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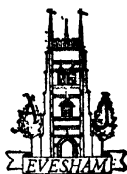
THE HAPPY LIFE

THE HAPPY LIFE

You Can Have It
.....
If You Want It
.....

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BY W. MAULEVERER, M.A.
(Author of "A New Way to Pray")



ARTHUR JAMES
THE DRIFT, EVESHAM

.....
"The Drift is God's Gift"
.....

Sold by and obtainable from
The Science of Thought Press,
Chichester, England.

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY PURNELL AND SONS, LTD.
FAULTON (SOMERSET) AND LONDON

FOR THOSE IN
EDUCATED DARKNESS
SAYS STARR DAILY

WHEN I looked at this title, *The Happy Life*, and later the sub-title, "You Can Have It—If You Want It", I must admit that I got a queer reaction. I wondered if the book was the latest edition from Pollyanna's Literary Mill.

To my surprise I found Mr. Mauleverer addressing himself largely to cynics, sceptics, agnostics, atheists and that vast befuddled fringe of intellectuals, with a deeply spiritual message. And I was intrigued by that, as well as by the simple, fresh, intimate style of the author.

The centre of validity in this book is experience—spiritual experience, that is—and the justification for accepting the validity of experience is Jesus Christ as He is found in the four Gospels and in the testimonies of those who have experienced the PRESENCE either by faith or by sight.

A comparatively few experience HIM BY SIGHT, seemingly for the purpose of reporting what they have seen, so as to toughen the stamina of others who walk by faith.

Jesus honours the factual-minded, who must see the evidence; but He blesses those who do not need the facts. "Blessed are they who not having seen believe."



FOREWORD

. This is a remarkable book in more ways than one. It is not only a spiritual book : it reveals the author 'as having a keen and rather devastating psychological insight into the pretences and rather innumerable shams and hypocrisies of the over-educated intellect.

The phrase, EDUCATED DARKNESS, might have been employed by the writer to characterize these people. Their clever capacities for self-deception are the composite source of the perpetual unhappiness which they vainly seek to conceal behind a veneer of learning, shop-talk and theatricality.

When I took up *The Happy Life* I wished that I had never seen it. *When I put it down I wished that I had written it.*

I can say this about the author's conviction as to the religion of experience as against the religion of form and theory : " Yes, yes, that's right."

This is because I have had the experience he describes. I have no factual proof. But my spirit confirms what his book declares.

I can therefore recommend *The Happy Life* to those who are mixed up and unhappy. As a French writer put it :

" The love of happiness can only be satisfied in the happiness of love."

STARR DAILY.*

**Starr Daily is the world-famous author of six powerful books. They are :*

<i>Release</i>	<i>This Is The Life</i>
<i>Recovery</i>	<i>Love Can Open Prison Doors</i>
<i>Good News</i>	<i>Through Valleys to Victories</i>

THE TITLES

MY title "The Happy Life," though not original, needs no explanation, for that is the kind of life we all naturally desire. But the sub-title does need explaining. The expression "You can have it if you want it" is not a cynical way of saying "Take it or leave it—I couldn't care less".

If there is one attitude more than any other that I have tried to avoid in life it is that of cynicism. I loathe it in other people and should deplore it in myself. Life is much too jolly.

No, the expression "You can have it if you want it" means word for word exactly what it says, and what the "IT" is I have tried to explain in the book.

* * * * *

THERE are probably few thinking people in England today who would honestly call themselves atheists. Some do so as a kind of outward show, because it sounds

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clever and seems rather up-to-date. But though I know one or two people like that, I don't think their numbers are very great.

There are, however, unless I am much mistaken, a very large number of agnostics. I have had the privilege of meeting many, and also of having been one myself.

Looking back at my own period of agnosticism, I think I should say that the last thing I wanted then was theory or speculation. The Rev. Professor So-and-so's latest theory about what-not left me absolutely cold. I wanted *facts*. I wanted a religion which could be *proved*, if not by intellect, at least by experience. And, incidentally, *that is my attitude now*.

I don't expect my little intellect to be able to prove the deeper profundities of religion, but I do expect it to pay due respect to experience—both to my own experience and to that of others.

And that is my plea in this book. It is simply an appeal to experience. To the best of my knowledge there is not one word of theory or speculation in it.

* * * * *

I HAVE found or have been led to an interpretation of Christianity which I know by experience to be effective. It does not make me a saint. It would take an explosion to do that! But it does give me here and now an inner growing sense of joy, peace and security, and an understanding of the real purpose of existence.

And that is surely what most people want!—not some sort of religion which may or may not be effective in a thousand years' time or in some future world. It is here

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and now in 1953 that matters. Does religion work, or does it not ?

It is because I know from experience that it does work, and because so many others (a few of whom are quoted herein) can say the same, and because I believe so passionately that a religion of experience and not of theory is what is so much needed today, that I have ventured to say "You can have it if you want it", and have endeavoured to set out at least one method by which it can be attained.

Of course, there may be lots of other methods. All I know is that this one works. Of course there are omissions in this book. It makes no claim to be exhaustive. Some good Christians may think that I am omitting doctrines which are vital to the whole Christian case. I wonder.

I think that we all tend to make religion too complicated, and that we would do well to get back to the simple (yet very profound) teachings of Jesus.

My most grateful thanks are again due to Miss Gibson, who, as on former occasions, has most kindly undertaken voluntarily all the work of typing.

W.M.

*Studland Rectory,
Dorset, 1953*

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. I

“You can have it . . .”

THIS book does not teach an easy method of how to get anything you want. And if you are one of those unfortunate people who spend a good deal of time trying to find an easy method of getting just what they want, this book will certainly disappoint you and you shouldn't buy it.

Fortunately a merciful Providence prevents us from bringing into manifestation everything that we want. And until what we want is a good deal more disciplined and decent, presumably it will continue to be so.

Most of the people that I know (with certain noble exceptions) who seem to be able to get anything they want are not very pleasant people. They are usually grumpy, selfish, unhappy and discontented, and the more they have the more they want. Spoilt adults are as nasty as spoilt children, and I have no desire to increase their number.

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No, the titles of these first chapters mean exactly what they say : " You can have IT . . ." ". . . If you want IT ", And what the IT is I will now try to explain.

* * * * *

THIS world is populated by a vast number of people, none of whose circumstances in life are exactly the same. When seen in large crowds—as, for instance, at a cup final at Wembley ; during the rush hours on the tube ; or at some large demonstration—they appear to be just one vast mass, and the individual is hopelessly lost in the crowd. Yet each individual is a separate entity and counts for one. Each individual is at the beginning of, in the middle of, or nearing the end of his own private history of experiences on earth. Each one has his own private joys and sorrows ; his own private hopes and fears ; his own private affections, interests, problems and worries, just as you and I have.

In other words, each individual person, be he rich or poor, saint or sinner, British or Chinese, Tory or Communist, learned or a fool, is a HUMAN BEING with the dignity, rights and duties of a human being. Though their circumstances vary in almost every way, yet at bottom all individuals are much the same as you and me, and are engaged in the curious yet interesting business of living a life.

Now it is obvious that a great many people cannot make head or tail of what this business of living a life is all about. Some regard the world in which we live as a sort of vast padded cell peopled by lunatics, and not very

“ YOU CAN HAVE IT . . . ”

well padded at that. Some regard it as a great bear-garden in which everyone fights anyone that gets in the way, and devil take the hindermost. Others regard the world as a sort of prison, into which somehow they have got, and from which someday they will be released when they have finished their stretch.

In clear distinction from the above there are many people living now, and many more who lived in the past, who claim to have found a meaning in existence. They do not claim to be better than other people, nor more learned than other people, but they do claim to have found a purpose in life in general and in their own lives in particular. And (what is very important) they claim to have found it not as a matter of theory but as a matter of experience. An ounce of experience is worth more than tons of theory. They claim from experience to have found a meaning in life, and it is my plea that they should be given a fair hearing and not be dismissed as a lot of credulous nit-wits.

These people can be found in all ranks of life, amongst the rich and amongst the poor, amongst the intellectual and amongst the ignorant, and there is one outstanding characteristic by which they may be known: they have a kind of inward happiness and serenity which seems to be quite independent of the outward circumstances in which they are placed.

Anyone can understand a person being cheery and happy when “ everything in the garden is lovely ”, but when one meets people whose outward circumstances are far from “ lovely ”, and yet whose inward happiness and serenity appear to be perfectly genuine, one must

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admit that they have "got something" and that that something is immensely worth having. It is, in fact, what many people would give almost anything to possess—an inward happiness and serenity which is independent of outward circumstances.

