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# RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

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J. E. GILBERT



Gilbert



# RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

ADULT PROBATIONER'S FIRST BOOK

BY  
REV. J. E. <sup>201605</sup> leazer GILBERT, D.D.

*Secretary of Spiritual Culture Society*

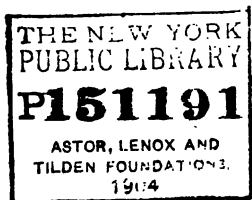
"I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me"

Gen. xxx, 27



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## THE FULL COURSE

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*First Term:* Religious Experience

*Second Term:* Biblical Doctrine

*Third Term:* American Methodism

REV. 1914





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## Introduction.

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THIS manual is the first in a series of three designed for the use of classes of adult probationers. Another series provides for juvenile probationers. For the author's ideas concerning the organization and conduct of these classes and the preparation which should be given to probationers, see his work *Preparation for Church Membership*. It is hoped that pastors will carry the classes through the entire series with an earnest endeavor to meet the suggestions which are given.

In the lessons of this term there should be a careful study of the matter on the part of each member before coming to the class. There the leader should endeavor to make every point clear to the understanding. In doing this the Scripture references should be found and read from the Bible

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with appropriate comment. Let each member of the class and the leader as well apply all the instructions to test and promote the personal experience.

Let it not be forgotten at any time, what is here frequently declared, that experience is variable. Different people have different thoughts and feelings, and the same person changes at different times of life. If this point is insisted on there may be at almost every class session profitable comparisons by those present, in which everyone should be urged to the utmost honesty and frankness. Insist only on essentials. Nothing so enfeebles the spiritual life as any attempt to appear what one is not. Hypocrisy is offensive to God and to men.

The following order might be followed in a class session: 1. Devotions,—singing, Scripture reading, prayer, singing; 2. Examination of the lesson for the day, by question and answer; 3. Free conversa-

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tion pertaining to personal experience on the theme of the day, with the purpose of securing immediate results; 4. Devotions. But this order should be varied somewhat so as to admit any special interests.

Special attention is called to the Appendix, in which are questions for review and for personal examination and a course of reading.

This manual is sent forth with the earnest prayer that the Holy Spirit may illuminate and guide those who use it, and that a more intelligent view of religion and a higher type of experience may result.

J. E. GILBERT.

Washington, D. C., Dec. 1, 1903.



# Religious Experience.

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## FIRST LESSON.

### PRELIMINARIES.

1. AN experience is a conscious state or movement of the soul. There are states and probably movements of the soul of which man is unconscious. Concerning these nothing definite can be affirmed, although much may be inferred.

2. The great deeps of our natures are known only to God, from whom they cannot be concealed (Psa. cxxxix, 1). An experience gives only partial knowledge of that unexplored realm.

3. An experience furnishes a basis and method of self-judgment. By it there may be a discovery of the tendencies and partly of the possibilities of the soul, and the se-



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cret springs of motives, desires, and purposes may be laid bare.

4. This knowledge of self gained by experience will be helpful in every effort for culture, as one will learn in this way what qualities should be strengthened and what qualities should be repressed and overcome, without which knowledge little can be done toward improvement.

5. As an immaterial entity made in the image of God (Gen. i, 26), the soul reaches its destiny by a process of development whereby its powers take on strength and beauty; and that process, in so far as it is under human control, can be conducted rightly as experience indicates the stages and methods.

6. It follows that every person, anxious for self-improvement, should take careful note of his own experiences—their origin, nature, variety, and fruits, acquiring thus in the course of years that wisdom which

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is needful in self-culture. In doing this some have kept a journal.

7. An experience is caused by something external. If the soul could exist wholly unrelated, which is manifestly impossible, it would doubtless remain forever quiet in one condition, probably ignorant of its own existence. Touched by that which is without, it is awakened to activity, and the changes produced are called experiences.

8. A religious experience is a state or movement of the soul with reference to the spiritual world, to God and man as spiritual beings, to duty and privilege as spiritual realities of the present life, and to the judgment and destiny as spiritual interests of the life to come.

9. A religious experience must be distinguished from that which is purely physical, such as hunger and thirst, that have their origin in the body and pertain to the things of time and sense.

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10. Religious experiences may be classed under five heads: Conviction and repentance, that relate to matters of right and wrong; faith, that deals with mercy and power; hope, that concerns the future and its awards; love, referring to relations and opportunities or duties growing out of relations. Besides these there are complex experiences.

11. The above is the logical order in religious experience—conviction, repentance, faith, hope, love. The earlier prepares for that which follows, and the later perfects what went before. This, moreover, is the natural order of spiritual development, the way by which the soul passes from lower to higher states.

12. Religious experiences are produced by the Spirit of God, who usually employs the truth (Heb. iv, 12) in all his efforts to influence men. They are the soul's responses to the Spirit's approach, and those

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responses are always according to the condition of the soul.

