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God's Way Is The Only Right Way

by

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I

WHY THROW LOGIC TO THE WINDS?

Five-sixths of mankind believe in life after death, believe that happiness eternal is every man's destiny, but oh, how sadly they are divided on the all-important question:

How is everlasting happiness in Heaven to be attained?

A general answer, which must appeal to the common sense of everyone, might be stated thus: Heaven's reward is to be attained according to the terms of Him Who has prepared it and offers it.

The world is filled with illogical people when matters practical are concerned. People are logical theorists when dealing with others, but do not like to have others be so logical and consistent when dealing with them. They remind us of the man in the parable, who sought the cancellation of the debt which he owed to his master, and who went away forth-

with to throttle the one who asked for the same consideration from him.

No one presumes that he could be a law to himself in respect of those to whom he owes allegiance here on earth, whether it be the state, or the head of the local community, or even his employer. He knows that he must conform himself to programs which are prepared for him. He would much prefer not to pay any taxes, but the State says that he must. He would prefer to be a bank president, but others will not favor him with that position. He would prefer to receive double the amount of remuneration for the work which he does for another, but it is not given to him. Yet, he understands the fairness of all this. He knows that the people of any nation, state, county, city, village, must be governed by law. He knows that citizenship entails obligations; that in organized society he is only a unit, and may not act independently of all others. He knows that he may not work for another unless invited, and subject to the terms imposed by

the employer. He knows that any other policy would lead to chaos, whether in society or in business.

Why is he not equally logical and sensible when there is question of seeking a happy existence in the life to come? In relation to Almighty God he is the creature, and therefore by his very nature, dependent and subject; in relation to Almighty God he has no right to make laws, but only to obey them; in relation to Almighty God he holds the position of employee towards his employer, and therefore must look for remuneration only in accordance with the terms stipulated. The terms for salvation must be the same for all alike, and therefore all must work for it in accordance with a well-defined plan.

There is a saying "the world owes us a living"; but we know that this is not true in practice. The most we could expect from it is to be ushered to a state institution—and even there we would be under orders. We know that we attain unto preferment only by hard labor and struggle. Millions

of people assume that God owes them Heaven, but He does not. The most He owes us is a chance for Heaven conditioned on the fulfillment of very definite terms. It is true that God makes the acquisition of Heaven comparatively easy when we take into account the glory and grandeur and the eternal character of it. But He owes it to His own infinite perfection to exact compliance with His demands—the same for His every child. God would cease to be God if He were indifferent towards the conduct of His creatures. He must love virtue and hate iniquity with all the power of His Being.

HEAVEN IS A PRIZE TO BE WON

Holy Scripture represents Heaven as a prize to be won, and we all know that a prize is always offered in return for service rendered according to clearly stipulated conditions. Let us suppose that you came before a group of school children and offered a beautiful wrist watch to everyone who would work an arithmetic prob-

lem for you on the blackboard. Following your offer every child protested, and insisted that he and she would get the prize on their own conditions. One child declared that he would get the watch for spelling ten words for you; another child stipulated that she would get the watch for composing half a dozen sentences for you. You would at once perceive the unfairness of such procedure. You would tell the children that you do not owe the prize to any of them; that it rests with you to give it or to withhold it; that if you should decide to confer it, it is your place and not theirs to determine on what terms it will be awarded.

Again, let us suppose you are an employer of people. A man comes to you and declares that he intends to work for you; that he will keep your books, and that you are compelled to pay him \$100.00 a week for his services. Would you not indignantly show him the door, because of his unwarranted and unreasonable attitude? You may employ him if you wish; and if you should employ him

you and not he will determine what his remuneration should be.

It must be clear, therefore, that people have no right to fashion their own religion, to dictate to the Almighty whether He will be served by them or not, or to decide the quality or quantity of the service they will render. Religion is made for man by God, and not by man for God.

It should be equally clear that the Almighty should want unity and harmony of service; that He should want every member of the human family to know Him aright, and to serve Him uniformly. If this be true, the prevalent notion that one religion is as good as another, or that it cannot matter whether a man has affiliation with any religion or not, is not defensible. Establish the fact that God actually made His will known to mankind, that He actually outlined a plan of salvation, and all people must look for salvation in accordance with it. What authority would you trust outside divine revelation for the attainment of eternal well-being? Whose

opinion among thousands would you choose when so much is at stake?

