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BY THE GUIDES OF

Mrs. Cora L. V. Richmond.



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THE DEAD CHRIST AND THE LIVING CHRIST.

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INVOCATION.

Infinite God; Parent of all souls; Giver of every perfect gift; Thou Divine and Eternal Life: unto Thee Thy children would turn with praises: the abundance of Thy blessings, the glory of Thy visible creation, the wonder of all that is invisible, for these Thy children would praise Thee: for every blessing which the earth yields, the spring time with its bloom and verdure, the summer's growth ripening into the autumn time, the glory of the golden sky whose radiance reflects the light that is beyond, and all the firmament of stars in which Thy law is manifest and Thy knowledge revealed; they would praise Thee for the human spirit, its surpassing knowledge, its relationship unto Thee, and the freighted message of the skies filled with the knowledge of the life immortal; they would praise Thee for the ministrations in every age, that those appointed and reared up to teach Thy truth, have given knowledge of immortal life; they would praise Thee for prophets and seers, for those endowed with the gifts of the spirit, and for that Christ whose attestation was the life divine. We praise Thee for all gifts, and that unto each, even in sorrow there cometh knowledge of immortality, the light, the life, the consciousness of the love that is beyond. May every heart turn to Thee, and may all know that enshrined within the casket of clay is the living image of life eternal, that every soul is near unto Thee, that all are guided and governed by Thy Love. May the visible Christ, revealed in each human life, speaking unto every heart of that which is divine, so supplant the dead images of past time that all shall know that Thy truth is eternal. Amen.

DISCOURSE.

"God is not the God of the dead but of the living."—Matt. xxii, 32.

Over there in Jerusalem when Christ had fulfilled His mission: revealing spiritual gifts, preaching love instead of hatred, forgiveness instead of revenge, showing that the kingdom of God is within the spirit, for these offenses He was put to death. Since the God of the Jews was a revengeful God they could not brook the introduction of the thought of the God of love; since, also, the law of the Hebrews was an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, in practice if not in precept, they could not receive the message of Him who said, "overcome evil with good"; and so it came to pass that for teaching love instead of hatred, for teaching purity of life instead of the semblance of it, for revealing the gifts of the spirit instead of the imitation of them, Jesus was betrayed and crucified, and His body placed in the sepulcher. From that time the church lost sight of Him; whether resurrected in body or spirit, whether the form that emerged from the sepulcher was the physical form or the spiritual form, the living Christ was lost to the world and to the church.

To the few who clung to the memory of Jesus, to those women who appeared at the sepulcher, to those who assembled in the little upper room where Jesus entered without the opening of any door, Christ indeed was living; but they knew little of the life into which He had arisen, and less and less did they know as time went on, although teaching of Christ, and His truths, although possessed of the gifts of the spirit, although in the church in Jerusalem, the congregation that still held faithful unto Jesus, there was that memory that kept alive His presence, there was also, as attested in the traditional history of that church, His personal visitation among them, in spirit, many times.

Among the Arians there was not only recognition of His spiritual qualities, but there were none of the tenets and dogmas of the church: simply the recognition of the ministrations of Christ and His teachings.

Just as soon as creeds became crystalized, as the doctrines of Paul became incorporated into the form of churches throughout Asia, and that portion of Europe which it is supposed Paul visited about sixty years after the crucifixion, all the life and light seemed to depart: the form of Jesus was worshiped, as the form that was crucified; the dead Christ became the Christ of the church. Do not deny it; the whole history of the church proves it: the blood of Christ and not His life, the crucifixion and not the Sermon on the Mount, Calvary and not the ministrations unto the poor, these became the symbols of the churches of Christendom. Sanctioned by king, crystalized by pope, spread abroad by dogma and tenet it came at last to be known that on the death of Christ alone must man hope for salvation.

What then was the life of Christ; what were the three years of sacred ministrations; what the gifts of the spirit poured out with lavish hand, the gifts of healing and ministration unto the poor; what the Sermon on the Mount, the only dogma that Jesus ever left as an inheritance to the world; what the prayer,

the only prayer authorized as being fixed and that only in spirit; what the Golden Rule, the only law of human action, the only guidance for mankind? All crucified upon Calvary, and the blood flowing from Calvary became the signet seal of salvation in Christendom.

