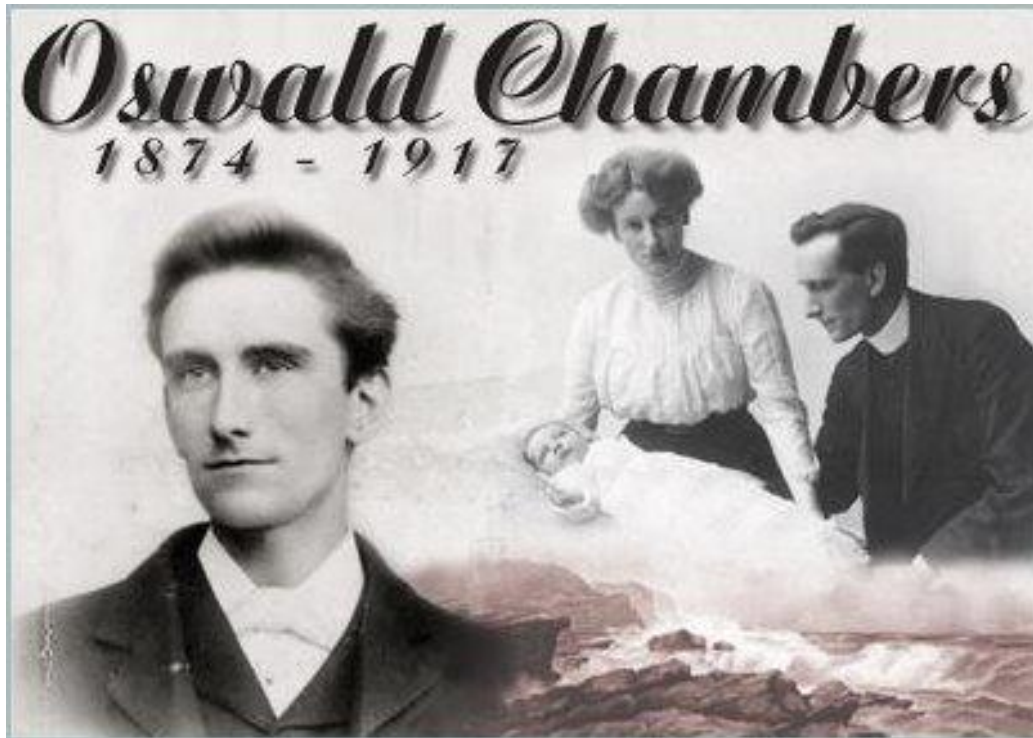


Facing Reality

By Oswald Chambers,



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Oswald J. Chambers (1874 - 1917)

Introduction

It may be helpful to read the following suggestions and statements of impressions that seem to stamp the ways of our God with perilous side-tracks. These are nothing more than suggestions thrown out. A Christian eclecticism is the prevailing conceit of our day, watering down the Word of God to fit broad human experience; selecting what the modern mind likes and rejecting what it does not like, even to the detriment of the Bible. This is a passing dangerous mood. The only sane spiritual attitude is the truth's selection of a man, not a man's selection of the truth.

Truth that is not incarnate is an abstraction. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Truth. Jesus Christ is a revelation—common sense alone never knows Him as “*the Son of the living God*” (*Matthew xvi. 16, 17*). Common sense knows ‘goodness’, ‘purity’, ‘virtue’, etc. To the majority our Lord when on earth was a disappointment (see John vi.); He was a remarkable young man (John vii.46), a prophet (Mark vi.15), a licentious man (Luke vii.34), a demon-possessed man (John viii.8), a sinner (John ix.24), a madman (Mark iii.21).

The Bible is a revelation—the universe of revelation facts; the world is the universe of common-sense facts. The facts of the material universe are ‘swallowed’, so to speak, on the integrity of the nervous system; the facts of the Bible in the universe of spiritual revelation are ‘swallowed’, so to speak, by the wilful commitment of a determined faith. The only way to know the material universe is to be born into it; and the only way to know the spiritual universe is to be born into it. “*Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born from above.*” Satan is a revelation. Satan is the antagonist of God —endeavouring to thwart God's purpose for the human race, he transforms himself as God's messenger, robed in light. Common sense

unaided never knows Satan; common sense knows ‘fate’, ‘misfortune’, ‘evil’, ‘bad luck’, or ‘destiny’, etc. Common sense is our great light, and Satan “*fashioneth himself into an angel of light*” when it suits him.

Too often common sense and its inferences are enthroned as God and are the only court of appeal. When that is so, the Bible and our Lord Jesus Christ pass into the limbo of dreams. Revelation facts alarm at first with the seeming contradiction of common-sense facts, but afterwards we discover that they correct common-sense inferences. This seeming contradiction is Satan’s stronghold. Spiritual fanaticism ignores common-sense facts; it believes that the material world is a huge blunder, or at best a mere dream, or at worst a hideous night-mare. When a man is born again into the spiritual universe he finds that common sense is not ignored but transfigured.

The spiritual life expounds material facts in an entirely new way — “*Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new.*”

A material life as supreme enthrones the Physical as God. An intellectual life as supreme enthrones Wisdom as God.

A spiritual life as supreme enthrones Jesus Christ as God.

These three are one: and any one separated is untrue. A spiritual life that does not alter and transfigure the material is false. A spiritual life that ignores the intellectual and the material is fanatical and false.

Jesus Christ is the Truth, because He alone is the three in one, and He alone can make the three one. A great number of professing Christians are living in the borderland between these three and consequently are in continual ‘swither’

‘*A great number also are ‘thinking pagan thoughts with a tired Christian brain*’. But profounder than the profoundest

philosophy comes the still small voice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ— *Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.*

What Must I Believe?

‘Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.’
(Romans viii. 9.)

There are two domains of Fact: common-sense facts and revelation facts. It is impossible to prove a fact; a fact must be accepted. We accept common-sense facts on the ground of our senses, and we accept revelation facts on the ground of our faith in God.

A Theory is the way we explain facts, an intellectual explanation of the facts we have got, and the explanation is right if there are only those facts. Your theoretical explanation won't work if you have an end to serve. The Christian Science theory says there are no such facts as pain or suffering or death, they are all imaginations; it has forgotten that there are bad facts as well as good. An hypothesis takes only those facts that agree with your theory, it works like a searchlight and life becomes amazingly simple. It is always easier to read a man's book about 'life' than to live your life, because he only takes facts that agree with his view, but when you get pitchforked into the confusion of circumstances, where is your fine theory of explanation?

You have come in contact with a hundred and one facts that the hypothesis had not taken into account. For the same reason, if you are religious, it is easier to read some pious book than the Bible. The Bible treats you like human life does—roughly. There are two ways of dealing with facts—one is to

shut your eyes and say that they are not there, the other is to open your eyes and look at them, and let them mould you.

We begin our religious life by believing our beliefs, we accept what we are taught without questioning; but when we come up against things we begin to be critical, and find out that the beliefs, however right, are not right for us because we have not bought them by suffering. **What we take for granted is never ours until we have bought it by pain. A thing is worth just what it costs.** When we go through the suffering of experience we seem to lose everything, but bit by bit we get it back.

It is absurd to tell a man he must believe this and that; in the meantime he can't! Scepticism is produced by telling men what to believe. We are in danger of putting the cart before the horse and saying a man must believe certain things before he can be a Christian; his beliefs are the effect of his being a Christian, not the cause of it. Our Lord's word 'believe' does not refer to an intellectual act, but to a moral act. With Him '*to believe*' means '*to commit*'. '***Commit yourself to Me***', He says, and it takes a man all he is worth to believe in Jesus Christ. The man who has been through a crisis is more likely to commit himself to a Person, he sees more clearly before the crisis comes we are certain, because we are shallow.

According to the Apostle Paul the essential ingredient in being a Christian is that a man has the Spirit of Christ, no matter what his 'tag' may be. Human strength and earnestness cannot make a man a Christian any more than they can make him an angel; he must receive something from God, and that is what Jesus Christ calls '*being born from above*' (Luke xi. 13; John iii. 3). The supreme test of a Christian is that he has the Spirit of Jesus Christ in his actual life.

The Fact the Bible and the Theory of Inspiration

The Bible is a world of revelation facts, and when you explain the Bible, take into account all the record of it. The Bible nowhere says we have to believe it is the Word of God before we can be Christians. The Bible is not the Word of God to me unless I come at it through what Jesus Christ says, it is of no use to me unless I know Him. The key to my understanding of the Bible is not my intelligence, but personal relationship to Jesus Christ. I begin my theories after I have got on the inside. You may believe the Bible is the Word of God from Genesis to Revelation and not be a Christian at all.

(a) The Mystery of the Bible. “. . . *holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*” (2 Peter i. 21)

What does the Bible say about itself? That it is inspired of the Holy Ghost, but through men, not through mechanisms. It is not that the Holy Ghost took up men in a miraculous way and used them as channels; the chief item is the man, and each Book bears the stamp of the man. The mystery of the Bible is that its inspiration was direct from God, not verbally inspired, but the inspired Word of God—the Final Word of God; not that God is not saying anything now, **but He is not saying anything different from the Final Word, Jesus Christ.** All God says is expounding that Word. The Final Word and the only Word are very different. Be reverent with the Bible explanation of itself.

