

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM JOEL (11/16/19)¹

Q: The Christian Science Reading Rooms sell a pamphlet, “Resolved: To Watch Our Conversation.” I have been wondering just how one who is following The Infinite Way should answer those who come to us with statements of discord or who seem to expect from us some comment relative to some discordant subject, without raising antagonism or inviting an argument.

A: Well, of course, the answer to that is just this: If the person is not metaphysically inclined, I would not give him a metaphysical answer. I would answer them in their own language.

Recently a middle-aged couple was very much disturbed about all these rumors about atomic bombs and so forth and so on and couldn't understand why we weren't disturbed about it. Knowing they had no interest in metaphysics, my answer was, “Well, what do you want—to live forever?” And that seemed to satisfy them—that I was ready for the end if it came. Now, what would be the use of saying to that person, “If you are one with God, it will not come nigh your dwelling place”? In the first place, if they believed in God, they wouldn't have been upset, would they? No. Do you see the point? And so it is.

We meet people all the time. I travel, and one thing I never discuss anywhere I travel is truth, religion, God, or metaphysics, except when someone brings the subject to me in such a way as to make me know that they're interested. Never would I open the subject, and so I have some interesting times on planes with people who are talking about the weather, or the danger in the airplane, or the danger of the next war, and so forth. I answer them in their own language: “I don't think it's as bad as it seems to be,” or “Perhaps the newspapers exaggerate to sell more copies,” or something of that kind that will not enhance their fears. But at the same time, I realize it can't quiet them either, because I cannot give them the truth of being. They just could not accept it.

There was a time many years ago when a young minister saw me in a train reading *Science and Health* and came over and tried to save my soul by telling me all the mistakes there were in the book. Well, needless to say, he didn't get far with me. But on the other hand, I wouldn't have gotten far with him either. And so it is that if you try to convince a person against their will, they remain unconvinced. So why try to proselyte? Why try to sell, especially when you have scriptural authority for this: “*The natural man receiveth not the things of God.*” So I would answer people gently. I would answer them as lovingly as I know how, but in their own language.

Sometimes you get the cue to answer in some sort of religious fashion. For instance, this morning I had a haircut and a manicure, and the manicurist began talking to me about some of these Communists and their atheistic ways, and she couldn't understand why they didn't believe in God. How could anyone not believe in God? So, I could answer her why they couldn't believe in God, but I said that maybe their particular God hadn't done much for them, and you

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couldn't blame them for not believing in it. "Oh," she said, "I never thought of that." Now, there would have been no use in telling her that believing in God hasn't been very profitable to the world so far. There is something more necessary than believing in God; there also comes a point of knowing the nature of God and how to pray. But you know, the manicures go very fast today, and you can't tell them all that in a short time. But that is how I would do it. I let myself be led, and certainly do not speak in the way of truth.

I did have an interesting experience in the Islands. Some friends took me over to the Royal Hawaiian one night, and a group of people were there who had been on the ship with them. He introduced me to a couple, and this man turned around and said, "We were just having a discussion when you came in."

"Yes?"

"I was telling this lady that only ignorant people, superstitious fools, believe in God, and she was saying that she can't quite accept that—not wholeheartedly anyhow. She didn't know too much about God, but she wasn't ready to say there wasn't any, and of course, I know, and I was explaining to her that no person of wisdom or intelligence would believe in God."

So he said, "What do you think about it? What's your idea?" "Well," I said, "to tell you the truth, I'm one of these fellows that knows a little bit about a lot of things, but you just happened to touch on the one subject about which I know nothing." And he turned to her, and he said, "You see, now there's an intelligent looking man, and he admits he knows nothing about God." Well, that was fine until later my friend told him that I'd written ten books on the subject of God. So when he met me a couple of days later on the street, he wanted to know what I meant. Was that just sarcasm, or was I trying to belittle him, or what?

I said, "No, I was being entirely truthful. You were denying a God, and frankly speaking, I have a suspicion you're right, that there isn't that kind of a God in the world. But that's only an opinion, and I wouldn't want to broadcast it. "Now," I said, "had you stopped to realize that you were only talking about your *concept* of God, you probably wouldn't have gone quite so far as to say there is no God, but just that there's no God like I have been believing in or have been taught to believe in." "Oh yes," he says, "that's what I meant."

