

GOOD WORKS -- RIGHT WILL

By A. J. Truesdell

If one man had a job he wanted done and he knew another man capable of doing it, he would no doubt ask him to take the job. It would be optional with this other man to accept or reject the offer. If he accepted the assignment and then neglected to carry it through to completion, little would be accomplished. On the other hand, if he refused to do the work, but reconsidered and went ahead and finished the task, the work would then have been completed.

Jesus called attention to this in a parable: "A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir, and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father!"

This matter of acceptance or rejection has been a stumbling block for philosophers who spend much time arguing and writing about the free will of man. Too, it is a difficult hurdle for sincere worshippers to pray wholeheartedly, "Thy will be done."

In Jesus' life we find the refrain recurring: "I must be about my Father's business," or, "I must work the works of him who sent me." In all history, Jesus is the one man who finished his work.

Man is looking for a solution to life and its complex problems, and has not found it in any of the theories presented up to and including the present time. The materialist knows nothing of Matter; the psychologist knows little of Mind; the spiritual practitioner knows even less about Spirit. Yet we find each one making it his mission to convert others to his beliefs and findings.

It is not wise for any man to subject himself or surrender his personal will to some so-called higher power until he has investigated thoroughly the nature, character, intent, and purpose of that power. In the material, intellectual, and spiritual areas of expression we discover that the beliefs of each person differ from those of other persons comprising the particular group with which he is identified, and varying opinions and oppositions of individual wills are active, side by side. Any man too eager to let loose his opinions and his ability to accept or reject any proposition might find, instead of doing the will of God, he is simply carrying out the desires (will) of a more positive mortal-will than he himself exercises. He might awake to find someone else is making free use of his free will.

Someone has said that the mortal will is the toughest thing in the universe. Many of the people who seek healing in any degree need only be freed from the domination of some other will. Whole families are often found to be ruled by one will. Whole nations and, we regret to say, whole multitudes of religious adherents may be subject to the rulership of some indomitable mortal with a slight knowledge of mental practices, or, to some religious mad-man.

This would indeed be a sorry life to live if a man were dependent upon the action or sanction of one mortal will to free him from some other mortal will. But such is not the case. The one thing that is tougher than a mortal will is

the will of God. Sincere invocation of that ever-present and ever-willing One, will not fail of establishing freedom from lesser and ulteriorly motivated persons.

If a healer attempts mental practice in the conduct of his cases, he becomes entangled continually in a battle of wills. This is a tiresome practice and not particularly profitable. There is no value to any decree which does not conform to God's "Let there be." The true spiritual healer believes, knows, and practices entering into agreement with the will of the Most High. He takes advantage of the proved purpose of that merciful nature to heal, bless, prosper, protect, support, and sustain that which it has created regardless of the state into which it might have fallen. The position of such a practitioner is that of a witness. His good reports of what he sees to be true of the Divine nature establishes a greater degree of that perfection in the consciousness of the patient. The bands of false concepts, material, intellectual, or religious, are snapped. Such a practitioner must believe in the power of the Divine to do its perfect work if he is to attain any degree of efficiency in his practice.

God wills, and lesser will wilt. In cases where willful domination of one person over others has prevailed, the truly spiritual practitioner actually witnesses the bending and dissolution of the mortal will under the remitting action of the word of truth going forth to do its perfect work. Further efficiency in practice releases him from even the necessity of dealing with any but the One will, and no word is used at all.

It is the privilege of anybody to work the works of God, each in his own peculiar way. Many sincere prayers are answered, and many cases are mysteriously cured and many wonderful works are done. The occupation of a successful healer or teacher of things spiritual is the most exacting, most difficult, and, we might add, most honorable and valuable service a man or woman can engage in. These occupations are no places for weaklings; nor can one be timid and remain in them. But the paradox is that the weak and timid find themselves moving into new strength and understanding if their weaknesses and timidity are prostrated before the will of God rather than before the will of man. For out of man's weakness God is made strong in man.

