

*I am ashamed of Christianity, but not of Christ*

SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN LIVING

turns its evil instincts! We thought that patriotism might save us, but see the murderous consequence which now we face! No! Something greater than science, deeper than education, more inclusive than patriotism, must save us. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

Indeed, in these difficult days one seems to discover its deep meaning all over again. In the gospel stands the most sober, realistic statement of the tragic need of man that the race has ever faced. Why should we balk at the great word "salvation" in view of our desperate want of it? Does not scientific medicine set itself to save us from disease? Do not schools exist because we need salvation from ignorance? Do we not institute philanthropies and pioneer more equitable economic orders because we need to be saved from poverty? Salvation is the chief preoccupation of all intelligent and earnest minds. But behind disease, ignorance, poverty, and running through the causes which produce and perpetuate them, is this deeper thing, the tragic selfishness of the unredeemed human soul. That is the sober, realistic fact. So the gospel of Christ has always taught. We may well be ashamed of much that is associated with the history of organized Christianity and with much that goes on in the churches today, but the gospel of Christ—that presents the soberest statement of realistic human need the world has ever faced.

For another thing, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ in its insistence on the prodigious lifting power of vicarious sacrifice. Vicarious sacrifice is the most impressive fact in the moral world. What one of us has not been saved from something because another, who did not need to do it, voluntarily took on himself our calamity or sin and by self-sacrifice redeemed us? And wherever that spirit of the cross appears and the ancient words come alive again, "He saved others; himself he cannot save," there is the

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most subduing, humbling, impressive fact we see. How can a man be ashamed of that?

This last week we buried Mrs. Anne Macy, Helen Keller's lifelong friend and teacher. Nearly fifty years ago, a little girl barely seven years of age—imprisoned behind doors so firmly locked it seemed they could not be unclosed and walls so high it seemed they could not be overpassed—was given to the care of this sacrificial teacher. For Mrs. Macy too had met blindness and, having partially surmounted it, vicariously gave herself to the blind. How subtly she passed through those fast closed doors! How marvelously she overpassed those high, strong walls and became to that imprisoned child the great emancipator! Years went by and Helen Keller passed her entrance examinations to college. Years went by and Helen Keller graduated from college *cum laude*. More years passed and Helen Keller was a world figure, known by every one. Still in the background was this magician, this self-effacing teacher, putting her life into another's and liberating it. It is one of the most amazing stories in the human record. And so powerful is such sacrifice that, because of this example of what can be done, new hopes have come, new methods, new open doors for blind and deaf folk everywhere, and the story has no end. Once more vicarious sacrifice works its miracle. How can one be ashamed of that?

To be sure, our world is disgraceful with the opposite of it, man's callous selfishness. Has some one here supposed that Paul, a man of piety and faith, must have been, therefore, a sentimentalist and looked at life through rosy spectacles? You should read the whole of this first chapter of the letter to the Romans, where our text appears. It is one of the most vehement eruptions of disgust with human life ever written. Listen to Paul in his denunciatory summary of humankind, "filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder,