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Its ... today

Continued from last week

CHAPTER V
THE APOSTLES' CREED

The Doctor settled into an easy chair and looked keenly at the Rector.

"You are taking a good deal of trouble to enlighten me," he said at length.

"Why not? Religion is as much a matter for investigation as medicine. It stands the intellectual test."

"Do most people realize that?" asked the Doctor.

"Maybe not. Many people have the religious instinct and seek the place where religion is presented. But I am sure that many desire to know more of the foundations upon which their religious practices rest."

The Judge and the Major entered at that moment and after the usual greetings the four men gathered about the fire.

"Well, Rector," began the Major, "what's the program for tonight?"

The Judge answered. "We are to be enlightened on the subject of the Apostles' Creed."

The Rector looked at the Doctor who nodded assent.

"Let's have sound doctrine," cautioned the Major smiling.

The Doctor was alert in a moment. "Before you begin," he said, I should like to say that I have always felt that the Church was too much attached to what the Major calls doctrine. The word makes me nervous. Why couldn't the Church have less doctrine and not puzzle us so much?"

The Rector laughed. "What do you mean by doctrine, Doctor?" he inquired.

The Doctor did not answer at once. He was deep in thought. Finally he exclaimed, "I mean abstruce theological statements set forth on authority, but to be believed by the people."

The Rector threw up his hands. "No wonder you want less of it. So do I. You are not defining doctrine. Doctrine is something quite different."

"What is it then?" challenged the Doctor.

"In brief, doctrine is truth, clearly set forth in teachable form. In general, every proposition of geometry is doctrine." Here the Rector reached for a book from the shelf nearby. "This is a book on the Science of Physics. Here is the first law of motion. 'If a body be at rest it will remain so unless acted upon by some external force.' That's doctrine."

"But that is a law of science," urged the Doctor.

"Yes, but it is truth set forth in teachable form."

"But the laws of science are different. They can be proved."

"Nevertheless, they are doctrine. Every body of truth, scientific, or historical, or philosophical, or literary, has certain essential principles which men endeavor to express as clearly as possible in order to teach others. Let us get this matter straight at the beginning. Religion has a certain body of truth. When that truth is put in teachable form it is doctrine."

"I heard a man at the club today," said the Doctor, "arguing about the Church. He said that unless the Church abolished its doctrines it would never appeal to him."

"I do not want to slander a possible friend of yours," said the Rector, "but that man was talking sheer nonsense. It sounded big and superior, but it was pure ignorance combined with a little bluster. He wanted to be a liberal fellow, eh?"

"I assumed as much," admitted the Doctor.

"I have no patience with men who think straight on other matters, but who dismiss religion with a phrase that means nothing. No truth has any force until it becomes expressed in doctrine. The multiplication table is pure mathematical doctrine. The rules of Latin grammar are doctrine."

"You are using the word in a general sense," interposed the Doctor. "How about theological doctrine? Is that not more narrow?"

"Not necessarily so," replied the Rector. "There are certain sciences whose truths may not be set forth with mathematical certainty, but which nevertheless may be taught to men. Philosophy is one such science, psychology is another. There are many others. Theology starts with a few fundamental facts. Every known fact is a challenge to investigating minds. Men try to learn the whole of the system of which one well established fact is a part. When you have fully established one fact, you are compelled, if you think at all, to draw certain conclusions from it. Robinson Crusoe saw the footprint in the sand. That was a fact. He immediately concluded that a human being had landed on his island. His thoughts revolved about that fact. Take Geology. The discovery of an almost perfect skeleton of a man in a cave at Mentone in France, together with the bones of extinct animals, and all covered with stalagmitic crust, is a fact. This together with other facts of a similar nature have set men thinking about the antiquity of man on this earth. Given a fact, thought about it is inevitable."

Granted," said the Doctor, "but what has that to do with doctrine?"

"Everything," answered the Rector. "Newton saw the apple fall. He noted the fact. His thought about it resulted in his doctrine of gravitation. Now in theology there are certain fundamental facts. Men's thinking about them produces a body of doctrine."

"But what if men draw false conclusions?" objected the Doctor.

"One man is most liable to do so," admitted the Rector. "But the doctrine of the Church is not the conclusion of one man. It is the corporate conclusion of vast numbers of men who have studied, investigated, and verified their conclusions. These conclusions, which the thought and experience of ages have substantiated, are presented as the sound judgment of the Church as to the meaning of the facts."

"But do not doctrines change with the passing ages?"

"Of course. Let us be clear. The facts are eternal and change not. But with the passing of the centuries and with new knowledge, the doctrines change. It is so with every science, your own most of all. The doctrines of the Church represent the highest possible reach of the Church toward the ultimate realities."

"But must people believe them even if they do not understand them?"

