# THE CHRISTIAN WAY OF LIFE

## AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGION IN NEW ENGLAND

THE ESSEX HALL LECTURE 1924.

BY

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THE LINDSEY PRESS
5 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, LONDON, W.C. 2
1924

PRICE 1/- NET.

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Printed in Great Britain by
ELSOM & CO., LTD., HULL

# PREFACE

THE Essex Hall Lecture was founded by the British and Foreign Unitarian Association in order to provide an opportunity for a public utterance on a subject of fundamental religious importance by a selected speaker, with entire freedom of treatment.

Among the lecturers in past years have been the Rev. J. Estlin Carpenter, D.D., on "The Relation of Jesus to his Age and Our Own"; the late Professor Sir Henry Jones on "The Immortality of the Soul in the Poems of Tennyson and Browning"; the Rev. W. R. Inge, D.D., Dean of St. Paul's, on "The Religious Philosophy of Plotinus and some Modern Philosophies of Religion"; Dr. Claude G. Montefiore on "The Place of Judaism among the Religions of the World"; the Rev. Charles Gore, D.D., late Bishop of Oxford, on "Christianity applied to the Life of Men and of Nations"; Dr. L. P. Jacks, Editor of *The Hibbert Journal*, on "The Lost Radiance of the Christian Religion"; and the Rt. Hon. Viscount Cecil on "The Moral Basis of The League of Nations."

The present lecture by Dr. W. W. Fenn was warmly appreciated by the large audience which heard it, and it is believed that a wider public will read it with interest and profit.

S. H. M.

ESSEX HALL, LONDON.

# THE CHRISTIAN WAY OF LIFE

## AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGION IN NEW ENGLAND

LET us imagine two men of the same daily occupation, living in the same neighbourhood, and moving with their families in the same social circle. They read the same books and newspapers, appreciate the same works of art and are pleased by the same music. They are on the same footing socially, economically and intellectually, and stand on the same level of culture. The main difference between them is that one professes and calls himself a Christian while the other does not. Would this professed difference show itself in any difference of outward behaviour, or if not so openly, then in any difference in their outlook upon life and general attitude towards its ups and downs? To borrow the Pragmatist's question—what difference does it make that one man is a Christian while the other is not? Would an observer knowing only so much about them as has been stated, be able to make out which was which? Of course, it may be said that quite apart from formal professions, both men are Christians, in a general sense of the term, since each, let us suppose, has been baptised, and certainly both pass their lives in conditions largely determined by Christian influences: all that may be freely granted without affecting our present inquiry. One man has openly and deliberately taken to himself the name Christian in a way that the other has not; he is more closely identified with the Christian community and is more intimately affected by its deeper currents of thought and feeling. So, our question is, what difference does this

make between him and his neighbour?

It is undoubtedly true that there have been long periods in the history of Christianity when this question could not have arisen, certainly not in precisely this form. In an age when all were called Christians and constituted such by baptism, the difference was between Christians good or bad, nominal or real; but in an earlier age when Jewish or Gentile Christians were surrounded by a non-Christian Jewish or Pagan population, the question had the same point that it now has in the Protestant world. We may ask how a Christian Jew in Jerusalem, at about 50 A.D., could be distinguished from his fellow Jew who was not a Christian, or how a Gentile Christian in Corinth or Iconium, say ten years later, differed from his unconverted neighbor, and these questions we can indeed answer with some accuracy and assurance, but as time goes on the reply becomes at once more vague and less confident on account of insufficient evidence For we have in mind not Christian leaders, but the average Christian man who wrote no books, played no important part in civil or ecclesiastical affairs, formulated no dogmas, probably wrote no letters, or at least none that have been preserved—a decidedly obscure and inarticulate person, this commonplace Christian believer, yet we are immensely interested in him for it was men of his kind that made up the Christian church, and the Christian influence passed through him to us by a succession rather more significant than the apostolic. Unhappily, however, our interest and curiosity have not been shared by scholars of competent learning and insight. The history of the Christian church, both externally as an institution and inwardly as the home of developing doctrine and ritual, has been often written with ample knowledge and critical discrimination, but the history of the Christian ideal and the Christian actual as cherished in the former case and exhibited in the latter by the ordinary Christian man has been strangely overlooked; yet we are heavily in his debt and would fain know better what manner of man he was. This is the large inquiry, of signal importance now in Protestant homelands and even more in foreign mission fields, to which some slight contribution will be made by describing what has been called the Christian way of life as represented in the religious history of New England.

In some respects the narrow field selected is peculiarly favorable for such an investigation. For during the first hundred and seventy-five years, that is until about the beginning of the last century, the population of New England was exceptionally homogeneous. Nearly all were of middle class English stock, and there were no sharply drawn social distinctions, since there was neither a titled nor a moneyed class. As labor had not yet become organized for mass production, the employers and the employed did not divide the community: none were very rich, none were very poor. In those days of home industries, when practically everything needed for the subsistence of a family could be raised on a man's own farm, before railroads had been built and distant markets opened, there were no large fortunes, save in a few conspicuous instances in sea-board towns. Wealth was disguised instead of being flaunted as it now is. An American literary critic who waxed merry over Whittier's simple-minded "innocence" in supposing it possible that a Judge should marry Maud Muller, whose grace as she raked the hay had caught his favoring eye, did not know the New England country-side of a century, or even a half century ago, and John Greenleaf Whittier did. There was many a judge on the bench, many an honorable member of a State legislature

or the National Congress, whose wife had often helped with her own hands in haying time, when a line of mist was edging down the western slopes and thunder was grumbling around the circle of the hills.

