

---

# THE CITY WITHOUT A CHURCH

By Henry Drummond

---

*I, John,*

*Saw the Holy City,*

*New Jerusalem,*

*Coming down from God out of Heaven.*

\* \* \*

*And I saw no Temple therein.*

\* \* \*

*And His servants shall serve Him;*

*And they shall see His Face;*

*And His Name shall be written on their foreheads.*

---

- I SAW THE CITY
- HIS SERVANTS SHALL SERVE
- I SAW NO TEMPLE THERE

[Henry Drummond Page](#) | [Cornerstone Books Home Page](#)

---

## I SAW THE CITY

TWO very startling things arrest us in John's vision of the future. The first is that the likeliest thing to Heaven he could think of was a City; the second, that there was no Church in that City.

Almost nothing more revolutionary could be said, even to the modern world, in the name of religion. *No Church*--that is the defiance of religion; a *City*--that is the antipodes of Heaven. Yet John combines these contradictions in one daring image, and holds up to the world the picture of a City without a Church as his ideal of the heavenly life.

By far the most original thing here is the simple conception of Heaven as a City. The idea of religion without a Church-- "I saw no Temple therein"--is anomalous enough; but the association of the blessed life with a City--the one place in the world from which Heaven seems most far away-- is something wholly new in religious thought. No other religion which has a Heaven ever had a Heaven like this. The Greek, if he looked forward at all, awaited the Elysian Fields; the Eastern sought Nirvana. All other Heavens have been Gardens, Dreamlands--passivities more or less aimless. Even to the majority among ourselves Heaven is a siesta and not a City. It remained for John to go straight to the other extreme and select the citadel of the world's fever, the ganglion of its unrest, the heart and focus of its most strenuous toil, as the framework for his ideal of the blessed life.

The Heaven of Christianity is different from all other Heavens, because the religion of Christianity is different from all other religions. Christianity is the religion of Cities. It moves among real things. Its sphere is the street, the market-place, the working-life of the world.

And what interests one for the present in John's vision is not so much what it reveals of a Heaven beyond, but what it suggests of the nature of the heavenly life in this present world. Find out what a man's Heaven is-- no matter whether it be a dream or a reality, no matter whether it refer to an actual Heaven or to a Kingdom of God to be realized on earth--and you pass by an easy discovery to what his religion is; And herein lies one value at least of this allegory. It is a touchstone for Christianity, a test for the solidity or the insipidity of one's religion, for the wholesomeness or the fatuousness of one's faith, for the usefulness or the futility of one's life. For this vision of the City marks off in lines which no eye can mistake the true area which the religion of Christ is meant to inhabit, and announces for all time the real nature of the saintly life.

City life is human life at its intensest, man in his most real relations. And the nearer one draws to reality, the nearer one draws to the working sphere of religion. Wherever real life is, there Christ goes. And He goes there, not only because the great need lies there, but because there is found, so to speak, the raw material with which Christianity works--the life of man. To do something with this, to infuse something into this, to save and inspire and sanctify this, the actual working life of the world, is what He came for. Without human life to act upon, without the relations of men with one another, of master with servant, husband with wife, buyer with seller, creditor with debtor, there is no such thing as Christianity. With actual

things, with Humanity in its everyday dress, with the traffic of the streets, with gates and houses, with work and wages, with sin and poverty, with these *things*, and all the things and all the relations and all the people of the City, Christianity has to do and has more to do than with anything else. To conceive of the Christian religion as itself a thing--a something which can exist apart from life; to think of it as something added on to being, something kept in a separate compartment called the soul, as an extra accomplishment like music, or a special talent like art, is totally to misapprehend its nature. It is that which fills all compartments. It is that which makes the whole life music and every separate action a work of art. Take away action and it is not. Take away people, houses, streets, character, and it ceases to be. Without these there may be sentiment, or rapture, or adoration, or superstition; there may even be religion, but there can never be the religion of the Son of Man.

