Chapter Five

The Cross and the Hill Difficulty

Now I saw in my dream that the highway upon which Christian was to travel was fenced in on both sides with a wall. That wall was called Salvation. Therefore, burdened Christian ran up this way. But he did so with great difficulty because of the load on his back.

So he ran until he came to a little hill. Upon that place stood a Cross, and not far away at the bottom of the hill there was a tomb. So I saw in my dream that just as Christian came up to the Cross, his burden was loosed from his shoulders, fell from his back, and began to roll. It continued down the hill until it came to the opening of the tomb, where it fell in. I never saw it again.

Then Christian, no longer burdened, was glad and said with a cheerful heart,

He has given me rest, by His sorrow;
And life, by His death.

Then he stood still for a while to look and wonder. It was very surprising to him that the very sight of the cross could relieve him of his burden. He looked...and looked again, until the tears began to roll down his face. As he stood looking and weeping, three Shining Ones came to him, and greeted him, "Peace be with you!" The first one said to him, "Your sins are forgiven;" the second stripped him of his rags and gave him new clothes; the third one made a mark on his forehead and gave him a roll with a seal on it, which he encouraged him to look at as he went on his way, and to present it at the Celestial Gate. So they went on their way. Then Christian was filled with joy and went on his way singing:

1. “In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: We have a strong city; God makes salvation its walls and ramparts” (Is. 26:1).

2. “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son” (Zech. 12:10).

3. “When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven’” (Mk. 2:5).

4. “The angel said to those who were standing before him, ‘Take off his filthy clothes.’ Then he said to Joshua, ‘See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you’” (Zech. 3:4).

5. “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit” (Eph. 1:13).
Thus far did I come laden with my sin,
Nor could aught ease the grief that I was in,
Till I came hither: What a place is this!
Must here be the beginning of my bliss?
Must here the burden fall from off my back?
Must here the strings that bound it to me crack?
Blest cross! blest sepulchre! blest rather be
The Man that there was put to shame for me.

Then I saw in my dream that he continued on until he came to the bottom of the hill. There he saw, over to the side, three men sound asleep with chains on their ankles. The name of one was Simple, the other Sloth, and the third, Presumption.

Christian, seeing them in this condition, went over to them in order to try to awaken them. Then he said, “You are like those who sleep on the top of a mast, for the Dead Sea is under you, a gulf that has no bottom.” Wake up, therefore, and come with me. If you are willing, I will help you take off your chains.” He continued, “If the one who goes about like a roaring lion comes by here, you will most certainly become his prey.” With that they looked at him, and began to reply as follows:

Simple said, “I see no danger.”
Sloth said, “Yet a little more sleep.”
And Presumption said, “Every vat must rest on its own bottom. What more can I say?”

And so they lay down to sleep again; and Christian went on his way.

He was troubled to think that men in such danger would rebuff someone who was so kind to offer help by waking them, counseling them, and offering to help them with their chains. And as he was troubled, he saw two men climbing over the wall on the left-hand side of the narrow way, and they caught up with him. The name of the one was Formalist, and the name of the other was Hypocrisy. Having come along side of Christian, they began to talk together.

Ch. “Gentlemen. Where did you come from, and where are you going?”

Formalist and Hypocrisy. “We were born in the land of Vainglory and are going to Mount Zion.”

Ch. “Why did you not come in at the Gate which is at the beginning of the Way? Do you not know that it is written: ‘The man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by

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6. “You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the rigging” (Prov. 23:34).

7. “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (I Pet. 5:8).
some other way, is a thief and a robber” 8

**Form. and Hyp.** “Our countrymen told us that the Gate was too far away and that we should take a short cut by climbing over the wall, as they had done.”

**Chr.** “Will it not be counted as a sin, against the Lord of the City where we are going, to violate His revealed will?”

**Form. and Hyp.** “You do not need to trouble yourself about that. Climbing over the wall is a custom in our land. We even have testimony that the practice has been in vogue for over a thousand years.”

