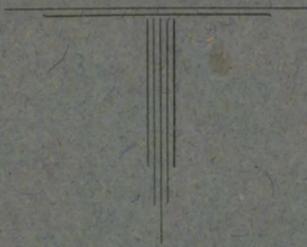


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# African Family Life



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## PREFACE.

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Changes are taking place in African life and old established moral codes are being abandoned. People are accepting strange and undesirable standards of conduct in their moral behaviour. The restraints of African tribal life are being cast aside, a process which cannot be avoided in African contact with civilisation and all that is implied by urbanisation and industrialisation. The African social structure is being broken down and, from a moral point of view, there is deterioration. Social and moral problems are increasing in magnitude, and the present trends are of serious concern to those associated with the future wellbeing of Africans.

This small book has been written to assist Africans in the understanding of these problems and warn them of the dangers of present-day life and attitudes. It is intended, primarily, for African Ministers, Evangelists, Teachers and Leaders. If the attention of these Africans is directed to these problems and some assistance given in their solution, the aims of the writers will have been achieved.

P. I.

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## AFRICAN MORAL BEHAVIOUR—PAST AND PRESENT.

All human beings who have been born into the world grow as individuals, and as they come to the age of 12 or 14 they reach the stage of puberty. This is the period when the life which has been dormant during the childhood days begins to awaken. It is very important that, at this stage, parents should explain calmly and clearly to their children what these new changes mean. They are only nature's way of preparing the boy or girl to grow well, strong and healthy for a future service to mankind.

Before the advent of Western ways of life, it was a custom among the Mashona people to take girls "to the river" for an occasional inspection to ascertain that all was well with their daughters. The Fingos isolated boys from other people because this was the time that circumcision took place. The custom of girls going to the "river" with an old woman is now dying away in Mashonaland, and in Matabeleland it has almost ceased to exist because of new influences and attitudes. In the olden days it was an established custom for those who were entering the stage of puberty to be given their own rooms or huts, called "ixiba" in Matabeleland and "gota" in Mashonaland. Parents trusted that the children would look after themselves and were not so anxious about the moral behaviour of their children. This custom cultivated the spirit of integrity and self-respect in the life and character of the young. But to-day the "ixiba" and "gota" systems are no longer the testing grounds of the character of the young—they are becoming dishonourable places because that is where many undesirable things have happened, and these things have lowered the self-respect and weakened the moral stability of the African race.

In Mashonaland, when two people were in love they were given the opportunity to converse with each other freely. They were never given the same room to spend the night together even when lobolo had been already accepted by the parents of the girl. It was a custom to examine the girl and ascertain her virginity before she was given to her husband. Love was bound up with

character; there existed a moral consciousness. Sometimes this love was prompted by similarity of interests, it was something deeper than physical appearances. The character and similarity of gifts were contributing qualities to those who were attracted to each other. Purity of life was important to both boy and girl. A lazy boy or girl found it a difficult task to get a partner in life. It was not in every case that people of the same tastes were married to each other. Where a different choice was contemplated, care was taken to avoid future disappointments. The African people viewed the moral integrity of the nation seriously and maintained a close watch on the growth of boys and girls to ascertain their purity. These good standards were higher than anything seen to-day, and it is the duty of a self-respecting race to regain the noble things which have already disappeared or are passing away.

African parents were greatly disturbed when their children failed to maintain the required standard of purity. Misbehaviour of children caused great sorrow and wailing in the home. The disgrace that was brought to the village was viewed seriously by the community. It is obviously plain that the character of one person in the society affected the whole community.

During the olden days in Matabeleland no man went to a woman when the warriors were going on a battle mission, because it was supposed that sexual relations would bring ill-luck to the army which was going to defend not only the warriors' lives but also the lives of those who remained behind. The women who remained behind were expected to live good lives and not do anything wrong, as it would bring disgrace and dishonour to the men who were away as well as to those who remained at home. If it were found out that there had been misbehaviour among the people who remained behind, those responsible for the act would be the "meat of the spear" and every self-respecting man or woman would be relieved to know that "dogs" had been removed from their midst. Those who indulged in sexual relationship against public opinion were classified as dogs; people refused to allow their offspring to live below the then recognised human moral standards.

