

## The Agnostic Finds Faith

JN 14:8-9 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

It is said there are two kinds of agnostics in this world: The ordinary agnostic and the onery agnostic. The ordinary agnostic might say, "I don't know if there is a God but I'd like to know." The onery agnostic says, "I don't know if there is a God and I don't care!"

On a 2 hour train ride in the late 1800's sat one agnostic of each type. The governor of New Mexico was an ordinary agnostic. He was riding on a train sitting next to a clearly onery one. The outspoken orator Colonel Robert Ingersoll poured out a litany of condemnation on belief in God, in Christ and in Heaven. The governor was taken back as he had never heard anyone speak like that before. Not a religious man himself he wondered if this was what he really believed also, or not. Was there a God and what about these claims that Jesus had arisen from the dead?

The governor was also an author and had been working on a small article about the times of Christ and so he decided to expand the scope of that project. He would research and write a book. The goal of the project would be two fold. #1 To produce a book and #2 to galvanize his own beliefs one way or the other.

The rest is history. In 1880 the book was published and became an instant best seller. In the book a nobleman named Judah faces an unfair series of events that leaves him destitute and a prisoner. His desire for revenge gives way to despair and as he almost dies from thirst. A young man gives him a drink of water and a new hope for living. The gracious young man, of course, is Jesus before the beginning of his three years of ministry. Later in the story Judah tries to return the favor as Jesus is marched to his execution. The book was so touching and so well done that even Pastors of the day advised their congregations to read it.

Over the next 100 years the book was made into several movies and even a full length animated version. The 1959 movie version won a then record 11 Academy Awards including Best Picture. That record has only been equaled twice and never surpassed. You have probably guessed by now that the book was *Ben Hur* and subtitled "A tale of the Christ". The Governor of New Mexico and the book's author was Lew Wallace. His quest to determine his own personal beliefs had resulted in a personal faith that he had not known before.

Wallace described it this way: "It only remains to say that I did as (I had) resolved, with results--first, the book *Ben Hur*, and second, a conviction amounting to absolute belief in God and the Divinity of Christ."

Let's remember the Savior who the wise men discovered to be real some 2000 years ago and Lew Wallace discovered to be real just over 100 years ago. We must remember when God stepped out of eternity and into time in the person of Jesus Christ and gave Himself freely for us.

Richard Lewis, Pathway Christian Church, Riverside, CA