If Heaven were a siesta, religion might be conceived of as a reverie. If the future life were to be mainly spent in a Temple, the present life might be mainly spent in Church. But if Heaven be a City, the life of those who are going there must be a real life. The man who would enter John's Heaven, no matter what piety or what faith he may profess, must be a real man. Christ's gift to men was life, a rich and abundant life. And life is meant for living. An abundant life does not show itself in abundant dreaming, but in abundant living--in abundant living among real and tangible objects and to actual and practical purposes. "His servants," John tells us, "shall serve." In this vision of the City he confronts us with a new definition of a Christian man-- the perfect saint is the perfect citizen.

To make Cities--that is what we are here for. To make good Cities--that is for the present hour the main work of Christianity. For the City is strategic. It makes the towns: the towns make the villages; the villages make the country. He who makes the City makes the world. After all, though men make Cities, it is Cities which make men. Whether our national life is great or mean, whether our social virtues are mature or stunted, whether our sons are moral or vicious, whether religion is possible or impossible, depends upon the City. When Christianity shall take upon itself in full responsibility the burden and care of Cities the Kingdom of God will openly come on earth. What Christianity waits for also, as its final apologetic and justification to the world, is the founding of a City which shall be in visible reality a City of God. People do not dispute that religion is in the Church. What is now wanted is to let them see it in the City. One Christian City, one City in any part of the earth, whose citizens from the greatest to the humblest lived in the spirit of Christ, where religion had overflowed the Churches and passed into the streets, inundating every house and workshop, and permeating the whole social and commercial life--one such Christian City would seal the redemption of the world.

Some such City, surely, was what John saw in his dream. Whatever reference we may find there to a world to come, is it not equally lawful to seek the scene upon this present world? John saw his City *descending out of Heaven*. It was, moreover, no strange apparition, but a City which he knew. It was Jerusalem, a new *Jerusalem*. The significance of that name has been altered for most of us by religious poetry; we spell it with a capital and speak of the New Jerusalem as a synonym for Heaven. Yet why not take it simply as it stands, as a new

Jerusalem? Try to restore the natural force of the expression--suppose John to have lived to-day and to have said London? "I saw a new London?" Jerusalem was John's London. All the grave and sad suggestion that the word London brings up to-day to the modern reformer, the word Jerusalem recalled to him. What in his deepest hours he longed and prayed for was a new Jerusalem, a reformed Jerusalem. And just as it is given to the man in modern England who is a prophet, to the man who believes in God and in the moral order of the world, to discern a new London shaping itself through all the sin and chaos of the City, so was it given to John to see a new Jerusalem rise from the ruins of the old.

We have no concern--it were contrary to critical method--to press the allegory in detail. What we take from it, looked at in this light, is the broad conception of a transformed City, the great Christian thought that the very Cities where we live, with all their suffering and sin, shall one day, by the gradual action of the forces of Christianity, be turned into Heavens on earth. This is a spectacle which profoundly concerns the world. To the reformer, the philanthropist, the economist, the politician, this Vision of the City is the great classic of social literature. What John saw, we may fairly take it, was the future of all Cities. It was the dawn of a new social order, a regenerate humanity, a purified society, an actual transformation of the Cities of the world into Cities of God.

This City, then, which John saw is none other than your City, the place where you live--as it might be, and as you are to help to make it. It is London, Berlin, New York, Paris, Melbourne, Calcutta--these as they might be, and in some infinitesimal degree as they have already begun to be. In each of these, and in every City throughout the world to-day, there is a City descending out of Heaven from God. Each one of us is daily building up this City or helping to keep it back. Its walls rise slowly, but, as we believe in God, the building can never cease. For the might of those who build, be they few or many, is so surely greater than the might of those who retard, that no day's sun sets over any City in the land that does not see some stone of the invisible City laid. To believe this is faith. To live for this is Christianity.

