

Thanksgiving Number

# The Sunday School Times

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**H**AVE you ever thought of the distinctiveness of the service provided by The Sunday School Times? To the reader, its columns offer carefully scrutinized advertising, and the advertiser is assured of a large constituency of readers in whose opinion an advertisement in The Sunday School Times is immediately accredited.

**A Nobleman**

By T. S. Knox

**A**FATHER came with troubled heart,  
With anxious soul in sore dismay;  
But when the Master bade him go,  
"The man believed, and went his way,"  
(And in that self-same hour,  
God worked His wondrous power.)

Though death was stalking near his home,  
Whose grim approach he could not stay,  
The Master's word enough for him—  
"The man believed, and went his way."  
(The heralds came to tell,  
That now the lad was well.)

If, like the nobleman of old,  
We would but hear and then obey,  
Unburdened of our doubts and fears  
We could in peace go on our way.  
(In casting off of care,  
We'd have an answered prayer.)

**EDITORIAL**

**The Hope that Energizes**

To expect the return of a loved one does not deaden our energy. It does not paralyze our activities. On the contrary, if we know that a dearly loved member of the family who has been away on a journey is to come back to-day, are we not likely to exert ourselves in getting the home ready, that we may give the best kind of a welcome? So it is for the Christian who is eagerly looking for the Lord's return. It does not paralyze Christian activity, though some who do not understand or accept this Bible truth mistakenly think it does. A medical missionary in Korea writes to the Editor: "Some time ago a fine, spiritual Bible woman took dinner with us. She spends a great deal of time in prayer and in doing evangelistic work:

To those who think that the doctrine of the Lord's return is crippling to evangelistic work I would like to have had them hear a remark of hers. Some of her relatives—her own family, I believe—are not Christians. They live a long distance from here. She said she thought the Lord would be coming soon, and some of her own folks were not saved, and that she was going to take this long trip to see them and try to lead them to him." It is a "blessed hope" indeed that energizes the child of God to win to Christ all that can be reached before his coming. And we find that the New Covenant, the New Testament, of our Lord Jesus Christ sets forth the hope of his return as one of the great incentives to good works in his name.

**When God Rewarded Righteousness**

God blesses and rewards holy living. Do we ever feel at times that, in addition to the precious promises, we should like to have evidence that we can consider and weigh as proof of our faith that God cares? Do we not have such evidence in a comparison of the history of Israel and Judah? Israel was captured by Assyria one hundred and thirty-five years before Judah was captured by Babylon. Israel had no restoration, while Judah was restored after seventy years. Israel had nineteen kings and *not one was good*, while Judah had nineteen kings and one queen, and *eight kings did that which was right in the sight of the Lord*. God's wondrous patience was evident in all this history. He met Judah in blessing whenever the king and people gave him a chance, and so will he bless us. *He is not a disappointment.*

**Thanksgiving and Prayer for General Feng**

**I**T IS to be hoped that countless thousands of God's children throughout the world at this Thanksgiving season will unite in prayer and thanksgiving for China's Christian General, Feng Yu-hsiang. The crisis in China, and the crisis in this soldier's own life, are surely God's earnest call to his people to pray. Nothing like it has occurred before in our life-time; nothing like it in the history of China, and perhaps nothing like it in the experience of any Christian soldier since the Day of Pentecost.

There have been many outstanding Christian military men since Cornelius the Centurion of the Italian Band was baptized with "his kinsmen and near friends." Oliver Cromwell and his Ironsides, General "Chinese" Gordon, Stonewall Jackson, are names revered and loved. But it may fairly be questioned whether any of these was permitted to do, under God, what General Feng has already done in evangelism and soul-winning, and in the transforming of entire communities by the power of Christ.

The war that has been waging in China for months past is the worst that China has known for years. General Feng's name did not appear at first in the news despatches. But about the middle of September the news was cabled to America that General Wu Pei-fu had decided to send the Christian General to the front, somewhere north of Peking. The Toronto Globe and Chicago Tribune published a despatch saying, "The men started moving this evening (September 17) in large numbers. Each man carried full fighting equipment. The infantry was accompanied by machine guns, light field pieces, Red Cross detachments, and large quantities of supplies, indicating preparations for a long overland march. . . . The population lined the streets to watch the soldiers pass. . . . The marching men frequently broke into song, chiefly Christian hymns, with words written by General Feng himself."

Nine days later a despatch gave the estimate "that half a million men are concentrated along the Manchurian border, with the stage set for one of the greatest battles in all of China's history. Neither side apparently is anxious to precipitate the main conflict."

