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What I Believe in and Why.

II.

I Believe in the Sinner.

It is easier to believe in the Sinner than in the Saint.

Our Lord found it easier. In His day on earth society was divided sharply into the two classes. As the two classes covered the whole of the people there was much variety of character in each class. Some of the Sinners were very sinful, others less; and some of the Saints were truly saintly, others not at all. But on the whole He found it easier to believe in the Sinners than in the Saints.

It is birth or wealth that makes the distinction between classes in our day, but in Christ's day the Saints and the Sinners were not distinguished so. More remarkable than that, they were not distinguished by character. A Sinner might be a man of excellent moral character, and a Saint might be a man of known and notorious vileness. The difference between them was due to the Law of Moses. Those who 'knew' the Law were Saints; those who knew it not were Sinners. It was not a question of goodness or badness, but of observance or non-observance of the precepts of the Law. The name given to those who knew the Law was therefore not Saints but Righteous, and the two classes were known as 'the Righteous' and 'the Sinners.'

Jesus showed in many ways that He found it easier to believe in the Sinners than in the Righteous. He told the story of two men who went up to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, that is, he was a Righteous man; the other was a Publican, and therefore one of the Sinners. And after repeating the words of their prayers, He said emphatically, 'I tell you, this man (the Publican) went down to his house justified (that is, counted righteous before God) rather than the other.'

We also find it easier to believe in the Sinner than in the Saint. And the reason is the same. The Saint is often not really a Saint, while the Sinner is always a Sinner. We know where we are with Sinners; we do not know where we are with Saints. There are Sinners of every degree of sinfulness, but they are all Sinners. There are Saints who, so far as we can judge, have no title to the name. If we used the word Saint as St. Paul did,

it would be different. By 'Saint' St. Paul meant one who believed in Christ to the forgiveness of his sins, and so was *on the way* to true holiness. But by 'Saint' we mean one who has attained (or professes to have attained) to holiness. Thus the reason why we find it easier to believe in the Sinner than in the Saint is that if the Saint is not a Saint he has first to acknowledge himself a Sinner and then begin to be a Saint; whereas the Sinner is a Sinner, there is no doubt about that, and can begin to be a Saint at once.

In a word, I believe in the Sinner because it is possible to make him a Saint.

But I have other two reasons, and I wish to take the three reasons in order.

I.

I believe in the Sinner *because God believes in him*. How do I know that God believes in the Sinner? Because of the extraordinary interest He takes in every single individual.

We speak of God's works as the works of creation and providence. What an interest God takes in the creation of every person. He does not make two alike. There is no standardizing in God's workshop. Every one of His creatures has individuality. He is himself. God is not a machine, making other machines with undeviating sameness. He is a sculptor whose loving hand traces every curve and line and never gives His mallet the same tap twice.

'As like as a Hand to another Hand!'

Whoever said that foolish thing,
Could not have studied to understand

The counsels of God in fashioning,
Out of the infinite love of his heart,
This Hand, whose beauty I praise, apart
From the world of wonder left to praise
If I tried to learn the other ways
Of love in its skill, or love in its power.

But God's creative care for the individual is not greater than His providential care. Tennyson said:

So careful of the type He seems,
So careless of the single life.

And in saying so he said just as foolish a thing as the man who said, 'As like as a Hand to another Hand.' Augustine knew better: 'Lord, when I look upon mine own life it seems Thou hast led me so carefully, so tenderly, Thou canst have attended to none else; but when I see how wonderfully Thou hast led the world and art leading it, I am amazed that Thou hast had time to attend to such as I.'

Now most of the individuals for whom God cares are sinners, and He does not care less for them on that account. It is one of the miscalculations of the Saint to think that God's love for Saints is greater than His love for Sinners. It is a different kind of love. 'If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' That is a different kind of love from the love of God to the Sinner, when God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son. But it is not greater. How could any love be greater than that? God cares for Sinners as much as He cares for Saints. For He wants to make them Saints, and the way to make Sinners Saints is to care for them. You remember Christina Rossetti?

And when he marked me downcast utterly,
Where foul I sat and faint,
Then more than ever Christ-like kindled he;
And welcomed me as I had been a saint,
Tenderly stooping low to comfort me.

That is the way of the Saint, the true Saint, with the Sinner. That is God's way.

The whole of His care is directed to the making of Sinners into Saints. Whittier has a familiar verse:

There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in heaven,
There is no place where earth's failings
Have such kindly judgment given.