(b) The Message of the Bible. “*And they are they which testify of Me...*” (John v.39-40)

Jesus Christ says the message of the Bible is about Himself; we cannot interpret it according to any other key “*no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.*” We can prove anything we choose from the Bible once we forget the message Jesus says it contains: “*The test that you know the Bible is*

that you understand what it is driving at, it is expounding Me, giving the exposition of what I am after.'

(c) The Meaning of the Bible. *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...” (2Timothy iii. 14-17)*

The Bible instructs us in righteousness, in the right-ness of practical living; its meaning is to keep us living right. Most people like to use the Bible for anything other than that, for a kind of jugglery to prove special doctrines.

The Fact of Christ and the Dogma of the Trinity

Dogma means the things we say in the creed, systematized theology. There is no dogma of the Trinity in the Bible. I am not asked to believe this and that about Jesus Christ, His birth and resurrection, before I am a Christian, but when I am a Christian I begin to try and expound to myself Who Jesus Christ is, and to do that I must take into consideration the New Testament explanation of Him. The Deity of Jesus Christ does not come to a man's intellect first, but to his heart and life. Nowhere in the New Testament are you asked to believe these facts before you are a Christian. They are Christian doctrines, and the Bible is the illustration of the Christian faith. The New Testament is not written to prove that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, but written for those who believe He is. There are no problems in the New Testament.

(a) His Condition. *“And all bare Him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.” (Luke iv. 22.)*

The condition in which Jesus Christ lived was a remarkably ordinary one, and every time people got startled in listening to Him, they came back to practical realities—He is extraordinary, but *“Is not this Joseph's son? Don't we know all about Him?”* Our Lord's first public sermon is an instance of how it is possible to choke the witness of the heart by the prejudice of the head.

(b) His Character. “*a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs....*”. (Acts ii. 22; John xviii. 20; Acts x. 38.)

The character of Jesus Christ is exhibited in the New Testament, and it appeals to us all. He lived His life straight down in the ordinary amalgam of human life, and He claims that the character He manifested is possible for any man if he will come in by the door He provides. (Luke xi. 13.)

(c) His Claims. “*He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.*” (John xiv. 6-9)

Is the philosophic explanation I have been given of Jesus Christ the right one? Is the essential nature of Deity omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence? The essential nature of Deity is holiness, and the power of God is proved in His becoming a Baby. That is the staggering proposition the Bible gives—God became the weakest thing we know. What does Jesus Christ say about Himself? He claims to be equal with God— “*He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.*”

The Christian revelation is not that Jesus Christ represents God to me, but that He is God. If Jesus Christ is not God, then we have no God. I am an agnostic; that is why I am a Christian. I could not find out anything about God, all I know about Him I accepted in the revelation given by Jesus Christ. I know no other God than Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is a Fact; He is the most honourable and the holiest Man, and two things necessarily follow - first, He is the least likely to be deceived about Himself, second, He is least likely to deceive anyone else. He said, ‘*God will give the very disposition that is Mine to you, if you ask Him.*’ Had He any right to say it—to say God would give me the disposition that ruled Him if I asked? If I say I have nothing in me to prove that Jesus Christ is real, am I willing to ask for the Holy Spirit? If I refuse to try a line Jesus Christ points out because

I do not like it, my mouth is shut as an honest doubter. Let me try it and see if it works. An intellectualist never pushes an issue of will. God comes to any man instanter when he is willing to ask, and he will notice a difference in his actual experience, in his attitude to things, and he will be amazed at the change that has been wrought.

If you feel yourself being riddled and say ‘*I don’t know what to believe*’, go to God on the authority of Jesus Christ and ask Him to give you the Holy Spirit, and experience what the New Testament means by regeneration. It means receiving a new heredity. Jesus Christ never asks anyone to define his position or to understand a creed, but— ‘*Who am I to you?*’ Has Jesus Christ made any difference at all to me in my actual life? Jesus Christ makes the whole of human destiny depend on a man’s relationship to Himself.

The Fact of the Creed and the Doctrines of the Church

A creed means the ordered exposition of the Christian faith, an attempt to explain the faith you have, not the thing that gives you the Christian faith. It is the most mature effort of the human intellect on the inside, not on the outside. The churches make the blunder when they put the creed as the test on the outside, and they produce parrots who mimic the thing.

‘*You must believe a creed!*’ A man says, ‘*I cannot, and if it is essential, then I cannot be a Christian.*’ A creed is necessary, but it is not essential. If I am a devotee of a creed, I cannot see God unless He comes along that line.

(a) The Gift of Instructors. “*And He gave some, apostles; . . . and some, pastors and teachers.*” (Ephesians iv. 11-13.)

The test of an instructor in the Christian Church is that he is able to build me up in my intimacy with Jesus Christ, not that he gives me new ideas, but I come away feeling I know a bit

more about Jesus Christ. To-day the preacher is tested, not by the building up of saints but on the ground of his personality.

(b) The Growth of Institutions. (*Acts vi. 1-4*)

The institutions of Churchianity are not Christianity. An institution is a good thing if it is second; immediately an institution recognizes itself it becomes the dominating factor. When the war struck us in civilized Britain we were members of certain churches and institutions, and were called Christians because we held certain doctrines and creeds. The bedrock of membership of the Christian Church is that we know Who Jesus Christ is by a personal revelation of Him by the Spirit of God. The essence of Christianity is not a creed or a doctrine, but an illumination that emancipates me— ‘*I see who Jesus Christ is*’. It is always a surprise, never an intellectual conception.

(c) The Grasp of Intellect. “*Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.*” (1 Peter iii. 15)

Peter does not say ‘*give an explanation*’, but “*a reason of the hope that is in you*”—be ready to say what you base your hope on.

Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God Whose ways you cannot understand at the time. ‘**I don’t know why God allows what He does, but I will stick to my faith in His character no matter how contradictory things look.**’ Faith is not a conscious thing; it springs from a personal relationship and is the unconscious result of believing someone. **My faith is manifested in what I do, and I am able to explain slowly where I put my confidence.** The faith that swallows is not faith, but credulity or fatalism. I have to get a grasp of the thing in my intellect, but that is second, not first.

Paul puts everything down to the words of Jesus Christ; if He is not what He claims, there is nothing in religion, it is pure fiction. If, however, Jesus Christ is not a humbug, and not a dreamer, but what He claims to be, then Christianity is the grandest fact that ever was introduced to any man.

Vested Interests of the Flesh

“But ye are not . . . , if so be” (Romans viii. 9)

When we are born from above the dominating spirit in us is the Spirit of God; the ‘*mind of the flesh*’ is self-realization, and the first thing that happens in a man’s conscious spiritual life is a divorce between the two. The initial experience is a conflict on the inside.

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” (Galatians v. 17)

Dominant Interest Versus Interesting Details *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” (Romans viii. 2.)*

We can estimate our life on the spiritual line by our dominant interest. How do we know what is our dominant interest? It is not the thing that occupies most time. The dominating interest is a peculiarly personal one, *viz.* the thing that is really fundamentally ours in a crisis. In sorrow or joy we reveal our dominating interest. We are taken up with interesting details; Jesus Christ was not. His insulation was on the inside, not the outside; His dominating interest was hid with God. His kingdom was on the inside, consequently He took the ordinary social life of His time in a most unobtrusive way. His life externally was oblivious of details, He spent His time with publicans and sinners and did the things that were apparently

un-religious. But one thing He never did - He never contaminated His inner kingdom.

God may be dealing with you on the line of ‘*considering the lilies*’, He is causing you to take deeper root and meanwhile you do not bear flowers. For a time your experience is— “*What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light*”. The only ones who knew who Jesus was and what He came to do, were a handful of fishermen. After He had died and risen again, He distinctly told them to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. According to ordinary reason they would have said, ‘*That is absurd, this is not the time to wait; we are the only ones who know these things, we ought to be proclaiming the truth.*’ Jesus said: “*Tarry . . . until...*” Don’t get impatient with yourself, your dominating interest is taking deeper root. In all probability in your time of active service you were living from hand to mouth on spooned meat, you nourished your life by the interesting details of religious life, you had no nutritious : root, and your work proved to be an elaborate way of evading concentration on God. There are far more people interested in consecration than concentration. It is easier to fuss around at work than to worship; easier to pay attention to details, to say our prayers or conduct a meeting, than to concentrate on God. Has God put you on the shelf deliberately? Why cannot He be glorified by a man in the dust as well as in the sunshine? We are not here to tell God what to do with us, but to let Him use us as He chooses. Remember, God’s main concern is that we are more interested in Him than in work for Him. **Once you are rooted and grounded in Christ the greatest thing you can do is to be. Don’t try and be useful; be yourself and God will use you to further His ends.**

Dominant Inspiration Verses Individual Desire *“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.” (Romans viii. 5.)*

A denominating inspiration is a distinct expression of the character. There are all sorts and conditions of inspirations which come to a man's life. For instance, in St. Matthew xvi. 16-25 it is recorded that Peter had two inspirations, one was from God and the other from Satan, but he did not know where either came from until they denominated themselves. Jesus said of one: *‘This is the voice of God’*; of the other: *‘This is the voice of Satan’*. The denominating inspiration that is Christian has the characteristics of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would glorify Him, - *“and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.”* The Holy Spirit does not talk from or about Himself: When a person does extraordinary things and says, *‘God told me to do them,’* it may have been an inspiration, but its denomination had not the characteristic of Jesus Christ. The character of Jesus Christ is the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and holiness is transfigured morality. People are inspired to do the wildest things and have no control over the inspiration.