The project is delirious? Yes--to atheism. To John it was the most obvious thing in the world. Nay, knowing all he knew, its realization was inevitable. We forget, when the thing strikes us as strange, that John knew Christ. Christ was the Light of the World--the Light of the *World*. This is all that he meant by his Vision, that Christ is the Light of the World. This Light, John saw, would fall everywhere--especially upon Cities. It was irresistible and inextinguishable. No darkness could stand before it. One by one the Cities of the world would give up their night. Room by room, house by house, street by street, they would be changed. Whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie would disappear. Sin, pain, sorrow, would silently pass away. One day the walls of the City would be jasper; the very streets would be paved with gold. Then the kings of the earth would bring their glory and honour into it. In the midst of the streets there should be a tree of Life. And its leaves would go forth for the healing of the nations.

Survey the Cities of the world today, survey your own City--town, village, home --and prophesy. God's kingdom is surely to come in this world. God's will is surely to be done on earth as it is done in Heaven. Is not this one practicable way of realizing it? When a prophet

speaks of something that is to be, that coming event is usually brought about by no unrelated cause or sudden shock, but in the ordered course of the world's drama. With Christianity as the supreme actor in the world's drama, the future of its Cities is even now quite clear. Project the lines of Christian and social progress to their still far off goal, and see even now that Heaven must come to earth.

[<Back](#)

---

## HIS SERVANTS SHALL SERVE

IF any one wishes to know what he can do to help on the work of God in the world let him make a City, or a street, or a house of a City. Men complain of the indefiniteness of religion. There are thousands ready in their humble measure to offer some personal service for the good of men, but they do not know where to begin. Let me tell you where to begin--where Christ told His disciples to begin, at the nearest City. I promise you that before one week's work is over you will never again be haunted by the problem of the indefiniteness of Christianity. You will see so much to do, so many actual things to be set right, so many merely material conditions to alter, so much striving with employers of labour, and City councils, and trade agitators, and Boards, and Vestries, and Committees; so much pure unrelieved uninspiring hard work, that you will begin to wonder whether in all this naked realism you are on holy ground at all. Do not be afraid of missing Heaven in seeking a better earth. The distinction between secular and sacred is a confusion and not a contrast; and it is only because the secular is so intensely sacred that so many eyes are blind before it. The really secular thing in life is the spirit which despises under that name what is but part of the everywhere present work and will of God. Be sure that, down to the last and pettiest detail, all that concerns a better world is the direct concern of Christ.

I make this, then, in all seriousness as a definite practical proposal. You wish, you say, to be a religious man. Well, be one. There is your City; begin. But what are you to believe? Believe in your City. What else? In Jesus Christ. What about Him? That He wants to make your City better; that that is what He would be doing if He lived there. What else? Believe in yourself--that you, even you, can do some of the work which He would like done, and that unless you do it, it will remain undone. How are you to begin? As Christ did. First He looked at the City; then He wept over it; then He died for it.

Where are you to begin? Begin where you are. Make that one corner, room, house, office as like Heaven as you can. Begin? Begin with the paper on the walls, make that beautiful; with the air, keep it fresh; with the very drains, make them sweet; with the furniture, see that it be honest. Abolish whatsoever worketh abomination--in food, in drink, in luxury, in books, in art; whatsoever maketh a lie--in conversation, in social intercourse, in correspondence, in domestic life. This done, you have arranged for a Heaven, but you have not got it. Heaven lies

within, in kindness, in humbleness, in unselfishness, in faith, in love, in service. To get these in, get Christ in. Teach all in the house about Christ--what He did, and what He said, and how He lived, and how He died, and how He dwells in them, and how He makes all one. Teach it not as a doctrine, but as a discovery, as your own discovery. Live your own discovery.

Then pass out into the City. Do all to it that you have done at home. Beautify it, ventilate it, drain it. Let nothing enter it that can defile the streets, the stage, the newspaper offices, the booksellers' counters; nothing that maketh a lie in its warehouses, its manufactures, its shops, its art galleries, its advertisements. Educate it, amuse it, church it. Christianize capital; dignify labour. Join Councils and Committees. Provide for the poor, the sick, and the widow. So will you serve the City.

If you ask me which of all these things is the most important, I reply that among them there is only one thing of superlative importance and that *is yourself*. By far the greatest thing a man can do for his City is to be a good man. Simply to live there as a good man, as a Christian man of action and practical citizen, is the first and highest contribution any one can make to its salvation. Let a City be a Sodom or a Gomorrah, and if there be but ten righteous men in it, it will be saved.

