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APOSTLESHIP

(The selection, training and making of apostles)

PART I — THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Chapter 1 — THE HIGH CALLING OF GOD

A Bondslave of Jesus Christ

In the third chapter of his letter to the Philippians Paul wrote that the single aim of his life while on this earth was to attain unto the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. It is a wonderful ambition, simple and comprehensive, the statement of a true apostle. To attain unto this he had let everything else go; it was the only thing that mattered to him, overriding everything else in his life. Other things had come and gone; marks had been reached, goals achieved, purposes fulfilled; these all lay behind him now, many of them forgotten — they had long since lost their attraction; he had passed beyond them. He had gained benefit from all, but they were not his final goal, so he had left them, freeing himself to reach out for all the things yet lying ahead. A final mark was set for him. He knew it, and, disentangled and unencumbered, he pressed towards it running strongly for the prize he so much coveted.

Much has been spoken and written about and around this passage, its wording, its message, its sentiments, and much more its noble ideals. Over and over again throughout the centuries saints and scholars have considered the passage and have passed on their benefits, until at this point in time there can scarcely be anything fresh left to say about it: no attempt will be made to do so here. The purpose for the reference to this scripture is to draw attention to this apostle's narrow view of life, and to show with what great application he pursued what he knew to be his predestiny. The calling and office of apostleship in the body of Jesus Christ is generally considered to be the highest of all the many callings therein. It is therefore hoped that it may be considered to be a permissible liberty to lift this masterpiece of expression out of its original setting and use it as an acceptable introduction to the whole subject of apostleship.

When Paul wrote in this vein to the Philippians he was not writing about his own calling to apostleship; both he and they knew that he was already an apostle. If there was any church in Asia Minor which knew Paul's calling and office it was the Philippians. For them everything began when a group of women started to meet together to pray, and pray until their prayer was answered; it was. God sent them Paul. He was their apostle by God's choice; neither in his mind nor in theirs was this in doubt or dispute; they were the fruit and proof of his apostleship. It is clear from scripture that at no time in his life did Paul ever reach out after apostleship as an end in itself, or as a prize to be won. He realized that the office is one of gift, not of reward. He never sought to be an apostle of Jesus Christ; he always thought he was unworthy of the position, and it is not even clear in scripture at what point he first assumed the title or was recognized as such.

To the Corinthians he firmly asserts and repeats that he was an apostle by the will of God, but this was only because he had to do so. To their shame he had to defend his calling to them because it was God's calling and they were questioning it. To his mind there was no possibility that he or anyone else could be or should be called an apostle. In an illuminative phrase to the Romans he says he was a slave of Jesus Christ, called an apostle. What a commentary on his attitude towards the 'top' calling. He might have written 'only a slave', for that is what he means. By the will of God and his own will also, he was a bondslave. To him that was the greatest of all privileges. That he was also called an apostle of Jesus Christ was a matter of his Master's choice; his choice was slavery. In his estimation apostleship is an appointment to a position of hard work among fellow-slaves. To him it was obvious that apostles cannot be selected by men from among themselves; he saw that to attempt that is an act of rebellion as preposterous as the belief that apostles are self-chosen. Anyone who is convinced that his own virtues and abilities commend him to God, or who requires recognition by Him or the Church on these grounds, is self-deceived. The true apostle is as much surprised by God's choice of him as are his companions; he is always convinced that he is not fit to be an apostle.

The Great Apostle

Such a one was Paul; we learn this and much more than this from a letter he once wrote to his son in the faith, Timothy. It is very clear in this scripture that apostleship is first of all a heavenly calling; it did not originate from earth. Apostleship among men is an adaptation of and a projection from the being of God, particularly of the person of Jesus Christ. Long before God ever chose a man to be an apostle on earth He elected the Christ to the office. The Lord Jesus assumed the title and fulfilled the heavenly calling on earth when He came into this world; herein then lies the greatness and awful responsibility of the office. Men never addressed Him by that name or acknowledged the office, and He did not require it of them. He was not the first human being on earth to be designated apostle. The title, if title it be, was bestowed by Him first upon the twelve chosen disciples. Furthermore, although the office holds obvious associations with the event, the calling did not originate at Jordan, nor was the title bestowed upon Him when He was anointed there. The calling and office and title had earlier and higher origins than that; the Lord held the office of Apostle in heaven.

It is the writer to the Hebrews who declares the Lord to be an apostle; no one else does, and the epistle is not concerned with Christ's earthly life but His heavenly ministry. The title is used in conjunction with another of His heavenly offices — High Priest; the two offices are thus shown to be associated with each other — 'the Apostle and High Priest of our profession'; both positions are eternal and heavenly. In connection with this we should note that, in anticipation of His incarnation, it was written of Him that His goings forth were from eternity. This scripture about the coming of the Messiah was quoted to Herod by the scribes following the birth of Jesus — He came forth unto God from Bethlehem, as the prophet said. He had also come forth from heaven to the people, but they did not recognize that, or believe that He came to earth because He was sent by His Father. His nativity was not His first visit to earth from heaven, nor was it His first mission for God on earth. From eternity He had been habitually going forth on mission at His Father's behest, though never before by incarnation. He was the Apostle and in this sense the Servant of the Trinity as Isaiah makes plain. Bearing this in mind, it may well be that Paul's words to the Philippians, already quoted, did refer to apostleship, heavenly apostleship, that is the apostleship in heaven. If this is indeed so, then Paul's statement holds a whole new world of meaning; divine possibility opens up to faith most invitingly, and a course is set before every one of us as it was before Paul. But, although the prospect is most intriguing, we will not pursue it; those who reach the mark at last shall find out what mystery lies beyond the words.

The connection between Paul's statement of intent and the expectation he entertained and our present subject is the phrase 'high calling of God'. The apostle said this high calling is in Christ, and it is clear that he only discovered it when he found himself in Him, not until then. It was not the only thing he found in Christ, as the epistle shows, but it was something of which Paul became gradually aware from the very moment of his regeneration onwards. He did not fully recognize it immediately, but he was not left long without knowledge of the reason for his call. Within only a few days of his first encounter with Christ on the Damascus road, God sent to him Ananias His servant, who informed Paul of the life work for which he had been apprehended, and, in view of this, ministered to him the Holy Spirit. Listening to the man, Paul could not but be convinced that God had specially chosen him, for Ananias plainly told him so; it must therefore have been obvious to him from the very beginning that he had been called in order to be sent; when or exactly where he was not told; he knew why though. He already knew that among the churches of Christ there were men called apostles; Pharisee that he was, he had regarded them as cursed of God and therefore His enemies, and for months past he had been seeking to destroy them. He might have thought that, had he wished to do so, he could have used the title 'apostle' about himself, and except he hated the word and all it stood for, he might well have done so, for he was truly a sent man.

The leaders of Judaism had chosen him and sent him to quash the so-called 'sect of the Nazarenes', which of late had sprung up so quickly and was flourishing so vigorously around the name of Jesus. But he detested the title with all its connotations; he had no ambitions along that line at all, none whatsoever. Yet, to his astonishment, within days of his unintentional and unexpected meeting with Christ, this man's calling and election by God was being outlined to him in words and in a manner which could have left him in no doubt as to God's intentions for his life. It was also made very clear to him what the relationship between himself and Christ was to be, for Ananias spoke to him in the

language, if not the tones, of command. There was no mistaking that Jesus Christ, in whose name Ananias came, regarded Himself as being Paul's Lord, and Paul as being His slave. This was entirely in harmony with all Paul had realized of Christ from the very first; the Lord had laid hold of him with such power and force that he knew he was in the grip of a mighty potentate. Paul never once raised an argument about that, he knew that the one who had stopped him dead in the road was a lord, though who He was he did not know — Paul knew what He was, but not who He was. This lord was the Lord, and from the moment Jesus identified Himself to him he began to accept orders from Him; 'Arise, go into Damascus, there it shall be told thee what thou must do' was the first of many. Crisis point was reached with Paul at that moment; either he would do as he was told and, in so doing, acknowledge that Jesus Christ was Lord and that he was His slave, or he would not; he made his choice. Paul rose to his feet and did exactly what he had been ordered to do; his will was broken, he submitted to the Lord and yielded himself to Him, a slave for ever.