The inspiration of the Spirit of God denominates itself at once. If you are impulsively led to do a thing, examine it and see what it means. Has it the characteristics of Jesus Christ? *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God.”*

Pure Worship Versus Power of Will *“Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship” (Colossians ii. 20-3.)*

If we desire self-glorification we can have inspirations which have not the denomination of Jesus Christ. Worship is giving to God the best He has given us, and He makes it His and ours for ever. What is the best God has given you? Your right

to yourself. ‘Now,’ He says, ‘*sacrifice that to Me.*’ If you do, He will make it yours and His for ever. If you do not, it will spell death to you. That is the meaning of Abraham’s offering of Isaac. Isaac was the gift of God to Abraham, but God said, ‘*Offer him for a burnt offering.*’ Abraham obeyed, and in the end received the illumination of true sacrifice and true worship of God. The best I have is my claim to my right to myself; my body. If I am born again of the Spirit of God, I will give up that body to Jesus Christ. “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*” (Romans xii 1)

The power of will is a different thing entirely. It says, ‘*I see that on the line of honesty being the best policy, being a Christian is rather a good thing*’ – a dastardly thing to believe or say. Individual desires may smatter of the right thing, but if they have not the dominating inspiration of the Spirit of God they are dead. That is why Jesus said to the Scribes and Pharisees, “*Woe unto you, ...for ye are like unto whited sepulchres*”; and to His disciples, “*Do not ye after their works: for they say and do not.*” There is always a twist about everyone o us until we get the dominating inspiration of the Spirit of God. It makes us condemn the sins we are not inclined to while we make any amount of excuses for those we have a mind to, and they may be ten times worse. If we are inspired by the Spirit of God our lives are lived unobtrusively; we do not take the attitude of ascetics, but live perfectly natural lives in which the dominating interest is God.

Dwelling Identification Versus Inevitable Death *“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.” (Romans viii. 9.)*

Our true life is not intellect or morality or bodily eating and drinking; our true life is our relationship to Jesus Christ. If once we recognize that and take care to be identified with Him in the crises of life, God will look after all the rest. If we try to draw our inspiration from elsewhere we will die in the attempt.

New Creation Versus Consecrating Nature *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2 Corinthians v. 17.)*

When we are indwelt by the Spirit of Christ we are in a new creation. A man in love and a man convicted of sin are in the same external world, but, in totally different creations. Both may be in the desert, but one has a disposition which makes him interpret the desert as a desolating piece of God’s territory, while to the other the desert literally blossoms as the rose. The disposition of the one is mad, he sees no light in the sun, no sweetness in anything; his ruling disposition is one of misery, while to the other—

*Heaven above is brighter blue,
Earth around is sweeter green;
Something lives in every hue,
Christless eyes have never seen.*

Consecrating ‘natural gifts’ is popular but a snare, ‘I have the gift of a voice and I will consecrate it to God and sing “Always, only, for my King.”’ If a man or woman is devoted to God, they can sing anything with the blessing of God; but if they are not right they may sing “Take my life”, and serve the devil in doing it. It is not the external things that tell, but the ruling disposition. There is no indication in God’s Word that we should consecrate natural

gifts, although we find many such indications in hymns. The only thing we can consecrate is our bodies. If we consecrate them to God, He takes them.

Immediately consecration is taken on the other line, the indwelling identification is not with Jesus Christ but with ourselves, which spells death. If we have the dwelling identification with Jesus Christ, then we are alive, and more and more alive. In the Christian life the saint is ever young; amazingly and boisterously young, certain that everything is all right. A young Christian is remarkably full of impulse and delight, because he realises the salvation of God; but this is the real gaiety of knowing that we may *cast all our cares on Him and that He careth for us*. This is the greatest indication of our identification with Jesus Christ.

Interest And Identification

“We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions . . . and the Lord hath made lo light on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah liii.4-6, RV. marg.)

Immediately we face Jesus Christ two issues reveal themselves: first, the issue of interest, second; the issue of identification. Which issue are we caught up with?

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance. from dead works, and of faith toward God.” (Hebrews vi. 1)

Interest *“And they sat and watched Him there.”* (Matthew xxvii. 36.)

The name of those interested is legion. Thank God for interest; the fascination of our Lord Jesus Christ is on the interested, and by pious performances and personal penances, and seasons of waiting on God, they sit and watch Him there, dissolved in mists of sentiment and self-depreciating

conventions. It is a gracious state to be in, as an introductory stage, but a place of imminent peril to remain in.

From positions of sitting in solemn silence, this stage of interest may reach a development like that indicated in Mark xv. 39— "*The centurion, which stood . . . , saw . . . , said, Truly this man was the son of God.*" The attitude has changed to a standing, and speculative statements are the result. Our Lord is inferred to be a sublime martyr, good beyond any goodness of man or woman yet witnessed on this earth. , His life and ideals were so far beyond His time and age that all the reward they gave Him was to crucify Him. "*Truly this man was the Son of God.*" He is stated to be from this stage of standing interest, the very first of all martyrs, of all prophets, of all priests.

There is still another development of the issue of interest and that is indicated in John i. 38, 39— "*Rabbi, where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw . . . , and abode with Him that day.*" This may represent the sympathetic souls who follow our Lord Jesus Christ out of the natural affinity of their natural hearts. They '*follow in His steps*' just as the disciples did in the days of His flesh, growing more and more perplexed at His teaching, more and more strained in their comprehension; becoming overwhelmed with their own sorrow in Gethsemane till they "*all forsook Him, and fled,*" and He went alone to His place for us—the Cross.

So many abide with Him '*that day*'—the day of natural devotion and interest; honest, earnest souls whose sense of the heroic, like Peter, or of the holy, like John, and the honest, like Thomas, has made them '*leave all and follow Him*', but only to heartbreak and faltering; slowly but surely they break for retreat and return to their own. (John xvi. 32.) All around us are these sad, spirituelle people wandering and wondering, too fascinated by our Lord Jesus Christ to turn again willingly to

the “*beggarly elements*” of the world; all the pleasures of sin are not possible because of their interest in Him.

This inward disaster and unsatisfactoriness they scarcely dare confess to themselves, let alone to others. Where have they failed? Are you there, reader? Then you are on the way of the Cross. You must go to the Cross. Read John xx. 22 and couple it with Luke xi. 13 and then as a destitute soul receive the gift of the Holy Spirit on the ground of what Jesus did on the Cross, and He will identify His life with yours. “*I will not leave you desolate: I come unto you.*” (John xiv. 18.)

Intermediate “*And they stood still, looking sad. And they said unto Him ...But we hoped.Yea, and beside all this, ...Moreover certain women of our company amazed us, ...but Him they saw not.*” (Luke xxiv. 17-24.)

The literature produced by the interested is most prolific and enervating. This literature may deal with the statements of Jesus Christ before His Cross, and strange and fantastic are the doctrines that are woven, and no wonder, as the only exegete of our Lord’s Word and doctrines is the Holy Spirit, and He is not given to any man who is blind to the Atonement of the Cross. The Holy Spirit is a gift, remission of sins is a gift, eternal life is a gift, on the ground of the Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Ignore that, and life is a wayless wilderness, where all our ideals fade and falter, leaving us only a grey, uncertain outlook, gathering to an eternal night.

The literature of the undegenerated intellect in a final analysis ends where Matthew Arnold’s words place it.

*Thou waitest for the spark from heaven! and we,
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will’d,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfill’d;*

*For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-thy—
Ah I do not we, wanderer, await it too?*

How one's whole being yearns to get such men and women to see that our Lord Jesus Christ by the gift of His Spirit, in mighty regeneration, ends this night of sorrow. Reader, if your counterpart is in any of the sentiments already expressed, seek God now on the merits of the Cross, and ask Him for the gift of the Holy Spirit, and receive Him in faith.

Identification *“I have been crucified with Christ, . . . and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself up for me.” (Galatians ii. 20.)*

What is imperatively needed is that emotional impressionisms and intellectual and moral interest be violently made by each individual into a moral verdict against our self-interest, our right to ourselves, determinedly letting go of all and signing the death warrant of the disposition of sin in us.

Paul says, *“I have been crucified with Christ”*; not *‘I have determined to imitate Him,’* or *‘I endeavour to follow Him,’* but, **‘I have been identified with Him.’** This is the point of vital godliness—the individual deciding, something after this manner:

‘My God, I should be there on that bitter cross.’

