

The Need of Salvation

by Charles Ewing Brown

The sermon explores the profound need for salvation in light of human suffering and the complexities of human nature.

Scripture: Genesis 3:17, Job 5:7, Psalm 24:1, Ecclesiastes 3:11, Romans 8:19

Topics: "Human Suffering", "Spiritual Redemption"

Description

Charles Ewing Brown preaches about the universal theme of human suffering and misery, tracing it back to the earliest times and the inherent struggles faced by mankind. The sermon delves into the philosophical views of various thinkers like Schopenhauer, Thomas a Kempis, John Milton, and John Bunyan, highlighting the deep-rooted nature of human misery and the eternal quest for understanding and solutions. It emphasizes the dual nature of man, torn between the physical and spiritual realms, and the misalignment with God that leads to maladjustment and sin, ultimately causing the perpetual state of human suffering.

Transcript

Trouble has been the lot of man from the earliest times. He shivers in winter's blasts and is smitten by the summer's heat. His frame is withered by sickness and worn by toil and anxiety.

Famine dogs his steps and the wild, red eyes of war stare at him through the darkness of fear and uncertainty. Evil and short are his days, and death relentlessly trails him with the gloom of nameless fears of the night that will follow earth's early sunset.

Once a boy held a conch [conch = a thick heavy spiral seashell] to his ear to hear what was said to be the roar of a distant sea. Most of the great literature of the world is such a conch in which one hears the never-ending moan of the troubled sea of human misery. "Man," writes Job, "is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7).

It is not necessary to agree with the philosophy of Schopenhauer to admit that he has painted a striking, if one-sided, view of human life when he says: "Let us now add the consideration of the human race. Here also life presents itself by no means as a gift for enjoyment, but as a task, drudgery to be performed; and in accordance with this we see, in great and small, universal need, ceaseless wars, cares, constant pressure, endless strife, compulsory activity, with extreme exertion of all the powers of mind and body. Many millions, united into nations, strive for the common good, each individual on account of his own; but

many thousands fall as a sacrifice for it. Now senseless delusion, now intriguing politics, excite them to wars with each other; then the sweat and the blood of the great multitude must flow, to carry out the ideas of individuals, or to expiate their faults. In peace, industry and trade are active, inventions work miracles, delicacies are called from all ends of the world, the waves engulf thousands. All strive, some planning, some acting; the tumult is indescribable. But the ultimate aim of it all -- what is it? To sustain ephemeral and tormented individuals through a short span of life, in the most fortunate case with endurable want and comparative freedom from pain, which, however, is at once attended with ennui; then the reproduction of this race and its striving. In this evident disproportion between the trouble and the reward, the will to live appears to us from this point of view, if taken objectively, as a fool, or subjectively, as a delusion, seized by which everything living works with the utmost exertion of its strength, for something that is of no value." [3]

It was the remark of Josiah Royce that Schopenhauer only re-echoed the pessimism of Thomas a Kempis' famous Christian classic *The Imitation of Christ*. [4] Accordingly we find Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471) writing as follows:

"Ah! fool, why dost thou think to live long, when thou canst not promise to thyself one day?"

"How many have been deceived and suddenly snatched away!"

"How often dost thou hear these reports: Such a man is slain, another man is drowned, a third breaks his neck with a fall from some high place, this man died eating, and that man playing!"

"One perished by fire, another by the sword, another of the plague, another was slain by thieves. Thus death is the end of all, and man's life suddenly passeth away like a shadow." [5]

It was to be expected that John Milton (1608-1674), greatest religious poet who ever used the English language, should describe human misery with powerful effect. After Adam's fall, the angel Michael shows him in vision the future fate of mankind, and as he gazes with saddened eyes his angelic guide describes the gloomy scene.