13. Religious experiences are the highest of which the soul is capable. They engage those powers by which man is allied to God and prepared for enjoyments and pursuits that are impossible to any of the lower orders of animals.

14. Religious experiences vary in different individuals and in the same person at different times of life. There are phases peculiar to childhood, youth, adolescence, early maturity, middle life, and old age. No two persons make the same response to the approach of God.

15. And yet, with all this diversity, there are some phases that are common to universal humanity. These are expressions of that nature which is the same in all men. As such they should be studied by all in an orderly way.

*Prayer.* "Who can understand his er-

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rors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me." (Psa. xix, 12, 13.)

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### SECOND LESSON.

#### CONVICTION.

1. ALL men are sinners (Rom. iii, 23). They have not only violated law, the law of God which is the regulating rule of their being, but their natures are enfeebled, perverted, and polluted (Isa. i, 6), so that there is in every man a proneness to violate law. This is man's state by nature—he was born in it.

2. It is true that under the influence of heredity and environment (Exod. xx, 5) this proneness to evil is not equally strong in all men, nor is it directed equally toward the same evil, but is present in some degree in every man, constituting the one well-known characteristic of world-wide humanity (Psa. xiv, 2, 3) termed by theologians depravity.

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3. All men are more or less convinced of their sinful condition. They know that at times they think and do what is contrary to the received standard of righteousness among their fellows, contrary even to their own judgment of what is right (Rom. ii, 15). Such experiences are had by the heathen.

4. These are imperfect forms of conviction, or condemnation, indicating that the sinful soul is not only aware of its state, but dissatisfied to some extent with that state, the cause of unrest, a promise of better things if right directions are given and followed.

5. As greater light is obtained the soul experiences profounder convictions of sin (John xv, 22); that is, a clearer and fuller view of the inward state is obtained, by the power of the Holy Spirit using the truth (John xvi, 8, 9).

6. One of the first and most important

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ends to be gained in saving men from sin is to produce in them an adequate sense of sin. As long as a man thinks himself to be good he will not seek improvement (Luke xviii, 11). Only the sick desire a physician (Matt. ix, 12).

7. Conviction assumes various phases according to the temperament and education as well as the past life. These phases are all present in some cases, while in others there are but two or three expressions. Each person must consider what is his own experience of sin, and how to treat it.

8. The essential and most common element of conviction is the feeling of self-condemnation. This does not arise from the judgment of a neighbor, a friend, or an enemy, but it springs up within, the result of an examination of one's own thoughts, desires, and purposes (Lam. iii, 40).

9. Joined with this is the feeling that God, who is a holy being, has been dis-



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pleased (Psa. vii, 11), that he has been alienated, and that thereby the good which otherwise might be enjoyed is lost (Jer. xxiii, 33). This feeling is not delusive—it points to a real fact.

10. There is the further feeling that greater ills are in store as the years come and go, that the future will bring disaster because of sin. There enters into the mind a foreboding of evil, a dread of calamities the precise nature of which cannot be described (Heb. x, 27).

11. This comes to be anticipated as deserved, something due to sin, a just retribution or judgment from which there is no way of escape on the ground of personal merit. This was illustrated in the case of the prodigal son (Luke xv, 21).

12. These convictions are painful, causing unrest and personal dissatisfaction. The sense of sin (the inward motions of which produce unholy actions), the sense

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of ill desert and dread of future evil, together with the loss of divine favor, combine to destroy the happiness (Rom. viii, 28). Sometimes this pain is inexpressibly excruciating. Sometimes it affects the bodily health (Psa. xxxii, 3, 4) and prevents slumber. Men have been known under deep conviction of sin to be unfitted for the ordinary duties of life.

13. By far the greatest number have gentler experiences under a sense of sin. The elements are present, but in lower degrees. They may have brief acute stages which pass away, and there may abide only that which is needful to render the person truly aware of his condition, sufficient for all spiritual ends.

14. Let no one expect or desire any particular form of conviction. Some have fallen into the error of supposing that they must experience precisely what another experienced. This is neither possible nor de-

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sirable. The Spirit of God works in each according to his pleasure (1 Cor. xii, 11).

15. Let this be remembered, however, that conviction in any form is but the soul seeing and feeling its own sinfulness. The inward look is the occasion of sorrow. It is a fortunate day when one's self-satisfied state has been disturbed.

*Prayer.* "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psa. cxxxix, 23, 24.)

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### THIRD LESSON.

#### REPENTANCE.

1. CONVICTION of sin is the first movement of the soul toward a better condition. The next exercise determines the peace and character of the person and leaves its influence upon the soul for all coming time and for eternity. What ought to be done when sin is discovered?