*My sins, my sins, my Saviour,
How sad on Thee they fall.*

All that Jesus Christ wrought for us is worked in us whenever we come to such a violent moral decision and act on it, for this is the free committing that gives the Spirit of God His chance to impart the mighty substituted holiness of God to us.

“I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me.” The individual remains, but the mainspring, the ruling disposition, is radically different; the same human body remains, but the old Satanic right to myself is gone. A lamp takes up very little room, but its burning and shining light streams far and penetrates wide, consumed in a glorious effulgence by the indwelling light. No wonder the Scriptures exclaim: “Our God is a consuming fire.” “Wherefore, if any man is in Christ, there is a new creation”, and, “we have this treasure in earthen vessels.”

“The life which I now live”—not the life which I long to live or pray to live, but which I live, the life which is seen in my mortal flesh, “I live by the faith of the Son of God.”

This is not Paul’s faith in the Son of God, but the faith that the Son of God has imparted to him. This is no longer faith in faith, but faith that has overleapt all self-conscious bounds and is the identical faith of the Son of God. (1Peter i. 8.)

Self-Realization vs. Christ-Realization

Matthew xvi. 24.

Self-realization is a modern phrase— ‘Be moral, be religious, be upright in order that you may realize yourself.’ Nothing blinds the mind to the claims of Jesus Christ more effectually than a good, clean-living, upright life based on self-realization (see 2 Corinthians iv. 3, 4). The issue with us to-day is not with external sins, but with the ideal of self-realization, because Jesus Christ reveals that that ideal will divide clean asunder from Him. If we are going to be His disciples our ideal must be *Christ-realization*.

The Desire “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself,”

There is no man awake to life but feels the attraction of Jesus Christ. There He stands, and all men are attracted to Him, whether or not they accept statements about His Deity or

theories about the Atonement, What is your desire? Is it to be a fine, sterling, moral, upright character? A grand and noble desire; but watch how Jesus Christ sifts it. Two of the early disciples had. the desire to follow Jesus, it was the consuming passion of their lives to come after Jesus, and when He asked them if they were able to drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism, they said, "*We are able.*" They were not conceited or proud, they were devout, humble-minded men, but they were perfectly ignorant about, themselves. There are many people to-day who say, '*Yes, Lord, I'll go with Thee all the way.*' But there are conditions: "*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself.*" What is the meaning of these words from the lips of Jesus? He is not teaching us to deny one part of ourselves in order to benefit another part of ourselves, which is what self-denial has come to mean. The full force of our Lord's words is — '*let him deny his right to himself; let him give up his right to himself to Me.*' Jesus laid down that condition to a clean-living, sterling young man of His day, with what result? His countenance was sad, and he went away grieved; for he had great possessions.

'*If any man will come after Me,*' said Jesus, '*the condition is that he must leave something behind,*' viz, his right to himself. Is Jesus Christ worth it, or am I one of those who accept His salvation but thoroughly object to giving up my right to myself to Him?

The Devotion "*and take up his cross,*"

There is a difference between devotion to principles and devotion to a person. Hundreds of people to-day are devoting themselves to phases of truth, to causes. Jesus Christ never asks us to devote ourselves to a cause or a creed; He asks us to devote ourselves to Him, to sign away the right to ourselves and yield to Him absolutely, and take up that cross daily. The cross Jesus asks us to take up cannot be suffering for conviction's sake, because a man will suffer for

conviction's sake whether he is a Christian or not. Neither can it be suffering for conscience sake, because a man will go to martyrdom for his principles without having one spark of the grace of God in his heart. Paul says, "*Though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.*" What then is our cross? Our cross is something that comes only with the peculiar relationship of a disciple to Jesus. It is the sign that we have denied our right to ourselves and are determined to manifest that we are no longer our own, we have given away for ever our right to ourselves to Jesus Christ.

The characteristic of the cross we carry daily is that we have been '*crucified with Christ*'. *Galatians ii. 20* does not refer merely to the fact that '*our old man*' has been crucified with Christ; it refers to the glorious liberty we have of sacrificing ourselves for Jesus Christ every day we live. What is sacrifice? Giving back to God the best I have in order that He may make it an eternal possession of His and mine for ever.

But something must happen first. The meaning of salvation and sanctification is not only the removal of the wrong disposition, but the radical alteration of identity. Paul says that his destiny is no longer self-realization, but Christ-identity: "*I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me.*" We need to remember that we cannot train ourselves to be Christians; we cannot discipline ourselves to be saints; we cannot bend ourselves to the will of God: we have to be broken to the will of God. There must be a break with the dominant ruler. We may be clean and upright and religious, we may be Christian workers and have been mightily used of God; but if the bedrock of self-realization has not been blasted out by our own free choice at the Cross of Christ, shipwreck is the only thing in the end. We enter into the Kingdom of God through the Cross of Jesus Christ, and self-realization cannot get

through with us, it must be left outside. We must be broken from self-realization, immediately that point is reached the reality of the supernatural identification with the death of Jesus Christ takes place, and the witness of the Spirit is unmistakable— *“I have been crucified with Christ.”*

Jesus Christ can take the man who has been broken by sin and twisted with wrong-doing and can reinstate him, not as an angel, thank God, but as a man, and present him before the throne of God without blemish, through the sheer omnipotence of His Atonement.

The Direction *“and follow Me.”*

We must not dictate to Jesus as to where we are going to serve Him. There is a theory abroad to-day that we have to consecrate our gifts to God. We cannot, they are not ours to consecrate; every gift we have has been given to us. Jesus Christ does not take my gifts and use them; He takes me and turns me right about face, and realizes Himself in me for His glory. The one dominant note in the life of a disciple is —

Jesus only, Jesus ever, Jesus all in all I see.

There is no devotion to principles or to a cause there; nothing but overwhelming, absorbing love to the Person of Jesus Christ. *“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”*

God grant we may answer—

*I have made my choice for ever,
I will walk with Christ my Lord;
Naught from Him my soul shall sever
While I'm trusting in His word.
I the lonely way have taken,
Rough and toilsome though it be,
And although despised, forsaken,
Jesus, I'll go through with Thee.*

Which?

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” (Galatians vi. 14)

God or Sin

God or sin must die in me. The one elementary Bible truth we are in danger of forgetting is that the Gospel of God is addressed to men as sinners, and nothing else. In tracing the experimental line of Church history one notices a significant thing—whenever a voice has been raised, like John Wesley’s, on behalf of God’s great power to deliver from sin, instantly a reacting wave of piety occurs, which takes the form of devotion and sentimental religious activity while the real message of the Gospel is lost by obliteration. After John Wesley’s teaching a protest was lodged strongly against his emphasis on a second definite work of grace, - and the consequence was a revival, of that wave of sentimental higher life not rooted and grounded in a changed life by God’s grace.

Christ or Barabbas *“And they crucified Him.” (Matthew xxvii. 35)*

Christ versus Barabbas—we have to choose. For a long while we can ignore sin and dwell on the fact that God is our Father, but if we mean by that that He forgives sin because He is loving, we make the Atonement a huge blunder and Calvary a mistake. What does Barabbas represent? The expedient to Jesus Christ, something less radical, less emphatic, less against what we want. What is the ‘Barabbas’ in your life and mine? Shall we give our vote for Christ or Barabbas to be crucified? Most of us have voted at one time in our history with God against Christ. The choice is always put when we are in the ascendant, when we are not being over-swayed either by Christ or Barabbas, but when we are in full possession of our powers; then God’s providence puts the choice suddenly in front of us—Christ or Barabbas?

Christ or the Old Man *“knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him” (Romans vi. 6.)*

What is our ‘old man’? The disposition of sin in us discovered by the incoming Spirit of God when we are born from above. A Christian experiencing the first work of God’s regenerating grace begins to discern this disposition, and the issue is clear that that old disposition must be crucified or the Spirit of Christ must be crucified, the two cannot remain long together. Paul states triumphantly, *“knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him.”* It was not a divine anticipation on the part of the Apostle Paul, it was a very radical, definite experience. Are those of us who have experienced God’s regenerating grace prepared to go the whole length with Jesus Christ? Are we prepared to let the Holy Spirit search us until we know what the disposition of sin is, the thing that rules and works its own way, that lusts against the Spirit of God that is in us? Will we agree with God’s verdict that that disposition should be identified with the death of Jesus? If so, then thank God, it will be as dead in us as the dead Christ was as a crucified body. Beware of going on the line of – *“I am reckoning myself to be dead indeed unto sin”*—unless you have been through the radical issue of will with God. Are we willing to be so identified with the death of Jesus Christ that we know with no apology that our old man was crucified with Him?