Is it a wonder then that the history of the church in Christendom has been a history of bloodshed? Is it a wonder then, having blood for its signet seal, that king and priest, pope and prelate, have sanctioned the waging of war against one another; that the blood of the martyrs was made, also, the seal and seed of the church; and that they who avowed the life of Christ and possessed His gifts were put to the severest tests, and finally sacrificed? When the "ten persecutions" were stopped by the authority vested in Constantine, it was only that the church itself might take the burden of persecution upon itself; that it fulfilled it to the letter and the spirit the history of Christendom will tell you. We are only referring to this history, we have neither fashioned it, nor fabricated it; it stands out traced in letters of blood for the past sixteen centuries. Yet on this day throughout all Christian Europe, in some portions of Asia, and even in Egypt and Africa, throughout Australasia, and in the distant islands of the sea the chiming of Christmas bells proclaim that it is the anniversary of advent of the morn of peace.

That which was set in the seal of blood upon Calvary, that which Christian kings and rulers have carried forward to bloody issues: as witnessed in the lives of martyrs, in the wars that have been waged in Christendom; that which has made the Roman Catholic Church with its line of popes, archbishops, bishops, and priests; that which has also made the long line of martyrs: put to death first in the name of that religion which afterwards borrowed their names and images, to place them in sacred niches and upon sacred places; the church has declared in its history. As we said in the beginning; it has chosen the dead Christ for its representation; the crucifixion stands as the sacred image in the Church of Rome: and it has been to pictured martyr and saint, put to death in the name of Christ, that you are compelled to look; all the horrors of bloodstained mockery revealing to you the history of man selfishly appropriating this sacred life and its image.

The church has not failed to declare war against an opposing power. When the Roman Catholic Church, dead to the living Christ, declared allegiance to the body instead of the soul, to the image instead of the spirit, to the form instead of the divine word and work; when this church could no longer be endured in Christendom, the protestant Church came forth; nominally without seal or ritual, nominally without sacerdotal sanction, nominally persecuted, as all had been who differed with the Roman Catholic Church, to accept precisely the same formula, to accept precisely the same creed, to follow in precisely the same footsteps. Where the Roman Catholic Church had put to death, the Protestants now became persecutors. Under "Good Queen Bess" as she was named, and under the dissolute king Henry the VIII, the Protestants in England achieved marvelous victories, putting Roman Catholics to death on the very places where Protestants had been put to death; glorious achievements under the name of the same Christ who was put to death on Calvary by the Jews! When in Scotland, in al-

most every county in England, throughout France, all through Italy, even in Germany, the wild fires of this new religious thought had spread, then there came a new seal, the sanction of a new authority. Jesus said, thou shalt love thine enemies; the church said thou shalt kill thine enemies. Jesus said, thou shalt not return evil with evil, but overcome evil with good; the church said, thou shalt return evil for evil, even with tenfold bitterness. Jesus said, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you; the church said, hate and destroy your enemies, curse them that hate you and that do evil to you, wipe them from the face of the earth, nay, if there is the *semblance* of evil to the church in them put them to death; if you suspect that they have different opinions from that which the church maintains put them to death any way and decide upon what is justice afterward. So men of science whose discoveries were not in keeping with the church were persecuted and put to death. Even under the eye of John Calvin, a reformer who dared question the authority of the church was permitted to be put to death, though one word from him could have saved a noble life. Thus the record has gone on.

It is no wonder that in this the nineteen hundredth year of the Christian era, there shall be vigorous preparations for war over all the civilized world, especially the Christian world! It is no wonder in Russia that armaments bristle at every exposed point, that she is preparing for wars of aggression! It is no wonder that Europe from her various kingdoms, monarchies and dynasties, looks with jealous eyes on every portion of the world, that her Protestant kings are seeking, in every possible way, to gain the advantage over nations that are unprotected! It is no wonder that Ireland rises under the wrongs of years; that Poland cries out against being made the mere tool of contending tyrannies! It is no wonder that hearts throughout Germany revolt at being forced into the armies of contending kings who claim to worship God and Christ, and follow in the footsteps of Mammon! It is no wonder that there comes up from France, long abused and long betrayed, the signal of distress lest the ambition of contending kings shall possess her soul and body, and shall plant upon her soil again the power of Mammon; while Great Britain, the greatest in profession, with the dome of St. Paul's leaning close against the sky, with Westminster standing beautiful and fair like a dream-place of worship; with her dismantled abbeys showing the traces of two great religious factions, is looking with ever vigilant eyes at home and abroad lest again the war cry shall break forth; but she has not the courage to heed the voice of the living Christ of today.

Pilgrims journey to Jerusalem from every land beneath the sun and pay their homage to the places where the feet of Jesus were supposed to have walked, and even there, upon that sacred Mount of Olives, they bend before the external place where the Sermon on the Mount was given never dreaming that its spirit is not in their hearts today.

