

THE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

OF

EDWIN MARKHAM

By

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## INTRODUCTION

# THE PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

OF

EDWIN MARKHAM

## INTRODUCTION

### A. The Subject

#### 1. The Subject Stated and Explained.

It is the purpose of this study to ascertain and present clearly the philosophy of life of the American poet Edwin Markham (1852-1940). Strikingly evident in his life from youth onward and in almost all of his works are the manifestations of an earnest soul reaching one hand upward to God, and extending the other hand outward in fellowship with men of all degree. It is with an examination of the beliefs thus manifested that this study is concerned.

#### 2. The Subject Justified.

For a study of the one American, who, in the past century, has most worthily deserved the title of "Social Prophet", one must go to Edwin Markham. It was his voice that was hailed by many as "the battle-cry of the next thousand years."<sup>1</sup> Alfred Russell Wallace called him "the greatest poet of the Social Passion that has yet appeared in the world."<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Edwin Markham wrote from personal experience, having toiled in his youth by the sweat of his brow. He could have had wealth, honor and esteem, "yet he put it all by and

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1. Estimate in the biography of the poet in Who's Who in America: 1897-1942.

2. George Hamlin Fitch: Great Spiritual Writers of America, p. 141

became a blacksmith, a mighty sledge in his strong right hand to batter down the prison doors, and break the chains of blind men in prison grinding at a mill."<sup>1</sup>

The social message of Markham, which made its greatest impact around 1900, is truly applicable to our day, though not exclusively applicable. The timelessness of such a message is stated by Walter Rauschenbusch:

History is never antiquated, because humanity is always fundamentally the same. It is always hungry for bread, sweaty with labor, struggling to wrest from nature and hostile men enough to feed its children. The welfare of the mass is always at odds with the selfish forces of the strong.<sup>2</sup>

To verify such a statement one need only compare present-day world society with that of centuries past, even with that society against which the prophet Amos prophesied.

But stronger than Markham's negative message as pertains to oppression of the common laborer is his positive clarion call for the World State, or Comrade Kingdom, as he called it. These are days when people, in the face of doom by atomic disintegration, are seeking solutions through media of world-wide political, social, educational and even religious unity. The danger of such organizations is that so many of the leaders do not acknowledge the supremacy of God, the infallibility of the Word, and the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all areas of life.<sup>3</sup> Hence God and Christ are denied a place in the activities of such organizations. Sociology of the world today will not base its program on the Lordship of Christ. Perhaps for that reason world society is at such a low ebb. A study of Markham's social-

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1. George Wharton James: Heroes of California, pp. 456,7
2. Walter Rauschenbusch: Christianity and the Social Crisis, p. 1
3. E.g., the director of the education unit of the United Nations Organization.

spiritual passion should prove fruitful to any serious student of sociology, in revealing how an Idealist attacks the social problem.

### 3. The Subject Delimited.

This study will deal with the philosophy of life of Edwin Markham as it relates to his theology and his social consciousness. The study will concentrate on the analysis of Markham's major beliefs regarding things of God and things of man, rather than on evaluation. As part of this study there will be sought the relation between his religious beliefs and the principles of his Comrade Kingdom. A short analysis of his Biblical interpretations will also be considered, as a basis for a brief evaluation of the balance of his social message.

#### B. The Sources for the Study

Markham's poetry best reveals his religious beliefs, so it is his hundreds of poems, published and unpublished<sup>1</sup>, that form the basis for the study of his theology. His social message finds its most powerful expression in poems like "The Man With the Hoe", but the more detailed presentation of the various aspects of the Comrade Kingdom is found in the unpublished prose volume The Forgotten Purposes of Jesus, and in other prose works, conversations and letters. As for the sources for the study of the influences in Markham's early life which produced his philosophy, and of the influence which his philosophy had upon American thought, works by various contemporary authors, most of whom had a personal acquaintance with Markham, have been used. The writings

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1. The writer is indebted to the Edwin Markham Library, Wagner College, Staten Island, which contains almost the whole of Markham's personal library, for liberal access to original sources.



of William L. Stidger, one of these close acquaintances, reveal much for this phase of the study.

### C. Method of Procedure

A full appreciation of Markham's beliefs would not be reached without a knowledge of the influences in his early life which guided his thinking. Therefore, chapter I is devoted to this subject.

Chapter II will then present his major religious beliefs as seen especially in his works and annotations. These are beliefs regarding God, Jesus, man, salvation and immortality. His Biblical interpretations will also be analyzed.

Thus having dealt with Markham's spiritual convictions, a study of the outward expression of social relations as motivated by these convictions will be undertaken in chapter III.

Chapter IV will deal with Markham's influence upon American thought in the fields of society, literature and theology.

CHAPTER I  
INFLUENCES IN MARKHAM'S EARLY LIFE  
WHICH PRODUCED HIS PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER I  
INFLUENCES IN MARKHAM'S EARLY LIFE WHICH PRODUCED HIS PHILOSOPHY

A. Introduction

One cannot study Edwin Markham without becoming aware of a dual constraint influencing every word and action. Basically, this constraint was the love of God and the love of men. So mingled were the two motives that to isolate them by analysis is practically impossible, especially as one looks at the Markham of later years. Stidger likens this indefinable mingling to a "great, sweeping blue-green stream of beauty, worship, and reverence: reverence for personality, for truth, for beauty, for God."<sup>1</sup> But this one vast stream, when traced to its sources, stems from two smaller branches: the social and the spiritual, the pragmatic and the idealistic, the mundane and the mystical.<sup>2</sup>

In order to understand more fully this "great, sweeping blue-green stream" of Markham's philosophy of life which for the most part became established in his later life, it is necessary that one trace the sources, beginning with his boyhood life, and see just what it was that fed the two smaller streams, and steered the courses of his spiritual and social thinking.

B. Home Influences

1. Parental

Since Edwin Markham was but seven years of age when his father died, it is understandable that it was his mother whose influence

. . . . .

1. William L. Stidger: Edwin Markham. p. 205
2. Loc. cit.

made the deepest impressions upon his life. However, this is not to minimize the father's influence, which worked upon Markham as he heard, as a young boy, the thrilling adventure stories of the early caravan crossings of the American continent, in which Markham's father played such a leading role.

Going back a few generations, one finds, on Markham's maternal side, the Winchells, who were Welsh and English in origin. These were Puritan dissenters of the seventeenth century who eventually had to take refuge in America because of persecution. To American thought and life this family contributed "intellectual vigor and aggressive activity in the affairs of church and state, many representatives having been noted as legislators, preachers, scientists..."<sup>1</sup>

It was after the Revolutionary War that the westward trek took on great proportions. Among the pioneers were Elizabeth Winchell and Samuel Markham, the latter also of an ancestry of English dissenters. Later becoming husband and wife, these two settled in the Northwest territory (now Michigan, Indiana and Illinois), and it was not until some of their children had grown up that they decided to push on further westward. This pioneering instinct of both Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Markham was inherited in full measure by their next addition to the family, a son, Edwin, who was born five years after they finally settled in Oregon City after a migration fraught with adventure and constant danger.

It was from such pioneering parents that Markham derived his remarkable strength of body and mind. The ensuing years proved this, for in every trial or pilgrimage, whatever the elements that battered

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1. Stidger, p. 20

against his body or soul as a boy or youth or man, he not only stood fast on firm ground, often alone, but even had added strength that enabled him to take the hard step forward.

Part of this rugged individualism and perseverance was born in Edwin Markham as he listened to his mother tell exciting stories of his deceased father. They were stories of incessant fights with the Indians who would swoop down upon the overland caravan by day or night, shoot their last arrow, and stampede and steal the cattle and horses. The courage and leadership of Samuel Markham, who was captain of one "train", was a big factor in the success of that particular westward trek. Such stories of his father thrilled him, and made him proud, causing him to want to carry on in his father's spirit. Young as he was when his father died, Markham still remembered a half century later something of his father's personality and character. At that time he told B. O. Flower in the course of an evening conversation as he reminisced of his childhood, "' My father was a mountaineer, a silent man, a deeply religious nature with a dash of mysticism.'"<sup>1</sup>

But the impressions of a departed parent often soon lose their first vividness, while personalities still living continue to work upon the heart and mind with ever-new and cumulative effect. So it was that the mother had more to do with influencing Edwin Markham than had the father. Mrs. Markham also had stories about herself to relate, as the time she was caught in the onrush of a buffalo stampede, when she could see "nothing but the flying feet of frightened animals, and dust clouds passing over her head."<sup>2</sup> And shortly after this experience, ( which she survived with but the breaking of three ribs), she gave birth to

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1. B. O. Flower: Progressive Men, Women and Movements of the Past 25 Years, p. 225
2. Stidger, p. 22

the son Edwin Markham!

It was her own close contact with and upbringing of Edwin Markham that mostly shaped his life. In fact, Markham even inherited a love for poetry from her. She was the "poet laureate of the new settlement, the earliest woman writer recorded in Oregon."<sup>1</sup> Doubtless the fact that his mother had to bear all the responsibility for the support of the family caused Markham to think much, in his later years, of the common folk, those who labored hard for their living, and toward whom Markham showed such a great love.

The adventurous spirit which Markham inherited from his parents almost proved to be his "Achilles heel". Only the interest and love of his mother toward him prevented what might have turned out to be a life of obscurity and unhappiness. In his bold desire to obtain a college education, he suddenly ran away from home. This he felt compelled to do, because of his mother's discouragement of his desire for higher learning.<sup>2</sup> For six months his life was nothing but adventure. First, it was being taken prisoner by a notorious bearded bandit. Then after release, it was a roaming life for six months on the back of a broncho-- a bare nomad existence. Luckily he found a ranch where he dropped the idea of college and decided on the life career of a rancher. But he did not figure on the matched courage and perseverance of his mother, who had followed his trail in an old buckboard and discovered him at the ranch. To "home" again for Markham, and it was

. . . . .

1. Stidger, p. 27
2. Despite indications to the contrary, e.g. her love for poetry, Mrs. Markham was rigidly practical and had "scant sympathy for the dreams of the poet lad. Life to her was something stern and practical--something not to be wasted on books or frittered away in idealistic dreams. She shrewdly distrusted literature as a provider for the outer man and wished her son to remain on the soil." -from B. O. Flower, op. cit., p. 230

not until favorable circumstances appeared that Mrs. Markham felt that Edwin could go on in studies-- that part of his career which provided the weapons with which he was later to wield such tremendous power upon American thought.

Here then was a mother as strong and courageous and adventurous as a man. Is it possible to find any religious tendency in such a woman? Was there any spirituality in her life that molded Edwin Markham? Hear Markham's own words on this:

My mother was a Roman matron, a woman of power, one who could have led an army to battle, but she was also a thoughtful woman with a strong slant toward religion.... She was a seeker after religious truth always and took me with her, even as a mere child, on these religious quests. She belonged to the Campbellite Church, known now as the Disciples.... I remember that now and then my mother would dress me and take me to what were called 'revival meetings' or 'protracted meetings'.<sup>1</sup>

This perhaps was the strongest influence of the mother upon the boy. Her own spirituality impressed him, but coupled with this was the influence of the preaching of the Word which was possible only because his mother always took him to church.<sup>2</sup> We cannot minimize the effects of this parental upbringing, for it directed Markham's reading habits to the Bible, especially to the Gospels, which in turn controlled all his thinking to his dying day.

So it was from an ancestry of intellect, boldness, adventure and aggression in church and state affairs that Edwin Markham was born. From both parents he inherited a strong and healthy body. His father left a memory of courage, leadership and religious mysticism. But

. . . . .

1. Stidger, pp. 226,7

2. Markham himself, in listing the influences which led up to his deepest religious experience in adolescence, recalled that he had been under the influence of the church since he was two years old, either through the preaching of the Word or Sunday School. Cf. Stidger, Men of the Great Redemption, p. 69.

it was his mother whose influence was greatest, for from the year of his seventh birthday, Edwin and mother comprised the entire household. From his poet-mother Markham learned to love poetry, and soon to write it. Conscious of her hardships and toil, Markham nurtured a deep love for the common man, the toiler. And it was her wise timing that made his educational-career dream a reality. But the most far-reaching influence of mother upon child was the spiritual influence. She brought Markham up in the fear of the Lord, under the preaching of the Gospel, and it was this that steered him along the course of life with his eyes always upon the eternal God.

## 2. Circumstantial

Undoubtedly circumstances played an important role in the shaping of Markham's career. If God gave him an instinct of love toward the common man, this was strengthened by his personal experience in the role of such a man. If God gave him a love of nature, this was nourished and sweetened as he lay under the trees keeping watch over his flock of sheep. If God gave him the consciousness of an Almighty Presence, this was proved in the hours of meditation by moonlight.

### a. Poverty

Edwin Markham was born into poverty. For bare existence he learned as a wee boy that he must toil and labor. This he never forgot.

Once the family had settled in Oregon City, Edwin's father tried to maintain this bare existence through farming and hunting. In this he was not too successful. Markham said that "he was not a good provider, and that the burden of the economics fell on his moth-

. . . . .



er."<sup>1</sup> When Edwin's father died in 1860, the entire responsibility of the home was left to Mrs. Markham. To help make a living she maintained a community store which catered to many of the Indians of that region. When Edwin was nine years of age, Mrs. Markham sold the store and bought a sheep ranch in Lagoon Valley, California. "Here hard toil, severe hardships and the privations common to the pioneer life fell to the lot of the boy."<sup>2</sup>

Actually, those memories of younger toils came back to him forty years later as he saw Millet's painting and composed the poem which was to give him world-wide fame, "The Man With The Hoe". Said Markham of that experience, " So I was forced to utter the awe and grief of my spirit for the ruined majesty of this son of God."

With an appreciation of such a struggling and sweating boyhood life, one well understands how the man which this boyhood produced would identify himself so closely, in thought and life, with every common laborer of the world, and would seek from God's revelation a bright outlook for the lot of such brethren-- a Kingdom of Comrades.

To proclaim effectively his discovery of such a unique revelation would demand a high degree of humility. His boyhood life of poverty and toil molded in him just that necessary trait, to which Joaquin Miller alludes when he writes:

Consider what Markham put aside, as putting aside a crown, to take his place with the poor and the despised. Wealth (enough at least ), books and a great knowledge of books, high honors and the esteem of great and good men; the love of men and the idolatry of women... Yet he put it all by and became a blacksmith....<sup>3</sup>

. . . . .

1. Stidger, p. 28
2. Flower, p. 226
3. James, pp. 456,7

b. Ranch Life

Tending the sheep or herding the cattle was a great experience for the boy Edwin. Whereas his experience of toil and hardship drew the tender chords of love and appreciation out toward man on earth, his solitary ranch life turned his eyes heavenward as if in response to Jehovah, "Be still, and know that I am God."<sup>1</sup>

1) Nature

The Suisun Hills were to Markham the citadel of God. Of those shepherd days he wrote:

I was brought into robust contact with the open air, with soil and sun; with great cliffs that soared perpendicularly into the clouds; with flurries of rain, which scattered bright drops on all the leaves of the encircling trees, and with vast cornfields, green and happy, filled with swordlike leaves which leaped when the glad wind rushed over them. I feel that it is a misfortune for anyone to grow up in wealth and sheltered homes, where they miss the outdoor experience.<sup>2</sup>

To Markham these things told him that a Creator existed and that He had a purpose for man other than oppression on earth:

I slowly but surely began to feel that the Creator who had made all this certainly did not intend that some men should be consigned all their lives to the bottomless pit, that abyss of civilization in which the submerged millions are struggling and perishing.<sup>3</sup>

To one whose life would be devoted to expression in verse, this fellowship with nature was the greatest school of learning. And the fact that this verse would impart so much of personal convictions borne out of communion with God and Christ is all the more reason why he should attend "God's University" among the Suisun Hills. Of this preparation Flower writes:

God spoke to the soul of the youth as surely as in olden times he

. . . . .

1. Psalms 46:10
2. Stidger, pp. 47,8
3. Loc. cit.

spoke to the child Samuel, and, though the physical ear was not yet attuned to catch the vibrations of the Infinite, the spirit received the message with awe and wonder and pondered its lessons. The prophets of ancient Israel were no more truly prepared by God to deliver their message to the children of men than was this child of the Sierras, whose pure imagination was flooded by the wonderful wealth of lofty imagery...<sup>1</sup>

## 2) Meditation

In the solitary stillness of the hills and valleys, meditation was natural and rewarding. With the background of knowledge of the Scriptures ( especially the Gospels ) in his young life, he would hold a flower in his hand and contemplate on the beauty of Jesus as the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley. "He remembered how Jesus loved the flowers of Palestine-- and how to him the lily was more beautiful than Solomon in all his glory; and he often pictured the great Prophet journeying alone into the silent recesses of the mountains to commune with His Father."<sup>2</sup>

Markham would often see Jesus the Nazarene on the mountain slopes delivering the great Sermon, and would meditate much upon its practical teachings. It was during these hours of meditation that the seeds of Markham's later social message were sown.