2. Several courses may be pursued to the lasting injury of the man, causing him to sink to a lower spiritual plane, to lose the power in part which has been awakened, to become afterward less susceptible to the influence of the truth and the spirit, and to invite a chain of evils that will be overwhelming in their consequences (Prov. i, 30, 31).

3. The convicted man may apologize for

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his sin, claiming that it was an accident, the result of inheritance or association, or pleading that others are guilty of the same or worse, or that it was not, after all, such a very great offense as the judgment had declared (1 Sam. xiii, 11).

4. He may attempt to conceal his sin from the eyes of men (Prov. xxviii, 13), thinking that if it is kept a secret a large part of the evil is removed, caring more for the good opinions of associates than he cares for purity of heart or rectitude of life (1 Thess. ii, 5, 6).

5. He may endeavor to drown the conviction amid the pleasures and business of the world. By occupying his time and diverting his attention the impression may wear away, and he may think that the evil is gone forever. This is a favorite method with many, often the secret of the engagements made by the young (2 Tim. iii, 4).

6. He may determine to do nothing, hop-

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ing that the conviction will gradually pass away, and resolving until then to bear it with fortitude and patience (Psa. xxxii, 3). But if the conviction is pungent this course will soon be abandoned.

7. There is but one proper method for the convicted sinner—he should repent. This is what John the Baptist proclaimed (Matt. iii, 2) as he sought to prepare the way for the Messiah, and it was the first message delivered by Jesus when he began to preach (Mark i, 15.)

8. Repentance is the natural and easy course. Conviction passes over into it so gradually that one is scarcely able to mark the line that separates between the two experiences. They have much in common. One is antecedent and the other consequent. There are elements which must be considered.

9. There is first a genuine sorrow for sin, not for its consequences as when one

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loses property or faces disaster. In that sense every man is naturally sorry for sin, sorry to be overtaken by it, sorry to be affected by it. But repentance is sorrow for the sin itself, for its existence in the heart and life.

10. This sorrow has its roots in the consciousness of God's displeasure and in a knowledge of his goodness (Rom. ii, 4), joined with a consequent desire to regain the lost favor and to be restored to communion with the infinite Father of spirits, in whose presence there is joy for evermore (Psa. xvi, 11).

11. This sorrow becomes valuable and perfect only when it results in a resolve to be rid of the sin, and to find some method of deliverance from it. This was illustrated in the case of the prodigal (Luke xv, 18). Herein is the difference between conviction and repentance: The former is self-judgment, self-condemnation; the latter is a

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struggle to be free from the condemnation.

12. In seeking relief from the burden experienced in conviction the soul employs several means, some of which are preliminary to the final ones and helpful toward it. They are natural results of true penitence; indeed, they may be said to be parts of it, or at least inseparable from it.

13. There is first the act of confession both to God and to man. He who is truly sorry for sinning will be sure to say so, and this confession will be in many ways profitable to him who makes it (1 John i, 9). In like manner a man will gladly acknowledge an offense committed against his fellow if sorry for it (James v, 16).

14. Repentance also includes an attempt to repair the injury inflicted by the sin, so far as this is possible. If the money of another has been taken it must be restored (Luke xix, 8). If one has been slandered



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the falsehood must be recalled. There can be no acceptable act until there is at least an attempt to adjust all transgression (Matt. v, 24).

15. This progressive experience of sorrow, confession, and reparation is but the soul's response to the influence of the Holy Spirit. It is partly emotional and partly volitional. Repentance marks the limit of the soul's ability on the subject of sin. By it sin is cast out of the heart and life so far as the man can cast it out. The reflex influence of repentance is immeasurably great and far-reaching.

*Reflection.* "The Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."  
(2 Pet. iii, 9.)

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### FOURTH LESSON.

#### FAITH.

1. HE who changes his attitude toward sin will change his attitude toward God. The two acts are intimately related. The second follows easily upon the first and completes that spiritual process which is begun in the first.

2. Sin alienates and separates from God (Isa. lix, 2). When by conviction sin is discovered and made burdensome and by repentance it is regretted and repudiated, the soul immediately seeks that favor which was lost, nor rests until it is found (Psa. xlii, 1).

3. There are conditions upon which it is consistent for God to receive the penitent into favor (Rom. iii, 26). These belong to the divine side of reconciliation, and will be

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treated under the head of Atonement in the course for next term. Here it is designed only to show by what process the soul accepts these conditions, through what states it passes in entering into fellowship.

4. That process is faith, which may be briefly defined as a form of dependence upon God. The fear and shrinking which the impenitent experience is dismissed, and there follows a composed trust and rest in Him who is the sure support of the life (Psa. xxvii, 1).

5. Let it not be supposed that faith is a price paid for God's favor, as if that were an article of merchandise. He is more willing to bestow than men are to receive, and none of his gifts can be purchased (Isa. lv, 1). The full recognition of this fact and the confidence thereby inspired is of the essence of faith (1 John v, 14).

