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Sept. 17, 1904. CHESTERTOWN, MD.

"Why I Am a Christian."

THIRD SERIES.—No. V.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I told you in my very last letter that I had another consideration to offer to show that the Christian religion meets the wants of our hearts, both as children and brethren. I have touched on it before, but it is so important, and so precious, that I must dwell upon it by itself. It is that of intercourse between God and man.

When we once believe—and when did man not believe that there is a God, his Creator?—our anxious hearts ask, What is God to us now? Has He made us and provided for us, and set the world going, and left it to go on by itself, leaving us to ourselves? or does He care for us, watch over us, tell us what we want to know, and hear us when we call upon Him? To these questions our heart, the heart of humankind has ever given one answer; it could not bear any other, namely, this: "God still cares for us, and God hears us." But how are we to entreat Him? and how does He reply? The answers to this further question have been, and still are very various. The fact is, we do not know, until He instructs us. Hence the oracles and false prophets, and sorceries, and hideous sacrifices, and vain oblations of the heathen, poor attempts at that which is right, poor, because ignorant. The religion of the Jews answered the question rightly, because it was God's religion—answered it up to a certain point; the religion of Mahomet answers it less perfectly up to that certain point; but our religion, that of Christ, having in it all that is true of the former religion completes the instructions as manhood crowns youth, and noon the dawn of the day.

The answer which my religion gives to these anxious questions is one which lays to rest these my cares; indeed, fills me with all joy and thankfulness. I give it to you in its own blessed words. "God, who in sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son," and "whatever ye shall ask the father, in my name, He will give it unto you."

I will not dwell on the watchful care which God has for our earthly good, nor on His constant providence; but I will speak of higher and more lasting interests; and I say that the incarnation (that is God taking our nature and becoming man, and its effects answers the question of our anxious hearts. "Does God still love us, care for us, help us?" Let that which He by His Son and His spirit, has done and still does; let His Church, His Sacraments, His Holy Scriptures make answer. If we understand their words, we will certainly gather this meaning, "What more could He have done that He has not done? What could He do that He does not do? He speaks to us and we to Him. There is free access to Him through Christ the mediator between God and man." This then I confidently assert. The heart of man requires intercourse with its God, and by our religion receives it and enjoys it.

4. Again—a tradition of Incarnation—God and Man in one Person—is to be found in the old religions of the world. I call it a tradition, because we christians know the prophecies and other sources from which the heathen probably derived it; and also because it is too bold a thought for man to think out for himself. Nevertheless, as it has been clung to so tenaciously, we may well regard this hope of an incarnation as a craving of human nature, and a want requiring satisfaction.

But those old false religions failed to supply that which they intimated. In the West, heroes became gods, and gods came down for good purposes and for bad; but no union between God and man came in, no real benefit to mankind.

In the East, Vishnu became incarnate in many and wild forms, but he goes back to his abode, laying aside all these forms and leaving man as he found him.

The same is to be said of the religion of the Buddhists and Parsees. The unity of the Divine and human has no real existence in these religions. Man remains below unsanctified, unexalted. If manhood really craves for Union with God, it cannot find that which it desires except in the gospel.

That God took our fallen nature unto Himself thereby cleansing it, and in that nature working out the reconciliation of sinful man with his God, the regeneration of our nature, the permanent grace and bless of union, God in man and man in God, now and forever; all this is not beyond and above the highest desires of the best of heathens, that it is the certain heritage of every christian; and, therefore, I praise God for giving us in Christ that which mankind yearned after, but in a manner and dergee infinitely beyond those yearnings, even a real union with Himself, by the Incarnation of the Second Person of the even Blessed Trinity, Jesus Christ our Lord.

5. I will make another point, it is this, the morality of the Gospel produces health and happiness, therefore surely the gospel seems designed by the Creator for His creatures. Every one admits that temperance, industry and charity are good for our body and mind, but the mere fact that they are good for us is not enough to influence men in general, and to counteract the force of their passions. There is no warmth in this principle, no love; nothing to carry the heart with it, but only the head, and reason alone has little power over men's actions.

But our religion not only strengthens immensely the influence of reason, teaching us that temperance and chastity are necessary. not only for our happiness in this life, but for happiness in the life to come; but it adds all the forces of love and gratitude; urging us, if not for our own sakes, yet for God's sake, who has bestowed such good things upon us, and promised such inestimable blessings hereafter, to do that which pleases Him, out of love and of gratitude. Nor this only, but acknowledging how weak and helpless we are to do right, the Gospel shows us how to gain strengh, and opens the floodgates of spiritual power, which we call grace; enabling us to do that which will both please God, and is best for ourselves. Besides, our religion teaches a higher morality than any which has ever been attempted, or thought of apart from it; which morality suits our nature and adds to our happiness.