That is right; but it is not quite right. God's care is not indulgence towards the sinner's failings. It is not kindly judgment; it is careful discipline. Not a failing is left unheeded. Kindly is He in all His ways, but also firm. 'Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.' Yes, in mercy and truth. And 'truth' to the Psalmist meant firmness. Whittier is sure about the mercy, he is not so sure about the truth.

The great thing to know is that God means to make of the Sinner a Saint, that He has faith in him, and that He directs all His providential care to that end.

Because of Thy strong faith, I kept the track
Whose sharp set stones my strength had well-nigh spent;
I could not meet Thy eyes if I turned back;
So on I went.

Because Thou wouldst not yield belief in me,
The threatening crags that rose my way to bar
I conquered inch by crumbling inch—to see
The goal afar.

And though I struggle toward it through hard
years,
Or flinch, or falter blindly, yet within,
'You can,' unwaveringly my spirit hears,
And I shall win.

II.

I believe in the Sinner *because Christ believes in him*. How do I know that Christ believes in the Sinner? He came to give His life a ransom for sinners. That historical fact is not made much of at present, but there is something in it.

There is something in it, whatever you think of Christ. You cannot think less of Him than that He was great and good. Now when a great and good man tells you what is his aim, and when he pursues that aim at the risk of losing his life, when he actually does lose his life in the pursuit of it, you must be persuaded that there is something in it. But if you believe, as I do, that God sent His Son into the world for this very purpose, that He might give His life a ransom for sinners, you must believe that there is more in it than in any other fact in history.

He came to give His life a ransom for Sinners. That means a definite purpose on God's part. And as God is very old as well as very young, it is a purpose that was formed not yesterday, but in eternity. This is one of the discoveries of the Apostle Paul, and he was never done wondering at it. Especially as he always looked upon himself as a Sinner. 'He (God) hath chosen us (sinners) in him (Christ) before the foundation of the world.' So when the fulness of the time was come God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law.

He came for Sinners. He came to make them Saints. Hear the Apostle to the Gentiles again: 'that we should be holy' (a perfect description of the Saint). To believe in Sinners is to believe that they may become Saints. It is not easy when we see them as Sinners and think what it means to be a Saint. But it is easier when we remember that purpose of God, formed in eternity, formed deliberately and determinedly. And it becomes easier still when we remember that Christ died for Sinners to make them Saints. For now we have not only God's eternal purpose, which is not likely to be thwarted, but also Christ's self-sacrificing love, the most piercing fact of the most powerful force in the Universe. Will the Sinner resist for ever the pressure of God's purpose? Will he withstand for ever the melting force of the fire of Christ's love?

But he must have a chance. There are two ways in which a Sinner must be given a chance—first as a human being, and then as an individual. The first is given by Christ, the second by the Saint.

There was a time when a man had no chance on account of the derangement of the Universe. The Sinner's sin had thrown all the moral machinery of the Universe out of gear. For man is not merely a number of individuals; there is humanity as well as men. Every act of every man thrills through the being of all other men. And the very first act of sin sent its influence throughout every part of the human race, and even up and down through the wide Universe of God's creation. Jesus came to readjust things. He became a man and sent His perfect manhood into the race to restore the harmony in every part and to bring it back to God. He died to reconcile us to God and to one another; and since then, so far as the Universe is concerned, the Sinner has the chance of becoming a Saint. One thing only remains. Every individual Sinner must be brought face to face with the purpose of God, and heart to heart with the love of Christ. He must get a chance. That is what the Saint has to do for the Sinner.

III.

I believe in the Sinner *because the Saint believes in him*. How do I know that the Saint believes in him? Because that is one of the marks of a Saint. The man who does not believe in Sinners is not himself a Saint. And also because the

Saints now everywhere are coming to see that the Sinner must get a chance.

