

"ALL YOU ADD IS --WHAT?"

Hebrews 11

We may ask ourselves over and over, "Am I a success or a failure?", for this is something we worry about. The question makes sense to us. The answer is important to us and there are the commonly accepted standards by which we may rate ourselves; so that every night, all we have to do is count our assets, instead of sheep, and go quietly to sleep--or to pieces--depending on what we find. The point is, we pretty well know whether we're a success or a failure, depending on whether we're "Keeping up" with the people we want to "Keep in" with.

There was a time when men thought they were saved by reason. In any perplexing situation, "All you add is reason", and that will save the day. The rational was considered the saving ingredient. "Just use your head", "Good old common sense"--and "Thou shalt be saved." But there soon appeared a fly in this ointment: Some men seemed to think that war, even poverty--things like that were ^(imminently) reasonable, rationally justifiable. So, "Salvation by reason", rather went by the boards. it didn't save much, at least it failed to save us from each other. As it apparently turned out, the devil is a great intellectual. It seems that if you educate a rascal, you only make him a "Rascal, D.D."!

In any difficult, any painful, any deadly, any diabolical situation --"all you add is education?" Is that it? "and thou shalt be saved?" No. I suppose that is one more illusion of our sensate culture. So we try something else. Maybe, in wondering whether you--or, the world, for that matter --are "saved", there are other assets to count on.

Probably the most generally accepted one today is best stated by that well known saint? No--by that famous philosopher? no, no--by that ^{eminent} imminent scientist then? no, no, no, very few, can you?, quote great saints, philosophers, or even scientists now-a-days. So, of course, the most generally accepted theory of salvation today is best stated by that well-known dog food commercial on TV: "All you add is --love."

If the Madison Avenue mind believes anything any more, it believes we are "saved by love." That is to say, in any perplexing situation, "all you add is--love", and that will save the day. Do as you please, as long as its loving. Love is the saving ingredient. "Just use your heart--good old common affection," and "thou shalt be saved". 660724 Page 1

But there does seem to be a fly in every panacea. For some men and women apparently feel that quite a bit is lovingly justifiable. In fact, it turns out that “the feelers” in this world may be even more unpredictable, more dangerous, than “the thinkers”. I asked a bearded one the other day what he thought of it (he was the one who told me that he was “a feeler” not “a thinker” at the university), and what he thought of it, I thought was unthinkable. What he believed to be loving, in a given situation, I believed to be something else again. It’s rather discouraging, but I do believe its quite possible to be a “loving rascal”, as well as an educated one.

For example, I remember a woman who shot at her husband when he came home one night. She was not an altogether bad woman, but she was a bad shot. She missed him. When he yelled, “What made you do that?” She replied, “because I love you so!” And, indeed, maybe it was the loving thing to do—because she literally and theologically scared the devil out of him. That man behaved after that, let me tell you. But you could never convince him it was the loving thing to do. Except for her bad aim, it would have been a disaster. “Surely”, he said, “that’s not what Jesus meant by ‘love your enemy’”.

Indeed, love is not always the saving ingredient, not in every situation. If Milton was correct in seeing Satan as most learned, Shaw may not have been far wrong in seeing him as most affectionate. Crooks are often affable, and, among themselves, may have a fine sense of fraternity, a brotherhood, an esprit de corps often eulogized in contemporary literature, where old fashioned vice becomes new newfangled virtue, because it is done in love. Thus you have the eerie phenomena of the loving lie, the loving theft, the loving death, etc...where love really does do you in.

If, in order to save any given situation, all you have to add is love, then you jolly well better know what sort of love you are talking about. If man has learned, rather late in his history, the danger, the disastrous effects of repression, he is also having to learn, with equal pain, the danger, the disastrous effects of uninhibited expression. When the New Testament avows that “God is love”, it is not expressing the cult of emotionalism. Sometime ago, a teen-ager argued, “But didn’t even St. Paul say ‘love is the greatest’?” “Yes”, I said, “but he

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had something else in mind". And though St. Augustine did say, "Love God and do as you please," he did not say, "Do as you please, for the love of God." There is a difference.

Maybe, for many reasons, the New Testament never says, "By love are ye saved," any more than it says, "By reason are ye saved," though it certainly lauds both, and no man can read it without finding its precepts reasonable and its narrative altogether lovely.

In a sense, what the New Testament does say, is that to reason and love, all you add is--faith: a dimension that guides the one and disciplines the other. For Biblical man, any notion of salvation always has this faith dimension.

The Book of Hebrews does not say, "By reason", Abraham set out across the rim of the world. His friends probably thought his leaving the civilized security of Ur for the insecurity of the wilderness, a most unreasonable thing to do. And I'm not too sure his wife and nephew considered it the altogether loving thing either, to uproot them so.

No, it was "By faith" a word very closely associated in the New Testament with the word "belief", that Abraham ventured forth, by a faith that conditioned, disciplined, directed--both his reason and his love. What he believed in dictated his behavior. He was not basically a thinker or a feeler--he was a believer and what he believed conditioned both his thinking and his feeling.

It still does. If you believe in nothing, you will amount to nothing. It's a matter of allegiance, fealty. So, what are you loyal to? It's important. It will lead you: in your thinking and feeling to heaven or to hell. Men are still saved, or damned by what they have faith in. You can't get away from that.

Every now and then, you meet a man with mean, bitter eyes, an outlook that has narrowed down to nothing, a sickly, spiteful mind, for all the world like one of those murky sea creatures that sting and poison what comes near. And you do not know what he has faith in, only that it's damned him and the contamination spreads.

But then again, you will meet another sort of man, a simple and honorable man, no more perfect than Abraham, but, like him, a just man, a kind man, a man strong to do what is right, and you cannot but think, "Here is God's man, a man of good faith." The man himself may not know it. But it is so. What he has faith in has so obviously saved him.

For the Christian, it is faith in Jesus Christ, as (...) Lord of life. It is treacherously easy, by a misplaced faith to make a "Hell of heaven"--but for 2000 years faith in Jesus Christ, for those who have had it, has made a "Heaven of hell"--no matter the place.

(This appeared to be two sermons intertwined. I have attempted to salvage one of them.) P.C.