Lord and Saviour

To many it may come as a very real surprise to know that the word Saviour occurs very infrequently in the New Testament. By comparison with the use of the word 'Lord' its occurrence is minimal. It is the same in the Old Testament also; the references to the title 'Lord' there are so many that, by comparison, the word 'saviour' is almost non-existent. To the understanding heart that should speak volumes and need no comment! Paul was a polite, reverent and deferential slave of his Lord, Christ, and he sought nothing higher on this earth. To him Jesus was not Saviour and Lord but Lord and Saviour; to his heart and mind that was the only true and correct order of revelation and address. Not for him the pseudo hail-fellow-well-met attitude of the twentieth century permissive society; it would be as offensive to him as it surely is in the ears of God. The over-familiarity of our days is insulting to His Majesty, and must be rejected by the churches as being part of the rebelliousness of a Godless age; it is contemptuous. It was no surprise to the Ephesians, or to anyone who knew the great apostle, to read that he was the prisoner of the Lord; he was; they all knew it. Similarly, when the Corinthians read Paul's statement that necessity was laid upon him, everyone would have agreed and testified to the truth of what the man said; Paul was a man entirely owned by another — possessed, and voluntarily so. If his slavery had been against his will, he said, a dispensation of the gospel would have been granted him, and if that had been so it would have meant that he had been granted licence from God to sin by disobedience. But God does not grant licence to sin; He does not grant dispensations and indulgences; hierarchies may do so, but these are never churches, nor are their officials men of God. That this great God of ours forgives and forgives and forgives again and again and again must never be mistaken or construed to mean that He indulges sin; He does not.

This acknowledgement of Christ's Lordship and man's slavery was as much a virtue of Ananias as of Paul. When he was sent of God to minister to Paul, his mission was as that of a slave. His response to Christ was exactly the same as Paul's had been — 'Lord'; 'here I am Lord,' he said; everyone in the church had the same understanding; each knew in himself that he was a slave. 'Go,' the Lord said, and Ananias went; when he arrived in the street called Straight and found Paul he said, 'Brother Saul'. Ananias welcomed him to the house of slaves with the words that he had been chosen by the Lord and was going to be sent on a mission from Him, and he delivered the message in tones of authority in the language of command. Ananias did not speak of office or title, he promised him nothing but suffering, but if ever a man was being called to fill the office and bear the title 'apostle' it was Saul of Tarsus.

Unlike anyone else before him, from the very beginning and from the very Highest of all, without being specially designated as such, Paul was a called apostle. In several of the epistles he wrote to various churches, he certified and authenticated his right to do so with the words, 'Paul, an apostle'. Misguidedly the words 'to be' have been added by the translators thus: 'Paul, called (to be) an apostle': it is a great pity. These words have been inserted in an attempt to make fluent reading for time-bound readers, but they obscure more truth than they reveal, for they give an interpretation of scripture. To a certain extent they do help by pointing out the translators' understanding of the reason why the Lord called him, namely in order that he should be an apostle. The degree of truth in this suggestion is sufficient to commend it to the reader's mind on two counts: (1) a man cannot be anything before the Lord calls him; (2) that is exactly what happened. But the point being made is that it is the Lord who called Paul an apostle; this is the point so often missed. In the mind of God Paul was always an apostle:

he did not have to become one in order to bear the title, nor did he have to earn it, he was always an apostle. Before he was recognized as an apostle and given the title by men, Paul was an apostle of Christ; the callings and elections of God are eternal. This marvellous fact is as true of the humblest member and office of the church as it is of an apostle, but what a high calling apostleship is; it is the highest of all callings to which a man may be elected.

Many aspire to apostleship in these days, but there are few that rightly bear the title and fit and fulfil the calling in reality. The title is based upon a concept and bestowed with purpose by the sovereign will of God; other than that it is a false assumption. Because of His foreknowledge, and certainly by His grace, the title is sometimes bestowed by Him upon men who, among their contemporaries, appear to deserve it, but it cannot be earned; when given to a man it must be understood by all to be but a further grace of God to him. Born of a relationship, it is an award to a degree of devotion foreknown by the Lord, and not as a reward for the demonstration of that devotion. Paul said that God enabled him for that for which He counted him faithful. God gave Paul His trust, putting him into the ministry; apostleship is a mark of an addiction to Christ excelling all others. The concept is slavery, love's freewill addiction to Christ; the title is as much God's estimate of a man as it is of His choice of him. In His mind an apostle is the slave of slaves.

Apostleship is not a concept of majesty or of rule, but of work, hard, unceasing labour involving suffering and loss. Two sentences, the one modern and the other ancient, joined together, express it in choicest words — 'burning with love's pure devotion (I) we will live and die for thee', and 'I laboured more abundantly than they all'. Surely, these statements are worthy of Christ, although He never made them; they are true of Him who is the greatest apostle of all — they must also be as true of every man who allows himself to be called an apostle by men. Paul once wrote of himself and the apostolic band of which he was a member, 'we as workers together with Christ': the apostle considered himself to be a worker; he did not think of himself as an apostle who worked but as a worker called an apostle, a very different thing. He said of himself that he was not fit to be called an apostle, and to himself would only allow that he was the least of all the apostles; he was always so aware of how terribly he had persecuted both Jesus and His Church, and was thoroughly ashamed of it. His later labours for Christ and His Church were by way of being a repayment for the damage he had done and for the insults and blasphemies he had heaped upon the Lord and His people. Throughout his entire ministerial life he considered himself to be in debt to the whole world of men. To his Lord he regarded himself to be in debt for eternity, consequently he laboured more abundantly than all the others.

When writing to the Corinthians he gives a brief account of some of his journeys and labours and trials — they were very spectacular and formidable — but he considered this to be nothing more than foolish boasting. He found no pleasure in this, and only indulged it upon the assumption that, since they suffered fools gladly they would bear with him also, but he regretted that they had forced him into doing it. He wrote in full knowledge of the fact that the work he did was no proof of his office or of his fitness for it. Not all the works he listed put together were regarded by him as the greatest factor in an apostle's calling, neither were they advanced with this in mind; he only put these forward to those who would persist in making that kind of comparison between apostles. His testimony must have staggered his critics, but he did not flatter himself by it, he was only sorry that a church he had established should require it of him. Long before he wrote his letter he realized and proved that works can be made to prove anything. Steeped in Jewish history as he was, he had always been aware of the fact that, when God came to Jacob and changed his name to Israel, He had put everything to do with God and man in true perspective — 'As a prince hast thou power with God and with men'. The Lord put the man's priorities right — power with God first, power with men second; if a man gets the order right and keeps his heart right he will find that these two work together in perfect balance as one. Having power with God for men's needs he will, by reason of that, at some time have power with men for God's purposes.