But perhaps the most fruitful hours of tending sheep, as far as the molding of Markham's career was concerned, were those in which, with Bible in hand, he would search the Scriptures, and memorize many pages of the Book. Concerning these hours Markham said;

When I was herding mother's sheep in the Suisun Hills of California I had given a great deal of time to committing the Gospel pages to memory. As I walked the hills after the sheep I carried my little Bible in my hand. As I sat on great rocks watching the day-star arise, and on through the sunny days of California to the gold-sunset, I read my Bible even as a ten-year-old boy....I could re-

. . . . .

1. Flower, pp. 228,9
2. Ibid., pp. 226,7

peat a hundred pages from memory as a child, pages of the Gospel of Jesus that I memorized while tending my mother's sheep.<sup>1</sup>

This thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, especially of the Gospels, proved to be the basis and groundwork for Markham's philosophy of life.<sup>2</sup> It was to his advantage that he learned the Scriptures during those long hours of shepherding his flock, for soon he was to become a busy teacher when such long days of meditation would be of the past.

### C. Educational Influences

Thus far there has been shown the parental and circumstantial influences which guided Markham's thinking to a philosophy of life centered in God and made practicable in relations of man to man. Also it has been seen that in the lonely shepherd life, with such contact with nature, the seed of imagination germinated. Now this little sprout was to be nourished and watered with things which poverty had thus far denied the young lad: books. Edwin's boyhood life was one of sheer loneliness-- the birds and animals his only companions during most of the long days. Now there was to be no more loneliness, for the "Black Schoolhouse" teacher and the "Enchanter" were to become his close companions and counsellors.

#### 1. Impression Made by Teachers

To one destined to become one of America's greatest poets, a basic education was almost mandatory. It is very significant that the rugged pioneers who had crossed the country with such hardship and who were now barely existing should be willing to sacrifice the ser-

. . . . .

1. William L. Stidger: Men of the Great Redemption, pp. 69,70
2. How true were his later interpretations of Biblical truth will be considered in chapter II.

vices of their children and send them to the district schools for three or four months each year. Markham was no exception to the common rule thus determined, and before he had reached his tenth birthday, he could read well, and books had become his passionate desire.

Teachers in those days were as migrant as the pioneers themselves; so it was that Markham had been in contact with many different instructors. But of such a number there were notably two whose impressions were deep and lasting, who opened to Markham great vistas of life and spurred him on to occupy the territories of the horizon.

a. Harry G. Hill

The first of these teachers entered Edwin's life when he was thirteen years old. Stidger calls this "perhaps the greatest event in all his life."<sup>1</sup> Of this influence Markham says:

I went to an old redwood schoolhouse, where for three months I came under the magic spell of the Enchanter, Harry G. Hill, a teacher who loved great poetry and who taught me to love it also.... This teacher, this beloved teacher, left an indelible mark upon my life....<sup>2</sup>

Markham had already been prepared to come under this "magic spell" of Mr. Hill. All of nature had thrilled him. "The soil of his soul had been plowed and harrowed by hardship and beauty. That soul was ready to have dropped into it the seed of poetry."<sup>3</sup> It was not long before Hill realized Markham's tendencies. One noon hour he gave the timely encouragement that started Edwin to pursue the life of a bard. Hill told Edwin: "'You have the love for beauty in you, my boy. You have caught the far-off echo of beauty; you have a poet's insight!"<sup>4</sup>

For days thereafter Hill would enchant Markham as he recited

. . . . .

1. Stidger, Edwin Markham, p. 104

2. Ibid., p. 105

3. Loc. cit.

4. Ibid., p. 111

to him the lines of great poets like Bryant, Tennyson and Moore. The effect upon Markham was magic. "' It was as though the gates of Paradise had opened and I had found my way inside. It swept through me like some madness.' "1

If Hill, the Enchanter, had anything to do with pointing Markham to a poet's career, he also had much to do with determining what type of poet Markham was to be. Hill was a mystic. Perhaps it was this that enchanted Edwin, whose earlier years were so saturated with hours of meditation. In his poem entitled "The Enchanter", which Markham wrote in his eightieth year as a tribute to this great teacher, Markham reveals the man's mystic leanings:

Sometimes he paused as if he heard  
Strange music in the air-  
As if some Vision of the Word  
Hung a bright moment there.

Was he some pilgrim from the prime,  
Tuned to life's deeper themes?  
Had he descended into time  
Through some long night of dreams?2

Is it not probable that the mysticism of Markham's later life and works was an outgrowth and development of that influence made by the redwood-schoolhouse teacher?

b. Samuel D. Woods

To understand the tremendous influence of the teacher Samuel D. Woods upon the life of Markham, one must know something of the lonely soul of Edwin up to this, his fifteenth year, the year in which he first met Woods in the "Black Schoolhouse."

Nine months of the year Edwin was practically in seclusion on the ranch, seeing only his mother from day to day. During the three

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1. Stidger, Edwin Markham, p. 112
2. Edwin Markham: New Poems, p. 77

months that he attended school there was contact with about fifteen other youths, but Markham never knew a companion. He was admired, even considered a leader, yet he felt no tie with their minds and hearts, for he, unlike them, always thought in terms of the spiritual.

This loneliness, desolation and want of companionship made Markham the restless and defiant youth which S.D. Woods encountered. Of their first meeting, Woods said, "When I first saw him, there were in his face lines that were prophetic, but the scowl of resistance was the dominant feature."<sup>1</sup> In discussing the effects of this resistance, Woods said:

While these reasons made his young life piteous in its desolation, they did not touch him in any way that marred his spirit... when aspiration faltered and hope deferred was sick unto death, he lifted up his eyes to the radiance of the summer heavens, and knew that somewhere, out of all this loneliness and despair, in God's universe, there must be peace. Might it not have been here, when he was treading the wine-press alone, that he acquired that marvelous fiber of patience that has been the sweetness of his many glorious later years.<sup>2</sup>

The memorable first meeting of this understanding Woods and resisting Edwin Markham came as a result of a disturbance in class caused by the boy who previously had "broken up the last two schools and whipt the schoolmaster"<sup>3</sup>, Edwin Markham. Markham expected the usual punishment, but his defiant eyes changed to a beautiful sweetness as Woods (who was about Markham's age) dealt with the soul of the boy. The teacher sympathized with Edwin's lonely and hard life, of which Markham had not known he knew; then told him he saw great possibilities for his life, and assured him of his close friendship. Markham "sobbed out his grief, and when he looked up I (Woods) saw the spirit which in

. . . . .

1. Samuel D. Woods: Lights and Shadows of Life on the Pacific Coast, p. 296
2. Ibid., p. 297
3. Ibid., p. 299

these later days has made him a prophet of righteousness."<sup>1</sup>

From that day on, Markham was no longer the resistant, defiant trouble-maker of the Suisun Hills, but the friendly, tender, hopeful teacher-- teacher, because the very next day Woods gave him charge of instructing the younger ones in the schoolhouse.

That Woods was of such great influence in Markham's early life, Markham reveals in a letter to him forty-two years later. Among other things, Markham wrote:

You know, of course, that you were one of the few noble influences in my lonely and sorrowful boyhood. Once in those old days you wrote me a beautiful letter, which I have kept until this hour.<sup>2</sup>

So it was that in such a time when the spiritual depth, imagination and creative powers of one who just two years previously had "stood riveted to the earth spell-bound"<sup>3</sup> as the Enchanter challenged him with poetry--when these were jeopardized by a growing resistance and restlessness brought on by loneliness and want of friendship, that the close companion, Samuel Woods, came into Markham's life to help him forget all the dark past and press on to the challenge of the horizon.

If Woods influenced Markham's later philosophy of life in any way, it was in the restoration to Markham of an interest in and love for his fellow-man. Regardless of how little he may have molded Markham's beliefs, the value of this friendship of Woods and Markham cannot be minimized for had it not been made, no one knows how much of Markham the prophet the world would have today.

## 2. Influence of Books

From his earliest boyhood, books were gems to Edwin Markham.

. . . . .

1. Woods, p. 301
2. Ibid., pp. 302.3
3. Flower, p. 231



To lay his hand upon a book was to capture more of the mysteries of life. William L. Stidger, who spent many hours with the bard in an attempt to determine just what books meant to him, came to the conclusion that "Books to him are as sacred as the most beautiful things that nature offers."<sup>1</sup>

Wielding such power, the printed word must have played an important part in the molding of Markham's beliefs. How his philosophy was thus affected is the interest of this part of the study.

The Bible was Markham's first prize possession. In the next section there will be shown the relation of Scriptures to his religious conversion. Markham was only a boy of ten years when he had memorized at least a hundred pages of the Gospels. The impressions made upon his soul were lasting, for the majority of his poems and writings of later life are colored with religious concepts that reveal an author whose basic beliefs are derived, at least partially, from Biblical truths. Markham himself evaluated the influence of the truths of the Gospels upon his life: "'The gospel of Jesus is the one thing that has had the most profound influence in my life.'"<sup>2</sup> The influence of the Scriptures upon Markham's social consciousness will be examined in chapter III.

Along with the Bible, Edwin's boyhood home contained a copy of the Almanac<sup>3</sup> and Piazza Smith's The Problem of the Pyramids, a story of the Pyramids' relation to Scripture (according to Smith). This volume had some mystical influence on Edwin, for at ten years of age he would sit at his mother's knees as she searched the book for the mysteries of the past, the origin of religion and the meanings of the ancient Bab-

. . . . .

1. Stidger, Edwin Markham, p. 91
2. Ibid., p. 230
3. At eight years of age Markham also read Peter Parley's History of the World, though this volume evidently was not owned by the family.

ylonian and Egyptian life. Once he listened to her read this book through half the night.

The next great event in Markham's life as far as books were concerned followed the months when he met the Enchanter. Captivated by the riches of a new world which seemed to have been exposed by the readings of this Enchanter, Markham ploughed a twenty-acre field and with his wages bought an unabridged dictionary and the volumes of Moore, Bryant and Tennyson. Then, according to Markham, he was on "'Pisgah's height. The heavens opened before me and the days that followed were filled with the joy of living."<sup>1</sup>

The effect of these and other literary works with which Markham came in contact was that of a deepening of imagination and an attraction toward the mystical elements of life. In Markham's own words, a poet is one who "lifts the curtain from the material thus revealing the deep, eternal meanings."<sup>2</sup> It has already been seen that many were the influences in Markham's boyhood that steered him toward a slight mysticism. Though poetical works did not strongly present this aspect, they nevertheless did add a little nourishment thereto.

Up to his twenty-second year, Markham had not come into contact with any religious books (excluding the Bible) which could influence his thinking. Perhaps it was just as well that thus far the Bible was his sole printed guide, for the religious experiences of his adolescent years could have had no firmer basis. But now, at the age of twenty-two, just after joining a Methodist (Union) Church, he gained the friendship of a mathematics teacher who came occasionally to

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1. Flower, p. 231
2. Markham: "Poetry: Defining the Indefinable", from The Poetry Review, Sept-Oct, 1929, ch. XXVII

preach at the church. He gave to Markham the remains of an Episcopal rector's library. The effect of this gift is best told in Markham's own words:

I felt as if I had discovered a continent... Millman's History of Latin Christianity was there, and other books but the crowning find was a series of books and discourses of William Ellery Channing . . . for six months every spare minute I read those books. I began to see that there was a broad and lofty view of religion; a view founded on common sense, and yet, which had in it the mystic vision also--such as I had experienced in my conversion a few years before down in San Jose.<sup>1</sup>

Thus one sees that as far back as in his early twenties Markham was already influenced, through Channing, to a definite two-phased philosophy which combined the practical with the mystical.

Stidger once asked Markham what were the ten great books of his life, in the order of their influence upon him. This chapter deals with the influences of Markham's early life, and though many of the ten books which Markham listed come into his later life, to preserve the continuity of Markham's reply to Stidger, all ten will be considered. Said Markham:

1. "If I had to pick ten books to take to a desert island to cheer my heart most, and give me spiritual strength for the way, I would take first of all the Gospels of Jesus."<sup>2</sup> Then Markham would take:<sup>3</sup>
2. Amiel's Journal: records the history of Amiel's soul in contact with the vast mystery of existence.
3. Shakespeare's dramas: greatest poet of all times.
4. Selected Poems of Robert Browning: after Shakespeare, Browning is the greatest thinker in the realm of poetry.
5. Poems of John Milton: the man who could "rise at times to the level of the sublime and maintain himself in that exalted atmosphere-- the place where man touches eternity and God."
6. William James: The Will to Believe: "he flings all foggy meta-

. . . . .

1. Stidger, Edwin Markham, pp. 233,4
2. Ibid., p. 97
3. All evaluations are Markham's. Cf. Stidger, Edwin Markham, pp. 97,8

physics and theology aside, and approaches the . . . anxious questions of the soul from the viewpoint of the man in the street."

7. James Martineau: A Study of Religion: keenest intelligence in modern world that ever touched the great mystery of religion.
8. Joseph Le Conte: Evolution in its Relation to Religious Thought: sets forth all that is important in the doctrine of evolution.
9. Henry Drummond: Natural Law in the Spiritual World: the first great book to show that what is worth while in religion has foundation upon the eternal logical life.
10. Emanuel Swedenborg: Heaven and Hell: first great thinker to make it plain that the next life is only an evolution of this life.

Markham could not be confined to ten books, and added to this list Thomas Lake Harris' The Arcana of Christianity, Victor Hugo's Les Miserables and The Man Who Laughs, and F.R. de Lamennais' The Words of a Believer.

#### D. Early Religious Experience

Stidger said that "Markham found God through a two-fold process; one a single, definite, upheaving religious experience in adolescence; the other through a slow process of evolution, brought about by a lifelong contact with the church, with preachers, a devoted Christian mother. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

With reference to this study, Markham's evolutionary religious experience has been dealt with in part in this chapter, and indirectly will be alluded to in chapters II and III. It is the purpose of this section to study Markham's adolescent upheaving religious experience and view the man who developed from the transformation.

##### 1. Influences

###### a. Home

When asked to describe his adolescent personal religious experience, or transformation, Markham first told of his mother's influ-

. . . . .

1. Stidger, Edwin Markham, p. 226

ence: her own spiritual life and her desire to have Markham attend Sunday School and church from the time he was a small child. He traced his quest for spiritual truths back to the times he would hear his mother read The Problem of the Pyramids.<sup>1</sup> Markham could not minimize her influence, for it was that which started the process at the culmination of which he was to find himself a new man.

b. Scriptures

As has been already stated, the Scriptures had a profound effect on Markham. For a young lad, his was a thorough knowledge of the Bible, especially of the Gospels. Jesus was his "hero". While still attending school, he expressed his desire to join the local church in San Jose, which desire was fulfilled at the time of his baptism. He took the matter seriously, but later he reflected that that was not his deepest religious experience. His deepest experience came after a prolonged time of reflection, during which time the Word was doing its work. When the blazing light came, Markham saw that the "only path to travel was the path that leads to the feet of Christ and his cross."<sup>2</sup> Thus it is seen that it was a knowledge of the central truth of the Gospels regarding the Christ of Calvary that led him in to this, the greatest of all his religious experiences.

c. Local Church

From boyhood Markham was a regular attendant either at Sunday School, or church, or both. He would often go to revival meetings where the preachers preached with "voices that could and did hurl thunderbolts of the fear of God into the most abject sinners."<sup>3</sup> Of Alexander Johnson's preaching Markham says, "We all sat there, es-

. . . . .

1. Cf. Ante, p. 19
2. Stidger, Edwin Markham, p. 231
3. Ibid., p. 227

pecially the children, pale and horrified with the prospect of a gulf of hell into which we might soon be hurled. <sup>101</sup> He recalls another preacher who always ended his ninety-minute sermon with a burst of tears. At times in the local church there was an over-emphasis on emotion, but only as a result of a dead-earnestness and concern for the souls of the people of the community. The church appears to have been efficient in organization and ministry. After Markham's first religious experience, he joined the church and was baptized. The church was a non-liturgical and fundamental organization. It claimed to have no catechism nor creed-- the only creed being the Bible. It extended the hand of fellowship to anyone who acknowledged Christ as Saviour. It exhorted new Christians to live in conformity with Christ's teaching.

Under the influence of such a fellowship of saints and preaching of the Word Markham was prepared, as he was also by other influences mentioned previously, for the transforming power of divine grace which was to draw him to God in that Road-to-Damascus experience.