Thank God, that battle has not yet been fought! There has indeed been bloody encounter, with sad loss of life, but nothing of what might have been ex-

**"Religious Education"**

When is religious education successful? It can be successful on one condition only; that it educates a regenerated soul. To offer religious education to an unsaved person is like trying to make useful citizens by sending dead men to college. There is nothing there to educate! The sad failure of much of what is called "Religious Education" to-day is that it leaves out regeneration, or the necessity of the new birth, and attempts to substitute natural educational processes. It is strikingly significant that the journal of the Religious Education Association in its August number publishes an article on the question "Can the Educational Method Produce a Genuine Religious Experience?" It frankly states that many leaders in the field of religious education to-day (and unfortunately that means chiefly Modernists), while dissatisfied with the old methods of religious training, find that the "newer plans" do not "produce spiritual results commensurate with those to which they have been accustomed." And so they are calling upon their fellow-workers to see if they can develop "vital religious experience through new experiments in religious education,"—still newer, that is, than the "modern" and "progressive" experiments that have been tried out with barren results for the past generation. There is pathos and tragedy in this frank, naive, unsophisticated confession of failure and blindness to the cause of failure. There is a textbook that solves the problem; it is God's Word. When all religious education seeks first to bring the unsaved to Christ as Saviour, and then to build them up in Christ in accordance with the revealed truths of the New Testament, there will follow convincing, thrilling, satisfying results such as only God himself can bring to pass.

pected of slaughter and disaster. The Sunday School Times of October 25 reported the victory that General Feng's army had over a force ten times its strength, and this immediately followed a day of special prayer called by the Great Commission Prayer League, when intercession for General Feng had large place. That victory occurred on October 9.

On Monday, October 20, a Christian layman in America was led to spend almost all night in prayer for General Feng. Two days later he wrote to the Editor of The Sunday School Times, "Watch for the Lord's hand in turning the tide of battle—some miracle."

The miracle came the next day. Newspaper readers the world around were amazed to read that at six o'clock on the morning of October 23 General Feng with the Eighth Brigade of the Eleventh Division of the Chinese National Army occupied Peking, took possession of the city's gates, and cut all telephonic communications within the city, suspended all train service, and was in complete control of the Chinese capital; and that he had done this to "stop the war." The Christian General's proclamation was reported as follows:

Feng Yu-hsiang does not want to make war, which is ruining the country and causing the loss of many lives. Feng has called a conference between the Government and the other side with a view of stopping the war. He is bringing his troops back to Peking for garrison duty and asks the people that order be preserved. Foreigners will be protected.

Then came conflicting and sensational despatches. One was that General Feng had demanded the abdication of President Tsao Kun and had overthrown the Peking Government. It was hinted that General Feng had done this in collusion with the Manchurian war lord, General Chang Tso-Lin, and the word "traitor" was applied to Feng. Grave reflections on Feng's character are no new thing; they have appeared from time to time during recent years, and are to be expected. They have hitherto been shown to be groundless, sometimes base slander, and there is no reason to suppose that the General has done other than his plain duty in the present crisis, and that which is for the best interests of his loved land and fellow-countrymen. Another despatch announced that the President had issued a proclamation ordering the immediate cessation



# Rupert Hughes and the Christian Religion

Why his attack on the Bible is representative of the intellectual and moral decadence widely prevalent to-day

By J. Gresham Machen, D.D. A. S. Prof., New Testament Literature and Exegesis, Princeton Theological Seminary

**A**T FIRST sight it might seem foolish to return any answer to the article of Rupert Hughes entitled, "Why I Quit Going to Church," in the October number of the *Cosmopolitan*. So many serious objections are being raised against Christian religion to-day that it hardly seems worth while to notice those that are not serious. And by revealing in his own person the mental and spiritual condition of men, even of real talent, who are without faith, the writer of the article has perhaps constructed as strong an argument in favor of the Christian religion as any that we might advance. Certainly if when a man "quits going to church" he sinks into a spiritual and intellectual decadence at all like that which (at least in some spheres) is so plainly attested in this article, then church-going is eminently worth while. Mr. Hughes does not believe in hell, and rejects the fear of God. But there is an abyss into which a man can fall even in this world; and the contemplation of that abyss, to every one who has retained some inkling of the higher things of human life, seems full of terror. One of the strongest arguments for the truth of the Christian religion is the condition of the human soul without Christ, and of that condition Mr. Hughes, in his article, has given us a very terrifying revelation.