It is not in the least a matter of luck, as if some people had that kind of temperament, and others hadn't, and therefore you can't do anything about it. You *can* do something about it. You yourself "can have it if you want it", for this inward happiness and serenity is the *rr* to which I am referring in the title of this book.

And it is my great hope that I may be able to give at least some impression, drawn from experience and not from theory, of how it can be obtained. I can only speak from my own experience, of course, and not from anybody else's, but, as already mentioned, I have at one time been through a period of agnosticism, and, after deliverance from that unhappy state, I have always made it a practice to seek in the teaching of others what I can accept rather than what I must reject.

And my experience has been that people who have *rr*, i.e. the inward happiness and serenity which are independent of outward circumstances, can be found in all denominations and sometimes professing the most amazing and even mutually contradictory doctrines, while there are others who can give outward expression to a credal formula but do not seem to have got *rr* at all.

All of which goes to show that it is not the doctrines which people outwardly profess that are important but that amount of TRUTH which they have inwardly been able to assimilate. And TRUTH in its essence is one and

“ YOU CAN HAVE IT . . . ”

undivided. Truth is not the monopoly of any one sect or denomination, nor is anyone debarred from securing just as much of it as he is able to assimilate. “ *YOU can have it if you want it.* ”

* * * * *

IT is not, therefore, any credal formula that I am endeavouring to expound in this book—that will come later. Nor am I pressing you to join any particular group of people, though I strongly believe that when you have found IT you will desire to and should join up with some group. I am merely concerned with the patently obvious and disturbing fact that a great number of people in this country do not give any impression of having found this inward serenity and peace. Having discarded the outward expressions of religion, they do not seem to have anything in its place. They have chucked away the baby with the bathwater.

If the people who say that they have no use for religion could demonstrate this inward serenity and happiness which is not dependent on circumstances I should be impressed. I should want to know more about it and how they came by it. But the average materialist of today, whatever his politics, does not seem to be particularly happy. He is so engrossed with getting what he hasn't got or keeping what he has got that his life has become full of cares, worries and anxieties. He may be able to work up an appearance of happiness or jollity by some outward stimulus, but inwardly he is not happy, and he knows it.

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Whatever you believe or disbelieve about the Bible, you will surely admit that the expression "Men's hearts failing them for fear of those things which are coming on the world" seems peculiarly apt to the present day. There seems to be an almost universal fear of the possibility of a Third World War, the cynical ones telling us that it is inevitable, the more sensible ones believing that it can be avoided. But the fear is there, and the more the fear, the less the happiness.

Again, there are great numbers of people nursing inward resentments and grouses against circumstances or people. They feel that they are not getting a fair deal out of life, or they are resenting the actions of someone else, and the more the resentment, the less the happiness.

In spite of the wonderfully brave outward appearance that people so often manifest, we are conscious that inward fears and resentment are much more common than inward serenity and happiness.

Yet I am convinced that, whatever his outward circumstances, inward serenity and happiness can be acquired, at least gradually, by anyone.

II

“ . . . if you want it ”

BEFORE we proceed to an examination of how this inner happiness can be obtained there are two points which must first be considered :

(A) You are not likely to find it unless you *really* want it.

(B) Neither your past life nor your present circumstances need in the least preclude you from finding it, provided that you do *really* want it. We will consider those separately.

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(A) One would have thought that an inner happiness and serenity of mind which was independent of outward circumstances would be of such tremendous value that everyone would want it.

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But the fact is that many people *don't* want it ; or at any rate they *don't* want it sufficiently to make a serious effort to find it. Having come to the conclusion that this world is either a lunatic asylum, a bear-garden or a prison, they have decided to make the best of a bad job and are satisfied to leave it at that.

If you are satisfied with life in general and your own life in particular, then you are not likely to want anything better, and you most certainly *won't* find it.

If you are satisfied with a life of continual struggle for material things, to get what you haven't got or to keep what you have got ; if you are satisfied with keeping up resentments about people or circumstances and get a certain kick out of proclaiming your grouses ; if you are satisfied with a life of continual noise, of radio, chatter and small talk so that you never stop still and think ; if you are satisfied with a life of ever-increasing speed, so that things get faster and faster but always come back to where they started from—in a word, if you are *satisfied* with life in general, then this book and its message is not for you.

And they are certainly not for you if you are satisfied with your own life and are rather pleased with your own respectability ; if you are just as good as others and better than many who go to church ; if you really are not aware that deep down within you is a mighty mess which desperately needs clearing up.

If you are *satisfied*, there is no hope, none whatever.

But if you are a bit fed up, there is some hope. If you are fed to the teeth, there is more. If you are one of the many people who today are thoroughly dissatisfied, dis-

“ . . . IF YOU WANT IT ”

illusioned and frustrated, it is better still, for you are fortunate enough to have arrived at the place where you will *really* want something better and will take a good deal of trouble to find it.

And that “ something better ” is not more cakes and jam, more money and possessions, more reputation and social advancement, but an inner happiness and serenity that is independent of circumstances. And when once you have found that yourself you will be able to help other people to find it, and thereby help the world in a constructive way, instead of in the destructive way which the proposers of a bloody*revolution would advocate. Incidentally, bloody revolutions in the past have always left things rather worse than they were before, and presumably would do so again!

It is the dissatisfied who will want “ something better ”, and that “ something better ” has been there all the time, available for anyone when they really want it. It is not some distant utopia in this life, nor some pie in the sky in the next life, but an inward happiness here and now, which, when once we have found it ourselves, we can pass on to others who really want it.

But I must emphasise the words “ really want it ”, because sometimes people think they want a thing when they don't. The obvious instance of that is the invalid who would like to persuade both himself and his friends that he wants to get better, while inwardly he is doing nothing of the sort. Inwardly he does not wish to abandon the attention that he is getting, the freedom from responsibility that he is enjoying, nor does he really want to get up and face once again the difficulties and problems

of life. He thinks he wants to get better, and in a way he does want to, but he doesn't want it sufficiently to make the changes and adjustments which a return to health would necessitate.

In the same way people may think that they want this inner happiness and serenity of which I have been speaking, and in a way they do want it, but they do not want it with such determination that they would be prepared to face adjustments and changes in their habits of living.

The point that I want to make is that those who are *satisfied* with life in general or with their own lives in particular will not want it ; those who want it a bit but are not prepared to face the modifications in their habits and outlook which it might entail are not likely to find it ; but those who really do want it will find it, and *nothing in the world can stop them finding it*. Which brings me to the second point which we are to consider : that neither your past life nor your present circumstances need in the least preclude you from finding it, provided that you do *really* want it.

(B) Some people think that the way in which they have lived in the past and the habits that they have formed in the past make an insuperable barrier to the finding of this inner happiness and peace of mind. They would indeed like to have it, but the position is quite hopeless, and it is not for them. I remember one man in very great distress, when I told him of the possibility of finding this happiness, saying : " No, it isn't possible, not after the life that I have lived."

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Now, I want to make it absolutely clear, with all the emphasis that I can, that your past has nothing to do with it! It is your *present* intention that matters. Of all the people that I know who have found inner peace and happiness, and of all the people whose record of their experience we can trust (and some of them I am going to quote later), there was not one who was particularly proud of the life that he had lived previous to his contact with reality. I have known of murderers, thieves, drunkards and sex-perverts who have found it. One I happened to visit in a well-known English prison only yesterday.

It is simply *not* true that one's past life is a barrier. Of course, it may mean that one will have to make a considerable change of mind and outlook. That is what is meant by repentance, and it will not be easy. But it is not the past life that matters, but the present intention. And if your present intention is to find this inner peace and happiness, cost what change of mind it may, then nothing can stop you finding it. “ *You can have it if you want it.* ”

Nor is it true that your present circumstances are a barrier to your finding it.

Some people think that all this sort of thing is not for them. They are “ men of the world ”, and this is not in their line. But even men of the world have got to face up to reality some day. One cannot blind one's eyes to facts indefinitely, and there are plenty of men of the world who have come to their senses and found the real joy which is so very much better than artificially stimulated pleasure.

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Some people think that it is all a matter of temperament. If you have a happy sanguine temperament you are one of the lucky ones ; but if you haven't, that's that, and you can't do anything about it. How many people say, " I can't help worrying. I'm of a worrying nature ", and they really believe it !

Some people think it's a matter of education. If you've had a good education and know a lot you may find the way to real happiness ; but if not, you won't. In reply to which one may point out the very obvious fact that clever people are not necessarily happy people, and that knowledge is not the same thing as wisdom.