Who is there who does not see that the unlawfulness of having more wives than one, and the unlawfulness of divorce is the guardian of domestic virtue and happiness? Who does not see how the honor which the Gospel pays to poverty and to loathsome disease softens the sorrows of life? Who does not acknowledge that forgiveness of injuries, patience under persecution and in adversity, and the loving our neighbor as ourselves—imperfectly practiced as they are—act as a balm to our sores, and that if they were fully exercised, they would double the happiness of our life? And thus the higher morality of the Gospel, its peculiar morality, are evidently suited to this nature of ours, and to the condition of our present life; and have a claim of the same kind, only stronger, to be considered as the gift of our Creator to His creatures, as that which we have already noticed in the case of light, and air, and food, and other like things which correspond to our bodily organs, and their necessity.

6. Then again, the gospel rule is so simple and universal that it is a rule for humanity. It is not a code, nor a ritual; although code and ritual spring from it. It is not a law which only one or two classes of persons can fulfil. It does not require leisure, and knowledge, and a refining mode of life like the systems of Plato and Aristotle, but is equally the rule of the young and the old, the servant and the master; and can be practiced by persons whose condition and callings would seem likely to extinguish every spark of the lofty and noble. It is simply the law of love, love of God, love of man, placed on a high and unshaken foundation, and made easy by new and powerful motives and aid.

7. To enlarge upon a point already touched upon. By those who are degraded and criminal, remedies are required which the gospel alone fully supplies. The first is a desire to amend, which can not last long enough to produce any effect without a well-grounded hope, which again can not exist without the assurance of pardon and moral restoration. Now what hope of these, is to be found in human philosophies? They could not and did not attempt to point out a way of pardon. The Heathen religions had sacrifices, which testified to men's natural sense of the need of atonement; but these were not thought to deliver from a vengeance which pursued guilt from generation to generation.

There was no mediation nor atonement to be had for great sins. Repentance was felt to be inefficient of itself, and the want of a true sacrifice was tacitly acknowledged. And then, supposing sin to be forgiven, what was to purify the defiled heart? to change a cruel, crafty, selfish man into a loving and truthful one? The answer of philosophy was only "Habit, good actions form habits of virtue by degrees." Yes, but how is such a man to begin and still more to persevere in good habits? To this no reply could be given.

It is the gospel alone which offers what the sinners require, hope of pardon thorough and lasting by a true sacrifice and atonement; hope of rising again and of purification by a spiritual influence upon his heart, helping him to begin afresh, and by degrees to form those habits of virtue which the gospel recognizes as fully as philosophy; but with this vital difference, that it alone makes it possible.

In my next letter I will give reasons of a different kind for my being a christian.

Faithfully yours,

HENRY B. MARTIN.

A Boston schoolboy was tall, weak and sickly.

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A Wedding Day Reminder.

William James, the famous psychologist of Harvard, said at a dinner in Boston:

"An odor often brings back memories that we had thought buried forever. As we regard some strange landscape it often seems to us that we have been just here before. The oddest, the most momentous associations oftentimes attach themselves to the most trifling things.

"Thus at a Thanksgiving dinner that I once attended the hostess said to a sour faced man on my left:

"'May I help you to some of the boiled rice, Mr. Smith?'

"'Rice? No, thank you—no rice for me,' Smith answered vehemently. 'It is associated with the worst mistake of my life.'"

The Music Critic.

At the risk of making this an apology as well as a confession I venture to express the hope that I may some day have the means to enjoy the best music without need of telling three hundred thousand or more readers why; whether Carubonci had tears in his voice; how Mme. Sembrich-Eames looked and acted; whether the second soprano was off key; the basso dependent upon the prompter; the conductor too fast or too slow, according to actual stop watch and metronome; how the lights were managed; whether the audience was large and appreciative or otherwise and whether the music was good, bad, indifferent and why.—Atlantic.

Brain Growth.

The brain usually stops growing at about fifty, and from sixty to seventy it is more likely to decrease. It has been related by Canon MacColl that Mr. Gladstone's head was constantly outgrowing his hats. As late as the Midlothian campaign, when he was nearly seventy, he was obliged to have his head remeasured for this reason. Canon MacColl's conclusion that this continual growth of brain contributed to Mr. Gladstone's perennial youthfulness appears not unwarranted.—London Spectator.

Oratory.

"What am oratory, Brudder Jackson?"

"Brudder Simmins, I will elucidate. If you says black am white, dat am foolish, but if you says black am white an' bellers like a bull an' pounds on a table wif bofe fists dat am oratory, an' some people will believe you."—Atlanta Constitution.

A Juvenile Wriggle.

Mother (an invalid)—Elmer, what did you do with the orange Mrs. Neighbors gave you to give to me yesterday? Small Elmer—It was too sour for you, mamma, so I put some sugar on it and ate it myself.—Chicago News.

It is from the remembrance of joys we have lost that the arrows of affliction are pointed.—Mackenzie.

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