The revelation would not be so significant if it were an isolated phenomenon. Even then, indeed, it would not be devoid of interest, since the wreck of a soul is never a trifling thing. But the real interest of the article is due to the fact that it is only one representative of a condition of intellectual and moral decadence which is widely prevalent to-day.

## The Result of Infidel Civilization

There was a time when the argument from modern authority seemed to weigh seriously against Christianity. If Christianity is true, the question arose how the leaders of modern life and thought had so generally come to reject it. Humanity seemed at first sight to be getting along very well without religion; utilitarianism, even when coupled with a materialistic view of the world, seemed to be bringing a new and better era; and self-interest seemed to be a sufficient basis of international peace.

But within the last ten years there has come a rude awakening. The superficial amenities of an infidel civilization have all been brushed aside, and there has been a terrifying revelation of the elemental depths. We are not referring specifically to the War, or to the orgy of vindictive cruelty which has been its aftermath. Even more serious than these things, terrible though they are, is a phenomenon which the War did not create but only helped to reveal—namely, the intellectual as well as moral decadence into which the world has gradually been falling within the last fifty years. There has been advance in purely material things, but the absorption in material things has been accompanied by neglect of the higher elements in human life.

We have had revealed to us—in the last fifty years how intimate was the connection between the Christian religion, with its insistence upon the reality of the human soul, and all those things which make life worth while. Now that faith has been undermined, beauty as well as goodness is taking its flight; behaviorist psychology cannot tolerate poetry or civil liberty any more than it can tolerate Christian faith. The truth is that humanity is in danger of sinking to the level of the beasts; it is in danger of sinking into bestiality not really mitigated but only made the more odious by a scientific technique degraded to the instrument in destroying human souls. Thus the rejection of Christianity by the modern world, far from being an argument against the truth of our religion, has become one of the strongest arguments in its favor. If such is the world without Christ, it may be that we shall be led to return to Christianity as to the thing which alone may save us from this abyss.

This intellectual decadence of our age is sometimes disguised: at the universities the lamentable growth of ignorance is concealed by a pseudo-scientific jargon; in the churches, mental and spiritual poverty often clothes itself in great swelling words of apparent piety. It requires indeed but a little consideration and a little reading to detect the shallowness of such pretense; and the blatancy of Mr. Hughes' ignorance fails altogether to surprise any one who has followed the decline of education which has been going on during the past few decades. But in making perfectly plain even to the man in the street the true nature of what has been taking place, his article is perhaps not altogether devoid of interest.

One astonishing thing about the article is that, having Christianity as the author does, he has not discovered anything more plausible to say against it.

Is it singular that Rupert Hughes should corroborate God's Word by his very attack upon it? In his article, "Why I Quit Going to Church," he says, "My brains simply lock when I try to understand the central theme of Christianity, the vicarious atonement. I can't even understand the beginning of it." This is the "offense of the cross," and God's Word says, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2: 14). It is not difficult for a believer to discern the cause of Mr. Hughes' lack of understanding.

There are really serious difficulties in the Bible,—not insurmountable but still serious,—but Mr. Hughes in his bitter tirade has hit upon very few of them. We hardly think it necessary to refute the absurd treatment, for example, by which Romans 3: 7 ("For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie . . .") is regarded as a confession of untruthfulness on the part of the apostle, and it is difficult to believe that any reader, no matter how limited his mentality, could honestly fall into such an error.

A similar remark may certainly be made about Mr. Hughes' refusal to understand the majestic imagery of the Revelation and of the rest of the Bible. Such reading as his would make not only the Bible but all the great literature of the world a sealed book. And no doubt the great literature of the world is gradually becoming a sealed book to modern men: first the power of production was lost, and now even appreciation also is rapidly taking flight. But in the case of Mr. Hughes we cannot believe that mental decadence has progressed quite so far as his article would seem to indicate; we cannot believe that it is really "the Lamb's wife" (with the other figurative language of the Apocalypse) which determines his attitude. The really determinative cause is an intense hatred, which always blinds men's eyes.

The evident passion with which the article is writ-

**I**N SHINING contrast with the bitter words of Mr. Hughes' attack on the Bible is the advice and testimony of one of the former Chief Executives of the United States. In a letter written from the White House to H. Clay Trumbull, Editor of *The Sunday School Times*, June 6, 1876, President Ulysses S. Grant said to the Sunday-schools of America:

Hold fast to the Bible as the sheet anchor of your liberties, write its precepts in your hearts, and practise them in your lives.

To the influence of this Book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future.

