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A STRONG MAN'S RELIGION

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. -- *Ephesians* 6:10-11.

Someone has said that religion is either a sedative or a panacea. Real religion could never be a sedative. True religion is always a tonic; false religions are often sedatives.

Nearly all of the religions of the world have taken it for granted that religion was a retreat from the world rather than a dealing with the world. They provided places where men who had become weary of the struggle of life had worn themselves out in its lusts could retire from the conflict and find surcease from their struggles.

I think nearly all of the great so-called religions of the world have expressed themselves in addition to their temples, in retreats, monasteries and nunneries. But in the world of Truth there are no monasteries, convents or cloisters. There are no places of retreat from the world for the followers of Truth, for the Truth does not offer a sedative to the soul. It does not offer an opportunity of retreating from the conflict of life. Although the Truth is the exact opposite of sense-thought, the antithesis of worldliness, it does not ask for the privilege of retiring from the conflict in order that it may express itself. It proposes, strange as it may seem, an unworldly way of dealing with worldly things, a way of winning the battle by ways that men have not known.

All of the revolt of our present time against religion is not a liability -- much of it is an asset. Men have tried to gauge the spiritual life of man by church attendance. But the life of the soul, as Jesus said in regard to the Kingdom of Heaven, "cometh not by observation." No man by any exterior sign can gauge the spirituality of this age. The very fact that men revolt from what has been looked upon as religion is a truer evidence of their spiritual growth than any fact of church attendance or building of cathedrals.

One of the principal reasons why men are revolting from so-called religions is that there is an instinct in them which tells them that it is pusillanimous to call for outside help under any circumstances. A real man is ashamed to acknowledge weakness and call for help from any outside power, even though that power be called God.

This spirit is having its expression in the world today probably more than ever before. Men feel that it is ignominious to call for help from anyone or any thing. And this is commendable. It is indicative of man's realization of his own inherent capacities and powers. There are many men in the world today who would rather fail from relying on their own efforts than succeed on the efforts of somebody else, even though he be called God.

Notwithstanding all of this, in which I am sincere, the Truth comes to the world and offers help to man such as has never been offered by any other phase of thought. It offers him all-sufficient help. It offers him help under every circumstance and in all needs. It offers help for the body in the way of health and strength when there is apparently no help that the world knows about. It offers strength to the arm, to the mind, to the heart, when help seems impossible. It offers help to one's finances when all visible sources and all expected means have failed.

How can we reconcile these two apparently diametrically opposite things: one, recognizing the divinity of that self-sufficiency, that attitude of the soul which is too big to accept help; the other, the embracing of a religion which offers complete and perfect help to man.

That we may be able to see that these two things are not inconsistent, I am asking you to personify with me electricity -- to think of electricity as a person if you will, and review some of the experiences of electricity. Electricity has been in the world since the world began and yet it was unknown, and therefore not utilized by man for ages. This great person of electricity, as we personify it, we can see sitting upon its throne of power and witnessing mankind in his arduous, back-breaking and soul-destroying labor as he strives to do the world's work.

Electricity saw men doing these things through countless ages; saw men hastening on long journeys that would take perhaps six months to complete, to carry letters from one end of the known world to the other in order to convey some information, when electricity was all of the time saying to him, "If you will trust me, I will flash it across the world in an instant." While men were enduring arduous labor, electricity was calling to the will of man, "Command me and I will do your work; I will carry your messages; I will do a thousand and one things that you cannot do at all or only do with pain." Electricity said to man, "Harness me and command me and I will do these things for you." But because man did not hear he could not heed. It said to man, "Whenever you are ready, I am ready. Whenever you are prepared to receive me and prepare channels through which I can operate, I will work for you." It was waiting to be commanded but it would not force itself upon man.

Thus it is with all the power of God, the help of God, the assistance of God. It is not an outside thing but an inside thing which man must prepare himself for if he would receive it.

Men have despaired through the past of pleasing God. One of the Protestant denominations teaches that man is utterly incapable of pleasing God, that nothing man can do or say can please God and the only way for man is to accept Jesus Christ as his savior. Jesus, so they teach, pleased God and the only thing man can do is to accept him as a vicarious atoning savior. This is not an isolated case but is fundamental in practically all of the great religions of the world -- they have all looked for a savior. Because the so-called religions of the past have despaired of man pleasing God they have had to find some other god who was able to intercede for them.