Christ or I *“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I but Christ that liveth in me.” (Galatians ii. 20.)*

Christ or “I”? I mean the religious “I”, the spiritual “I”, the pride of spiritual possession. Have we learned the glorious, unmistakable privilege of being crucified with Christ until all that is left is Christ’s flesh and Christ’s blood in our flesh and in our blood where once the world, the flesh and the devil had their way? These are tremendous things to say in the light

of the way the modern mind looks at things, but not too tremendous in the light of the Gospel

Christ or the World *by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*" (Galatians vi.14.)

What is the world? The set of people with the ambitions, religious or otherwise, that are not identified with the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says, *'I am crucified to that world, and that world is crucified to me.'* When the world comes before us with its fascination and its power, it finds us dead to it, if we have agreed with God on His judgement about sin and the world.

These are not only statement made in God's Book; they are meant to be real, definite experiences in our lives. If the issue is put before you in your own life just now—Barabbas or Christ? you can no longer debate the question, you must decide; but let me plead with you to decide for Christ and have 'Barabbas' crucified. If you have been born from above and the Spirit of God is discerning in you the *'old man'* the disposition of sin, then make it an issue of will with Him, tell Him that you want to be identified with the death of Christ until you know that your *'old man'* is crucified with Christ. If you have gone through that issue of will, then stand clear for Christ and Christ only, until *"I have been crucified with Christ"* is not a sentiment, but a sensible fact in daily living, walk and conversation, stamped with the other-worldliness of the life hid with Christ in God.

The One Right Thing To Be

"Believe also in .Me." (John xiv. 1)

We do not now use the old evangelical phrase *'a believer'*, we are apt to think we have something better, but we cannot have, *'A believer in Jesus Christ'* is a phrase that embraces the whole of Christianity. The history of the word is interesting,

but what will hold our attention now by the aid of the Holy Spirit is the vital experimental meaning of the phrase ‘*a believer in Jesus Christ*’.

To believe in Jesus means much more than the experience of salvation in any form, it entails a mental and moral commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ’s view of God and man, of sin and the devil, and of the Scriptures.

Belief and the Scriptures *“And they are they which testify of Me.” (John v.39.) “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me.” (John v.46)*

How much intellectual impertinence there is to-day among many Christians relative to the Scriptures, because they forget that to “*believe also*” in Jesus means that they are committed beforehand to His attitude to the Bible. He said that He was the context of the Scriptures, “*they are they which testify of me.*” We hear much about ‘*key words*’ to the scriptures, but there is only one ‘*key word*’ to the Scriptures for a believer, and that is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself: All the intellectual arrogance about the Bible is a clear proof of disbelief in Jesus. How many Sunday School teachers to-day believe as Jesus believed in the Old Testament? How many have succumbed to the insolence of intellectual partisanship about the Person of our Lord and His limitations, and say airily, ‘*Of course, there is no such thing as demon possession or hell, and no such being as the devil*’ To “*believe also*” in Jesus means that we submit our intelligence to Him as He submitted His intelligence to His Father.

This does not mean that we do not exercise our reason, but it does mean that we exercise it in submission to Reason Incarnate. Beware of interpreters of the Scriptures who take any other context than our Lord Jesus Christ.

Belief and the Saviour *“Dost thou believe on the Son of God?”*
(John ix.35.)

The number of insidious and beautiful writers and speakers to-day whose final net result will be found to be anti-Christ, is truly alarming. The writers I mean are those who examine psychologically the Person of our Lord on the ground of facts discoverable in unregenerate human consciousness and effectually dissolve away the Person of Jesus Christ so marvellously revealed in the New Testament. John writes of this very spirit of mind and emphasizes it as anti-Christ—*“Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit which annulleth Jesus is not of God.”* (1 John iv. 2-3.) To believe our Lord’s consciousness about Himself commits us to accept Him as God’s last endless Word. That does not mean that God is not still speaking, but it does mean that He is not saying anything different from *“This is My beloved Son: hear Him.”*

To be a believer in Jesus Christ means that we realize that what Jesus said to Thomas is true – *“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”*, not the road we leave behind as we travel, but the Way itself. By believing, we enter into that rest of peace, holiness, and eternal life. Let us maintain ourselves abiding in Him.

Belief and the Spirit *“And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin and of righteousness, and of judgement: Of sin, because they believe not on Me;”* (John xvi. 8-9)

Sin is not measured by a creed or a constitution or a society, but by a Person. The Gospels were not written to prove anything, they were written to confirm in belief those who were already Christians by means of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and their theological meaning. The Holy Spirit in the mighty phases of initial quickening in spiritual regeneration (John xx. 22; Luke xi. 13)

and of the baptism (Acts i. 8), does one thing only, *viz.* glorify Jesus. A great and glorious fact - to believe in Jesus Christ is to receive God, Who is described to the believer as ‘*eternal life*’. **Eternal life** is not a gift *from* God, but the gift *of* God, **that is, God Himself**. (John vi. 47; xvii.2-3; Romans vi. 23.)

Belief in Service “*He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water,*” (John vii. 38.)

How anxious we are to serve God and our fellow men to-day! Jesus our Lord says we must pay attention to the Source—belief in Him, and He will look after the outflow. He has promised that there shall be ‘*rivers of living water*’, but we must not look at the outflow, nor rejoice in successful service. “*Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*” (Luke x. 20) The source, belief in Jesus, is the thing to heed; and through that famous, for-ever binding commission, believers in Jesus are to make disciples— “*Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations.*” Are we doing it?

The great Pentecostal phrase, “*witnesses unto Me*”, is the same thing stated for all believers in unforgettable words, witnesses not so much of what Jesus can do, but Witnesses unto Him, a delight to His own heart, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints.”

May God save us from Christian service which is nothing more than the reaction of a disappointed, crushed heart, seeking surcease from sorrow in social service. Christian service is the vital, unconscious result of the life of a believer in Jesus.

We have much need to bear in mind Paul’s warning, “*But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*” (2 Corinthians xi.3)

Pentecost makes bond-slaves for Jesus Christ our Lord, not supernatural manifestations that glorify men. The Christian Church should not be a secret society of specialists, but a public manifestation of believers in Jesus.

The one right thing to be is a believer in Jesus.

Are You Independent or Identified?

John xxi. 18.

Devotional Following *“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young thou girdest thyself and walkest whither thou wouldst:”*

Jesus is not rebuking Peter, He is revealing a characteristic of us all Peter had given up everything for the Lord, and the Lord was everything to Peter, but he knew nothing whatever about the following that Jesus is referring to. Three years before Jesus had said *“Follow Me”*, and Peter followed easily, the fascination of Jesus was upon him; then he came to the place where he denied Jesus and his heart broke. Now Jesus says again *“Follow thou Me”*. Peter follows now in the submission of his intelligence, his will, and his whole being. There is no Figure in front save the Lord Jesus Christ. When we are young in grace we go where we want to go, but a time comes when Jesus says *“another shall gird thee,”* our will and wish is not asked for. This stage of spiritual experience brings us into fellowship with the Spirit of Jesus, for it is written large over His life that *“even Christ pleased not Himself”*. There is a distinct period in our experience when we cease to say—*‘Lord, show me Thy will,’* and the realization begins to dawn that we are God’s will, and He can do with us what He likes. We wake up to the knowledge that we have the privilege of giving ourselves over to God’s will. It is a question of being yielded to God.

Death Following *“but when thou shalt be old, . . . another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.”*

When we are young in grace there is a note of independence about our spiritual life— *‘I don’t intend any one to tell me what to do, I intend to serve God as I choose.’* It is an independence based on inexperience, an immature fellowship; it lacks the essential of devotion. Some of us remain true to the independent following and never get beyond it; but we are built for God Himself not for service for God, and that explains the submissions of life. We can easily escape the submissions if we like to rebel against them, but the Spirit of God will produce the most ghastly humiliation if we do not submit. Since we became disciples of Jesus we cannot be as independent as we used to be. *‘I do wish Jesus did not expect so much of me.’*

He expects nothing less than absolute oneness with Himself as He was one with the Father. *“That they may be one, even as We are one.”* That is the *‘hope of His calling’* and it is the great light on every problem. *“And for their sakes I sanctify Myself;”* said Jesus. Jesus makes us saints in order that we may sacrifice our saint-ship to Him, and it is this sacrifice which keeps us one with our Lord.

In the natural world it is a real delight to be faced with risk and danger, and in the spiritual world God gives us the *‘sporting chance’*. He will plant us down amongst all kinds of people and give us the amazing joy of proving ourselves *‘a living sacrifice’* in those circumstances. *“Thou art My beloved Son: in Thee I am well pleased”*; the Father’s heart was thrilled with delight at the loyalty of His Son. Is Jesus Christ thrilled with delight at the way we are living a sacrificial life of holiness? The disciple has no programme, only a distinguished passion of devotion to his Lord.

Process of Belief

“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” (John i. 12.)

According to the New Testament, belief arises from intellectual conviction and goes through moral self-surrender to identification with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mind Reception *“To as many as received Him,”*

What place has the Lord Jesus Christ in your Intellectual outlook? Until the Lord Jesus Christ has been received as the highest and only Authority, Bible explanations are beside the mark because they lack the one efficient seal of the Holy Spirit Who is the only interpreter of the Bible revelation, and the Holy Spirit does not seal Bible interpretation to any man who has not accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as the final Authority for his life, for his mind, and for his whole outlook. John i 12 represents the whole work of an individual soul in relationship to Jesus Christ. Have I accepted Jesus Christ for my head as well as for my heart? Jesus Christ must be realized and accepted as the Authority as far as man is concerned.