6. Hence, faith begins in a recognition of the goodness of God, which, as already

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mentioned, had much to do in promoting repentance for sin. No one could trust a being who is not benevolently inclined; no sinner after repentance would turn to God unless convinced that he was merciful and gracious, long-suffering and kind (Exod. xx, 6).

7. The mercy of God must be expressed in some way so that men may be fully convinced of it. God has been pleased, not only to declare it by the prophets (Isa. lv, 7), as an important part of all their messages, but to give supreme proof of this disposition by sending his Son into the world (John iii, 16).

8. Faith in God, based upon his goodness or mercy, is faith in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son (Acts xvi, 31), a casting of one's self into the loving embrace of God proffered in the person of Jesus.

9. A man will not depend upon God merely because he is merciful. There is

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need of something more to awaken in the human heart its fullest confidence. The sinner has not only violated law, but he has injured himself and is weak. He needs, therefore, some one who will not only forgive but will also strengthen (Eph. iii, 20).

10. Hence, faith is awakened by the discovery of God's power, a power that is under the control of his goodness (Heb. vii, 25), and is exercised toward those who, having been turned away from their sins, need now to be helped in gaining victory over their sins (Matt. i, 21).

11. This element of power is alarming to the wicked but comforting to the penitent. The man who clings to his sins fears to fall into the hands of God (Heb. x, 31). The man who repudiates his sins and discovers his own weakness desires nothing more than to be under God's protection (Eph. i, 19).

12. When the soul recognizes that God is

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merciful and mighty there is a consequent drawing toward him, a strange experience, at first feeble but slowly gaining in strength, until at last, letting go all other hope of obtaining pardon or help, there is a glad and complete surrender. It is not unlike the firm grasp of a drowning man who seizes a rope cast out of a ship by a trusted friend (Psa. xxxii, 6, 7).

13. Simultaneously with this act of faith God pardons. There is a change in his mind and attitude, which need not be fully considered here. It belongs to next term's study under the head of justification (Rom. v, 1). But there comes into the heart of the believer an experience of pardon which is productive of great joy (Isa. xii, 1).

14. There is another result, a matter of experience, which is of utmost importance. When a man, once estranged by sin, has been restored to the favor of God by repentance and faith, the Holy Spirit, which

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before testified against him, now testifies to him (Rom. viii, 16), and he feels that he has been made a child of God, adopted into the heavenly family.

15. There begins also at the same time a renewal of the nature by the Holy Spirit. Up to this point all experience—conviction, repentance, faith—was the result of the Spirit's work. Now that the man is converted, turned from sin to God, the same Spirit proceeds to arouse, unfold, and strengthen the powers for the service of God. And at every step faith must be present in the man to secure the desired results (Gal. ii, 20).

*Reflection.* "Without faith it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. xi, 6.)

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### FIFTH LESSON.

#### HOPE.

1. HE who repents turns away from sin. He who has faith has turned toward God. This double turning (conversion) begins the new life, or, rather, makes possible the new life which is wrought by the Spirit of God (Eph. v, 9), and which will be treated more fully in the lessons of next term under the head of Regeneration.

2. The regenerate life has new experiences impossible in the old life. The soul becomes conscious of states and movements to which it was before a stranger (2 Cor. v, 17). This results from the changes already mentioned, changes that affect the voluntary powers of the soul and cause it to make responses in a new way to things external to itself.



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3. The first of these experiences, following naturally after faith, is a new and clearer vision. The unregenerate man is said to be blind (2 Pet. i, 9), because he does not and cannot perceive the things of God. But in conversion and regeneration the spiritual sight is restored as it was in Saul on the way to Damascus (Acts ix, 18).

4. This new vision is turned toward the future and the spiritual world. Previously the soul was occupied with the things of time and sense which were considered to be of chief importance, laying up treasures on the earth (Matt. vi, 19). Now there breaks upon the sight what was before invisible (2 Cor. iv, 18).

5. The experience thus produced is hope—an anticipation, desire, and appropriation of future blessings. Sometimes this is so vivid that the person counts upon the things discovered as present possessions, and in consequence considers himself rich.

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6. The believer's hope is unlike that of the unbeliever. There is something in human nature, even in its lowest estate, that turns from the present to the future, a faint action of powers that lie dormant, whose full and correct movement occurs only when by the Spirit they are awakened and strengthened.

7. The believer's hope has one peculiarity that specially distinguishes it from that of the unbeliever—its source is in God (Psa. lxxviii, 7). The man realizes that the good he expects and believes to be his is derived from God (James i, 17). He so sees into the complications of life as to discover God working in it for the good of his children (Rom. viii, 28).

8. The Old Testament saints by this experience, this vision of the future, were enabled to anticipate the coming of Christ (Jer. xiv, 8). It was that which filled the minds of the prophets and gave courage in

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every dark hour to the leaders of the nation (Acts xxvi, 6, 7).