Christ removed the hindrance in the Universe. We must remove the hindrance in society. That is what the Saints everywhere are coming to see. That is what the Saints everywhere are beginning to do. There is an article in *THE ENCYCLOPÆDIA OF RELIGION AND ETHICS* on 'Prisons.' It is written by Lord Guthrie, Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland. This is how that article ends: 'If the State does its duty in these essential particulars, the Christian Church will not be slow to avail itself of the opportunity, which it has never yet had, of bringing to bear the power of the gospel of Christ without the hindrances and pitfalls which at present, to so large an extent, render nugatory the best efforts of religion and philanthropy. The present generation will not see it; but the day will come when no member of any civilized community will be able to say to any judge what a criminal, young in years but old in crime, once truthfully said, before sentence, to the writer of this article, "My lord, I never had a chance!"' There is a commentary on these words in Lord Tollemache's *Talks with Mr. Gladstone*. After 'expressing a doubt whether Madame de Staël meant *her mot* (Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner) to be taken quite literally, Mr. Gladstone went on to say: "I will go the length of admitting that, even in the extreme case of pronouncing the sentence of death, a judge, if he is really a Christian man, will be liable to say to himself, 'God knows how much that man has been tempted, and though for the sake of society I am bound to punish him, he may on the Judgment Day be preferred before me.'"

There are many kinds of Sinners. It is the duty of the Saint to give every one of them a chance—to believe in them, to see the possibilities of Saintliness in them, and to give them a chance.

1. I believe in the worldly-minded Sinner. The most familiar example is Zacchæus. Money and position are everything. Zacchæus got the money 'by false accusation,' but could not obtain the social position. He came into touch with Christ. Then—'To-day is salvation come to this house, forso much as he also is a son of Abraham' (who was a son of God—see the genealogy). The case is typical and quite conclusive.

2. I believe in the reckless, rowdy Sinner. He has come before us frequently during the War. And we have found it easy to believe in him because of his courage and his patriotism. This example is related by Dr. William Ewing in his book *From Gallipoli to Baghdad*: 'A burly Irishman came in with many wounds. His case was quite hopeless. Even so, he could appreciate the humour of his appearance. "What are you?" asked the doctor kindly. "Sure, I'm half an Irishman." "And what's the other half?" "Holes and bandages," came the answer like a flash. They gave him morphia to soothe him, without much effect. Soon the ward was filled with a rich, mellow voice, singing—what think you?—

Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves.
Britains never, never, NEVER shall be slaves.

With the echo of that patriotic song on his lips he went down into the dark valley.'

Where God is. God with His eternal purpose.
Where also is Christ. Christ with His everlasting love.

3. I believe in the Sinner who is a Savage. Can Saints be made out of Savages? It is the missionary's absorbing purpose. And sometimes it is so well done that we are ashamed of our own sanctity. As for the possibility, listen to Bishop Gilbert White in *Round about the Torres Straits* (1917): 'It is my deliberate opinion that the aboriginals at Yarrabah have shown themselves as capable of those qualities of discipline, unselfishness, self-restraint, and fixity of purpose which go to make up civilized social life as any other race.' Then the Bishop tells this story: 'I attended an interesting ceremony in the drawing-room of Government House, Darwin, on the occasion of the presentation by the Administrator of the Albert Medal, conferred by the King on an aboriginal called Neighbour for conspicuous bravery. Neighbour was one of the men whom we met on the occasion of our first visit to the Roper, and he was afterwards arrested by a mounted constable on the charge of stealing cattle. It is not at all necessary to suppose that he had been personally guilty of the offence, as it is not infrequently the custom to consider any member of a tribe responsible for any act committed by another member, if the first is available and the second not easily got at. The prisoner was in chains when he arrived with the

constable on the bank of a flooded river. The constable rode into the water to see if it were crossable, leaving his prisoner on the bank, when in swimming his horse rolled over, striking him on the head with his hoof, and he was washed down the middle of the stream quite unconscious. Neighbour, chained as he was, sprang into the water, swam out to the drowning man, and brought him safely to the bank. He then caught the constable's horse, and might easily have been a hundred miles away before any alarm could have been given. Instead of this, he rode in to the Police Station, about twenty miles away, and brought help for his captor. It is pleasing to be able to record that the constable in this instance showed his gratitude by settling a sum of money for life upon his rescuer. All the Government officials of Darwin were present, as well as the Bishop of the diocese, when the Administrator, in the King's name, presented the medal to the first pure-blooded Australian aboriginal to receive this decoration.'

