

THE WORD.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

John 1:14.

John has here put the whole gospel into one short sentence. Is there another verse in the whole Bible that carries a deeper meaning, for its length, than this sentence? It is so profound that human intellect cannot fully grasp it; it is so immeasurable that human speech cannot fully define its meaning. It is like the mighty ocean. It is so deep and wide that the strongest swimmer dare not try to cross it; it is so mild and gentle that a little child can safely play in the surf on the beach. The weakest preacher can here draw streams of living waters; the greatest cannot sound its full depth.

When Nansen was exploring the Arctic he dropped his sounding-line and wrote in his log, "Deeper than that!" The next day he used a line twice as long, dropped it into the sea, and wrote in his log again, "Deeper than that!" The third day he took all the rope on board ship, tied it together and dropped it overboard; again the amazing record in the ship's log, "Deeper than that!"

"The Word was made flesh." Who can fully comprehend the whole meaning of those simple words? How can human speech tell us what it is like for God to become man? It is only by looking closely at His life that we can get some measure of the wonderful meaning of these words. He never made a mistake, He never uttered a hasty careless word, He never needlessly hurt the weakest and most halting of God's children. Every other man or woman who ever lived on this earth has done all

27

these things and more. How could a life of such absolute perfection stand by the side of erring men and women without clashing violently with theirs? How the imperfect lives of the best men and women clash with those around them! Although His life was the most perfect ever lived on this earth it blended easily with the imperfect ones all around it. The Prophet Isaiah said of Him, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." The bruised reed grew stronger and the smoking flax grew brighter as He passed by.

"--and dwelt among us." In the East they say, "He pitched His tent in our midst." He pitched His tent among men, and that made the world a better place to live. His life never jarred with His neighbors who were trying to do better. His life had to clash with the lives and purposes of wicked selfish men, just as the full light of the sun drives back the darkness of the night. But the lame, halting follower was never discouraged by the bright light of His own excellent life. They just looked at Him and that made the way easier; His life just welcomed any frightened and discouraged soul to come after it. We follow His life today as safely and gladly as the disciples did almost two thousand years ago. That is what makes it different to all other lives.

His is the only life ever lived on earth that is a worthy pattern for men of all time. One of the Bishops said, "There will never be a place for a new religion till some one lives a better life than He lived!" The best that any mere man can do is to hold up the torch for the men of his own time. As soon as he passes on time makes his life and his example obsolete. When we try to follow any other life as a pattern, it leads us to a dead end. We can only become as good as the pattern, and

that ends all progress for our own lives and for those who come after us. Any man who does not live beyond the dead past has never truly lived. To follow any other man as a pattern is to live in the dead past.

Buddha, Confucious, Mohammed, all had a message for the people of their day. But look where the people are today who still follow their leadership. The world has outgrown the Philosophy of these men. The teachings of the Man of Galilee are as inspiring and wholesome today as when He gave them to men. The wiser men grow the more they see in His words. There has not come one yet who was wise enough to find fault with His life or His teachings, or to propose a way that is better. His life and teachings is like a flawless diamond; the more light is turned on it the brighter it shines.

We can find plenty of mistakes in the lives of the best men and women who ever lived. Some have tried to discredit the Christian religion on the grounds that so many err in trying to live it. It is said the Bob Ingersol asked General Lew Wallace to study the New Testament to find all the weak places in the lives of the men and women in the early church, then write a novel exposing the weakness. General Wallace began studying the New Testament, but found there that the life of Jesus Christ did not have any weakness. He was so impressed with its perfection he turned from his skepticism and wrote the great Christian novel Ben-Hur.

The Bible speaks very frankly of the faults of its greatest heroes. It tells us that Noah got drunk, that Abraham lied, that Jacob cheated, that Samuel's sons were crooked, that David committed adultery and murder, that Peter denied his Lord, and that all the disciples fled when He needed them most. But it

29

records not one single error or weakness of His life or teachings. It is the perfection of His life that makes Christianity the hope of the world.

An article in the Reader's Digest recently told of a man who went on pilgrimage to Mecca, the sacred city of Mohammed. Had not some of his ancestors been Mohammedan he never could have made the trip. Through them he knew enough of the religion to pass the censors. What he tells of this trip shows how shocking the results are when people follow the leadership of a mere man centuries after he is gone.

An Arab Shiek now owns the sacred city ^{and} is robbing the faithful of his own religion. He tells us of poor people dying in their efforts to reach the sacred spot who were treated so brutally by other members of the same brotherhood, that he and his companion, who had lived in Christian lands, were made sick at the sight. They saw men and women dying of hunger and thirst kicked aside with a brutallity they would not have been permitted to use on beasts in Christian lands. What makes the Christian religion so different? It is the fact that He once lived here.

Although He was declared worthy of the highest throne in heaven, while He lived among men He asked nothing for Himself. He gave the most lavishly and received the least from men of any who ever passed this way. Of money He had none; the foxes of the fields and the birds of the air were richer than He. Of honors among men He was the uncrowned King; the only crown He ever wore on earth was a crown of thorns. Only a few humble folks gave Him homage; only the poor in spirit saw in Him the image of His Father. The world saw nothing. Justice was denied Him. His trial was the cruelest mockery of justice ever given to a man on this earth.

In Hawthorne's story The Great Stone Face a boy, Earnest, was inspired by the kind, noble and wise face formed by rocks on the side of one of the White Mountains in New Hampshire. His mother told him there was a legend that one day a boy would grow up in the valley to be a great, noble and wise man, and that people would know him because his face would be like that carved by the divine hand on the side of the mountain. Earnest used to sit for hours looking at the noble, majestic countenance, and wishing he might live to see the great man who was to come. Finally a man who had lived in the valley when a boy went away and became a great merchant. When he had amassed a vast fortune he decided to come back to the valley to live. The people at once decided his face was like the one on the side of the mountain and Mr. Gathergold was proclaimed the hero of the valley, but his name could just as well have been Mr. Scattercopper, by the way he divided his great wealth with people in need. Earnest knew that Mr. Gathergold did not look like the face on the side of the mountain, and it did not take the people long to decide it did not either. Then came old Blood-and-Thunder, the army man, and after him the smooth-tongued politician, Old Stony-Pniz, then the gentle poet, who was so unlike the face on the side of the mountain, that no one claimed a resemblance. But the gentle poet did find that Earnest's face was like The Old Stone Face, which no one else had noticed before. He had looked at the face so long till his became like it. In the same manner the world has become more God-like by looking into the face of the Man of Galilee.