At last a religion has come that has no external savior, no one to whom it can go to have done for it what it finds itself, or thinks it finds itself, incapable of accomplishing.

The Truth is a strong man's religion. Looked upon from the surface the Truth

may appear to be a retreat from life's battle, for Truth offers God as its supreme resource for everything. It is exactly the opposite of a weak man's religion and is not a religion of despair. It is not a religion of surrender, of recognition of inability and an appeal to outside aid, but is the revelation of new but unrecognized resources of a man's own nature as a son of God.

People who adopt religion as a means of escape or of fleeing to some power outside of themselves for the redemption of their situation, are not adopting the Truth.

Truth is a strong man's religion because it recognizes no authority other than its own. The Truth soul sees that there is no authority except the authority of a man's own soul. The authority for every man is in his own breast. Only strong men and women dare trust the God in them. Emerson says that when a man appeals to authority outside himself, his soul has already fallen.

Truth breaks away from all bibles, saviors, authorities and traditions and goes to the one source of authority -- the soul of man -- where God has put his own power and to which he says: "Trust thyself."

Another reason why Truth is a strong man's religion is because the Truth never asks for something for nothing. It is a strong man's religion that dares to say: "I do not want anything that I have not earned; I do not ask of this universe one thing for which I have not paid the coin which the Creator of the universe has stamped as legal -- that attitude of mind which brings to me my good."

The Truth is a strong man's religion because it dares to break with all traditions. It is easy to live in tradition, and easy to accept the ideas that have been handed down to us from the past. The Truth breaks with all of them and says that the great teacher, Christ, is now present and we can go to that true teacher and get our instruction and guidance directly.

The Truth is a strong man's religion because it breaks not only with the authority of men but with that hidden authority which comes to us under the words, "They say." How much of our lives has been guided by those words, by the traditions that have come down to us! Every tradition that comes to us we should challenge. If it is stamped with the stamp of Truth then let us accept it; if not, let us put it away forever.

The Truth recognizes and admits that we alone are responsible for anything that enters our lives; no one is responsible for anything that comes to us but ourselves. It is a strong man's religion that dares to abandon all alibis. If we are here, we are here because we have brought ourselves here, and circumstances are as they are because we invited them. You may say that somebody else brought them; true, but he was your messenger. He brought them on your order. God is all substance, all power and all life, and man draws upon those things for the conditions he experiences.

Because Truth recognizes that no person, thing or circumstance can change things for us, but we ourselves must change them, is another reason that the Truth is a strong man's religion.

Where is there a stronger religion in the world than that? For what other religion could a strong man ask? One soul can help another but not until that soul is ready to be helped.

The Truth asks no favors of man. We can ask favors through people but not of them. There is a temptation on our part to ask favors believing that other people can

do things for us. It is a strong soul that dares risk all to eternal law, that dares to know and depend upon that law. Emerson tells us that if we need a friend or a book, that friend or book will come to us by straight or devious paths. There is a tendency to look to people, but we must know that if we are true to the principle, the eternal law will bring about the things that we need.

If we do not succeed it is because there is something that needs rectifying. If we have the right character, and I use that word in the boldest, deepest, highest sense, we can depend upon it that that right character will so touch the universe that our reward is sure.

Millions of years have been required to bring us to the place where we can serve God at this particular time. He needs us to help in his work. To dare to risk all to our character is a strong man's task. God is not a being upon whom we are to lean. Too much has been thought of the past, that tired and worried men could go to God and say, "I have reached the limit of my endurance, now you take care of me."

God is a great principle of life like electricity and as electricity offers itself to man, so God offers himself to man, not as a substitute to man, not to pamper man but to act through him, inspire him, empower him, alleviate his ills, strengthen his will, show him the great capacity and power that lies in him as a child of God and to call upon that great untried capacity and unknown resource which lies in the nature of every man as a child of God.

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Dear Father, we thank thee that thou dost not spoil us by doing our work for us, but worketh through us. For that wonderful nature which Jesus revealed and which we possess we thank thee. Father God, we thank thee not only with our words, but by laying hold of that infinitude which is thine and ours and using it to glorify thy name. Amen.