

GOOD IS THE LORD

By A. J. Truesdell

God is the Principle of Good. The son of God should shine forth this Principle which is the true light and which makes him a child of light. How can the son place himself in right relation to the Principle?

The primary step is that a man come to himself. Though his attention be glued on the realm of thought and of form, still he may glance occasionally toward a higher realm - that of the Father in heaven.

Books cannot describe God. Nobody can tell exactly who and what God is. Even Jesus Christ did not attempt to describe the Father except to say that he is Good and that he is Love.

Jesus told us to look up, to lift up our eyes. He instructed us to watch and to pray. He insisted that we keep his word, and that we follow him.

To follow anyone is to move behind in the same path or direction; to endeavor to strive after and gain the same prerogatives and privileges; to yield allegiance to an authority, leader, or master. A man may follow a leader and still retain his own personality. You remember Disney's cartoon of the Seven Dwarfs: little Dopey followed the six dwarfs, but he was still Dopey. He retained his personality in such a way that he became the star in his crowd. Yet, he always followed the others.

The instructions we receive in the art of looking up are true. The steadfast High-watcher will surely come to the time when he will stand spell-bound in contemplation of an indescribable ecstasy which Jesus referred to as the kingdom of heaven. Though it is transcendent, anyone is capable of perceiving it and it is of practical use to the devotee.

Paul gazed upward only to fall down blinded by the power and glory of God revealed through the transcendent presence of Jesus Christ. Man's ordinary concept of God has no such effect upon him. When Peter caught a glimpse of the spirituality of Jesus he exclaimed as though in pain, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." John seemed to have been absorbed in a continued abstraction but his own estate was returned with power. The personality of the divine witness is refined, stepped up, so that for awhile he seems lost. But he always returns with power.

Many men through the ages have devoted time and study in an effort to find out about God. None, however, made God so evident in the living of a life as did Jesus Christ. His doctrine is the clearest, simplest, and sublimest, as well as the most effective we can study.

His description of God was not elaborate. He said simply that God was his Father. He likened God's kingdom of heaven to leaven, to a net, to a seed, and other homely things. Surely the descriptives Jesus used indicate the kingdom of heaven to be a practical, usable realm, just as yeast, seed, pearls, and nets are practical, usable things in the life of man. When he was asked to show the Father he said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." He sent forth his disciples before they had attained mastery as an aid to their development. They

had to learn to revalue and to put emphasis upon things spiritual, rather than upon effects.

His instruction "Watch and pray," corresponded to the divine edict recorded by Isaiah, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."

Knock, and it will open; seek and find; ask and receive: do you weary of this instruction? Consider David who declared, "Unto thee lift I up mine eyes." Ancient seers told their pupils to look towards God a thousand times an hour, and if they forgot a thousand times an hour, they were to remember a thousand times an hour.

Jesus was always gazing toward the Father as revealed in his statements: "I and my Father are one."

"I came forth from the Father and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father."

"The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel."

If a man is obedient to the call to look Godward, he will be moved toward those heights which have been called the Miracle Working Uplands. If he is steadfast in his gaze, it will have the effect of absorbing his attention. The quality of that absorption will become manifest in the life a man lives in the world. Anyone who consecrates himself to the mission of looking God-ward will make a definite contribution to the race in some noble form or other. And what he sees as he gazes will no doubt become the cherished doctrine of his friends and followers. What he tells of what he sees will be only descriptions of the way in which God works, for no one has really seen God who is eternally the Unseen and Unknown. But anyone can look toward God and come to know something of his way. As he continues, he himself is transformed, adapted to God's way, and that is what men see.

I believe any person will agree that no scholar is too advanced to take post graduate work in a university higher than the one from which he graduated. Then, why should any of us feel that we are too advanced to continue the study of God. This study is in its infancy in the mind of the race: or, shall I say, the mind of the race is in its infancy with regard to the truth of God.