Not only were racial distinctions absent and social discriminations unacknowledged, but also all the inhabitants shared the same religious inheritance. Not that all belonged to the church: from the beginning, church members formed only a very small part of the population, probably not more than one out of four or five, yet it must by no means be inferred that the rest were indifferent to religion. In the collections of theological books belonging to Harvard College and to the Andover-Harvard Theological Library, there are hundreds which contain the autographs of previous owners, and it is striking to observe how many were once the property of laymen, books too of the driest and grittiest character, which to-day, unless for their associations, not one layman in a thousand would keep on his shelves, much less read. There was a great deal of theological reading and reflection, and the sermons of the village minister, which Oliver Wendell Holmes once likened to Passover bread, holy but heavy, were attentively heard and faithfully discussed. Here were men and women, then, of the same racial stock and religious inheritance, singularly alike in social, economic and intellectual status, yet some of whom avowed themselves Christians while others, often from modesty or self-depreciation, made no such profession. What actual difference was there between the two classes? That is our question.

During the first sixty years, that is from 1630 to 1690, the colonial period, there was probably no appreciable difference whatsoever. It has been said that every ship which came to New

England up to 1645 carried one passenger whose name never appeared on the rolls but who ruled every soul on board with a rod of iron, and his name was John Calvin. That is a picturesque way of saying that all the first colonists were Calvinists. Not that all sought the "howling wilderness," as they loved to call it in their moods of self-pity or in petitions and protests to the mother-country, from religious motives exclusively or even chiefly. Some were led by hope of bettering their condition, others by love of adventure, the lure of the long trail, and doubtless in many cases, perhaps in most, there was a tangle of motives the strands of which are hard to disentangle and estimate at their proper values. Nevertheless, nearly all were Calvinists. Just as to-day, when the Fundamentalists are fighting "the battles of the Lord," there are multitudes who sympathize with them although they are connected with no church and do not even call themselves Christians, so it is fair to say of the first settlers that all had Calvinistic prejudices and presuppositions. Yet they were Englishmen before they were Calvinists, and Christian Englishmen too. That means that they possessed certain racial and acquired customs which were far more deeply ingrained than their Calvinism. As a class, they were stout-hearted, truth-speaking men, loyal to conscience as they apprehended it, tenacious of order and intolerant of nonsense, zealous for the purity of the family, honoring law, reverencing God, His Word and His day. That is, they had a set of excellent moral habits which were vested with divine sanction by the Bible Calvinistically interpreted, and enforced with unsparing rigor by Calvinistic magistrates and a stern public sentiment. It is true that they were flinty and sharp-edged, prone to take life rather austerely and grimly, whence it is that the word Puritan has now

become what Martineau once called a "vehicle of excited feeling" against whatever or whoever is staunch, serious, and law-abiding; but it were well for those who speak thus cavalierly to reflect that we do live in a world where laws are inexorable, and that human life is not a musical comedy but still to every thoughtful mind carries the dignity of tragedy. Those first colonists were by no means lank haired, sour-visaged men, all compact of holy groans and pious snuffles, but they were thoughtful and the circumstances in which their lot was cast kept them ever mindful of the seriousness of man's life upon the earth. This was true of almost all of them, hence so far as outward conduct went, there was little difference between a church member, a regenerate man, a Christian, and his neighbor who was none of these things. Nor was there any perceptible difference as respects formal religious practices: all went to church, were compelled to by law; all read and believed the Bible, kept the Sabbath, and were obedient to the laws of God and the Commonwealth. Family prayers were generally maintained, as well as grace at meat.

Nevertheless, if there was no visible difference between the two classes, they were not identical. Hermas, in the third and fourth Similitudes of the Shepherd, is shown many trees, dry and leafless, among which he is unable to discriminate, and is told that these represent the righteous and the sinners who cannot be distinguished in this wintry world, but shall be recognized for what they are in the world to come. Similarly in bleak New England the two classes were indistinguishable, but the one was destined for heaven while the other was doomed to hell. Let us be perfectly clear about this. Of the two neighbors whom we described, the one had experienced a work of grace in his heart which constituted him a Christian in the specific sense of the term, credible

evidence of which was required for church membership, while the other had not. What difference did it make between them ? Was the former a better man, more friendly and public spirited, a more kind and faithful husband, a more affectionate father, a more obliging and serviceable neighbor ? I am not aware that such was, or was expected to be the case. Yet, although the two men might be of exactly equal worth in all the relations of life and in all the outward observance of religion, in God's sight one was a potential saint in light while the other was a smouldering firebrand of hell. And why ? Simply because one was regenerate, while the other was not. Regeneration, then, made an immeasurable difference between men, which, however, might be evident to God alone. Thus, over a life of moral habits, however excellent, moves an undefined ideal of a life well pleasing to God which the regenerate alone could lead.