Whether or not we are inside the pale of Christian experience, have we solved the problem of who is the final authority for our intellect? Is Jesus Christ? Is He the finest, the holiest Man that ever lived? If so, then our attitude of mind leads us to the position where we have the privilege of becoming sons of God. If I have the right mental attitude to Jesus Christ the next step is easy: I will necessarily be led to accept, what He says, and when He says, *“If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?”* then I will ask and receive.

Will I give a moral surrender Jesus Christ’s authority? If so, the privilege of becoming a child of God will be a moral fact for me because the Holy Spirit will teach me how to apply the

Atonement of Jesus Christ to my own life, and how to be identified in obedience to Him with the life of Jesus Christ in the experience of entire sanctification.

Moral Reception *“to them gave He power to become the sons of God,”* But there is another class of people to whom the practical comes first. It is not the intellectual problem that bothers them but the personal one: conviction of sin, perplexity arising from a wrong disposition. Will you in that condition receive the Lord Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life? If once Jesus Christ is clear to the vision of the heart, everything else is simple. *“To as many as received Him, to them gave He the privilege (or the right) to become the sons of God.”*

I accept Him not only as my Authority, I accept Him as my Saviour. I pin my faith implicitly to what He says and looking to Him in implicit confidence, I ask God to give me the Holy Spirit according to the word of Jesus and receive Him in faith. Faith means implicit confidence in Jesus, and that requires not intellect only but a moral giving over of myself to Him. How many of us have really received from God the Spirit that ruled Jesus Christ and kept His spirit, soul and body in harmony with God? The Holy Spirit will bring conviction of sin, He will reveal Jesus Christ, and He will bring in the power verse 13 describes—*“which were born ...of God”*, begotten of God. He will do all that on one condition—that we surrender morally to Jesus Christ.

It is this point of moral surrender that nearly every man *‘shies off’*. We sentimentally believe, and believe, and believe, and nothing happens. We pray *“Lord, increase our faith”*, and we try to pump up the faith, but it does not come. What is wrong? The moral surrender has not taken place. Will I surrender from the real centre of my life, and deliberately and wilfully stake my confidence on what Jesus Christ tells me?

Mystic Reception *“even to them that believe on His name.”*

From intellectual conviction and moral surrender to identification with the very life and joy of Jesus. A great thinker has said, “The seal and end of true conscious life is joy”, not pleasure, nor happiness. Jesus Christ said to His disciples, *“These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full”*—identity with Jesus Christ and with His joy.

What was the joy of the Lord Jesus Christ? His joy was in having completely finished the work His Father gave Him to do; and - the same type of joy will be granted to every man and woman who is born of God the Holy Ghost and sanctified, when they fulfil the work God has given them to do. What is that work? To be a saint, a walking, talking, living, practical epistle of what God Almighty can do through the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ—one in identity with the faith of Jesus, one in identity with the love of Jesus, one in identity with the Spirit of Jesus until we are so one in Him, that the high-priestly prayer not only begins to be answered, but is clearly manifest in its answering — *“that they may be one, even as We are one.”*

God grant that from *‘intellectual insubordination’* and moral insubordination and spiritual insubordination we may prove that we are made one with the Lord Jesus Christ by the marvellous gift of the Holy Spirit through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, so that, as Paul says, when our Lord comes He may be “*marvelled at in all them that believed.*”

The Great Life

“believeth all things”. (1 Corinthians xiii.)

It is a great thing to be a believer, but easy to misunderstand what the New Testament means by it. It is not that we believe Jesus Christ can do things, or that we believe in a plan of salvation; it is that we believe Him; whatever happens we will hang in to the fact that He is true. If we say; *‘I am going to believe He will put things right’*, we shall lose our confidence when we see things go wrong. We are in danger of putting the cart before the horse and saying a man must believe certain things before he can be a Christian; whereas his beliefs are the result of his being a Christian, not the cause. Our Lord’s word *‘believe’* does not refer to an intellectual act, but to a moral act; with our Lord to believe means to commit. “Commit yourself to Me”, and it takes a man all he is worth to believe in Jesus Christ.

The Great Life is to believe that Jesus Christ is not a fraud. The biggest fear a man has is never fear for himself, but fear that his Hero won’t get through; that He won’t be able to explain things satisfactorily; for instance, why there should be war and disease. The problems of life get hold of a man and make it difficult for him to know whether in the face of these things he really is confident in Jesus Christ. The attitude of a believer must be, *‘Things do look black, but I believe Him; and when the whole thing is told I am confident my belief will be justified and God will be revealed as a God of love and justice.’* It does not mean that we won’t have problems, but. it does mean that our problems will never come in between us and our faith in Him. *‘Lord, I don’t understand this, but I am certain that there will be an explanation, and in the meantime I put it on one side.’* Our faith is in a Person Who is not deceived in anything He says or in the way He looks at things. Christianity is personal, passionate devotion to Jesus Christ as God manifest in the flesh.

The Genesis of the Great Life *“Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him. Whom He hath sent.” (John vi. 29)*

The Great Life is begun when we believe, belief cannot be pumped up. If we in our hearts believe in Jesus Christ, not about Him, but in Him, ‘*He is all right anyway,*’ it is an evidence that God is at work in our souls *“Abraham believed God.” (Galatians iii. .6)* *“Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him.” (Job xiii. 15)* Every abortion and wrong-doing in spiritual life begins when we cease believing in Jesus Christ. If we believe in a state of mind He produces in us, we will be disappointed, because circumstances will come in our lives when these works of Jesus Christ are shadowed over; but if we believe in Him, no matter how dark the passage is we shall be carried right through, and when the crisis is passed our souls will have been built up into a stronger attitude towards Him. What counts in a man’s life is the disposition that rules him. When God begins His work in us He does not make a mighty difference in our external lives, but He shifts the centre of our confidence; instead of relying on ourselves and other people, we rely on God, and are kept in perfect peace. We all know the difference it makes if we have someone who believes, in is and in whom we believe, there is no possibility of being crushed. The Great Life is not that we believe for something, but that when we are up against things in circumstances or in our own disposition, we stake our all on Jesus Christ’s honour. If we have faith only in what we experience of salvation, we will get depressed and morbid; but to be a believer in Jesus Christ is to have an irrepressible belief and a life of uncrushable gaiety.

The Growth of the Great Life “*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me.*” (John xiv. 1.)

Jesus Christ is talking here about what no man knows but Himself; *viz*, the day after death, and He says, ‘*Don’t be troubled about it.*’ We grow in this Great Life by making room for Jesus Christ in our outlook on everything. Before you seal your opinion on any matter, find out what He has said about it—about God, about life, about death. Men discuss matters of heaven and hell, of life and death, and leave Jesus Christ out altogether; He says, ‘*Before you finally seal your mind, Believe also in Me.*’ If the bit we do know about Jesus Christ is so full of light, why cannot we leave the matters of heaven and hell, of life and death, in His hand and stake our confidence in Him? “*God is Light,*” and one day everything will be seen in that light. “*I am the Light of the world, he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.*” To be ‘*a believer in Jesus Christ*’ means we are committed to His way of looking at everything, not that we are open to discuss what people say He taught; that is the way difficulties have arisen with regard to Christian faith. Theology ought to be discussed; it does not follow, however, that our faith is assailed, but that in the meantime we stake our all in Jesus Christ. The great lodestar of our life is – ‘*I believe in Jesus Christ, and in everything on which I form an opinion I make room for Him and find out His attitude.*’

The Grandeur of the Great Life “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life.*” (John vi. 47.)

We often hear it put as if God gave us a present called ‘*eternal life*’. What Jesus Christ says is, ‘*he that committeth himself to Me hath eternal life*’, i.e. the life that was characteristic of Himself (1John v.11; Romans vi. 23; John xvii.3). If we commit ourselves to Jesus He says, ‘*Stake your all on Me and I will see you*

through, don't worry about anything but your relationship to Me.' "The Best is yet to be." We shall yet see everything brought into subjection to the One in Whom we believe.

Watch carefully how you begin to get away from believing in Jesus. When we mistake darkness for sin, or when we get into moods and hang fire, we choke the work of God in us. "This is the work of God", not that you believe you are turned into a child of God, but "that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent." What does it matter what happens to us? The thought of ourselves ought never to come in at all! The one thing that tells is the great fundamental rock: "Believe also in Me," Many know a good deal about salvation, but not much about this intense patience of '*hanging in*' in perfect certainty to the fact that what Jesus Christ says is true.

