

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS

By Robert Applegate, Jr.
(Continued from last month)

WE KNOW that whatever religion says, it says to those who are in religion so that every mouth should be stopped and all the world become answerable to God. For through the works of religion no person will be declared innocent before Him. For from religion comes the knowledge of error.

But now, apart from religion, The Goodness of God is uncovered. Religion and the Scripture bear witness to it - the Goodness of God towards all who believe. We accept its benefits through faith in Jesus Christ.

There is no distinction. All have erred and fallen short of the Glory of God. But all are freely declared innocent by His Kindness through the ransoming by Jesus Christ. God has sent Him forth as an expiation - to be received by faith in Him - so as to show His own Goodness in passing over former errors. This is the clemency of God that shows His Goodness in the present time - that He Himself is good and declares innocent anyone who has faith in Jesus.

Where then is self-exaltation? It is excluded. By what law? By the law of religious works? Not at all; but by the law of faith. For we reason that a man is declared innocent through faith apart from the works of religion. Or is God a God of the religious only? Is He not a God of all people? Yes, of all people, since God is One. He declares the religious innocent through faith, and the irreligious innocent through faith. Do we then annul religion by faith? By no means. Rather, we establish religion.

In the First Century as now, man felt that their religious affiliation and their religious observations made them better than those who observed other customs, and assured them of God's favor. This was particularly true of the Jews, but it is also true of all people at all times. But Paul points out that religious affiliation and religious observation are not enough and can be deleterious, because misleading.

"Whatever religion says, it says to those who are in religion." But no one is able to keep these precepts; so every mouth must be stopped; i.e., all self-assurance must be put away. Take the first commandment of religion: to love God "with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." No one can keep this command. So through religion comes the knowledge of error.

From the very earliest times men have had a feeling of guilt in their approach to Deity. They have felt that it was impossible to give to God the love and devotion that they owed to Him; they have felt guilt about this deficit. Religion fosters this sense of guilt; it should remove it. Today almost everyone feels guilty about something. This is our unconscious religious heritage. And our psychologists have shown us at great length how destructive this sense of guilt is. It is one of our greatest enemies.

Religion should give us a childlike innocence and a childlike faith in our approach to God. But religion gives rather two harmful attitudes: a sense of guilt and a feeling of self-righteousness. These opposite attitudes, like all

the pairs of opposites, go hand in hand. "Through religion comes the knowledge of error." But even this can be good if it turns us back to the Truth of the Gospel by making us realize our complete and desperate need for it. "All have erred and fallen short of the Glory of God." This, which should be obvious, is the summation of Paul's introduction. We are all in the same boat; so no one can judge another or have faith in his own righteousness.

"But now, apart from religion, the Goodness of God is uncovered. Religion and the Scripture bear witness to it." In Greek, the now is emphatic - right now, in this present time - not in some unforeseeable future and not in the good old days.

Both religion and the Scripture derive from God and therefore testify to God. It is only when we trust in them, rather than in That to which they testify, that they become deleterious. It is when they become ends in themselves, rather than means to an end, that they become destructive and misleading. Of course in theory religion never puts itself in the place of God, but leads to Him. In practice it is more often the other way around. Paul had discovered this by experience; he knew what he was talking about. He had followed the path of religion zealously and sincerely; it led him to murder and misery. And this was not just because the religion he followed was a wrong religion. All organized religions partake of the same despising of those who are of another persuasion.

Religious observation and faith in Christ should go hand in hand. Too often the former is a substitute for the latter. This is why Paul emphasizes over and over that it is by faith in Christ that we receive that which God longs to give us. We receive the Goodness of God not by any works that we can do, but by childlike acceptance of that which is freely given to us. It is truly an insult to God to think that we could do anything to deserve His Grace; yet He gives it to us because He is our Father.

Religion fosters the sense of guilt; the Gospel destroys it. For the Gospel is this: that "all are freely declared innocent by God's Kindness through the ransoming by Jesus Christ." So if we still have any feelings of guilt, we have not yet accepted the Gospel, we do not yet believe in the Good News.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (i.e. to deliver those in error from their errors and the effects of those errors), Paul wrote to Timothy.

