

ON TRUE RELATIONS

BETWEEN MAN THE DEBTOR AND HIS DIVINE CREDITOR GOD.

WHAT HE OWES THE ALMIGHTY

Full and Grateful Acknowledgment of Immeasurable Obligation and a Loyal and Loving Surrender of His Life and Actions to the Divine Will—Honest People Will Wish to Pay the Bill Presented.

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1903, by William Hally, of Toronto, at the Dept. of Agriculture, Ottawa.

Chicago, May 17.—In this discourse man, the debtor, is shown in his true relation to his Divine creditor, to whom he owes not only a full and grateful acknowledgment of immeasurable obligation, but such a loyal and loving surrender of his life and actions to the divine will as shall prove the genuineness of his professions. The text is Matthew xxi, 21. "Render unto God the things that are God's."

Many people talk as if this world was full of riches. I do not believe any such charge. There is more honesty in the world than it gets credit for. Indeed, it is my belief that most people are honest, that most people want to do right. This is not a world of hypocrites. All men are not scoundrels. If you have not found this kind of a world, there is something wrong with your own principles. The man who declares that all men are rogues at heart is practically making confession of his own dishonesty. If you tell me that all men cheat, I conclude that you yourself would cheat if you had the chance. It sometimes takes a thief to catch a thief.

If most people were not honest, it would be difficult to explain some of the customs of the business world. In many of our cities lunch buffets have been started, where you can go to a large counter and help yourself. You can eat as much as you want. Practically no one watches you. The proprietor leaves it to your own honesty to tell how much you owe. Does not this prove that most people are honest!

Taking this premise, then, for granted, I shall boldly present to you a bill which I know you will try to pay. It is from my Lord and Master. It is a statement of the debt which every man, woman and child, to more or less extent, owes to God. I do not demand payment of it, for it is greater than you could ever pay, though you lived on earth a thousand years and worked as hard as you could; but I want you to feel your obligations and to resolve that you will do all that is in your power to show your gratitude to your Heavenly Father for all the mercies and comforts with which he has surrounded you during your life. Therefore, what you are to do, you must start to do right away, and in order to do it, you must serve Christ from now on with your whole heart.

A big bill for good health is charged up against most of us in the divine ledger. We may be growing old now and have here and there a rheumatic twinge; we may be unable to eat as heartily of indigestible foods as we did when young, or to work as rapidly or as long, but most of us have had years and years of good health. We have had years with two stout lungs and two keen eyes with good digestive organs and good nerves. Now comes the question: What have we accomplished with this God given blessing called good health? Have we done anything more with it than to eat and sleep, and brutelike, physically to enjoy ourselves? Have we placed that good health at the service of the Master, as we know we ought to have done? If you had been very sick, and I should come into the room just after the crisis was past, and say, "Well, Mr. So-and-so, how are you feeling to-day?" You would answer, "Thank God, I am better; I hope I shall soon be well," you give by that answer all the credit of your convalescence and health to God. Can it be that God is not expecting you to do anything for him on account of his blessing?

"But," answers some one, "you cannot blame the average person for not being more grateful for his good health. A healthy man does not think about his health. If that good health was taken away from him it would be different. Then the individual would realize what he had lost. But how can you blame a man for not being grateful for a healthy liver or kidneys or spleen when the mere fact that these organs are healthy proves that he never knew he had a liver or spleen or kidneys?" In one sense, my brother, your answer is right. When a man loses his good health he is ready to give up almost everything he has to win it back. If his lungs are diseased he will sell out his business to go and live in Los Angeles, Cal., or San Antonio, Tex., or in some mild climate in Arizona. But in another sense, my brother, your answer is wrong. Though most of us may be healthy, yet there was a time when nearly all well persons have been sick, and awfully sick. We know what it is to have the temperature run up to 104 and 105 and the pulse, like a trip hammer, beating 130 times to the minute. We know what it is to have pneumonia or typhoid fever or appendicitis. And from the past experience of those sicknesses we should fully realize the blessing of good health and be willing to pay a great debt of service to God for that health. When visiting the Isle of Wight in 1885 we saw the Queen's physician every morning ride up to the royal palace. He did not go there because the Queen was ill, but in order to prevent her from becoming sick. If the royal courts of Europe have their attending physicians, who are paid large salaries to keep the rulers well, shall we

not pay in service anything to our Heavenly Physician for the physical strength with which many of us are endowed?