"...*believeth all things.*" That is the greatest courtesy in the whole of human life. If we believe in Jesus Christ we will determine to make our relationship to men what Jesus Christ's was to us. He believed that He could save every man irrespective of his condition. Do we believe He can? or do we get small and sceptical and cynical about some men? If we do, we are hindering them from being right. There are some people we feel the better for meeting, their ruling disposition is a generous one, they are not frost-bitten and mean; they are not necessarily good, but they have hold of the right relationship to things. That is true in the spiritual world; when we meet a man or woman who believes in Jesus Christ, we feel we can tell them anything. The thing for us to examine is: Are we really living the Great Life, or are we living in a band box with a priggish notion that Jesus Christ is tied up in some formula? Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh, and He says, '*This is the work of God that you believe in Me.*' The full growth in the Great Life is to "Believe *also* in Me" about

everything. *'Make room for Me, especially in matters where you cannot go; - bring the child's mind to what I have said about them.'* We want to be our own Lord and master, to get everything solved for ourselves, Jesus says, *"Look unto Me and be ye saved."* To commit his life and reasoning to Jesus Christ's attitude takes a man right out of himself and into Jesus Christ. This is not rational, it is redemptive. How many saw Jesus Christ as the Son of God? He was nothing more than a Carpenter to the majority. It comes with a rush of revelation, *'I see Who He is!'* and He gives us the life which is inherent in Himself.

Many Christians get depressed over mean, despicable things they find in themselves; I feel glad, because it is a justification of what Jesus said, *"Without Me ye can do nothing."* If we stake our all in Him, He will see us through as Saviour or as Deliverer just where we need Him. It is a great thing to have a God big enough to believe in. To believe in a God whom *"to be God is not fit"* makes a man immoral. The, God revealed in Jesus Christ is grand enough for every problem of life. *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."* Let us carry away the Great Life of joy and simplicity.

Irresistible Discipleship

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong."

(1 Corinthians xvi. 13.)

By a *'disciple'* we mean one who continues to be concentrated on our Lord. Concentration is of much more value than consecration, because consecration is apt to end in mere religious sentiment. Concentration is the gist of the Sermon on the Mount— *'Be carefully careless about everything saving your relationship to Me'*, our Lord says. *'Irresistible'*, not in the sense of being exquisitely charming, or of being irresistible in war, but irresistible in the sense of not being deflected.

The Practice of Alert Detachment

“Watch ye,”

There is a detachment that is fanatical. Detachment without discretion is delusive, so when the New Testament uses the term ‘*watch*’ (and the New Testament has a great deal to say about watching), it means an alert detachment which comes from a discreet understanding of the Lord’s will. (See Romans xii. 1-2.)

One continually finds an encroachment of beliefs and of attachment to things which is so much spiritual over loading. Every now and again the Spirit of God calls on us to take a spiritual stock-taking in order to see what beliefs we can do without. The things our Lord asks us to believe- are remarkably few, and John xiv.1 seems to sum them up— “Ye believe in God, *believe also in Me.*” We have to keep ourselves alertly detached from everything that would encroach on that belief; we all have intellectual and affectionate affinities that keep us detached from Jesus Christ instead of attached to Him. We have to maintain an alert spiritual fighting trim.

“Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us” (Hebrews xii.1) This does not refer to indwelling sin, but to the spirit of the age, literally—the sin “*which doth closely cling to us*”, or “*which is admired of many*” (R.V. margin), the thing that hinders us in running and keeps us attached. We have to see that we run alertly and run watching, run with patience, continually readjusting ourselves and determinedly holding loosely to all other things. Detachment without discretion leads us astray, but detachment with the discretion that is able to discern the Lord’s will in daily occurrences will make us irresistible disciples. Our Lord said to His disciples, “*Behold, we go up to Jerusalem.*” There are a great many things that are quite legitimate, but if they are not on our way to Jerusalem, we do not do them.

The Practice of Attentive Decisiveness

“stand fast in the faith,”

We hear a great deal about decision of character; in irresistible discipleship we have to learn an attentive decisiveness. There is a decisiveness that is destructive, a pig-headed decisiveness that decides without deliberation. ‘*Standing fast in the faith*’ gives the idea of deliberate attentive decisiveness— ‘*I will take the time to go through the drill in order to understand what it means to stand fast*’ (cf. Ephesians vi. 13). It is a great deal easier to fight than to stand, but Paul says our conflict is not so much a fight as a standing on guard. Our Lord requires us to believe very few things, because the nature of belief is not mathematical, but something that must be tested, and there are a number of insidious things that work against our faith. A famous preacher once said he found in his actual circumstances he did not believe half so much as he did when he was preaching. He meant he found it difficult to ‘*stand fast in the faith*’ in daily circumstances.

It is possible to preach and to encourage our own souls and to appear to have a very strong faith, while in actual circumstances we do not stand fast at all, but rather prove what Herbert Spencer said to be true. Herbert Spencer said people were trained to think like pagans six days a week and like Christians the remaining day; consequently in the actual things of life we decide as pagans, not as Christians at all. The way of irresistible discipleship is to practise not only alert detachment, but also attentive decisiveness; after having deliberated on the relationship of our faith to certain things, we decide. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would “*bring to your remembrance all things whatsoever I have said unto you.*” We hear some word of our Lord’s and it sinks into the unconscious mind; then we come into certain circumstances and the Holy

Spirit suddenly brings back that word to our conscious minds. Are we going to obey our Lord in that particular, or take the ordinary common-sense way of moral decisiveness? Are we going to stand fast in the faith, or take the easier way of decision without deliberation? To think along this line will give the death blow to the dangerous method of making principles out of our Lord's statements. To do that we do not need to maintain a detached life with Him; all we need is to gain an intellectual grasp of His principles and endeavour to live our life in accordance with them.

We can never tell how we shall have to decide in certain circumstances, but we have to see that we stand fast in the faith. We know what *'the faith'* is when we have gone through with God in any particular. *'The faith'* is faith in the Redemption and in the indwelling Spirit of God; faith that God is love, and that He will see after us if we stand steadfast to our confidence in Him. It is easy to stand fast in the big things, but very difficult in the small things. If we do stand fast in faith in Him we shall become irresistible disciples.

The Practice of Comprehending Determination

"quit you like men,"

When we are children we are impulsive. Impulsiveness grows up with us from childhood's state; we do not quit ourselves like men. If we have been in the habit of discerning the Lord's will and love and have to decide on the spur of the moment, our determination will be comprehending, that is, we shall decide not from the point of view of self-interest, or because of the good of a cause, but entirely from our Lord's point of view.

One of the finest characteristics of a noble humanity is that of mature patience, not that of impulsive action. It is easy to be determined, and the curious thing is that the more small-minded a man is the more easily he makes up his mind. If he

cannot see the various sides of a question, he decides by the ox-like quality of obstinacy. Obstinacy simply means I will not allow any discernment in this matter; I refuse to be enlightened. We wrongly call this strong-mindedness. Strength of mind is the whole man active, not discernment merely from an individual standpoint. This determination in a disciple is a comprehending one. “*For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified,*” says Paul.

The Practice of Actual Dependability

“be strong.”

We can depend on the man or woman who has been disciplined in character, and we become strong in their strength. When we depend on someone who has had no discipline, we both degenerate. We are always in danger of depending on people who are undisciplined, and the consequence is that in the actual strain of life they break down and we do too. We have to be actually dependable.

When we are young a hurricane or thunderstorm impresses us as being very powerful, yet the strength of a rock is infinitely greater than that of a hurricane. The same is true with regard to discipleship. The strength there is not the strength of activity but the strength of being. Activity may be a disease of weariness, or of degeneration; to be dependable means to be strong in the sense of disciplined reliability. To convey ‘*stayability*’ is the work of the Spirit of God, not the product of convincing controversy.

These considerations convey the characteristics that the Apostle wanted the Corinthian Christians to develop in themselves. If we keep practising, what we practise becomes our second nature, then in a crisis and in the details of life we shall find that not only will the grace of God stand by us, but also our own nature. Whereas if we refuse to practise, it is not God’s grace but

our own nature that fails when the crisis comes, because we have not been practising in actual life. We may ask God to help us but He cannot, unless we have made our nature our ally. The practising is ours, not God's. He puts the Holy Spirit into us, He regenerates us, and puts us in contact with all His Divine resources, but He cannot make us walk and decide in the way He wants; we must do that ourselves. Paul says "I do not frustrate" (i.e. make void) "the grace of God."

Always Now

2 Corinthians vi. 1-10.

"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (v.2)
"We intreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." The grace we had yesterday won't do for to-day. "The grace of God"—the overflowing favour of God; we can always reckon it is there to draw on if we don't trust our own merits (ch. v. 18-21).

Condition of Saintliness in Private Trials

"But in everything commending ourselves as ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses," (v4.)

Our private life is disciplined by the interference of people in our own matters; the people who do not mean to be a trial are a trial; that is where the test for patience comes. Have we failed the grace of God there? Are we saying, *'Oh well, I won't count this time? It is not feeling the grace of God, it is drawing on it now.* Whatever is our particular condition we are sure to have one of these things Paul mentions - afflictions, necessities, distresses. **It is not praying to God and asking Him to help us in these things, it is taking the grace of God now. Many of us make prayer the preparation for work; it is never that in the Bible. Christianity is drawing on the overflowing favour of God in the second of trial.**

Condition of Saintliness in Public Tribulations

“In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings:” (v5.)