II

A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE IS A DANGEROUS THING

We all believe in the adage that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing." On this principle we should not be influenced in the slightest degree by men, otherwise educated, who have never specialized in the things of God, in the things of religion, in the things of the soul. In every country there are men, professors at universities, writers of books, politicians, scientists, who may be quite competent to speak in line with their professions, but who should be scorned when they pretend to give supreme court pronouncements on religious matters. These men, after going to school for many years, fill their libraries with books which deal with their specialty, and to become experts must never cease feeding their minds on data relating to their profession. But how can they also be

proficient or specialists in matters relating to religion? What sort of soul education have they had? Not so much as a kindergarten, or a primary education, yet many of them presume to be others' teachers. Their souls have also been starved spiritually. They have remained away from religious instruction; they have given no encouragement to grace. Yet, because they are learned men otherwise, it is assumed that their judgment counts for much when they foolishly do give expression to religious views.

Just as we go to the astronomer and not to the politician to learn the facts about a new star, so we go to the Teacher commissioned by God Himself for a knowledge of religious facts. We certainly should never think of going to H. G. Wells, or to Bertrand Russell, or to Arthur Brisbane, or to Sinclair Lewis, to Elmer Barnes, or to George Bernard Shaw, for a knowledge of such facts; and more particularly should we refrain from going to those who have an interest in destroying religion in the

land. The number is not small of those who are attempting to do this, particularly through the printed word, and because it pays. They are aware that millions of the "unchurched", and millions more of the dishonest and immoral are more disposed to read their attacks on the Christian faith than they are to read defenses of it, simply because it is much easier for them to slip a little farther backward than to push forward and wage a fight against the "old man with his vices and concupiscences."

Truth Is Independent of Our Attitude

A fundamental error of our age is to talk and write about "truth" as though it were subjective, and might, therefore, be contained in a hundred contradictory expressions. Truth is something fixed, something eternal, something objective. It remains what it was, no matter how many thousand conflicting opinions might be volunteered concerning it. Only recently a new planet was discovered. Yet it has existed in the firmament for thou-

sands, or millions of years according to the scientists. It has existed as an objective thing without people knowing anything about it. The powerful telescope has brought it before the human eye, and the human mind now says "credo" to it. But it would remain an objective fact even if no person said "credo" to it. It would remain a very definite, fixed, *single thing* even if everybody expressed different opinions about it—and only one opinion would be right.

So also must religious truth be approached. It remains as it was originally revealed, by the Almighty, whether we know about it or not, whether we have different opinions about it or not. There can be only one correct opinion about it, and our only interest should be to ascertain the fact.

HUMAN NATURE CANNOT SAVE ITSELF

At this time much is being written about the ability of human nature to save itself independently of any supernatural helps, and this teaching

is being crystallized into a movement headed by Irving Babbitt of Harvard, Norman Forester, Rev. Charles Potter, Paul Elmer More, Harry Emerson Fosdick. These men are not in complete agreement, and therefore the religion of Humanism, which they advocate, is not very definite. Mr. Babbitt, for instance, believes in revelation and in the supernatural. However, he so emphasizes the dominance of man's free will that he believes that he could elevate himself to a high state of perfection by the right kind of choice in the exercise of his free will. Mr. More thinks that man can, by a sort of intuition, know what others learn by faith, and can by aiming high accomplish what Christianity teaches can be attained only through grace or supernatural helps.

The Rev. Dr. Fulton Sheen defines Humanism in its broad sense, as "an endeavor to have Christianity without Christ, godliness without God, and Christian hope without the promise of another life."

But if we bear in mind that our destiny is supernatural, it becomes clear that no man can reach it of his own power. A human being can never rise above the human unless lifted up by some higher power. Hence that teaching of Christ's faith becomes plausible which represents God as having invested the souls of Adam and Eve, His first creatures, with a supernatural life. He created them according to His own image and likeness, and elevated them from the position of mere creatures to that of adopted sons.

Holy Scripture tells us that our first parents forfeited this supernatural status when, put to the test, they disobeyed God. Faith teaches that human nature, which existed at that time solely in Adam and Eve, was on trial; that therefore, when they lost the supernatural status, their descendants were deprived of it at the time of their souls' creation. Faith also teaches, however, that the supernatural life of soul might be recovered by everyone on compliance with certain

conditions, divinely imposed, but always in relation to the infinite reparation which was to be made by God Incarnate in the course of time.

Why Should Not a Second Adam Repair Injury Done By the First?