The so-called weak-willed are likely to submit easily to the will of God when they are called, just as they had been prone to submit to other wills before they were awakened. Thus do the meek inherit and come to know the joy of doing the Father's will. However, the willful are more likely to do the greater works after they have been struck to the ground by the Light that no man can see and live as he formerly lived. Notice the difference in Paul's actions and beliefs before and after he was brought low by one touch of the Divine will upon him.

Jesus said his meat was to do the Father's will. When he was asked for a sign that his on-lookers might see and so believe him, he made a comparison between the food which comes as a result of mental practice (or the Mosaic Law which, he said, was not the true bread), and "the bread of God which cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world." Here we can take this instruction, that signs follow mental practice while works follow those who believe.

A substantial Reality sustains anyone who accepts the bread Jesus offers. "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst . . . For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me."

Some people feel that to be meek toward God means to be receptive to everything which claims to be spiritual: such neglect to exercise discrimination. Jesus found multitudes in bondage to the determinations of the scribes and Pharisees who posed as their pious benefactors. He made them the target for his denunciations: he called them names not at all complimentary.

John recorded that Jesus said, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent," or, believe that man is the direct emanation of divinity; that man is from and of God; that whatever takes place as a result of that acknowledgment or agreement is the bread or substance of life; that this alone is real; that this alone is worthy of man's allegiance; that this is working in him, motivating his actions; that this is his very intelligence which teaches him to know how to believe and thus work the works of God.

Because there is only God, Omnipresent, Omnipotent, and Omniscient, there can be only one work to accomplish; that is, complete loss of self in whatever plans and purposes exist in the Mind of God. Man, to cooperate in this, must work as God works, using the wisdom implied in Omniscience.

Looking into our religious history, it is interesting to note that the name Yahweh, or Jahweh (Jehovah, as it is written in our Scripture), was not given to Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, but was given to Moses. In our Scripture, the word transcribed Jehovah, is that I AM THAT I AM, the original word-for-word interpretation of which is, "I-am-I-was-I-will-be because I-am-I-was-I-will-be the power to be eternally I."

Moses, with his great mission, had to exercise a determination which welled up from within him. Any performance under law is always accompanied by a fortified will. "I-will-be" is the tone heard and felt and obeyed inwardly, then manifested outwardly as a tremendous activity.

In our New Testament this "will-to-be" is designated in the word "Christ." Jesus Christ is the Name which promises "the things that I do, ye shall do also, and greater." We are to believe on that Name if we wish to do the works of God.

When the prodigal came to himself, the first thing he said was, "I will arise."

The scope of action of the will in the realm of manifestation and the extent of the enduring nature of the work accomplished is limited only by its deviation from original intent, plans, or purposes.

It is not enough to prattle, "Thy will be done." There must be a remembrance of the fact that nothing of any consequence is being done except that which God intends to have done; and, that is already accomplished even though to the unenlightened the earth seems to be without form and void.

There is no way for man to know the truth except through an exercise of his will in the same direction God is moving. God is Love; the will is an extension of Divine Love; and, intelligence and understanding are radiations of the Divine Will. This is the Light of the Father. The man wide awake, coordinating and cooperating with God, the Creator, becomes I-will-be-what-I-will-to-be and he does the works of God. He is the workman who goes ahead and finishes his assigned task.

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SPIRITICITY February 1947
BAPTISM -- SONSHIP
By Nell Truesdell

When a club-group installs new officers for the year the preceding staff, together with all their plans and methods of working, are resigned in favor of the incoming administration. The moment the new officers take over responsibility for guiding the destiny of the group, their baptism begins. It is a response both from within and without that initiates each recipient into the secrets, mysteries, and doctrines of the particular activity he has entered. This ordinance seals his position and, at the same moment, introduces him to or enables him to move into his duties as a governing member of the group.

Whenever a change in your experience or mine is about to occur, whether it be within the thinking self or in outward adjustment of body or affairs, a process called baptism sets in. Old knowledge and experiences are surrendered as the new come into expression.

Baptism in religious association may be looked at from two viewpoints: one, the candidate is initiated into a particular church organization by this rite; two, baptism itself signifies a spiritual grace already possessed.

