

Agnosticism Is Not The Answer

Love Is

"That ye, . . . may be able . . . to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19)

There is something better than living with a question mark. I may know something experimentally that I do not know scientifically.

One hundred and twenty five years ago the black man, who fled for life and liberty, did not know very much scientifically about the North Star. He may not have known it was a great central sun, with a solar system, like ours, revolving around it. But he knew where to find it. He knew that its light led the way to a country under whose sheltering flag no man could be held in slavery.

I can't explain *why* Christ loves me. It's beyond knowledge. I *know* He does. That is clear to me.

There is no mystery to the love born between mother and son. Love is born of love. *But Jesus loves those who hate Him.* That passeth knowledge. That is incomprehensible. I accept it, although I cannot explain it.

First, the love of Christ passeth knowledge because He loves those whose spirit and character make them unworthy of His love. How can God pursue those who hate, who are bitter, persecute, disobey, insult, rebel, and waste their lives?

Like attracts like. A man of poetic temperament is drawn to the poet. Musicians admire the masters. Scientists find a society. Unions are formed – the machinists, bricklayers, long shermen, electricians find their own.

Why should Jesus be the exception? He is pure, and yet He loves the impure. He is truth, but He loves those whose lives are an open lie. He is light, and yet He loves those who have chosen darkness. He is from heaven, and yet He loves those who have never so much as looked in that direction. He always put the will of God first, and yet He loves those who are constantly trampling that will under their feet. His name and nature is love, and yet He yearns over those who follow the bent of hatred and revenge.

I cannot comprehend it. It "passeth knowledge."

Second, the love of Christ passeth knowledge because it is *infinite*. My comprehension is finite. My perspective is limited. I want the *immediate*. From where I operate the panorama is small. My judgment rests on restricted evidence. I want the child to show me everything in the fourth or fifth grades. I want the employee to convince me within the first six months. I want my marriage to work before a two-week honeymoon is completed. *I need a better elevation.*

I know in *part*. That is a sentence I should always keep before me. God sees what I cannot see. He sees the final, as well as the commencement. I wish some of my teachers could see me now. I wish some of the saints who were so discouraged with me in my teens could fellowship with me now. They would chuckle at some of their dire predictions.

Buchanan was Pennsylvania's only White House occupant. He remained a bachelor. His heart's choice was discouraged by her father from keeping company with him. The father thought the young man to be improvident and with extremely poor prospects toward making a name for himself. That father was shortsighted. He kept a daughter from becoming a First Lady.

God sees farther than I can see. So, He loves as I can never love.

Love is in *deed*. We know Jonathan loved David because the Crown Prince of Israel endangered his throne to serve his friend.

We know that Enoch Arden loved Annie Lee, because he pined away and died when, returning from the long imprisonment on that loveliest island of a lovely sea, Enoch found that wearied with waiting, Annie had married Philip Ray, and he might never hold her to his heart again.

We know that Jacob loved Rachel, for he served for her 14 years, and found that time as but a day, because Cupid was 'singing a song of hope in his heart.

We know that Bismarck loved Germany, for his whole life is a witness to the truthfulness of his words, "Let them hang me if they will, so long as the rope with which they do the deed binds United Germany to the foot of the Prussian throne."

I only have to see what Jesus *did*. I look at His poverty. I examine His loneliness. I witness His rejection. I observe His shame. I see Him maimed. He is beaten. He is contradicted and misquoted. He is mocked. He is deserted. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46). He is abandoned. And I must ask, "For *what purpose?*" Am I worth it? It "passeth knowledge."

Calvary is more than a historical fact. It is a *personal experience*. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy. Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:5). I cannot understand Calvary, but I can experience *salvation*.

The man who is dying of thirst as he tramps across the desert reaches the spring. He does not know the source. He does not know the chemical composition. His instinct tells him that water is what he must have or die. He bows and drinks, He experiences the thrill of life leaping through his body. *From that hour he knows that water saves a man who is dying of thirst.*

Likewise you experience Calvary! The sinner comes to the Cross. When he receives Jesus, an awful need is canceled. Life commands. Its power is present. The Holy Spirit applies the victory of Golgotha. It "passeth knowledge."

Third, the love of Christ passeth knowledge because it is more than a fact or an experience. It is a *force* in the universe. It is more than a sentiment or feeling.