It is here that the older, the more individual, conception of Christianity, did such mighty work for the world--it produced good men. It is goodness that tells, goodness first and goodness last. Good men even with small views are immeasurably more important to the world than small men with great views. But given good men, such men as were produced even by the self-centred theology of an older generation, and add that wider outlook and social ideal which are coming to be the characteristics of the religion of this age, and Christianity has an equipment for the reconstruction of the world, before which nothing can stand. Such good men will not merely content themselves with being good men. They will be forces--according to their measure, public forces. They will take the city in hand, some a house, some a street, and some the whole. Of set purpose they will serve. Not ostentatiously, but silently, in ways varied as human nature, and many as life's opportunities, they will minister to its good.

To help the people, also, to be good people good fathers, and mothers, and sons, and citizens--is worth all else rolled into one. Arrange the government of the City as you may, perfect all its philanthropic machinery, make righteous its relations great and small, equip it with galleries and parks, and libraries and music, and carry out the whole programme of social reform, and the one thing needful is still without the gates. The gospel of material blessedness is part of a gospel--a great and Christian part-- but when held up as the whole gospel for the people it is as hollow as the void of life whose circumference even it fails to touch.

There are countries in the world--new countries--where the people, rising to the rights of government, have already secured almost all that reformers cry for. The lot of the working man there is all but perfect. His wages are high, his leisure great, his home worthy. Yet in tens of thousands of cases the secret of life is unknown.

It is idle to talk of Christ as a social reformer if by that is meant that His first concern was to improve the organization of society, or provide the world with better laws. These were among His objects, but His first was to provide the world with better men. The one need of

every cause and every community still is for better men. If every workshop held a Workman like Him who worked in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, the labour problem and all other workman's problems would soon be solved. If every street had a home or two like Mary's home in Bethany, the domestic life of the city would be transformed in three generations.

External reforms-- education, civilization, public schemes, and public charities--have each their part to play. Any experiment that can benefit by one hairbreadth any single human life is a thousand times worth trying. There is no effort in any single one of these directions but must, as Christianity advances, be pressed by Christian men to ever further and fuller issues. But those whose hands have tried the ways, and the slow work of leavening men one by one with the spirit of Jesus Christ.

The thought that the future, that any day, may see some new and mighty enterprise of redemption, some new departure in religion, which shall change everything with a breath and make all that is crooked straight, is not at all likely to be realized. There is nothing wrong with the lines on which redemption runs at present except the want of faith to believe in them, and the want of men to use them. The Kingdom of God is like leaven, and the leaven is with us now. The quantity at work in the world may increase but that is all. For nothing can ever be higher than the Spirit of Christ or more potent as a regenerating power on the lives of men.

Do not charge me with throwing away my brief because I return to this old, old plea for the individual soul. I do not forget that my plea is for the City. But I plead for good men, because good men are good leaven. If their goodness stop short of that, if the leaven does not mix with that which is unleavened, if it does not do the work of leaven--that is, to *raise something*-- it is not the leaven of Christ. The question of good men to ask themselves is: Is my goodness helping others? Is it a private luxury, or is it telling upon the City? Is it bringing any single human soul nearer happiness or righteousness?

If you ask what particular scheme you shall take up, I cannot answer. Christianity has no set schemes. It makes no choice between conflicting philanthropies, decides nothing between competing churches, favours no particular public policy, organizes no one line of private charity. It is not essential even for all of us to take any public or formal line. Christianity is not all carried on by Committees, and the Kingdom of God has other ways of coming than through municipal reforms. Most of the stones for the building of the City of God, and all the best of them, are made by *mothers*. But whether or no you shall work through public channels, or only serve Christ along the quieter paths of home, no man can determine but yourself.