Our Great High Priest

In this thing God showed Himself the example of all He desires and expects of men. Before He attempted to show that He had power with men He worked with power in God — that is within Himself — and the power worked in Him mightily unto the creation of the universe and the manifestation of man. As a result of, and in keeping with this, Jesus was born on earth — the Apostle

of God. God worked within Himself unto this end long before He began, or even could begin, to work within or upon man to His ends with him. This method and demonstration by God is the pattern for all men, especially for apostles. By the power that works in him an apostle must first have power with God before he can expect to have power with men. The Lord Jesus was set forth on earth as the example of this and we are commanded to consider Him as such. It seems that the writer to the Hebrews is setting out a logical order of truth and guiding our thinking along God's common sense lines, made apparent by the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Christ. Having completed the work of redemption for which He came, He has returned to heaven and is now appearing at the throne of God interceding for us; having become an apostle He is now a high priest. From the point of view of men that is the true order, but from God's point of view it is not.

Long, long before He became a man in order to have power with men, in a new way with a new purpose the Lord had power with God in heaven, and when in the fulness of time He appeared upon earth He followed the same pattern. Ages before He was born a man and became a human apostle the Lord stayed in obscurity, out of public gaze, and had power with God, ministering Himself to His Father as He had ever done. The apostleship, which began with His incarnation, was the logical outcome of this eternal priesthood; He offered no outpoured blood then — just Himself. His ultimate sacrifice on earth, the flesh and blood man He was, was the result of it; that was all He offered — but that was ALL. All apostleship among men to this day is only bestowed upon man from this position; it is the only apostleship there is, and it will only function within the Church upon these conditions. No one on this earth can be, or will be, regenerated and converted, into the image of God except it be from this ministry; a man must have power with God before he can have this ability and authority from God. God will not bestow this most miraculous of all power and function upon any man unless this truth be recognized and adopted without reservation or diminution into his thinking and practice. Priesthood, though classified with apostleship, is both in order of thought and degree of power and importance, greater than apostleship, and must precede it in order of ordination and ministry. God will not send out an unsacrificing man with an uncaring heart; He cannot because such a person would misrepresent Him; God has no care for mere form and banal ordinance. When the Lord was here on earth among men He did not choose apostles from among them because they were great men; His own ministry at that time was conducted among men on a different basis and for a different purpose from that which was revealed and upon which He worked after Pentecost. As a man His purposes were with Israel after the flesh; these were primarily Messianic and carried out upon the basis of God's promises to His people Israel concerning an earthly kingdom. Following Israel's rejection of Him under the Old Covenant, He brought in the new and everlasting covenant under the terms of which He brought His own Church into being. Everything to do with this was and is administered from heaven upon the basis of God's promise to the Son, which was fulfilled at Pentecost almost immediately after He returned to heaven. A new age then began, in which the glorified Lord elected and called apostles in a manner different altogether from the procedure He followed when on earth. This can be demonstrated in many ways, but sufficient has been shown for the present, so leaving this aspect of apostleship until later we will turn to the Gospels and take up our subject in these writings.

Chapter 2 — THE REASON FOR THE CALL

The Persistent Call

It may be correct to assume that the men the Lord chose to be His apostles during His earthly life were men above the average; surely they must have been or they would never have stayed with Him. From the moment men started to follow Jesus, whatever the motive was that moved them to do so, they must have realized that discipleship to Him would not be easy. A few days' acquaintance with Him must have made them realize that they may have been committing themselves to something they could live to regret; many questions about His aims and intentions must frequently have filled their minds. It could not have been long however before they discovered that they were attaching themselves to a man who was heading for disaster. Not only so, but they soon began to realize that He was fast becoming the most-loved and most-hated figure in the land. Wherever He went there was extraordinary blessing, but there was also unimagined trouble. He was always clashing with the religious authorities; it seemed inevitable that arguments would develop about everything He did or said. He was popular enough

with the masses, but whatever He said or did seemed to be challenged by their elders and religious leaders; the simplest of remarks were questioned and His most beneficent intentions were constantly regarded as suspect.

It was of no use to try and hide the fact, either from themselves or from others, that He was a most controversial figure. Although He said many wonderful things about God, He did also say things and make claims about Himself that were most provocative; often they themselves did not understand His meanings, yet somehow they could not doubt Him or abandon His call. There was something about Him that held them; His was not a passing attraction, it gripped them, He seemed to hold them in His hand; His call was insistent, there was no denying that He meant to have them. His pursuit of Peter, James and John was remarkably persistent; it was quite apparent to those three, if not to all, that He was not prepared to let them go. Following their first call this famous trio often went back to their fishing, but He pursued them to the fishing grounds and finally convinced them that they must follow Him. It was evident to them and to all that He really did want them, and it was also clear that He was going to be their Lord or nothing; loyalty to Him was the first requirement.

The Man Above All

One of the most engaging attractions about Christ to them was His humanness; He endeared Himself to their hearts because He was so natural. They soon discovered that His favourite name for Himself was Son of Man; that was how He thought about Himself. He was certainly that; He never aspired to anything higher and when He said it of Himself it seemed to mean much to Him, as though in His heart it meant a lot more than they knew. Having been familiarized with the writings of the prophets since childhood, they were aware that the prophet Ezekiel had been called 'son of man'. At the time the prophet was recording God's words to him in a vision. Ezekiel had never called himself by that name as though he was making any great claim for himself, but no one doubted that he was a great man and a prophet of the Lord. Daniel, another great prophet and a man greatly loved by God, also used the name of himself; but again he was not making the claims himself, but was only recording what he was called by Gabriel. Neither of those men were making proud boasts or great claims but were simply recording facts; even so, neither of them said he was the Son of Man. Jesus did though, and when men heard Jesus say He was the Son of Man they knew what He was meaning: He was matter-of-factly claiming the divine title. Everyone who heard Him must have known what Jesus was doing and where such claims would ultimately lead. In all respects Jesus made plain to them that His claims, as well as He Himself, must be faced. Such tactics could only lead to one end, it seemed He was deliberately heading for a clash with the authorities; everyone knew it was bound to occur.

Perhaps it was either to challenge Him on this ground or to forewarn Him, that Nicodemus, the nation's foremost teacher, came to Jesus one night in Jerusalem. According to him it was freely acknowledged among the teaching fraternity that Jesus was a teacher and that He was undoubtedly sent from God. Those men had been watching Him closely for some time; the miracles He did seemed to prove their conclusions and they were prepared to admit it. But how about this title He was using of Himself? Did He really think He was the Son of Man? It was an astonishing claim, a different matter altogether, and they had very grave doubts about Him, hence the interview by the top man. Jesus knew the position from which Nicodemus was speaking and who he was and the company he represented and why he came; more than that, He loved him. Therefore, taking charge of the conversation, He directed Nicodemus' thoughts towards the truth which he and all men needed to know. He was not prepared at that time to answer endless questions about genealogies and the implications of His works and claims and statements; He knew that would only gender strife, and He did not want strife with Nicodemus. Instead He deliberately made an answer to him which, if taken the wrong way, could be made to mean that He regarded him as being totally incapable of asking Him questions, because he was not even alive. Poor Nicodemus — he was completely nonplussed. Instead of asking Jesus about Himself and who and what He was, he was forced to ask questions about himself; he was entirely outmanoeuvred and completely baffled. The answers he received and the information he was given filled him with amazement and incredulity. He left that room that night certain of at least one thing: Jesus thought he needed to be born from above.