## 2. Conversion

### a. Occasion and Type

To Markham, his baptism and first joining of the church was not the turning point in his spiritual life. The occasion of his real conversion is best described by his own words:

I remember, however, after I had been baptized, and after I had joined the church, even after I had been within the influence of the church from two years of age, a very definite time when what I call my religious experience came to me. I had been listening to a series of revival sermons when all at once it came over me

. . . . .

1. Stidger, Edwin Markham, p. 228

like a flash of revealing light, light such as never had been seen by me on land or sea; light such as shines only from some great Paradise; light that I shall never forget; that the only path to travel was the path that leads to the feet of Christ and his cross. I saw it all in this burning, blazing, almost blinding flash of insight. And with very deep emotion I told the preacher of my experience and of my insight. I told him of that blazing light, of my Road-to-Damascus experience. I was overcome by it.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of this conversion, Markham was again received into the fellowship of the local church, on the basis of his confession that he acknowledged Christ as Saviour and of his pledge to try to live in conformity with Christ's teaching.

b. Effects

From the moment the great light flashed upon Edwin Markham revealing the one and only path of life, he was a new man. It was a sudden change, and a real change. Of its effect on him, Markham said:

I certainly had the feeling that I had taken a sudden and serious step upon the new path of the light I had seen; a step that was to lead me away from the frivolities and general disorders of the world. From that high moment on I have felt a closer unity with the Divine Master; and that unity has never been broken unto this hour! That unity is one of the sure permanencies of my life.<sup>2</sup>

From this very testimony it is to be noted that prior to his conversion Markham found himself involved in the world's frivolity and its general disorder. Now all things had become new, and he felt himself lifted from the worldly to the heavenly, from the corrupt to the holy, from an identification with Satan to a unity with the Divine Master. Before, he had found himself in a chaos of creeds and doubts, seeking "anxiously for the unifying principle of life."<sup>3</sup> Now Christ became the revelation of God. This was the new Edwin Markham.

. . . . .

1. Stidger, Edwin Markham, p.231
2. Ibid., pp. 231,2
3. Ibid., p. 208

This was the experience that affected his message in prose and poetry of which he was soon to be master.

One may speculate on the various possible philosophies that Markham might have developed were it not for such an experience at the foot of the cross of Christ. Up to this period in his life there were the various mystical influences which could easily have made Markham a pure mystic, but as a result of this conversion he became a Christian mystic, unknown things of God now finding their revelation in Christ. Markham could have become a pantheist, but finding God and Christ through such a spiritual experience outside of any materialistic environment made him the Christian idealist.

The succeeding years of his life, and the works thereof, must always be viewed in the light of this great experience, but with at least one qualification. From all evidence, Markham, in his conversion, accepted Christ's death as expiatory for his sins. Yet, as will be shown in the succeeding chapters, he was influenced by men like William Channing and Emanuel Swedenborg to deny such efficacy. With this borne in mind, it will be easier to understand his later beliefs, which in so many aspects appear to present inconsistencies with the Christian faith.

#### E. Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to set forth the influences in Markham's life which led to a philosophy that was originally Christian, slightly mystical, and pragmatic.

Edwin Markham's deeply religious nature is traced back to the influence of both parents, especially his mother, who brought him up on the teachings of the Bible and took him regularly to Sunday School



and church. His search for spiritual truth was intensified during his boyhood ranch life, when God's universe and nature were the University, long solitary days were the study periods, and the Bible, especially the Gospels, was the textbook. Such was Markham's preparation for the deepest religious experience he was ever to undergo, namely his "Road-to-Damascus" conversion, when the world lost its hold on him and he realized a definite union with Christ.

Markham's slight mysticism was derived first of all from both parents, who themselves were to a fair degree mystical. His meditative life in the open country nourished this inclination, along with his personal contact with the mystic Enchanter, Harry G. Hill, and a growing acquaintance with the various poets who delved into things of the unknown.

The pragmatic and practical aspect of Markham's philosophy was born in Markham's boyhood. Brought up by pioneering parents, enduring poverty and toil, coming under the influence of the teachings of Jesus regarding the Christian's relations to his neighbor, and reading such authors as William Ellery Channing, Markham saw that the hardship of man was not the original purpose of God, that nothing short of a brotherhood of Christians on earth should be desired. Out of this early background was soon to come forth the "battle-cry of the next thousand years."

CHAPTER II

MARKHAM'S BELIEFS AS REVEALED  
BY HIS WORKS AND ANNOTATIONS

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ANNOTATIONS

A. Introduction

The silent years of Markham's life were those of his teaching career, which extended up to the year 1899. In that year he resigned the Headmastership of the Tompkins Observation School at Oakland and moved east to Brooklyn with his wife, Anna Catherine Murphy, whom he had just married the previous year. It was just at this time that his fame as a poet began to be heralded following the publishing of "The Man With the Hoe".

Although the years preceding 1899 were silent for him, they were the important formative period of Markham's life. Just as the apostle Paul spent the hidden years in Arabia and Tarsus following his conversion and before his great proclamation of the divine message entrusted to him, even so Markham was quietly preparing for his proclamation of the message written so indelibly upon his heart. While it is true that an analysis of Markham's beliefs is made predominantly on the basis of his works published after 1899, it is to be borne in mind that many, if not all, of the seeds of such beliefs were sown in the earlier years.

While he was deeply religious, Markham had no use for systematic theology. In fact, on Reverend Dr. Behrends' statement before an ecumenical conference, "'Burn theological millinery! Put old doctrines into a museum!'", Markham commented, "I heartily approve the

bonfire and the shelving."<sup>1</sup> To Markham, creeds were unnecessary and often misleading. He said:

Perhaps when they come to the formulation of a new creed our fermenting churches will find that no creed is needed-- only a covenant to lead the brotherly life. They will find, perhaps, that Christianity is not a dogma to be believed, but a life to be lived-- find that a little faith in Christ is worth a great deal of belief about him.<sup>2</sup>

While it is true that Markham did not consider creeds or religious beliefs as having any saving value, and while it is true that he would admit the Sermon on the Mount and the Golden Rule as the most important creeds, he nevertheless did have many religious convictions, as hundreds of his works reveal.

It has already been stated that Markham's philosophy was a combination of the idealistic and pragmatic, the spiritual and the mundane. The pragmatic and mundane phase of this philosophy will be examined in chapter III, where Markham's social message is to be considered. It is the purpose of this chapter to present the idealistic and spiritual aspect of his philosophy. The outline will follow the subjects of God, Jesus, man, salvation and immortality, which outline is more detailed than the one which Markham himself gave when he said, "My religion, in its larger reaches, involves three things: what I think about God; what I think about man; and what I think about life and death."<sup>3</sup> The study will conclude with a consideration of some implications of Markham's religious beliefs, and his general interpre-

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1. Markham, "If Not the Creeds What?". (unnamed, undated periodical clipping, filed at the Edwin Markham Library, Wagner College. This and all other unnamed or unpublished references, hereafter referred to, are on file at the Edwin Markham Library.)
2. Loc. cit.
3. Markham, in The New Church Messenger, (March 5, 1930), p. 170

tations of the Bible.

## B. Beliefs Regarding God

### 1. God's Character

#### a. Omnipotence

Markham once made this annotation in a volume of his library, revealing a belief in God's preeminence qualified by kinship with man:

God is the Supreme Man of all worlds. Whenever you find man, you find God in some degree of perfection. Over all worlds there is a Supreme Man: that Man is God. God is not Superhuman, but is the Supreme Man. On the highest Throne sits a Man- that Man is God, the All-Father.<sup>1</sup>

To Markham, God is infinite, the Creator of man:

Do something, brother, to befit  
An offspring of the Infinite!<sup>2</sup>

Concerning God's creation of man, Markham noted the following:

It must have been in the mind of God from the beginning to create man. Had he not created man, creation would have lacked its fundamental idea and realization. . . . When God said, "let us make man in our image", it implied that man's creation was in God's mind previously. Man is the only being that can love God, and man is the only being that can be loved truly by God.<sup>3</sup>

Nature is also the handiwork of God:

There's a thrill in the sod  
At the touch of the God,  
And a song in my heart for the gift and the Giver.<sup>4</sup>

This infinite God, beyond man's full knowledge, is forcibly put in the poem, "Dreyfus":

There is a something sacred and sublime,

. . . . .

1. Annotations of Markham in Wieman, Macintosh, Otto: Is There a God? A Conversation, p. 11. This and the following references to Markham's annotations are preserved in Markham's original handwriting in the many volumes of his personal library now contained at the Edwin Markham Library, Wagner College.
2. Markham, Bk IV (fourth book of verse: see bibliography for complete title), "Your Great Hour", p. 31
3. Annotations of Markham in H. Martensen: Christian Dogmatics, p. 84
4. Markham, Bk III, "Wind On the Rye", p. 87

Moving behind the worlds, beyond our ken,  
Weighing the stars, weighing the deeds of men.

. . . . .  
Take heart, O soul of sorrow, and be strong:  
There is One greater than the whole World's wrong.  
Be hushed before the high benignant Power  
That goes untarrying to the reckoning hour.<sup>1</sup>

b. Omniscience

Markham's God knows all things: the infinitely great, the infinitesimally small. This knowledge Markham likes to call Divine Vision, and describes it in a poem under that title:

And he sees before Him pass  
Souls and planets in a glass:  
And within the music hears  
All the motions of all spheres,  
All the whispers of all feet,  
Cries of triumph and retreat,  
Songs of systems and of souls,<sup>2</sup>  
Circling to their mighty goals.

c. Love

In view of an "all-benignant Power" that made all things and knows all things, it is a mystery to Markham that this Power should be interested in lowly man. So he titled one of his quatrains, "A Mystery", the first lines of which read:

God moves among His mighty worlds afar,  
Yet shines in every soul a quiet star;<sup>3</sup>

God is concerned with every man's soul:

No soul can be forever banned,  
Eternally bereft:  
Whoever falls from God's right hand  
Is caught into his left.<sup>4</sup>

To Markham this concern for man by God is understandable in the light of the fact that God is Love, or, as Markham prefers to say, Love is

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1. Markham, Bk. II, p. 65
2. Markham, Bk. I, "Divine Vision", p. 98
3. Markham, unpublished
4. Markham, Bk. IV, "The Divine Strategy", p. 3

God:

Then all the worlds will know that Love is Fate-  
That somehow he is greater even than Heaven-  
That in the Cosmic Council he is God.<sup>1</sup>

This love of God is manifest in Christ's identification with the suffering of the world. This is described by Markham in the poem, "The Nail-Torn God", the last verse of which reads as follows:

But there is a God who struggles with the All,  
And sounds across the worlds his danger-call.  
He is the builder of roads, the breaker of bars,  
The One forever hurling back the Curse;  
The nail-torn Christus pressing toward the stars,  
The Hero of the battling universe.<sup>2</sup>

To Markham, the "Divine Feminine as well as the Divine Masculine Principle is in God."<sup>3</sup> And so he assigns to God all the attributes of a tender, loving mother.

d. Justice

While God is loving, at the same time He is just. This is very succinctly put in the quatrain entitled "Eternal Equities":

All the poised balance of God would swerve  
Did men not get the blessings they deserve;  
And all the vigorous scales of Fate would turn,  
Did men not get the punishments they earn.<sup>4</sup>

God is one who keeps His Covenant, His word with man:

For He that framed the impenetrable plan,  
And keeps His word with thee, will keep with man.<sup>5</sup>

In keeping with God's justice, what proves to be punishment to one man becomes blessing to another:

The storm that washt his field away,  
Watered my field for the harvest day:

. . . . .

1. Markham, Bk. I, "Love's Vigil", p. 55
2. Markham, Bk. V, p. 58
3. Markham, footnote to "Song To the Divine Mother", Bk. I, p. 121
4. Markham, unpublished
5. Markham, Bk. I, "The Butterfly", p. 57

Lightnings that burned his proud abode,  
Lighted my feet on a dangerous road:  
Gales that hurled his ship to the deep,  
Drove mine home to the harbor sleep.<sup>1</sup>

But while God metes out His justice continually, there is to be the final judgment. The reckoning hour will be in God's hand.<sup>2</sup> That will be a time "When God reveals His awful face."<sup>3</sup>

## 2. God's Providence

To Markham, God is the provider of all things to men, the guide along the path, the pilot on the seas. In "A Collect for Thanksgiving Day"<sup>4</sup>, he thanks God for providing the material as well as the spiritual. He thanks Him for the sky, hills, trees, rain, light, night, even beauty, friends, faith, memories, hope of heaven. Markham finds peace and security in the hollow of God's Palm:

At the heart of the cyclone tearing the sky  
And flinging the clouds and the towers by,  
Is a place of central calm:  
So here in the roar of mortal things,  
I have a place where my spirit sings,  
In the hollow of God's Palm.<sup>5</sup>

God is the unseen Pilot:

I sail a sea, but I never know  
Who is the Pilot, for he sits alone.  
Yes, Someone is up at the wheel, altho  
His face is hidden, his name unknown.<sup>6</sup>

Typical with Markham, while he ever looks to God, his eyes are never turned away from man, the common toiler. So it is even here that as he considers God's providence, he sees it made possible by the instrument of man. His poem "The Carriers of the Load" describes the toils of the laborer and the benefits to civilization from these toils. At

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1. Markham, Bk. V, "Why?", p. 112
2. Markham, Bk. II, "Dreyfus", p. 65
3. Markham, Bk. IV, "A Judgment Hour", p. 37
4. Markham, in Eleanor H. Caldwell: Entertainer and Entertained, p. 89
5. Markham, Bk. III, "The Place of Peace", p. 108
6. Markham, Bk. V, "The Unseen Pilot", p. 111



the end of the poem he writes:

These are the conscripts carrying our loads;  
These are the hands that pave our rugged roads;  
Shape even the shoes with which our feet are shod-  
Make possible the providence of God!<sup>1</sup>

### 3. God's Will

Markham lays much to the will of God in a man's life. The soul in the will of God has as little to do with that will as an arrow in flight has to the bow that sent it:

The flying arrow, knowing its path is made,  
Goes singing softly at the bow's behest,  
Taking its destined journey unafraid-  
In every moment of the flight at rest.  
.....  
So speed, O Soul, to your divine abode:  
Go singing through the shadow and the light-  
Go bravely on your high-appointed road,  
At rest in every moment of your flight.<sup>2</sup>

God's will may be delayed by evil, but in the end it is accomplished. Just as a "chance rock. . . may change a river's course", yet cannot "hold it from its destiny, the sea", even so, "God is not foiled."<sup>3</sup> Behind the mystery and awe of the Cosmos, "God's sure hand presses to a blessed end."<sup>4</sup> God as Pilot steers the destiny of man.<sup>5</sup>

God chooses His instruments for accomplishing His will. In one sense men are partners with God in building the world.<sup>6</sup> Just so He chose America to build the "Brother-Future" beam on beam. To America Markham calls:

For some large Purpose, since the youth of Time,<sup>7</sup>  
You were kept hidden in the Lord's right hand.

.....

1. Markham, Zion's Herald, (September 13, 1933) p. 877
2. Markham, Bk. III, "Rest In Flight", p. 109
3. Markham, Nautilus, (August, 1909), "Be Patient With God".
4. Markham, Bk. II, "The Mighty Hundred Years", p. 26
5. Markham, "The Unseen Pilot", op. cit.
6. See Markham, Poems of Sunlit Heights, "Partners", p. 35
7. Markham, Bk. II, "The Errand Imperious", p. 51

God even uses evil men to accomplish His will:

All things, good and evil, build the road.  
Yea, down in the thick of things, the men of greed  
Are thumping the inhospitable clay.  
By wondrous toils the men without the Dream,  
Led onward by a something unawares,  
Are laying the foundations of the Dream,  
The Kingdom of Fraternity foretold.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. God's Revelation

##### a. In Nature

It was noted in Chapter I how Markham as a boy on the ranch saw God so intimately in nature. So it is not surprising that in his later poems he should reveal the beliefs thus originated. Markham saw God in the vast motion of the sphere. A poet "feels the motion of the sphere and builds his song in sacred fear."<sup>2</sup> Markham saw God in the beauties of Nature. In the grass was soft growing; in the rock, hushed firmness; flowers, simplicity; poppy, hope; tree, kindness and patience; and in crickets, joy.<sup>3</sup> He even saw the brotherly spirit of a rock:

I huddled close against the mighty cliff.  
A sense of safety and of brotherhood  
Broke on the heart: the shelter of a rock  
Is sweeter than the roofs of all the world.<sup>4</sup>

He saw the peace of God in the dawn.<sup>5</sup> The tranquillity in nature, when contrasted to the fret and cares of man, revealed a tragedy:

Oh, the fret of the brain,  
And the wounds and the worry;  
Oh, the thought of love and the thought of death-  
And the soul in its silent hurry.  
.....  
But the stars break above,  
And the fields flower under;

.....