No, your present circumstances are no barrier to your finding it. Whatever your temperament, education, heredity or environment ; whatever your circumstances may be and whoever you are, you can have this inner happiness and peace if you really want it.

And I shall now endeavour to expound the method, or perhaps I should say A method, by which it can be found, drawing from my own personal experience and from the witness of those whose experience of it has been much deeper than mine.

III

The First Step

THIS first step is absolutely essential, and unless you are prepared to take it it will be quite impossible for you to find this inner happiness and serenity of which I have been speaking. It is this :

You must be prepared to give reasonable and sensible attention to the dogmatic assertion made by all religions at all times, that human beings here and now are citizens, not of one world¹ but of two. There is the material world which we can see, touch and measure, and there is an eternal world which we cannot see, touch or measure. And both the material world and the eternal world are real.

I am not saying that it is necessary at the moment to have any knowledge of the eternal world. But I do say

¹ I am using the word " world " here, not in the sense of the terrestrial globe, but as the environment in which we live.

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emphatically that you must abandon (if you have ever had it) the extraordinarily unscientific notion, so commonly held by people who ought to know better, that things which they cannot see, touch or measure do not exist ; or, if they do exist, that they are so unreal that they can know nothing about them.

Again I repeat, that it is the clear dogmatic assertion of all religions, in all places and at all times, that man is living here and now BOTH in a material world AND in an eternal world. And most of them would go a good deal further than that and say that, if a comparison is to be made as to which is the more real of the two, it is the eternal world and not the material one.

But I am not making comparisons now. Suffice it to say that, for all practical purposes, both are REAL. There is the world of time and space in which we find ourselves and which we all know only too well, AND there is the eternal world in which we certainly are but of which we may not be very conscious as yet.

Of this eternal world two things can here be said. In the first place it is not psychic, and has nothing whatever to do with psychic matters in which you or I may or may not believe. They are entirely irrelevant, and, whether they are true or not (and I am not here stating my own opinion), they have nothing to do with the eternal world of which I am speaking.

Secondly, the greatest Teacher that this earth has known spent a great deal of His time explaining and describing what the eternal world is, and I am not likely to be able to state in a few sentences what He needed so many exquisite parables and analogies to illustrate.

THE FIRST STEP

In your heart of hearts you probably know what the "eternal world" is as well as I do, but perhaps one small analogy may not be out of place.

Imagine for a moment someone who is in very great distress coming to see you privately and pouring out his soul to you in the hope that you may be able to help him in his trouble.

Now, as you look at him there are two things about him which are both true. First, there are the things which you can see, touch and measure, such as height (5 ft. 10 in.), dark hair, brown eyes, etc. If you are a physicist you would know something about the chemical elements which make up his body. If you are a phrenologist you would know something about which brain cells were at the moment in activity. If you are a psychologist you would be able to diagnose his mental state and describe it. And all that would be perfectly true.

But it is only a part of the story. For it is an equally true fact that here before you is an individual, a human being, pouring out his very soul to you in his distress, and that "very soul" is not something that you can either see, touch or measure in any way whatsoever. It is something which belongs to the eternal world and not to the material world, though it is for the moment very much in touch with the material world.

None of us can see, touch or measure other people's souls, though we are in contact with them every day; and only the most extraordinarily purblind person would affirm that they did not exist.

The point that I am trying to make is that *both* judgments about the man are true: (1) all those material

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things about his body, brain and his mental processes, which can be scientifically measured and explained and which belong to the material world ; and (2) that part of him which we mean when we say "he is pouring out his very soul " and which belongs to the eternal world.

A man's soul is not, of course, the eternal world, but it has a relationship to it. And if one can admit its existence it is not a very far step to admit the existence of its Creator and Sustainer, whom people vaguely call God.

And when once we speak about God and the human soul we are speaking about matters which concern the eternal world, matters which cannot be seen, touched or measured, but which are nevertheless real. And if they are real they are obviously very important indeed. Only a lunatic could say : " Yes, I believe in the existence of God, the human soul, and the eternal world, but they are not important and have no practical relevance to my own life."

One can understand the position of the atheist, who denies the eternal world altogether ; though it doesn't seem very scientific or logical. One can understand the position of the agnostic, who says that he is not yet sure, but, this being a matter of great importance, he will make every endeavour to find out. But what is completely unintelligible is the position of the person who admits the existence of God, the eternal world, and the human soul, and yet considers them of such secondary importance that he is not really interested in them !

* * * * *

BUT, to revert to our theme. The first inevitable and unavoidable step towards finding the inner happiness and serenity which is independent of circumstances is (1) to admit that those who claim to have experienced the existence of the eternal world are not a lot of sincere but misguided fools, and (2) to be willing, since the matter is so important, to give serious and intelligent attention to what they have to say.

There are in the world today a large number of people who only give attention to the affairs of the material world in which they live. They are therefore entirely dependent on, and at the mercy of, circumstances for their happiness or misery. If things go well they are happy ; if things go badly they are worried and miserable. They live in one world as materialists, and for all practical purposes are unconscious of any other.

On the other hand there are a large number of people who are conscious of, and in contact with, two worlds : the material and the eternal world. They are not wholly dependent on, and at the mercy of earthly circumstances for their happiness or misery, but have secret and inner springs of assurance on which they can draw.

These two groups of people, so fundamentally and widely different in most respects, are alike in these two ways : First, they both claim to speak from experience. The materialist says that he only experiences what he can see, touch and measure, and he denies or ignores the rest. The religious man says that he experiences both the material and the eternal world, and to deny either would be absurd.

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Secondly, these two groups are alike in that they both seem odd and queer to each other. The materialist doesn't understand the religious man, and thinks him strange, different, and living in a peculiar sphere of his own. And the religious man doesn't understand how the materialist can be content to hold such a cold and unsatisfying creed without attempting to verify the statements of those who claim to have found something better. Both groups seem odd to each other and always will do so, for their whole outlook on life is fundamentally different.

Except then, on these two points : (1) that both claim to speak from experience, and (2) that each thinks the other odd, these two groups profess two radically opposed and irreconcilable points of view. *One point of view is that we are now living in one world only, the other that we are now living in two worlds. And never the twain shall meet.* They cannot both be right, and, since one cannot sit on the fence indefinitely, sooner or later a choice must be made between them.

* * * * *

Now what I want so urgently to say is that, if there is to be any hope of your finding the happiness and peace of which I have been speaking, you must take the first step of coming down from the fence on to the side of those who say (and know) that we are the citizens of two worlds : the material AND the eternal.

You may know nothing about the eternal world as yet, nor have experienced it yourself. That, at the moment, is

THE FIRST STEP

not the point. What does matter is that you do not consider it as something odd, and thereby show yourself to be on the other side of the fence. What does matter is that you are prepared at least to say: "Between the claims of the materialist and the religious man, I think that the religious man is probably right; and since this is a matter of *very* great importance, I shall make every endeavour to find out whether or not he is right."

In that case you will not be ashamed to study religion, and from now onwards what I shall have to say concerns religion and religion alone.

IV

Some Testimonies

WE will now consider the testimony of a few representative people who claim to have found by experience this inner happiness and serenity which is independent of outward circumstances and, having found it themselves, were able to bring blessing to countless other people.

Each of these lived in times of turmoil, crises, and wars ; times which according to their standards would have seemed as critical as the present day does to us. Yet, despite the upheavals around them, they found this "IT", and they found it where it only can be found—in the eternal world, where dwells THE PRESENCE "that inhabiteth eternity".

For this PRESENCE they had different names. But, as we shall see in the next chapter, the name given to God is unimportant. What is very important is what we

SOME TESTIMONIES

believe about Him. I have met Christians whose idea of God is indistinguishable from what Mohammedans mean by Allah, and I have met Hindus whose idea of Brahma is definitely Christian. The name doesn't matter. What we believe about Him does.

These portraits, purposely taken from people professing different religions, can only be very sketchy, but the point to be emphasised is that the people were real and their experiences were most certainly very real.

* * * * *

IN the sixth century B.C. there lived Lao Tse in China and Gautama Buddha in India. Lao Tse spent most of his life as court librarian in the State of Chou. His warnings about the materialism of his day and the coming collapse of the State unless there was a return to spirituality passed unheeded, and he decided to go. At the frontier he was asked by the guardian of the pass to write down his beliefs. He stayed there long enough to compose a poem describing the way of Tao. He then passed through the gate and disappeared.