"Oh," said a poor laborer to a missionary one day, "I do not owe any debt to God. He has done nothing for me." "Nothing for you!" exclaimed the missionary. "Would you be willing, poor as you are, to take one million dollars cash for your two eyes?" "No," answered the laborer. "I would not." "Would you be willing to take a million dollars for your two legs, and all the rest of your earthly days have to be wheeled around as a cripple? Would you be willing for a million dollars to exchange your good lungs for those of a consumptive?" "No," said the laborer, "I would not." "Then," said the minister, "you owe to God gratitude and service to the amount of at least \$3,000,000 capital for good health."

A big debt, for food and clothing and house rent, I find charged against us in the divine ledger. A noted French statistician has compiled the following summary of how an average man, fifty years of age, has spent his past life: He has slept 6,000 days; played 4,000 days; was eating 1,500 days and has been sick 500 days. During his 1,500 days of feeding, he has eaten a whole car load of bread—17,000 pounds; a whole car load of meat—16,000 pounds; 4,600 pounds of vegetables, eggs and fish, and has drunk 7,000 gallons of liquids. He has worked only 6,500 days out of the 18,250 days which he has lived. In other words, he has slept nearly as long as he has worked. Then when you further estimate all the expense of a man's clothing and cost of travel during his life, you can to some extent compute the financial value of the food and clothes with which God has endowed one of his children up to the half century milestone.

But though the divine debt for food and raiment may be very great are you going to try to cancel it by merely estimating dollar for dollar, how much the beefsteaks and the chops and the potatoes and peas and barrels of apples and the garments have cost? Oh, no. That would not be right. You, a strong man, with the earning capacity you now have, owe to God financially more than that. You have a moral debt as well as a financial one. If I should come to you in a business crisis of your life and help you, you would never forget it. If I should say: "Mr. So-and-so, I hear the banks are beginning to push you. Never mind, I will see you through this crisis. Bring your notes to my office, and I will indorse them," what would be the result? Tears would come into your eyes. You would perhaps cry like a little child. You would say to me: "I can never forget your kindness. It means more to me than money. If any trouble ever comes to your home, you can always count upon me as your friend."

Suppose your father and mother died thirty years ago and left you penniless. Suppose at that time I should have gone to a foundling's home and found you and brought you into my house and adopted you and reared you as my son, what would be the result? Would you estimate the sacrifices I have made for you by the dollar and cent measure? By how much I spent for your clothes and board? Oh, no! You would estimate it by the extent of my love. You would give back to me more than money. You would feel that all you are and all you have you owe to my paternal kindness and that I have claims upon you that all your devotion cannot repay. What, then, are your obligations to God for all the comforts you have enjoyed? If you give yourself to him, body, mind and soul, is that more than your duty? We must remember all the days he has cared for us in our infancy. Think how he has guided and protected us all through the struggle of life. We must pay installments on that bill by caring for God's helpless children, by feeding God's hungry and clothing God's naked and bending over God's sick.

We can never get away from this responsibility. One day a gentleman stood waiting for a friend at the New York entrance of the Brooklyn Bridge. While standing there he saw a little street urchin go up to an ash barrel and pick out of the refuse a piece of bread and begin to eat it. The gentleman turned to an old woman who was tending an apple stand near by and said, "Have those little boys nobody to care for them at all?" "No one," grimly answered the old woman, "except God, and he does not always seem to be around." Yes, as we look at distress unrelieved, at lives in which there is no brightness, it does seem as if God were not always around. But has that thought no message for us? Are not these very cases opportunities placed in our way of repaying some of our obligations to Him? We cannot pay him, but when as his children we relieve the destitute or lift the burden from the weary shoulders we are acting as his almoners and are doing his work. We should care for others in Christ's name because God has so long cared for us.

A big bill for church privileges I find charged against us all in the divine ledger. Why all? Because the church of Jesus Christ is not, as some people suppose, a small building dedicated for a few weddings and funerals and a place in which are to be gathered a few Sunday school teachers. It is not, as a great preacher once described it, merely an "ecclesiastical Flying Dutchman," with a dead minister in the pulpit and dead hearers in the pew and a dead deacon passing the collection plate.