9. The hope of the believer reaches out to the life to come, and that in several particulars (Titus iii, 7). It attests the certainty of that life about which philosophers have speculated and all men have fondly dreamed, as a promise from God (Titus i, 2), as in fact an inheritance of saints (Col. i, 12). Thus the soul is able triumphantly to expect deliverance from the grave and entrance afterward into blessedness (2 Tim. iv, 8).

10. This expectation of a future life is compared to an anchor which men cast out into the sea in the time of the storm. Hope reaches into the unseen world where Christ is gone (Heb. vi, 19, 20), the soul's sure support in the midst of the many troubles that befall men here.

11. This life would be intolerable without such hope (1 Cor. xv, 19). It is the future

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life that gives explanation and worth to this (Heb. xiii, 14). Heaven's long age of bliss shall repay all that God's people suffer here, and suffer they must because of the evil that is about them (John xiv, 1-3).

12. Hope has a most salutary influence upon the believer. It is an excellent stimulus to holy living. He who expects to live with God after death in the mansions prepared for him will seek deliverance from all things incompatible with that heavenly abode (1 John iii, 3).

13. Moreover, it gives unity and vigor to all the powers, as doubt, fear, and despondency distract and weaken (Psa. lxxi, 14). It gives joy and steadfastness (Prov. x, 28), so that one presses onward with constancy and even alacrity in the way of duty (2 Cor. i, 7).

14. Hope stands midway between faith and love (1 Cor. xiii, 1); nourished by the former it becomes one of the chief grounds

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of the latter, exercising a salutary influence upon both.

15. There is, therefore, a justifiable and profitable optimism for the believer, who, turning his eyes toward the future, sees the good both of this life and the next and refuses to be cast down by the untoward things that arise (Rom. viii, 37, 38).

*Benediction.* "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xv, 13.)

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### SIXTH LESSON.

#### LOVE.

1. THE experiences thus far described—confession, repentance, faith, hope—all tend to improve, elevate, and enrich the soul on its Godward and heavenward side. That is the end sought by the Holy Spirit in all the influences by which these experiences are produced.

2. It is easy to see what ought to follow. The full life naturally seeks to bestow itself for the good of others. This is a law of existence (Matt. x, 8). They who have little or nothing endeavor to obtain what they lack, satisfied with receiving and enjoying. The divine gift reverses this tendency, and by means of it a man becomes a fountain unable to contain himself (Acts xx, 35).

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3. This overflow or outflow of the soul is love. It is a spontaneous putting forth toward some person, a giving of one's self, prompted and sustained by a strange and mighty but blessed drawing toward its object, with desire to confer good (John iii, 16). Love gives.

4. In lower and imperfect form love exists in all men even when they are unregenerate, called then natural love (Rom. i, 31), as that of parent for child, experienced in all conditions of humanity and in some degree in the animal kingdom. Without this individuals would be driven apart and the social relations would be impossible.

5. Love as a religious experience is higher and more beautiful, and may be called supernatural, because it does not exist in the natural heart but is produced by the Spirit of God (Rom. v, 5), an outgoing that is like that of God (1 John iv, 8).

6. This love is the climax of spiritual at-

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tainment, the end toward which all holy endeavor should be directed, the end sought in all divine discipline. Love is the supreme excellence of angels, the ruling disposition of the heavenly world, "the bond of perfectness" (Col. iii, 14).

7. Love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. xiii, 10). All the commands are kept by him who is governed by love. No one who loves will even desire to be released from any law. On the contrary, he will delight in the law (Psa. cxix, 97), for it prescribes that way which is most productive of good.

8. Love varies with the character of the object toward which it is directed, becoming—

*Complacency*, when the excellent qualities of the being loved excite admiration;

*Communion*, when by similarity of character an interchange occurs, most common among equals, of which brotherly love is the highest and most beautiful expression;



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*Reverence*, when the being loved is superior in character and station ;

*Pity*, when the being beloved has been unfortunate ;

*Praise*, when the excellent qualities excite surprise and prompt to public announcement that others may know them ;

*Charity*, a feeling to aid the poor and needy ;

*Sympathy*, when one has passed through similar experiences and is able to feel with another ;

*Gratitude*, when benefits have been received from the one beloved ;

*Anger*, when justice has been violated, sometimes called indignation ;

*Mercy*, when one who has inflicted injury has repented of it and sought forgiveness.

9. God has commanded men so to love that every power of their natures shall be under its control, and it shall become the dominating principle of life—love to God

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(Deut. vi, 5), love to neighbors (Lev. xix, 18), and even love to enemies (Matt. v, 44).

10. When love is thus dominant the man is said to be perfect; that is, he has attained to the highest virtue in kind (Matt. v, 48).