There is an almost awful freedom about Christ's religion. "I do not call you servants." He said, "for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth. I have called you friends." As Christ's friends, His followers are supposed to know what He wants done, and for the same reason they will try to do it--this is the whole working basis of Christianity. Surely next to its love for the chief of sinners the most touching thing about the religion of Christ is its amazing trust in the least of saints. Here is the mightiest enterprise ever launched upon this earth, mightier even than its creation, for it is its re-creation, and the carrying of it out is left, so to speak, to haphazard--to individual loyalty, to free enthusiasms, to uncoerced activities, to an uncompelled response to the pressures of God's Spirit. Christ sets His followers no tasks. He

appoints no hours. He allots no sphere. He Himself simply went about and did good. He did not stop life to do some special thing which should be called religious. His life was His religion. Each day as it came brought round in the ordinary course its natural ministry. Each village along the highway had someone waiting to be helped. His pulpit was the hillside, His congregation a woman at a well. The poor, wherever He met them, were His clients; the sick, as often as He found them, His opportunity. His work was everywhere; His workshop was the world. One's associations of Christ are all of the wayside. We never think of Him in connection with a Church We cannot picture Him in the garb of a priest or belonging to any of the classes who specialize religion. His service was of a universal human order. He was the Son of Man, the Citizen.

This, remember, was the highest life ever lived, this informal citizen-life. So simple a thing it was, so natural, so human, that those who saw it first did not know it was religion, and Christ did not pass among them as a very religious man. Nay, it is certain, and it is an infinitely significant thought, that the religious people of His time not only refused to accept this type of religion as any kind of religion at all, but repudiated and denounced Him as its bitter enemy.

Inability to discern what true religion is, is not confined to the Pharisees. Multitudes still who profess to belong to the religion of Christ, scarcely know it when they see it. The truth is, men will hold to almost anything in the name of Christianity, believe anything, do anything--except its common and obvious tasks. Great is the mystery of what has passed in this world for religion.

[<Back](#)

---

## I SAW NO TEMPLE THERE

"I SAW no Church there," said John. Nor is there any note of surprise as he marks the omission of what one half of Christendom would have considered the first essential. For beside the type of religion he had learned from Christ, the Church type --the merely Church type--is an elaborate evasion. What have the pomp and circumstance, the fashion and the form, the vestures and the postures, to do with Jesus of Nazareth? At a stage in personal development. and for a certain type of mind, such things may have a place. But when mistaken for Christianity, no matter how they aid it, or in what measure they conserve it, they defraud the souls of men, and rob humanity of its dues. It is because to large masses of people Christianity has become synonymous with a Temple service that other large masses of people decline to touch it. It is a mistake to suppose that the working classes of this country are opposed to Christianity. No man can ever be opposed to Christianity who knows what it *really*



is. The working men would still follow Christ if He came among them. As a matter of fact they do follow anyone, preacher or layman, in pulpit or on platform, who is the least like Him. But what they cannot follow, and must evermore live outside of, is a worship which ends with the worshipper, a religion expressed only in ceremony, and a faith unrelated to life.

Perhaps the most dismal fact of history is the failure of the great organized bodies of ecclesiasticism to understand the simple genius of Christ's religion. Whatever the best in the Churches of all time may have thought of the life and religion of Christ, taken as a whole they have succeeded in leaving upon the mind of a large portion of the world an impression of Christianity which is the direct opposite of the reality. Down to the present hour almost whole nations in Europe live, worship, and die under the belief that Christ is an ecclesiastical Christ, religion the sum of all the Churches' observances, and faith an adhesion to the Churches' creeds. I do not apportion blame; I simply record the fact. Everything that the spiritual and temporal authority of man could do has been done-- done in ignorance of the true nature of Christianity--to dislodge the religion of Christ from its natural home in the heart of Humanity. In many lands the Churches have literally stolen Christ from the people; they have made the Son of Man the Priest of an Order; they have taken Christianity from the City and imprisoned it behind altar rails; they have withdrawn it from the national life and doled it out to the few who pay to keep the unconscious deception up.