"Death thou hast seen In his first shape on Man; but many shapes Of Death, and many are the ways that lead To his grim cave -- dismal, yet to sense More terrible at the entrance than within. Some, as thou saw'st, by violent stroke shall die, By fire, flood, famine; by intemperance more In meats and drinks, which on the Earth shall bring Diseases dire, of which a monstrous crew Before thee shall appear, that thou may'st know What misery the inabstinence of Eve Shall bring on men." Immediately a place Before his eyes appeared, sad, noisome, dark; A lazar house it seemed' wherein were laid Numbers of all diseased maladies Of ghastly spasm, of racking torture, qualms Of heart-sick agony, all feverous kinds, Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarrhs, Intestine stone and ulcer, colic pangs, Demoniac frenzy, moping melancholy, And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy, Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence, Dropsies and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums. Dire was the tossing, deep the groans; Despair Tended the sick, busiest from couch to couch; And over them triumphant Death his dart Shook, but delayed to strike, though oft invoked With vows, as their chief good and final hope. Sight so deform what heart of rock could long Dry-eyed behold? [6]

We might change the figure and say that this misery of mankind is the deep slough of despond in which the great seventeenth-century English writer, John Bunyan, struggled so long. In his *The Pilgrim's Progress* Bunyan writes: "Wherefore Christian was left to tumble in the Slough of Despond alone; but still

he endeavored to struggle to that side of the Slough that was still further from his own house, and next to the Wicket-gate; the which he did, but could not get out, because of the Burden that was upon his back: But I beheld in my Dream, that a man came to him, whose name was Help, and asked him, What he did there?" [7]

It is from this dismal swamp that Paul heard the age-long cry of distress which forever clamors for deliverance. "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:19, 22, A.R.V.).

PROBLEM OF HUMAN SUFFERING

Paul sees religion as an answer to man's pathetic cry for help in the midst of his suffering and anxiety, and observation confirms the statement that all religion of which history gives us any record whatever is an attempt to answer the cry of distress which arises from the vast swamp of human misery.

Buddhism arose in this way. Buddha Gautama, so the story goes, was a prince of India, living a life of luxury surrounded with all that could gratify sensuality and please the natural man; and yet in this condition he found himself unhappy. Moreover, he was smitten with compunction as he regarded the accumulated misery of the world around him.

It is a dramatic story which tells how he left all his earthly glory behind and, walking softly lest he waken the sleeping dancing girls, fled the palace and went out to be a homeless ascetic devoting every waking hour of the day to the contemplation of the mystery of human suffering. Thus was Buddhism born, and a little reflection will convince any man that all philosophy and all religion, regardless of origin, exist in history for the purpose of furnishing a satisfactory solution of the problem of misery and human suffering.

What Is the Nature of Man's Misery?

Nearly all historic interpretations of the problem of human suffering have been rendered futile and misleading by reason of the fact that they have been oversimplified. The brilliant thinkers of the world feel happy when they can gather all the threads of a difficult subject into one compact cord -- when they can explain all the complex phenomena of human life by one simple formula. And so the meaning of man's misery has been oversimplified.

In his book, *The Idea of the Holy*, a deep and searching inquiry into the foundations of religious feeling in human nature, Rudolph Otto has shown that the very first effort which mankind made in history to understand the meaning of life was an attempt to attribute all suffering and all misfortune to an incomprehensible, fearful mystery which later men called God.

At the beginning, good and evil were not differentiated in this mystery, but were considered as the source of both the sin and the suffering as well as the goodness and the joy of human life.

The earliest Hindu literature gives us pictures of the gods as being the source of human misery. In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, one of the scriptures of Hinduism, dating from the third century or earlier, is a passage boldly attributing the sufferings of humanity to the incomprehensible will of God. In the story, Prince Arjuna is being served by the supreme god, Vishnu, incarnated as Krishna, disguised as a charioteer. Suddenly the humble charioteer throws off all camouflage and reveals himself with blazing brilliance as the highest god before the wondering eyes of the prince, who chants:

Thou Refuge of the World!
Lo! to the cavern hurled
Of Thy wide-opened throat, and lips white-tushed,
I see our noblest ones,
Great Dhritarashtra's sons,
Bhishma, Drona, and Karna, caught and crushed!
The Kings and Chiefs drawn in,
That gaping gorge within;
The best of all both armies torn and riven!
Between Thy jaws they lie
Mangled fell bloodily,
Ground into dust and death!
Like streams down driven
With helpless haste, which go
In headlong furious flow
Straight to the gulping maw of the unfilled ocean,
So to that flaming cave
These heroes great and brave
Pour, in unending streams, with helpless motion!
Like moths which in the night
Flutter towards a light,
Drawn to their fiery doom, flying and dying,
So to their death still throng,
Blind, dazzled, borne along
Ceaselessly, all these multitudes, wild flying!
Thou, that has fashioned men,
Devourest them again,

One with another, great and small, alike!