Not only was it undefined, it was also held to be unattainable by merely human effort. It was hopeless for man to rise up early, sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrows, so that he might attain unto a life acceptable in the sight of God. All his efforts must necessarily prove futile, since God alone, through His regenerating power, could enable one to realize this Christian ideal. There are few things more perilous, morally and spiritually, than to believe thus in an undefined and unattainable ideal, the realization of which depends wholly upon arbitrary supernatural help, although the most direful consequences wait upon its non-fulfilment. Ideals are like Bunyan's apples of Eve, seen in the House Beautiful, whereof Christian was unable to tell whether they were food or poison. They are never so likely to prove the latter as when they are not organic with life, springing out of it, and reacting upon it with quickening

and purifying power. Such a dislocation between the ideal and the actual is always fraught with peril, and so the New England men found it as we shall presently observe.

May it not be, however, that the case has been put somewhat too strongly, and that although there was no visible difference between saint and sinner, the former was supposed to have certain inner experiences due to the operation of God's spirit which therefore an unregenerate man could not enjoy—warm and pious frames, rapt elevations of thought and feeling, a keener sense of God's hand in the various events of life ? There is some reason to believe that this was supposed to be the case. For instance, the Rev. Samuel Newman of Rehoboth, in Massachusetts, compiler of a Concordance to the Bible, left among his papers a set of Rules or Tests, thirteen in number, by which he sought to read his title clear to mansions in the skies. Of these thirteen tests, only two even suggest any reference to conduct, while all the others have to do with states of thought and feeling.

Those two were a desire to requite evil with good (which indeed might be only a desire) and a choosing of suffering rather than sin (which, again, might not be an effective choice). Yet, it must be added that comparatively little is said about such inner spiritual experiences in the sermons of the period. Perhaps this was in part due to the reluctance of these men, just because they were Englishmen, to talk about such things, but it may quite as well be because, for the same reason, they did not have them to talk about. At any rate, reports of such emotional experiences produced little impression upon them, as when the redoubtable Capt. Underhill professed that the Spirit of God fell mightily upon him while he was taking a pipe of tobacco, and they smelt brimstone in the incense of the sanctuary. In any event, such a difference

was not at all in outward conduct but solely in inward feeling which at best is still not organic with the rest of life.

With the dying off of the first settlers, the fathers of New England, changes began to appear both in moral habits and in religious belief. As regards the latter, their Calvinism softened,and, in particular, one of its cardinal doctrines, that of regeneration, slipped into the background of their minds. Calvinism was a form of Christianity peculiarly appropriate to these early conditions, when literally and beyond all question the colonists were dependent upon God not only for their well being but also for their very being. Before them stretched the unbounded and unexplored forest, and through its leafy screen, savage beasts and still more savage men peered evilly upon them. To the North were the French, hostile to them both as Englishmen and as Protestants. Much farther to the South, yet not wholly beyond striking distance, were Spaniards, and to both French and Spanish fleets the New England coast lay open. Behind them rolled the ocean cutting them off from home and human help. Upon whom could they depend but upon God ? Nor must we forget their great enemy Satan, whom they did not forget even for a minute. One theory was that at the time of the Protestant Reformation, the Devil dethroned in Europe had fled to the unchristianized New World, where he had found in the American Indians a people peculiarly to his liking and apt to do his bidding. Just as he had become well established in his new domain, the Puritans and Pilgrims, representing the purest form of Christianity then in the world, had come over to dispute his sovereignty. Of course, Satan would do his utmost to destroy these invaders of his peculiar realm by arousing his savage subjects against them, and by bringing under his sway pliable men and women who as witches,

could do their fellow countrymen incalculable harm. Like most seventeenth-century Christians, the settlers believed in hosts of invisible evil spirits, filling the air, in the Devil, their great Napoleon, and in witches and compacts with Satan. Sometimes, too, these witches were spirited away into the depths of the forest for nocturnal meetings which, as some of the apostate visitors confessed, were organized after the pattern of Congregational churches,[1] so closely did the diabolical ape the divine.

All this the settlers devoutly believed, but they also believed that they were in the mighty hand of God, because they were in New England not of their own will alone but in obedience to His command. He had brought them across the ocean, miraculously preserved them from its perils, and established them upon inhospitable shores for the furtherance of his purpose, which might even be to set up the New Jerusalem in those uttermost parts of the world. They stood in the power of God, these first settlers, and He, whose might was over all, would never leave them nor forsake them, so long as they remained faithful to Him and obedient to His will. Upon Him, then, they were ultimately and utterly dependent. That was their Calvinism. But as time went on, the forests were cleared and their savage inhabitants subdued; the colonists became less manifestly dependent upon God; they had proved their strength, and feelings of self-reliance grew. So, in general, their Calvinism weakened.