The wonderful privilege available to all who study God is that each one can pursue his subject right where he is. He can be an ambassador of truth to the extent of his acceptance of truth and practice thereof.

God still works; he will work for you. The more familiar you are with him the better are the results achieved. Your game of life is your most absorbing problem. How well do you play it? How successful are you? How sure of yourself?

No matter how much you feel you already know about life, there is something within you that longs to understand more. We have repeated again and again, No one has plummed the depths of God. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Those who pursue the study of God have discovered that his Presence responds in certain ways to certain names and words. The name Jesus Christ always brings a response. The word Good has a like effect.

Attitudes of mind also touch the Divine Presence and cause a reaction toward the petitioner. Praise is one of these. Praise has a tendency to increase whatever is being praised. We find those who desire more Good sincerely praising God, the source of Good, saying, God is Good. If it is prosperity they want, they praise God for his wonderful providence - God is my prosperity. If it is health that is desired, they praise God for his wholeness - Hallowed be thy name. If happiness is what they want, they praise the joy of the Lord - This my joy is fulfilled. All this praise seems to please the Lord and a beneficent response is always experienced.

Actually, it is not God who is influenced into doing more or giving more Good. The very exercise of praise expands the mind, the consciousness, to accept as external fact what Good is desired, for, "I am the Lord, I change not." "Is anything too hard for me?" "It is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

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LIBERTY IS RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE

By Nell Truesdell

The story of the prodigal son will ever serve as the best example of the unnecessary suffering man inflicts upon himself. This son at home had everything that could satisfy. His father loved him, his brother assumed responsibility about the place which served to increase the wealth of the estate, and servants were at hand to wait upon him day and night. In short, the young man led what is dreamed of by most people as the ideal life.

But he was not satisfied. He suffered under the impact of so much good poured unstintingly upon him. He was forced to endure the penalty of being a beloved son of a doting Father. His mental and emotional pain caused such distress within him that he asked for freedom to go out into the world. Fortunately his father was big-minded enough to grant his request.

After he established himself in the world, however, he discovered that the suffering he endured while at home in the midst of love and abundant supply recurred, only this time it took a different form. His distress now was the result of insult, hunger, and poverty. It was the same suffering in another guise. Outer conditions mastered him, whether at home in the midst of plenty or in a foreign land without supply, for in either case he, being inwardly impoverished, was never master of himself.

Fancied bondage is the only jailer. Wherever a man is, that restrictive of liberty is at his elbow, a constant companion which will not be dispelled except by a change that must occur in the inner man. Agonizing over what he has to endure has prompted many false moves and caused unnecessary pain, emotional, mental, and physical, not only to a sufferer, but to those who love him. Often they too are swept along with him into the vortex of his own emptiness. The

awful effect of imagined affliction cannot be estimated. It causes its victim to rush headlong into unnecessary experiences that lead him so far afield that he finds it difficult to return to normalcy.

The first movement toward the better estate is to come to himself right where he is. There is a spark of divinity, a better self within every man, that must burst into flame, no matter how feeble, when the draft of the Holy Breath fans it. The Highest God and the Inmost God is One God. That latent pin-point of light wrapped securely in flesh and thought cannot forever be hid from its owner's view. He may be unaware of it for countless life-times, and suffer the consequent difficulties of his ignorance, but the spark remains. It will eventually burst into flame for, by nature, it is the most combustible element in man's makeup.

It seems that a man or woman buried in sense nature must go through the purifying process that harsh experience affords. It seems that the more valuable the talents a person possesses the more violent is his experience. No character in all the history of mankind ever achieved a worthwhile place in the memory of the race except he first endured and then won his battle for existence in the world.

The world is our proving ground. It is a mighty field and it is there that our battle rages. Its vast and violent authority over all in it subdues and wrests from what and whoever is submissive to it, any substance they possess that it might feed and keep itself alive. The world will devour you while it dangles just beyond your eager grasp the baubles for which you strain every nerve to attain. And, the only reward for you is the struggle. In time you may learn that the world promises all and delivers nothing, while, on the other hand, the Spirit promises no thing yet delivers everything.