Something else equally important was clear to him: this man, who they thought was a teacher sent from God, firmly believed that He Himself was born of God. Although he had so obviously been put

under examination by Jesus, he had also, to the best of his ability, examined Jesus, and he realized that whoever Jesus was He was certainly a force to be reckoned with. He was indeed! When He called Himself the Son of Man He meant He was more than just a prophet raised up unto the people as were Ezekiel or Daniel, or even Moses or Abraham. He was meaning more than that, much more, more than at the time He was prepared to say, for no man had been His father. Ezekiel had been a special prophet in that he was also a priest, but he was nevertheless a mere man, for a man had been his father. God addressed him as 'son of man', but He was careful to give Ezekiel a vision of One who he knew was greater altogether than himself. Ezekiel was granted a vision of the likeness of a throne of fire with 'the likeness of ... a man above upon it', he said; he also saw the appearance of a bow and heard a voice calling him, 'son of man', and saying, 'I send thee'. Ezekiel was conscious of the fact that he had seen the likeness of the throne and the glory of the Lord, who in times past had appeared on earth among men in the likeness of the appearance of a man. The prophet-priest was overwhelmed; he had seen a vision of God, and to him God appeared to bear the likeness of a man. What was he seeing? What did it mean? Was this the likeness of the original Man, the uncreated pattern-Man upon whom Adam, the original man of earth, was created and from whom he had received his spirit? Ezekiel knew he was not seeing Him, that was not possible, but he knew he was seeing a likeness, and said so. It was as though he was beholding a mysterious reflection of God in some heavenly mirror, and He appeared to be a man! This was something new.

The Lord God, the Creator of heaven and earth and men, appeared unto Ezekiel in the likeness of a man and spoke to him. 'Son of man', He said, 'stand upon thy feet and I will speak unto thee', and at the same time the spirit entered into him and Ezekiel became a prophet. Six or seven hundred years later another man, in full view of that same throne, recorded that an angelic man said unto him, 'The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'. Ezekiel did not know that name, but he saw the likeness of a Man and heard Him calling him son of man. Without knowing it he was listening to the testimony of Jesus; to him it seemed like the testimony of the man-like God who was speaking to him from the fiery throne of glory. What he did know was that the spirit of prophecy and of that testimony entered him, and from that moment he became what he was called: in a new way he was now a son of man sent from God, a prophet of the Lord and a representative of the Most High. More than being a son of a man he was a son of that Man, the One who had called him from the throne and spoken to him and whose spirit had entered him. His human name had not been mentioned, instead he had been given a descriptive title, far more related to his humanity than the name his father had given him when he was born. Because of this wonderful new relationship with the Man on the throne he knew that he was related to all mankind, and from that moment he knew he was on a mission from God. He was sent; he was an apostle of that Man on the throne, who is the great Apostle of God.

To the Jews who came to listen to Jesus on earth the title, 'son of man', was sacred and divine, it held all those great historic meanings full of spiritual import and promise. Did He know what His claims meant? Did this man realize all He was saying? They all knew what He had recently done in the temple; it was a public scandal and, in their eyes, sacrilegious; He seemed to have come suddenly from nowhere and burst upon the public scene, creating havoc everywhere. In the temple He had even gone so far as to challenge the priests and the Levites and all the elders present, in fact everybody within sound of His voice, to 'destroy this temple', and, as if to add absurdity to indignity, had boasted that if they did so he would raise it again in three days. Such things had never been heard of before. Whatever was He doing and saying? Did He realize that there was a direct link between His actions and words and what Ezekiel had prophesied? Ezekiel had actually spoken of the destruction of the temple and of its rebuilding, and had included plans for its reconstruction in his book. Did this Jesus fully realize what it meant to claim to be the Son of Man and to say such things? Did He understand what His claims meant to them? Was He a cruel, heartless charlatan, a blasphemer and a deceiver, or was He genuine? In his day Ezekiel had been a tremendous man; his impact on his contemporaries was profound and unforgettable, they truly accepted him as a son of man sent from God. His prophecies were so true and weighty and full of prophetic hope that they were still influencing the nation to that day; if what Jesus said was true, the prophecy was about to be fulfilled. If that were indeed so, then Jesus was plainly the Son of Man and the Son of God too; He was the Messiah. But raise the temple in three days! That could not possibly be; even Ezekiel had not suggested that.

Ezekiel had never claimed to be the Son of Man, nor did he ever say he had power on earth to forgive

sins, or that he was Lord of the sabbath; but this man did. Further than that, as time went on and His ministry progressed, one day, without the slightest reticence or hesitation, Jesus actually claimed to be the Lord who made the sabbath day for Adam. He was not claiming just to be a man, or even a distant son of the man for whom the sabbath was made; He was categorically stating that He pre-existed Adam, the father of the whole race. More than that, although He did not say so, He was claiming to be the one who fashioned time. There really could be no doubting Jesus' purpose in making such claims, He was saying He was the Lord God. Whether or not they thought it, the likeness of the appearance of the man on the throne was now manifest in flesh before them. However else and in whatever other forms He may appear on the throne, this one thing is sure, in accordance with Ezekiel's vision of the reflected likeness in the heavens of a Man, God had become Man on earth.

The Background of the Call

The implications of this insistent and repeated claim that He was Lord of the sabbath proved to be the main reason for the first moves towards Jesus' ultimate murder. The intention to destroy Him had for some time lain smouldering in the hearts of the fanatical Pharisees, who went and took counsel with the equally fanatical Herodians, that together they should work out a plan to have Him murdered. This fatal decision was taken one day in a synagogue and there is no doubt that the Lord deliberately provoked it. It was the sabbath and the place was packed with worshippers; His presence assured that, and in the congregation there was a man with a withered hand. Knowing that the Lord's compassionate heart would almost certainly go out to the man, His enemies gathered around watching and waiting. Understanding this, and quite undeterred by it, the Lord went straight to the point and said to the crippled man, 'Stand forth': everyone present knew the challenge had been accepted. Addressing Himself to everybody present, including His enemies, He said, 'Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days or to do evil? To save life or to kill?' No-one spoke; there was no answer but the one He demonstrated: He healed him.

The Son of Man acted upon a law which preceded Moses' law and was one of the reasons why Moses' law was given, a heavenly law as eternal as God, namely the law of doing good every day and through all eternity. To do good is God's habit; from this all creation proceeded: at the conclusion of each day's activity in the first week of world history God pronounced His satisfaction with His handiwork in these terms, 'It is good'. It was therefore natural for Christ to do good and, in the synagogue that day, the Lord coupled with this law another one like it and closely connected with it, namely the law of salvation. 'Is it lawful... to save life...?' He said, meaning by implication that any and every day, including the sabbath, was the right day for healing, and He healed the man to underline that fact. The Pharisees, filled with anger though they were, could not deny what He said, and kept quiet; they had no alternative. They dared not raise any objection, either to the truth or to the miracle, or they would have lost their reputation in the community. They had thought they had Him trapped but were caught in their own snare and publicly humiliated; filled with hate they took steps to do away with Him. The Lord, fully aware of this, also made some decisions; the future must be safeguarded, so He proceeded to take steps to ensure that His work would continue in the earth after He left.

Besides this awareness of the intentions of the Pharisees, the Lord had other reasons also for making His new moves; all things were working together for good. Vast multitudes were thronging Him every day, all to listen, some to touch or be touched by Him. Even gentiles were coming to hear Him; the very unmanageability of the crowds was creating problems. His heart was filled with compassion for them, their need was so great and He wanted to do them good, but except He did some kind of self-exalting sensational miracle He just had to retreat from them. At times the crush was so great that there would be no place to stand, and at one time He just had to ask His disciples for a boat so that He could distance Himself from the people a little. Not that He wanted to get away from them; on the contrary He wanted to remain within their sight and hearing, but how to do that without being trodden underfoot by them, was a real problem. Under those circumstances it was humanly impossible to be in direct touch with everybody and it grieved Him. They were not to be blamed for their eagerness, if the positions had been reversed He would have done the same as they.