It was the dead Christ that was taken into the Church of Constantine. It was the dead Christ who was taken down through the ages of bloodshed, darkness, infamy and gloom. It is the dead Christ whom the Christians in Christen-

dom worship today, else there would be a living voice rising up in the midst of all the potentates and powers pleading for that humanity which Christ served; pleading for those poor whom He did not despise: pleading for those who have the voice to speak the truth and whom the world has put to death in every age: pleading for the living spirit which today is in the world and will not be denied a hearing.

What of the living Christ? From the place within the sepulchre; from the visitation to His beloved disciples and the few women who followed after Him, Jesus, in spirit, arose to Heaven. Since that time His living spirit has brooded not in the church, but above the church. Such lives as were consecrated unto truth; such lowly hearts as were filled with humility; such as bore in patience and meekness their cross of persecution for His sake; such as uplifted the Magdalen and spoke kindly to those in prison and dungeon cell; such as rescued little children from starvation and peril, these were they whom the living Christ visited. Sometimes to those in priestly garb the heart-throbs of humanity would reach, even beneath that encasement, and to many lowly and downtrodden these, annointed, not of man but of God, would minister His truth. Sometimes the gifts of the spirit would spring up within the church, and when those possessing them had been sufficiently persecuted, put to death, they would be sanctified: as witness Saint Catherine, of Sienna, fair as a dream of beauty, with the light of her eyes shining now from that wondrous palace, now a saint in the Church of Rome where once she was a martyr; or Saint Cecelia, whose inspired strains seemed to tremble down from the skies filling the Christmas air with wonderful melody. caught up through death unto the transfiguration of the heavens and set in her appointed place as one of the martyrs; or Saint Joan d'Arc, the Maid of Orleans, put to death because of her gifts and canonized by the Church only a few years ago, the same church that sanctioned her death; these were they whom the living Christ visited; or some of those monks who had the courage to lift their voices against the constituted authorities of the world and plead for the people, as did Savanorola in Italy; or some of those saintly women who went about doing good in the name of Christ, not all who wore the garb for mostly it is under the great and all-potent dominion of the church; but some lives there are uplifted to saintliness by the very spirit of the Christ in heaven who watching over them guarded and guided all these years.

In Protestantism, driven to the Home of Light through fire and flame and bloodshed, when the battle smoke cleared away such mild lives as blossomed out into praises of God, the Wesleyans and Quakers, those who believed in peace instead of war, in love instead of hatred, these felt the presence of the living Christ. And at last those who with the great wild cry of protestation against forms and ceremonies, those who with living flame rose up against slavery, rose up against the bondage of man in any form, these perceived the living Christ enshrined in humanity and declared that not upon Calvary, nor yet in Jerusalem, nor yet before any shrine, or priest, or potentate, will they bend the knee, but that the name which the church has made almost infamous, shall be redeemed, rescued, and set apart from the associations of human selfishness into the life of the living humanity where it belongs.

Jesus of Nazareth, ascended unto the highest Heaven, is not responsible for the work wrought in His name though He foresaw it; but the living Christ of today, that power which is the spirit of truth in every age, that Christ which means truth and love; where is that Christ? Brooding with over-brooding pinions, vocal with the voices of the stars and the angels in their spheres, radiant with the light of suns, more glorious than planets or worlds, breathing down through the spaces, yet brooding so near to human hearts and lives that they perceive its presence. The Christ that sets men free from death is the Christ life: that which relieves them from the terror of death is the knowledge of immortal life; that Christ has come in the name of the new inspiration that fills the world with messages and knowledge concerning the future life; breathes it in the voices of little children; pictures it in the images of the skies: inspires it in words and works spoken and written; manifests it unto those whom disembodied spirits love. The living Christ is not in the grave, neither in the sepulchre, nor yet so far away that man may not perceive His presence. Outside the palace gates where the beggar waits in rags and passes the numb and almost frozen hand, there is the Christ waiting patiently for you to unlock and unbar the door.

In Hunts matchless picture, the "Light of the World," it is the unfrequented gate to which Christ comes and knocks asking for admittance. The gate that is most unfrequented in life, grown over with the thorns and briars of selfishness, hedged around with the various productions of Mammon. this is the gate where the living Christ is knocking today, whether he comes clothed in rags, or whether he comes with the voice of the avenging angel, he still is the living Christ of today.