1. Markham, Bk. II, "The New Century", p. 67
2. Ibid., "Poet-Lore", p. 119
3. Markham, Bk. I, "A Prayer", p. 28
4. Markham, Bk. I, "In the Storm", p. 49
5. Markham, Bk. I, "A Lyric of the Dawn", p. 71

And the tragical life of man goes on,  
Surrounded by beauty and wonder.<sup>1</sup>

In his imagination, Markham once made a pilgrimage to find God. He went to the holy tombs and to the broken altars, listening for His voice, looking for His footprint, but found them not. It was on his return journey that he found God in the song of a lark, in the wonder of a rose, in the blessing of a well, in the beauty of a lover's face, and in the signal of the sun.<sup>2</sup>

b. In Man

God formed man in His own Image. So it is that Markham sees the shadow-form of God in every human heart. This he sets forth in the quatrain, "Infinite Depths":

The little pool, in street or field apart,  
Glasses the deep heavens and the rushing storm;  
And into the silent depths of every heart,  
The Eternal throws its awful shadow-form.<sup>3</sup>

It is this same reflection of God in man that Markham was referring to when he said, "Know man and you will know the deep of God."<sup>4</sup> God speaks his heart through mortal man. So it is that the poet "Hears through the roar of mortal things the God's immortal whisperings;"<sup>5</sup>

c. In Christ

Markham believed in the Incarnation-- God in the flesh in the Person of Christ-- for God is Christ. One of his annotations reads:

Yes, we may conceive of God as like Christ, because God is Christ. In Christ is all the God we know. Whatever is beyond Him has folded in the First Mystery.<sup>6</sup>

. . . . .

1. Markham, Bk. I, "The Tragedy", p. 97
2. Markham, Bk. III, "Revelation", p. 102
3. Markham, Bk. I, p. 43
4. Markham, Bk. III, "The Deep of God", p. 98
5. Markham, Bk. II, "Poet-Lore", p. 119
6. Annot. of Markham in Francis J. McConnell: The Christlike God, p. 33

This is also stated in one of his favorite quatrains:

Here is the truth in a little creed,  
Enough for all the ways we go:  
In Love is all the Law we need;  
In Christ is all the God we know.<sup>1</sup>

Christ is the supreme revelation of God. To see the nail-torn Christ is to see the nail-torn God. To see the Kingdom of Christ is to see the Kingdom of God. To see the miraculous power of Christ is to see the omnipotence of God.

### C. Beliefs Regarding Jesus

#### 1. Life

To Markham, Jesus was both man and God. He was man in that he died; He was God in that He rose again and "ascended into the heroic life". He lived a career that was an "epic of passion and grief and heroic hope-- one of the terrific tragedies in the Wars of God. It everywhere touches on the Ideal, the one eternal kingdom of poesy. It begins with a soft idyl of wonder and joy, passes through whirlwind and earthquake, rising at last to the white calm of eternity."<sup>2</sup>

Markham recalled his shepherd life, how one December night, as he watched the "immemorial march of star on glorious star"<sup>3</sup>, he envisioned the shepherds of old:

Who saw the hosts go by, the heavens unfold,  
And heard the song shake down  
High over David's town,  
Where the bare stall was His  
Who on the Right Hand is;  
While Magi on the Syrian sands afar  
Were hastening at the signal of a star.<sup>4</sup>

. . . . .

1. Markham, unpublished
2. Markham, The Forum, (January, 1910), "The Poetry of Jesus", p. 54
3. Markham, Bk. III, "On the Suisun Hills", p. 88
4. Loc. cit.

The Magi sang a song at the manger of the Christ Child:

This is the One we worship in the splendor of the fire:  
He is the dream of every heart, he is the world's desire.<sup>1</sup>

Markham saw God lowering himself to the sorrows and toils of man-  
kind in order that man be reconciled:

'Twas the God of Song and Mirth  
Who descended to the Earth.  
It was He who veiled His face  
In the sorrow of the race;  
He who toiled at Nazareth,  
Going with us down to death;  
He who bowed the heavens for men,  
And arose to light again.

. . . . .  
'Twas the First-born Son of Light  
Shone upon the human night,  
Bringing down the Final Truth  
In His deep eternal youth.  
God was reconciled to man  
When the ages first began;  
But that man be reconciled  
God became a little child."<sup>2</sup>

By coming the way of the lowly, and living the life of the lowly, Je-  
sus consecrated the common way:

Now have the homely things been made  
Sacred, and a glory on them laid.  
For He whose shelter was a stall,  
The King, was born among them all.  
He came to handle saw and plane,  
To use and hallow the profane:  
Now is the holy not afar  
In temples lighted by a star,  
But where the loves and labors are.  
Now that the King has gone this way,  
Great are the things of every day!<sup>3</sup>

And in coming to this earth, Christ came not for his own  
sake, but for the sake of all men; not to gain sheep, but to provide  
the shepherd; not to be served, but to serve. This is what made Christ

. . . . .

1. Markham, Bk. III, "The Song of the Magi", p. 179
2. Markham, Bk. II, "The God of Song and Mirth", p. 99
3. Markham, Bk. III, "The Consecration of the Common Way", p. 178

so attractive to Markham, as we see in his quatrain, "Christus":

Why does He make our hearts so strangely still,  
Why stands He forth so stately and so tall?  
Because He has no self to serve, no will  
That does not seek the welfare of the All.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Death

Though Jesus came as a servant, at the same time he came as King, but "men had no throne for him but the Cross!"<sup>2</sup> In the sixth hour He cried with a loud voice, "It is finished!" "To all appearance, the Hero of the Cross had gone down in final overthrow. . . soon this obscure cross would be lifted up until its shadow fell across the world, across the heavens. It was soon to become the eternal symbol of the sacrifice that is at the heart of all heroic life, the symbol of 'the lamb slain from the foundation of the world'. . . . In the light of the cross, men were to see the diviner joy and more glorious meaning of their existence. . . ." <sup>3</sup>

This crucifixion of Christ was to Markham one of the indications that God was not seated comfortably in the far-off firmament merely looking down upon the troubles and woes, the disasters, the ills, of the earth. No, to Markham, God in the person of Christ stands in the front lines of the great struggle of mankind:

. . . there is a God who struggles with the All,  
And sounds the worlds his danger-call.  
He is the builder of roads, the breaker of bars,  
The One forever hurling back the Curse-  
The nail-torn Christus pressing toward the stars,  
The Hero of the battling universe.<sup>4</sup>

A striking feature is that he does not accept the atoning power of Christ's death as such. It is necessary that this be borne in

. . . . .

1. Markham, Bk. V, "Christus", p. 6
2. Markham, The Forum, (January 1910), "The Poetry of Jesus", p. 64
3. Ibid., pp. 64, 5
4. Markham, Bk. V, "The Nail-Torn God", p. 58

mind when the later section on salvation is considered, where it will be shown that according to Markham, works are the predominant saving power of man. Concerning Christ's death, Markham wrote:

Jesus yielded at last to his murderers because he knew there is a moral power in sacrifice. He knew that his death would send an immense power upon his words- would add to his message the might of martyrdom.<sup>1</sup>

Christ knew that he had the only truth that could save the world. So vital was this truth that his followers must guard it unto death. Therefore Jesus set the example by dying on the Cross. This death saved and immortalized truth by consecrating it with death--"death the highest testimony that God or man can ever make. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

Markham's view of the value of Christ's death is two-fold: first, Christ, by dying, consecrated Truth and empowered it with a martyr's influence. Secondly, Christ set the example for his followers, to defend Truth even unto death. Markham excluded the efficacy of Christ's blood in saving man from his sin, because, according to him, man does not need to be reconciled to a God of love.<sup>3</sup> Markham derived his social message by thus denying the cross' atoning value, and making the path that Christ took predominantly exemplary.

### 3. Resurrection and Ascension

Markham saw in Christ's resurrection and ascension wondrous reality and living hope:

To all appearance, the Dark Powers had broken forever the hope of humanity; the Deliverer was dead, his body sealed in a sepulchre of stone. But this tomb was only a door to more wondrous happenings in the long adventure of redemption.

. . . . .  
He is next seen in the soft early morning of the third day. . .  
By the strong lever of the Law, he has forced himself back again  
into the earthly vision . . . . Then on the appointed mountain,

. . . . .

1. Annot. of Markham in Henry B. Wilson: God's Will for the World, pp. 51-55
2. Loc. cit.
3. Cf. his early poem, "The God of Song and Mirth", p. 38

in a still dawn, he parts from them all, and the heaven receives him from their mortal eyes. . . .

. . . . .  
And all the long centuries since Calvary, the Crucified has been faithful to love, preparing the 'many mansions', setting in order the nations of the dead, still consecrated to human service as the Invisible Warrior in the world-struggle.<sup>1</sup>

It is to be noted that here also, with reference to Christ's preparing the mansions, Markham lays more emphasis on the relation of Christ to society, or the nations, than to individuals. This will be brought out in greater detail under the section E of this chapter, and also in chapter III.

But it should not be overlooked that Markham accepts the strict historicity of the life, death and resurrection of Christ according to the Scriptures. This is but another reflection of a faith firmly founded on the experience of his boyhood and adolescence already considered. For a more detailed treatment of Markham's interpretation of the life of Christ, the reader is referred to the four monthly issues of The Forum, 1910, immediately succeeding the January issue to which references have been made in this section.

#### 4. Relation to the World

Though Christ ascended to be at the right hand of God, this by no means shuts him out of the world. For Christ is God, and actually he has been in all events since Creation:

. . . the vast inbrothering of man-  
The glory of the universe- began  
When first the heart of the Mother Darkness heard  
The Whisper, and the ancient chaos stirred.  
Ever the feet of Christ were in events,  
Bridging the seas, shaking the continents.<sup>2</sup>

He has had influence in warring nations like Chile and Argentina, con-

. . . . .

1. Markham, The Forum, (January, 1910), "The Poetry of Jesus", p. 65
2. Markham, Bk. II, "The World-Purpose", p. 80



cerning which Markham wrote the poem, "Christ of the Andes":

O Christ of Olivet, you hushed the wars  
Under the far Andean stars:  
Lift now your strong nail-wounded hands,<sup>1</sup>  
Over all peoples, over all lands: . . .

In his poem "Christ With Us", Markham first laments the fact that there is no Christ in this world, when suddenly he hears a child's cry of hunger, and upon feeding the child, realizes that the Christ he thought was dead is "in the little one" he fed.<sup>2</sup> This thought-- that man serves Christ when he serves man--permeates Markham's philosophy of life.<sup>3</sup> In fact, without it, there would not be Markham's social message. It is the kernel of truth that he places uppermost in all his teaching and life. This will become more evident further on in the study. The justification for this emphasis is not the burden of this section of the study.

Even the look on a man's face reveals whether he is one of Christ's, or Cain's, according to Markham:

Bishops and deans, would you detect  
The crowning mark of the Elect--  
Know who believe beyond rebuke  
The Gospel and the Pentateuch--  
Know who accept the Thirty-Nine,  
And taste with Christ the mystic wine?  
Then search the face of him you doubt  
And that will let the secret out. . . . .  
. . . . .  
That hardened line, that loveless look,  
Are records in the Judgment Book.  
The truth is written and writ plain  
Whether we be for Christ or Cain.<sup>4</sup>

Markham preached Christ as the Social Saviour. He once said that if he preached in a church, his message would have two points:

. . . . .

1. Markham, Bk. IV, p. 61
2. Markham, Woman's Home Companion, XXXII, (December, 1905)
3. See also Markham, Bk. II, "The Hindered Guest", p. 121
4. Markham, Bk. III, "Records in the Judgment Book", p. 111

the regeneration of the individual and the regeneration of society.

"If the people would not hear both of these messages I would put on my hat and walk out of their church. . . . If you opened my heart you would find written on it--Christ, the Social Savior."<sup>1</sup> Once in a San Francisco church, in commenting on the problem of the oppressed toiler, Markham said, ". . .I believe Jesus of Nazareth is the Father, the Saviour of the human race. In His principles of justice, in His principles of brotherhood, we find the solution of these questions!"<sup>2</sup>

Markham holds that some day, when all peoples and all societies will enter the new social order, the principle of which is the Golden Rule, then the Comrade Kingdom will have come upon the earth. Its ruler will be none other than the very Christ whom Markham cherishes to call the Social Saviour.

#### D. Beliefs Regarding Man

##### 1. Equality of Brotherhood

Markham justifies in part his call for fraternity on earth by presenting the truth of the equality of men. Before America entered the first World War, Markham made a plea for peace in his poem, "Ghosts in Flight", the last verse of which makes peace exclusively reasonable in the light of the fact that all peoples came from the one source:

Peace, peace, O men, for you are brothers all-  
You in the trench and on the shattered wall.  
Do you not know you came  
Out of one Love and wear one sacred name?<sup>3</sup>

. . . . .

1. McConnell, Edwin Markham Waits for a Train and Talks
2. From Samuel M. Jones: The New Right. p. 397
3. Markham, Bk. IV, "Ghosts in Flight", p. 71

In his poems "The Jews" and "A Cry for Brotherhood", Markham protests the persecution of the Jews. To Markham, the "crest and crowning of all good, life's final star, is Brotherhood."<sup>1</sup> The greatness of man is not in inventions, wealth, eloquence or art, but in the ". . . resolute will to lift the poor, to build the Brotherhood, the vision unfulfilled."<sup>2</sup>

But the fulfillment of Markham's dream for equality and brotherhood will not come until the Kingdom has come:

When God's warm justice is revealed-  
The Kingdom that the Father planned-  
His children all will equal stand  
As trees upon a level field. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Then it will be that just as trees have equal access to the earth's store of nourishment, to the sky's rains, to the rush of wind bringing laughter, and to the fellowship of other trees, so it will be with man: blessed equally of God with all things, and at the same time in joy and fellowship with the fellow men.

## 2. Image of God

Man was made in the image of God. The Shadow-form of the eternal is in the depths of every heart.<sup>4</sup> "Know man and you will know the deep of God."<sup>5</sup> Man is a great mystery to the world:

Out of the deep and endless universe  
There came a greater Mystery, a Shape,  
A Something sad, inscrutable, august-  
One to confront the worlds and question them.<sup>6</sup>

The soul of man is immortal:

Fear not to pass the silent door,

. . . . .

1. Markham, Bk. I, "Brotherhood", p. 21
2. Markham, in Rotarian, (March, 1936), p. 4
3. Markham, Bk. II, "The Field Fraternity", p. 49
4. Cf. Ante p. 36
5. Markham, Bk. III, "The Deep of God", p. 98
6. Markham, Bk. I, "Man", p. 60

Out to the realms of the Evermore;  
Be glad: it is your native shore,<sup>1</sup>  
And you are going home once more.

So while in one sense man seems a mystery to Markham, in the other sense he is no more so than is God, of whom he is the image. And as God is the God of eternity, even so the immortal soul of man passes into the eternity beyond, unknowable and yet by faith known.

### 3. Sinful Nature

Markham recognizes the fact that man is born in sin, that before he becomes a follower of Christ he lives to self. One of Markham's annotations reads, "Life in the Kingdom would be a daily dying to the self-life."<sup>2</sup> It is sin that has brought about the oppressions and woes of the world. Men instead of loving one another, hate with deadly hatred. Markham contrasts men with ants. The ants live in gentle Brotherhood, while, as he points out:

. . .we mortals plot and plan  
How to grind the fellow-man;  
Glad to find him in a pit,  
If we get some gain of it. . .<sup>3</sup>

Men, by this sinful nature, seek to exclude the neighbor:

He drew a circle that shut me out-  
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.  
But Love and I had the wit to win;  
We drew a circle that took him in!<sup>4</sup>

It is this exclusion and hatred for the fellow-man that brings about the oppression of the laborer by lords and rulers, against whom so many of Markham's works are directed, notably his "The Man With the Hoe". It is for this reason that man when he works cannot sing as the birds sing<sup>5</sup>, for he is always thinking of self-gain out of com-

. . . . .

1. Markham, Psychology, (April, 1925), "Going Home", p. 19
2. Annotations of Markham in Martensen, p. 181
3. Markham, Bk. I, "Little Brothers of the Ground", p. 23
4. Markham, Bk. II, "Outwitted", p. 1
5. Markham, Bk. II, "The Builders", p. 39

petition with his neighbor.