Christianity holds that nineteen centuries ago God became Incarnate by assuming a body and soul to His divinity, and that as the God-man He offered an infinite atonement for mankind's sin, while He paid the purchase price for the restoration of the supernatural life to the souls of men. Faith teaches that this supernatural life, even since the Atonement, is *not actually bestowed* on the soul at the moment of its creation, but that every soul may come into its possession by submitting to the rebirth which takes place in Baptism.

History offers proof sufficient that man has never attained to a proper knowledge of God, or of his religious duties by what might be determined natural religion. St. Paul assures us, and history supports his contention, that by pure reason, unaided by revel-

ation, man could arrive at a knowledge of the existence of God, at a knowledge of the soul's immortality and at the general conviction that man is a dependent creature and therefore owes worship to the Creator.

But that pure reason cannot go beyond this is clear from the status of religion in pagan nations, whether of old or at the present time. Their people believe in a plurality of gods, who were not only antagonistic to one another, but were made the patrons of all sorts of vices. Hence those who acknowledged them could not have any definite standards of right and wrong, and particularly not of fixed and special duties to them.

In supernatural religion the nature and attributes of God are defined, as well as the special obligations of service and worship. Man accepts supernatural religion in the same manner he accepts nearly all his knowledge, namely, by faith. Even the scientist, who insists that he has arrived at correct conclusions, must begin with an

act of faith. He has never seen an atom or an electron. He has never discovered one in his laboratory. He only knows that they exist. Practically everything which the child learns at school is accepted by faith; practically everything which you read in the daily newspaper you accept by faith.

We should, therefore, be predisposed to assume that God has taught us much about Himself and about our duties to Him, and that He expects us to accept this knowledge by faith; by such childlike faith as is imposed in the school teacher, in the expert physician or surgeon, in the captain who pilots the boat over the rough seas to a given port in Europe or South America.

WHAT IS FAITH?

Now, not only is revelation supernatural, but the acceptance of this revelation from God or from the teaching authority which He has left in this world must be a supernatural act in order to be meritorious. The Christian religion defines faith as a

supernatural virtue by which we believe what Almighty God has revealed, not because it appeals to our reason, but because the God Who has made the revelation could not be deceived Himself, and could not deceive us. There are numerous people in this world, to whom the revelation of God makes a very strong appeal, but who withhold their submission from Him. They have not received the supernatural gift of faith, because they have sought it rather by their study and investigations than by prayer. Being a supernatural thing it must come directly from God. It has always been taught in the Christian Church that the gift of faith is infused by the reception of Baptism which brings the supernatural life to the soul in the first instance.

He does not act sincerely who refuses to accept the full revelation of God because it contains much of mystery. He should rather expect to find mystery in the supernatural order, particularly since the natural order is full of mystery, to which he does not

hesitate to bow in submission. The wisest ones in this world will readily confess that there is far more in the natural order which they do not comprehend than there is of the comprehensible.

Christ referred to the supernatural assistance which man needs for Heavenly merit when He declared: "Without Me you can do nothing." St. Paul referred to the power of supernatural assistance for Heavenly merit when he declared: "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me."

Bereft of the supernatural life, a man can earn nothing but natural merit when he does good and avoids evil. By natural goodness he cannot "lay up for himself treasures in Heaven." While he lives in the natural order the best of his works can have a value only commensurate with that order. When he lives in the supernatural order, and acts from supernatural motives, all the good works which he performs, and all the evil which he avoids, have a supernatural

value, and are therefore meritorious of reward in Heaven.

WHAT DOES "SUPERNATURAL" MEAN?

Do we need to state more than this fact in order to bring home conviction to you? If the reasonableness of the supernatural be not apparent, it is because most people have an incorrect conception of what it is. When they read about the "supernatural," they immediately think of miracles or of palpable direct communication between God and the individual. Now while miracles belong to the supernatural order, because they can be performed only by the power of God, we usually do not refer to them when we speak about the supernatural. Even nature itself originated in the supernatural since it can be traced back to God ultimately, as everyone, including the evolutionist, must grant.

But who is there who will deny that eternal bliss is supernatural? And is not every immortal being destined for eternal bliss? If so, then every human being is destined for a super-

natural life beyond the grave. Grant all this—and who could honestly deny it?—the means to that destiny must be of the same nature as the destiny itself.