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[1] "The witches do say that they form themselves much after the manner of Congregational churches, and that they have a baptism and a supper and officers among them abominably resembling those of our Lord."—Cotton Mather, *Wonders of the Invisible World*, ed. 1862, p. 160.

In particular, their faith in regeneration, and consequently in whatever was supposed to be peculiar to the regenerate, also waned. The beginnings of

this change appear in the "Anne Hutchinson troubles" over which we must linger for a moment, both because of the bearing of the controversy upon what has already been said, and also because of the light it throws upon subsequent history. Two points were especially under discussion. One was the assertion that "sanctification" is no evidence of "justification." Put in plain English, this meant that one might be a very saint in outward behaviour and even it would seem in inward disposition, and still lie under the curse of God. That is precisely what their own theory implied, as has already been stated. True, but these settlers were Englishmen and therefore were not at all disposed to let their logic sweep them over Niagara. They could not work with the idea that a man might be irreproachable in the sight of men and still be an object of God's wrath and hate; particularly when soldiers refused to serve in an Indian expedition under the leadership of a good commander whom they suspected of being under a " covenant of works." So, when they banished Anne Hutchinson, their practice belied their avowed theory. Should that practice persist, the theory which it implied must ultimately demand explicit recognition; and, as we shall see, that was what actually happened.

A second point at issue was Anne Hutchinson's claim to be the recipient of private revelations. This also was intolerable, not only because Münster was to the men of the early seventeenth century what Bolshevism is to their descendants of the early twentieth, but also because those colonists were bent upon establishing in the New World a Church and a State after the pattern laid down in God's revealed Word, and understood perfectly that any recognition of private or personal revelations might easily subvert the very foundation of the structures they were rearing

with so much labour and at such great sacrifice. Yet, to condemn Anne Hutchinson and so deny the possibility of any direct Divine action upon the mind of man in " revelation," was to go a long way towards denying a similarly immediate working of the Spirit upon the soul of man in " regeneration." Thus it came about before the century ended that belief in regeneration and in the ideal of the regenerate life had almost passed out of their active thinking. There is a noteworthy passage in a letter written by Cotton Mather to Major Richards, an influential member of his church, who was strongly opposed to the " Half-way Covenant " which Mather approved.[1] In this letter, under date December 14, 1692, Mather states his purpose to admit to baptism " such as were instructed and orthodox in the Christian religion, and should bring testimony signed by more than one among the people of God that they are of a virtuous conversation, and should after their names have been publicly propounded (and objection cannot be made against them) openly and seriously give themselves up to God in Christ, according to the terms of the Covenant of Grace, with a declaration of their study to prepare themselves further for the table of the Lord." Then Mather goes on to say: "I do most fully agree with you that no unregenerate person is to be baptised. But then I also think that a person so qualified as has been described, and one so sensibly submitting to the laws of our Lord, should not be pronounced unregenerate."

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[1] *The Mather Papers*, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Ser. IV, vol. viii, p. 397.

In every way this is a most illuminating letter. It shows how completely the New England men had lost sight of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration since it admits as beyond question that no unregenerate person is to be baptised. It draws the distinction mo-

mentous to the New England fathers between Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and acknowledges the more advanced qualifications required for the latter. But our present interest lies in the test it proposes by which a man may be declared regenerate, and in the almost unconscious assumption that a man may "study to prepare himself for the table of the Lord" for which regeneration was theoretically indispensable. It is plain that thought has moved a long way from the position of the first settlers; or shall we say that practice has gone far beyond the earlier theory still formally maintained. As so often happens, conduct dictated by circumstances had outrun theory, and instead of theory moulding practice, practice was imperceptibly shaping theory to conform with it. This indeed seems to be the characteristically English method of progress. The point is that by this time regeneration had become one of the vanishing things, and the virtues attributed exclusively to the regenerate were likewise passing out of mind. Accordingly, the ancient ideal of a life well-pleasing to God, superior to the life of moral habits, that undefined and unattainable ideal of which we spoke as dependent upon regeneration alone, had become obsolete. Its place was taken by a quite different ideal, namely that of the virtues of the Fathers of New England. How this came to pass will apear from a brief consideration of changes in the moral situation.

As the thin line of settlers pushed back from the sea coast into the country impelled not by religious motives either in whole or in part, but solely by economic ambition, moral customs began to deteriorate to familiar frontier standards. From complaints in the sermons of the time, and especially from the Findings of the Reforming Synod held in Boston in 1679-80, one might infer that there had been in New England a belated appearance of the

moral conditions existing here after the Restoration. That, however, would be a false inference. Jeremiads of the sanctuary cannot always be taken as accurate representations of existing conditions. Again, the situation in New England at the time of the Reforming Synod was unhappy. There had been shipwrecks and other grievous calamities, in Boston there had been pestilence and devastating fires, the Indians were again on the war-path harassing the frontiers, and many lives had been lost in unsuccessful expeditions against them and their French instigators. To crown all, relations with the mother country had become increasingly tense, and the loss of the Charter, with its probable effect upon property rights, was imminent. These disasters and menaces were interpreted not as misfortunes but as visitations. God was displeased with New England and was forsaking it to its foes. Accordingly, the one and only security lay in returning to Him with confession, repentance and a renewal of the ancient Covenant.

