

## Christian Retirement

By Thomas Reade

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### ON THE NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY

Christianity is a religion of love. It flowed from the eternal love of God the Father; was published in lines of blood on the cross of God the Son; and is graciously revealed to every contrite soul through the power of God the Holy Spirit.

Christianity breathes nothing but love to the penitent sinner. It woos, it entreats, it invites all, without exception, to partake of its blessings, and live. It holds forth the free mercy of God through Christ; and offers pardon and acceptance even to the vilest, who come unto Jesus weary and heavy laden, as the Savior and friend of sinners.

Can you, Oh! my soul, refuse such an offer as this? Can you reject so loving a Savior; so rich an offer of grace and mercy? "Blessed Jesus! behold a wretched sinner at the foot of your cross. Enable me to look unto you alone for salvation. Draw me, and I will run after you. Oh! may I daily live upon you, the true bread from heaven, by faith. Unite me to yourself, as the branch to the vine; the member to the head; and bring me in joyful triumph to your celestial kingdom. But what am I now asking? Blessings rich as heaven, and extensive as eternity. I am imploring blessings bought with blood—the blood of God incarnate! Amazing price! yet freely paid, to purchase heaven for me!"

Christianity spreads happiness around her path. True happiness can only be found in a covenant God in Christ, who has declared himself to be a just God, and yet a Savior; just, and yet the justifier of all who believe in Jesus; yes, faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Outside of Christ, when we contemplate the great Jehovah in his essential character, we behold every perfection in array against us, and demanding our everlasting punishment as rebel creatures. Infinite holiness and justice, truth and goodness, require that sin should be punished. Hence the Scriptures declare that "our God is a Consuming fire," "who will in no wise clear the guilty."

But when we view God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself not imputing their trespasses unto them; when we behold the Eternal Word becoming flesh, and dwelling among us; when we see the babe of Bethlehem, Emanuel, God with us; then hope revives, and, leans with sweet, delightful confidence on the rock of

ages; love kindles into a bright and ardent flame; faith contemplates with rapture the stupendous plan of mercy; while all our enraptured powers unite their efforts to adore the great Redeemer's name.

Lord, what is man, that you are thus mindful of him; or the son of man, that you so regard him? Oh! how wonderful is the love of God towards lost rebellious sinners!

"Who is a God like unto you, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retains not his anger forever, because he delights in mercy. He will turn again; he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

The religion of Jesus is a religion of peace. The angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men," when they announced to the wondering shepherds the glad tidings of the Savior's birth. Wherever the power of the Gospel is felt, there joy and peace reign. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as a rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing."

Christianity displays the wisdom of God. "Happy is the person who finds wisdom and gains understanding. For the profit of wisdom is better than silver, and her wages are better than gold. Wisdom is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. She offers you life in her right hand, and riches and honor in her left. She will guide you down delightful paths; all her ways are satisfying. Wisdom is a tree of life to those who embrace her; happy are those who hold her tightly." Proverbs 3:13-18

"Take, then, to yourself, Oh mighty Savior, your great power, and reign over all the earth! Fulfill your promise to your ancient Israel, and to the benighted millions of the heathen world. Let Satan no longer maintain his empire in the human heart. Hurl him from his seat. Dislodge him from his citadel. Command him into the deep; for you have said, 'All Israel shall be saved,' and 'the Lord shall be the King of the whole earth.' Adorable Emanuel, Prince of peace, Sovereign of souls! take away the veil from the heart of the poor Jews, who have so long been 'scattered and peeled;' 'without a king, without a prince, without a sacrifice.' Hear the prayers of gentile Christians on their behalf, that they may look upon you whom they have pierced; and mourn, until their sorrow, through your forgiving grace, shall be turned into joy. Open the eyes of the perishing heathen, that they may see the misery of their condition; the hard bondage under which they labor; the cruel tyrant whom they serve; and the awful doom which awaits them in another world. Oh! do you reveal to them, through the preaching of the Gospel, your agony and bloody sweat, your cross and passion; all the mysteries of Gethsemane and Calvary. Show them the crown of glory which you have purchased; the kingdom which you have prepared; the inheritance incorruptible

and undefiled, which is reserved for all who live a life of faith in you. Endue them with strength to renounce their sins, and to burst the chains which bind their captive spirits. Shed abroad your love in their hearts, and transform them into your own most holy image. And Oh, loving Savior, have mercy upon those thousands of nominal professors of the Gospel, who are by you esteemed the worst of sinners! These, Oh Lord, do unto you the greatest dishonor. They hear of you without emotion. They talk of you without affection. They know your Gospel, speculatively, but experience nothing of its power. They call you Lord, but do not obey you. They have the light shining around them, yet love darkness rather than light. They hear the sweet sound of grace, yet find no chord of unison within. They see the waters of life flowing on every side, yet never taste of their refreshing stream. They have a name that they live, and yet are dead. They profess that they know God, yet in works deny him. They have the form of godliness, yet deny the power thereof. They express a self-complaisant pity for the poor Jew and Gentile, while they themselves are in a far more wretched state than these objects of their commiseration. Oh! that the Spirit may be poured out from on high; that the wilderness may become a fruitful field; that every heart may experience the transforming power of your sovereign grace, and the whole earth be filled with your glory! You have said, 'Surely I come quickly—Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus.'

Eternal God, your power display;  
Chase all the shades of night away;  
Let every foe before you fly,  
And bring each Gospel blessing nigh.

Your dying love, Oh Lord, reveal,  
That love which melts the heart of steel;  
Each stubborn will in mercy bow,  
And lay the rebel sinner low.

Arise, Oh Sun of righteousness,  
And all your waiting people bless;  
Arise upon our hearts, and shine  
Until every heart be wholly thine.

Inflame our cold affections, Lord;  
Renew them by your quickening word;  
Bind every thought in willing chains,  
Until not a rebel thought remains.

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