Do not do the Church, the true Church at least, the injustice to think that she does not know all this. Nowhere, not even in the fiercest secular press, is there more exposure of this danger, more indignation at its continuance, than in many of the Churches of to-day. The protest against the confusion of Christianity with the Church is the most threadbare of pulpit themes. Before the University of Oxford, from the pulpit of St. Mary's, these words were lately spoken: "If it is strange that the Church of the darker ages should have needed so bitter a lesson (the actual demolition of their churches), is it not ten times stranger still that the Church of the days of greater enlightenment should be found again making the chief part of its business the organizing of the modes of worship; that the largest efforts which are owned as the efforts of the Church are made for the establishment and maintenance of worship; that our chief controversies relate to the teaching and the ministry of a system designed primarily, if not exclusively, for worship; that even the fancies and the refinements of such a system divide us; that the breach between things secular and things religious grows wider instead of their being made to blend into one; and that the vast and fruitful spaces of the actual life of mankind lie still so largely without the gates? The old Jerusalem was all temple. The mediaeval Church was all temple. But the ideal of the new Jerusalem was--no temple, but a God-inhabited society. Are we not reversing this ideal in an age when the church still means in so many mouths the clergy, instead of meaning the Christian society, and when nine men are striving to get men to go to church for one who is striving to make men realize that they themselves are the Church?"

Yet even with words so strong as these echoing daily from Protestant pulpits the superstition reigns in all but unbroken power. And everywhere still men are found confounding the spectacular services of a Church, the vicarious religion of a priest, and the

traditional belief in a creed, with the living religion of the Son of Man.

"I saw no Temple there"--the future City will be a City without a Church. Ponder that fact, realize the temporariness of the Church, then--go and build one. Do not imagine, because all this has been said, that I mean to depreciate the Church. On the contrary, if it were mine to build a City, a City where all life should be religious, and all men destined to become members of the Body of Christ, the first stone I should lay there would be the foundation-stone of a Church Why? Because, among other reasons, the product which the Church on the whole best helps to develop, and in the largest quantity, is that which is most needed by the City.

For the present, and for a long time to come, the manufactory of good men, the nursery of the forces which are to redeem the City, will in the main be found to be some more or less formal, more or less imperfect, Christian Church. Here and there an unchurched soul may stir the multitudes to lofty deeds; isolated men; strong enough to preserve their souls apart from the Church, but shortsighted enough perhaps to fail to see that others cannot, may set high examples and stimulate to national reforms. But for the rank and file of us, made of such stuff as we are made of, the steady pressures of fixed institutions, the regular diets of a common worship, and the education of public Christian teaching are too obvious safeguards of spiritual culture to be set aside. Even Renan declares his conviction that "Beyond the family and outside the State, man has need of the Church . . . Civil society, whether it calls itself a commune, a canton, or a province, a state, or fatherland, has many duties towards the improvement of the individual; but what it does is necessarily limited. The family ought to do much more, but often it is insufficient; sometimes it is wanting altogether. The association created in the name of moral principle can alone give to every man coming into this world a bond which unites him with the past, duties as to the future, examples to follow, a heritage to receive and to transmit, and a tradition of devotion to continue." Apart altogether from the quality of its contribution to society, in the mere quantity of the work it turns out it stands alone. Even for social purposes the Church is by far the greatest Employment Bureau in the world. And the man who, seeing where it falls short, withholds on that account his witness to its usefulness, is a traitor to history and to fact.

"The Church," as the preacher whom I have already quoted, most truly adds, "is a society which tends to embrace the whole life of mankind, to bind all their relations together by a Divine sanction. As such, it blends naturally with the institutions of common life--those institutions which, because they are natural and necessary, are therefore Divine. What it aims at is not the recognition by the nation of a worshipping body, governed by the ministers of public worship, which calls itself the Church, but that the nation and all classes in it should act upon Christian principle, that laws should be made in Christ's spirit of justice, that the relations of the powers of the state should be maintained on a basis of Christian equity, that all public acts should be done in Christ's spirit, and with mutual forbearance, that the spirit of Christian charity should be spread through all ranks and orders of the people. The Church will maintain public worship as one of the greatest supports of a Christian public life; but it will always remember that the true service is a life of devotion to God and man far more than the