Cotton Mather himself gives unmistakable indication of the real situation. In his *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693) he writes: " We are still so happy that I suppose there is no land in the universe more free from the debasing and debauching vices of ungodliness. The body of the people are hitherto so disposed that swearing, Sabbath breaking, drunkenness, and the like, do not make a gentleman but a monster or a goblin in the popular estimation. All this notwithstanding, we must humbly confess to our God that we are immeasurably degenerated from the first love of our predecessors. However, we boast ourselves a little when men go to trample upon us, and we venture to say, whereinsoever any is bold (we speak foolishly) we are bold also " (ed. of 1862, p. 11). To the same effect is another passage from the same

author's *Ratio Disciplinae* published in 1726, " Though the body of the people are a sober, honest, industrious and well-disposed sort of men . . . and the common people are better acquainted with religion than in any other country on the face of the earth, yea some whole towns have not so much as one family in them which does not maintain a religious worship of God our Saviour, or so much as one person that is known to walk disorderly; nevertheless there is found among them too much cause to complain of a growing apostasy from the religious disposition that signalized the first settlers " (p. 196).

From these two quotations, one discerns the actual state of affairs. Moral habits had undoubtedly declined; not very seriously, yet to such an extent that the traditional virtues of the ancestors had taken the place of the undefined and unattainable ideal which the first settlers had cherished. So it was that the general religious situation had very decidedly altered. With the new emphasis upon man, indicated by the substitution of self-reliance for the sense of absolute dependence upon God, and reliance upon means of grace in contrast with the immediacy of grace in the work of regeneration, the Christian way of life was now conceived as a striving after the virtues of the first colonists, recognizable and attainable human virtues irradiated by pious feeling, enlightened by Christian doctrine, and aided by steadfast observance of the regularly appointed means of grace. Even in Cotton Mather who is popularly and properly regarded as representing the clerical party, we find this very much attenuated and mitigated Calvinism. He would have indignantly resented any insinuation that he was no longer a Calvinist, and indeed could set forth the traditional doctrines with clearness and force upon occasion. Nevertheless it is to him that we owe a surprisingly broad and

luminous statement which gives the view of his generation at its best: "What is a Christian? A Christian is one who believes all that our glorious Lord Jesus Christ has revealed; a Christian is one who also obeys all that our Lord Jesus Christ has commanded."[1]

Such were New England conditions when Jonathan Edwards appeared upon the scene. Of the personality of this memorable man and the tragedy of his thought and life, we cannot here speak, but only of his conception of the Christian way of life. It must be evident that the changes in religious thought had been in the general direction of Pelagianism or Arminianism, yet these heresies were scornfully repudiated. In his *Magnalia* of 1702 Mather quotes from Arrowsmith's *Anti-Weigelian Oration* a prayer that it may always be easier to find a wolf in England or a snake in Ireland than an Arminian or Socinian in Cambridge, and applies it

[1] Marvin, *Life and Times of Cotton Mather*, p. 386.

to Harvard College. Some twenty-five years later he declared with triumph that no Arminian pastor could be found in all New England. Yet only about ten years afterwards, according to Edwards, " there began the great noise that was in this part of the country about Arminianism, which seemed to appear with a very threatening aspect upon the interest of religion here."[1] Plainly what had happened was that practice had suddenly risen into recognition as conscious theory. Against this Edwards set himself with the full energy of his masterful intellect, aiming to revive decadent Calvinism with its two cardinal doctrines of the absolute sovereignty of God and the equally absolute necessity of regeneration. His main line of attack was to deny unqualifiedly even the slightest moral ability on the part of man to contribute towards his own salvation, and so to rest everything upon the sovereign grace of God exercised only upon those whom from all eternity He had elected by His inscrutable will.

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[1] *Narrative of Surprising Conversions*, Works III, p. 233.

In addition, however, Edwards developed another and more positive line of thought which is of especial significance for our immediate purpose. It is unfortunate that Edwards is commonly known only as author of the *Treatise on the Freedom of the Will* (which has been grossly overpraised for its logical acumen) and as preacher of certain sermons which blaze and crackle with infernal flames. His pre-eminent contribution to religious thought is his *Essay on the Nature of True Virtue.* This particularly concerns us now. As against those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and relied upon their possession of the common human virtues to win favour with God, Edwards defined true virtue as consisting only in " love to Being generally considered." To such a definition there are many objections. The word " Being " is used in very much the same way as that in which some popular writers of the present day use the word " Life," as if it were somehow an independent and measurable entity, instead of an abstract term denoting an intricate complex of relations. Besides, Love is the most concrete of human feelings, and to direct it towards so abstract a conception as " Being in general " amounts almost to a contradiction in terms. In fact, Edwards himself usually puts it more definitely as Love to God, considered either as the source and sum of all Being, or as comprehending within himself the largest quantity of Being. Objections aside, however, our interest lies in the fact that Edwards has revived that unattainable ideal which regard for the virtues of the ancestors had displaced; and, in addition, he has defined it in such a way as to shrivel into contemptible nothingness the "good works"