4. I believe in the Sinner who is a Criminal. How easy that is to-day! We realize our relationship to the criminal as our fathers never did. We see the social, the moral, the economic factors which produce him, and we know that for these factors we cannot escape our share of responsibility. The criminal problem, as an experienced writer has it, is not so much a penal as a social problem. If Sir Edward Clarke is to be believed, the late Justice Hawkins was no sentimentalist, yet in his *Reminiscences* he again and again lets us see that in his opinion our present criminal laws do not give the criminal a chance. They take account neither of heredity, nor of upbringing, nor of temptation. But we are on the way to better manners and better laws. There is a well-attested story of a young girl who was repeatedly punished for stealing flowers. Then it occurred to some Saint that this sin might be diverted into (social) sanctity. She was given a flower-stall in Paris, and her infamy was turned into honour.

5. I believe in the Sinner who is a Prostitute. On that sin also we are coming nearer to the mind of Christ. First of all we dismiss the plea of necessity. 'It is a time-honoured lie,' says Professor James Stuart of Cambridge, 'that men have irresistible passions, and that women must be sacrificed to them, and unless I believed it to be a

lie of the deepest dye I should believe God to be unjust and should fall into despair. But it is a lie, and I shall never cease to endeavour to expose it. It is a lie which of all the lies which circulate in the world just now has, I believe, most of deadly poison in it against religion and against God.'

And there are examples. One of the most touching occurs in the *Life of Francis Thompson*. The girl noticed his forlorn state as he tramped the streets of London and slept under its bridges, and she did all in her power to assist him. 'When the streets were no longer crowded with shameful possibilities she would think of the only trust that her heart regarded and, a sister of charity, would take her beggar into her vehicle at the appointed place and cherish him with an affection maidenly and motherly, and passionate in both these capacities. Two outcasts, they sat marvelling that there were joys for them to unbury and to share. Weakness and confidence, humility and reverence, were gifts unknown to her except at his hands, and she repaid them with graces as lovely as a child's, and as unhesitating as a saint's.' And when he found friends and fame she kept away; he never saw her again.

I waited the inevitable last.

Then there came past

A child; like thee, a spring-flower; but a flower
Fallen from the budded coronal of Spring,
And through the city-streets blown withering.
She passed,—O brave, sad, loveliest, tender
thing!

And of her own scant pittance did she give,

That I might eat and live:

Then fled, a swift and trackless fugitive.

6. I believe in the Drunkard. This is a harder belief than those that have been named. One day in the City a mass of men and women, drunkards all, were gathered in a mission room. It was packed, for a feast was to be had for nothing. The missionary spoke to them. They belonged to the district; would they not come to the Mission church? They assented unanimously, uproariously. Next night the Mission church was opened. Not one was there. 'The wood's rotten,' said the Superintendent, 'the nails will not hold.' Yet it is possible to make a Saint even of the Sinner who is a drunkard. There are examples. But listen again to Lord Guthrie. If the drunkard is to be

won for the Kingdom, the State must step in and see that, 'whether or not, in the interests of personal, social, and national efficiency, the sale of alcohol, like the sale of opium, should be prohibited except for medicinal use, the existing temptations to use alcohol either in moderation or in excess—such temptations being often found at the maximum where the power of resistance is at the minimum—shall be ended.'

7. I believe in the Sinner who is a Pharisee. That is the hardest belief of all. There are two kinds of Pharisees.

First there is the Pharisee who is too religious to be righteous. He is much occupied with salvation, but it is only the saving of his own soul. He believes in the Perseverance of the Saints. He is strong on doctrine, especially the doctrine of Justification by Faith. The texts that should be chosen for sermons are evangelical texts. If any other is chosen he is offended. Martin of Oban once chose the words of Micah: 'What doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.' 'If there's an awkward text in all the Bible,' said a godly hearer, 'that man is sure to find it.'

Next there is the Pharisee who is too righteous to be religious. He does not go to church; only hypocrites do. When he comes upon a life in which religion is an evident influence he calls it 'religiosity.' Even Viscount Morley calls it so—'intense religiosity (what is the word?)'—though he admits that the reading of a pious woman's memoir made him think,—'in one way made me as remorseful as Atys in Catullus. But that cannot be helped.'

These two—the Pharisee who is too religious to be righteous, and the Pharisee who is too righteous to be religious—are the most difficult of all Sinners to make Saints of. For the first and last essential is absent, the recognition of sinfulness. That is why the Publicans and Harlots enter the Kingdom sooner. Yet I believe in the Sinner who is a Pharisee. For it is part of my creed that with God nothing is impossible. And there have been examples even here. Do they not say that the rich young ruler became the disciple whom Jesus loved? And in our own day we have had of the other kind one outstanding example—George Romanes.