The "ixiba" system in Matabeleland and the "gota" system in Mashonaland when boys or girls were given their own huts was good in those days, because this custom helped the young to cultivate a spirit of self-respect and moral integrity; parents also trusted their children to look after themselves. The old customs are now being abused despite their goodness long ago. Times are changing, and these changes are being flung upon the African people without any real preparation for them. Gone are the days when African boys and girls of 16 to 20 years bathed naked together in one water pond or pool without any unhealthy thoughts. Innocence then still reigned calmly in their hearts and minds; but now there is vice and wickedness.

In urban and industrial areas there is a marked disintegration of the social structure of African life and a breaking down of the customs involving self-respect. There is a decay of national moral consciousness in the evil and well-known practices which prevail. Prostitution is general and there has been decay in moral integrity. The rules and customs which regulated and controlled society are no longer prevalent. The authority of the elders is, generally speaking, a thing of the past, and sometimes parents agree with and encourage moral laxity on the part of their children. Liberty in its true sense has been abused by promiscuous practices. Pleasure-seeking which is controlled and directed by desires of lust destroys both body and soul. Money is used in ways which are of no real value, such as skokiaan, beer drinking, gambling and prostitution. Venereal diseases are a serious menace to the African people and, unless they are checked, will have tragic consequences on future generations. These diseases are not found in the towns only, but also in the rural areas. Those suffering from venereal diseases should secure medical treatment quickly—delay is dangerous.

To some extent the existing social evils in towns and industrial areas are due to bad housing and unsatisfactory living conditions, but these cannot be regarded as the sole contributory factors. There has somehow come to the African population a tragic manifestation of moral laxity and lack of discernment in

moral questions. Sex has lost its true meaning and purpose, family life is being broken up and marital relations on the right foundation are being destroyed.

Prostitution is being encouraged by the common practice of men coming to seek work in urban areas, leaving their wives and families at home in the country. Government legislation is aiming to stabilise married life in urban areas—that is, to have married families living permanently in the urban areas, and this may help to reduce the present evils, but they will not be overcome by legislation alone. It is African society that can and does invalidate the law. What is needed is a change of heart, mind and outlook in order that the community might co-operate in eradicating the social evils which have already appeared in the life of the nation.

Government, sympathetic Europeans and Missionaries may help, but it is the co-operation of Africans generally, and particularly their leaders, which is required to build up African life on a sound basis. It is those who desire to follow a higher life; who refuse to follow physical lust and passion; who uphold chastity and purity; who believe that self-respect is the best policy to follow in married life; who uphold that faithfulness between man and wife is the ideal; it is these who are rebuilding the life of the nation. It is necessary to regain the moral consciousness that human bodies are made to be temples for the indwelling of the spirit of God. St. Paul said: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ, and make them members of a harlot?" Also he said: "Your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you which ye have from God and you are not your own."

#### FRIENDSHIP.

The African people are well spoken of for their hospitality, and this is one of the visible characteristics of the race. Those who know the African people well are aware that one of the things

which an African values very much in life is true, intimate and healthy friendship. An African values friendship and would go to the extent of sacrificing his possessions to restore broken friendship between man and man or woman and woman or man and woman.

This good habit of friendship starts early in life between boys and girls or between children of the same sex, and is sometimes continued right through life.

It was formerly a common sight to see boys and girls, whose ages ranged between 12 to 18, herding cattle together in the veld without any direct supervision of the parents. A boy or girl would give his or her life for their friends if there happened to be any unexpected danger. This was done without any close ties in blood relations. The moral aspect did not even arise in the minds of these boys or girls nor even in the minds of their parents. They kept a high moral standard unconsciously, and everything was done according to the customs and laws of the elders.