upon which his Arminianizing contemporaries were relying as constituting a life acceptable to God. Let us put it in plainest terms. His thought is that no human action deserves to be called good, or virtuous, which is not animated by love to God. As the lover could not love his beloved so much, loved he not honor more; or as a man's love for his friend is wicked when it leads him to benefit his friend by putting him into a position where his incompetence works harm to other persons or to the State; so, according to Edwards, our loftiest virtues are nothing worth unless they are manifestations of an all-suffusing, all-controlling love of God! A man may love himself as part of universal Being; he may love his family and friends, his country, and even humanity as a whole, regarded as larger and larger quantities of Being; but these particular affections count for nothing in God's sight unless they are inspired and governed by love of the Most High, which in every experience of life shows its commanding presence: and such love is possible only to those who have been born again by God's special and saving grace. Before so sublime a conception of goodness as this, a seamless, shining robe of love, the " good works " upon which so many depended as the essence of a life well pleasing to God did indeed become but as the filthy rags of their own righteousness.

It is noteworthy that this ideal of the Christian Life, in the form given it by Edwards, has to do not with outward conduct but with inward motives and states of feeling. It is sometimes said reproachfully that the New England Puritans set more store by the Ten Commandments than the Beatitudes, and it is undoubtedly true that their holy Mount was the cloud-shrouded and tempest-swept peak of Sinai, rather than the Galilean hill where quiet words of grace fell gently from the lips of

Christ. Yet Edwards knew right well that the Ten Commandments do not sufficiently set forth the whole duty of man, since they may be obeyed from motives such as Arthur Hugh Clough adduces in *The New Decalogue* instead of from loving reverence for them as divine behests. Hence, although he everywhere insists upon holy practice as the chief although by no means the infallible test of a Christian man, he also teaches that this must proceed from love to God. Thus he anticipates Schleiermacher by giving religion its home in the feelings, and more intimately in love to God flowing out into all human conduct. He freely admitted that, externally viewed, there might be not the least perceptible difference between the two men described at the beginning of this Essay, yet he contended that there must be a very real difference between them in the motive and spirit of behaviour. One lives to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever, the other lives from and for himself. Hence there is an immense difference in eternal destiny: the one is sealed for heaven the other is on his way to hell.

Thus the ideal of the Christian life has received its definition, and a glorious definition it is. Yet it still remains beyond the reach of human effort and striving. Only after a new " taste " or " relish " has been imparted to man by the regenerating Spirit can he truly love God and begin to walk in the Christian way. But is it possible for a man to know for a certainty whether he does love God or not ? There is a hymn which used to be a favorite at neighborhood-meetings on the New England country-side, even within my recollection, one stanza of which runs thus:

'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord, or no,
Am I His or am I not ?

Upon the answer their eternal destiny depended, yet how could they tell ?

The doubt is perfectly reasonable; and the result of Edwards' noble definition was to plunge New England into a doleful period of religious introspection, one of the best illustrations of which is the *Journal* of David Brainerd. Good men and women carried about with them a clinical thermometer of the soul, and took their spiritual temperature many times a day, registering the readings in their Diaries or Journals, sometimes with glimmerings of hope, more often with black despair. Plainly, then, it was necessary to devise some test which would enable one to answer this momentous question. The need was met by Samuel Hopkins, who had studied theology in the family of Jonathan Edwards, and remained through life his devoted friend and loyal disciple.

The test, put in the form of a question, was simply this: Do you feel that you are willing to be damned for the glory of God ? It is needless to spend any time over the history of the idea which the question implies. Ultimately it goes back to the plea of Moses—"Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written"; and to Paul's willingness to be accursed from Christ for the sake of those who were his brethren after the flesh. It is foreshadowed in some of the Christian mystics, and in certain passages of disputed genuineness in the published sermons of early New England preachers. Edwards himself referred to it with respect but not with approval. If it is worth while to hazard a conjecture as to the source from which Hopkins derived it, a plausible guess would be that it was from Mrs. Edwards, who herself had come upon it in the works of her distinguished great-grandfather Thomas Hooker. Our interest however is in its meaning rather than its history; and its meaning has been widely misunderstood. It has sometimes been supposed to denote a willing-

ness that, with respect to oneself, God's purpose should finally and forever fail, and that one soul at least should continue in eternal rebellion against God. Manifestly, however, this is to put the idea in a totally different context from that to which it belongs. According to the revived Calvinism which both Edwards and Hopkins championed, the end of creation was to declare the glory of God. The glory of God is His character; hence to manifest His glory is to reveal his character. In His character are justice and hatred of sin, hence to declare His glory by the full exhibition of His character, there must be in the creation sin for Him to hate, and Hell to show how much He justly hates it. It follows, therefore, that there must be some sinful souls doomed to suffer in Hell forever, else the very purpose of the creation would be unfulfilled. That is, there are some foreordained to glorify God by their damnation which reveals His just hatred of sin, precisely as there are others predestined to glorify Him by showing forth His clemency and grace in their salvation and eternal blessedness. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and the question is this: Supposing that you are among those whom He has chosen to glorify Him by damnation, is that glory so altogether supreme in your eyes that you would welcome your predetermined reprobation because you thus set forth His glory. It is a terrible question, for in those days hell was hell, and its torments were eternal in duration and inconceivable in intensity.