11. Mr. Wesley said, "So to love God with all the heart and the neighbor as one's self, that out of this pure fountain of love to God and man shall flow all the actions of life—this is Christian perfection," the best definition for that exalted state.

12. "Love covereth sins" (Prov. x, 12). Under its control a man does not discover the faults of another (1 Pet. iv, 8) because he regards more particularly those qualities that are pleasing.

13. Love (charity) edifieth, develops, and strengthens all the nobler elements of man's nature (1 Cor. viii, 1) so that by its influence one steadily advances to better things.

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14. This building-up process through the power of love has for its objective point the comprehensive view of the enlarged possibilities of the saints (Eph. iii, 17, 18).

15. Love should be without dissimulation (Rom. xii, 9), as any attempt at deception tends to prevent its fullest expression.

*Exhortation.* "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." (1 John iv, 7, 8.)

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### SEVENTH LESSON.

#### PRAYER.

1. EVERY man longs for some things not possessed and wishes to retain other things already possessed. These experiences originate in the thought that what is desired will contribute to happiness or usefulness or promote some cherished purpose, plan, or pursuit.

2. The desires may be for unworthy things whose possession will result in injury, or for things that cannot be obtained whose seeking will end in disappointment; or the desires, however worthy in themselves, may be immoderate, causing undue attention to some things and neglect of other things (Eccles. vii, 16).

3. Hence, the regulation of the desires is necessary to happiness, to right conduct,

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and to good character. Some of them must be greatly modified and placed within certain limits, and others of them must be altogether removed. The accomplishment of that task is by no means easy.

4. All the experiences described in the foregoing lessons will be helpful in this matter. Having passed from allowed sin to rejected sin, from alienation from God to reconciliation with him, from the sordid pursuit and enjoyment of material gain to anticipations of spiritual blessings, from self-seeking to self-giving, new and holy desires will be awakened in the soul.

5. As the man has turned to God, and he seeks to live in harmony with the divine will, he will properly refer his desires to God, submitting them for his inspection, approval, or modification, and soliciting his help in realizing what is right in them. This act or experience is prayer.

6. Genuine prayer has at least four char-

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acteristics: it is offered with a righteous purpose (Psa. lxvi, 18), all sin being excluded from the thought and desire; it is prompted by the Holy Spirit (Rom. viii, 26), who is the author of all holy desires; it is presented in the name of Jesus (John xvi, 23), through whom alone there is a right to approach God; it is with faith (Heb. xi, 6), without which all prayer is vain.

7. Two other characteristics will be prominent in the highest forms of prayer. It will be fervent or hearty (Col. iv, 12), because it is an address to the Supreme Being on the most momentous concerns; it will be constant (Col. i, 3), for there never can be a time when God's will need not be considered or his pleasure and help sought.

8. Scholars have recognized six possible parts of prayer: invocation, the request for audience; adoration, a meditation upon the divine perfections; blessing, the ascrip-

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tion of praise due to the infinite glory; confession, an acknowledgment of sin; petition, the presentation of requests; pleading, an earnest and prolonged request.

9. A season of prayer may employ one or any number of the foregoing. It will be highly profitable for the soul at set times to engage in these parts according to spiritual needs and promptings, exercising itself in each part separately.

10. There are different kinds of prayer—the mental or silent, the vocal or audible, the private or personal, the public or united. Each has its place and value, and should be carefully considered that it may be profitably practiced.

11. Scripture examples of prayer present forms and spirit, and may be studied with much profit. Some of the more prominent are those of Daniel (Dan. vi, 11), of Solomon (2 Chron. vii, 1), of Hannah (1 Sam. i, 12), of Paul (Acts ix, 11), and of Jesus

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(Luke iii, 21). What is ordinarily styled the Lord's Prayer, because he gave it (Matt. vi, 9-13), should be committed to memory and each petition made the subject of reflection.

12. Prayer may be offered anywhere. There should be, however, for believers a secret place (Matt. vi, 6) into which one may retire at times, from which all other persons should be excluded. For united prayer (Acts xvi, 13) there must be a spot which may be agreed upon and may become very dear to those who resort to it.

13. The length of time to be spent in prayer at any season must be determined by the suppliants. There have been extended prayer seasons, as in the case of Anna (Luke ii, 37), and of the widow (1 Tim. v, 5), and of Jesus (Luke vi, 12). Some have made long prayers as a pretense of superior piety (Matt. xxiii, 14).

14. The times for prayer may be regular



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and special to meet ordinary and extra needs. The Scriptures mention three seasons, morning, noon, and night (Dan. vi, 10), indicating that this had come to be a national custom (Psa. v, 3), which is certainly very beautiful and commendable.

15. All true prayer is answered (Matt. vii, 7), but not always as men may wish. Failure to receive answers is accounted for in various ways. As a general statement it may be said that God grants what is according to his will (1 John v, 14), and he refuses what will be injurious to the petitioner (James iv, 3).

