

## THE GREAT EXAMPLE

By A. J. Truesdell

This is the Season when we hear the beautiful legend of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. We never tire of the inspiring simple account of a world-shaking event. We love the story of the shepherds watching their flock by night, startled by the angel of the Lord who came upon them with such glory that they became sore afraid. We are comforted that the angel told them to fear not for the message brought was one of joyful import; that in Bethlehem a baby had been born who was Christ the Lord; that he could be found lying wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger. And then it seemed as if the heavens opened for a great host of angels appeared praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

After the dazzling radiance disappeared, the simple shepherds talked among themselves of the awesome experience and they agreed that they should go to see what had come to pass since the Lord had taken this special means of announcing it unto them.

The account of the visit of the three Wise Men holds us spell-bound. We realize how God had moved their hearts in such a way as to urge them to undertake a journey to a far distant land to search out a young child born, at the time, among hundreds of other children over the known earth. Their hearts were told he was specially destined for he was to become King of the Jews.

When they arrived at Jerusalem they found no rejoicing either in anticipation or celebration of the birth. Since they knew they were close to the end of their journey, in simple trust they inquired where such a young child could be found for, they said, they had seen his star in the East. Doubtless they were mystified when no one in the locality knew of the great one who was to come into their midst. Soon their quest came to the ears of Herod. He bade them come to him and tell him the details of the reason for their search. They must have sensed the uneasiness of the ruler as he questioned them and eagerly urged them to return to him and disclose where the young child was, after they discovered him, in order that he too might pay him homage.

We forget, for the time, the sinister import of this request as we visualize the majestic pageantry of the Wise Men riding their richly laden camels on to Bethlehem, as they followed the star, to find the lowly manger where the newborn child of destiny lay. Our hearts warm when they find him and, recognizing his divinity, worship him and lay at his feet costly gifts. Too, we are thrilled that they were warned of God in a dream not to return to Herod but to depart unto their own country by another way.

All who hear or read this story are impressed in some manner. Some accept the account without question; hence, benefit in great measure. They are simple and trusting and they want to believe that God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to perform. Others who are intellectual and analytical question some of the details and circumstances in the story. They struggle with unbelief of which they themselves are the authors.

The question of the immaculate conception no stumbling block to the rational minded; they realize that all conception is spiritual; hence, all spiritual conception is immaculate. They wisely drop the subject of the

legitimacy of Jesus' birth to press on to consider the teachings of this Greatest and Holiest man who ever trod this earth.

Some pride themselves on what they call a more critical trend of thought and endeavor to discount and discredit even the advent of Jesus. Others claim that a man called by the name of Jesus taught nothing new; that his achievements were the result of his use of mass psychology on the crowds who came to hear him. The treatment he received at the hands of some of the historians of his day, and even of this day, was most caustic of all. A few of his critics have attained reflected glory through their attempts to discredit and denunciate him.

The fact that all people have definite opinions for or against him whose birth we celebrate this month would be enough to stamp him as a great man in the world. The fact that established religions take occasion to justify themselves at his expense would establish him as a spiritual force.

That he is both a great man and a spiritual force seems to be increasingly apparent as time goes on. The lives of all mankind have been affected by the advent of Jesus Christ. Consideration of his birth, experience, and death is the greatest story in history; also, it is the greatest blessing, the greatest tragedy, and the greatest drama of all time.

This savior of mankind was a great man in every sense of the word. His influence extended far beyond that area affected by other men's greatness. His ushering into the race a better hope, a higher standard of ethics and spiritual experience, made little of the great of his time and left them no cloak for their conceits and vanities. He declared a greatness in what he called the kingdom of heaven that far exceeded the highest man had attained in the earth. And he said the least in this kingdom was greater than anything the race had to offer.

Now and again a writer attempts to record completely all the steps in the development of this remarkable man, sensing an inadequate treatment in former efforts of others to do justice to the total character of this world teacher. But no one book does, or can do him justice because no language has been developed capable of setting forth his qualities and actual achievements. Perhaps the best account of the gospel of Jesus Christ was given by John who admitted his inability to cover thoroughly the teachings of his Master. He concludes his book with this statement: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen."

