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Next to Bible study, there is nothing else to strengthen the faith of a young Christian so much as the study of old Christians. Pick out the other men and women who have really made a business of serving the Lord, and ask them if they know anything about the Lord's personal leadings. And consider the answers you get. Take a man who has gone through life with everything coming right for him at the critical time; perplexities cleared away when he was himself at his wits end; sickness and trial removed when at length he could endure no more; food and raiment supplied when visible supplies were just exhausted; spiritual strength given at a moment when the heart was sick with dread of yielding to a great temptation—when a man out of a lifetime of such experiences has come to old age in the firm conviction that God does care intimately and minutely for his servants, what a tremendous argument for faith it is. And then when you go round a community and find a dozen aged saints all ready to bear the same testimony, the establishment of one's confidence ought to be firmer than the everlasting rocks. For God is no respecter of persons, and what he has done for so many others he will surely do for us. In order to get all the truth, we must notice what these well-tried witnesses give thanks for. They have not always had prosperity. God says he watches when the sparrow falls, but there is no sign that the sparrow will never be allowed to fall. But neither sparrow nor man is going to be hurt. And the man who walks close to God learns what things God is most interested in. The Father would much rather see you a good man than a rich man, of course. And if God shapes the course of any one of us with the apparent object of taking away from us worldly good things and giving us more of heavenly good things, it is more a proof of providence than any doubt of it.

"CHRISTIANITY AND CURRENT LITERATURE."

The "British Weekly" is loud in praise of Dr. Henry Van Dyke's address before the Pan-Presbyterian Council at Liverpool, on "Christianity and Current Literature." Beginning with a brilliant defense of "book religion," and following this with a rapid presentation of the beauty and power of the Bible, he tells us that it is true that "Christ wrote no volume; but he absorbed one literature, the Old Testament, and he inspired another, the New Testament." He protests against that ignorant and wicked exclusion from schools of a volume which Huxley and Arnold called "the most potent in the world for moral inspiration." Wherever it comes it enriches and ennobles human life, opens common sources of consolation and cheer, helps men to understand and respect one another, gives a loftier tone to philosophy, a deeper meaning to history, and a purer light to poetry." He finds the Bible to be the elevated plane from which all the great Anglo-Saxon writers have looked out upon life, each telling us what is to be seen therefrom, as "the man upon a mountain peak tells you not of the mountain upon which he stands, but of what he sees therefrom." The message of the great masters of English verse from Shakespeare to Tennyson, he flashes forth in a line devoted to each, and shows how everyone of them has drawn his best inspiration from some Bible truth. And his close, describing the "loftier and serenener region (of the Word) where through the clear air of serious thoughts one can learn to look soberly and bravely upon the mingled misery and splendor of human existence," will be remembered long.

Lutheran Observer:—It is a perfectly just demand that preaching shall concern itself with concrete conditions. Men need and they want applied Christianity. They have a right to look to the pulpit for help, hope, inspiration in their daily lives. The great problem with them is how they are to gain and keep possession of their souls in spite of the things that assail their faith and that tempt them to apostatize. What they need to feel is that the gospel is not a beautiful theory of life about which they hear on Sunday, but a mighty ally every day, adapted to aid and strengthen them in all their trials and vicissitudes and bear them through in triumph. They are entitled to hear the saving truth applied to the concrete social, economic, political and commercial conditions of the world and times in which they live. They have a right to demand that the pulpit be alive to the spirit of the age, understanding its movements, sympathizing with its heart-hunger, and able to speak to the living needs of the day in the living thought and language of the day. "Preaching for the times" in this sense will always be in order. No other sort will meet imperative requirements. Here as in nature, adaptation to environment conditions means success.

A LIVING FAITH.

A living Christian faith is that acute sense of the reality and worth of the things of Christ that makes a man live for them. It is the faith that shapes life. It is more than a mere intellectual assent to the facts of Christianity. Christianity is historic. It had a beginning from a Person who really lived, and whose life is accurately recorded; and it has had growth, clearly marked and defined. The character of its founder is distinctly known; the nature and general purport of his teachings are correctly reported. It is a historic event, and as such is to be accredited. It is a matter for belief, just as Caesar and his empire are, or Plato and his philosophy, or Shakespeare and his poetry. But this faith does not touch the springs of life.

Furthermore, the assent of the mind to Christian doctrine is not always equivalent to living faith. Men do not always make the connection between knowledge and conduct. A body of truth held in the mind is valuable only as unmined gold is valuable—it exists as a possible resource. To be a living power it must feed, incite, guide life. Faith making the connection is living faith. To many a man who knows of the historic Jesus of Nazareth, life is no more than to some who know nothing at all of Him. One may be familiar with and give credence to the great truths in Christ's teaching, and yet entirely ignore them in his conduct. He has not made vital contact between truth and life.

The advantage of having belief so clear that it can find clean-cut, concise statement in a creed is inestimable. It is a question whether inner conviction can have any force at all in life so long as it is too vague for distinct credal statement. A creed is a power so long as it utters a vital faith, so long as it is warm with truths born of vital personal experience. But the danger is that truth so formally embodied becomes embalmed, fastened like a cold dead weight upon a mind it does not fit, satisfied with mere intellectual affirmation without the vital confirmation of experience. A living faith grows, and, like the chambered nautilus in its shell, enlarges its statement of truth, or packs into the old words vastly richer new meaning, as the seasons roll.

A living faith is that power by which all the content of Christian creed and Christian history is converted into one material for life. It makes God more than an object to be thought about and argued about, rather a Person to pray to, to trust, and to obey. His love is the mainspring of life. God in Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us, is to the believing heart the supreme fact of life. It sends a man down into the business and the battle of life, and even into its pleasures, with a supreme sense of the eternal issues of earthly service, and of the spiritual relations that lie back of existence, directing it to the wise and proper use of all that belongs to time and sense. It puts one into personal relation with a living God.