#### 4. Freedom of Will

Markham saw the "awful" step that God took when he made man a free creature-- a dangerous and yet necessary step. He appropriately entitles this move "The Daring of God". The last verse reads, (God speaking):

I know the risk, the terror of My deed;  
Yet I must make him free to be the seed  
Of Seraphim who guard the cosmic gates:  
Behold in his hand the glory and the curse  
As he goes forth to build the eternal fates:  
Now there is danger in the universe!<sup>1</sup>

In another poem, "Man-Test", Markham again brings out the truth that God made man free to choose between good and evil:

. . . . I will leave man to make the fateful guess,  
Will leave him torn between the No and Yes,  
Leave him unresting till he rests in Me,  
Drawn upward by the choice that makes him free-  
Leave him in tragic loneliness to choose,  
With all in life to win or all to lose.<sup>2</sup>

#### 5. Instrument of God

As the creature of the Creator, man has the obligation to "do something. . . to befit an offspring of the Infinite!"<sup>3</sup> Markham cites Lincoln as an example of one whose aim was to do something befitting:

One fire was on his spirit, one resolve-  
To send the keen ax to the root of wrong,  
Clearing a free way for the feet of God. . .<sup>4</sup>

In his poem "Man's Great Task", Markham tells what that task is:

. . . 'Tis to grasp firmly life's crude clay  
Save this part- cast that part away,  
Then mould it to a shining whole:

. . . . .

1. Markham, Bk. IV, "The Daring of God", p. 38
2. Markham, Bk. III, "Man-Test", p. 95
3. Markham, Bk. IV, "Your Great Hour", p. 31
4. Markham, Bk. II, "Lincoln, The Man of the People", p. 2

Man's task is to complete the soul-  
To fire it with the social sense,  
That man may build God's Providence-  
May build a highway, end to end,  
Down which God's mercies may descend.<sup>1</sup>

Markham brings out this fact of man's working out God's providence also in "The Carriers of the Load", already referred to.

## E. Beliefs Regarding Salvation

### 1. Markham's Interpretation of the Meaning of Salvation

#### a. What Salvation Is Not

According to Markham, the salvation brought by Christ was not the establishment of a church or a group to discuss conduct and morality. If it were just that, "then Christianity is only a new Judaism wherein we say Jesus instead of Jehovah."<sup>2</sup> The pragmatic in Markham demands that unless there is the life of good works, fraternity and truth, there is no salvation. Mere memberships or beliefs are not synonymous with salvation.

#### b. What Salvation Is

Salvation is "an utterly new vision of life. Jesus did not come preaching mere individual decorum: He came- as the record tells us- 'preaching the kingdom.'"<sup>3</sup>

##### 1) The Kingdom Within Man

Man does not enter the Kingdom; the Kingdom enters man, for "the kingdom of God is within you."<sup>4</sup> This Kingdom has its center in man, existing there in "first principles, for all growths begin in

. . . . .

1. Markham, Psychology, (December, 1923), p. 13
2. Markham, quoted by William L. Stidger in G. Bromley Oxnam, (editor): Preaching and the Social Crisis, p. 190. These and following quotations are from Markham's manuscript of the unpublished work, "The Forgotten Purposes of Jesus."
3. Ibid., p. 190
4. Luke 17:21

centers, all evolutions begin in seeds."<sup>1</sup> As a preparation for the entrance of this Kingdom into man, there must be repentance of evil. With this repentance comes the baptism of the Holy Ghost when men, according to Markham, are baptized "in the fire of heroic love that will burn away their inward selfishness and will set them aglow with the social passion of the Lord. In the heat of this flame, the cold, hard barriers of selfish familyism will dissolve and all families be drawn into one Divine Family of the Father."<sup>2</sup>

## 2) The Kingdom Within Society

To Markham salvation of the individual is not the sole phase of God's plan. "Our holy religion is not a saving power merely for individuals; it is also a saving power for society in its industrial order."<sup>3</sup> The seed of life planted in the soul of man is planted to take form outside in human institutions where the Golden Rule is the working principle. While saved society owes its salvation to God, saved men are the instruments used to bring about that salvation:

All true Christians, then, are pledged to band together to create a new society in the world, a society that shall forsake the struggle for private riches and that shall institute a struggle for communal riches.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. The Way Of Salvation: Man's Part

Having thus seen Markham's interpretation of the meaning of salvation, that it is the Kingdom of God within man, the influence of which indwelling should extend over all society, it will now be shown how Markham conceives the process by which this Kingdom enters man: what man does to receive it, and what Christ does to impart it.

. . . . .

1. Markham, quoted by Stidger in Oxnam, p. 190
2. Ibid., p. 191
3. Ibid., p. 197
4. Ibid., p. 192

There are two aspects of man's receptivity: faith and works. To Markham works takes the precedence in importance, because outwardly or humanly speaking, it is the final test of a man's conversion. But Markham does concede a place to faith.

a. Place of Faith

In the section of Martensen's Christian Dogmatics entitled "The High-Priesthood of Christ", Markham at one time wrote the following in the margin: "If we did not become righteous by God's grace and by faith in Christ our redemption would be but half attained."<sup>1</sup> In his poem "The Need of the Hour", Markham ends this description of America's need with the following words:

We need the faith to go a path untrod,  
The power to be alone and vote with God.<sup>2</sup>

But other than these and possibly a few more references, Markham fails in all his prose and poetry to give to the place of faith the proportions of attention which the New Testament gives. This standard of comparison is used since Markham himself acknowledged the New Testament to be the basis for his teachings. Markham admitted his underemphasis of faith. Where Martensen wrote that the teaching of the Evangelical Church that "Christ alone, received by faith is the Righteousness of man"<sup>3</sup> was characterized by the Romish Church to be dangerous, Markham commented, "It is dangerous."<sup>4</sup> Concerning the "doctrine of justification by faith alone", Markham commented, "Swedenborg fought this evil"<sup>5</sup>, indicating the strong probability that the writings of

. . . . .

1. Annotations of Markham in Martensen, p. 307
2. Markham, Bk. II, p. 71
3. Martensen, p. 393
4. Annotations of Markham in Martensen, p. 393
5. Loc. cit.



Swedenborg influenced his beliefs in this regard.<sup>1</sup> To the statement "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law", Markham commented, "An evil dogma."<sup>2</sup>

Markham's tendency to minimize the value of faith in justification or salvation is explained, in part at least, by his fear that men would stop at faith, rest from good works, and depend alone on beliefs and creeds for salvation. This is implied in his statement that "Christianity is not a dogma to be believed, but a life to be lived. . . . a little faith in Christ is worth a great deal of belief about him."<sup>3</sup>

#### b. Place of Works

The writings of Markham on this phase are innumerable. If his philosophy is over-balanced in any direction, it is on the practical side. As stated above, salvation means basically the Kingdom of God within man. The deeds of man shape his soul:

. . . into his fateful heap of days and deeds  
The soul of a man is cast.<sup>4</sup>

Deeds are worship; deeds make man a friend of God:

For each true deed is worship:  
. . . Yes, they whose feet upon good errands run  
Are friends of God, with Michael of the sun;<sup>5</sup>

St. Elizabeth now walks the fields of Paradise because of her good deeds:

. . . he wins God's favor unawares  
Who, self-forgot in brother love, a brother's burden bears.<sup>6</sup>

. . . . .

1. That Swedenborg had tremendous influence on Markham's philosophy has already been noted in chapter I. For a good treatment on Markham's evaluation of Swedenborgian philosophy, see his article "Swedenborg", originally printed in The New-Church Review, (January and April, 1925)
2. Annotations of Markham in Martensen, p. 394
3. Markham, "If Not the Creeds What?"
4. Markham, Bk. II, "A Creed", p. 25
5. Markham, Bk. II, "The Angelus", p. 42
6. Markham, Bk. IV, "St. Elizabeth of Hungary", p. 112

Our acts decide our fate:

Only your own act molds your fate-  
Only the man you are today  
Counts when the judgment angels weigh! <sup>1</sup>

The requisite of Heaven is that we be found doing duty's common round:

There's only one thing that Heaven requires-  
That we be found in our serving-place  
When God reveals his awful face-<sup>2</sup>

Just as Heaven is in the little kind deed that "propt a brother in his need", so all Hell is "in that little careless sneer that struck a brother like a spear."<sup>3</sup>

Such are examples from Markham's poetry that indicate the importance of works in salvation. His prose also bears this out. In his manuscript of "The Forgotten Purposes of Jesus", already referred to in this chapter, Markham outlines the principles of the Comrade Kingdom as he interprets Christ's teachings. In brief, these principles are: 1) do the Golden Rule 2) repent of social injustices 3) be baptized in the fire of heroic love toward others. Unquestionably the seat of action in these principles is in man. Man must do, repent, love.

According to this philosophy, does Christ do anything in the operation of salvation? This aspect will now be considered.

### 3. The Operation Of Salvation: Christ's Part

In the section above on the death of Christ, it was pointed out that Markham denied the efficacy of the atoning blood of Christ. According to that philosophy, Christ's death consecrated and gave moral power to Truth, and set an example for followers of Christ to defend

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1. Markham, Bk. III, "The Cup of Pride", p. 55
2. Markham, Bk. IV, "A Judgment Hour", p. 37
3. Markham, unpublished poem, "Great Issues in Little Things"

Truth unto death. So Christ's death has no miraculous function in the regeneration of the soul of man, according to Markham. As for Christ's life, that too was mainly exemplary and inspiring. In such example, inspiration and leadership man finds salvation!

Markham says that "men are saved when they are brothers, under the inspiration of the Divine Christ."<sup>1</sup>

According to Markham, Christ's part in man's salvation is his preaching of the Kingdom. When Christ came into the world, he saw a cold world based on "grim animal individualism". Then he began his mission by preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, saying, "Repent and accept the Kingdom!" Jesus is the Saviour of the human race not in his drawing men unto him nor in his sacrifice for their sins, but as a result of his proposition to the world of "principles of justice . . . principles of brotherhood"<sup>2</sup> in which are found the solutions to the world's problems. So Markham limits Christ's part in salvation to the preaching and proposing of high principles by which He himself lived.

#### F. Beliefs Regarding Immortality

Markham definitely believed in life after death, and many of his works reveal this belief. In an article entitled "Immortality", he wrote:

So I bear witness to my faith another existence. That we should survive death is not to me incredible. The thing that is incredible is life itself. . . .

. . . . .  
Well, but we are here. Some Power has called us out of the unknown. We did not come of our own wills. Some Higher Power has evolved it all. And the Power that has caused this revelation of wonder and mystery can easily have prepared for us another surprise

. . . . .

1. McConnell, Edwin Markham Waits for a Train and Talks.
2. Markham, in Samuel Jones, p. 397

beyond the locked mystery of death. And I believe that this stupendous Power we call God has created another world, a world of spirit for the spirit of man.<sup>1</sup>

In another place, Markham said,

A survey of the whole field discovers no fact of science that disproves the survival of the soul at death. It is at the same time true that the testimony of science to immortality is a stammering testimony. . . .<sup>2</sup>

To Markham, birth is the gateway from eternity, death is the gateway to eternity. Time is the brief hour between those two eternities, and yet "in that fleet interval, our souls must be shaped and tested for some use here and elsewhere."<sup>3</sup>

#### 1. Soul Growth

For those who enter Heaven, there is growth of soul. What was imperfect on earth, is perfected in Heaven. Where there was work on earth, there will be more work in Heaven, to bring about this perfection. This thought is developed in Markham's poem "The Gift of Work", quoted here at length:

When I have touched the end of days  
And bid farewell to earthly way;  
I have one thing to ask of Him  
Who sings above the Seraphim-  
The gift of work- more work to do  
To let God's glory glimmer through.  
For well I know that in the Lord  
More work will be our work's reward.

Perhaps the Master's lips will say:  
'He touched one heart upon the way,  
So give some further work to him;  
But he must draw the lines less dim-  
This time must not so bungle there,  
But give his sketch a nobler air.  
He must put action in that curve;  
Give to this feature more reserve.  
His early colours were too thin:

. . . . .

1. Markham, in Sydney Strong, ed.: We Believe in Immortality, p. 101
2. Markham, unnamed, undated clipping
3. Edwin Markham: Campbell Meeker, p. 3

He now must dash the beauty in  
With bolder stroke.- This is the Plan:  
More work; by work we build the man!<sup>1</sup>

The activity of the soul in heaven is versed in Markham's own epitaph:

Here now the dust of Edwin Markham lies,  
But lo, he is not here: he is afar  
On life's great errands under mightier skies,  
And pressing on toward some melodious star.<sup>2</sup>

To pass onward to the dead is to go home:

It is the world from which you came.  
Be glad: it is your native shore,<sup>3</sup>  
And you are going home once more.<sup>3</sup>

It is in that home that the soul will continue to grow in the great Kingdom of God.

## 2. Soul Annihilation

For those who are found wanting at the judgment hour, there is the commitment to an aimless, drifting, agonizing existence which finally ends in annihilation. This annihilation of the guilty soul is strangely the one mercy that awaits the lost soul.<sup>4</sup> This is Markham's interpretation of the Scripture verses: "This is the second death"<sup>5</sup>, and "If any man defile this temple of God, him shall God destroy."<sup>6</sup> In commenting on this "final destruction of the incorrigible soul", Markham says:

Now it is clear that evil tends to destroy the bodily and the spiritual structure. Under the impact of evil, the body tends to crumble and the spirit to decay. Hence it is reasonable to believe that the spirit form or spirit man will crumble at last under the blows of evil in the deep gulf of Hell. In brief, evil is self-

. . . . .

1. Markham, Bk. IV, p. 33
2. Markham, Bk. IV, "An Epitaph", p. 40
3. Markham, Psychology, (April, 1925), "Going Home", p. 19
4. See Markham, Bk. V, "The Drifting Crowds", p. 68
5. Cf. Revelation 20: 13-15
6. I Corinthians 3:17

destructing so that the soul destroys itself in the Last Abyss: there the mercy of dust descends upon the incorrigible wanderer from the law of the Brother God. In the Lost Gulf oblivion scatters her poppy.<sup>1</sup>

To the statement, "Nor do we ever regard any one as hopeless. . . . in the end all will come into the Light of the Love of God"<sup>2</sup>, Markham comments: "I hope this is a fact. But I doubt it. I fear that some of us destroy in our being the forces of recovery, and therefore sink at last into the waters of Ni, the waters of Oblivion."<sup>3</sup>

In a conversation with Stidger, when Markham was commenting on a line of his great poem, "The Ballad of the Gallows Bird", concerning Choice as being the Hinge of Fate, he proposed that just as in life choice determines man's fate, so in death, or in Hell, there are choices to be made which will either lead "on to the abyss of annihilation, or up to the peaks of spiritual glory." One is the low road, the other is the high road. If the low road is chosen deliberately and continuously, the man is doomed for soullessness.<sup>4</sup>

### 3. Heaven

Markham believes in a literal heaven. To the scoffer who asks where heaven is, Markham has an answer:

Scoffer, you cry, 'Where is your other world,  
Your fabled heaven in far eternities?'  
Well said, but first, before your lip is curled,  
Tell ('tis a little thing) where this world is! <sup>5</sup>

Heaven is a desirable goal, but the desire for it is not to be the motive for good works, as is seen in the following:

For none should do good from the fear of pain,  
And none from the lure of a heaven to gain.

. . . . .

1. Annotations of Markham in Frederick W. Farrar: *Eternal Hope*, p. 164
2. W. T. Stead: *After Death*, p. 168
3. Annotations of Markham, loc. cit.
4. Cf. Stidger, Edwin Markham, p. 191
5. Markham, Bk. II, "A Bargain", p. 87

So I shut all hells and heavens from sight,  
And leave all clear for the soul's great fight.<sup>1</sup>

To Markham, heaven is also a camp for heroes who died for the truth:

Glory to the Lord, the Hero of Heaven,  
He whose wounds in his side are seven-  
Glory that He gathers the heroes home,  
Out of the red fields, out of the foam-  
Gathers them out of the Everywhere,  
Into the Camp that is Over There!<sup>2</sup>

Markham maintains that to prepare for the heaven of the hereafter, one must build a heaven here. The "stuff" to build a Paradise is here on earth at the disposal of man.<sup>3</sup> The heaven on earth is the Comrade Kingdom of which he speaks so much. He says:

The principles that govern the Heaven here are the same that govern the Heaven hereafter. You find these principles and precepts set forth in the parables of Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount. . .<sup>4</sup>

Markham desires to see the Heaven on earth come to pass, but he admits that this is denied him by life, and given him perhaps by death, at which death he will really see his dream of the Kingdom of God.