At least until the time that John wrote his gospel, an exhaustive history or biography of Jesus had not been written. We must remember that John was an old man when he wrote his book, and that he was the one writer who was a companion to Jesus. Perhaps no true history of Jesus will ever be written except as it is engraved in the universal ethers, for we could say the history of Jesus Christ is the history of God in his creative and redemptive endeavors. Man's knowledge of such processes is partial hence his recordings are incomplete.

The nature of the spiritual impact upon the world nearly two thousand years ago in the simple event of a birth of a child is known by no man. Scholars have devoted whole life-times to considering it and to the study of this one man's brief life in the world and its effect upon the total history of mankind. Most of their findings are deficient and the best they can do is give

a few details of Jesus' physical development and of his oral teachings as recorded in the Four Gospels. They are more explicit in stating their own general impression of his influence upon mankind as a whole.

In a letter to the Corinthians Paul wrote: And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Little wonder that this Son of God has been inefficiently represented; for, how can men represent God? Surely not by words, but only by the same means employed by Jesus Christ: God in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

Jesus declared that he did nothing of himself; the Father within him did the works. Jesus talked little about himself, but he did talk about man to his listeners, and he talked about the son of man, and the Father of man. He talked of life, and love, and light. He spoke with authority for he was Authority speaking. He knew himself to be God-in-man and he asserted he was the Son of God.

Jesus could have pretended to be something of himself, as countless "leaders" have. Had he, he would have accomplished no redeeming works; he would have been untrue to what he knew to be true of himself and of all mankind. When he chose his disciples, he chose simple men from among the common people, for he knew that such men were teachable and would represent his teachings creditably. He knew how his ministry would work in man. All who study his life realize his every experience from the manger to Gethsemane is charged with symbolic import for anyone who seeks his way of life. His ministry, every miracle, his manner - all are important and vital to the seeker for truth. For, in a study of his life and teachings man discovers instructions about God's intention for man.

The conception and development and birth of Christ within any man transpires in him who dedicates his life to God as Jesus did.

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THE WAY OUT IS UP

By Nell Truesdell

Some of our readers have asked for a resume of the teaching of truth as presented through the CHRIST TRUTH LEAGUE. Highlights of our teaching are itemized below, then briefly explained as follows:

1. A person always moves in the direction he is looking.
2. The objective toward which he gazes absorbs the attention of his mind, teaches him about himself, and becomes incorporated in his life-fabric as an experience which remains with him until he changes his point of view.
3. Thinking gives little relief from troubles. Jesus plainly taught, "Take no thought."
4. The way out is UP. "Look unto Me." "Look up, lift up your heads." "Lift up your eyes, and look."

If you wished to travel to any point on this globe, you would first mentally look in the direction you wished to go, and then would plan your trip in detail. Suppose you wished to travel from Fort Worth, Texas, to the city of New York. Immediately the attention of your mind would fly to your destination and all your plans would be designed to get you there. If you wished to stop off at any place along the way, your attention would fly from your starting point, hesitate at the stop-over, and then fly on to New York.

Should there be some special interest at your stop-over you would look more earnestly toward that point than you would if the break involved merely a transfer from one train or plane to another. If the attention of your mind were held there, your delay would be more prolonged, even to the point of absorption of all the time and means you had allowed yourself to make the whole trip.

This analogy is applicable to our life-plan. When you and I first decided what our life-work would be, we were full of enthusiasm and the zeal to accomplish. Our goal was inviting and full of promise. To most of us that destination shimmered in a distance so far removed from the present that we glanced toward it through a dusty haze kicked up in our strenuous activity at the place where we were.

Frequently it was lost to view because, like all objectives to be reached, gradual steps toward it were involved, each to be taken in order. In due course, these steps seemed to take the form of extreme delays and handicaps and we became distracted. More and more the attention of our mind was drawn away from our first dream of success and fixed at a stop-over at which we had had no intention to remain. But as the delay lengthened, in our anguish and misery in what we termed a great misfortune, we became grieved, saddened, and hurt. The position we assumed, appropriate to our feelings, was definitely negative. All the threads of our thought wove together a network in which we were caught as a bird in a trap. Some times we would sigh helplessly and hopelessly when we remembered the wonderful dreams we had for ourselves. If we glanced at our goal at all, it was fleeting and uncertain.

If we could have, through every stop-over, kept our vision transfixed on our ultimate goal without wavering, we should have arrived there quickly and easily long since. But all too often we allowed the problems of the day to entangle us, absorb our attention, and so weaken its fixedness on our heart's objective that it became just a part of our memory, a figment (we now say) of our imagination.