Thus the Christian ideal has been defined again, along the same lines as before, but more closely and with a kind of infernal grandeur. It is still true that such an ideal is beyond mere human power, unaided by supernatural grace. That fact of itself suggests the logical fault of the ideal as set forth in the appalling question which we have

been considering, for since by no possibility can any one feel himself willing to be damned for the glory of God unless he has been " born again," the instant he feels in himself that willingness he may be reasonably confident that he is not going to be damned at all. Yet here is certainly a conception of the Christian way of life which challenges awe and shuddering admiration. That man as a Christian should live to the glory of God has been a familiar thought since the days of Paul: " Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." That such a life carries with it self-sacrifice, has also been familiar: " If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me: for whosoever would save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall save it." But this ideal outreaches even these thrilling words, whose meaning is not wholly beyond the limits of our experience:

> Let goods and kindred go,
> This mortal life also:

we can understand that, for we have known men and women willing to live in obscurity and poverty and even to lay down their lives rather than sin against God and their own souls. Yes, we say, they indeed are true Christians, and sometimes we are wistful, wishing that we ourselves were worthy to be counted among them. Yet, sometimes, even they had respect unto the recompense of reward; is it not written even of Christ himself that he "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame"? Yet here were men reckoning the glory of God of such supreme concern that they were ready not only to suffer and die but also to go to hell forever for it. When a man has actually reached that point, nothing this life can bring has any power of temptation over him. He is above "the

world's allurement, threat, and fashion," and has become morally and spiritually the Lord's free man. New England may well lift up her head in pride that she has bred men who were capable of this last renunciation, and I must add, New England may equally well bow her head in the dust that she has conceived of God so meanly as to deem him capable of requiring such a sacrifice—for his glory.

It must not be thought, however, that what has been said holds good of all the Churches in the ancient Congregational order of New England. The movement of thought and life which Edwards started influenced comparatively few of the churches and ministers. The great majority of them kept on in the dull plodding way of their mitigated Calvinism, languidly encouraging the commonplace virtues of conventional morality, with no glimpse of any Christian ideal surpassing them. The primitive ideal had been forgotten; the virtues of the fathers had lost power to arouse or inspire; the pillar of fire by night was treated as a will o' the wisp, and the pillar of cloud by day was dubbed mysticism, " a horrid thing, sir, a very horrid thing," and the radiance of the Christian way of life had faded into the dull light of a leaden day. On the sea coast, however, there were a few congregations whose Calvinism had been more deeply impaired, and who were so outraged by what they deemed the monstrous extravagancies of Edwards and his followers, that in protest they were driven farther and more rapidly in the opposite direction, and were soon entirely and confessedly beyond Calvinism altogether. These churches preferred to call themselves Liberal Christian, but soon had the name Unitarian put upon them by their theological adversaries. As these churches conceived the Christian way of life it differed very little from that of mitigated Calvinism. Their

religion was tranquil and thoughtful, their piety decorous and restrained. They were content to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk fairly humbly with their God. The cause of foreign missions found them cold, and when presented left them colder, for it appealed to a thought of God utterly repugnant to them. Domestic missions had no interest for them, until their own sons and daughters, moving into the newly-opened West, craved such religious privileges as they had enjoyed at home. In fact, they cared almost nothing about extending their influence, or getting others to believe as they did. Yet this was not due wholly to indifference. These New England Unitarians did believe sincerely in the dignity of human nature and the power of the truth, and were convinced that when freed from ignorance and superstition man would reveal a natural tendency towards God and His Truth. Accordingly they conceived it their mission to set men free, educate their intelligence, and leave the rest to themselves and to God. They advocated philanthropy and education instead of evangelization. This became their Christian way of life; to live according to reason and conscience, to cherish a tranquil and trustful faith in God, and to help their fellow-men in the most lofty and liberating way. Their chief defect was as Emerson said, that they forgot that men are poets, and they themselves were a little afraid of poetry—excepting that of Alexander Pope. It was, however, mainly through Emerson that they, or their descendants, were lifted out of their rather prosaic piety, when, obedient to his summons, they were led from the pastures of placid and prosperous experience to the hills of God, and the springs of the water of life.