U. S. Grant.

ten should also prevent us from seeking in it anything like logic or consistency. It is hardly worth while to ask whether Mr. Hughes is really unaware of the existence of Protestantism, as his assertion that the Christian religion has five major gods including "Mary the Mother" might seem to indicate. The truth is that such assertions do not spring from any real observations at all, but are largely rhetorical; they are intended, not to impress those who really know something about Christianity, but to impress the vast multitude that is really as ignorant as Mr. Hughes either is or pretends to be.

But his crowning inconsistency concerns the importance which is assigned to doctrine. All through the article there runs the notion that Christian doctrine, though thoroughly sinister, is at the same time a very powerful thing. It has, according to Mr. Hughes, produced persecutions for witchcraft and the degrading fear of hell and a thousand other ills. In fact, Mr. Hughes is ready to "break down and sob with pity for the poor dear people that were caught in those traps of theology and tormented slowly into their graves." And at the end of the article he points out the powerful, though degrading, effect of the Christian doctrine of God. "The thing that makes ardent churchmen such dangerous citizens," he says, "is their belief that they have a god directing them

and that those who oppose them are opposing God. This is the secret origin of all the horrors. A man alone is subject to evil impulses enough, but a man and a god are a thousand times as dangerous." In view of this close connection which the author finds between Christian doctrine and the supposed horrors of the Christian religion, it is rather surprising to find him saying almost in the same breath that "everybody knows that a man's creed has nothing whatever to do with his character." Just after speaking of "the traps of theology" that torment men into their graves, just after denouncing belief in God as "the secret origin of all the horrors," Mr. Hughes comes to the conclusion that it makes no difference what a man believes after all! It would be difficult for any contradiction to be more complete.

But it is useless to look for logic where passion holds such complete sway. Such an article may possibly prevent people from reading the Bible if they have never begun to do so, but it will hardly impress those who have ever read the Bible for themselves. The truth is that the attack on Christianity is an obscurantist thing; it flourishes not in the light but in the darkness; and the greatest enemy of Christianity is the stark ignorance to which alone Mr. Hughes' article makes its appeal. The attack can be met only by the power of the Spirit of God; but the means which the Spirit will use is, we think, a revival of the neglected teaching function of the Church. The great majority of those who reject Christianity to-day do so because they know absolutely nothing about it; in the words of a great scholar, "The Church is dying of ignorance." If we would be used of God in guiding men back to Christ, we must cease at once our depreciation of theology and of theological education, and must engage earnestly in acquiring for ourselves and imparting to others that orderly acquaintance with the whole counsel of God which is the only sure safeguard not only against the blatant hostility of Mr. Hughes but also against far more dangerous and insidious attacks.

## Sincerity Is Not Necessarily Truth

We are not concerned to deny the subjective honesty of Mr. Hughes; he is no doubt self-deceived. Probably his blasphemous article is ethically superior to the sermons of many Modernist ministers who say one thing and mean another, who use the language of devotion in a double sense, and thus by false pretenses are enabled to undermine the Church from within. And we have far more hope of Mr. Hughes than we could have of many a minister in the evangelical churches to-day. There was a time in his days of faith, Mr. Hughes confesses, when he ceased to examine the truth of the Bible out of fear lest his faith might be destroyed. There, we think, was the great mistake. That honest and full examination, which was lacking then, has, we are constrained to think, never been undertaken by him at all. If it had been undertaken, fearlessly and candidly, the result might have been different.

And even now it is not too late. We do not know what has led Mr. Hughes to his present attitude—what mistakes and sins and errors on the part of professing Christians, what misunderstandings of his own. But we do know that if he would even yet read the Bible, with the sympathy which is the least that it deserves, then he might be led to a different conclusion, and the literary talents which God has given him might be devoted to better ends.

And what is true of Mr. Hughes is true of other men as well. The Church has need of few things more than of a revival of true learning. Our religion need fear no real examination; ignorance is one of its greatest enemies; and the new Reformation, for which we ought earnestly to pray, may well be accompanied by a new Renaissance.

PRINCETON, N. J.

## From a Layman's Greek Testament

By Ernest Gordon

For he mightily convinced the Jews, . . . that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 18: 28).

**T**HIS was said of Apollos, the Jew of Alexandria, who was a powerful, *dunatos*, expounder of the Scriptures. The word for mightily, *eutonos*, is "vehemently" convinced the Jews. It is used once elsewhere, Luke 23: 10, where the chief priests and scribes are pictured as vehemently, *eutonos*, accusing Jesus to Herod. What a typical contrast! The Jew in the present period of history assails the Saviour with all the intensity of his nature. "No one," says Frédéric Godet, "can form any idea of the hatred which a ma-