When we speak of the supernatural in religion, we mean, first of all, the possession of a revelation from the Almighty, which guarantees both correctness of belief and certainty concerning the demands made by the Creator on the creature for the attainment of bliss eternal. We mean, secondly, that supernatural condition of soul which elevates the human being to union with the Creator. We mean, thirdly, the helps of a supernatural character which God has left with an Institution for the maintenance and promotion of this union with God, and even for restoration of such union in case it should be severed by serious sin. We might say we mean, fourthly, that supernatural enlightenment of the mind and that assistance of the will, which the Almighty imparts directly to the individual for the avoidance of evil and the perform-

ance of good. It was the prevalent belief of all Christendom for centuries that the Son of God not only elevated human nature as such when He united it to His divinity in the Incarnation, but that He left with the world provision for the union of every individual with His God in what is known as the sacramental system entrusted to His Church.

RELIGION WAS NEVER KNOWN EXCEPT AS "ORGANIZED"

Religion was never understood by the people of any nation as dissociated from an organization or system. It is only in these latter days that we hear of a distinction between Christianity and churchianity. It has always been assumed that the whole human family should acknowledge, serve and worship God "with one heart and one mind;" that all should be members of "one flock under one shepherd." It has always been believed that the Almighty made a revelation of His will, whether through Abraham, through Moses, through Christ, through Buddha,

through Mohammed, through Joe Smith. Religion has always existed as a system, whether in Judaism, in the Roman or Grecian Empires, in China, Japan, in India, in Christianity, in the Ottoman or Mohammendan world, in its established forms in England, Germany, Russia and other countries.

Religion was always, therefore, very definite in organization, in its confessions of faith, in its practices. But today, in the so-called Protestant countries, there is a drift from organized religion and, therefore, from religion itself. The theory of private judgment is basically responsible for this, yet day after day we read and hear that a life built on certain Christian principles is equally acceptable to God as a religious life pursued in harmony with, and under the direction of a religious system which claims God Himself as its Founder.

This new departure is due to one of several situations:

(1) The man who has been outside of organized religion, and

watches it as an interested outsider, observes irreconcilable conflicts between the different organized forms; he cannot fail to note their mutually contradictory teachings; it is clear to him that multitudes could not give an explanation or reason why they are what they are. Hence he cannot comprehend how his doubts would be settled; how conviction could be brought home to him, how peace could become his possession if he identified himself with one or other religious sect.

(2) This same man observes that most of the churchmen who fall under his observation do not seem to know their own mind; he does not see unity of belief in the same denomination; he notes that their spokesmen do not emphasize, if they do not altogether repudiate, the supernatural, and hence theirs cannot be more than human institutions engaged in social uplift or the reformation of people through political effort. He cannot harmonize this situation with the divine origin and divine guidance claim-

ed by the several religious systems, and therefore he feels just as secure outside as in.

(3) The majority of those who are not allied with organized Christianity have never given much consideration to the one form of the Christian religion which has unity and harmony of belief and practice, whose existence is world-wide, which does claim divine guidance, which is the mother Church of all, in whose ranks all Christians in the world were enrolled as members for many centuries, which can trace its origin back to the very days of Christianity's Founder. These facts about the Catholic Church are patent to people in countries where her members predominate, and hence the Protestant sects elicit little interest from them. In countries like our own, or like England and Germany, where Catholics constitute a small minority, where a popular prejudice against their organization is outstanding, where the impression prevails that many points of Catholic teaching are

unreasonable, and that Catholic worship consists of mere ceremonial, where the notion is entertained that the profession of the Catholic faith and the exercise of American citizenship are incompatible, where the literature of the day is anti-Catholic in spirit, where, for these reasons, the Catholic faith is very unpopular—the claims of the oldest religion in Christendom are not investigated.

(4) Of course, there are many who have studied history, who are conversant with the fact that Catholicism is nineteen centuries old, with a following today exceeding that of all other forms of Christianity by 100,000,000. They are aware that the Catholic Church knows her own mind and is never hesitant about speaking it clearly. But they haven't the courage to confer with her because of the spiritual exactions she makes of her members. She will not tolerate in her fold those, who, having once been validly married, have secured a divorce and have married a second time—and the country is full of such

persons. Unfortunately they cannot become Catholics without submitting to the test exacted of Herod by John the Baptist. She will not admit to her Sacraments those who are habitually given to any immoral or dishonest practice, who will not make restitution of ill-gotten gain. She requires faithful attendance at divine worship every Sunday of the year. She requires her people to get down on their knees after sinning, acknowledge their guilt and promise amendment. These demands are all admired by the outsider, but he prefers not to subject himself to them as yet.