common utterance of prayer." I have said that were it mine to build a City, the first stone I should lay there would be the foundation-stone of a Church. But if it were mine to preach the first sermon in that Church, I should choose as the text, "I saw no Church therein." I should tell the people that the great use of the Church is to help men to do without it. As the old ecclesiastical term has it, Church services are "diets" of worship. They are meals. All who are hungry will take them, and, if they are wise, regularly. But no workman is paid for his meals. He is paid for the work he does in the strength of them. No Christian is paid for going to Church. He goes there for a meal, for strength from God and from his fellow-worshippers to do the work of life --which is the work of Christ. The Church is a Divine institution because it is so very human an institution. As a channel of nourishment, as a stimulus to holy deeds, as a link with all holy lives, let all men use it, and to the utmost of their opportunity. But by all that they know of Christ or care for man, let them beware of mistaking its services for Christianity. What Church services really express is the *want* of Christianity. And when that which is perfect in Christianity is come, all this, as the mere passing stay and scaffolding of struggling souls, must vanish away.

If the masses who never go to Church only knew that the Churches were the mute expression of a Christian's *wants* and not the self-advertisement of his sanctity, they would have more respectful words for Churches. But they have never learned this. And the result in their case of confounding religion with the Church is even more serious than in the case of the professing Christian. When they break with the Church it means to them a break with all religion. As things are it could scarce be otherwise. With the Church in ceaseless evidence before their eyes as the acknowledged custodian of Christianity; with actual stone and lime in every street representing the place where religion dwells; with a professional class moving out and in among them, holding in their hands the souls of men, and almost the keys of Heaven--how is it possible that those who turn their backs on all this should not feel outcast from the Church's God? It is not possible. Without a murmur, yet with results to themselves most disastrous and pathetic, multitudes accept this false dividing-line and number themselves as excommunicate from all good. The masses will never return to the Church till its true relation to the City is more defined. And they can never have that most real life of theirs made religious so long as they rule themselves out of court on the ground that they have broken with ecclesiastical forms. The life of the masses is the most real of all lives. It is full of religious possibilities. Every movement of it and every moment of it might become of supreme religious value, might hold a continuous spiritual discipline, might perpetuate, and that in most natural ways, a moral influence which should pervade all Cities and all States. But they must first be taught what Christianity really is, and learn to distinguish between religion and the Church. After that, if they be taught their lesson well, they will return to honour both.

Our fathers made much of "meetness" for Heaven. By prayer and fasting, by self-examination and meditation they sought to fit themselves "for the inheritance of the saints in light." Important beyond measure in their fitting place are these exercises of the soul. But whether alone they fit men for the inheritance of the saints depends on what a saint is. If a saint is a devotee and not a citizen, if Heaven is a cathedral and not a City, then these things

do fit for Heaven. But if life means action, and Heaven service; if spiritual graces are acquired for use and not for ornament, then devotional forms have a deeper function. The Puritan preachers were wont to tell their people to "practise dying." Yes; but what is dying? It is going to a City. And what is required of those who would go to a City? The practice of Citizenship--the due employment of the unselfish talents, the development of public spirit, the payment of the full tax to the great brotherhood, the subordination of personal aims to the common good. And where are these to be learned? Here; in Cities here. There is no other way to learn them. There is no Heaven to those who have not learned them.

No Church however holy, no priest however earnest, no book however sacred, can transfer to any human character the capacities of Citizenship--those capacities which in the very nature of things are *necessities* to those who would live in the kingdom of God. The only preparation which multitudes seem to make for Heaven is for its Judgment Bar. What will they do in its streets? What have they learned of Citizenship? What have they practised of love? How like are they to its Lord? To "practise dying" is to practise living. Earth is the rehearsal for Heaven. The eternal beyond is the eternal here. The street-life, the home-life, the business-life, the City-life in all the varied range of its activity, are an apprenticeship for the City of God. There is no other apprenticeship for it. To know how to serve Christ in these is to "practise dying."