Friendship can be established between male and male, female and female, and also between male and female. Healthy friendship among the Africans should never be allowed to sink below good standards of moral conduct. In many cases friendship has enhanced and enriched character. True friendship is an image of divine love and it should be honoured; it is one of the blessings of God to mankind. Africans were blessed for true friendship which was pure and uncontaminated by any undesirable and unhealthy physical intimacies. This can be illustrated by quoting common practices which were prevalent amongst the African people. For instance, a man would go away to a far-off place or country and leave his wife, sons and daughters in the care of a married friend. This friend would take all the trouble of looking after the whole of his friend's family without any malicious or undesirable thoughts ever arising, because it was abominable to abuse the confidence of his beloved friend. He would look on his friend's family as his children, including their mother. The absent man's family would

also look on him as their "father," not "uncle." Any troubles which arose would be settled by this man and even in times of drought he would not shirk his responsibilities. He would serve them without any thought of compensation, and as a true friend shared even in the hardships of his partner. This was not looked on as Christian service but true human friendship, yet it touched some of those qualities which are valued so much in Christian life. An African friend would go to the extent of laying down his life not only for his friend but also for his friend's wife and children. But to-day this is not true, and the national morale is seriously debased.

African people in urban areas have caused the word "Friend" to lose its meaning. Men and women say "so-and-so is my friend," but what they really mean is that so long as they indulge in unhealthy sexual relationships and are not married they are only "friends" and nothing more. In this way the word "friend" has been changed in meaning and has come to mean the one with whom illicit sex relations are conducted.

Many girls between the ages of 15 and 20 run away from their homes in the country and go to towns and compounds, and in many cases they are found living with a man without marriage; this practice is called "ukupeka amapoto" or "kubika mapoto" which means cooking pots. Even the offenders are ashamed to call it marriage, hence they call it by the name which means that their main work is to look after the pots and do cooking for the man. These foolish girls live with a man who in many cases has a legal wife away from town. It is impossible to condemn this practice too strongly. It is not surprising that old Africans who have been brought up in tribal life shake their heads in despair when they see what is happening in the towns and compounds.

It is reasonable that many respectable Africans wish to keep their daughters away from these bad influences. Many locations and compounds are little better than Sodom and Gomorrah of olden times.

Changes are seen to-day in the friendship of adult Africans and also young people. The good characteristics of African life have disappeared and true friendship is not common. Among young Africans, particularly in the urban and industrial areas, immoral practices have arisen and friendship has now a different meaning. Those who are in a position to know what is happening say the present behaviour among young Africans is shocking. It is a sad sight to see African boys of only 12 years of age gambling quite openly and those who are a little older indulging in kaffir beer and skokiaan, but more serious than this is the immoral relationships among young Africans. An African in close contact with his people stated recently that it was now unusual for an African woman to enter marriage without previously having had sex relations with men. If this be true, and there is no reason to doubt it, then it is certain that moral depravity has eaten its way into African life.

Healthy friendship and companionship removed from sexual conversation and indulgence must be recaptured for Africans if the race is to be built up on sound foundations. True friendship can be a treasured possession and bring happiness and blessing. Young Africans should be careful in selecting friends, particularly of the opposite sex. Bad friends lead to trouble but good friends lead to happiness.

There is a strong power which can be used to build up morality and character; it is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ which can save Africa and its people. People will not be saved and their bad habits changed by Government legislation or by municipal regulations, but by the power of God in Christ. "The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but mighty before God to the pulling down of strongholds." Our Lord set a high standard which superseded that of the Old Testament when He said: "Ye have heard that it was said thou shalt not commit adultery, but I say unto you that everyone that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." St. Paul tells the followers of Christ to realise that their bodies are the temple of the Lord.

## MARRIAGE.

In Africa, before the advent of Western civilisation, marriage was looked upon as a life-long undertaking or contract. There was no marriage certificate then, but the verbal agreement between the husband or the husband's people with the parents of the girl was sufficient. When the boy's parents approached the parents of the girl and were accepted, then lobolo was paid as a seal of the engagement. The girl viewed the acceptance of lobolo as a serious indication that it was now time to prepare for the great day of her going away to her husband. She would prepare for her departure long in advance and make baskets, floor mats, clay pots and other useful things to use in her new home. When the time of marriage drew near she was required to visit all her relatives and bid them good-bye before going to the new home. All young men would respect her as soon as lobolo was paid and they would never attempt to make love with her. What was the purpose behind these visits to all her relatives? It was an accepted practice that her blood relations would give the girl sound advice which would sink deep in her heart and mind. The relatives gave her advice on the standards and behaviour of a married woman and the girl listened attentively and sincerely to all the words of Bantu wisdom which were given her and pondered these things in her heart. While all this was being done on the girl's side, the young man also received instruction from his elders. Therefore both the boy and the girl prepared themselves well in advance for the responsibilities which they would be called upon to face in their new life. This preparation for marriage was wise and helped young people in facing their new life together.