We are learning that everything that traps and holds our attention serves to anchor us to itself. If we look squarely into our lives we shall see clearly that we are belabored with whatever we know the most about. That which consumes our attention builds itself into our consciousness in such a way that we are possessed by it; we actually become it in manifestation.

For example: some people know a lot about special sicknesses of the body. They love to talk about ailments and describe in detail their distinctive features. Such persons are bound to illness either in their own bodies or in the bodies of those dear to them. Frequently their thorough knowledge of ill-health subjects a weaker member of their family or social group to their ideas. Some people know a lot about lack of supply; some know much unhappiness and tell lengthy tales of the unblessed, unlucky, and wretched conditions of themselves, their relatives, and close friends.

Anyone bending a willing ear to these wails of despair will be sucked into the void they make around him, and, like a bolt from the blue, adversity will hit and he will find himself suffering the same unfortunate condition of mind, body, or affairs the words of negation portrayed. Whatever we describe, or allow others to describe to us, is built into our hearts, takes root, and eventually comes to fruition, usually in some surprising manner. Our perfect language is bent to describe vividly imperfect plights of which we, or others with whom we agree, are the progenitors.

How to get free? We think and think, and go round and round our problems, unwittingly building bulwarks of fancy about us that withstand our every effort to break through. They enwrap us securely, like the gossamer web of a spider imprisons a hapless and struggling insect which has not a chance to escape.

Thinking is at once man's greatest distinctive characteristic and his most awful handicap. Thinking is a formulative faculty. What we think about takes shape and eventually manifests in our life and affairs. We build our worlds by our thoughts. Since our thoughts are usually based in falsity, our worlds are consequently figments of our imagination. Nevertheless they seem quite real for we are well versed in the struggle for existence.

Thinking for the purpose of delivering himself from one world to another has become man's chief past time. But the practice brings little relief, for the limitations of one world are carried over into another. What we know is the baggage that furnishes the spot in which we at present abide. And whatever we know, we give a lot of thought to. Jesus gave the solution, "Take no thought." But we, in our cocksureness, claim that we cannot stop thinking - that God gave us a mind to think with.

It is what we think about with that mind that influences us. And as I said, we think about the things we know. We know whatever we have been giving our attention to. So the secret of changed thinking would be in changing our point of view; come to know something new and think about that.

Everything that we already know is old-stuff, there is no newness in it. Whatever value was in it was utilized when we first thought about it and only the husks are left. Newness comes from one direction only - the unknown. The first dawn of what, to your mind, had never before been known is the only newness there is.

We glance toward the unknown, even if at first we do not see anything, until something lying in that direction is spotted and centered upon. When we turn a telescope toward an objective in the heavens beyond the natural sight, we see only a blur until the focus is fixed. So it is with the unknown. We look towards it, and cannot see anything. But if we are persistent, we shall see what Jesus promised, "Look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest."

Take no thought; your Father knows what you need, was the tone of his teaching. It follows that we ought to look toward the Father if we hope to find out what he knows we need, and so acquire it from him. Where is he? He is above thinking and feeling. How find him? "The way of life is above, to the wise." Look upward toward him until you know he is there. Soon you will discover that the sight with which you look toward him is the same sight with which he looks toward you. "Return unto me, and I will return unto you," is his promise.

Just the simple act of up-look is a freeing practice. If you look upward, everything drops out of your mind and heart. You become emptied so that you might be filled with new realizations, new ideas, new inspirations. Then your thinking becomes worthwhile, it is quickened, it becomes an actual agent for your good.

You realized there is nothing to fear because God is your very breath of life. Since you cannot get far away from your breath, you cannot get far away from God. Your thoughts then run in and out of your mind like air runs in and out of your lungs. If your vision is centered in the world, those thoughts can be like foul sewer air. If your vision is centered in God above the world, those thoughts can be clean like the thoughts of Jesus when he talked to little children, or gave his simple, sweet lessons to grown-ups.

And so, the last step in our teaching becomes the first. For after all is said, the way out is UP!

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SPIRITICITY December 1946

PLOTINUS AS A SPIRITUAL GUIDE

By R. A. Applegate, Jr.