Sitting there in the boat, with the needs of men and women staring Him in the face, it was obvious that something more must be done about it than at present. He needed assistance. The time had come for the men He had called to discipleship to be put to work; they must learn that He expected them to do

more than follow Him, they must help Him also. His plan would be to select a band of men from among His followers, train them, and send them out to the people in their own homes in their own cities and towns and villages throughout the whole land. The effect of this would be to increase and broaden the scope of the ministry; instead of one voice proclaiming the gospel in the land there would be thirteen. It would greatly help the people also, for they would not then need to travel long distances to Him, but would have their needs met by others than Himself; such a thing could result in nothing but good.

There was also another reason for this determination. Among those attracted to Him and His ministry were a lot of devil-possessed people; these were as welcome as anyone else, the blessings were for all, but there was more to it than that. Through these people satan was attempting to destroy His ministry, and Jesus knew it. Having failed in his earlier attempts to destroy Him, the devil was trying new tactics. Having failed to defeat Him by direct confrontation in the wilderness, satan's new move was to try and discredit His works and ruin His ministry by attempting to praise and patronize Him. The Lord saw through it of course and was far too wise to accept it; He would not allow it in His presence. Insincere praise is worse than criticism; genuine praise is a ministry, whether to God or to man, but flattery is deception; whoever receives it will bring about his own destruction. The praise of devils is damning, both to themselves and to those they praise; better an open sword-thrust than devilish flattery. Whenever He met it the Lord dealt with it summarily; His method was always to silence the person the devil was using.

Following this, the Lord made His first major move towards the fulfilment of His purposes (and what a lesson we all should learn from this): He ascended a mountain and spent a whole night alone in prayer to God. It was a momentous occasion; the decisions He had to make that night would affect all time and eternity. The new programme of God for men was about to be set in motion on the earth, preparations for the founding of the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men were in the making. The Lord would not move without His Father's mind though, so He sought seclusion to wait on God. We do not know all that took place during that time of solitary communion, we can only judge by what followed on from it. In the beginning, when He was about to commence His public ministry, Jesus was shown all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them in a moment of time from the top of an exceedingly high mountain. Satan had taken Him there to represent to Him both the extent and the exaltation of his kingdom, and to impress Him that he really was reigning over all other kingdoms of this world. The devil had carried Him to the heights hoping that, with one dazzling display and a flashing temptation full of lying promise, he would sweep Christ off His feet and bring His mission to nought. Full of pride, satan spoke to Jesus as a king to an heir apparent; his was the kingdom of kingdoms — all the kingdoms of the world he boasted. The devil seemed to have such great possessions and power, but it was of no avail, He who boasted no earthly kingdom did not want the devil's. Christ already had a kingdom of His own, but it was not of this world. What a great fool Lucifer again proved himself to be that day; men who are deceived by him are poor dupes, but Jesus was not one of them.

So it was that many months later, as the morning dawned, the Lord sat alone on the mountain as on the throne of His kingdom. With calm confidence He looked out over His native land, and prepared to launch His counter attack on the devil. Whether He had been entirely alone with God all night or whether His disciples had also spent the night there, hidden in some place close at hand yet some distance removed from Him, is difficult to tell. Whether near or far, to Him they were in another world, a kingdom foreign to God, and He left them there while He spent that night of prayer alone. Had they been watching all night for Him though, waiting upon His good pleasure? Had they been witnesses of His patient waiting, and did they hear the distant sound of His voice and try to make out His words as He lay before God, shadowed from the moon in some dark cleft of the rock? Obviously they were somewhere near at hand, near enough to hear His voice when He called to them in the morning: they were staunch men, ready to respond to His needs or requirements at all times. Although He had excluded them from His personal devotions and private prayers, He had not dismissed them from following Him, so they stayed as close to Him as possible, entering Into as much as they could.

Called to be With Him

Loyalty and devotion are precious virtues and in the morning they earned their reward, for in the dawning of the new day they heard Him calling to them. Quick to respond, senses all alert, they

hurried to answer Him, wondering what He wanted. With no preamble, without any explanation, He began to call out names, selecting individuals from among them, perhaps pointing them out with His finger; something new was happening. One, two, three, four, five — on He went, everyone but He wondering what it was about and when it would stop; no one knew, and except to call out the name of the person He wanted He said nothing. It would have been less mystifying to them if, before starting to call, He had explained to them what was in His mind, but this He had not done, so they just stood silently by while those He named moved over to Him forming themselves into a little band, increasing in number as the call continued. Not much longer though, He reached twelve and stopped; evidently the chosen number was complete. What would be the next move? Everyone stood around, wondering what it was all about, the little group forming a kind of inner core of the larger company of disciples. All awaited His further word but none was forthcoming. If He explained His purpose to them it is not recorded; He simply called and they obeyed. The Gospel-writers who record the incident tell us the Lord's reasons for doing this, but do not say whether or not He disclosed these to them at that time. It may not have been wise to have done so just then, but He was the best judge of that; the principal thing about the occasion is that the famous apostolic band was formed that morning as they obeyed His call. He called them apostles; but whether or not He put the title to each name as He called it, thus — Apostle Peter, Apostle James, Apostle John — we do not know.

Whatever the rest of His faithful disciples thought of His actions and choice, they did not say; they did not offer an opinion, and He did not seek it; His word was sovereign. For the most part those men were a good, loyal crowd, and they accepted what He did, but they were also very human and must have felt some kind of reactions to what was happening. The twelve were not the only men who had stayed within earshot of Him all through that night. Why did He select them and pass over all the others? Were those twelve men so very special? Was there something wrong with the rest of them; if not, why was He being so selective? Was He showing favouritism? It is never easy to be selective among human beings, if only because someone is bound to get hurt if he is so pointedly left out. Unless self-esteem is very low, jealousy is often unavoidably created when sovereign choices are made. To be passed over without explanation hurts pride and causes misunderstandings; at such times motives are bound to be questioned and misinterpretations will always be made; almost invariably such things as happened that morning cause trouble and unhappiness to someone. But if these troubles existed among the disciples they are not referred to — it could be that only murmurs of assent and signs of approval were expressed. Perhaps they all knew that election is not division and ought never to be thought of as promotion; the twelve were not called because they were superior beings, they were not treated as such by the Lord, neither were they regarded as such by their fellows.

Of one thing we may be very sure, even though he may have known little or nothing about what his calling entailed, each one of those apostles was thrilled that the Lord had chosen him. At that time, for the most part, the Lord was a very popular figure and the prospect was very thrilling; to be with Him was an honour and a pleasure. Perhaps if they, as He, could have seen prison and judgement and a cross ahead they might not have been so keen; threats and persecutions are hard things to live with; mercifully they were hidden from their eyes. The Lord was very wise, and His timing was perfect; He knew also who He had called and who would follow Him without demanding explanations; to Him that is a virtue. He wanted their implicit trust, for He had no intention of revealing His plans for the twelve at that time, He loved them too much for that. The purposes He had in mind for them were very great, so great in fact that, for the time being, He just had to keep them secret. Beyond what He may have expressed of His desire for them to be with Him then, the Lord's purposes for them included greater things in the not too distant future as well. He was going to give them power to heal sicknesses and cast out devils and send them forth into the land to preach the gospel to the nation.