Generally speaking, there is now very little real preparation for marriage and people are married without the benefit of good advice from their elders. African family life has suffered because of this neglect. Parents should be proud of their children when they marry and should give them help and advice to lead them in their new life.

Marriage is a serious and important matter and should never be undertaken lightly. When a man takes a woman to be his wife it means that they are to share together everything in life and be true to each other in every experience of life until they are parted by death.

At present there are three forms of marriage among Africans recognised by the State. The first and highest form of marriage is the Christian marriage, which is performed in a church by a Christian minister and before the church congregation. The second form of marriage is the Civil marriage, which is conducted by the Native Commissioner or Magistrate. These two forms of marriage are monogamous, that is the man may only have one wife. The third form of marriage is usually called Native marriage. This is registered in the Native Commissioner's office and is polygamous, which means that the man may have more than one wife. The question of polygamy will not be discussed in this pamphlet, but it is claimed that the best form of marriage is that which allows a man to have only one wife. This chapter will deal with Christian and Civil marriages, which allow only one wife.

When a couple decide to marry they should realise that they are entering a very long journey which has its joys and sorrows. Happiness in marriage does not come miraculously; it is built by the husband and wife sacrificing some of the things they enjoyed before marriage and giving thought to each other's need. Their joys or sorrows will also affect the community. The African people have a wide view of marriage; one of the things they emphasise when a couple is married is faithfulness to each other, not to destroy the happiness of the homes of the relatives of the man or woman in their new village. The African people realise that any unhealthy thing which may arise in married life will affect not only the two but the relatives and the whole community.

The Church blesses the act of marriage and prays for the happiness of the couple. The State sanctions and recognises Christian or Civil marriages but it also regulates the life of the society by Laws which safeguard the married couple and the

community. Even the community thinks it has a sacred duty to guide the married people, and the advice of elders should not be ignored. The Bible tells us to keep to the advice and instructions of those who are older, because they know the way of life from experience.

It is useful for married couples to bring their difficulties and troubles confidentially to an older person if they have failed to come to an agreement in their problems. This was an established custom among the African people and great relief and joy has come to many homes which were on the verge of collapsing by following this good practice of seeking advice from some person in whom the couple has confidence. Above everything else, the couple should be acquainted with the fact that there is a third person who is always at hand. He is Jesus Christ, the great Leader and Counsellor. They should learn to cultivate the habit of prayer in their homes and always seek His advice and guidance through His Holy Spirit which is able to work miracles in the hearts of all men.

Marriage is a life-long undertaking and involves great responsibilities for husband and wife. The order of the marriage service has these words: "for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part." Some people seek divorce as soon as any trouble, difficulty or misunderstanding comes, but this is to disregard the sacred obligations of marriage. Only in exceptional circumstances should divorce be sought and this only when everything else has failed. A home built on true love does not fall easily—"love suffereth long and is kind."

Marriage, whether it be Christian or Civil, has its trials, difficulties and hardships, but there are also joys, satisfaction and happiness. Both husband and wife must play their part to make marriage successful and happy. There should be sympathy, understanding, loyalty and goodwill on both sides. Some husbands desire to keep their wives under subjection because they claim to have bought them by the payment of lobolo and regard them only as servants brought for the purpose of looking after their homes,

cooking food and satisfying their sexual desires. A man who regards his wife in this way is missing much of the deep joy of marriage which is found in true friendship and companionship and the sharing together of life. The husband should learn to respect and honour his wife and the wife should do the same; they are not servants and masters but partners together in life. When people marry they have to learn to live together in peace. It should be the aim of husband and wife to preserve and make their love deeper by talking freely and peacefully over matters on which they do not agree, not in a spirit of anger but in a spirit of love.

Sometimes friction and trouble come between husband and wife because of the unsympathetic attitude towards each other and sometimes because of ignorance. When a husband comes to his wife he should do so in a spirit of love, understanding and gentleness and not only to satisfy his own physical desires without consideration of those of his wife. There are times when a woman is not in good health and it is at this time that the husband should exercise control over his sexual desires, and not disregard the feelings of his wife. Sympathetic understanding and consideration makes stronger the love between husband and wife.