How can we with our materially based language explain the work of Jesus Christ? All that we can say is that He, through His perfect surrender of His own will, through His complete, conscious oneness with God, canceled out our mistakes and enabled us to approach God with the simplicity and expectancy of a little child going to its father.

Paul uses three metaphors to try to convey to his readers this simple, overpowering truth. The images are drawn from the common experiences of his day with which his readers would be familiar. The first is the image of a paid ransom (which appears in the King James Version as "redemption"). In those days piracy was common. If you were captured by pirates, a member of your family would pay your ransom and so save you from being sold into slavery. He would restore you to freedom. Similarly Jesus Christ has ransomed us from our errors. He has freed us from slavery to our false ideas. He has restored us to freedom - if we accept what He has done for us.

Paul's second metaphor is that of expiation. The expiatory sacrifice that paid men's debt to God (as a prisoner is said to pay his debt to society) was an accepted idea both among the Jews and the Gentiles of the First Century, although there was often a sneaking suspicion that these sacrifices did not really remove men's guilt. But Jesus Christ did remove all men's guilt; and so (as John puts it) "He is the expiation for our errors, and not for ours only, but also for the errors of the whole world." This is the Good News.

Paul's third metaphor (to which he will come later in the letter) is that of reconciliation, as when friends are reconciled after an argument. But the important thing to realize about these figures is that they are not meant to explain the work of Jesus, but to convey it, to communicate it. We cannot explain the Atonement in human terms and when we try to do so by pushing Paul's metaphor, we come to ridiculous and repulsive conclusions about the nature of God. But we can accept the At-one-ment and thereby receive the benefits of it. If we do this there will then be no argument in our own minds about its reality. We will not need explanations. A person who has seen an atomic explosion does not need to understand it in order to be convinced of the reality of it.

This portion of Paul's letter, which is the heart of it, can be summed up in the words that Luke reports the Risen Christ speaking to His disciples:

"Thus it has been written that Christ should suffer and rise from the dead the third day, and that a change of heart and the cancellation of mistakes should be proclaimed in His Name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

(To be continued)

SPIRITICITY August 1961

UNDERSTANDING

By Alden Truesdell

"WITH ALL thy getting get understanding. Exalt her and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace."

Understanding is priceless: the most practical, the most mystical of all gifts.

We have learned that Real Man is spiritual. We see then that man's actual status - or the truth of his origin and sonship - must be inwardly discerned. The spiritual discernment, or inner observing, does not see things as they appear to the outer eye. We have heard that God is "no respecter of persons"; so when we are seeing with the eye divine, we will not be seeing personal characteristics, nor will we be judging by appearance. We will be judging right judgment, judging as spiritual sons of a Spiritual Father. It is in this inner activity that the son is able to see what the Father is doing; while he hears the instructions enabling him to go and do likewise. Here the single eye fills the body with light; and by this light, man sees and comprehends the Christ Truth of his being. This is understanding.

The man of understanding goes from strength to strength. For understanding enables one to grow despite all the complexities that present themselves for consideration and for confusion in the outer picture. Understanding sees the One Presence behind all appearance, much as a mathematician sees the one principle of order in the multiplicity of figures and symbols that are mathematics. In understanding, there is very much of the practice of letting patience have her perfect work; for understanding knows that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

We may remember the statement that "through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: and by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches."

Wisdom is the light of the Father; it is a must in the building of anything - particularly the consciousness and character of man. It is the one dependable light. "In Thy light shall we see light," sang the Psalmist.

Wisdom is the selective activity that follows the determination to be built up. There must be the selection of right materials, the rejection of substitutes. Wisdom pays strict heed to the specifications given to it, that all may be done "according to the pattern shewed thee in the mount." For wisdom knows that if the house is built on sand, it will surely collapse.