His choices that morning were made with a twofold plan in mind: (1) it was the first step towards the initiation of an immediate strategic campaign against satan; (2) it was also a move towards the fulfilment of His as yet unannounced intention to build His Church. He did not inform anybody of these things then; it was enough for the twelve that they should know He wished them to be with Him. Naturally they were thrilled, it was what they wanted, and to discover that He wanted it as much as they did filled them with joy. Jesus was as human as they were; He longed for human companionship and to have real friends who believed in Him and wanted Him for Himself. He yearned to be wanted as a person and not just followed as a religious leader or a great benefactor. Besides, to be what He

wanted them to be, they themselves must want Him more than anything or anyone; religious convictions and staunch loyalties are poor substitutes for love. He did not want comrades in arms, nor yet just champions of a cause; He could have had ten thousand angels for that if He but spoke the word; He wanted men, fellow human beings; He had become a man for that. He knew that He must not overburden them at that time though; it would have been a terrible mistake to have done so. They were quite unable to meet the demands of the situations into which He wished to send them; they needed training.

The Lord's work was not easy. If men were to understand who He was and learn of His kingdom, His will must be done on earth, but the twelve were neither prepared personally nor equipped sufficiently for the task. When He chose His men they were unregenerate; He had no option about this, He just had to make the most of what was available. Presumably they were zealots and the best that could be had, but they were men born of the flesh, not one of them had received the Spirit of God. By contrast He was a man of the Spirit; He was born of the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, anointed with the Spirit; He was the Spirit manifest in flesh, but they were none of these things. Doubtless they aspired unto the spirit they saw in Him, but while He was yet with them that could not be; the Holy Spirit would not come to them until He left the earth. Nevertheless, while He was on the earth He needed to make the kingdom of heaven manifest to His generation, where it was and in what it consisted, and what the kingdom of God was like, and He had very little time in which to do it. The task was gigantic, and the days were short and men were in the dark; the whole land must be flooded with light and the power of God as quickly as possible; but to have sent out men neither spiritually equipped nor mentally prepared for such a task would have been to court disaster, and in the sight of God it would have been criminal folly. Although potentially they were apostles, they were far from what they should have been; they were His sheep moreover, and He could not possibly throw them to the wolves. To have endowed them with gifts and endued them with power would have been a simple enough thing for Him to do, but it would not have been loving; He had more regard for them than that; their souls were worth infinitely more to Him than their service.

That is why His first intention in the call was 'that they should be with Him'; His call was to Himself, not to a work, even though it was His work. Work must wait, pressing and great though it was, and the needs dire and many; work was only of secondary importance, their relationship with Him and their own personal needs were of far greater importance. Whether or not they were aware of it, their own needs were as great as those of the people to whom He wished to send them; their state was little better than anyone else's; it would be a great mistake and utterly wrong to send them out in their present condition. His first concern for them was not equipage or gifts or power, or to exhort them to dedicate themselves to the task; all that could wait. Gifts could be bestowed and power could be imparted to them in a moment when the time was right, and dedication to the work would develop as they engaged in it. His concern when He called them was with their relationship to Him; first and foremost He wanted them to be with Him; before they could work among men they must learn to live with Him and with each other.

The Lord's most important business with those men was to establish, as nearly as possible, the same position between Himself and them as existed between Himself and His Father; He knew He could not do that yet. Work-wise a somewhat similar position had to be established, He had been sent from His Father on His apostolic calling, and He wanted that same thing for His apostles. He could not give them His heritage, or an entirely identical privilege, but He wanted to send them out as from His own bosom; for above all they were in need of this as well as of more intensive instruction. There was something else also which concerned Him: when He came from His Father's bosom it was as a lamb for the slaughter, and He knew that unless He sent out His apostles in the same manner all would be in vain. He was also aware that keeping them with Him — virtually commandeering them — would brand them in men's eyes and they would become natural victims of every devouring spirit in the land — which is exactly how it worked out.

When He did finally send them forth they were indeed as sheep among wolves, sacrificed by Him unto the needs of the world; but He did not tell them these things at first, they were not ready for it. They must stay with Him and learn of Him; only by this could they be prepared for what lay ahead for them. If they stayed with Him and succeeded in learning of Him He would feel justified in sending them

out when the time came. Their ministry would be to preach and exercise power in His name, and only in the intimacy of a closer relationship with Him could they learn to do that. They must learn of Him from Himself personally, their knowledge must not be secondhand, hearsay and supposition would not do; each one must acquire everything directly from Him by close observation of Him under all situations and conditions. How much they would learn! He was as fearless as He was gentle, as noble as He was brave, as loving as He was just; He had no weaknesses whatever, His life would stand the closest scrutiny; the nearer they came to Him the more wonderful He would become to them. He knew they would be amazed at most things and baffled by much that He did; but His love, He knew, would more than compensate for everything. They would find His grace more than sufficient for all the mystery and astonishment and all the hardships and fears, all the shame of their calling, would be touched by His glory; they would discover good and evil, but they would be taught the truth and necessity of it all by Him. When He finally sent them out to stand on their own among men and devils, the knowledge they had gained of Him and His ways would be all the assurance and authority they needed. He could not impart knowledge of Himself in the same way as He could bestow power upon them; that must be learned by each one individually before He sent them. His greatest concern was that the ignorant and the sick and the devil-possessed should be loved as He loved them; they must be handled aright and in the same way as He Himself would do it; souls must not be submitted to uncouth experimentation by men who had not properly learned of Him.

Even so the apostles' spiritual education would never be completed until they were exposed to unresolvable situations without Him being there. O how much they would learn on their own when they would have nothing more humanly tangible and recognizable of His presence with them than His name. Some things, such as baptism in water and personal recruitment of one disciple by another, He had allowed from the beginning; indeed from the commencement of His ministry it had been His policy to hand over all water baptism to His disciples under His personal supervision, but preaching and healing and deliverance He was not prepared to hand over to untrained and ignorant men. At some stage power had to pass into the hands of men or the kingdom of heaven, (which both John the Baptist and He Himself had announced as being at hand), could never reach all the people of the land. Hence His new move; the period of training must commence; the kingdom must be publicized everywhere and come within everybody's reach.

Whosoever shall do the Will of God.

As soon as this new move of the Lord came to people's notice it immediately met with opposition. He knew it would, it was bound to be misunderstood. It upset His friends, it upset His enemies and it upset His family (to say nothing of what the rest of His disciples thought and said); that He upset the devil goes without saying, He wanted to do that. He did not wish to upset His friends and dear ones though; that caused Him sorrow, but not second thoughts; it just had to happen. He never let the possibility of being misunderstood or maligned deter Him: this was part of the price He had to pay and His apostles had to consider it well, they too had, a price to pay. He did not expect anybody to understand Him much, not even His own family; they were concerned about Him, understandably enough; to them He seemed to be going too far altogether. In the beginning it had all been very thrilling, He was a wonder boy; those who had known Him throughout His life from infancy must have anticipated that at some time unusual things would be bound to happen to Him; they could not possibly have expected what did happen though. While He was a carpenter at Nazareth, apart from being the best carpenter there was, His life followed fairly predictable lines. But who could have foretold the events which took place at Jordan or foreseen the way things went from there on? What, for instance, was the explanation of His sudden departure from home for some unknown spot in the wilderness? What happened to Him there?