The Bible tells us that "male and female created He them." This was not an accident but a definite act of creation, that man and woman might find their true life and happiness together. This means that sex life, the relationship between men and women, is not a thing of evil but is the gift of God to His children. God has given to mankind many gifts and these can all be put to a right use or a wrong use. Hands can be used to do good works or they can steal; minds can be used to help and improve ourselves and the world or they can be used to think and plan evil things; we can speak words of kindness and helpfulness or we can speak words which are untrue and unkind. This gift of God which is called sex life can be abused and used for wrong purposes. Sex life in its true and right sense is based on love as between man and woman. Animals do not experience love relationships and their sex unions are casual, but with human beings sexual union between

men and women is an expression of their whole being in a spirit of love and affection. Prostitution is not based on love or affection but on the satisfaction of physical desires. In Christian marriage sex relations should be the expression of love and affection between a man and his wife.

The instruction of African boys and girls in sex matters and moral problems is of great importance. Christian parents should not avoid this task. Where there is no instruction or help given by parents there is much whispered conversation among young people which is inaccurate and unhealthy and which often leads to experimentation, with tragic results. Senior school pupils are sometimes given helpful talks and instructions at mission schools, but nothing which is done by other people can free parents from their responsibilities. It is in the home that young Africans should learn the important facts of life. Children learn very early about animals and their habits and the birth of calves, kittens and young animals. From these incidents, which are well known, parents can talk of human relationships. It is essential that children should be given knowledge and advice in a spirit of helpfulness and warned of serious moral dangers. Far too many parents leave their children to gain knowledge in undesirable ways, with the result that pain and suffering come to them and their children.

An African minister had trouble with two of his children and they were guilty of serious immoral conduct. When asked whether he had ever spoken to his two children about sex life and moral matters he confessed that he had never done so as they would learn about these things in the world. They did learn and in a wrong way!

An African girl found herself in trouble because of things which had happened between her and her boy friend. When the trouble was revealed she said that she did not know it was wrong to allow her lover to do these things as she had never been told or warned by her parents. Her parents confessed that though they were Christians they had never spoken to their daughter about these matters. The parents of the girl were just as much to blame as the girl for what had happened.

It is wrong for parents to allow their children to grow up in ignorance and learn the important things of life casually from other people. Young people are surrounded by temptations and they should be helped by their parents to meet these temptations. The unwillingness of parents to accept their responsibilities is the cause of much of the moral laxity of to-day.

#### THE DESIRE FOR CHILDREN.

It is true to say that from the African point of view every man who marries expects and hopes for the coming of children into the home. Further, it is the general African belief that when children do not come it is always the fault of the woman. African women have suffered untold hardships because they have been accused of having failed to produce children. It is natural to expect children as the result of marriage and the coming together of man and wife. Sometimes this does not happen and might be caused either by the man or his wife.

In the olden days it was the African custom that when a couple failed to have a child the woman was placed under the special treatment of a herbalist or in other cases under a witch-doctor for the purpose of putting right the obstacle which prevented her from having a child. When the woman received "muti" which she drank following instructions, the man was also required to take some "muti" administered by their doctor. It often happened that because of their faith in the doctor or herbalist and his treatment, they were made happy by the arrival of a baby in the home. The old African people insisted that both the man and the woman should receive treatment. At present African men seem to find it difficult to believe that there can be infertility in them and they blame their wives. From outward appearances they appear to be physically strong, but they are ignorant of the fact that there may be present in them some disease or sickness which prevents them having children. Africa is changing, but men are indifferent in accepting improved knowledge. Many men have refused to accept the fact that venereal diseases, which have come to Africa, bring physical defects in their bodies.