The things of God have been so whitewashed and covered over with trappings to make them attractive and acceptable to the public by men who seek their fortunes in religious traffic, that the worldly-minded trained to recognize a good bargain, refuse the counterfeit. In this they are wiser than their tempters and, perhaps, will come to themselves sooner.

You and I seem to have come to ourselves for we are giving attention to God. We are learning to keep silent before him. We are realizing that the meek inherit the earth. As we remain steadfast in watch toward the Most High, though our efforts seem feeble and our steps falter in a world of ambitious bustle, our persistent vision Godward does draw into our little orbit the golden light of his love, and we know too that the way to achieve is "not by power, nor by might, but by My Spirit."

This is our fulness of time. It is the time when we shall look into the world with clear eyes, shining with the Light that gives understanding, and deny all that we have been trained from birth to accept as real and true; and, to affirm God, God, God, the only Reality.

What is there to teach in truth but this one fact? What other teaching will give strength to those weakened by indulgences according to the world's standards?

Modern man demands results. Wherever his interests lie, there must be a return to himself, with increase, or he will change his interest. The sort of results gained in the world will never wholly satisfy because they are material. Man is a spiritual being, the image and likeness of God. He does not always

believe this but it remains the truth about him regardless. Spiritual man will be satisfied with nothing less than Spirit.

In the popular metaphysics students have been taught to hold the thought so that they might demonstrate over some limitation, mostly fancied. They hold the thought, they visualize, they affirm and decree in order to bring to pass in the outer, some manifest form of imagined good. The system is feasible in that it invites a person to transfer the attention of his mind from appearances of evil, sickness, lack, and limitation to wholeness in all departments of his living. But it fails because it is not the true way at all. Man's attention is still fixed on things - better, yes - but material none the less.

It may seem good to be able to deliver oneself from limitation of one sort or another; one is then not so inconvenienced. But look squarely at the method involved and see how false the system is.

What does it profit a man to demonstrate temporarily over some appearance of sickness if the false purposes within his heart remain unchanged? The sickness will return in another guise and another "healing" will have to be effected. What advantage is there in filling some lack if the whole consciousness is poverty stricken?

Jesus gave a formula for complete demonstration. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." This order is brimful of all that any man or woman could desire or dare to claim. But we are afraid of the kingdom of God. Such an order strikes terror in the heart centered on getting the things of the world. This is the result of not being acquainted with God. We stand trembling before him and seek a way of escape even before we have an opportunity to become familiar with him.

Why does one man fear to meet another who seems to be in a position of power? Because he knows not what is in himself. In his imagination he thinks the influential man is superior to him and he fears his appraisal. But the manhood in both is the same, one not greater or less than the other. They can meet in this manhood as equals and honor one another.

Why shrink from God? In the secret of our own chamber we can take moments to become acquainted with him. Meditation on spiritual promises, statements of truth, reciting of prayers - such are instruments of communication with God. As acquaintance ripens, timidity flees, until eventually the communicant stands silent, face to face with his Lord.

The degree of earnestness in which God is sought becomes the measure of our reception of his good. For he pours more and more of himself into the heart of him who basks in his presence.

The aim of our life should not be to acquire things, but to get a greater consciousness of God. This is our treasure and as we have it, the things needed are manifested without our even trying to make a demonstration. Such a statement needs only be proved by the skeptical.

The one victory is that of choosing God first in every instance of our experience, until the whole life-activity is a dedication to God. This will not make one less a man or woman; rather it will be God's mark of high calling upward.

If after you have read this article you look yourself over and find any trace of unrest or limitation anywhere at all, remember escape is not by way of going somewhere else or even in making a change in the outer around you. But the liberty you long for is within you. It comes to you as a willing servant to administer to you in mind, body, and affairs, if you will look above your feelings and fancies to him who invites, Come to me; I will give you rest.