*Counsel.* "Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication." (Eph. vi, 17, 18.)

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### EIGHTH LESSON.

#### PROGRESS.

1. EVERY living thing advances from feeble beginnings toward an ultimate state of completeness, not by accretions from without, but by the development of an interior principle or germ. In its method and rapidity the advance is governed by unerring law fixed in the constitution of the being.

2. For illustration: The tree begins as a little twig so small and frail that the foot may bend it to the earth, but by the action of forces within itself it becomes the mighty monarch of the forest in whose branches the birds build their nests. So the beast, at first scarcely able to obtain its own food, grows in stature and strength as the years pass.



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3. In like manner the soul of man may pass to higher states by an unfolding process so mysterious as scarcely to admit of explanation, so gradual that one may hardly mark its separate stages, yet so real as to command the closest attention and arouse the most serious and earnest effort.

4. Spiritual growth is commanded (2 Pet. iii, 18). It is therefore a duty, not something that may be done or left undone at pleasure, but something that must be done unless a man would be disobedient to God and out of harmony with him.

5. It is by growth that a man becomes what he was designed to be, and attains the place which God intended him to fill (Phil. iii, 12), able to act an appointed part in the world for God and man. A stereotyped, stationary man is not fully alive, and he is forever out of place, possibly a stumbling-block for others.

6. The believer's true attitude is one of

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upward looking, joined with a firm resolve and a strenuous endeavor to escape from present conditions, however excellent those may be, and to reach out after those conditions which are more excellent (Phil. iii, 13, 14). There will never be a time in the life of a man when there is not something higher to which he may attain.

7. As a pattern and incentive to men it is expressly asserted that the Son of God grew, not in bodily stature only, but in spirit also (Luke i, 80). The law of life held in him; perfection was not reached all at once, but by a steady movement.

8. Spiritual growth is by periods. Some things are possible in childhood and others in after years (1 Cor. xiii, 11). The earlier prepares for the later. It is a calamity when the first years are neglected, as if it were possible to undo the mischief and overtake the rapid movements in nature toward permanent conditions.

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9. Spiritual growth is toward Christ and into him (Eph. iv, 15). He is the head, the life, the pattern. The one end of all progress is to become his and to be like him (1 John iii, 2).

10. Spiritual progress is secured by the continuance and perfection of the experiences named herein. It must not be supposed that a man may have repentance, faith, hope, and love but once (1 Cor. xiii, 13). There must be an ever-increasing exercise in turning away from sin to God and in putting forth right affections toward God and man. Moreover, these experiences interact, so that each is helpful to each other and all go forward to better conditions.

11. The truth factor in spiritual progress cannot be too greatly emphasized. By means of it the soul is liberated (John viii, 32) and sanctified (John xvii, 17). The truth must be desired for nourishment (1 Pet. ii, 2); man must eat it (Matt. iv,

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4), that is, he must diligently meditate upon it (Psa. i, 2) and thereby assimilate it into his being.

12. There are no limits to spiritual growth. The body attains its maximum of size and strength and after a time declines, but the spirit may go on through the entire period of this mortal life and probably through the life to come, "from glory to glory," ever approximating to that which is according to the will of God.

13. It is by growth that the highest forms of joy and peace will be reached, the privilege and the duty of all (1 John i, 4). Our anxieties and fears are due to the fact that we have too little strength and solidity to meet the vicissitudes of life. A frail empty bark is tossed violently on the waves by the wind. A strong vessel with ballast outrides the storm and comes safe into the harbor.

14. Progress in religious experience may

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be generally indicated to consciousness by the following: In the beginning we are chiefly concerned about ourselves; later, we are interested in the welfare of our fellow-citizens; and finally, the chief desire is to exalt Christ and bring glory to God.

15. In the ages to come, the untold periods beyond the judgment, God will present human beings as specimens of his handiwork (Eph. ii, 7), to the praise of his wisdom and power. They only who have unfolded in this life under his discipline will shine forth in the next life with exceeding splendor (Eph. v, 27).

*Exhortation.* "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection." (Heb. vi, 1.)

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### APPENDIX.

#### A. REVIEW QUESTIONS.

(To be used in private and in the class.)

I. *Preliminaries.*—What is an experience? How much of ourselves is known to us? Why should one consider his experiences? What is a religious experience? What five kinds of religious experience are there? How are religious experiences produced? How do religious experiences compare with other experiences? Are religious experiences the same in all persons? Are there some experiences common to all?

II. *Conviction.*—What is the moral condition of all men? Are all men more or less convinced of their condition? How are deeper convictions produced? Does conviction always assume the same form? What is the essential thing in conviction?



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What other elements are usually present in conviction? What is the sense of ill desert? What gives pain in conviction? Why does a convicted person fear?