Out of the sepulchres; out of the tombs of the ages; out from the darkness and gloom which has enshrouded the name of Christ, the Spirit of Truth summons you today. It summons you to the altar of the living humanity; whatever of truth is in the world it summons you unto that shrine. Notice whatever is persecuted of man, whatever thought is put to death that is striving to be expressed, that is the Christ today, there the living Christ summons you. If the united voice of humanity praises anything distrust it, for it has kissed the feet of Mammon or it could not be praised. If the united voice of the world upholds anything distrust it, for kings and rulers are pledged to uphold only sanctioned power; but if in any land there are those who are banished and despised, if in any land there are those who are persecuted for opinions sake; if there is a Nazareth, possibly like that which Spiritualism is, consider that the Christ is there for whom men despise the Christ in heaven doth praise.

That truth which is denied a place of worship, but which comes home to every heart revealing to humanity the wonder of the skies; that truth which pleads with suffering from out the slums of crowded cities, from hearts that are weary with toil, from voices that have long been attuned to sorrow, consider that the Christ is there. Little children pleading to you on the street; women flying for shelter from infamy and shame, thousands clothed already in garments that are stained but still who plead, as did the Magdalene unto Christ: oh consider these! Consider also that there are thousands within the upper air pleading for humanity; those who have been driven heavenward through clouds of flame, through battle smoke and burning pyre, through guillotine and execution; those who have risen after long days of toil and nights of weariness. It is the Christ of humanity who pleads with you at this hour; here on this altar of Christmas tide, here in the sacred place of peace, here where peace has a meaning more than

the sound of word, make your pledges unto that shrine of the living God and the living Christ; the Christ that is in you, that has been outraged a thousand times but still pleads; the Christ that is in your children, that looks to you with pleading eyes for guidance, for the way of peace; the Christ that is in humanity, torn and bleeding, refused admittance to the very heaven that has been gained by bloodshed, sent hopeless and despairing down into the Gehenna from which there is no appeal, that humanity outcast from the church, despised by the state, persecuted by Mammon, is the humanity that Christ pleads for today.

No Soul is cast out from God; and those whom man has persecuted stand out in the light of the living Christ. Aye, new shrines will be reared; new altars will be erected; new priests and oracles will approach; angel voices will plead with man in the fair vestibule of the temple of the living Christ; women with voices that are full of fervor and prayer; strong men with tearful eyes; and great men annointed from the lowly of earth; and in the coming dispensation this living Christ, wearing the lowly garb and crowned with no crown of earth, will sit enshrined in the hearts of humanity: and His name will be Love, His watchword will be Truth, and that which He preaches for all mankind to exemplify will be of such praise as is born of the surpassing light of Truth and Righteousness unto all.



“*JESUS IN HIS CRIB.*”

[IMPROMPTU POEM; THE SUBJECT BEING GIVEN BY THE AUDIENCE.]

’Twas a lowly place where the infant Jesus lay
 Cradled amid the shadows of the earth;
 Yet the wise men came thither to pray
 And bring gifts, presents of pure worth;
 The lowly place was symbol of that state.
 Humility, announcing Him most great.

Beneath the radiant star the wise men saw
 (That star which was the angel symbol given)
 Him in the lowly place, whom human law
 Of earth would render dim, whom e’en heaven
 Had sent; and for the lowly birth
 He was made king of all the earth.

And yet more radiant than burnished gold,
 More precious than the cradles wherein kings
 Are shrined, this manger well could hold
 The image of that Christ and the bright wings
 Of the fair herald of that heaven-born truth.
 Known, taught, revealed, even in His youth.

What other precious token could be given
 Than this: that from the very upper skies
 The truth could bring the light to earth from heaven,
 Could in the lowliest place come with surprise,
 And visit those who, weary, on the earth
 Are all unconscious of this kingly birth?

All unaware Jesus is born today;
 Such hearts as know the coming see the light:
 You may not look for some king far away,
 Nor far beyond the ken of human sight,
 But in the lowly place, the heart of prayer,
 You find the Kings of kings is resting there.

King, Prince, Potentate, Lord of pure love:
 What shrine is fitting for the birth place here?
 Not where the tyrants' infant forms may move
 Cradled in luxury, not wealth's dim sphere,
 But in the lowly heart the Jesus lies,
 And there reveals the light of paradise.

BENEDICTION.

May the chiming of those starry bells,
 That above the earth and beyond the battle smoke
 Of human strife, the living sweetness tells
 Of the new glory that upon the earth awoke;
 The chimes that from the heavens above
 Reveal the dawn of truth and love.

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