The book of Tao is now the bible of the Taoists. In the following two passages, the first speaks of the PRESENCE :

Before the being of Heaven and Earth
There existed the nebulous One,
 Unnamed, silent, formless,
 Changeless, eternal, unfailing,
The fathomless womb of all things.
Baffled, I speak of it as Tao.

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And the second, of the need of being in contact with the
PRESENCE :

Open the being to God,
Abide in stillness.
Life arises, and passes,
Birth, Growth and Return,
A rhythmic Arc from source to source.
In the life rhythm is quietude,
A tranquil submission ;
In the soul's submission is peace,
Absorption in Eternity.
And so, the Great Light.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WHEN Lao Tse was writing of the PRESENCE in China, Gautama Buddha (forty years his junior) was seeking Him in India. All his efforts of asceticism and extreme fasting (practised over six years) proved fruitless. Eventually, after taking nourishment, and while sitting beneath the famous bo-tree, he received Enlightenment. He knew. Moved by compassion for mankind, he returned to teach what he had found.

“I reveal suffering,” he said, “and the *extinction* of suffering.” And again : “I come to preach not death but *Life*.” He never named the PRESENCE, but the PRESENCE was obviously to him the one thing that mattered. “There is no more wonderful thing and seemingly miraculous to the sceptic mind than a man who has been mired in the transient pleasures of the world turning to holiness and finding bliss.” *That was the Buddha's way of saying : “You can have it if you want it.”*

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For the great multitudes of people today, committed to the ideals of materialistic competition and self-expression, and almost perpetually haunted by the fear of war and economic disaster, it would be a wise and salutary tonic to study the teachings of the Buddha and Lao Tse. "The peace that lies at the heart of these two religions; the stressing of self-conquest before conquest of others; the truth that moral conduct grows naturally out of personal holiness; and the natural welling-up of respect, compassion and nobility among men who have known mergence in the Divine—call it God, Enlightenment or the Tao: all this is profoundly and tragically needed in this crisis of spiritual paralysis. . . . We should find, incidentally, a startling correspondence with the basic teachings of Jesus."¹



LATER, in the fourth century, came Socrates and his interpreter, Plato. Hear what Plato has to say about the PRESENCE in the *Phaedrus* :

"The intelligence of each soul capable of receiving the soul's inheritance is enraptured at beholding the Absolute, is filled full and rejoices. . . . She sees justice and temperance and absolute knowledge, not as these things are seen in the generative world, relatively, but with comprehension of their essential nature, in absolute existence. With that clairvoyant eye, she sees the truth of being, and so passes to the innermost Heaven and is at home."

¹ Sheldon Cheny: *Men Who have Walked with God*, (A. Knopf, New York, 1945), ch. 2, p. 42.

And again :

“ A man must have a sort of intelligence of the Absolute. . . . A recollection of those things which the soul had when it was in the company of God, an escape from relative being into the apprehension of true Being. . . . In the right use of such recollection he is continually re-initiated into the mysteries, and he alone among mortals takes on perfection. Because he is careless of worldly interests, being rapt in the Divine, the crowds deem him mad ; for they do not recognise inspiration.”

By the above three people the nature of the Absolute, the PRESENCE, was undefined, but He was none the less real to them. They knew what they were talking about because they spoke from experience.

In Jesus the nature of the Absolute becomes defined. But as I shall have much more to say later about Jesus, “ the express image of the Father ”, we will now pass to the testimonies of three of His followers. They also knew what they were talking about because they spoke from experience. I quote them—one from Germany, one from Spain, one from France—as being representative of those who have written down their experiences. They are representative also of untold thousands who never put pen to paper, but whose experiences were none the less real.

* * * * *

ABOUT the year A.D. 1600 there lived at Goerlitz in Silesia a shoemaker by the name of Jacob Boehme. Like the thoughtful Psalmist, his steps had well-nigh slipped when he saw the prosperity of the wicked of his

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day and the sin and misery of human life. In his melancholy he lifted his heart to God, determined not to give up until God had heard him and helped him. And now let him speak for himself :

“ And then, when I had wholly hazarded my life on what I was doing, my whole spirit seemed suddenly to break through the gates of hell, and to be taken up into the arms and heart of God. . . . For then, with all reverence I say it, with the eyes of my spirit I saw God. I saw both what God is, and I saw how God is what He is. And with that there came a mighty and an incontrollable impulse to set it down, so as to preserve what I had seen.”

And later :

“ The gate of the Divine Mystery was sometimes so opened to me that in one quarter of an hour I saw more and knew more than if I had been many years at a university.”

Only a few years before, Teresa of Spain, that very practical and business-like woman, was writing in almost the same strain :

“ This instantaneous communication of God to the soul is so great a secret and so sublime a favour, and such delight is felt by the soul, that I do not know with what to compare it, beyond saying that the Lord is pleased to manifest to the soul at that moment the glory that is in Heaven, in a sublimer manner than is possible through any vision or spiritual consolation.”

And again :

“ By means of the senses and of the faculties the soul could not understand in a thousand years what she understands in this way in the briefest space of time.”

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. Exactly thirty years after the death of Boehme, Blaise Pascal, the greatest mathematical genius of his day, yet hungering for God, had an experience which was so momentous and real that he kept a "Memorial" of it sewed up in his clothes for the rest of his life. The Memorial is too long to quote in full, but here are relevant lines from it :

In the year of grace 1654, Monday 23 November.
From about half-past ten in the evening
Till about half an hour after midnight

FIRE

God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob.
not of the philosophers and the learned.
Certitude, joy, certitude, sight, joy.
God of Jesus Christ
Joy, joy, joy and tears of joy.

That great outburst of certainty and assurance does not come from a merely credulous and emotional mind, but from one of the greatest intellects of his age.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Now the interesting thing to note about these three testimonies is that they come from people belonging to quite different branches of the Christian Church. Boehme, the cobbler, was a Lutheran ; Teresa, the nun, was a Roman Catholic ; and Pascal, the scientist, was a Jansenist (a form of Calvinism). Yet they are all one in their assurance of the Reality of the PRESENCE which they

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had found, or rather which had found them. In externals they differed; in what really matters they were agreed. They knew with a definite assurance which admitted of no doubt whatsoever that God really is and that He is not just a figment of man's imagination. And they are only three representatives of a vast number of people who can speak in the same strain.

In English devotional literature you will find Julian of Norwich, the Roman Catholic; George Fox, the Quaker; John Wesley, the Methodist; William Law, the Anglican, and many another, all saying the same thing—that they KNOW with indelible certainty Him in whom they believed.

* * * * *

THESE people all spoke from experience and not from theory or speculation, and to ignore their testimony is sheer folly. But before leaving them there are two things that I want to say.

First: their knowledge of the eternal world and the help which they received from the eternal world enabled them to be better, nobler, wiser and more effective people than they would otherwise have been, and this world was the better for their living in it. It should be obvious to anyone with intelligence that this earth can only be a better and happier place when people living in it are better (morally better) and happier people. However much you improve social conditions, if the people living in those improved social conditions are going to behave like devils we shall not be much "forrader".

I claim that the people who were in touch with, and

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received help from, the eternal world are the very people who have really helped this world most by becoming better people themselves and helping other people to become better.

Secondly : after all, the people whom I have been quoting were experts, not ordinary people like you and me. So if we haven't had their experiences as yet, we must not be too much perturbed. It is merely that they are ahead of us and are showing us the way. What *does* matter, and matter very much indeed, is that we should take the first step of realising that this *is* the way ; that mankind *is* living in two worlds here and now ; that contact with the material world only is not enough ; and that it is quite essential that we do contact the eternal world which is here around us all the time and from which alone we can find the happiness and serenity that is independent of circumstances. How we can contact it we shall consider later.

V

God

THE first step is, then, to accept the fact that God IS, even though we ourselves as yet may have no experience of Him. The "PRESENCE" is here—on that all religions are agreed.

But before we proceed to examine the second step there is a point of very great importance which must first be considered. What is the NATURE of the God who IS? All religions agree that God IS, but they disagree as to His nature.

What you personally believe about His NATURE, His character, is of vital importance to you, for it affects everything that you do. All the common humdrum routine affairs of your daily life, as well as all important decisions, are influenced by what you believe, or disbelieve, about the nature of the PRESENCE. It is, therefore, of the greatest importance that your beliefs about

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Him should at least approximate to the Truth and not be grotesque caricatures.

But how can we know what is the truth about His nature? For, after all, (1) no man hath seen God at any time, and (2) the religions of the world, though unanimous as to His existence, are not agreed as to His nature.

Perhaps statement (2) needs a little modification. The outward credal statements of the religions of the world are far from unanimous about the nature of God, but individual people within those religions, who have known Him not by theory but by experience, are much closer in their beliefs about Him than perhaps we realise.

I have quoted Lao Tse, Buddha, and Plato. Neither of them said much as to the nature of the PRESENCE which they had experienced. They all lived before the time of Jesus, who, however, said a great deal about the nature of God, as we shall see later. Personally I believe (and this is only a personal opinion, and not important) that had they lived after Jesus and not before Him they would have spoken of God in terms of Jesus Christ and not in the vague way in which they did.¹

* * * * *

How, then, can you find out about the nature, the character of the God who is? I know of only one really satisfactory answer to that question, and that is: "Go to Him yourself and find out!"

¹ The only large historical religion which came after Jesus is Islam. And a careful study of the life and teaching of Mohammed alongside the life and teaching of Jesus should convince most unbiassed students of the superiority of the latter.

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For, after all, since God exists (and you must at least be prepared to believe that, on the testimony of others if you have none of your own) it would be inconceivable that He would not wish to make Himself known to His children. By the very words " God " or " the PRESENCE " we mean the LIVING God, Dynamic and not static, Active and not asleep. He is perfectly capable of making Himself known, and will do so, just in so far as we will let Him.

I cannot conceive of the possibility of anyone sincerely going to the PRESENCE and asking for Light about Him without his being plentifully answered. It just could not happen. How the answer comes is a different matter, but assuredly it will come. *For, all that everyone has ever known about God is not what they have been clever enough to find out but what He has been good enough to reveal.* They would never have sought Him had He not first prompted them to do so.

And that applies to you. You COULD NOT sincerely go to Him for Light about His nature had He not first prompted you to do so—you would never have thought of such a thing !

Nor is it conceivable that He would reveal to you anything that was not the TRUTH. But here we must be careful. God will reveal the Truth all right, but our capacity for receiving the truth is very much limited. It is limited by all sorts of things : our own prejudices mainly ; our unwillingness to " change our mind " and believe the Gospel ; also our sins ; and, perhaps more than we realise, our inner realisation that knowledge of the Truth will necessitate adjustments and changes in our

habits which at the moment we are not willing to face. Many an agnostic's¹ problem is not really an intellectual one but a moral one.

Since our capacity for recognising truth is limited, it is necessary, therefore, to check up our experience of truth with the experience of other people. We do not get truth from other people, but from its SOURCE, yet the experience of others who are much better people than we are, and who know much more about these things than we do, is of very great importance, and it is folly to disregard it. Our own ideas of the nature of God, specially coming (as we do) rather late to these things, is not likely to be more correct than the experience of the experts who have preceded us.

We needn't, and indeed we shouldn't, take what they have to say as infallible. They made mistakes sometimes as all human beings do, and none of them except Jesus claimed perfectly to reveal the PRESENCE. But they did know a great deal, and what they knew came from experience and not theory, and we must therefore be humble enough to check our own experience of what God teaches us about Truth with the experience of those who were much finer characters than we are. After all, it is by their fruits that we shall know them, and those who demonstrated by the sanctity of their own lives that they were in touch with God are not likely to lead us very far wrong.

But it is not to them first that we must go, but to the PRESENCE HIMSELF, and He will guide us and lead us into

¹ This is, of course, *not* true of all agnostics, but my experience has been that it is true of many.

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the Truth, just so far as we are willing to be led and guided. He will lead us to the right people, the right books, and, above all, to *the right experiences*, which will bring us to a deeper knowledge of Himself.

* * * * *

WHAT, then, is the nature of the PRESENCE? It would be presumptuous for me to attempt to define it. For He is as near to you as He is to me, and you should know from Him and not from me. I cannot describe the Infinite, nor circumscribe Perfection into a few clever sentences. I only know that He is REAL and not a creation of my own imagination. I only know that the highest and most glorious ideas of goodness that I can muster are but paltry and feeble representations of His immeasurable Goodness and Love, and that nothing which is evil can possibly proceed from Him. I only know that in Him is all Truth, and that what is untrue cannot and does not proceed from Him. I only know that all Beauty is an expression of Him, and that all ugliness and disharmony is a denial of Him.

I know that I can never escape Him, for one cannot escape that which is. Were I to go to Heaven He would be there. Were I to go to Hell He would be there also, only I shouldn't know it, for my hell is only the exclusion of Him (deliberate or otherwise) from my own consciousness.

I know that the PRESENCE is a "HE" and not an "IT"; personal and not just a principle; real and not vague; pervading all things with His Perfect Spirit; and caring

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for each individual soul as if he were the only soul that existed.

And you can know these things, too. But you will never know them by intellect, for our little finite intellects cannot grasp Infinite Perfection, and the PRESENCE cannot be limited to a philosophy. Nor will you find Him by science, for He cannot be measured, or tabulated or reduced to laws of man's making. You will find Him on your knees, in the "pouring out of your very soul", to Him who hears and understands.

I cannot describe His nature. You must go to Him yourself and find out. But there is One, and One only amongst men, who can best describe Him. He is the only one who has ever dared to say: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

VI

Jesus

“**B**UT why Jesus? Why spoil the argument by arbitrarily selecting one of the world’s many teachers and speaking of Him? Had you been born an Asiatic instead of in England you would have selected Buddha, Krishna, Lao Tse or Mohammed? Why should Jesus be right and the others wrong?”

Now personally I don’t believe that Jesus was right AND the others wrong. I believe that Jesus was quite right and the others partly right. But before I try to answer the above criticism I would point out that the field of “possibles” among the world’s great teachers is not so big as people think. Zeus, Jupiter, Jehovah, Brahma and Allah are not historical characters but names given to (and more or less intending to describe) the PRESENCE.

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That leaves us with only Lao Tse, Confucius, Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed as historical characters, representing the *major* religions of the world. Lao Tse was a philosopher and Confucius was a teacher of ethics ; neither ever claimed to be anything else. That leaves us with Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed.

I am not going to "vet" their various claims. Each must do that for himself. But I am going to try to reply to the question at the beginning of this chapter in the only way that I can do so—by giving my own reasons why I believe Jesus to be the supreme revelation of God to man, and therefore why He has a claim to my loyalty and yours. What I have to say now, therefore, must be very personal.

Being an Englishman, I was brought up, as many another, with a good background of second-hand Christianity. That is to say, I believed doctrines on the authority of someone else, but had little first-hand experience. And that was quite right ; children ought to be given that start. They need to be given a background in religion, just as they do in mathematics, history, science and any other educational subject. Later they can think for themselves.

In my later "teens" I experienced very definitely what is called conversion, and my second-hand religion gave place to the more positive joy of first-hand experience. But there were shocks to come, for my conversion (for which I shall ever be thankful) was mainly supported by a crutch which was afterwards to collapse, and that crutch was the doctrine of an infallible Bible.

Later, when in India, a chance visit to the Golden Temple of the Sikhs at Amritsar affected my whole life.

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For there before my eyes I saw the Sikhs giving the same reverence to their Holy Book that I was giving to mine, and they couldn't both be infallible ! And who was to say which was right ? And why ?

In one day my crutch of dependence on an infallible Bible was gone. My whole faith, so carefully built up, seemed to collapse in ruins, and I entered an unhappy stage of agnosticism.

The things " which I had loved long since " I now " lost awhile ", and there was nothing to take their place. I still knew from the experience of my conversion that the PRESENCE existed ; but, now I had lost Him and could not find Him.

* * * * *

LOOKING back now on those unhappy days of agnosticism, I realise that they were really immensely valuable, for I was led on to a direct faith in Jesus independent of any infallible crutch. I can see now the " nullah " at Ahmednagar in which I used to sit alone, thinking out and praying out (though I knew not to whom) a rebuilding of my shattered faith.

That is over thirty years ago, and I cannot remember details clearly, but what follows below is, I think, something like what I used to ponder over in my nullah, seeking for an answer to that question : " But why Jesus ? "

Anyway, I came, or rather I was led, slowly but resolutely to a faith in Jesus Himself, which is independent of any crutches ; which has stood the test of time ; and which I firmly believe to be impregnable for eternity.

I have never seen Him myself, though I know others who have (some of whom I shall quote later), but here at least are some of the reasons why I believe that Jesus has a supreme claim on my loyalty and yours.