The failure to have children brings disappointment and often serious trouble. It is wrong for the husband to blame his wife or for the wife to blame her husband unless there has been a proper medical examination. It often happens that medical treatment by a qualified doctor or a small operation will put everything right. Those who are unable to have children should, therefore, consult a doctor and seek the best advice. In some cases, however, difficulties cannot be overcome by medical treatment. Some Europeans find themselves in the same position and are unable to have children of their own, but they adopt children. Some Africans do the same and find great joy in the children they adopt. When one African couple was asked what they felt about the absence of children in their home they said: "It is our share of the Cross, we are God's children and it is difficult for us to dictate to our Father and ask Him to do our will or why other people are given the gift of children and we are not. We share in other people's joy and have always offered help when they are in difficulties." This illustration shows how people can avoid being bitter when they have no children. It is wrong from every point of view for a man to divorce his wife because they have no children. Some African people are beginning to realise that happiness between man and wife is not measured by the coming of children into the home, although this may enrich their happiness, but true happiness and joy is centred in their love for each other and they find peace and joy in living their lives for one another and serving God in their daily work by helping their people.

#### RELIGION AND FAMILY LIFE.

Jesus placed great value on children and family life. We read in the Bible that He could not tolerate an offence against "one of these little ones." It would be better for such a man who offended the little ones to have "a mill-stone hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Therefore it is clear that we do Him wrong when we offend a little child.

The life of the community emerges from family life. It is therefore evident that the family is the most important place for the beginning of life as it is the cradle of the nation. The individual is part of the family and the family is part of the community and the community is part of the nation. The true foundation of life is found in the family.

Jesus began His life on earth in a family and He resorted to a family circle at Bethany to rest from his labours. Jesus showed a special love for His mother who brought Him up from a cradle in a stable, and when He died on the Cross He made provision for His mother by asking one of His disciples to take care of her. The mother of Jesus influenced Him a great deal, and in His teaching there was shown a deep insight into ideal family life.

The home of Christian parents should be to the community an example of the life and mind of Christ especially in the care, guidance and upbringing of children. Children who appear dirty, ill-fed, badly clothed and neglected are a disgrace to the life and teaching of Christ. The Christian home where ideals are centred on purity should show its fruit in life which follows in the steps of the Master. It is in the home of its parents that a child, who will later become a citizen, learns the true way of life. It is here where the character of the child is moulded and shaped for good or ill in later life. The quality of the future generation depends on the part homes are playing in training and influencing children. Many African boys and girls go wrong and engage in evil habits. In many instances this is not their own fault; parents have neglected their duties and responsibilities. Investigations have shown that many young Africans who have been in trouble and become breakers of the law have come from homes where there has not been a good influence. On the other hand, many Africans who have grown up to live lives of usefulness and blessing have done so because of the good influence of their homes and parents.

If God blesses a husband and wife by giving them children they should realise that they are His trustees and they have to take special care of these children and train them in such a way that they will grow up to be useful members of the family and

community. Children should be taught to know and love their Heavenly Father.

Christian or non-Christian parenthood involves great responsibilities. The family is the foundation of national life and moral integrity. Many things which arise in later life can be traced back to the days of childhood. Why do people refer to the habits of a child as related to those of its parents? Because they are certain that a child inherits some characteristics from its parents and home, whether these are good or bad. The duty of bringing up children is a serious and grave task, because whatever good or evil is sown in early life by the parents will burst out when the dormant life begins to awaken in later years. Therefore parents are the builders of society and their aim should be to build up a nation whose life and character is good.

Some families have fixed times for family worship and it should be remembered that children get weary of long complicated prayers which they cannot follow intelligently. Children should be taught prayers of words and ideas which they can understand. They should not be restricted by rigid rules and practices in the family prayer life. They should be given a chance to express themselves freely when speaking to their Heavenly Father in their prayers. Parents are trustees on behalf of God for the care of His children.

The home is one of the ideal places where the whole family can train itself for service to God and mankind. In the teachings of Christ, love in the home was essential to love outside the home. "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him, and if he repent, forgive him." Peace in the family is related to peace with our neighbour. The followers of Christ must show the world the ways of Christ. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." Christ also taught: "Blessed are the peace-makers for they shall be called the children of God." Surely it should be the aim of every Christian to become an acceptable child of God. Therefore the Christian family should lead the world to Christ by doing good works, not only in the home but in the community and in the common duties of everyday life.

The Christian citizen daily comes into contact with his other fellow citizens whether they be Christian or not. In his private life and at work he is facing new problems of life and conduct. Modern life makes it impossible to live in isolation. These daily contacts should be used as opportunities for showing to others the difference Christian faith and love make in daily life. The influence of example is great and it should be remembered that when a Christian does wrong he brings disgrace upon himself, his home and children, the community and on Christ Himself.