So death has one aspect that it is benignant and beautiful. It may answer the heart's desire. It may give what life denies. It may satisfy my long ambition, my ambition to find a social order founded on Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. . . ."<sup>5</sup>

But a notation made by Markham around 1920 seems to indicate a belief in a fraternity in heaven, but not a complete sinlessness. To the statement by the writer Chauncey Giles that in heaven "There must be no jar, no discord, no selfish or evil desire, no failure in the attainment of any end"<sup>6</sup>, Markham commented: "This is too much: this makes Heaven uninteresting. I fancy that the angels do often

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1. Markham, Bk. IV, "A Clear Road for the Soul", p. 35
2. Markham, Bk. IV, "A Song for Heroes", p. 83
3. Markham, Poems of Sun-Lit Heights, "Earth is Enough", pp. 32,33
4. McConnell, op. cit.
5. Markham, Cosmopolitan Magazine, XII, (June, 1906), "What Life Means to Me", p. 188
6. Chauncey Giles: The Spiritual World, p. 87

fail in their purposes." <sup>1</sup> The dates of the two writings compared may explain an evident inconsistency.

#### 4. Hell

Just as the lure of Heaven should not be the motive for good works, so the fear of pain of Hell should not be the motive.<sup>2</sup> Markham holds that men will not be punished in hell for evils committed in this world. To the statement "Men are not punished in the spiritual world for what they do in this, but for what they do there" <sup>3</sup>, Markham commented, "But they will do there whatever they are in the habit of doing here: that is the terror of the evil life: it persists in the next world."<sup>4</sup> So Markham's conception of Hell is the extension of the evil life which is lived on earth, with final annihilation of the soul. The similarity of life in the other world to life in this is proposed by Markham with these words:

When a man is dead, he is still exactly the same as he was before. He has the same hopes, fears, nobilities, frailties. . . .<sup>5</sup>

Just as there is social need on earth, so there will be social need in heaven. If a man has the spirit of anti-socialism, Markham says:

. . . he will soon find himself an outcast from humanity, either in this life or the life to come, for there is social need over there as well as here. And finally, if he persists in that philosophy, that anti-social feeling, his soul will die, for does not the Scripture say: The soul that sins, that soul shall die? <sup>6</sup>

With this social need in Hell, a man is given the chance to make the right choice in responding to that need, this choice deciding his fate even in Hell.<sup>7</sup> Even in Hell the soul is invited to join in the "loves

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1. Annotations of Markham, loc. cit.
2. Markham, Bk. IV, "A Clear Road for the Soul", p. 35
3. Giles, p. 143
4. Annotations of Markham, loc. cit.
5. Stidger, Edwin Markham, p. 188
6. Ibid., pp. 191,2
7. Loc. cit.



and labors of the higher life. This is the appeal of Heaven, an appeal that comes to every soul that passes over the Great Divide. . . ."<sup>1</sup> But once this appeal of Heaven is rejected, and the downward path to the Abyss chosen, there is no redemption for the soul.

To the statement that no one in Hell will have the desire to know the truth and live it, Markham commented, "Let us hope that some- a few- may awake even in Hell."<sup>2</sup> To Markham, there is another escape from Hell: the second death, which is the door to dust and oblivion.<sup>3</sup> Markham holds that the very merciful nature of God demands an escape for man from the punishments of Hell:

In the beginning, no God could have created man if it were possible for that man to wedge himself in the pit of an eternal failure. There must be some escape for man from the pit into which he plunges blindly. God holds the keys of life and death, and some key of death will liberate man out of this pit of his living death. Oblivion will at last receive him.<sup>4</sup>

Markham's vivid conception of hell is strikingly portrayed in one of his longest poems, "The Ballad of the Gallows Bird". In his own estimate, this one will live even beyond his greatest poem, "The Man With the Hoe". For forty years he had it in his mind to write about Hell, and the actual ballad was nine years "brewing" in his soul, the composing being done each night between the hours of midnight and one o'clock. It is the type of poem that haunts the reader-- it even captivated Markham himself: for to him, it is a true description of the real Hell. Many of Markham's comments on Hell, quoted just above from Stidger's biography of Markham, are based on this story of the "Gallows Bird".

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1. Loc. cit.
2. Annotations of Markham in Giles, pp. 149, 150
3. Loc. cit.
4. Ibid., p. 159

### G. Implications of Markham's Religious Beliefs

From the foregoing, it has become clearer that Markham's philosophy is primarily that of an idealist after a certain sort. Markham cannot think in terms of a traditional dualism with two separate worlds, the supernatural and the natural, for the world upon this earth will gradually improve and evolve into the perfection of heaven. Harold H. Titus' summary on the Implications of Idealism well states Markham's philosophy: man lives in a universe akin to him, with its laws harmonizing with the demands of his intellectual and moral nature. Accordingly, the universe develops under the control of moral, aesthetic and religious ends.<sup>1</sup>

Markham's idealism holds that God is not apart from the world, but is the indwelling life principle. Though he may be transcendent, yet he is also immanent in the world process. Nature, history, the social order and the human heart are infused with divinity.

To Markham, Christ is the finite "expression" of the infinite God in the universe. In Titus' words, this Christ is the "struggling hero, the Supreme Self of Person in a society of persons."<sup>2</sup>

The social implications of Markham's idealism will be more thoroughly treated in the following chapter. It may be mentioned here that Markham's frequent treatment of social issues raised the fears of idealists that he would gradually drop his idealistic tone entirely. One example of this is Mary J. Reid, a critic, who, upon reading a short story of Markham's, which he had written with the encouragement of Hamlin Garland and the theme of which was strictly social, cautioned Mark-

. . . . .

1. Harold H. Titus: Living Issues in Philosophy, pp. 247,8
2. Ibid., p. 248

ham with these words:

And do not be too much influenced by the modern school of realists. Be enough influenced to be a product of your time- but do not adopt the ultra methods of Hamlin Garland.<sup>1</sup>

Markham's reply indicated his resolute determination to sound the idealistic tone, even in prose:

As for realism and idealism in literature, it seems that one might be governed by the nature of the theme. Certain subjects seem to lend themselves best to a realistic treatment; others do not. This is my present position. Then too, is not the chief difference between the two methods a mere matter of degree. The idealist rejects a little more than the realist. In fact, isn't it true that there is no absolute realism in literature- that no one has yet arisen with the hardihood to tell all the facts. You have, I think, given me most excellent advice; I should, as a rule, confine myself to the idealistic method.<sup>2</sup>

#### H. Markham's Biblical Interpretation

It was shown in chapter I that the major textbook of Markham's boyhood was the Bible, especially the Gospels. At the age of ten he had memorized one hundred verses from the New Testament. It was because of such a basic training in the Scriptures that most of his poetry and prose of later years was, in part or in whole, an interpretation of some aspect of the truths of the Scriptures. It is the purpose of this section to determine the soundness of Markham's Biblical interpretation according to basic rules of interpretation. Such basic rules will first be proposed.

##### 1.. Basic Rules of Biblical Interpretation

The basic rules of Biblical interpretation which are herewith proposed, are general, logical, and fair, and are accepted by the whole of Biblical scholars. Arbitrarily, for this study, the principles as

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1. Jesse Sidney Goldstein: "Two Literary Radicals: Garland and Markham in Chicago, 1893", American Literature, XVII, (May, 1945)
2. Loc. cit.

summarized by John A. Broadus<sup>1</sup> will be referred to.

According to these principles the interpreter of Scripture should interpret:

- a. In light of a minute examination of the text.

Grammar and rhetoric of the text should be noted carefully. Earlier versions should be compared. Figures of speech should be watched for their meaning.

- b. In light of the text's immediate connection.

This provision is indispensable to true interpretation. "The immediate connection or context will usually embrace from a few verses to a few chapters before and after the text. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

- c. In light of the text's larger connections.

The larger connection may include the entire book of the Bible in which the text is found. The larger context aids in furnishing the logical connection of a text with a whole argument, or furnishing the necessary general historical knowledge for enlightenment.

- d. In accordance with the general teachings of all of Scripture.

The teachings of Scripture "are harmonious and can be combined into a symmetrical whole. If a passage may have two senses, owing to the ambiguity of some word or construction, to the doubt whether some expression is figurative, etc., then we must choose one which accords with what the Bible in general plainly teaches rather than one which would make the Bible contradict itself."<sup>3</sup>

The "finality of any text or portion of Scripture must be judged by the total revelation."<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Evaluation of Markham's Biblical Interpretation

The foregoing rules will now be discussed briefly with relation to Markham's abiding by them in his interpretation of Biblical truth.

- a. Interpretation in light of a minute examination of the text.

In one way, Markham follows this rule very closely. In describ-

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1. John A. Broadus: On the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons, pp. 44-49.
2. Ibid., p. 45
3. Ibid., p. 47
4. Loc. cit.

ing the life, death and resurrection of Jesus<sup>1</sup>, he is careful not to reduce the details, many of which are miraculous, to a generality that allows implication of the most radical sort. Where the New Testament says that Christ arose from the grave on the third day, Markham interprets this to reveal that Christ by his own infinite Power broke the bonds of death: the grave could no longer contain him. To Markham the ascension was an event exactly as described by the text. "Then on the appointed mountain, in a still dawn, he parts from them all, and the heaven receives him from their mortal eyes. . . ."2

Regarding the comparison of earlier texts and versions of the New Testament, there is no indication that Markham pursued any such study.

Perhaps Markham departs furthest from a minute examination of the text when he interprets the Scriptures regarding the Kingdom. An example of this is his interpretation of the third chapter of Matthew, where John the Baptist preaches of this Kingdom. Matthew 3:11 reads: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I . . . he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. . . ." Markham interprets John as speaking of baptism of everyone: "All souls are to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire"<sup>3</sup>, whereas the text tells that John is speaking of a baptism of only the repentant ones, confessing their sins (Mt. 3:6) and bringing fruits meet for repentance (Mt. 3:8). All others are to be hewn down. (3:10)<sup>4</sup>. On the basis of such interpretation, Markham

. . . . .

1. See Forum (1910), "The Poetry of Jesus".
2. Ibid., p. 65
3. Oxnam, p. 191
4. Markham interprets the "all" of 3:10 to refer not to individuals, but to evil habits, evil customs, evil institutions and evil governments.

concludes that all families will be drawn "into one Divine Family of the Father".<sup>1</sup>

b. Interpretation in light of the text's immediate connection

Here again Markham generally considers the context in the historical sections of the New Testament.<sup>2</sup> But on subjects like the Kingdom, or Heaven, he appears to interpret according to a system already formulated. An example will bear this out. Markham interprets Matthew 6:19-34 to mean that man is to look away from the low order to the higher order of the Comrade Kingdom. Within the friendly circle of this holy brotherhood, "all workers will have their earthly needs supplied".<sup>3</sup> In other words, sufficiency will not come for man until the Ideal Kingdom is set up. But the context of this chapter clearly reveals that

- 1) heaven is a spiritual kingdom ("where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt", v. 20)
- 2) for the present life here on earth, God is the giver of necessities to the one who serves Him (v. 24), and seeks His Kingdom and righteousness (v. 33).

c. Interpretation in light of the text's larger connections

The chief value of this safeguard is in its application to argumentative or historical themes. Since Markham does not take up any theological discussion which involves logic and argument, as, for instance, the theme of the book of Romans, the rule hardly applies to his interpretations in that respect. As for his treatment of the Gospels, which give the life and teachings of Jesus, Markham gives due regard to the context of the whole as far as the life of Jesus is concerned, but over-emphasizes the "group" message of Jesus' teachings. This is a consideration of the next evaluation of Markham's application

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1. Oxnam, p. 191
2. Markham hardly ever refers to the Old Testament
3. Oxnam, p. 194

of the fourth basic rule of Biblical interpretation.

- d. Interpretation in accordance with the general teachings of all of Scripture

Although chapter III is given over to a study of the details of Markham's social message, it has been unavoidable to mention frequently in this study the preeminence in Markham's thinking which the Comrade Kingdom had. Markham's desire was to see the society saved, as well as the individual. To allow for such an interpretation, he saw society gradually evolving here on earth to a Brotherhood, brought about by the good deeds and love of men. Markham conceded the place of faith, but as was noted in Section E of this chapter, he placed more emphasis on works. But total revelation includes not only the Epistle of James, where the place of works is shown, but also the Epistle to the Romans, where justification by faith is set forth so predominantly. The balance of truth lies in the fact that "faith without works is dead"<sup>1</sup> and "by works was faith made perfect".<sup>2</sup>

Markham's emphasis on the salvation of society seems to be out of proportion to the totality of the teachings of Christ. Markham bases his emphasis on the Sermon on the Mount, but even there Christ deals with individual problems. Jesus' contact with different peoples during his public ministry was that of concern for their individual souls. He preached individual regeneration, not with the view that society per se would eventually be saved, but adding the admonition that the regenerated ones should shine in a dark world and keep their lamps trim until the coming of the Son of Man, when all Christians would be received up into glory. At such a time, the "fool-

. . . . .

1. Hebrews 2:20

2. Hebrews 2:22

3. Hebrews 2:25

ish virgins" who had not trimmed their lamps would not find entrance into the Kingdom, because they had failed in their individual responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

In view of the above evaluations, it may be concluded that Markham's social gospel was not derived basically from a sound and balanced interpretation of Scripture. G. Ernest Wright alluded to this tendency on the part of proponents of the Social Message when he said:

The strong social gospel movement in this country had its original inspiration, not primarily in biblical exegesis, but rather in the idealism inherent in the 19th century doctrine of progress with its vision of the Kingdom of God on earth.<sup>2</sup>

### I. Summary

This chapter has viewed Markham's religious beliefs regarding God, Jesus, man, salvation, and immortality, and has briefly evaluated his Biblical interpretation in the light of basic rules of interpretation.

Markham's God is the omnipotent Creator whose ways are governed by the two motives of love and justice. He mercifully provides for all His creation, and wills the destinies of men to a blessed end. He has revealed himself in nature, man and Christ.

Jesus, after a short sinless life as described by the Gospels, died to consecrate Truth, and having left the highest example of sacrifice, ascended to heaven shortly after his resurrection, where he now is preparing a place for the ideal Kingdom, the subjects of which prepare themselves here on earth under his leadership as their Social Saviour.

. . . . .

1. Matthew 25
2. G. Ernest Wright, "The World Council of Churches and Biblical Interpretation", Interpretation, III, (January, 1949)



All men have originated from the one source of Love, and so by the original plan of God were made for Brotherhood. Man is the shadow-form of God, a form marred by sin, which was the result of man's wrong Choice. This Choice was made possible by God's decree of freedom of will, a decree He deemed necessary though dangerous.

Salvation, which is not equivalent to memberships or creeds, but which means the Kingdom within man and within society, depends both on man's receptivity and Christ's initiative. Man must have faith in God and Christ, but that faith is worthless unless the deeds bear it out, for fate is molded by deeds. Christ, the object of this faith and the supreme example of the works, gave the principles of righteous living and died to consecrate Truth.

To Markham, immortality is less mysterious than life itself. Life Hereafter is an evolution of the present life. Those who live according to the principles of the Comrade Kingdom on earth, pass on to the Ideal Kingdom in Heaven, where the soul grows, and where more work is work's reward. The other class goes to Hell, where there is punishment for the sins committed in Hell only, and where there is still a dim ray of hope for redemption up until the moment the path to the Abyss is chosen. If that path is chosen, God's last mercy remains: the dust of Oblivion.

Regarding Markham's Biblical interpretation, of the four basic rules of interpretation proposed, Markham follows most closely that of minute examination of the text. His furthest departure is from the rule of interpretation according to the general teachings of total revelation. The majority of his departures concern the subject of the Kingdom.

CHAPTER III

THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF MARKHAM

### CHAPTER III

#### THE SOCIAL MESSAGE OF MARKHAM

##### A. Introduction

It is difficult to categorize Markham's philosophy because of its numerous paradoxes. While his philosophy is idealistic, it is also pragmatic, and is not guilty of the charge of Professor John Dewey, the pragmatist, that the idealistic philosophy "tends to substitute an antiquated attitude of other-worldliness for that of a vigorous participation in the struggle for a new society here and now."<sup>1</sup> Markham's idealism is one that shifts in thought to a struggle for a new society, with a standard for the new society not originally pragmatic, but moral and spiritual: the Golden Rule. For this reason one must call his philosophy both idealistic and practical.

It will be the purpose of this chapter to study the practical phase of Markham's philosophy. First will be noted the indications of the preeminence of the social message in his thinking. Following this, the various factors in Markham's life which led to such a practical philosophy will be discussed. Finally, a condensed description of the principles of the Ideal Kingdom which Markham preached, will be set forth.

##### B. Its Preeminence In Markham's Thought

Like most absolute idealists, Markham's center of attention is in society, not the individual. He recognizes individual worth, and the fact that salvation of the society cannot come without individual

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1. Harold E. Titus: Living Issues in Philosophy, p. 250

salvation of men. But to him the supreme good of the world is in social salvation. In a letter to Stidger, Markham wrote:

In the old days preachers proclaimed an individualistic redemption, the escape of the individual into a place of spiritual safety. But this idea must be expanded to include collective humanity. However it was on the past, it is now certain that there is no available salvation for the people except social salvation.<sup>1</sup>

A cursory glance at Markham's writings will prove that the heart of Markham's message is the Social Gospel, or the call to the Comrade Kingdom, the call to Brotherhood. This is evident first of all from the frequency of social references in his prose and poetry. Many of his works are written with the purpose of exposing the prevailing curse and sins of selfishness, greed and oppression in the world. Others are devoted to the positive message: a description of the blessed Comrade Kingdom, and a challenge to bring it about. Together, these make up by far the bulk of Markham's writings.