The creatures whom Thou makest,

With fining jaws Thou takest,

Lapping them up! Lord God! Thy terrors strike.

At sight of this dreadful mystery, Prince Arjuna raises again the eternal question which philosophy and religion have long tried to answer:

From end to end of earth

Filling life full, from birth

To death, with deadly, burning, lurid dread!

Ah, Vishnu! Make me know

Why is Thy visage so?

Who art Thou, feasting thus upon Thy dead?

O Mightiest Lord! rehearse

Why hast Thou face so fierce?

Whence did this aspect horrible proceed? [8]

The answer of the Bhagavad-Gita remains still one of the classical attempts to solve the problem of human misery: man is a victim of the inexplicable and incomprehensible movement of the will of God. Strange as it may seem, this was substantially the doctrine of Augustine and Calvin. In Christianity this belief is called predestination, and in secular language it is termed fate.

At the same time it must be born in mind that this is likewise the essential answer of scientific materialism, namely, man suffers as he does through the operation of nature, which acts blindly and remorselessly without intelligence and without heart. We believe the solution is too simple, as is also the theory of Buddhism and of Schopenhauer that misery springs from desire.

There are many Christians who believe that man's misery arises from the fact that he is now living in a world resting under a permanent curse from God. This would not be an unreasonable belief for a devout Hindu worshipping Kali, the goddess of fury, or Vishnu who grinds the skulls of earth's noblest heroes between his teeth; but it is not an easy doctrine for a Christian to defend.

The doctrine is based upon the story of the curse pronounced against Adam: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field" (Gen. 3:17-18).

I do not deny that the ground was cursed for Adam's sake. That was a temporary sentence upon him personally, for it specifically identifies him as the one to suffer the penalty. But those who claim that this is the devil's world and that the earth and nature are resting under the curse of God must have neglected

reading the following verses: "And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:21-22).

An abnormal Christian asceticism has throughout many weary centuries unnecessarily embittered the lives of good people by confusing the world of nature which God pronounced good with the world of moral evil which Christians must forever fight. That God pronounced the earth good when he made it is plainly a part of the record: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). Indeed, there is a sense in which all nature is holy, for a holy thing is a thing which God owns, and "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof" (Ps. 24:1; I Cor. 10:26-28).

Of course, we do not mean by this that the earth and nature are holy in the moral and spiritual sense of a purified Christian soul, for obviously nature is not capable of any such purity, being without will or any spiritual quality. We simply mean that the earth is holy in the scriptural sense that things that belong to God are holy. It is not too much to say that all attempts to account for man's misery and sin by reference to the supposedly uncongenial nature of his physical environment in this world are a reflection upon the infinite wisdom and goodness that placed man in the midst of a world best adapted to minister to his happiness as planned and built by the infinite wisdom of God. Many years ago that vigorous evangelist Sam Jones poured contempt upon whining Christians who sing: This world's a howling wilderness of woe, This world is not my home.

"You old hypocrites, you," cried the fiery orator, "if there is any howling you are the ones who are doing it; but this world is not a wilderness of woe: this is God's world."

The most pronounced religious conservative must concede that modern research has proved one phase of liberalistic optimism, namely, that the control of nature as revealed by science is placing in man's hands almost infinite possibilities of progress and happiness. Through science man is entering into an age when it seems not unreasonable to hope for the cure of all diseases, or at least an antidote to all pain and suffering which human nature is called upon to endure.