These verses are Paul’s spiritual diary, they describe the outward hardships which proved the hotbed for the graces of the Spirit—the working together of outward hardships and inward grace “Imprisonments, tumults, labours,”—these are all things in the external life. “In tumults”—watch a porridge pot boiling and you will know what tumult means; in that condition draw on the grace of God now. Don’t say ‘*I will endure it till I can get away and pray*’; draw now, it is the most practical thing on earth. **Whenever you are going through any tribulation that tears, don’t pray about it, but draw on the grace of God now. The exercise of prayer is the work of drawing now.**

Condition of Saintliness in Pure Temperance

“In pureness, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in the Holy Ghost, in love unfeigned.” (v. 6.)

These are the inner characteristics of the temperate life—pureness, knowledge, long-suffering, kindness, love unfeigned. There is no room for extravagant impulse there; you cannot be pure and impulsive, you can be innocent and impulsive, because that is the nature of a child. Purity is something that has been tried and found unspotted. We are always inclined to be in temperate about our religion, it is the last thing for which we learn to draw on the grace of God. In our praying we draw on our memories, on our past experiences, on our present desires. We only learn to draw on the grace of God by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering. How many of us have to learn that temperance is knowledge? We want to get short cuts to knowledge and because we cannot take them we rush off, into intemperate

work. Notice the disproportion between the modern disease called Christian work and the one characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit. The craze in everyone's blood nowadays is a disease of intemperate work, external activities.

"In long-suffering" long suffering is being drawn out until you can be drawn out no more, and not snapping. God puts His saints into places where they have to exhibit long-suffering. Let circumstances pull and don't give way to any intemperance whatever, but in all these things manifest a drawing on the grace of God that will make you a marvel to yourself and to others.

"In kindness" - be perfectly clear and emphatic with regard to your preaching of God's truth, but amazingly kind in your treatment of people. Some of us have a hard, metallic way of dealing with people which never has the stamp of the Holy Ghost on it. The word of God is "sharper than any two-edged sword", but when you deal with people, deal with them in kindness; remember yourself, that you are where you are by the grace of God. Don't make God's word what it is not.

"In the Holy Ghost" - it is not the tones of a man's speech or the passion of a man's personality, it is the pleading power of the Holy Ghost coming through him.

"as though God were intreating by us" - this is the entreaty that is learned at Calvary and made real in the worker by the Holy Ghost.

"In love unfeigned." Love feigned is this: *'I love you very much, but..'* Love unfeigned never thinks or looks at things like that. If love has to give stern rebuke it never prefaces it with remarks like that; the one great thing that moves us is the love of God which has been shed abroad in our hearts, and that love is described in 1Corinthians xiii.

Proclaiming Testimony

“In the word of truth, in the power of God, through the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left.” (v7)

“In the word of truth” - draw on the grace of God for testimony. Not, ‘Oh Lord, I am going to give testimony, please help me’: draw on the grace of God while you testify, proclaiming the truth in the presence of God. The first motive of testimony is not for the sake of other people but for our own sake; we realize that we have no one but God to stand by us. Always give your testimony in the presence of God, and ever remember God’s honour is at stake.

‘In the word of truth’ in our testimony; *‘in the power of God’* working in us, and *‘through the armour of in-the-rightness’* of our public and private life shielding us. You cannot draw on the grace of God for testimony if these three things are not there—the word of God, the power of God, and the consciousness that you are walking in the integrity of that testimony in private, if they are there, then there is an unflinching certainty. Am I *‘in the rightness’* all round? Testimony frequently stops short because the armour of righteousness is not on the right hand and on the left. Keep drawing on the grace of God, then there will be the power of the proclaimed testimony.

Personal Temperament

“By glory and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true:” (v8)

Each of these contrasts puts our natural temperament *‘out of it’*. Let circumstances bring you where they will, keep drawing on the grace of God. Our temperament is not our disposition; temperament is the tone our nature has taken from the ruling disposition. When we had the disposition of sin our temperament took its tone from that disposition; when God

alters the disposition the temperament begins to take its tone from the disposition He puts in, and that disposition is like Jesus Christ's.

Perfect Trustfulness

“As unknown, and yet well-known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed:” (v9)

“I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” (Philippians iv.13) - drawing on the grace of God in every conceivable condition. One of the greatest proofs that we are drawing on the grace of God is that we can be humiliated without the slightest trace of anything but the grace of God in us. Draw on the grace of God now, not presently. The one word in the spiritual vocabulary is **NOW**.

Poverty Triumphant

“As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” (v10.)

As we draw on the grace of God He increases voluntary poverty all along the line. Always give the best you have got every time; never think about who you are giving it to, let other people take it or leave it as they choose. Pour out the best you have, and always be poor. Never reserve anything, never be diplomatic and careful about the treasure God gives. Always now is the secret of the Christian life.

Oswald J. Chambers (1874 - 1917)

Oswald Chambers sometimes startled audiences with his vigorous thinking and his vivid expression. Even those who disagreed with what he said found his teachings difficult to dismiss and all but impossible to ignore. Often his humour drove home a sensitive point: *“Have we ever got into the way of letting God work, or are we so amazingly important that we really wonder in our nerves and ways what the Almighty does before we are up in the morning!”*

Oswald Chambers was not famous during his lifetime. At the time of his death in 1917 at the age of forty-three, only three books bearing his name had been published. Among a relatively small circle of Christians in Britain and the U.S., Chambers was much appreciated as a teacher of rare insight and expression, but he was not widely known.

Chambers was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, in 1874, the youngest son of a Baptist minister. He spent his boyhood years in Perth; then his family moved to London when Oswald was fifteen. Shortly after the move to London, Oswald made his public profession of faith in Christ and became a member of Rye Lane Baptist Church. This marked a period of rapid spiritual growth, along with an intense struggle to find God’s will and way for his life.

A gifted artist and musician, Chambers trained at London’s Royal Academy of Art, sensing God’s direction to be an ambassador for Christ in the world of art and aesthetics. While studying at the University of Edinburgh (1895-96), he decided, after an agonizing internal battle, to study for the ministry. He left the university and entered Dunoon College, near Glasgow, where he remained as a student, then a tutor for nine years.

In 1906 he travelled to the United States, spending six months teaching at God’s Bible School in Cincinnati, Ohio. From there, he went to Japan, visiting the Tokyo Bible School, founded by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Cowman. This journey around the world in 1906-1907 marked his transition from Dunoon College to fulltime work with the Pentecostal League of Prayer.

It was on one of his trips to America that he met Gertrude Hobbs. In 1910 he was married to Hobbs, whom he affectionately called "Biddy". On 24 May 1913, Biddy gave birth to their first and only child, Kathleen.

In 1911 he founded and became principal of the Bible Training College in Clapham in London. In 1915, feeling called to the war effort (World War I), Chambers applied and was accepted as a YMCA chaplain. He announced that the Bible Training College would be suspending operations for the duration of the war. Chambers was assigned to Zeitoun in Egypt, where he ministered to Australian and New Zealand troops who were later part of the disastrous Battle of Gallipoli.

Chambers died 15 November 1917 in Egypt as the result of a ruptured appendix. He suffered the extreme pain of appendicitis for three days before seeking medical attention, refusing to take a hospital bed needed by wounded soldiers.

While there are more than 30 books that bear his name, he only penned one book, **Baffled to Fight Better**. His wife, Biddy, was a stenographer and could take dictation at a rate of 250 words per minute. During his time teaching at the Bible College and at various sites in Egypt, Biddy kept verbatim records of his lessons. She spent the remaining 30 years of her life compiling her records into the bulk of his published works.

The complete story of his life is told in *Oswald Chambers: Abandoned to God* (1993).



Quotes by Oswald Chambers

A good book, in the language of the book-sellers, is a saleable one; in that of the curious, a scarce one; in that of men of sense, a useful and instructive one.

Books are the blessed chloroform of the mind.

Character in a saint means the disposition of Jesus Christ persistently manifested.

Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time.

Holiness, not happiness, is the chief end of man.

I have learnt that I am me, that I can do the things that, as one might put it, me can do, but I cannot do the things that me would like to do.

If in preaching the gospel you substitute your knowledge of the way of salvation for confidence in the power of the gospel, you hinder people from getting to reality.

It is the unseen and the spiritual in people that determines the outward and the actual.

The dearest friend on earth is a mere shadow compared to Jesus Christ.

The whole point of getting things done is knowing what to leave undone.

We have to pray with our eyes on God, not on the difficulties.

We look upon the enemy of our souls as a conquered foe, so he is, but only to God, not to us.

When a man is at his wits' end it is not a cowardly thing to pray, it is the only way he can get in touch with Reality.

When it is a question of God's almighty Spirit, never say, "I can't."

You will never cease to be the most amazed person on earth at what God has done for you on the inside.



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