NOT DOCTRINE, BUT LACK OF GOOD WILL, DETERS PEOPLE

It is not the doctrinal teaching of the Catholic Church which keeps these people out of her fold. In all other matters they want conviction and readily accept the seemingly incredible. They know that God Himself has promulgated laws which bind the consciences of men; they know that morality can have no sound foundation without definite teaching;

they know that when doctrines are imperfectly believed, as they are by the generality of people in the United States, the moral results are anything but encouraging; they know that Pascal was right when he declared: "If the axioms of mathematics imposed a moral obligation man would doubt them if not reject them."

Do you belong to this class? Remember what our Divine Savior said to a man who was not ready to divide his attention between the things of this world and the things of the world to come: "This night thy soul shall be required of thee."

The pride of man's intellect and the exactions of his passions are the two principal hindrances to the investigation of the claims of the Catholic Church. They prompt man to procrastinate the tendering of his submission. It was this pride of intellect which caused the fall of Lucifer and his followers, which caused the fall of Adam and Eve. They themselves would be their own gods, they "would not serve." It is not sur-

prising, therefore, that the descendants of Adam should exhibit the same traits. This pride of intellect summons God and His Church before its tribunal and passes judgment on them. People do not trust their own judgment in anything else of importance. They consult others before investing their money; they seek the advice of experts in different fields. Yet they will not listen to God Himself speaking in their interest; they will not submit their feeble intelligence to His infinite intelligence.

You must live for the soul, for your eternal welfare. The virtues which you admire in others you must practice yourself.

A Summary

One bereft of physical life cannot act at all; one bereft of supernatural life cannot act supernaturally. But man must act supernaturally if he would hope to reach his supernatural destiny. Supernatural life is imparted in the first instance by the divinely appointed ordinance of Baptism, through which Christ says man is

“born again” of the Holy Ghost. But a man does not baptize himself.

Man must be taught about God, about his duties, about the terms of salvation. But this instruction must be imparted by another.

Man must be guided, directed and assisted by supernatural helps. But he is not to be his own guide, and the supernatural things must be dispensed to him by others.

Just as God Himself does not baptize the individual directly, neither does He instruct him nor dispense His means of grace directly.

It need not be stated that no man, uncommissioned, may presume to act in the name of God. The teacher who instructs your child in school does not do so without a commission; he or she is engaged for the purpose by a Board with full authority to act. The physician, who guides and directs you along the way of health, may not do so uncommissioned or unauthorized. He must be properly licensed and officially recognized for such guidance.

Now just as the conduct of secular education is the function of the state or of some sort of government, even if it be only a local government; just as the lawyer and the physician must have a commission from some authority centered in some sort of government, so evidently must the "minister of Christ and dispenser of the mysteries of God." He must have a commission, delegation, and must be able to prove it, or who would entrust his eternal salvation to him? Christ came to be the "way, the truth and the (supernatural) life" for man, but He was to reach people through His Kingdom vitalized supernaturally by the Holy Ghost and functioning through duly commissioned men.

Too much emphasis cannot be laid on this fact, which is overlooked entirely by those who claim that they can attain unto salvation by their own efforts, independently of the religion of which God Himself is the Author.

Why is it not clear to people that there should be an organized society in this world for the promotion of the

eternal well-being of man, just as there is an organized society for the promotion of the temporal well-being of man?

Just as the state is constituted of a large number of individuals united for a common purpose, under a common authority, so should there be a spiritual kingdom in which the same individuals are united for the pursuit of an eternal destiny under a common authority.

Just as a high degree of material civilization itself is not attainable outside of a well-ordered state, so, it would seem, a high degree of spiritual civilization would not be attainable outside a well-ordered religious system.

Faith teaches that even human society has divine approbation, and that its rulers represent Almighty God in the legitimate authority they exercise. Now the Kingdom of Christ in this world is of direct divine institution, and its teaching body was directly and expressly commissioned to represent its Founder. Its accredited

representatives were empowered, and delegated, to administer supernatural things in order that man's higher life, the supernatural life, might be promoted in relation to his eternal salvation.

Pamphlet No. 3 in the series deals with the Kingdom of Christ, its character, its credentials, its authority and capacity to act in the name of God and in behalf of the people's eternal interests.

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No. I—"After Death—What?"

No. II—"God's Way Is the Only Right Way."

No. III — "God's Kingdom There Through His Kingdom Here."

These and others are recommended for serial reading to the agnostic, skeptic, and to the prospective convert.

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