Looking at the surface of things it seems perfectly feasible that we should within one generation become able to feed adequately, clothe comfortably, and house in a sanitary manner every human being in the world; furnish suitable employment to every adult on earth, and cure all diseases. We ought to be able soon to control heredity so skillfully that no more inherited diseases and deformities will be transmitted to posterity; in so doing we should eliminate insanity, feeble-mindedness, and all types of crime which arise from inherited handicaps. We should be able to secure justice for every man and education for every child and youth. Sickness, war, and crime would be eliminated. In this way we could easily build a world which would hold no jails, no hospitals, no insane asylums, and which supported no navies and no armies. Some might think this is a flight of fancy, but I believe that every first-rate scientist in the world will agree that these utopian gains are easily within the scope of man's scientific and inventive grasp at the present time -- if it were not for the contradictory intractable quality of human nature itself. Therefore, sadly, like Adam of old, we are driven away by a flaming sword from this scientific paradise of the future -- driven away, however, not by the evil quality of the physical universe but by the impossibility of ordering the world of mankind into any such rational pattern of life.

THE SPRINGS OF MAN'S MISERY ARE IN HIMSELF

While we admit that the world of physical nature has been a hard school -- it has goaded man with heat and with cold and burdened him with toilsome labor -- yet we deny that his misery springs from the physical nature of the world. For us there is good doctrine in the old English folk song:

"I am Myself, My Own Fever and Pain."

The paradox inevitable in all thinking about the mental, moral, and spiritual nature of man has been well expressed by Dr. Harold Rugg as follows:

Every man is a deep dichotomy ... he is Two Men

In every man there is authoritarian ... democrat,
pragmatist ... and poet, exploiter ... and sustainer-of-the-yield.

there is a pride of Self . . . and a sense of neighbor

-- a practical opportunism... and an adamant idealism.

there is the aggrandizing I ... and the balancing We.

But to make these two men one --

That is the eternal problem.

Because of this split in Every man,

Every Mediterranean culture is a corresponding dichotomy.

Within each one two rival traditions contend for supremacy:

-- The Exploitive Tradition of the Individualist.

-- The Great Tradition of the Person. [9]

One of the most able modern exponents of this interpretation of human nature is Prof. Reinhold Niebuhr, of Union Theological Seminary, New York City. Dr. Niebuhr has expounded this Christian interpretation of human nature in two scholarly volumes: *The Nature and Destiny of Man: Vol. I, Human Nature*; and *Vol. II, Human Destiny*. It would be beyond the scope of this book to specify the many points in which I disagree with Dr. Niebuhr, but as against scientific materialism and liberal modernism, I am free to say that Dr. Niebuhr has written the most brilliant and discriminating analysis of human nature to appear in America in many years. Nevertheless he is merely, along with many other able modern thinkers, returning to the traditional Christian doctrine of the nature of man. He is writing in the tradition of Martin Luther, Blaise Pascal, Augustine, and Paul. These have all focused attention upon the double and contradictory quality of human nature. The best and simplest explanation of this standing contradiction in man's life which I have seen is given by Prof. Karl Heim, of the University of Tubingen, in his great book, *God Transcendent, Foundation for a Christian Metaphysic*. The idea is worked out on many pages, but is brought to a focus in the following illustration:

"Two straight lines of infinite length and of different directions intersect in a point. Two infinite planes, inclined at an angle to each other, intersect in a straight line. The result presented by this intersection of

two infinite magnitudes can be described only paradoxically. The point of intersection O, in which two straight lines, AB and CD meet, belongs to the line AB and also to the line CD. But the remarkable thing is that the two lines do not divide this point between them nor compete for the possession of it. The point O belongs wholly and completely to the line AB, and it belongs also wholly and completely to the line CD. The same is true of the line of intersection between two planes. It belongs as much to the one as to the other." [10]

To summarize the illustration, we might imagine the horizontal line representing nature, matter, science, and time, the nature of the physical elements of man. Then intersect this at right angles by a vertical line representing mind, thought, spirit, conscience, and eternity. And at the point where these two lines intersect there is generated the strange, perverse, self-contradictory, and restless nature of man. He does not belong wholly to either world alone, and yet there are times when he may imagine himself belonging wholly to either one or the other of these worlds.

At the time when he thinks of himself as an animal he resents the tantalizing and disturbing thought that he is a spirit. And sometimes when he dwells in thought upon the buoyant and unconquerable nature of his spirit, he resents the fact that he is an animal, and seeks to deny it.