(1) *Intellectually.* I believe that His teaching, *more* than the teaching of anyone else that I know, squares best with the Absolute Perfection and Goodness of the PRESENCE. And by "His teaching" I do not mean the teaching of any other person whatever about Him, nor do I mean the teaching of any sect or denomination, but His own declared teaching as recorded in the four Gospels. I do not claim that record to be infallible, but I cannot think that anyone can read and re-read the Gospels without getting a very clear idea of what the teaching of Jesus was.

I do not profess to be very good at following it, and am often conscious of saying "Lord, Lord" and not doing the things which He says; but I get the most profound impression that He spoke and still speaks with authority; that "no man spake like this Man"; that what He taught was the Truth; and that here, indeed, is what mankind, individually and corporately, is looking for in its search for guidance and for God.

It should be fairly obvious that the teaching of Jesus, though it has been practised in varying degrees with glorious results by individuals, has not as yet been applied or even seriously considered by nations in their dealings with one another. That does not mean that the teaching of Jesus is ineffective in international affairs, but merely that it has not been tried. Even as individuals we find it hard to believe that it is a worse thing to practise evil than it is

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to suffer evil, and corporately we do not as yet believe it at all.

· But His teaching stands, and I believe it to be of God. If I knew of a "better 'ole" I should go to it, but I don't.

(2) *Ethically*. And what can I say as to the character of Jesus—a character which stands out so sublime and makes some appeal even to the basest of men? I know of no grander expression in human terms of the Perfection and Goodness of the PRESENCE, nor can I conceive of one.

For perfection does not lie in the doing of an infinite number of things but in doing the right thing at the right time and in the right way. When was Jesus ever awkward or gauche or at a loss? The centurion's comment "Truly this was a righteous Man" does not seem to me to go nearly far enough.

I don't know of any other definitely religious leader who seemed so attractive to sinners and gave them the impression that he cared and that all was not lost. Many another leader has attracted the righteous and helped them forward to a deeper consecration. The fact that Jesus was regarded as, and indeed came to be called, "the Friend of publicans and sinners" is indeed very significant. To hate the sin and yet love the sinner is surely something Divine.

But Christians all down through history have sensed that the goodness and beauty of the character of Jesus was supremely portrayed in what took place at Calvary. Many curious doctrines have been woven round that event, but at least they agree in acknowledging that here is

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the grandest expression of utter self-sacrificing Love that the world has ever known.

There have, of course, been many lesser examples of self-sacrificing love and goodness, and thank God for them, but I cannot conceive as possible any greater expression of voluntary self-sacrificing love than the utter abandonment of home, friends, reputation, and of life itself, as took place on Calvary.

The importance to me of that event is that it was voluntary ; and that it was foreseen, each step being described beforehand. Jesus was not caught out by the superior cleverness of Caiaphas. "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John x.18). He could have avoided the Cross, but instead He deliberately allowed His enemies to do what they would with Him. There is no possible higher expression of self-sacrificing love. And if that is not Divine, what is ?

(3) *Finally*. I am faced with the utterly undodgeable fact that He *claimed* to be revealing the PRESENCE in His own person. Although He may have said only once "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father", it should be fairly obvious to any reader of the Gospels that that was what He was claiming all the time ; and that people were to recognise that fact, not by miracles and "signs", but by the truth of His teaching and the sinlessness of His character. Anyway, it was on that ground, which His enemies called blasphemy, that He was finally condemned.

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So, both you and I, whether we like it or not, are faced with the inescapable challenge that either He did perfectly reveal the Father (in human terms) or He did not. Either Jesus is here and now at this moment what He claims to be or He is not. We may defer our answer to that challenge, but we cannot escape it. It is peremptory.

I know of no one else in history that has made such terrific claims *and* supported them so effectively and conclusively by his teaching, actions, character, life, death and resurrection. Either His claims to be the Way, the Truth and the Life, to be The Good Shepherd and the Light of the World, to be the revelation of the Father to man, are true or they are blasphemy. We cannot evade that issue.

It was on some such lines, alone in my nullah, independent of, though no doubt helped by, the teaching of others, that I was led back to a real faith and assurance. But this time it was not primarily a faith in doctrines (important though I believe some doctrines to be), but a direct faith in the Living Jesus Himself as "the express image of the Father" and as your Saviour and mine.

VII

More Testimonies

WHAT I have just described is my own personal experience. But I don't think that it is very different from the way in which any thinking person will be brought to a conviction that Jesus is indeed "the express image of the Father". For (except in very rare cases) it will most certainly not be by signs and wonders, and all our hopes for some special proof are doomed to disappointment. It is "an evil and adulterous generation that seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it".

We all have some sort of capacity to recognise truth when we hear it, and to appreciate nobility of character when we see it, and when both are reinforced by stupendous personal claims we must of necessity either accept or reject those claims.

Jesus never based His claims upon the working of signs

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or wonders. They were usually done out of compassion. But He did base His claims upon the fact that He was both declaring the Truth and manifesting it.

As to why He sees fit to bring people today to the knowledge of Himself by faith and not by sight I don't profess to know. But I do know that it is so, and that He is the best judge of such matters. And I, for one, am quite content to leave it at that.

But there are a few very rare cases of people being brought to Jesus by sight and not by faith, and I intend to quote three. There are also many cases of people having seen Him AFTER they had believed.

In the three short narratives which follow there are certain very interesting facts which seem to be common to each of them and which I believe to be important.

(1) The people concerned were not merely unbelievers. They were men who had heard of Jesus and had REJECTED Him ; they were indeed violently hostile to Him.

(2) They were *in extremis*. That is to say, they were in a state of dire need, and were definitely prepared to do something really desperate, either to themselves or to Christians or to society in general.

(3) Their subsequent witness to Jesus entailed much more suffering at the hands of unbelievers than most of us have so far endured.

* * * * *

WHEN I was an undergraduate at Oxford I had the privilege of attending a meeting at which that very remarkable Indian, Sadhu Sundar Singh, was

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speaking. He was dressed in a saffron robe, and his whole appearance, serene, kindly and vital, was noticeably like the usually accepted portrait of Jesus. This was his story :

He was the youngest son of a wealthy Sikh landowner in the state of Patiala. From his earliest days he not only accompanied his mother on her visits to the temples, but was carefully taught by her to regard religion as the supreme thing in life.

His restless mind sought the serenity and happiness of which we have been speaking, and he studied the Granth (the Bible of the Sikhs), the sacred books of Hinduism, the Koran, and, at the mission school which he attended, the Christian Bible.

The New Testament provoked in him a violent antipathy as being subversive of all that he had learnt and treasured from his childhood, and he tore it up and burnt it in the fire. So strong were his feelings that, on one occasion, when the shadow of a Christian missionary fell across him, he spent a whole hour in washing away the pollution !

But he could not find in any religion the inner peace which he sought. And so one night he made a desperate resolve that, if he could not find it, he would throw himself in front of the Ludhiana express which passed at the bottom of his father's garden at five a.m. He spent that night in meditation and prayer, and just before dawn *he became conscious of a bright cloud filling the room, and in the cloud he saw the radiant figure of Jesus, who said : " Why do you oppose Me ? I am your Saviour ; I died on the Cross for you."*

As he looked upon that face, so filled with Divine love and pity, there came a sense of forgiveness and peace,

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and he consecrated himself to his life's work as a Christian Sadhu.

He was disowned and cursed by his family. Year in and year out he wandered over India, preaching Christ and meeting with much hatred and opposition. But it was in Tibet that he met with his most terrible sufferings and persecution. And it was to Tibet that he felt specially called, when in 1929 he started out, full of joy, saying : " I shall come back again in the autumn if all goes well."

He never came back, and no one has ever known what happened to him.¹

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* * * * *

THE second case of a person who found Jesus by sight and not by faith need not occupy us long. It is the very obvious one of St. Paul. The narrative is given in full three times in the Acts of the Apostles.

The similarity between St. Paul's experience and that of the Sadhu is very remarkable. He is violently hostile to Jesus, who seems to him to be the denial of all that he believes. Jesus appears to him on the Damascus road and says almost the same words that He said to Sundar Singh.

He offers himself in whole-hearted service to his new-found Master, and in that service he meets with opposition, persecution and very great suffering. " Five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods. Once was I stoned. Thrice I suffered shipwreck. A night and a day I have been in the deep."

¹ See, *Sadhu Sundar Singh* by Mrs. A. Parker (S.C.M.).

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Perils, weariness, painfulness, watchings, hunger, thirst, and finally martyrdom—all these were his lot.

And yet he could speak so obviously sincerely of joy and rejoicing and of the peace of God which passes understanding. There is no record that he ever saw Jesus visibly a second time, but he was always conscious of His presence.