The coming of large numbers of Africans to town and industrial areas has placed tremendous responsibilities on the shoulders of Christians, and it is their duty to reveal the deep-seated qualities of Christian character—faithfulness, temperance, purity, love and service to mankind. All these good qualities should be made to spring from the homes of Christian people. The preparation for a higher and nobler citizenship in Heaven begins here on earth.

#### RELIGION AND THE AFRICAN COMMUNITY.

The African race had its religious beliefs and customs before Christianity came to bring light. The character of the nation was bound up with its religious beliefs and practices though much of these were surrounded by superstition and cruelty. It would not have been surprising had St. Paul come to Rhodesia for him to have uttered the same words he addressed to the Athenians: "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious."

Different races and peoples have come to Africa and brought with them their own religions, and among them was Christianity. Christian missionaries came to Rhodesia in the early days and, though at first their work was difficult and met with little response, gradually the Christian message of love won its way into the hearts of the people and many have come to know and love Jesus Christ and follow His ways.

In the previous chapter the importance of religion in family life was mentioned, and it was pointed out that the family is the

cradle of the race of men and women. It is important that Christian parents should bring up their children in the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His way of life. This chapter will be devoted to the guidance of Christians in their relation to the community.

A Christian believes in God and in the saving power of Jesus and he gathers with fellow Christians to worship God and seek His help. A true Christian lives his religion in the home and in his family circle, but that is not enough—he is called to live his religion before men in everyday life. St. James said: "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only." Our Lord said: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven"; and He also taught us the parables of the Leaven and the Good Samaritan. Then again, He said to His disciples: "If ye love Me ye will keep My commandments." The New Testament is full of the teaching that Christian people must bear witness in their everyday life before men. No man can be a Christian in his own home and on Sundays and then follow the ways of evil during the week in the world. To follow Christ means to follow Him every day in all our life. St. Paul pleaded with the Thessalonians: "Hold fast that which is good; abstain from all appearance of evil." Followers of Christ have to be careful in their life day by day.

Many Christians get into debt and though in some cases this cannot be avoided owing to unemployment, sickness and other causes, it is true that often it is due to careless and wasteful spending. Family expenditure should be watched very carefully and debt avoided as much as possible. Much unhappiness has been caused by debts.

Often a Christian finds himself in a society and among people who do not profess the Christian religion and sometimes has to work with people who have no religious beliefs. He also meets and associates with people who have varied forms of religious beliefs and some Christians who have a different interpretation of Christian beliefs and principles. The Christian should show a spirit of tolerance even when other people's views and beliefs are radically opposed to his own. The Christian cannot isolate himself

from the life of the community and must show the spirit of justice, chastity, purity, tolerance, kindness, sobriety and unselfishness. God uses the co-operation of His children to eliminate the evil in the world and thereby bring in His Kingdom.

Christians cannot remain silent or inactive when confronted by the social evils of African life to-day, and Christian people should be drawn together in facing these forces of evil which are destroying the character and life of African people. Far too often missionaries, African ministers and preachers stand aloof and consider their sole purpose and work is to preach the gospel, and they are content to leave the fighting of social evils to others. Is this the mind of Christ?

Africans, particularly those in the towns and industrial districts, are rapidly being influenced by evils which will ultimately bring the destruction of all that is good unless the force of these evils is checked. There is excessive drinking, prostitution and immoral practices, gambling, thieving and dishonesty, worldly pleasures often of a doubtful kind, and a general drifting away from those things which build up the life of a people on a sound and enduring foundation. Before these distressing and serious facts Christian people, if they know and love the Lord, cannot be silent and inactive. They have a Christian duty to perform in using their resources, their strength and their power towards the eradication of these evils. People who profess no Christian faith are often concerned about these evils and work together for improved life and better social conditions, and those who name the Name which is above every Name should not stand aloof.

There is a legend that when Christ left the earth He was asked who was to carry on His work now that He had gone. Christ replied that He had left His disciples to continue His work. He was then asked what would happen if His disciples failed and Christ answered that He had no other way.

The salvation of human society in Africa will not be found in Government legislation or in the passing of numerous resolutions. It will depend on the power of Jesus Christ working through His followers. If they fail, there is no other way.

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