It is a strange fact that nearly all philosophy is strenuously engaged in the heartbreaking task of bending these two lines to make them come together into one. Materialism and naturalism seek to bend the vertical line of spirit down to the level of the horizontal line of matter and nature. Students who are drilled in this fantastic exercise for eight or ten years sometimes become so maimed and deformed in their thinking that they cannot any longer conceive and understand the spiritual quality of man's nature.

Philosophical idealism, on the other hand, is engaged in bending the horizontal line of matter and nature to a complete parallel and identification with the vertical line of mind and spirit, thus tending to deny the reality of nature and of matter. This also produces an artificial abnormality in human thinking which tends to make the reception of the truth impossible. Advocates of each of these philosophies stigmatize the Christian view as dualism. Nevertheless, the view which we advocate is not dualism, properly speaking, because dualism implies the existence of two parallel lines running side by side, and that is the very theory of the universe which we deny. We deny that God and spirit run side by side with nature and matter. We assert that God and spirit cross nature and matter just as the vertical line crosses the horizontal line, and yet one does not destroy the other.

I have emphasized this idea because once this viewpoint is gained the student will be amazed at the way in which his conception of the nature of man is clarified and made to correspond with reality. He will discover that while scientists are correct in describing the physical and animal nature of man, at every point the description falls short of the real man because that can only be understood by a recognition and appreciation of his spiritual capacities. One must understand the way in which this creature of time partakes of the august quality of eternity. And here, too, the inquirer finds himself thinking in the pattern of Holy Scripture, which says: "He hath made everything beautiful in its time: also he hath set eternity in their heart, yet so that man cannot find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end" (Eccles. 3:11, A.R.V.).

This stereoscopic vision of human nature is the truest and best because it sees man as a creature of two worlds and thus is able to describe him in a manner truly scientific, in a perfectly proper meaning of that word. Even worldly men of genius have been able to see this truth when not blinded by dogmatism.

Shakespeare has expressed it thus:

"What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?" [11]

This is man as the greatest English poet saw him, now like an animal, now like God.

It has been 2,900 years since that famous Greek man of genius, Homer, explained how man's spiritual nature may be hypnotized into a stupor which leaves him predominately an animal. Homer illustrated this by the myth of the sorceress Circe who, when the sailors of Ulysses had gorged themselves with feasting and with wine, touched them one by one with her wand and turned them into swine:

" ... then instantly she touched them with a wand, and shut them up in sties, transformed to swine in head and voice, bristles and shape, though still the human mind remained to them." [12]

We might say that the sorcery of Circe and the genius of Homer made these men miserable by an illuminating revelation of their true condition so that they saw, as never before, that they were animals in a pigsty, yet gifted with the lofty intelligence of the human mind which saw clearly their condition but felt itself utterly unable to escape from its animal limitations.

"The one party is brought back to the other in an endless circle," says Pascal, the great seventeenth century French philosopher, "it being certain that in proportion as men possess light they discover both the greatness and the wretchedness of man. In a word, man knows that he is wretched. He is therefore wretched because he is so, but he is really great because he knows it."

Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;

Still by himself abused and disabused;

Created half to rise, and half to fall;

Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;

Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled;

The glory, jest, and riddle of the world! [13]

And thus we have seen that man is a bundle of contradictions, miserable and creating misery. Let us go on to see why it is so.

WHY MAN IS A MISFIT IN NATURE

In things of the spirit wise men do not seek for glaring incontrovertible proofs which shall fatally stab the very mystery of life with unanswerable logic. Rather are wise men like the Indian guides of frontier legends who search carefully for the slightest displacement of a fallen twig, or perhaps the faint bruise of the grass by a footfall, or a pebble turned out of its place, in order to trace the way their quarry has taken through the pathless wilderness. Such things are not proved. They are surmised by minds made sensitive to the smallest indications of hidden truth.