"Well," I said, "that's why I couldn't answer you. I don't know your concept of God—not a thing about it, and I couldn't answer. Nor could I answer about the world's belief of God. I can't tell you whether there is one or isn't one. I could tell you that we don't see much evidence of it, but I couldn't tell you whether there is or isn't, and what I think about God and know and write about God, you could never have accepted that evening." And so that ended the subject. But you can see that it isn't necessary to run around saying, "Oh, I know all about God. Let me tell you." No, no.

Another thing I find is not too wise, and that is to be so sure to tell people that God will heal them or God will do this or that for them, as if you were just an authority that could call in God and right away their problems are all met. You see, you've learned from your own experience that turning to God, praying, studying, meditating, doesn't immediately bring you all the answers. So if you just say to someone else, "Oh, if you would just try God, your problem would be met," they're apt to look at you and say, "But you're wearing glasses still," and then you have no answer for them, do you see, because their problem is more serious than just wearing glasses.

No, the thing to do is to be led of the Spirit; to be gentle and not hesitate. When a person is in trouble, say, "Had you thought about turning to God? Had you thought about some of the new approaches to God, or would you like to read a book or a pamphlet on a subject that might be helpful to you?" But do it without too much positiveness that this is the way, and all the other ways are wrong.

Well, that has been one of our troubles in metaphysics, you know, that some of our Christian Science friends have been so positive that no other way but theirs is the right one, and you'd be surprised that Unity thinks the same thing, and some of the New Thought teachers think the same thing. It doesn't behoove any of us to go around boasting or bragging about "the one and only," since there is no such thing as "one and only." There is one and only God, but there are millions of approaches to God.

Many a person has found God inside the Roman Catholic Church, and many have found It in the Hebrew church. I don't suppose anything ever surprised me as much as when a couple of years ago a book was published called, *Man and God*, by a man named Gollancz, and it is a compilation of the words of wisdom and experience and godliness of men over a period of centuries. But nearly one half of that book is made up of quotations from Hebrew rabbis and masters. Now, you read that book and tell me if you don't think they knew God. Oh-ho! They knew God well! Did they know God! They were masters of authority on God and could prove it and demonstrate it and live it. I never realized that. These people were all old-timers, way back in biblical days, but I never realized that some of these people were as close to God as we could ever hope to be. We'll be satisfied when we approach their realization of God. And so it was with some of the saints in the Catholic Church. They reached God. The Catholic Church didn't prevent them from reaching God, and so it is going to be.

I have known Christian Science practitioners and teachers that I really feel it was being on holy ground just to be near them, and I have known a couple in other movements that I can also tell you that just to be in their presence is a sacred experience. Why not? God is no respecter of persons. God is at the center of our being, and we all reach God through one approach or another. How can we say how the other fellow should do?

I'm interested in watching a book that will be out in January, which is a compilation of prayer called *The Path of Prayer*. It is a compilation of many ways, many paths of prayer, in reaching God, and in it there is nearly a whole page of quotations from *The Infinite Way*. The man who compiled it found *The Infinite Way* late in his work but felt that it deserved a place in there. Well now, when people read that and see The Infinite Way approach to God, many are going to be very sure you couldn't reach God that way, and that God isn't that kind of a God, and I suppose as we read other passages in that book, we will say, "Why should that be in the same book with *The Infinite Way*, because it can't be right."

But that isn't so. God is an individual demonstration, and people reach God in many different ways. We can only show forth our understanding of God to you because you have been drawn to this particular way. That is one reason I will not advertise. I'm satisfied for only those people to be here who have been drawn and can, in a measure, understand this approach, whereas by advertising, we could bring in a couple of hundred people from the outside who would be in continuous conflict with me, and my period up here on the platform would be an unhappy one because I love to talk only to those that I know in advance are going to agree with me. Somebody said many years ago, "Joel believes there's only one mind, and that's his!"