**Chr.** “Yes, but will your practice stand up under a trial of law?”

**Form. and Hyp.** “Since this custom has been practiced for over a thousand years, it would doubtless be admitted now as a legal defense by any impartial judge. And besides, what difference does it make how we got in the Way? If we are in, we are in. You are in the way and you came in at the Gate; we are also in the Way, and we came tumbling over the wall. How, therefore, is your condition better than ours?”

**Chr.** “I walk by the rule of my Master; you walk by the rude working of your fantasies. You are already considered thieves by the Lord of the Way. Therefore, I doubt that you will be considered His men when you come to the end of the Way. You came in by yourselves without His direction and will go out by yourselves without His mercy.”

They did not respond very much to these comments by Christian. They simply told him to mind his own business. Then I saw that all of them went on their way without much conversation. Only these two men told Christian that, as to laws and ordinances, they did not doubt that they kept them as conscientiously as he did. “Therefore, we do not see how you are different from us, except for the coat that is on your back which was, as we believe, given to you by some of your neighbors to hide the shame of your nakedness.”

**Chr.** “You will not be saved by laws and ordinances, since you did not come in by the door.” 9 As for this coat that is on my back, it was given to me by the Lord of the place where I am going. You correctly stated that it covers my nakedness. I take it as a token of his kindness to me; before I had nothing but rags. I comfort myself as I go on my journey with these thoughts: When I come to the Gate of the city, the Lord will know me as one who has his goodness, because I have his coat on my back - a coat that he freely gave me in the day that he stripped me of my rags. I have, in addition, a mark on my forehead. Perhaps you did not notice it. But one of the Lord’s most intimate associates (an angel) put it there on the day that my burden fell from my

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8. “I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber” (Jn. 10:1).

9. “Know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified” (Gal. 2:16).
shoulders. I will tell you also that I was given a sealed roll to comfort me as I read it on my journey. I was told to present it at the Celestial Gate where I would certainly be accepted after it was presented. I doubt you have these things and do not have them because you did not com in at the Gate."

They did not even answer Christian. They just looked at each other and laughed. Then I saw that they all went on and that Christian stayed in front of them. He kept his thoughts to himself, sometimes weighed down and other times encouraged. He often read from the roll that the Shining Ones gave him. When he did, he felt refreshed.

I looked, then, that they all went on until they came to the foot of the hill Difficulty, at the bottom of which was a spring. There were also two other paths besides the one that came straight from the Gate. At the bottom of the hill, one turned to the left and the other to the right. The narrow way went straight up the hill. Christian went to the spring and drank from it to refresh himself.¹⁰ Then he began to climb the hill, saying:

>This hill, though high, I covet to ascend,
The difficulty will not me offend:
For I perceive the way to life lies here;
Come, pluck up, Heart; let’s neither faint nor fear:
Better, though difficult, th’ right way to go,
Than wrong, though easy, where the end is woe.

The other two also came to the foot of the hill. When they saw the hill was steep and high, they also noticed there were two other ways to go. Supposing that these two ways might meet with the one Christian was traveling on, they determined to go the easier routes (now the name of one of those ways was Danger, and the name of the other, Destruction). So the one took the way which is called Danger, and it led him into a great wood; the other took the road called Destruction which led him into a wide field full of dark mountains where he stumbled and fell, and never stood again.

I looked and saw Christian going up the hill. I perceived that he slowed down from running to walking, and from walking to crawling on his hands and knees, because the hill was steep. About halfway up the hill was a pleasant arbor made by the Lord of the hill for the refreshment of weary travelers. When he got there, he sat down to rest. He pulled his roll out of his coat and read it; it gave him great comfort. He also reflected again on the coat that was given to him when he stood by the cross. At last he fell asleep. It was a deep sleep. This detained him there until it was almost night. And while he was sleeping, his roll fell out of his hand. Then someone came and awakened him, saying, “Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!”¹¹ With that, Christian suddenly got up and sped on his way. He went on until he came to the top of the hill.