Therefore we do not imagine that we can prove that man is a misfit in his universe. Neither do we seek to give such proof. We do, however, believe that there are bent twigs, crushed grass, and misplaced pebbles which suggest to the thoughtful that man is indeed a misfit in nature and it is from this fact that his misery arises. Christian thinkers who have followed the trail of man through history for centuries have a very definite interpretation of the origin and nature of man's misery and of the reason why he is a misfit in 'the universe where he lives. That doctrine is that man is a misfit because he has lost adjustment in the spiritual phases of his life. He is miserable because he is out of harmony with God, and that is the meaning of sin.

We admit that this is not the current, popular interpretation of the modern world, yet even in our times it is conceded that most of man's misery comes from maladjustment. Indeed, the whole modern science of psychiatry is built around that one word "maladjustment." More than any other single term perhaps "maladjustment" describes the theory and technique of abnormal psychology in understanding the mental ills of men. Psychiatrists believe that a large part of insanity and many forms of mental derangement are caused by the failure of the afflicted person to adjust himself to his environment, in some manner. Now Christians have no fault with any constructive science which seeks to better the lot of mankind; but it is to be remembered that all of the so-called sciences dealing with human nature, such as politics, economics, sociology, and psychology are, in fact, mixtures of science and philosophy, being in most cases more philosophical than scientific. It would be easy to show that in the composition of each of these sciences there is more of the value judgments of philosophy than of the experimental facts of science. These social sciences, also, are nearly always tendency driven or dogmatic in that they proceed upon certain philosophical suppositions to a foregone conclusion. Many psychiatrists, for example, do not believe in the spiritual nature of man. Consequently all their efforts at adjustments are bent toward ignoring and paralyzing the spiritual qualities of man's nature to a point where he will be satisfied with himself as a mere animal.

This is the kind of cure that is worse than the disease. It is as if a man living near a junk yard should become depressed by constantly gazing on disorderly piles of scrap and at last his dejection grew so great that he would consult a physician. The physician would offer to cure him by blinding his eyes so that he could no longer see the junk pile. Such a treatment might cure the patient of one form of depression but it would certainly leave him in a worse condition; and likewise there is no doubt that some unbelieving psychiatrists have wrought a similar injury in the spiritual life of their patients. The universal experience of mankind has constantly shown that, broadly speaking, it is impossible for the normal man to become so adjusted to mere physical nature that he finds peace and satisfaction. This is a subject worthy of contemplation by a thoughtful person. Animals do become adjusted to their environment, and while they may not know any ecstasy of happiness, it is certainly true that under normal conditions they do not suffer anything like the common misery of human life. Even Darwin, who first popularized the theory of "nature, red in tooth and claw," took pains in his famous Origin of Species to emphasize the fact that, for the most part, the life of animals is pleasant.

"When we reflect on this struggle," he says, "we may console ourselves with the full belief that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply." [14]

That is to say the great naturalist believed the life of animals to be on the whole a pleasant one. They do not suffer from fear and anxiety and dread of the future; and especially they do not suffer from the fear of death. And all the philosophers, economists, politicians, physicians, and philanthropists of the world could

not, by putting their efforts together, produce for mankind such a great relief as that. Reinhold Niebuhr, in *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, [15] points out that the fact that man fears death while the lower animals do not is evidence of man's being of another order of nature. I might add that herein man is like Benjamin Franklin when, sending his kite beyond his view and above the clouds, he felt the sharp tingle of the electric current which came from that distant source down to him. So man lives in two dimensions of life -- spirit and animal. As an animal he would be satisfied with earthly comfort except that he is connected with this vertical line of spiritual reality reaching out into eternity, and from eternity that line brings to him from time to time the sharp lightning strokes of the fear of death which prove his connection with another world.

It is just because his relations with that other world are disordered by sin that he cannot find the conditions of peace in this world. All of his progress in science and the control of nature are thwarted and prevented from fulfilling their rational possibilities by the irrational and destructive element of sin in the life of mankind.