Garibaldi offered his soldiers hunger, thirst, dangers, wounds, hardships, imprisonment, and possible death; and yet the Italians flocked to his standard by the thousands. *That was because they loved Italy.*

The black servants of David Livingstone bore the body of their dead friend across the territory of hostile tribes, where they had to fight for right-of-way, through tangled forests, in hunger and thirst, when they were obliged to leave many of their number dead by the wayside, for 1500 miles to Zanzibar, that the sacred dust of the grand man might be sent to England for entombment in Westminster Abbey. That was because his Christlike service had won them to him body and soul.

I don't quarrel with such force. *I admit it.* I know what Jesus is doing. The *force* of it builds records every day.

Paul tells me the purpose – "that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." I know that something is at work making an acorn eventually a giant oak. *And something is at work in me with a giant end in view – something worthy and eternal.*

The force of Calvary is to fill my life with God. Jesus lived that life and He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). That is the direction my life will take. I will stop asking, "How much can I get out of the world?" I will ask, "How much can I do, how much can I give to it?" I am going to look at earth with His eyes. I am going to step as He stepped. I am going to care as He cared.

That is a *force* that becomes a "Niagara." It turns me on. It does for me what sunshine does for the soil. It keeps me in orbit.

Scientists tell us that if earth were to be held in its orbit by steel wires, it would require as many, an inch in diameter, as could be stretched between the earth and the sun. Yet how easily is this planet held in place! And God does the same for me when He fills me "with all the fulness of God." I know this. Any failure to achieve can never be blamed on lack of power available.

It is a fullness of *patience*. The agitation, the fret, the friction vanish. I function smoothly. I know where I am going and why.

William of Nassau was called The Silent; not because he could not talk, but because, in the tumult of that generation, he kept his counsel and was unmoved by the storm of human clutter about him. Above all I appreciate a calm. I know that experience when I know Jesus. There is an *assurance* that keeps the soul. It is worth everything to me.

Read Christ's record! Events swirled about Him. He became an everyday target. But always there was that magnificent peace! He knew *where* He was going and *why* He was going. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*" (Matthew 11:28).

Do you enjoy it when you say your prayers? Can you rest? Do you sense it when you face decisions? Can you commit? *It is the consciousness that all is well.*

Don't miss this word "fulness" in the text! God never conceived emaciated living, humdrum existence, fear-eroded survival on this planet. That is Satan's lie. I'll read you God's intent. "That ye might be filled with all the *fulness* of God."

Mister, that is the good life! I know God by His creation. And creation speaks to me of the exciting, adventure, limitless exploration, beauty, possibility, agelessness, eternity, love, color, travel, thrill, tomorrows, satisfaction – "all the fulness of God." I believe it. "In him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

It gets bigger. I could never settle for a stalemate. There must be the possibility of *growth*. "All the fulness of God" must mean this to me. I must never be reduced to a manufactured accomplishment. *I must develop.* There must be room for that throughout eternity. Nothing would be more boring than to cease to excel – to simply join a mutual admiration society sitting around for eternity content in self-righteousness.

I am a *living soul* – not a mantelpiece. I have Infinite destiny. That "fulness" will never cease throbbing. Filled "with all the fulness of God." That is what Calvary provides.

Oh, yes! "In him, ... (I) *move*." John felt those eternal vibrations. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

There is an endlessness about Jesus. You cannot exhaust Him. I'm going to have lots of birthdays. I'm so glad that my empty, meaningless existence was directed toward "His fulness."

In the gallery of fine arts in Paris you may find a piece of very beautiful statuary. It has a history that will emphasize this message. For years an old artist worked on the model, done in clay, with painstaking care. At last it was complete, and a great joy filled his soul. That very night a cold northeast wind swept over Paris. The old man could only think of his model. As the cold stole into his gloomy quarters he said to himself, "If the moisture in the clay is allowed to freeze, the beautiful perfection of my model will be ruined."

With the devotion of an idolater, he arose and piled all the clothing and bedding at his command upon the image that was the pride of his heart and the work of the years, The next morning the old man failed to appear for breakfast. His friends looked for him and found him stiff and stark, He had been frozen to death, but he had saved the image.

I am faced with the same task. I have a lifetime (whatever period of years they may be) to appropriate the eternal image. Everything else is secondary. It must be my supreme business to protect that image at any cost. It is what Jesus wants to do for me – make it possible for me to acquire this new nature, Then I am on my way to that "fulness" that justifies my existence.