Water is a changing, impermanent element, and it symbolizes the mentality easily affected by impressions received, translated, and reflected by the thoughts. The water used in a baptismal ceremony does not interpenetrate or permeate a person to cause him to change his mind, or be cleansed from secret sin. It simply signifies the washing away of that which is foreign to his spiritual nature. The use of water in the ceremony is really a partial baptism, the outer symbol, but it is often considered sufficient for complete spiritual redemption.

However, we see that true baptism is more than cleansing the body with water; or, even experiencing a change of mind: it is the redemption of the entire being through a cleansing action aroused from within.

The word "baptize" signifies a soaking through or saturating. We speak sometimes of the full baptism. Anyone experiencing it is full of the Spirit. He sucks in, is permeated with Spirit; is completely absorbed by Spirit. He loses himself in Spirit. He becomes wholly Spirit.

In this complete change or transition, the whole state of being is altered or transformed. Vitiating elements are dropped. Excrescences foreign and extraneous to the new state are released, forgotten. The purification is thorough.

The disciples of John the Baptist and some of the Jews were concerned with gaining recruits for their particular sect and disputed among themselves that the disciples of Jesus were gathering numerous converts. John wisely refrained from all competition by saying, "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven." Men were astounded by this extraordinary attitude and declaration, but John assured them that he had always said, "I am not the Christ, . . . I am sent before him."

John rejoiced that he had the privilege of witnessing Jesus' entrance into the work of redemption for the world as a whole. Somehow he knew he was appointed to begin the work and that Jesus was to fulfill it. He assured his

followers that he was free from jealousy or guile and, to prove his point, gave them the parable about the bridegroom and his best man.

In those days, the custom was that the best man at the wedding take complete charge of all activities concerning the groom. The best man held the place of honor at all the festivities. He became the intermediary between the groom and the guests. Usually the groom was so excited by his coming marriage that he remained speechless; but, when he did find words to utter, he talked only to his best man, his bosom friend. The friend was supremely happy in his responsibility to the groom and rejoiced in the opportunity to be importantly helpful to him and to the guests gathered to celebrate the marriage. His heart was always warmed when the groom spoke to him for (as such things went in the East), he knew the ordeal of ceremony was tediously prolonged. John the Baptist felt this glory toward Jesus. In his heart, he honored the man who had come to do the greater work.

In today's world many hold the vision of a happier and more profitable living for all if a spirit of friendly cooperation could be enjoyed instead of cut-throat competition. Nothing is ever gained through competition for it is strife, and strife breeds inharmony. If anyone is competing with you, go serenely on in your chosen field of activity and know there is plenty to go around; that you cannot be denied your just portion of the good that is already yours from God.

John seems to have failed; but, so did Jesus seem to have failed. In their fields of action both were successful. John admitted, "I am not the Christ," and showed he was satisfied not to make the full realization for himself. Jesus admitted his Son-ship to such an extent that Peter had to exclaim on occasion, "Thou art the Christ!" John knew that Jesus would carry his work further and reveal to a greater extent the presence of the Spirit. But, rather than compete with Jesus or renounce him, John chose to acknowledge a greater work to be done.

He showed his understanding when he declared, "And no man receiveth his (Jesus') testimony," -- John himself numbered among them.

John the Baptist represent the intellectual conclusions that drop into what is called the sub-conscious whenever a higher perception becomes active in consciousness. It is in this hidden area that those conclusions come into opposition with former physical and emotional dominant ideas. Through the effects of the interaction within, one is apt to lose one's head.

Jesus ever remembered that God has given all things unto the Son and he was careful of the spiritual prerogatives his Father had bestowed upon him. He bore witness to what he believed. We, too, are walking advertisements of our faith. Whatever our desires, or the problems of our life, we, like Jesus, can lift our vision heavenward and know God cares; that he blesses richly without measure.

God will never be disturbed by the ignorance of men. He will always be available to the son who has the courage to look toward him and receive what he has to give.

Our baptism is going on continuously. All the events and affairs of life are a baptism. If we give mind and heart to God, we shall receive from within the spiritual baptism that purifies and abolishes all strife and competition and sets us in our rightful place to do our best work.

