delivered into his hands the final, complete and perfect system of life and faith, he most firmly and steadfastly believes. In its light he sees and recognizes the fallacies of Platonism, the legalism of Stoicism, the sensuality of Epicurus, and the emptiness of philosophy falsely so called. To him, with the experience of his life behind him, he is founded upon a lasting rock of certainty; nay, more, grafted into a living union with the final Truth revealed of God.

And as, his labors ending, he writes to his spiritual children, exhorting them to permanence in Christian faith and the performance of Christian duty, he sums his confidence in these words: "For we have not followed, cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of His Majesty.

It is with a glance backwards along the crowded centuries of Christian time that I come today to take this same confidence from the lips of the aged Apostle of Christ, as I speak to you of "The Challenger of Faith."

The same faith, existing through all the centuries since, makes the same claim of exact certitude to-day, as when St. Peter faced the persecutions of the Apostolic century. Against it are directed no longer the arms of Roman legions, nor the persecutions of hostile emperors.

Today it meets a more subtle and insidious foe, as a tolerating philosophy relegates its claims to the age of fable, and its system of faith to a place among the world's delusions.

The old world's barbarity in chains and stakes and the greedy lions of amphitheatre, have passed, with their age, into a bloody page of history;—the day of rampant atheism, soulless, lifeless, raging like flaming waves of the sea, lies like a blot, far removed;—to-day the air about us is filled with another spirit; the cry comes in other syllables;—we have come to the day of a philosophy that, mighty in aim, colossal in achievement, tremendous in activity, vaunts itself to a supreme arrogance as enshrining the scientific syllogisms as the final arbiter, it pronounces judgment on all things. The scientific syllogism! I mean by that experimental reason; not the pure Reason of Kant who died complaining that no one understood him; not the misty reason of Hegel, that, like the star dust, is neither light nor darkness,—but the experimental reason of school and college; of laboratory of climate, of lens and scale; of telescope and test tube;—the experimental reason, that; discovering not the laws, but the results of law in the natural world insulates its wires, perfects its carbons, whirls its dynamos, and in the splendor of its achievements, cries as it shines out with the vividness of its mighty light: "The age of darkness is past; the new age of philosophy has dawned! Leave your old, time long theories; close your pages of legendary ages past! To-day is the full dawn of the New Creation. Thought is the incarnation; Science its High Priest; Invention its Gospel; Attainment its Immortality."

Such is the cry that, modified by many environments, greets us today. For the splendor of its achievements we have sought but admiration; in the magnificence of its attainments all must glory; but for the ruthlessness of its iconoclasm the ages to come will mourn, as it turns against the faith that has been its foundation and denies the mother that gave form and substance to its life.

In presenting to you today a defence of revealed Christianity upon the basis of external and experimental proof, I am met once more by the question, "What do you mean by Christianity?" Our day is non-descript in its nomenclature. Words are often the changeable insignia of factions. Interpretations are often arbitrary. Human theories coin meanings, and press ancient syllables into the dies they cut. What do you mean by Christianity?

In a single word, Christianity is Christ. His personality implanted in humanity; His life entering into and absorbed by our life. The introduction from above of a new re-agent, that solvent to some, destructive to others, of the elements in their composite lives of ours, effects a change and creates a new combination. The ethics and morals of Christian philosophy; these are not Christianity, but its results. The forms and types

of Christian worship and administration; these are not Christianity, but its means. Christianity in its simplest definition is the supernatural revelation of a new life, that carefully regarding the natural structure of this life; carefully conserving the permanence of natural law, overleaping none of the barriers that exist in the domain of the perfect development of effect from adequate cause as added to the kingdoms of Nature a new order, the kingdom of Heaven.

But in its broader and more comprehensive sense, what do I mean by Christianity?

I mean that faith, that philosophy, that rule of life and obedience, that, enunciated by the personal teaching of Jesus Christ; delivered by Him to those whom He chose to be the Apostles of His Gospel, became the visible, tangible Creed of the Church, that from the beginning has been called by His name. The structure of belief that crystallized in the matchless brevity of the Apostles' Creed has, in all these centuries, reiterated what He Himself declared:

"The faith in God; the faith in man." The hope in Christ, where hope began, that has taught the world to believe in the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of humanity, the pardon of sin, and the hope of immortality; and has, in all conditions of life, ministered to the purest and best of these natures of ours, and pointed ever upwards as to the stars. I mean that system that, when the iron power of Rome had spent its fury, came out of the catacombs to set up a more lasting throne than Caesar's that has inspired and preserved the best of human thought, and attained, and gives to the world today the unequalled glory of Christian civilization. I mean the religion of Jesus Christ; the one final philosophy; the one complete solution of the weird enigma of human life; the one system that has ever claimed to answer the questionings of the human spirit and satisfy the soul of man, and my work to-day as I speak to you who are studying the phenomena by which our lives are surrounded and of which our lives are part, is to attempt to satisfy you by logical, experimental proof that in pointing you to Christian faith as the climax of human thought, I am following with you no cunningly devised fables, but am bringing you into the presence of One who, above the revered Isis of Egypt, the oracles of Greece, or the Titanic deities of mighty Rome; who, far beyond him of the hemlock, or the philosopher of the highest good; who, supreme beyond all modern thought, as Alcyon shines in the centre of the starry worlds, says, because He has the right to say, "I am the Truth."

I have said that Christianity is, in its essence, a vital power; that it has to do with the sources of life the springs of thought, emotion, and that most inscrutable power of all, the human will. As such it rests for its inherent characteristics upon internal evidences. The individual experiences of those who confess its truth; the inner illumination of those who ac-