Understanding is an awareness that the structure being built is the work of God and the house of God - that the nature of man is the Nature of God. Wisdom builds up; understanding stands under. Wisdom declares a truth; understanding proves it. Of the two facets of Intelligence, understanding seems the more backward; but when understanding acts, it is with the assurance of expressing a practicable proposition.

A petroleum engineer, whom we know and for whom we have done a great deal of work, represents a man who has had an idea for a process that would recover the many by-products of sour gas. The problem was to get a plant in operation to prove the theory. Such plants are usually in the nature of research plants, experimental. But this man's theory was so logical - set forth in such logical sequence - that the engineers who studied it and signed the contract to build the plant said that the operation would not be research; for it was based on a series of scientific statements that had to work. They are now building the plant as a workable system.

So it is with understanding. There is no question about the outcome of a correct application of an orderly Principle.

Get wisdom, certainly. Wisdom might be described as spiritual insight. But with all your getting, get understanding - the certainty of the workability of trusted theory, the willingness to work with God-Law, the assurance that it will not fail, but must succeed.

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SPIRITICITY August 1961

SHORT LESSONS

By Nell Truesdell

MY WORK IS MY REWARD

I AM always surprised when a student tells me that he thought his study of Truth would remove all the irksome jobs of daily existence. This false notion leads many to drop their studies before they become thoroughly acquainted with the underlying principles of Truth. Half-understood principles are never practicable on any level.

Understanding of Truth principles will eradicate a person's hostility toward tedious tasks. When friction disappears all work goes smoothly, not because the tasks have altered, but because the person's attitude and approach have changed. When opposition gives way to interest, what was once a tiresome duty becomes an exciting adventure.

Truth principles give us new skills to work with. We learn to exchange destructive attitudes for constructive ones. We discover more efficient ways of handling our work; we find the work teaching us about itself. Not only is the drag of physical labor lessened, but mental and emotional stresses that drained our energies are removed. We are never tested beyond our limits. However, our willingness to meet those limits supplies the momentum that enables us to enter new and larger fields of endeavor.

"Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, . . . shining as lights in the world."
(Philippians 2:14-15)

WALK IN THE LIGHT OF GOD

MAN WORSHIPS his concept of God. Because in his general notion of God there is a mixture of good and evil, man reaps the results of belief in duality. Sometimes the experiences of his life are good; other times they are not. The man who believes in the good is not different from the man who believes in evil; each believer has what amounts to the same faith, which charges whatever is believed in with an accomplishing power. Each one therefore shows forth in body and affairs exactly what his stimulative faith has aroused to the point of materializing.

The lesson to learn is that of turning the attention from all external and tangible things (whether labeled good or evil) to God Himself. It is a matter of selection. A man can have faith in God in such a way that objective things become his servants instead of being his masters. It was Jesus Christ's one-pointed view of the Universal Being that enabled Him to prove Its adequacy. He knew that materiality did not restore a man's health or provide him with necessary food, shelter, or clothing. He had faith in the Power that Itself was able to provide anything needful for the comfort and well-being of man. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, . . . nothing shall be impossible unto you."

Everybody thinks, speaks, and acts according to the highest light that he has received from childhood on up through the years. Man's religion,

especially, instructs him in concepts of right; but all along the line of human existence (particularly in the middle years of life) man senses an uneasiness and a mistrust within him concerning the merits of his accepted religious ministry, and its effects upon him. For he experiences disappointment, ill health, lack, grief, and an indefinite feeling of futility. At the same time, he senses vaguely that his religion should protect him sufficiently to insure him against any disaster and provide him abundantly enough to fill his life with the good he longs for.

What man fails to understand is that eventually he reaches a point in his religious experience where he touches the limit of its ministry upon him; and that, at that point, he is afflicted and sorely distressed. Neither does he understand that, at the point where the religious influence leaves off and calamity begins, he must assemble the forces of his being so that he can spring past the limits of the religious influence upon him into a Light that is higher than, and uncircumscribed by, the light that his religion offers.