"Not at all! Belief in the doctrine of the Church does not mean blind intellectual assent to those doctrines. But it does mean an attitude of confidence in the truth-finding capacity of the Church, and a consequent trust in the conclusions. I have not enough knowledge of medicine to say that I believe, intellectually, in a single of your prescriptions. Yet I h... much confidence in the whole ... medical science, and ... the pr...

believe in y... re not trying ... iption, if al experiment ... some indi- But are the doct... wn." be taken like p... e Church ...s?" "No. The analo... octrine is quite ... d in... telligible. nt you cannot sw... ar a... it like a pill. ach one can absorb ... allonly what he can understand and use. But the Church ... a teaching body and it tries to make men understand the doctrine."

"Give an exampe."

"A fundamental doctrine of Christianity is that God is ... the dead. ... is not nature! God is not Ghost, ... force, but God is a Person. As such He is capable of love, and He loves men. He wants men to do His will, and He has made clear His will. To those who do His will He promises some supreme experience which we call life eternal."

"Is that doctrine?" asked the Doctor.

"It surely is. Now there are two ways of believing it. One way is to say that it has your intellectual assent as an explanation of God's relation to men. The other way is to admit this statement and this doctrine as a part of your living, as a motive, an incentive and a principle. Then your life shows that you have assented unto it with your whole being."

"You can live doctrine then?" asked the Doctor.

"You cannot do anything else if you really accept it. The Church is only slightly concerned that men agree intellectually that the system of doctrine is reasonable. The Church is tremendously concerned that its teachings become a part of each man's life, and that he base his actions and words upon them."

"Then belief is not merely saying that you think something is true when you do not know whether it is true or not?"

"You must have been under some misguided task masters in your youth, Doctor," broke in the Judge. "What in the world gave you that impression?"

The Major answered for him. "The lack of attention in maturity to the real claims of religion. I know. I went through it."

"Belief," said the Rector, "involves the confidence of the whole man in the reliability of the main fact that the world and the race are the products of God's will, and a certainty that those teachings which follow from this fact are trustworthy. Such a belief is the reliance of man upon the validity of human thinking and his faith that the world is not a huge deception arranged for his confession, but an orderly, reasonable, and loving expression of God's good will and love toward men."

"But does one have to accept the doctrine to become a member of the

(Continued on page 3)

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AS SHE WAS.

This is the picture of a pretty little Armenian girl before her country was devastated by the Turks. Thousands and thousands of little ones like her are now absolutely dependent on the United States for salvation from starvation. The Christmas appeal of the Near East Relief is now going through this county. Those who wish to help these helpless little ones are asked to communicate with the Near East Committee in their county.

ARE FORCED TO EAT HUMAN FLESH

STARVING CHRISTIANS IN NEAR EAST DYING BY THOUSANDS OF HUNGER.

U. S. THE SOLE HOPE

Horrible as it seems starving persons in the countries of the Near East — men, women and children of the Christian faith —have been driven by hunger to the eating of human flesh, according to a letter from Aimee Vanneman Higdon, recently received by the officials of the Near East Relief, at Maryland Headquarters, 453 Title Building, Baltimore.

Dated at Erivan, in the Caucasus, the letter says:

"Conditions here are terrible but the worst place is Igdir near Etchmiadzin. There the houses are full of unburied dead. A man walking through the streets the other day seemed to be carrying a sack; upon examination it was found to contain the body of a freshly killed man which the bearer was carrying home to eat. In another family the cook was found roasting half the body of a baby. In other places children have been seen cracking human bones for marrow. I can really scarcely endure the sights we see of famished children on the streets. We do not have enough to feed half of them; besides we do not have half enough relief workers.

Children Lie Dead In The Streets.

"If the American people could realize that it is a common thing all through Armenia to see children lying dead in the streets, and that people are forced to eat each other, they would hate themselves for having any surplus money which they would not offer to save these poor people. In some places the orphans are gathered from the street and placed in a big open courtyard to be given one bit of bread. They have to sleep on the ground with no covering. Usually the following morning they are sorted over and the dead ones put to one side until the ox-cart comes around to gather them up.

"Meanwhile the wonderful fertile fields are all ploughed by the survivors of the massacres, but there is no grain to sow. The Tartars and Turks have carefully taken away all seed grain so as to make it impossible for the Armenians to have a harvest this year. Just to think that these black soil valleys must go barren—that is the discouraging thing about it. It looks as though this famine must continue all next year. Things like this make one's blood boil. Many of the Armenians have money but neither Tartars nor Gregorians will sell them anything. It seems as though something ought to be done at once to put an American or other protectorate here to save the people.

"The streets are full of weeping and begging. I can certainly say I have never seen a smile in this place—just people crying all the time Ajam, Ajam (I am hungry). When they receive something to eat, they break down and weep from sheer weakness. If some of the indifferent people in America could see this, they would never be the same people again. There are few Americans who could even dream that there could be so much torture and suffering in the world. Of course, there are individual cases everywhere, but never before a whole nation in such a condition of suffering which never ends.

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