To move among the people on the common street; to meet them in the market-place on equal terms; to live among them not as saint or monk, but as brother-man with brother-man; to serve God not with form or ritual, but in the free impulse of a soul; to bear the burdens of society and relieve its needs; to carry on the multitudinous activities of the City--social, commercial, political, philanthropic--in Christ's spirit and for His ends: this is the religion of the Son of Man, and the only meetness for Heaven which has much reality in it.

No Church however holy, no priest however earnest, no book however sacred, can transfer to any human character the capacities of Citizenship--those capacities which in the very nature of things are *necessities* to those who would live in the kingdom of God. The only preparation which multitudes seem to make for Heaven is for its Judgment Bar. What will they do in its streets? What have they learned of Citizenship? What have they practised of love? How like are they to its Lord? To "practise dying" is to practise living. Earth is the rehearsal for Heaven. The eternal beyond is the eternal here. The street-life, the home-life, the business-life, the City-life in all the varied range of its activity, are an apprenticeship for the City of God. There is no other apprenticeship for it. To know how to serve Christ in these is to "practise dying."

To move among the people on the common street; to meet them in the market-place on equal terms; to live among them not as saint or monk, but as brother-man with brother-man; to serve God not with form or ritual, but in the free impulse of a soul; to bear the burdens of society and relieve its needs; to carry on the multitudinous activities of the City--social, commercial, political, philanthropic--in Christ's spirit and for His ends: this is the religion of the Son of Man, and the only meetness for Heaven which has much reality in it.

No; the Church with all its splendid equipment, the cloister with all its holy opportunity, are not the final instruments for fitting men for Heaven. The City, in many of its functions, is a

greater Church than the Church. It is amid the whirr of its machinery and in the discipline of its life that the souls of men are really made. How great its opportunity is we are few of us aware. It is such slow work getting better, the daily round is so very common, our ideas of a heavenly life are so unreal and mystical that even when the highest Heaven lies all around us, when we might touch it, and dwell in it every day we live, we almost fail to see that it is there. The Heaven of our childhood, the spectacular Heaven, the Heaven which is a *place*, so dominates thought even in our maturer years, that we are slow to learn the fuller truth that Heaven is a *state*. But John, who is responsible before all other teachers for the dramatic view of Heaven, has not failed in this very allegory to proclaim the further lesson. Having brought all his scenery upon the stage and pictured a material Heaven of almost unimaginable splendour, the seer turns aside before he closes for a revelation of a profounder kind. Within the Heavenly City he opens the gate of an inner Heaven. It is the spiritual Heaven--the Heaven of those who serve. With two flashes of his pen he tells the Citizens of God all that they will ever need or care to know as to what Heaven really means. "His servants shall serve Him; and *they shall see His Face; and His Character shall be written on their characters.*"

They shall see His Face. Where? In the City. When? In Eternity? No; to-morrow. Those who serve in any City cannot help continually seeing Christ. He is there with them. He is there before them. They cannot but meet. No gentle word is ever spoken that Christ's voice does not also speak; no meek deed is ever done that the unsummoned Vision does not there and then appear. Whoso, in whatsoever place, receiveth a little child in My name receiveth Me.

This is how men get to know God--by doing His will. And there is no other way. And this is how men become like God; how God's character becomes written upon men's characters. Acts react upon souls. Good acts make good men; just acts, just men; kind acts, kind men; divine acts, divine men. And there is no other way of becoming good, just, kind, divine. And there is no Heaven for those who have not become these. For these are Heaven.

When John's Heaven faded from his sight, and the prophet woke to the desert waste of Patmos, did he grudge to exchange the Heaven of his dream for the common tasks around him? Was he not glad to be alive, and there? And would he not straightway go to the City, to whatever struggling multitude his prison-rock held, if so be that he might prove his dream and among them see His Face? Traveller to God's last City, be glad that you are alive. Be thankful for the City at your door and for the chance to build its walls a little nearer Heaven before you go. Pray for yet a little while to redeem the wasted years. And week by week as you go forth from worship, and day by day as you awake to face this great and needy world, learn to "seek a City" there, and in the service of its neediest citizen find Heaven.

[<Back](#)

[Henry Drummond Page](#) | [Cornerstone Books Home Page](#)