In the prosecution of the first world war, the United States spent enough money to buy every scrap of property and every inch of land from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Coast. When we think of this and then remember the multiplied billions of dollars spent in the second world war, it is easily apparent that our country is rich enough to give every family a good home, abundant food, education, and all the advantages of a comfortable life. There is only one thing which makes this impossible despite the dreams of idealists: namely, the sinful quality of human nature which will frustrate any such generous purpose. We create inventions which would lighten the toil and increase the comfort of mankind. But great corporations buy up these inventions and hide them away so that their use cannot be enjoyed by the public. Inventions which do reach the public and which promise to make the earth a paradise are soon grasped by warring nations and used to destroy the life of mankind in ways of which even Milton never dreamed. In fact, the famous Russian philosopher, Nicholas Berdyev, denies that any social reform has ever achieved its end.

It is not necessary to go that far in order to understand that man cannot achieve his object of making a secular paradise of this world as long as he is working at cross-purposes with God. The increasing realization of this fact is sending the greatest thinkers and scholars of the Christian world back to the fundamental doctrine of the nature of man. This movement began in Europe at the end of the first world war, where the hard facts of history moving on the minds of able and brilliant men began to counteract the false theories of religious liberalism which, assuming the perfectibility of human nature, had thrown overboard the Christian doctrine of the sinfulness of man's heart and for generations prophesied that man could by his own effort transcend his fate as a miserable sinner.

The reaction against religious liberalism and modernism was much later in reaching America. In this country, at the close of the first world war, the false prophets of religious liberalism began again to lift the optimistic chant of man's self-redemption which they had been singing in this country for some fifty years.

Following is an example of this optimism written by a famous religious liberal in 1921. Under the caption, "Twenty Years from Now," by Dr. Frank Crane: "Europe will have righted itself; Germany, pruned of her destructive militarism will flourish in newness of strength and with kindness once more minister to the world; in Russia will be one of the mightiest democracies purged of Czarism and Bolshevism. Ireland will have settled down; the Balkan States will have got over the initial difficulties of their young democracies, and this part of Europe will be the paradise of tourists; Mexico will be our well-beloved neighbor; war will have disappeared from the horizon of the world, a whole generation of men will have come to maturity, with their bodies unimpaired and their imaginations unpolluted by alcohol; the labor movement will have

outgrown its bitter phase of class warfare and brought on a world-wide sweep of industrial democracy; children will be happier, homes brighter, ignorance less, blatherskites less blustering, useless talk) -- twenty years from now."

We must confess to a sense of nostalgia at the sweet music of Dr. Crane's optimism, for although the writer was not a religious liberal, he was nevertheless able to admire the famous commentator and to appreciate the bold, if diluted, testimony he bore to Christianity in the public press of those days. Of course, we have never expected his prophecy to be fulfilled, but we must say that we wish it had been. Perhaps the keenest of all disappointments is the failure of Dr. Crane's prophecy that the blatherskites would be less in the modern age. The good doctor has defined blatherskites as people given to "blustering, useless talk." So it comes to pass that while the good doctor is now in heaven, doubtless having his theology duly corrected, the blatherskites are still with us on earth, promising the millennium in the 1980's, whereas all Christian realism must insist that the sinful quality of human nature will work in the future as in the past to frustrate the wisest science of the best and strongest men and continue in the life of human society the sin and misery which has been the age-old inheritance of the human race.

Fourteen hundred years ago Augustine wrote: "And Thee would man praise; man, but a particle of Thy creation; man, that bears about him his mortality, the witness of his sin, the witness that Thou resistest the proud: yet would man praise Thee; he, but a particle of Thy creation. Thou awakest us to delight in Thy praise; for Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it repose in Thee." [16]

And this will certainly be as true twenty years from now as it was in the days when Christianity was young.

3 Shopenhauer, *The World as Will and idea* Vol. III, pp. 112ff.

4 Cf. Josiah Royce: *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, p. 245

5 Thomas a Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, XXII, 7

6 John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book XI

7 John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part I

8 Bhagavad-Gita chap. 11

9 Harold Rugg, *Now Is the Moment*

10 Karl. Heim, *God Transcendent, Foundation for a Christian Metaphysic*, p p.70-71

11 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* Act II, Scene 2

12 Homer, *The Odyssey*, Book X

13 Alexander Pope, "Essay on Man"

14 Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, chap. 3

15 Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, Vol.. I, Human Nature, p. 99

16 *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, Book I

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