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PLOTINUS AS A SPIRITUAL GUIDE

By R. A. Applegate, Jr.

Ch. II, (continued from last month)

With respect to "frugality", Plotinus, as with "anonymity", has little to say. However, here again we can refer to the instance of Rogantius, who, besides surrendering his senatorial rank, gave up his own house, freed his slaves, and lived and ate with other members of the Plotinian circle. Also, Plotinus himself evidently owned no private property, as he lived and taught in the house of Roman lady, Gemina. Thus it is possible that he did enjoin poverty of the Socratic kind and some form of communal living wherever that was possible. Such a program of communal living is, as with withdrawal from the world of affairs, practically necessitated by the ideals presented in the Enneads. The completely dedicated life which is enjoined would be impossible or next to impossible for a man living among ordinary people immersed in the world of affairs. As Gerald Heard states, "The blind denial of the world, its unfaith, its busy, energetic, smiling despair is a tide far too powerful for any man to breast alone."

With respect to the physical renunciation of the objects of appetite, Plotinus follows Plato in saying that only the necessary pleasures are to be permitted. "Necessary pleasures and all the activity of the senses it (the soul) will employ only as remedies and assaugements, lest its work be impeded." Plotinus does not, however, define the necessary pleasures; but, from the testimony of his life, it appears that they would constitute a small group, and that the discipline that he advocated meant more than just moderation. Porphyry says of him that he often ate not so much as a piece of bread during the day in order that his powers of concentration might be improved. Whether he urged such complete abstemiousness upon his followers, it is, of course, impossible to say. Rogantius, we are told, ate but one meal a day, but he may have only been following the example set by his master.

Concerning the sexual desire specifically, Plotinus says, "If such desire there must be, it will turn upon the actual needs of the nature and be entirely under control." In another place, however, he seems definitely to include celibacy among the philosophic virtues. "And this means continence (to me *kpouein*), self-restraint, holding staunch against outside pleasure and spectacle." It would seem thus that Plotinus definitely enjoined celibacy, but then moderated the statement for those unable to receive the sterner discipline. The principle is that the philosopher will refuse to dissipate his powers, which are rather to be exalted and lifted up. The same thing is implied in the description of the different kinds of desire in the Symposium. It is one desire whether manifested as physical love or as aspiration towards the Highest. It is to be directed from the lower to the higher. To quote Gerald Heard once more, "Sex is a great power, or to be more accurate, it is the first and earliest stemming-out of the basic vitality. It requires skilled control, for from this controlled energy rises the raw stuff out of which higher consciousness is derived."

This external phase of purgation of Plotinus is, with the exception of the command for celibacy, derived from Plato. All the disciplines mentioned above may, with the one exception, be found in the Republic, as well as in many of the other Platonic dialogues. Thus the retirement of the philosopher from active

political life is urged in Republic 496. The communal living of the philosophers, if Plotinus did urge it, is taken directly from the way of life of the guardians of the ideal state. The same is true of the discipline of poverty: that is, of owning everything in common. If Plotinus did urge it, he adopted it directly from the Republic. In Plato, these two disciplines of communal living and the possession of everything in common are laid down as requisites for the life of the guardians of the imagined ideal state. However, since Plato says that this state may already exist on the spiritual plane and that, in any case, the man who is wise will live by its rules and none others, it seems that Plato did urge these specific disciplines for the philosopher himself whenever they could feasibly be practiced. Both are healthful disciplines. For the man who is dedicated in any field whatever, it is a tremendous help to be continuously associated with a group of people of the same mind. Also economic cooperation within such a group (not, of course, to the extent of sharing personal belongings) is helpful both in establishing a bond of unity and in overcoming the possessiveness of material wealth.