The course of development in the other New England churches was deeply affected by this movement. When the break came in the old Congregational

order, the Churches which represented the traditional modified Calvinism, and those which stood by the teaching of Jonathan Edwards, combined against the Unitarians, and as a result of this formal union they mutually influenced each other. The excesses of the Edwards group were toned down, and the apathy of the "mitigated Calvinists" was enlivened. In consequence their thought of God almost imperceptibly changed. They had set up a magnificent moral ideal in the light of which every man stood condemned before God, but judged by that same ideal did not their God stand condemned before men? As the meaning of that question was more deeply felt, their thought of God changed to one in which love was supreme. They realized, as their predecessors had not, that God can be loved only when He is conceived as supremely lovable. Their controversy with the Unitarians had turned their attention *to Christ*, with far-reaching results.

As we read the literature, if it can be called literature, of the earlier period, say up to the middle of the nineteenth century, we are impressed by the almost complete absence of any reference to the character of Christ. His name indeed everywhere appears, but the figure is that of the Pauline Christ instead of the historical Jesus. To the incidents of his earthly life, exemplifying his loving kindness and tender mercy, there is hardly an allusion. Possibly it would have seemed to them irreverent, as it did to Newman, to dwell upon the patience and gentleness, the courage and sympathy of Jesus. What else could one expect of incarnate Deity ? Christ was to them an official whose death was an essential factor in a scheme of salvation, but who was not himself conceived of as example and type of a saved man who for that very reason has saving power. This discovery seems to have been made first by the Unitarians; and

Channing's exalted tribute to the character of Christ struck a note which has now swelled into a triumphant chorus. The person of Jesus has emerged from the glory-mists of tradition and overpassed the bounds of officialdom. In the light of his personality, men see the Christian way of life differently. What indeed can it be but the way Christ himself lived ? What a simple observation ! Or, rather, how simple men have been never to have made it before ! He went about doing good, he loved his fellowmen and was ready to lay down his life for them. Can a man venture to call himself a follower of Jesus, a Christian, if he is indifferent to the sufferings of others, if he is not doing everything in his power to relieve them ? This view, be it noted, came almost simultaneously with revelations of human need due to social and economic evils, and the two combined to throw an altogether new emphasis upon the duty of the Christian with respect to social reform. The human Jesus became the inspiration to a humanitarian Christianity. Naturally, then, this brought the divided bodies Unitarian and Trinitarian into closer sympathy and co-operation.

The purpose of this Essay has been historical exposition, not comment or criticism; but now at the close I cannot refrain from a single observation upon the general subject, prompted by the present situation which has just been outlined. It is not peculiar to New England. It exists everywhere in the English-speaking world. Its leading characteristic is an interpretation of the Christian life in terms of social service, with Christ as the great exemplar to whom the sufferings of human kind made convincing appeal; and, therefore, it is urged, whoever would call himself Christian must be similarly sensible of human need and responsive to it. Mutual helpfulness is an imperative human obligation, recognized

and enforced by the teaching of Jesus that all men are members of the one family of God and brothers one of another; but to make Christianity coterminous with social service, and to define a Christian as one who feeds the hungry and clothes the naked, or (to speak more after the mode of scientific charity) who works in settlements and clubs, is active in social reforms and the like, is to lose sight of the deepest significance of Jesus himself, and to miss the very heart of Christianity. And this, for the very simple reason that Christianity is a form of religion, and Jesus was first and foremost a deeply religious man. Now, religion is one of the most exquisite values of life; but it is neither the only nor an all-inclusive value, nor is it the one most important, perhaps, for social welfare; yet life would be sadly impoverished should it lose the precious quality which religion alone supplies, through a heedless sacrifice of its distinctive character in the supposed interests of a wider utility. Whether religion be defined as poetry believed in, or described as the music to which the work of life goes on, is immaterial, provided it be clearly seen that it possesses intrinsic value, in the sense that it is not a means to an end, even to so worthy an end as social service, or one so desirable as the soul's salvation, but is an end in itself, a savour of life lifting it above sordid routine, relieving its sorrows, hallowing its joys, and lightening its burdens by revealing the eternal meaning of our swiftly passing days.

A man may be an excellent public-spirited citizen and withal thoroughly upright and lovable—no better friend and neighbor than he in all the country round—and still not be religious; precisely as with all these splendid traits he may be without appreciation of literature, art or music. In the interests of religion and its distinctive contribution to the enrichment of human

life, we need to see more clearly that the first service of Jesus to mankind lies in the fact that he taught and exemplified a singularly pure and lofty form of religion. It is written of him indeed, that he went about doing good, but it is written again that he was in the habit of spending solitary hours in meditation and prayer. If we would follow him truly and fully must it not be both in prayer and in service, in thoughtful communion with God as well as in unsparing service of man ? Primarily, he was not a social reformer but a genuinely and profoundly religious man, whose active helpfulness was only a part, although an inseparable part because the natural and inevitable expression, of his inner religious life. Should men ever lose interest in the incarnate God, the Messiah, the Saviour, and even cease to magnify the healing and helping friend of man, perhaps they would turn with all the more wonder and reverence to the lowly Galilean who spent his troubled days in the unfading radiance of a vision splendid, and trod the hard and cruel ways of common human life with God; think of it, *with God*. Christ was above all else a religious man; and the Christian way of life must ever lead upward in humble devotion to God, no less than outward in the sympathetic service of man.

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