His was a special call to a special work, the results of which last to this day.

* * * * *

THE third instance of someone finding Jesus by sight and not by faith is that of Starr Daily, now living in America. He has kindly given me permission to quote his experience, which he has narrated in full in his books *Release* and *Love Can Open Prison Doors*.¹

Starr Daily was a criminal who spent much of a lifetime in American prisons. Like many another criminal, he indulged in a plentiful supply of hate. "I started out by hating God and wound up by hating everything, including my own infallible wisdom." "I was filled and seared with a crimson hatred and black rebellion. I hated everything and everybody, including myself."

At one time, during his final prison "stretch", he was ordered to the "hole", a dungeon which he vividly describes in his book *Release*. At the end of this punishment, exhausted by pain and undernourishment, he entered a state of semi-consciousness, and Jesus appeared to him.

¹ Pub. Arthur James, Evesham, at 7/10 each post free.

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“He came towards me, His lips moving, but not vocally. He paused near my side and looked down, deep down into my eyes, as though through them He were trying to penetrate my soul. In all my life I had never seen or felt such love in the human eye as now glowed and radiated in His eyes. Nor had I ever felt myself so utterly helpless in the captivity of love.”

“The scene faded out casually . . . eventually forming itself into one word of gossamer irregular letters. The word was LOVE. This, too, vanished, leaving me for what seemed an age enveloped in an unspeakable state of mental clarity.”

“I had no sense of my prison walls, but my thoughts roamed the imponderable Universe far and clear. The measurements of time and space vanished out of my consciousness. I was free. I knew that I was free. I had found the Reality within the actuality, the breath within the breath, the consciousness within the consciousness, the soul within the form. And, above all, I knew that I was being what the theologians call ‘reborn’.”

As he points out in the prologue to his book, psychologists, metaphysicians, theologians can all try to offer an explanation of the above experience. But such explanations are not very helpful. “About the best that I can say is that at least for a moment of time I was free of the Time and Space sense ; that I knew Reality and knew why I knew it. All of which is no explanation, save for those who are able to say ‘Yes, yes, that’s it’.”

After all, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and “by their fruits ye shall know them”. And when a man is suddenly changed by a vision of Christ from a hating

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criminal into a loving and useful member of society you can offer what explanation you like, but the fact remains that that is exactly what happened to Starr Daily. And he has so continued to live the Christian life for over twenty years. Personally I would rather see more facts like that and less explanations !

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THE three people whose experiences I have just recorded all found Jesus by sight and not by faith. I cannot too strongly emphasise that for most of us it is the other way round. "Because you have seen Me, you have believed," said Jesus to Thomas ; and then, as if looking down through history at the hosts of people who were to find Him by faith and not by sight, He added : "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

If you want proof of the existence of God, of the spiritual world, of Jesus, it is practically betting on a certainty to say that you will not get it by sight. The odds against it are enormous. You *must* be humble enough to give reasonable credence to those who speak from experience and whose "fruits" have not been unworthy ; to realise that things can be VERY REAL though they cannot be touched and measured ; and that "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy".

VIII

The Second Step

IN Chapter 3 we considered the first essential step towards finding the happiness and peace which is independent of outward circumstances. That was to admit the existence of the second or spiritual world, even though we may not as yet have had any experience of it. To ignore the evidence of so many better than ourselves who have experienced it, or to treat it as irrelevant to human life, is folly.

But now there is another step to be taken which is even more vital and important. It is one thing to realise that God and the Spiritual World exist. It is quite another thing to contact them. The first is a matter of the intellect ; the second is a matter of the will.

There are plenty of people who know that God exists (and that, at least, is something), but that knowledge of Him means no more to them than their knowledge of the

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North Pole. They don't care a scrap about the North Pole, and in actual practice they don't care a scrap about God, except in a time of crisis. They believe in God, but they have never contacted Him.

But how do we contact God "whom no man hath seen at any time"? How do we contact the living ascended Jesus? That is the vitally important question which I shall try to answer now.

* * * * *

WE have been thinking about God as the PERFECTION of Goodness, Truth and Beauty. We have been thinking about Jesus as the perfect expression (in human terms) of this PERFECTION of Goodness, Truth and Beauty.

Now, Jesus taught and Himself demonstrated that it is of the very nature of the Father to be making the first move towards contacting us. There is no need for us to try to attract His attention. He is already most generously giving the whole of His attention to us. He commands us; He calls us; and, above all, He loves us. And what is needed on our part is RESPONSE to His Love, His command and His call.

Contact between you and God is already half made in that He is already making the first move. It is completed, and only can be completed when you RESPOND to His Divine Call. And that, on your part, will mean an action of your will.

By your own free will you can respond to God's love, commandment and call. By your own free will you can

THE SECOND STEP

reject them. It is your will in either case, and no one else on earth can operate your will for you. And it is a very humbling and awe-ful fact that not even God Himself will ever force your will. He stands at the door and knocks, but He never batters down the door.

If agnostics (and I mean sincere agnostics) would realise that the very fact they are seeking the Truth is in itself evidence that the Truth is seeking them, just as the fact their heart is beating is evidence of the Divine life within them, half their difficulties would be solved. They could never of themselves have thought of seeking the Truth (any more than they could of themselves make their heart beat), and it is mere conceited presumption to think that they could.

The Divine PRESENCE is already acting upon and "operating" within us; and He is doing that perfectly and making no mistakes. The way to contact Him, then, is by an act of our own free will, to open ourselves to, to RESPOND to what He is already doing.

And people make that definite and voluntary response to God in all sorts of different ways. The prodigal son "came to himself" and said: "I will go to my Father." Brother Lawrence was observing nature, when suddenly the truth of God's call dawned upon him, and he responded. Isaiah was in the Temple, Ezekiel by the riverside, Zacchaeus up a tree, and Matthew in his tax office.

I had the unusual distinction of doing it on a lie! A friend once said: "Have you given your heart to Christ?" I replied: "Yes, of course I have", when inwardly I knew that I had done nothing of the sort. But

that question haunted me and would not leave me till I did make a definite act of response to His Call, and I did it, as I suppose most of us do, on my knees.

You may term it what you will—conversion, surrender, the new birth, or decision ; it may be sudden or it may be gradual ; but it is the quite essential and unavoidable step that each must take of his own free will and in his own way, of responding to the call that God is already making. *It is the beginning of replacing second-hand theory by first-hand experience.*

For the fact remains that God is calling the human soul, and nothing in all eternity can alter that FACT. We may deny that it is so ; we may avoid the issue ; we may, like St. Augustine, keep putting it off ; we may go up to heaven or down to hell in our attempt to avoid “ the Hound of Heaven ” ; but, do what we will, we cannot alter the fact that God is calling us, and that we cannot find serenity and happiness until we have freely and voluntarily responded to His call.

The second step, then, is a *voluntary response* on our part to the command, call and love of Jesus, and that in itself is the “ new birth ” and there is no other. Life becomes quite different and immeasurably richer and happier. We begin to see things differently, and to find a meaning in things. This world no longer appears to be a mad-house, a bear-garden or a prison, but a school in which we and all who are willing to be taught can quickest learn how to become what God desires and intends us to become.

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THE SECOND STEP

BUT here I must offer two words of caution.

(1) I have purposely muddled up the words "Jesus" and "God" in what I have just said, and I have no intention of thereby entrapping you or myself in theological arguments and subtleties. People love to make religion complicated by theological hair-splitting. Let us stick to the facts. We know that God exists, the PERFECTION of Goodness, Truth and Beauty; we know that Jesus exists and calls men *now* as He did long ago.

Don't, then, let yourself be side-tracked from the main issue of *responding* to the Divine Call by plunging into theological speculations as to whether God is Jesus or Jesus is God, and thinking that that is religion, because it isn't! Religion is never speculation; it is response to Fact.

And the fact is that Jesus claims to reveal the Father, and therefore whether we speak of God calling or Jesus calling it comes to the same thing. Anyway, the early disciples responded to the call of Jesus, and came to regard Him completely as their Master and Lord, and so can you and I.

(2) The second word of caution is: don't let yourself be side-tracked from the main issue of responding to the Divine Call by responding to the call of somebody or something else. It is Jesus that calls you to be His disciple; not the Church, or the Pope, or the Bible calling you to be their disciples.

Practically the whole of the disunity of the Church today can be traced to this one cause: that people tend to become disciples of other disciples instead of direct disciples of Jesus.