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¹⁰. “They will neither hunger nor thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat upon them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water” (Is. 49:10).

When he came to the top of the hill, he saw two men running as fast as they could towards him. The name of one was Timorous, and the other was called Mistrust. Christian asked, “Sirs, what’s the matter? You are running the wrong way!”

Timorous answered that they were going to the City of Zion and had even gotten up the difficult hill. “But,” he said, “the farther we go, the more danger we experience. So we turned around and are going back.”

Mistrust. “Yes,” said Mistrust, “for right in front of us two lions were lying in our path - we are not sure if they were asleep or awake - and our only thoughts were that if we got too close, they would immediately tear us to pieces.”

Chr. “You have made me afraid. But where shall I go to be safe? If I go back to my own country I will certainly perish there, because it is prepared for fire and brimstone. If I can get to the Celestial City, I am sure to find safety there. I must go on: to go back is nothing but death; to go forward is fear of death and, at the end, eternal life. I will continue to go forward!”

So Mistrust and Timorous ran down the hill, while Christian went on his way. He began to think about what the two men had said to him, then reached for his roll so he could read from it and find comfort. But he could not find it. Then he was greatly distressed and didn’t know what to do. He found himself longing for it because of the relief it brought him in the past, and because it was his pass into the Celestial City. So, standing there, he became confused and didn’t know what to do. Then he remembered that he had slept in the arbor on the side of the hill. Falling down on his knees, he asked God to forgive him for his foolishness and decided to go back to look for his roll. So he arose and went back. Who can sufficiently understand the sorrow that Christian felt in his heart? Sometimes he sighed; sometimes he wept; and he would often be angry with himself for being so foolish as to fall asleep in a place which was intended for only a little rest from his weariness.

Therefore, he went back. He carefully looked to the left and to the right all the way, hoping to find his roll that had been his comfort so many times on his journey. He continued on until he came within sight of the arbor where he had sat and slept. The very sight of the place brought sorrow to his heart by reminding him again of the evil of his sleeping. He had deep regret over his sinful sleep, saying, “Oh wretched man that I am, that I should sleep in the daytime! That I should sleep in the midst of difficulty! That I should sleep in the midst of difficulty!12 That I should give in to my fleshly desires and to use that rest for the ease of my flesh. The Lord of the Hill built it only for giving relief to wearied pilgrims! How many steps have I taken in vain! (The same thing happened to Israel; because of their sin, they were sent back again by the way of the Red Sea). Now I have to take those steps with sorrow, which I could have taken with joy, had it not been for my sinful sleep. How far I might have been on my journey by now! I must take the same steps three times - but should only

12. “Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God” (Rev. 3:2).

“So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet” (I Thess. 5:6-8).
have walked them once. Now the night is approaching, and the day is almost spent. Oh, that I had not slept!”

By this time, he had reached the Arbor. There he sat down and wept. After a while, he looked sorrowfully under the bench and saw his roll. Trembling, he hurriedly grabbed it and put it inside his coat. Who can really say how joyful this man was when he had his roll again! For this roll was the assurance of his life and acceptance at the Celestial City. Therefore, having placed it in his coat, he gave thanks to God for directing his eyes to the spot where it lay. With joy and tears, he began his journey again. But oh, how quickly did he go up the rest of the hill! But before he reached the top, the sun set on Christian. This made him recall the emptiness of his sleep, so he began to grieve: “Oh, sinful sleep! Because of you, I am about to have the night overtake me! I must walk without the sun. Darkness will cover the path of my feet and I must hear the noise of the gloomy creatures - because of my sinful sleep!” Now he also remembered the story that Mistrust and Timorous told him about how they were so frightened at the sight of the lions. Then Christian said to himself again, “These beasts roam in the night for their prey. If I should meet them in the dark, how could I evade them? How could I escape being torn to pieces? So he went on his way. While he was feeling regret about his failure, he looked up. Right in front of him was a stately palace called Beautiful. It stood just beside the highway.

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