The church is the greatest purifier of the community. It is the great preventer of crime. I know of a keen, shrewd business man who lived in a small Ohio city. Every year he sent a large donation to all the different churches, "not," said he, "because I am a professing Christian, but because I believe the church does more to empty our jails and poor-houses and criminal resorts than any

other power on earth." The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is the great cornerstone of a pure home. We do not have to argue here for one moment to try to prove this statement. It is an axiom, a self evident fact. Now, my brother, if the church of God makes your clerks more honest, and keeps the messengers of crime from off the streets, where they might destroy your sons and daughters; if it is the foundation stone of a strong national government as well as that of the home; if it is the great enemy of ignorance and the leader in all movements that look to the purifying and spiritual elevation of the human race, do you not believe that you should cast your influence into its work? Do you not owe it an inestimable debt? Should you not try to broaden its teachings and through it to try to disseminate the gospel redemption which will save men this side of the grave as well as upon the other side?

A big debt for gospel education I find charged against us all in the divine ledger. The struggles of poor boys for a college education offer some of the most pathetic of illustrations. Harry is a farmer's boy. He lives in the country and wants to go to school, but how can he? Try as hard as the family may, they can't make ends meet and no more. But get an education he will. He works on the farm during the summer and teaches school during the winter. After awhile, by night study, he fits himself for an academy. His little savings he hoards like a miser. He enters the university. Then perhaps he comes up to graduation with a hacking cough or ruined eyesight and with his physical health wrecked. Ah, that is pathetic! That is a sacrifice that is being made in every part of the land.

But if it is pathetic to see a poor boy struggling for an intellectual education how much more pathetic is it to see one struggling for a spiritual education when he has been born in the cradle of sin? When I go down the street and see men and women whose faces from early childhood were scarred and marred with sin, I often say to myself: "What chance have those poor mortals? Their fathers perhaps were jailbirds. Their mothers were dissolute and deserted them perhaps on the day they were born. Their companions from youth have been thieves and robbers. And yet some of these poor wretches, born in sin, have struggled up by the grace of God into the light. They have by slow and painful stages, won a hard earned spiritual education. They struggled on and up, battling their way step by step, fighting against all the inherited tendencies of their past lives. They struggled up out of the hovel and the saloon and the gutter and the poorhouse. Like the demon possessed Mary, at last they became the sainted Mary, as spotless and pure as the driven snow.

But, thank God, none of us—no, I believe not one—ever had to go through such a struggle for a spiritual education. We had that in the days of our childhood. We were born at the knee of Christian mothers. Shall we not be willing to pay God back for this education? Because he has given us that spiritual education free, so that we can discriminate between right and wrong, shall we not now be willing to pay something at least for our past Christian tuition?

How can we pay God back for this spiritual education of our childhood? I will tell you. In the same way I expect my children to pay me back for their intellectual education. Some years ago I had my life insured on the tontine plan. These premiums at the time have been very hard to meet. But when we come up to them I always say to my wife: "This money will come due when I am forty-four years old. That is just the time we shall want to send our boys and girls to college. Then, after they have had their education, as well equipped men and women they can go forth to the battle of life and be intellectually good men and women." I am going to get my pay back in the good that I hope my children may be able to do. And so God expects his pay for our spiritual education in the moral, pure, consecrated lives we should, by the grace of God, live for his service. Are you and I, my friends, doing what we ought to do? Are we truly living the Christian lives which our early bringing up should justify?

A big debt we also owe to God for the blessings which come to us from our living loved ones. Strange is the fact that we rarely appreciate a dear one until she is gone. There are plenty of monuments and memorials erected for dead men, but very seldom any for the living. We would be willing, if our finances would warrant it, to endow a hospital or library or founding home to the memory of a dead child. Do we not owe God any debt of gratitude to the loved ones who are still by our side? Shall not the father and husband feel that he needs to make some acknowledgment for the children and the wife who now sit with him at the table and bow with him at the family altar? Oh, my Christian friends, I do not believe we are intrinsically mean. I do not and will not lower myself to the belief that we have intentionally gone to God heretofore only as beggars. Most of us have stopped to think with how many blessings God has surrounded us. Therefore I have today tried to show you the joys of Christian giving, the joys of paying back to God at least a little of what we owe.

The simple fact is that but few of us have ever begun to taste the sweetest nectars which come from the gospel vineyards. We have only selfishly looked at the gifts which God has given to us. But when we honestly try by a consecrated life to pay back God for what he has done for us then we shall have a joy which increases in value as we delve into it. Oh, my brother and sister, will you be honest with God? Will you try to repay him by a consecrated life's service for all the mercies with which he has surrounded you? I to-day present this bill of debit from my Divine Master and King.

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