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. They consider themselves bound either by what the early fathers teach, or by what Church Councils teach, or by what the Old Testament teaches, or by what this or that church leader teaches, but will not find out for themselves what Jesus teaches.

We are not called to be disciples of disciples ! We are called to be disciples of Jesus here and now, and that will take every ounce of what we have got.

Of course, if we are wise, we shall gladly and thankfully listen to what other disciples have to tell us from their experience, and we shall learn from them, and give them the right hand of fellowship whatever their denomination, but we are NOT their disciples.

Of course, if we are wise, we shall gladly and thankfully glean from the Bible what the writers have to tell us about Jesus, but we are NOT their disciples. Our main Bible study will be confined to finding out what Jesus Himself had to say and what He did and does.

Of course, if we are wise we shall join up with some branch of the Church (for lone Christians are usually of not much use), and we shall give loving and loyal obedience to our ecclesiastical superiors in so far as they echo the commands of Jesus, but we are NOT their disciples.

We stand in our own right as direct disciples of Jesus and of no one else. We speak from our own experience and not another's. And nothing can separate us from His leadership, guidance, care and love, except our own wilful disregard of it.

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THE SECOND STEP

I WOULD close this chapter by pointing out the interesting fact that, once people have taken the second step, and of their own free will have responded to the Call of Jesus, so often they regard their previous life as so much time wasted.

A friend of mine, whose agnostic period lasted about twenty years, told me that he felt as if he had had twenty years taken out of his life. "Too late have I sought Thee," said St. Augustine, and he, too, bemoaned that so much of his life had been useless.

In my own case I believe my agnosticism was valuable, as by means of it I was led to a deeper understanding of Jesus as the Truth, and was taught how to stand on my own feet without the aid of crutches.

Agnosticism is only a waste of time and useless if it is deliberate. And it is deliberate when we don't take the trouble to find out whether God is calling us or not; when the real reason why we will not seek the Lord is because we are not prepared to do what He says; and when we are inwardly aware of His call and yet are refusing to respond to it.

The past doesn't exist; the future doesn't exist; the only time that does exist is NOW; and never can the call of Jesus to your soul be more insistent and demanding than it is at this moment. It is for you, by an act of your own free will, to respond.

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IX

And Then, What ?

WHEN once that response has been made, not to a doctrine but to the PRESENCE, an immense change begins to take place in our whole attitude to life. I know that from experience.

So do multitudes of others who, as St. Paul says, know that Christ died for our sins (yours and mine) according to the Scriptures. Whereas we were blind, now at last we begin to see. Life begins to have a purpose and there are enormous possibilities of joy, usefulness and growth in front of us, stretching far beyond our stay on this earth.

But it is first as well for us to recognise what has really taken place. It is not that we have made a choice, a sort

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of New Year's Resolution, to give up agnosticism or indifference and to try Christianity in the hope that it may really work.

That would be analogous to the man who has two routes in front of him. He tries route *A*, and finds it only leads to frustration. So, being sensible, he now decides to try route *B*. In each case he is the deciding factor, and what he does is entirely an act of his own unaided will.

Whereas, what you have done has been an act of your own will, but not of your unaided will. There has been very strong pressure upon you all the time—a pressure, not of force or compulsion, but of Love. To that pressure you, like most of us, had set up a resistance. We preferred to paddle our own canoe, and the result was frustration, the couldn't-care-less attitude, or some other form of unpleasantness.

Now, by an act of your will, you have decided to stop resisting. You have opened the sluice-gates, and the waters of themselves have begun to pour in. In other words, God, the PRESENCE, Jesus (call Him what you will, it is all the same) has been knocking at the door of your heart ever since you had any existence at all. You have at last recognised that fact, and by an act of will have opened the door and let Him in. He will do the rest !

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BUT there are one or two important points which must now be considered.

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(1) If your experience is anything like mine you have probably only partially opened the sluice-gates. The waters have come in all right, but not as yet at their full flood. You have established contact with Reality, with the PRESENCE, and that has been a very real experience. But it is only a beginning.

It cannot be too strongly stated that the new birth is not the goal but the starting point of human endeavour, and that tremendous joyous possibilities lie ahead. There is no limit to what He will do with our souls if we will let Him.

But (if I may mix metaphors like anything) at least we know that we are now on the right tack, and that the way in future will be to respond more and more to the Divine pressure, to open the sluice-gates wider, to let Him more and more take charge of us.

And I have found that to be a great adventure, and that the most surprising and wonderful things do happen, just in so far as I can more and more get my own self out of the way and take my orders and directions from Him. I am still only in the experimental stage with that, but I have found that it does work, and I have never yet been let down.

So, having responded to the Divine pressure and opened the sluice-gates, don't think that you have finished. You have only just begun, and there is a joyous life of spiritual growth in front of you. That life need not be particularly pious, but it is LIFE, because it is in touch with God who is Himself the Source of life. "This my son was dead, and is alive again."

(2) Having once opened the sluice-gates, I don't think you will ever have the strength or the desire to close them

AND THEN, WHAT ?

again. You may go through phases of spiritual deadness. We all do that at times. But Jesus will see to it that you come back to your senses again, if necessary with a bump !

I cannot think that anyone who has once contacted REALITY could ever again irrevocably cut himself off from it. He may wander away, perhaps far away, and thereby create unhappiness for himself and others. But inwardly he knows the Truth ; and Divine Love will give him no peace till he is back in the fold again.

After all, what is not TRUTH is illusion, and there cannot be any real happiness or permanence in illusion. And once we have contacted Truth we cannot be satisfied with illusion. Once we have seen something of the Light we can never again be satisfied with darkness.

(3) Thirdly, there now arises before us one great and all-important duty, which must never be allowed to take any sort of secondary place. It is what Jesus called " ABIDING in Him "

By " abiding in Jesus " I do not mean thinking of Him at every moment of the day. Obviously, if we are to do our jobs well, it is to our jobs that we must give our full attention. But it does mean a subconscious realisation that He is alongside—in fact, more than alongside. It is " we in Him, and He in us ", a condition that we can and should experience, but which (while limited to three-dimensional existence) we cannot define or explain.

* * * * *

THE HAPPY LIFE

PEOPLE may be said to ABIDE not in what they are thinking about at the moment but in what has become the emotional undercurrent of their daily life. The Bible speaks quite definitely of some people dwelling (or abiding) in darkness and others dwelling (or abiding) in light.

It is to that "dwelling in the Light" or "abiding in Him" that you are now called, and that can only be done by regular daily habits of PRAYER. Prayer is not just asking for things; it is consciously establishing contact with the PRESENCE. It is absolutely vital. And at least a quarter of an hour (that is a very minimum) every day must be given to communion with your Lord. And it should be fairly obvious that when you are in communion with your Lord it is not you who should do all the talking!

Some people establish contact with Jesus and experience the real PRESENCE by attending the Holy Sacrament. Others establish contact with Jesus and experience the real PRESENCE by sitting with a group in silence. They both experience exactly the same thing, "contact with Jesus", and it does not matter in the least which means is used as long as that end is obtained. It is the end that matters, not the means.

* * * * *

BUT some means you MUST take, and take regularly, whether it be the Catholic Sacramental means, or the Quaker Silence means, or something between the two. For the one thing that does matter is to "abide in Him",

AND THEN, WHAT ?

and unless you take the disciplined trouble to use some regular means of contacting Him in prayer you will soon fall away, and the process of being brought back may be decidedly unpleasant.

(4) And now one last word. You have found the Truth, and the Truth is in process of making you free. But you are not alone in your discovery. You are merely just one of a very great company of souls, a multitude which no man can number, both in this world and in realms beyond, who are here and now rejoicing in the Truth which they have found, or rather which has found them. They are here and now experiencing something of the inner happiness and serenity which is independent of outward circumstances, of which we spoke at the beginning of this book.

They are the Christian Church, something far bigger and grander than denominations or sects, and into that Church you now take your place, as a disciple of Jesus in your own right.

You are probably nominally a member of some department of the Christian Church already, and *I counsel you to stay in the denomination to which you belong and help to bring life into it. It is not doctrines and arguments and speculations that the Church wants. It has got plenty of those. It wants life, spiritual life, and that can only come from those who are in contact with Jesus, who is Himself the Resurrection and the Life.*

Don't stand outside the Church. It is no good. You need the Church and the Church needs you. Take your place humbly as an unimportant though valuable member of the great multitude whom no man can number whom

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Jesus described as His brethren and His friends, and for whom He prayed so earnestly :

“ That they all may be one ; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us ; so that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.”

THE END

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