All bondage is the fruit of vain imagination. The jailer is yourself alone. You cannot blame another for your plight. You cannot ever blame God. But change your point of view; look in a new direction above yourself, and you will find freedom, abiding, happyfying, substantial freedom.

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SPIRITICITY September 1946

PLOTINUS AS A SPIRITUAL GUIDE (Continued from Last Month)

By R. A. Applegate, Jr.

CHAPTER I - ONTOLOGY

For Plotinus, as for all the mystics, life on this earth is a search for something higher and better than the ordinary human existence with its birth, three score and ten years, and death. Mysticism is a way of life. It is, as Dean Inge says, "the attempt to realize, ... the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal." The mystic accepts as his guiding principle that, above the physical world with its inconsistencies and ridiculousness, there must be a world of stable spiritual Reality; and that above even this spiritual World, there must be a Creator who is all-loving and who is never separated from his creation; so that even a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his knowledge. The mystic is extremely sensitive to the imperfect and inconsistent, and is therefore unwilling to stop short of perfection. For this reason he is willing to give his life wholly to the attainment of what he considers the highest calling that a man is capable of. For him it is an assumed theorem, perhaps an inborn feeling, that perfection is attainable and that it is his supreme duty to obtain perfection in life, in morals, in knowledge, and in dedication. For him the life that consisted of a birth, a number of years, a struggle to make a living, and death would be the greatest futility. He feels that there is something better than this, perhaps that he is here for some purpose; or else he has a simple but overpowering desire to know the Highest. There is that within him which will not let him stop short of the highest and deepest secrets of the universe. Thus he is willing, in order to be true to his quest, to despise all wealth and worldly honor and all that the "natural man" would sell his soul to obtain. He is willing, as St. Paul was, to be accounted a fool among men in order to know God and to accomplish the one task that he feels he is in this world to perform.

Mysticism takes the same general forms wherever it is practiced. Dean Inge has made this clear both in his Christian Mysticism and in several chapters of The Philosophy of Plotinus. To look upon mysticism as essentially an oriental phenomenon is a mistake. Such writers as St. Augustine, Spinoza, Meister Eckhart, Swedenborg, and Emerson show clearly that it is not peculiar to any country or region. In fact, the universality of mysticism and the fact that it exhibits the same general characteristics wherever it occurs indicate that it is, at least, worthy of study, to determine what it is that the mystics are striving after and what are the claims that they make.

Mysticism need not be an attempt to escape from an unpleasant environment or from a world with which the mystic is unable to cope. The mystic may be, as St. Paul was, a success in another field before his conversion. The mystic sees, however, more clearly than others - as all we see at times - that life in this world as it is usually lived is "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." He realizes, as Solomon did, that success, worldly wisdom, wealth, is "vanity of vanities." Yet for all this, he is not pessimistic or cynical, because he sees, or thinks he sees, behind the world of appearances, another world, where things as they ought to be are really things as they are. Thus he dedicates his life to finding out about this Other World. It is easy for him to be one-pointed and dedicated in this quest, because nothing else seems to him to be worthwhile.

Mysticism, as Dean Inge points out, is a way of life. It is not a philosophy, but it involves a philosophy. It accepts the possibility of seeing and knowing God: and its philosophy is designed to show how this is possible, to explain it logically and consistently so that others may be led to the same conclusion; and, to trace the path by which the desired goal is to be obtained. The mystic accepts at the start of his quest that it is possible to know the Highest. He accepts it as a fact that the Creator of the universe must be Omnipresent and Omniscient. He cannot conceive of a limited God. To him that would be a contradiction in terms.

Plotinus is one of the greatest examples in the Western world of the mystic way of life. Founding his philosophy on that of Plato, he chose what he found suitable in his forerunner and changed the emphasis of Plato so that he came out with an entirely different philosophy, one that accorded with the mystic conception of the universe, which, at least in its radical forms, always demands a rigid monism.