III. *Repentance*.—What improper courses may be pursued by one under conviction of sin? Why are these not proper? What is the true course to be pursued by the penitent? How is repentance related to conviction? What is the chief element in repentance? What is the source of this? What is the first result of this sorrow? Why does repentance produce confession? Why does it lead to reparation? What is the effect of repentance upon the convicted man?

IV. *Faith*.—What is faith? By what is it preceded? Is faith a price paid for pardon? What is the first ground of faith? What is the other ground of faith? How is the mercy of God declared? How is divine mercy exhibited? What has faith to do

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with Christ? How do the ungodly feel in considering the power of God? How does the penitent feel in considering divine power? Why this difference of feeling? What takes place in the mind of God when faith enters the mind of men?

V. *Hope*.—What is hope? Why does it arise in the renewed heart? What is the origin of the new spiritual vision? Toward what is it directed? Wherein does the believer's hope differ from the unbeliever's? What was the particular object of hope to the prophets? What is the object of hope to the Christian? To what is the hope likened, and why? What is the value of hope in the spiritual life? How is hope related to faith and to love? May Christians be optimists?

VI. *Love*.—What effect is produced by the experiences of repentance, faith, and hope? What follows when a man is enriched? What is love? Mention some

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phases of natural love. Describe love as a religious experience. What is its origin? How is love related to law? What varieties of love are there with reference to the characters of those beloved? How far should love control our lives? When love is dominant what is man's state? How does love affect character?

VII. *Prayer*.—What is prayer? Why should men pray? What four characteristics are there in genuine prayer? What two other characteristics are in the highest forms of prayer? What are the six parts of prayer? What are the four kinds of prayer? What examples of prayer are given in Scripture? What places may be chosen for prayer? How long should a prayer be? What are the best times for prayer? Is prayer answered?

VIII. *Progress*.—How do living beings make progress? Why is spiritual growth commanded? What is gained by spiritual

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growth? What is the believer's true attitude? What is the highest pattern and incentive to growth? What is the end or ideal in spiritual growth? What is recognized as to periods of growth? How is spiritual progress effected? What has truth to do in spiritual growth? What is the limit in spiritual growth? What relation is there between growth and destiny? How is growth indicated to consciousness?

## RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

### B. PERSONAL EXAMINATION.

To be conducted daily and prayerfully in private.)

#### FIRST WEEK.

1. Am I anxious to know my own spiritual condition?
2. Do I seek light on this subject and welcome truth pertaining to it?
3. Do I lay my heart open for inspection by the Holy Spirit?

#### SECOND WEEK.

1. Am I aware of my sinful condition?
2. Am I burdened and condemned by the discovery of my sins?
3. Is sin itself loathsome and offensive to me, or agreeable and desirable?

#### THIRD WEEK.

1. Am I truly and deeply sorry for my sins, or do I apologize for them?
2. Am I fully determined, so far as in me lies, to forsake my sins?

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3. Will I confess my sins to God and endeavor to repair any injury done by me to men?

### FOURTH WEEK.

1. Have I faith in the mercy and power of God as revealed in Christ?

2. Do I cast myself as I am upon him for pardon and strength?

3. Do I feel in my heart that he has forgiven and accepted me?

### FIFTH WEEK.

1. Do I look away from present and temporal good to future and spiritual good?

2. Does this outlook of hope give me joy and stimulate me to live for God?

3. Do I feel that the life to come will yield pleasures unknown in this life?

### SIXTH WEEK.

1. Do I experience an outgoing of heart toward God and men?

2. Does this drawing of my soul incline

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me to render service for the good of men and the glory of God?

3. Is the law of God a delight because it shows the way to the highest and best service?

### SEVENTH WEEK.

1. Am I anxious that even the desires of my heart should be pure and good?

2. Do I habitually present these to God, anxious that he should approve or oppose, satisfied that his will be done?

3. Do I receive answers to prayer? If not, why not? Do I experience pleasure in prayer?

### EIGHTH WEEK.

1. Am I making any progress in the spiritual life?

2. Am I seeking a higher state?

3. Am I anxious to know the will of God in his word and to be conformed to it?

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### C. READING COURSE.

(Recommended to those who have leisure and disposition to consider the subject of religious experience under the guidance of other minds and by other methods.)

1. ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. By Bishop S. M. Merrill, D.D. Price, 90 cents.
2. PHILOSOPHY OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. By Bishop R. S. Foster, D.D. Price, \$1.
3. THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST. By Professor J. Agar Beet. Price, \$1.
4. LOVE ENTHRONED. By Daniel Steele, D.D. Price, \$1.20.
5. PRAYER. By C. H. Van Anda, D.D. Price, 45 cents.
6. POPULAR AMUSEMENTS. By J. Townley Crane, D.D. Price, 60 cents.