That was a turning point; from then on everything suddenly changed; to His family it was embarrassing and disconcerting. How could they justify His conduct to people in the village? It was most uncomfortable and unexplainable. How could an explanation be given to the neighbours about the men who kept turning up in the village and hanging about around His home? Then there was the incident in the synagogue; what He did there was good — it was surely right to cast out devils — but the claims He made! He nearly got Himself murdered over them; He was certain to run into trouble if He continued to say that kind of thing. The miracle at Cana of Galilee was terrific of course; they could

all bask in the reflected glory of that, Mary especially; it was a welcome relief from the tension and uncertainty of some of His other activities. But that was all ruined when He went up to Jerusalem; He created unimaginable, almost unforgivable, disturbances in the temple. He was so unpredictable, He knew very well that His behaviour would cause untold troubles, the temple was the Jews' most sacred shrine. Whatever was He thinking of? There seemed to be no restraining Him, yet where it would all end if He went on unchecked who could imagine? His friends felt they must do something about it.

The reports which came to their ears of His latest doings sounded rather alarming; He had spent all night in prayer on a mountain top with His disciples, and had decided that twelve of them should be with Him all the time. Whatever for? Had He formed a bodyguard? Was He going to do something desperate? Was He going to try and establish a kingdom and take over the government? Was He about to Stage a coup? What was in His mind? They were afraid for Him. Nationalism was good perhaps, but there had been others who had tried these things before and had perished. His friends were really concerned for Him; He had gone far enough, if not too far already, so they consulted together with His family, and decided they must act at once; the decision taken, they set out to try and restrain Him. They had no difficulty in finding Him; He was in some person's house and His chosen band was with Him. Thousands of people, it seemed, were hanging around the place hoping to see Him. They were so many that there was no time to eat and scarcely room to breathe; there was great excitement everywhere too, the pressure was tremendous, it was not natural. Everything the Nazarenes saw and heard made them more concerned; it was worse than they had thought, and they were more anxious for Him than ever; they pressed through the crowd until they reached Him. When at last they succeeded in getting through to Him, they were filled with dismay, and wondered if it had been worth the effort. What they found filled them with disappointment; their pleadings had no effect on Him at all, He was obviously beside Himself. The change that had come over Him was extraordinary; He was in the grip of something, He was like a man possessed. During the night something beyond natural explanation had undoubtedly happened to Him. They realized that they could do nothing; in their hearts they knew He was already beyond their powers of persuasion. They just had to leave Him.

They did right of course. Nothing seemed to touch Him; it never occurred to any of them that He was the epitome of the servant of the Lord spoken of by Isaiah: He was blind and deaf. They were blind and deaf to the fact that He refused to see and hear any of the signs and warnings they saw and heard, although they were plain enough for everybody to see and hear. Some scribes had come down from Jerusalem to investigate the position; these were knowing men and it was their pronounced opinion that He was possessed of a very powerful spirit named Beelzebub the prince of devils. That was why He could cast the devils out, they said Of course, that was the obvious reason; the scribes knew; if they didn't then who did? Jesus' friends were more worried than ever, but not so He; when the scribes' verdict came to His ears, as it was intended to, His response was to call them to Him and tell them a couple of simple stories. His purpose was transparently obvious. By those stories He showed the people exactly what He thought of the scribes and how ridiculously wrong they were. More seriously for them, they were perversely wrong. They felt so secure in their office, and believed that they were serving God and the people; but Jesus showed them that, in reality, they were serving satan; worse still, without knowing it, they were actually his slaves, held, imprisoned and in bonds in his house. The stories, so simply told and readily understandable, were thinly veiled descriptions of those scribes' own deadly condition. At the same time, so like Him, He was graciously telling them, and all who were listening to Him, that He had come to spoil satan's house and goods and that therefore there was hope for them; but they were not impressed. What they did not know then was that He had actually met satan earlier and had conquered and bound him in the privacy of the wilderness. Having done that, He found no difficulty in delivering human beings from lesser devils which had made their homes in them: the greater victory being achieved, the lesser skirmishes posed no problems to Him. Deliverance was no trouble to Him at all.

This was all very wonderful in the ears and eyes of all His well-wishers. Men and women who had benefitted from His ministry stood in and around that house that day thrilling to His words, and, despite their apprehensions, could not but join with His disciples and apostles and rejoice together with the people. They were still not without some degree of reserve though, especially when they heard His next solemn words: 'He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness but is in

danger of eternal damnation'. It was a greatly daring thing to say and obviously dangerous; everyone knew that the statement was specially directed at the scribes and all the group they represented. None who heard His words that day would ever be able to forget what He said; it seared the mind. He was making enemies by the minute, laying up wrath against Himself with almost every word He spoke — the day of reckoning must come! Yet how truly He spoke; though in many His words stirred up hatred, to many also they brought enlightenment and hope and comfort: only one sin was unforgivable. Only one? What a gospel! Be it ever so great, except for the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit there is no sin or blasphemy a man can commit that God will not forgive. From the moment a man or a woman realizes this wealth of generous love, he or she can never possibly think that Jesus has an unclean spirit. Those scribes were wicked men; they were clearly implying that Jesus was an unclean man possessed of an unclean spirit: they had to be exposed; but Jesus was more concerned with their peril than with their wickedness and folly. They were in danger of eternal damnation and that concerned Him greatly. He was not damning their souls to hell, but giving them most solemn warnings. His purpose was also to prove to the multitudes that their scribes were full of sin and totally unreliable guides to thought and opinion; to follow them was to endanger their own souls and perhaps believe themselves into hell with them.

By this time Jesus' mother and half-brothers had succeeded in finding their way through the crowds to within calling distance of Him. They too were worried about Him and had come to add their influence to the mounting weight of their friends' opinion. Did they not all care for Him and want Him to draw back before He went too far? It was very subtle, their last concerted attempt to get Him to come back home; it was now or never and they realized it, so did He. Whether or not they had all heard the recent exchanges we cannot tell, but if so Mary of all people knew that her Jesus did not have an unclean spirit. She must also have known deep down inside that the family's attempt that day would be useless; theirs was a hopeless cause; He would never come home again, they were spending their energies in vain. Mary knew who He was; it was natural that she wanted to speak with Him. But about what? Nothing she could say would deter Him from His mission. She knew He was the man of destiny and that she might as well try to remove God from His throne as try to hold her son back or turn Him off course. He had already made clear to her what her position was when He had spoken to her in Galilee at the wedding. 'Woman what have I to do with thee?' He had asked her, and she had not been able to answer Him; there was nothing to say, there was still nothing to say. She stood outside the house with her sons and called Him. She called Him, her sons called Him, the multitude called Him, they all called Him — 'Jesus' — but He was deaf to their call; whoever sought to call Him from His commitment sought in vain; to them and their call He was as a dead man.

What lessons those chosen apostles learned from their Lord that day! What a beginning to their apostleship. Who among us can tell what thoughts went through their minds and how greatly their lives were affected by it all? What a Man He was; what an example He was of all He taught, and what methods He used! He taught them no theory and no doctrine, He gave them no class lesson, He turned them to no book; everything was by demonstration, they only had to look and listen; it was the most perfect beginning any company of men could possibly have. From dawn to dusk, in the mountains or on the plain, among the multitudes or in the house, it was a day of contact with God and the crowds, with little or no sleep and no chance to rest. They had been totally without food, yet they were brim-full of life and energy; it was a revelation to them. From the beginning those men were given the opportunity to see what apostleship could mean for them in terms of hard work — full days of twenty-four hours spent in ceaseless labours among the multitudes for God, utterly forgetful of self. They took stock of everything: the blasphemies, the inclusiveness and exclusiveness of forgiveness, all He had said about satan and Himself and the Holy Spirit. What a solemn warning that had been, and so necessary; it was so terrible that the Lord never repeated it. They were grateful for everything, but perhaps to them the most wonderful thing about it all was what He said to the multitude in their presence about His mother and His brethren and themselves. They could scarcely believe their ears when they heard Him say, 'Who is my mother or my brethren?' and then looked round on themselves as they sat about Him: 'Behold my mother and my brethren,' He said. 'Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and my sister and mother' — everyone was astounded! It was wonderful music in the ears of the apostles though; it sounded to them as though He regarded them as being His family. Whatever effect His words had on the family and friends from Nazareth, the truth so loved by Jesus must have come over very clearly to the apostles. They felt they had been called and chosen to do the will of God;

His family only exists for that purpose, it consists only of men as they were meant to be, doing the things they were meant to do.