There are many degrees of mystics. Joan of Arc, with her visions of St. Michael, was a mystic, although she would not have dared to make the claims that some of the mystic do; whereas Jesus Christ, with his bold insistence, "I and my Father are one" was the consummate Mystic. However, in its radical form, Mysticism is always the quest to realize oneness with God. To this radical school Plotinus belonged. His Ontology is designed to show how the attainment of the quest is possible. This attainment is bound up for him in the nature of the universe. It is made possible by two facts: the Omnipresence, and hence immanence of the One, and the "eye of the soul." The latter, which is the soul's inner attention, is capable of being directed. It is that faculty which "is the birthright of all, which few turn to use." Its nature will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

Plotinus uses the terms, "the One," and "the Good," and "the Highest" interchangeably. This Highest, which he also calls "That solitary-dwelling Existence, the Apart, the Unmingled, the Pure, That from which all things depend, towards which all look, the Source of Life, of Intellection, and of Being," and in several places, "the Father," is above thinking and above knowing. It is ineffable. We cannot say what It is but only what It is not. It can be described only by negatives. We cannot even ascribe unity to It, because that would be limiting It; nor can we ascribe to It goodness, because It is above goodness. We call It the Good because there is no other name for It and because that which proceeds from It is good. "The One is, in truth, beyond all statement; whatever you say would limit It; the All-Transcending, ... which alone of all things has true being, has no name ... We can state what It is not while we are silent as to what It is." It is not only Omnipotent, but Omnipotence ("one all power reaching out to infinity.") It is not only

Omnipresent, but Omnipresence. "The Supreme is everywhere and yet nowhere. He is everywhere in entirety; He is, at once that everywhere and everywhere; He is not in the everywhere but is the everywhere as well as the giver to the rest of things of their being in that everywhere." The Highest is not only lovable but is Love and It is completely above the three-dimensional world of time and space. "He is not to be set in anything either as enthroned in eternal immanence or as having made some entry into things; He is to be conceived as existing alone, with space and all the rest as later than He. Thus we conceive Him as far as we may, the spaceless; we abolish the nothing of any environment; we circumscribe him within no limit; we attribute no extension to Him; He has no shape, even shape intellectual; He holds no relationship but exists in and for Himself before anything is. He is at the same time lovable and Love itself. God's being and His seeking are identical; once more, then, the Supreme is the self-producing, sovereign of Himself."

(To be continued)

Alphabet of
DAILY MEDITATIONS
For Every Week Day of the Month

September 1946

2. ACCORDING to His mercy he saved us.
3. They took up the fragments that remained twelve BASKETS full.
4. The Spirit of the Lord shall CARRY thee.
5. He shall DELIVER thee.
6. Of His FULNESS have all we received.
7. GLORIOUS things are spoken.

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9. HE HEARETH us.
10. God gave the INCREASE.
11. JUDGE righteous JUDGMENT.
12. The Lord bless thee, and KEEP thee.
13. LOOK upon the face of thine anointed.
14. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his MASTER.

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16. A great NUMBER believed.
17. By the OBEDIENCE OF ONE shall many be made righteous.
18. He will abundantly PARDON.
19. QUENCH not the Spirit.
20. I will clothe thee with RAIMENT.
21. Wait on the Lord and He SHALL SAVE thee.

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23. TARRY here and watch.
24. The highway of the UPRIGHT is to depart from evil.
25. I was not disobedient unto the heavenly VISION.
26. The Lord giveth power to get WEALTH.
27. Let YOUR YEA be YEA.
28. Where is thy ZEAL?
29. Take fast hold of instruction.

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We suggest that you glance at the word for the day first thing in the morning. Because it is charged with spiritual intensity of feeling, it will remain with you and give you a rich reward. Please keep the DAILY MEDITATIONS with us.

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