Further proof that the Social Message is the core of Markham's mission is the language of conviction and force in all his social references. His strongest words concern some aspect of this message. Added to this proof is his own statement of purpose as a poet, which he gave in a poem entitled "To High-Born Poets". The poet is given the high task:

To speak to men the one redeeming word.  
No peace for thee, no peace,  
Till blind oppression cease;  
The stones cry from the walls,  
Till the gray injustice falls-  
. . . till strong men come to build in freedom-fate  
The pillars of the new Fraternal State.<sup>2</sup>

. . . . .

1. G. Bromley Oxnam, (editor), Preaching and the Social Crisis, p. 205
2. Edwin Markham, Bk. I, p. 110

### C. Influences Leading to This Philosophy

#### 1. The Gospel of Jesus

As has been already pointed out, Markham himself said that the Gospel of Jesus is the one thing that had the most profound influence in his life. If he were to be deserted on a lonely island and could take only ten books with him, his first choice would be the Gospel of Jesus.

It was in the Gospels that Markham discovered what was the passionate purpose for man in the heart of Christ. This purpose involved the establishment of a Comrade Kingdom to which Jesus wanted all men to belong. It was especially in the teachings of Christ, including the Parables, that Markham found the principles of the social message which he began to preach. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount set forth the Constitution of the New Order. The teachings of John the Baptist added to Markham's basis for a broad interpretation of the Kingdom.

It is to be noted here that the section of the Gospels that attracted Markham's attention were those that presented the teachings of Jesus. He did not overlook the life and death of Christ in his interpretation; but he chose to concentrate on the teachings. Thus one can understand the tendency toward such a strong social message.

#### 2. Books

Besides the Bible, two main writings had their influence in actually formulating Markham's philosophy: the works of William Ellery Channing and Emanuel Swedenborg.

As has been seen,<sup>1</sup> when only twenty-two years of age, Markham was given the remains of an Episcopal rector's library, which included

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1. Cf. ante, p. 21

books by Channing. So absorbed became Markham in Channing's volumes that for six months he read them during every spare moment. Channing was a proponent of the social message, international peace, temperance, piety and unitarianism, among other things. This was the first contact Markham had with such teachings, for, as was shown in chapter I, up to this time his spiritual environment had been predominantly evangelical. Channing's teachings on brotherhood attracted Markham, and appealed to him as best interpreting Christ's teachings for the solution of man's oppression. Markham saw Channing's religious views as being broad and lofty, founded on common sense, and yet partially mystical.

Swedenborg's writings came to Markham a little later in life, but not without force. Swedenborg's main influence upon Markham was mystical. But it was through his teachings that Markham discovered that the next life is only an evolution of this life. This is what Markham needed to see in order to reconcile the existences of two similar kingdoms: the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom on Earth. That was Swedenborg's major contribution to the formulation of Markham's social philosophy.

### 3. Personal Experience

No books could have originated within Markham the impulse to cry out against oppression in behalf of the Comrade Kingdom. This conviction could come by no other way than personal experience. Markham's early life was filled with such experiences, as has been related in chapter I. His was a life of hardship and toil; and whatever he did not experience personally, he saw first-hand. Haunted with such memories and convictions, it was not strange that he should be captivated by the original painting of Millet's "The Man With the Hoe", when

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it was on exhibition in California. For an hour he sat before the painting (a copy of which he had seen twelve years previously), while the terror and power of its message took a hold of him. Let him describe that message in his own words:

I saw that this creation of the painter was no mere peasant, no choice man of the fields, but he was rather a type, a symbol of the toiler, brutalized through long ages of industrial oppression. I saw in this peasant the slow but awful degradation of man through endless, hopeless and joyless labor.<sup>1</sup>

So, in the form of the epic poem "The Man With the Hoe", Markham was "forced to utter the awe and grief" of his spirit "for the ruined majesty of this son of God".

In his later years, Markham saw no improvement in the world. Not many years after he wrote "The Man With the Hoe" came World War I, the antithesis of the Comrade Kingdom. Following hard upon this came the "Boom" of Inflation, with its selfish acquisitiveness, egotism and materialism. The third period brought the Depression, with all of its "terrible degradation of human personality". These three dark periods saddened Markham, and were he living today, he would have still more reason for sadness. But Markham never gave up in despair. To him, this was not a result of the failure of Christianity, but the result of the failure to try out Christianity in the large social sense. From such personal experience of the failure of the nation thus to try out Christianity, Markham in his last years took even greater strides in the proclamation of his social message. The unpublished prose volume which was to be called "The Forgotten Purposes of Jesus", many parts of which were quoted in chapter II, was the product of such experience and conviction. In this volume, Markham set forth

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1. Mark Sullivan: Our Times—America Finding Herself, Vol. II, p. 236

his interpretations of the principles of the Comrade Kingdom according to New Testament teaching.

#### D. Its Principles

##### 1. Brotherhood of Man

Predominantly, Markham's message concerns the state of society as a whole, though basically that state depends on each individual. The Kingdom which Christ preached "has its center in man"<sup>1</sup>, but it is not expected to stay there. It must "take form outside of us in human institutions. . . in a new society where the Golden Rule shall be the working principle".<sup>2</sup> The great world-purpose is the "vast inbrothering of man"<sup>3</sup>. Each person must "be baptized in the fire of heroic love"<sup>4</sup>, burning away all selfishness and greed, with the result that all men are brothers in the "one Divine Family of the Kingdom"<sup>5</sup>. Then no longer will each man plot how he may grind the fellow-man<sup>6</sup>, and the rich will no longer oppress the poor, but share their substance<sup>7</sup>. The economic order will be cooperative rather than competitive. The world status will be that of peace. According to Markham, war "can be cured only by the divine forces of love and justice. . . ." <sup>8</sup> Within the friendly circle of the Comrade Kingdom, all workers will have their earthly needs supplied. "Life-destroying worries will pass away, and men will live happily like the birds of the air, birds that gather

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1. Oxnam, p. 190
2. Loc. cit.
3. Markham, Bk. II, "The World-Purpose", p. 80
4. Oxnam, p. 191
5. Loc. cit.
6. Markham, Bk. I, "Little Brothers of the Ground", p. 23
7. Cf. Markham, Bk. I, "A Harvest Song", p. 116
8. Markham, Bk. IV, Explanatory note to section "Echoes from the World War", p. 67



their food from the bounty of the fields." <sup>1</sup>

## 2. Rulership of Christ

The leader of the Comrade Kingdom is Christ. He is Lord of each individual, but also of the whole social order. Individual redemption is necessary, but Christ's expanded purpose was social salvation, according to Markham. As leader, Jesus even fills the labor throne:

So we await the Leader to appear,  
Lover of men, thinker and doer and seer,  
The hero who will fill the labor throne  
And build the Comrade Kingdom, stone by stone. . . <sup>2</sup>

As Leader, Christ has written the Constitution of the Kingdom. That is the Sermon on the Mount, the "working form for God on earth".<sup>3</sup> In this is contained the Leader's one great duty laid upon his subjects-- "to embrother men and to emparadise the world".<sup>4</sup> Christ as Leader is the ideal ruler: he never calls upon his followers to do something he has not done. He calls men to love, for he has loved. He calls men to die for truth, if need be, for he did just that at Calvary.

## 3. Preparation for Hereafter

Markham believed strongly in another existence. This has been shown in detail in chapter II. Heaven is the place where those individuals go who strive to bring about Christ's Kingdom here on earth. Markham knew that he would not live to see the fulfillment of the Comrade Kingdom on earth, but he believed it would come some day. Those comrades who die before that fulfillment, later find themselves in the Ideal Kingdom, the Kingdom of the Hereafter, which is merely

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1. Oxnam, op. 194

2. Markham, Bk. II, "The Leader of the People", p. 55

3. Oxnam, p. 195

4. Ibid., p. 198

an evolution of the Kingdom on earth. The principles that govern both kingdoms are the same, namely, those given by Jesus in his parables and Sermon on the Mount. Man prepares for the Kingdom hereafter by his life in this world. What is left unperfected here, must be perfected there. More work will be work's reward.

Because of the close relation of heaven and earth with respect to this Comrade Kingdom, one can easily understand again why deeds play such an important part in Markham's philosophy. In essence, that philosophy boils down to: "You must eventually perfect your life yourself; why not start doing so right now?" This appears in bold contrast to the words of Paul addressed to the Galatians: "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation."<sup>1</sup>

#### E. Summary

This chapter has discussed the preeminence of the social message in Markham's philosophy, the factors leading to this philosophy, and the principles of the Kingdom message.

That the social message is the heart of Markham's mission is evident from the frequency of social references in his works, from the forceful tone of such references, and from his own explicit statements.

Markham derived his social consciousness originally from the Gospels of Jesus, which had a profound influence upon his life. Basically it was the parables and Sermon on the Mount from which he derived his conception of the Comrade Kingdom. When he was twenty-two years old, he obtained the writings of William Ellery Channing, whose social philosophy directed his line of thought. The writings of Swedenborg

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1. Galatians 6:15

later added to this influence, reconciling the problem of two heavens by an evolution theory. Added to the influence of the Gospels and the religious books was a background of personal experience in the hard toils and oppressions of life. This personal conviction was a decisive factor in his choosing the mission to challenge men to build the Comrade Kingdom.

In the last section of this chapter, the principles of Markham's social message were briefly described. These involve the Brotherhood of Man, which is basic to any Ideal Kingdom; the Rulership of Christ; and the conduct of man on earth as a preparation for the Kingdom of the Hereafter, should death precede the complete realization of the Ideal Kingdom on earth. Upon these essential principles depends the fulfillment of Markham's highest hope: the coming of the Ideal Kingdom.

## CHAPTER IV

### MARKHAM'S INFLUENCE UPON AMERICAN THOUGHT

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MARKHAM'S INFLUENCE UPON AMERICAN THOUGHT

A. Introduction

Markham never sought popularity or fame, never coveted state-ly mansions, never confined himself to the circle of popular person-ages. That is what prompted Joaquin Miller to write, "Consider what Markham put aside, as putting aside a crown, to take his place with the poor and despised."<sup>1</sup> Markham had a message born out of deep conviction, and it was his one purpose in life to tell the world about that message. That he succeeded in such a mission is illustrated by a magazine review of the influence of just one of his poems, actually the poem that brought him fame:

His "The Man With the Hoe" is the most revered and well-liked poem, short of the psalms of David, that the world has known. It has been translated into about 40 languages and reprinted in probably as many as fifty thousand newspapers.<sup>2</sup>

It will be the purpose of this chapter to show why Markham's message gained such warm reception, and how it influenced social, literary and religious thought. Because of the historical perspective required by historians in writing their books, it is too early to begin to appreciate the tremendous influence of this man's life upon American thought.

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1. Quoted in George Wharton James: *Heroes of California*, p. 456
2. Review in Overland Monthly, (November, 1931), p. 8

## B. Reasons For This Vast Influence

### 1. State of American Nation in the Early Twentieth Century

#### a. Economic Structure

The policy of taxation in America around 1900 was deplored by William J. Bryan. In 1895 Bryan was referring to the Supreme Court's invalidation of the attempt to have an income-tax law, when he challenged: "Is it the fault of God or Nature. . . that our tax laws are so made. . . that the poor man pays more than his share and the rich man less?"<sup>1</sup>

The country's outstanding political issue in the years 1900-1915 was that of the trust companies, or private monopolies. One of the country's leading conservatives, Grover Cleveland, sent a message to Congress warning of the situation, which read in part:

The communism of combined wealth and capital, the outgrowth of overweening cupidity and selfishness, which insidiously undermine the justice and integrity of free institutions, is not less dangerous than the communism of poverty and toil.<sup>2</sup>

Theodore Roosevelt is quoted as having said, around the year 1903, that "Corporation cunning has developed faster than the laws of nation and State."<sup>3</sup> Even in the year 1873, Chief Justice Edward G. Ryan, of the Supreme Court of Wisconsin, said, in part, "There is looming up a new and dark power. . . . The accumulation of individual wealth seems to be greater than it ever has been since the downfall of the Roman Empire."<sup>4</sup>

America in 1900 was thus a nation of two main classes: the wealthy and the poor. The curse of the poor was their poverty; the

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1. Mark Sullivan: Our Times-America Finding Herself, Vol. II, p. 247
2. Ibid., p. 249
3. Loc. cit.
4. Ibid., p. 250

blessing of the rich was their wealth. The breach was ever-widening, and while there were political figures that frequently voiced their protest, there had not yet been a poet to sound the battle-cry in verse, a medium that can penetrate all barriers of caste, creed and color.

b. Social Structure

The inevitable accompaniment to this economic situation was the social structure of oppression of the poor. Here was "one boy born in a palace, surfeited with unearned riches"; there was another lad born in a hovel, beset by unmerited poverties. Within a matter of years the rich son would be ruling over the poor with unfair advantage. The chasm between the two was one of "icy pride and worldly wealth." May Engstrom Hoss vividly describes the situation which faced the sympathetic American in 1900:

He saw these classes held asunder with no sympathies in common--held asunder and living as far apart as though they were marooned on separate continents. He saw the pampered child of the rich employer grow up, knowing nothing of the half-starved children of the poorly paid workman; while the poor children in their destitution grew up to envy-- if not to hate-- the rich child in his over-abundance. He saw the haughty aim of the purse-proud: he saw the humiliated look of the moneyless.<sup>1</sup>

In Bryan's estimation, the extremes of society were being "driven further and further apart. . . . At one end of the scale luxury and idleness breed effeminacy; at the other end, want and destitution breed desperation. . . ." <sup>2</sup>

Considering, then, this economic and social structure in the America of 1900, it is not strange that a voice crying out against oppression of the poor would cause startling reverberations, with fer-

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1. May Engstrom Hoss: Heroism and Service, Vol. IX, pp. 57, 58
2. Sullivan, p. 243

vent acceptance by the oppressed peoples, and vigorous denial by the indicted oppressor. What added to the noisy commotion stirred by Markham's voice was the fact that he was the first of the poets to take up the cry. He was the Pioneer-Poet of the Social Passion.

## 2. Markham: The Pioneer-Poet for the Oppressed

There had been expressions of protest against social injustices in other fields by the beginning of the twentieth century. Politicians, economists, newspaper editors and other professionals tried their hardest to make an impact, but these lacked expression that would strike home to the very hearts of men. The French artist, Jean Francois Millet, had struck the introductory note to such needed expression when he painted "The Man With the Hoe", picturing on canvas the common underpaid toiler. But not every one could interpret and appreciate such art. Besides, the reproduction of a painting and its distribution to the masses of America would have been very difficult. What was needed was an interpretation of that note in forceful but plain poetry; and a challenge to the existing conditions of America. This was where Markham came in. A poet had arisen to the need of the hour. Much was at stake for Markham-- his very livelihood-- but his passion for the "savages" of civilization prevailed. He must interpret for America and for the world just who that Hoe-Man is. The Hoe-Man "is not the intelligent working man. He is not the savage of the wilderness, who has at times a step of dignity and a tongue of eloquence. The Hoe-Man is the savage of civilization." <sup>1</sup>

On January 15, 1899, the pioneer-voice of the hitherto unknown poet appeared in the San Francisco Examiner, in the form of the

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1. Markham, in W. R. Benet (editor), Fifty Poets, p. 4



poem entitled, "The Man With the Hoe". The battle-cry had sounded. But whom would it stir? How long and hard would be the battle?

### C. Significant Influence of Markham

#### 1. Upon Social Thought

"The Man With the Hoe" was Markham's first introduction to fame and influence. Having spoken that first "word for the Humiliated and the Wronged" <sup>1</sup>, he gained the friendship of all the downtrodden, lowly, despised and friendless peoples. This receptivity of his social message encouraged him to write more lines on this subject in the forty or so years that followed.