(Chapter I, Continued from Last Month)

Matter (hyle) is the furtherest emanation of the One. It is the creation of the lower soul, as the soul is of Divine Mind, and Divine Mind of the Good. It is pure indeterminateness. It is not-being (tomeon), yet not absolutely nothing (oukon). It is as a light finally disappearing into darkness at the furtherest distance from its source. Beyond it there is nothing. It is the recipient of the Ideas; but since it has no reality, neither do the shapes which it bodies forth. However, in spite of this indeterminateness and lack of reality, it is represented by Plotinus in many places as the source of evil in the universe and an active impudence to the higher life of the soul. It is here that Plotinus runs into difficulty. To be consistent with his definition of the One, he would have had to say that evil has no reality, without qualifying the statement in any way. However, he is too conscious of the moral struggle to be satisfied with this explanation. I have already quoted Professor Rogers' statement that the moral struggle tends to report itself metaphysically as the struggle between a good principle and a principle of evil. It seems to me that this is what Plotinus has done, in part, in ascribing evil to matter.

Plotinus modeled his matter on the "necessity" of the Timaeus. However, here once more, he has departed from Plato; for Plato is frankly dualistic. Plato recognizes two forces in the universe; an active force for good, which wanted to create the universe perfect, and a constraining force of necessity. This is the common sense point of view based on the "facts" of the universe in which we live. Plotinus, however, was unable to accept this statement. His ontology required a monism; and he therefore departed from Plato in making the hindering principle itself a product of the Highest and yet something having no reality.

Plotinus is never certain about the problem of evil. At one place he says that it has no reality; but by this he does not mean that it does not exist, but only that it is something entirely different from the Authentic Existences (the

One, Divine Mind, and Soul). "There remains, only, if Evil exist at all, that it be situate in the realm of Non-Being ... By this Non-Being, of course, we are not to understand something that simply does not exist, but only something of an utterly different order from Authentic Being." By this, Plotinus must mean that, while evil exists, for the sage who can rise to the realm of Authentic Being, it will cease to exist so far as he is concerned. This interpretation is supported by another passage, where Plotinus speaks of the philosopher as having faith that evil can never touch him. It is also supported by the whole theory of purgation, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Plotinus has also adapted the stoic conception of evil: that individual evils contribute to the good of the whole; that each individual, no matter how steeped in vice, unwittingly contributes to the beauty and purpose of the universe. An actor, says Plotinus, may act his own part poorly and still contribute to the beauty of the whole performance. "The universe is good, ... when everyone throws his own voice towards a total harmony, singing out a life - thin, harsh, imperfect, though it be." The fallacy of this conception is obvious. You cannot explain away evil by saying that an individual evil contributes to the good of the whole, as though the whole were something other than the sum of its parts. It would have been better if Plotinus had left this explanation out of his system, and said simply that evil has no reality. At least he would have been consistent, and, to me, it seems that he would have been stating the truth.

It is not vital to look upon evil as good. It is vital to say that it does not exist. It is vital to say that there is no conflict between Spirit and matter, for Spirit is all when speaking of these two. Evil is separation; nothingness; the vale of tears into which humanity sinks and swims about. It is an appearance that seems real, but anything that can be over come, surmounted, changed for the better (or worse) is unstable and unreal. Only Reality remains, permanent, fixed. There is only Reality. The rest is seeming. The untrained eye can see this fact. The untrained see, half-closed, as it were, so that the shimmering effects of shadow seem permanent, substantial. But their substantiality is only in the eye of the beholder. The Reality to such an one, is unreal; but to the illumined it is the reverse.

This conception of evil depends on the conception of God as the only power and the only presence in the universe. Such a conception seems to be contrary to the obvious facts of the world. It finds confirmation, however, from two completely unrelated sources which agree in their conclusions: modern physics and the teachings of Jesus Christ. The most advanced physicists have said that there is only one power in the universe, "an infinite and eternal energy from which all things proceed;" and that this power is omnipresent. Some of them have gone even further and called this power "God." "The universe is simply God expressing Himself." Every known element, they say, is just a mode of motion of this one energy and each one can be resolved back into energy. Therefore, we do not live in a material universe at all, but in a universe of light. It may be objected that the "matter" of Plotinus is entirely different from what we mean today by "matter," but Plotinus and the physicists agree in three respects about matter: first, that it is a product of the one power in the universe; second, that it is that which gives mass to bodies; and, third, that it has no reality. Thus they agree with respect to the main points about matter. They differ in their methods of arriving at their conclusions and in their methods of explaining them, but their results are the same. It is true that the scientists say nothing about evil; but, if there is only one power in the universe, then there can be no evil. This appeal to a field completely outside metaphysics may be objected to; but, if there is any truth in the various fields of inquiry,