The exercise of moderation of all the physical appetites is urged by Plato throughout the Republic. It is one discipline that even the young men who are later to be guardians are to apply to themselves. It is so obvious a necessity that it is unnecessary to dwell upon it here. A word must be said, however, about celibacy, which Plotinus urges and Plato does not. It is not generally recognized today (except by the Catholic Church) as a requirement for the higher life of Spirit. However, both Jesus Christ and St. Paul urged the practice. At least that seems to me to be the only possible explanation of the passage, "There be some eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." St. Paul definitely urged it. "I say therefore to the unmarried, ... It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better marry than to burn." If both of these founders of Christianity urged the practice of celibacy, then there must be some basic reason for it, some basic value intimately connected with the Christian ideal of selflessness in God. That value, it seems to me, can be only that the conservation of a man's energies on the lower plane permits him to be a more potent force for good on the higher plane of spiritual giving: that is, the physical desire must be capable of being transmuted into aspiration for the highest way of life, the selfless giving of oneself in loving service to others.

For Plotinus, the reason for celibacy is not the conservation of one's forces that they may be dedicated to the service of others. The reason, for him, is the release of the soul from enslavement to the world of sense. This indeed is motive enough for the practice, but it is a self-centered one. The Christian may not be able to condone this egocentric motivation, but the practice of continence itself finds justification for the sincere Christian in the words of the founders of Christianity.

It is the inner phases of purgation that are for Plotinus the more important. It is here that the real battle is won. "To the possession of the self the way is inward." It is within that lies the soul's real self-determination. No matter what outer acts it may be compelled by circumstances to perform, here it may be inviolately free. Let the soul but purify itself in its inner parts and nothing that is external can hurt or disturb it. The man that has thus purified himself, "is cheerful ever, and the order of his life untroubled; his state is fixedly happy and nothing whatever of all that is known of evil can set it awry." The reformation of conduct is the first step on the way towards the ultimate attainment, but it is only the first step, because, for

Plotinus, the goal is not merely to be sinless, but to attain oneness with the Highest.

The reformation of character includes for Plotinus the inner component of the three disciplines listed above, that is, in the removing from the soul of all amativeness, acquisitiveness, and ambition. "So the soul; let it but be cleared of the desires that come by its too intimate converse with the body, purged of all that embodiment has thrust upon it, withdrawn, to itself again - in that moment the ugliness that came only from the alien is stripped away." The principle to be followed in the purification of character is, that which the soul gives its attention to it magnifies in its own consciousness. Thus the philosopher will withdraw his attention from the carnal desires until, for him, they have ceased to exist. "The tyranny of his body he will work down or wear away by inattention to its claims." The soul will give to the body all that it sees to be useful or necessary, but it will do so as though to something separate. It will take care of the body as a musician takes care of his lyre, and it will lay the instrument aside at nature's hour, but it is always the master to decide with respect to the body. This same principle to attention applies to all the passions and afflictions of the soul as well as to the purely physical desires. "The thing it (the soul) has in mind it is and grows to. For in its sense-sight, it is the lower in the degree in which it penetrates the object."

(To be continued next month.)

Alphabet of
DAILY MEDITATION
For Every Week Day of the Month

February 1947

1. ACQUAINT now thyself with him and be at peace.
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3. Come BEFORE His Presence with thanksgiving.
4. Seek his face CONTINUALLY.
5. God is my DEFENSE.
6. EVERY man ... should ENJOY the good of his labor.
7. He FILLETH the hungry soul with goodness.
8. It is GOD that GIRDETH me with strength.
*
10. All men should HONOR the Son.
11. I know whom I have believed.
12. Let us make a JOYFUL noise.
13. We KNOW that the Son of God has come.
14. LABOR not for the meat which perisheth.
15. He MAKETH MY way perfect.
*
17. Hold fast My NAME.
18. ONLY believe.
19. Thou wilt show me the PATH of life.
20. Make him of QUICK understanding.
21. I have hid thy RIGHTEOUSNESS within my heart.
22. God is my STRENGTH.
*
24. Blessed is the man that TRUSTETH in the Lord.
25. The highway of the UPRIGHT is to depart from evil.
26. Pay thy VOWS unto the Most High.
27. WALK in the Spirit.
28. Thy YEARS shall have no end.

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Meditation is good mental practice. Please keep the statements in mind as they will stimulate constructive thinking.