Religion as man accepts it proclaims a definite end for every man. It teaches that every child born into the world is destined to flower into adulthood, grow old, and eventually die; and it teaches, too, that death confirms the sinful state of man. Religion then plainly reveals that it has lost sight of the Allness and Oneness of God. The teaching that results from this loss, accepted by the impressionable child mind, is rooted deep in the fabric of every man's life, so that each lives not in hope of a spiritual attainment that will free him from the hurts of the world and the grasp of death, but in the shadow of death itself. The seemingly inescapable fear that engulfs man stems from this spectra. It is the cause of every anxiety, every disappointment, every failure, and every death experienced by every human being. This is the shadow that Jesus Christ dispelled once for all time. As a whole the race refuses to accept His demonstration.

Why? For the reason that man is quite willing to abide in the chambers of imagery made by his progenitors and accepted without question by himself. He guards these so jealously and defends them so skillfully that he cannot of himself escape the magnitude of their influence. Yet the influence is nothing; it is as a cloud that is easily dispelled by a sunlight that knows no darkness. The Divine Light, all around and above man, is touched when man turns his full attention to that same Light already within him. His conscious attention directed toward It, hidden in the depths of his Inmost Being, connects him with It and turns the flood of the Universal Illumination inward and upward, so that the man himself becomes a light of the world. "Ye are the light of the world," Jesus Christ said; "let your light shine."

This Light is the Shekinah of God to man. Under It man is protected from the might of the flesh. By It he is refreshed and sustained. Its Power invigorates him with the inspiration that is the almighty of a Strength past human strength. It is the Livingness and Knowing that are the Spirit of man.

To be conscious of this Spirit is the destiny of every person. How long each one puts off accepting that destiny and entering into it is a matter of choice. Because man loves the "familiar spirits" more than the Spirit, he tarries with them; and while he tarries, he bemoans his fate - a fate inevitably determined by himself.

To learn to look toward the Spirit is an art easily mastered. It demands no more time or effort than that required to hold oneself in darkness. A simple transfer of the attention by anyone sincerely seeking the Light of Spirit gets

quick results. The mystical connection between God and man is available to all alike. He who dares to give himself the advantage of it comes into possession of all the blessings of the Universe by a way that is neither an accident of opportunity nor the fruit of goodness.

Fear of all kind is lost when a man walks under the Light of God. To make direct contact with God Himself in the midst of consciousness, to walk and to talk with Him in secret, is to connect with the Love of God that casts out all fear and that binds man to the Almighty, Changeless God who IS the Light of his life.

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Alphabet Of
DAILY MEDITATIONS
For Every Week Day of the Month

AUGUST 1961

1. I APPLIED My heart to know, . . . AND to seek wisdom.
2. BELIEVE on the Name of the Son of God.
3. See His face CONTINUALLY.
4. DECLARE His DOING among the people.
5. Know that you have ETERNAL Life.

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7. FORGIVE men their trespasses.
8. God GIVETH life to them that have it.
9. Pray for one another, that ye may be HEALED.
10. The Spirit INDEED IS willing.
11. Let us JOIN ourselves to the Lord.
12. We KNOW that the Son of God is come.

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14. LET your LOINS be girded about, and your LIGHTS burning.
15. The MEDITATION of MY heart shall be of understanding.
16. God NOW accepteth Thy works.
17. OBTAIN gladness and joy.
18. Send now PROSPERITY.
19. It is good that a man should . . . QUIETLY wait for the Lord.

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21. In RETURNING and REST shall ye be saved.
22. SANCTIFY the Lord God In your hearts.
23. THY TESTIMONIES are my meditation.
24. In UNDERSTANDING be men.
25. Add to VIRTUE, knowledge.
26. WE WALK by faith.

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28. Take My YOKE upon you, and learn of Me.
29. Be ZEALOUSLY affected . . . in a good thing.
30. We shall all bear the Image of the heavenly (man).
31. Now is Christ risen from the dead.

"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

SPIRITICITY is the working Power of the Spiritual Principle,
As electricity is the working power of the electrical principle.