But his words also stirred the accused peoples to self-examination. This effect is described by George Wharton James:

How the blows rang; how the iron struck fire; how the heat burned and seared. The world felt the blows and men and women who had been asleep in their own selfish comfort and pampered luxury awoke to the sorrows, sufferings and needless woes of others. His direct questions were sharp-pointed arrows that penetrated the joints of the selfish armor of men.<sup>2</sup>

Immediately following its first printing, "The Man With the Hoe" appeared in all American newspapers, and was soon translated into all languages. It was the "theme of thousands of articles, interviews, editorials, cartoons, sermons, debates, parodies, jocularities, flying paragraphs. Two new words appeared in the language--Hoeman and Hoemanry. . . ." <sup>3</sup> The poem drew this response from the New York Herald:

Is a . . . revolution impending in America- a bloodless revolution this time, fought not with bullets but with ballots? If so, Edwin

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1. James, p. 456
2. Ibid., p. 457
3. Hoss, p. 61

Markham will prove to be at once its despised prophet and its accepted high priest.<sup>1</sup>

This poem caused a great social awakening in America not because of any original proposal or idea, but because it forcefully told, in terse, bold poetic strokes, what the common toilers of America had wanted so desperately to say for years upon years.

Just as the poem had been in the making for many years, Markham had not the slightest intention of resting his fight with a mere "battle-cry". He determined to spend the rest of his days striving for the goal which to him was a God-ordained destiny: the Kingdom of God on earth. Shortly after writing the poem, Markham moved east to New York, where he lived for the rest of his life. It was while in the east that other injustices to the helpless and defenceless aroused his indignation and "led to his entering the arena on their behalf".<sup>2</sup> In New York he made a personal study of child labor in the factories, shops and mills, and wrote many stirring articles in defiance of this condition.<sup>3</sup> John B. Horner evaluated Markham's social influence with these words:

. . . if true greatness is measured by one's ability to stamp his impress upon humanity, Edwin Markham would be counted great if he had done no more than to cause mankind to pause long enough to consider the oppressed laborer who had never been taught to think. . . The world is now writing a new dispensation, for industry. . . upon the inspiration of seers as Edwin Markham.<sup>4</sup>

Markham's approximately forty years of residence on Staten Island, New York, were years of sweat and toil in his mission as Social Prophet. Whether it was writing prose or poetry, or speaking to con-

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1. Sullivan, p. 240

2. James, p. 458

3. E.g. a series of articles for Cosmopolitan Magazine. Markham was also a co-author of the book, Children in Bondage, dealing with this subject.

4. John B. Horner: Oregon, p. 364

ferences or congregations, his message was the same: the Gospel of the Comrade Kingdom. In the estimation of many, his has been the greatest influence upon social thought in twentieth century America. Perhaps that influence has been so great because Markham was a living example of the message he preached. His home was humble; he never rode by Pullman car; he always ate moderately in consideration of the starving masses; he renounced all material "things" as being secondary. Of this Stidger said:

No Tolstoy has more completely renounced things. No Ghandhi has more completely given up the material possessions of life. No Kagawa has so completely consecrated himself to the Comrade Kingdom of God. Edwin Markham is the great Poet Prophet of the Comrade Kingdom of God on earth.<sup>1</sup>

In America's twentieth century social era, Markham was the voice of the oppressed toiler, indicter of the cruel rich, inspirer for social legislation, preacher of Christ's social gospel, and example of unselfish brotherly life.

## 2. Upon Literary Thought

Edwin Markham became the leader of the new poetic movement in America. This movement took up the cry of labor, the cry of the ground and the cry for a nobler civilization. It sought the poetic beauty which lay hidden in the common human life around men. A. M. Sullivan, president of the Poetry Society of America, said:

Markham believed the principal function of the poet is to convey ideas and he gave expression to thoughts of the commonplace in language that the masses understood.<sup>2</sup>

May E. Hoss said, "This idea has been caught up by the younger American poets, and it is now the dominant note in the new poetry of our

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1. G. Bromley Oxnam, (editor), *Preaching and the Social Crisis*, p. 206
2. Markham Library, Wagner College, Staten Island.

era" <sup>1</sup>. These new poets determined not to be bound by traditional laws of rhythm or rhyme, nor did they abuse this freedom. Actually, Markham maintained the best tradition of the classic school. Will Carleton, Joaquin Miller, Bret Harte, Eugene Field and James Whitcomb Riley were of this school of thought, writing poems of the village and the farm. It was Markham of their group who wrote the songs of the toilers.

Not only did Markham write close to man, but he encouraged others so to write. He approved university training of poets, "to enrich the 'quiet education of the feeling' which must be secured individually." <sup>2</sup> The magazine 20th Century Poetry said that Markham "spent himself in the encouragement of younger poets." <sup>3</sup>

This poetry for the masses gained for Markham the highest of acclaim. Joyce Kilmer called him America's greatest living poet. George Stirling said, "He is the dean of the world's poets." He was hailed as the "foremost name in poetical literature since Tennyson and Browning." <sup>4</sup> A Chicago editor gave this estimate in 1919:

I regard Edwin Markham as our greatest contemporary poet; and I offer him as an all-sufficient answer to the assertion that the days of American poesy have passed.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, impressing the literary world was not Markham's ultimate aim. True, he welcomed the publishing and distribution of his prose and works, but only for the purpose of reaching the souls of men with his message of Love.

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1. Hoss, p. 62

2. Markham, in the Daily Californian (Chicago), 1919

3. Article in 20th Century Poetry, (1929), p. 290

4. Quoted in Sullivan, p. 242

### 3. Upon Religious Thought

The warm reception of Markham by religious circles is understandable in light of the fact that the nation was sadly lacking a poet of fair renown who would write with deeply spiritual and yet practical tone. Why must poets find their themes only in politics, economics, love, mystery, fairy-tales, history? Are not the themes preached upon from the pulpit of eternal value and worthy to be used as seed for the creations of poetry? Did not David of old set an example of the beauty of setting forth spiritual truths in verse?

Strangely enough, the pulpit seized upon Markham's social works rather than his more spiritual verse, and used them as inspiration for many social sermons. Concerning this, and referring to one poem specifically, John B. Horner said:

The first four lines of "The Man With the Hoe" have been the subject of more sermons. . . than any other four lines written in the English language during the last quarter century.<sup>1</sup>

This reaction is but a reflection of the new idealistic philosophy which had already arisen among religious circles in the 19th century, to which G. Ernest Wright referred when he said:

The strong social gospel movement in this country had its original inspiration. . . in the idealism inherent in the 19th century of progress with its vision of the Kingdom of God on earth.<sup>2</sup>

Markham spent many hours in fellowship with social preachers of various denominations, and spoke to their congregations on numerous occasions. All such contacts proved to be of great inspiration to the pastors. The Reverend William L. Stidger, pastor of the Copley Methodist Episcopal Church of Boston, is an outstanding example of one

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1. Horner, p. 364
2. G. Ernest Wright, "The World Council of Churches and Biblical Interpretation", Interpretation, III, (January, 1949)

upon whom Markham made deep and lasting impressions. On the occasion of Markham's seventy-fifth anniversary Stidger asked Markham if he had a message for ministers. Markham's reply, in part, was:

Tell them for me that they are engaged in the greatest occupation on earth- the business of carrying the message of the Comrade Christ to humanity. I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of the mighty.<sup>1</sup>

Markham's general influence upon the laity has also been felt, because he spoke to the masses. Franklin N. Lapham called Markham the "Average Christian's Poet", because he gave practical poetical interpretations of the Christian life. B. O. Flower said just before the First World War that Markham was the "reflector of the mighty spiritual undercurrent of our age. He represents the new conscience and the broadening spiritual ideals of our wonderful age."<sup>2</sup>

That Markham's influence upon American Christendom was not sweeping and general to the extent of starting a "social revival" cannot be questioned. To fairly analyze the reasons for the rejection of his message by many churches, especially evangelical churches, is beyond the limits of this study. The section in chapter II on the evaluation of Markham's Biblical interpretation suggests one basis which may have motivated such rejection. The fact remains that Markham fanned the flames of a young social movement, and also won many converts, within the churches, to his philosophy.

#### D. Summary

This chapter has dealt with the tremendous impression which Markham made upon twentieth-century America. At the turn of the cen-

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1. Filed at Markham Library, Wagner College
2. B.O. Flower: Progressive Men, Women and Movements of the Past 25 Years, p. 225

tury, the American nation was ripe for a bold protest in refined classic tone against the rapidly intensifying oppression of the poor masses by the wealthy few. Taxes and monopolies drained the poor and fed the rich. America was veritably inviting the caste system; actually, such a system was already in existence. The appearance of Markham on the scene at such a time as this could not take place without notice. He was the pioneer to express in verse the sentiments of the masses. Deep and lasting impressions were inevitable.

Markham's significant influence extended over three realms of thought: the social, literary and religious. In American society, Markham caused a great awakening, rallying the poor masses to a common front, and shooting "sharp-pointed arrows that penetrated the joints of the selfish armor of men." His poems and articles were published throughout America and even the world, and inspired "a new dispensation for industry".

Markham also became the leader of the new poetic movement, which took up the song of labor and used common human life as the subject for verse. Not only was he the leader, but the teacher and inspirer of such writing. So great was his poetic influence that he was acclaimed by some as the dean of the world's poets and the foremost name in poetry since Tennyson and Browning.

Akin to Markham's influence upon social thought was the impression he made in the religious circles of America. That impression was made not with his deeply spiritual verse, but with his social prose and poetry. The churchmen who warmly received his message were of the school of Idealists which had arisen in the nineteenth century. To them, Markham was a prophet. His verse was used often for sermon suggestions; many times he himself was the speaker. He has been one

of this century's main inspirers of the Social Gospel of the Kingdom on Earth.

Such has been the response to a message from a new poet who stressed the social obligations of men. That there should be negative reactions was inevitable. The wealthy minority still claimed their right to earned wealth; the classic poets held firm to traditional subjects for verse; and many elements within the churches guarded with increased fervor their religious convictions involving predominantly Biblical interpretation.



CHAPTER V  
GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

## CHAPTER IV

### GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### A. Summary

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine Edwin Markham's philosophy of life. The desire was felt to discover the motives which impelled this bard to such a rigorous proclamation and defence of the Social Message, and to learn what fundamental religious beliefs are basic to such a social emphasis.

Chapter I was devoted to the introductory task of describing the phases of Markham's early life which led to a distinct idealistic-pragmatic philosophy of later years. Markham's home life was truly character-building. From his parents, especially his mother, he derived a fear of God and knowledge of the Bible through frequent church attendance and a daily family altar. Circumstances about the home also molded his frame of mind, for in poverty he learned the patience of toil, and on the hills as shepherd or rancher he sensed the nearness of the Infinite One. There were the educational influences: from the unforgettable Harry G. Hill and Samuel D. Woods he was encouraged to a mystic outlook, a restored confidence in man, and a love for poetry and books. Concerning books, Channing's works were among his first prize possessions, but the Book of books, the Bible, was his original close companion. Markham's deepest religious experience came in his youth at the time of his conversion, when he realized a definite union with Christ. From that day, Jesus was the object of his attention, upon whose life and teachings he based his entire social message of later years.

An analysis of Markham's religious beliefs as revealed by his

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prose and poetry was the consideration of chapter II. This was followed by an evaluation of his Biblical interpretation in the light of basic rules of interpretation. Markham's God is the Creator who has willed a man's end to be blessed. Jesus is the Son of God, but also the Supreme Man, having left the highest example for a Brotherhood Kingdom by dying to consecrate Truth. He is the Saviour of society as well as of individuals. Man is the shadow-form of God, a form marred by hate but restored by Love. Salvation is the equivalent of the Kingdom of God within man and society, realized by deeds that conform with the principles laid down by Jesus. Markham's philosophy of immortality is Swedenborgian. Life Hereafter is an evolution of the present life, but on a higher plane. Comrades of the earthly Kingdom are gradually perfected in Heaven, the Ideal Kingdom. All others go to Hell, where they continue to sin and reap punishment for such sin. God's last mercy of hell is the dust of Oblivion.

A summarizing section in this chapter on the philosophical implications of Markham's religious beliefs showed Markham to be primarily an idealist. A quotation by Markham bore testimony to this conclusion. Whether Markham was strictly Biblical in his various interpretations, was the question under study in the last section of the chapter. Here it was shown that Markham's furthest departure in interpretation was from the rule of interpretation according to the general teachings of total revelation. The majority of these departures concerned the subject of the Kingdom.

In chapter III the practical or pragmatic phase of Markham's philosophy was studied. This was done by an analysis of his social message: its preeminence in his thinking, the factors leading to such a philosophy, and its principles. The social message was proved to

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be the heart of his mission by the frequency of social references, by the forceful tone of the references, and by Markham's own testimony to that preeminence. Jesus' parables and the Sermon on the Mount were the main sources of Markham's message. William Ellery Channing was the first writer to interpret for Markham Jesus' teachings in the light of social emphasis; Swedenborgian works made some later important contributions. Perhaps the greatest factor leading to Markham's emphasis on the man-to-man relationship was his personal participation in the hard toils and oppressions of early life, which to him appeared inconsistent with God's original plan. The last section of this chapter summarized the principles of the Comrade Kingdom which Markham preached, namely, the principles of Brotherhood of Man, Rulership of Christ, and Preparation for the Hereafter.

Markham's influence upon twentieth century American thought was the consideration of chapter IV. The causes for such a deep impression were first shown. These were mainly two-fold. America around 1900 was ripe for protest, with its taxes and monopolies draining the poor and feeding the rich. The poor were nothing more than outcasts. Into such an arena came the pioneer with the classic "battle cry". Markham was the first to sound the trumpet in bold verse against economic and social tradition. For that he was hailed the Social Prophet.

Markham's influence upon social, literary and religious thought was then briefly weighed. In the social world he caused a great awakening, rallying to the cause of the poor masses, and exposing the savage brutality of the wealthy oppressors. It was he who inspired what was termed "a new dispensation for industry." In the literary world, Markham became the leader of a new poetic move-

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ment. This trend veered away from the traditional subjects of verse, like love, adventure and fairy-tale, to those of common human life and the lot of the average man. Besides being leader in this movement, Markham was its inspirer and teacher. That his acclaim was great is indicated by his being placed in the category of such men as Tennyson and Browning. In the religious world of thought, Markham was received with open arms by the modernist clergy who felt a strong need for the American Christian to become sensitive to the social obligations of neighborly love. To such ministers Markham was an inspiration. If sermons on the Social Gospel ever received any impetus, it was when Markham appeared on the scene. To the lay churchman his verse was understandable, reasonable and practical. Markham himself would have wanted his greatest influence to be felt within the church. But in many religious circles he was fighting a losing battle: losing for reasons too numerous and complex to be fairly analyzed in this study. One general cause for his failure was the strong conviction of some churches concerning Biblical interpretation. A basis for rejection of his philosophy as concerns Biblical interpretation was suggested in chapter II.

## B. Conclusions

In light of the fact that God willed that man's destiny be a blessed end, and that man is the shadow-form of God, the state of competitive society today presents an inconsistency. In Markham's estimation, this inconsistency can be corrected only by man's no longer hating his neighbor, but loving him as himself. The great "world-purpose" is the "vast inbrothering of man." In other words, there still resides within sinful man the seed of power to correct things himself. To Markham there must be a standard by which man so corrects things; and this

standard was set by the lofty life and teachings of Jesus. By living like Him, in Truth and Love, each man contributes to this "vast inbrothering" and so hastens the fulfillment of the Comrade Kingdom.

Markham's argument is clearly logical, but in being such, it has avoided the inviolable judgment laid down by God and recorded in Scripture: "the soul that sinneth it shall die."<sup>1</sup> If Markham had accepted that fact, he would have seen that there is no seed of life and power left in man of himself to restore fellowship with God, which fellowship was broken by sin itself. Moreover the death-judgment of the soul need not be a fatalistic philosophy, for along with that God-ordained judgment comes the God-proclaimed promise of life in Christ Jesus. Here, God does not turn back on His Word: death still is the penalty for men's sins, but Christ is the one who dies for all. Markham's philosophy denies the expiatory death of Christ, for he fails to appreciate its absolute necessity.

Markham's Brotherhood life is the way of entering the Kingdom. Total revelation of Scripture clearly shows that brotherhood is a way of living in the Kingdom. Again, Markham's idealistic philosophy as opposed to the realistic, leads him astray. Markham can see with hopeful vision an Ideal Kingdom coming to pass on earth eventually, by the unanimity of men's efforts to make such a Kingdom. But Scripture realistically acknowledges that even in regenerate man there is sin, and that there never will be the Ideal Kingdom, until all Christians are resurrected with new bodies, and there is a new heaven and a new earth.

The possible over-emphasès of various aspects of Markham's

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1. Ezekiel 18:4

social message have been pointed out in this study. At the same time, the works of Markham have given rich suggestions, especially those from which portions were quoted in chapter II. The fervor with which Markham lived and wrote his convictions puts one to shame. He held out his hand to everyone; Jew or Gentile, small or great. He is a challenge to everyone who preaches individual regeneration by grace through faith, to demonstrate that faith by good works.

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