then those truths should agree. It is one universe. Whether you study it from the point of view of philosopher by means of reason, or from the standpoint of science by research, you should arrive at the same conclusions if your conclusions are true. And it is a peculiar testimony to the truth of the extreme monistic view that the further the scientists and the further the metaphysicians go, the closer they come together.

This monistic view also receives confirmation from another source. Jesus Christ said "The devil ... (the principle of evil) is a liar (or there is no truth in it)". And he also said, "Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment." This second statement, it seems to me, can mean only one thing: that the appearances of the physical world are not real, and that the perfect Spiritual Reality is all that is real. Jesus not only made this statement, but he proved it by his miracles. In performing his miracles, he saw men as they really were, and his faith manifested outwardly as a so-called healing. Actually, nothing was healed or changed. The appearance was merely made to conform with the Reality. Belief in the miracles of Jesus Christ is usually regarded as gross superstition. It is regarded as unscientific, because miracles seem to be a setting aside of the natural law. However, there are laws within laws, and there are many natural laws that we know nothing about yet. Thus it is not setting aside the law of gravity to fly an airplane; it is simply using a law contained within the law of gravity. The same physicists who say that there is only one power in the universe say that Jesus was merely the most perfect scientist the world has ever seen, and that he knew all about laws with which they are just beginning to become acquainted.

It has been argued against the extreme monistic point of view that it does away with moral responsibility. However, this is begging the issue. The first thing to do is to determine whether it is true, and then to see what its implications are. And to the very best of my ability, in the light both of the teachings of the life of Jesus Christ, and of the discoveries of modern science, it is true; and Plotinus was right when he said that evil has no reality.

For Plotinus, as for Plato, the eye of the soul is a reality. "There the soul rests, free from all solicitude, establishing order by the marvelous efficacy of its contemplation of the things above it. For the measure of its absorption in that vision is the measure of its grace and power." This eye of the soul is our attention. Usually it follows the path of our senses, but it is possible to withdraw it from the sensible world completely and to direct it toward that world which "swings close by," the world of spiritual reality.

"From the Divine Heights there has been vouchsafed to all ages One Heavenly Edict. All the everlasting pages struck off by men under the white flames of inspiration have been results of knowing or unknowing obedience to the Boundless Mandate of the Lofty One inhabiting Eternity:

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

"This fleet, subtle sense is our incorporeal eye. It is the one faculty of our immortal soul which we continually make use of. It is the creature made subject to maya, not willingly, but in the hope of the redemption of the body, as Paul wrote to the Roman Christians."

THE END



Alphabet of  
DAILY MEDITATIONS  
For Every Week Day of the Month

December 1946

2. I APPLIED my heart to know, ... AND to seek out wisdom.
3. BELIEVE on the Name of the Son of God.
4. Seek His face CONTINUALLY.
5. DECLARE His DOING among the people.
6. Know that ye have ETERNAL life.
7. FORGIVE men their trespasses.  
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9. Wisdom GIVETH life to them that have it.
10. Pray one for another, that ye may be HEALED.
11. The Spirit INDEED IS willing.
12. God was ... JUSTIFIED in the spirit.
13. We KNOW that the Son of God is come.
14. LET your LOINS be girded about, and your LIGHTS burning.  
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16. The MEDITATION of my heart shall be of understanding.
17. God NOW accepteth thy works.
18. OBTAIN gladness and joy.
19. Send PROSPERITY.
20. It is good that a man should ... QUIETLY wait for the Lord.
21. In RETURNING and REST shall ye be saved.  
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23. SANCTIFY the Lord God in your hearts.
24. THY TESTIMONIES are my meditation.
25. In UNDERSTANDING be men.
26. Add to VIRTUE, knowledge.
27. WE WALK by faith.
28. Take My YOKE upon you, and learn of Me.  
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30. It is good to be ZEALOUSLY affected ... in a good thing.
31. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty.

Each morning, early, read the word. Hold it in mind during the day and it will become to you a light shining in the darkness.