There was never quite such a day as that day. Many months later, towards the end of His earthly life, the Lord said to those same men that time would come when they would wish to see again one of the days of the Son of Man: He did not promise that the opportunity would ever be granted them, nor did He specify any particular day; He just left the idea with them. Whether or not the opportunity to express their ideas ever arose we do not know, He simply sowed the suggestion in their minds and left it at that. Perhaps, given the opportunity, some may have cited this very first wonderful day of trainee apostleship as the best. It was certainly a most unusual one, beginning with their calling and ordination and ending with their inclusion by the Lord into His family. How deliberately He did it. To Him, if they would do God's will, they were more than apostles, they were brother, sister and mother and all to Him also. Did it really mean He had switched His loyalties and allegiance from His earthly family to them? He had certainly left His own flesh and blood for them; not that He had joined them to Himself and to each other yet, He had not. They did not exist as a body of men until He formed them around Himself; they were His close friends and companions now though. It was a most wonderful and satisfying experience to hear Him speak as though they were His closest relatives. Soon however the same test would come to them; when it did would they leave their own flesh and blood for Him as He had for them? They did not know He was leading them up to the critical decision which, at present, lay hidden from them in the near future. So much turned on those words, 'Whosoever shall do the will of God'. None but those who do God's will are in the family of God.

All biblical authors who write of this theme are clear on this point; as clear as Jesus. This is why the Lord included Mary and her sons by her husband Joseph in His statement: it was an ideal moment for Him to introduce the subject of the relationship God had in mind. Mary was His mother simply because she did God's will, that is all. Mary's great claim to fame is that, given the opportunity, she willed to do God's will and yielded up her all that it should be accomplished in her. There were other factors involved in this of course: she had to be a virgin, she must be of the household and lineage of David; she had to belong to a certain generation also. However, apart from being a virgin (which was not uncommon among unmarried women in those days) and submitting her will to God, she had nothing to do with what happened to her. The other qualifications were bestowed upon her by heredity; as far as she had anything to do with it they were providential blessings rather than virtues. Her chief virtue lay in her obedience to the will of God, which implied her willingness to forego marriage if that was the price. Every generation will call her blessed because she yielded to God's desires and co-operated with Him to achieve His immediate purpose. Thereby she became an instrument of His love and the handmaid of His good pleasure. Jesus loved His mother, He did not snub her that day; on the contrary He publicly honoured and exalted her. The only thing that could possibly be wrong about it was people's misunderstanding of His remarks and their consequent misinterpretations of His attitude towards His mother. She knew though; Mary understood. Everybody thought that Jesus was a member of her family, and although she had consistently denied it, by all the laws of nature according to men's thinking He was; but He was not. Everybody was wrong; it was entirely the reverse: Jesus was not a member of Mary's family, Mary was a member of His family. By consenting and co-operating with God to be Jesus' mother she did the will of God and thereby qualified to become Jesus' sister; it was so simple and yet so real.

Wonderful as it was, this was not the only reason why Jesus talked about His sister when speaking to His apostles about doing the will of God. He was very intent to make them see that not only Mary but others also, whether male or female, could become His fellow-helpers in the family of God. To those apostles it came perhaps as the greatest revelation of the day: 'Whosoever shall do the will of God': they had been greatly privileged and mightily blessed, but privileges and blessings were not thereby made exclusive to them; blessings abound for all who will fulfil the conditions. They had that morning given themselves over for just that purpose, and had been specially ordained by the Lord unto it. Consequently they had witnessed enough in one day to know that it was not going to be easy; however, undeterred by that, they were determined to go through with it. They could not help but have noticed though that Jesus had quite definitely refrained from using the past tense. Doing the will of God had to be a living experience; He did not say, 'Whosoever has done', but 'Whosoever shall do'. Neither did He say, 'Whosoever shall do the will of God as Mary did'; He did not put their action into the living

present extending into the future, and hers into the thirty year old past. He did not want them to think in those terms, lest they should rely on some past act and pin their faith about themselves to that. He meant them to look at Him, not her, and understand His remark to mean, 'Whosoever shall do the will of God as I have done and am doing and shall forever do'. Did Mary hear what He said? If she did, what did she think when she heard Him use the tense which indicated the living present? She had responded so splendidly in the past, but why was she there that day? Had she come with intention to restrain the son whom she knew she ought not to attempt to restrain (Him or anyone else) from doing God's will? If that was her intention she was reproved for it, but O so gently. He praised her. He exalted her to a position which in His heart His apostles also held, no higher and no lower. The apostles could have learned such glorious lessons of love from Him, had their understanding been quickened and their ears opened to hear. He was not only training them to deal with enemies, but also teaching them how to handle dear ones and friends, and cope with these strong family ties which could so easily bind them and nullify their call.

Chapter 3 — THE KEY TO ALL PARABLES

The King in His Kingdom

The next session of training through which the Lord took the apostles, although seemingly of a different nature altogether, was really the next in series on the same theme. He chose a different location and taught them other things, but did not vary the underlying message. This time He wanted to give them a lesson about people at large, so He took them down to the seashore. The first day's ministry started in secret on a mountain top; the second commenced at sea level in public; the point of both was to show that He was sovereign Lord of all. The surroundings were familiar enough to them; He chose the spot very carefully in order to achieve the maximum effect. As usual the people in their multitudes came flocking to the shore, pressing in upon the apostolic band till, by sheer weight of numbers, they were forced further and further out to the water's edge. Something had to be done, so the Lord did it, He entered with His apostles into one of the ships beached there and pushed offshore a little, leaving the crowds standing on the land. It was a natural as well as a convenient thing to do; the ship proved a most convenient pulpit, but it was also the beginning of an adroit manoeuvre. What no one but the Lord knew was that He had engineered it all; the act was parabolic. He had set the scene for what He wanted to teach everybody, not least His chosen apostles. Sitting there in the boat with them, He was not only as a Son among brethren, He was also as a king enthroned in His kingdom surrounded by His courtiers, reigning over them and above the whole sea of humanity. Having established this position He started teaching the people the truth about themselves.

I Speak to Them in Parables

Everyone who had ears to hear would learn much that day; but He specially wanted His apostles to listen very closely to Him. As usual He turned to His favourite method of teaching when speaking to the multitudes and used a parable; it was important to everybody that He should get His meaning across understandably. The situation was ideally suited to His purpose, all except the little company in the ship were on the land. He wanted to reveal to the multitudes some secrets concerning the kingdom; conditions were just right. He began to open up the truth they ought to know about themselves in relation to the kingdom, so He began to talk about ground, upon which all but thirteen of them were standing. If they had ears to hear they could not miss His meaning or fail to grasp that He was talking to them about themselves. As the story unfolded they learned that they were being classified into four distinct groups, and that a sower was sowing His seed among them with a view to reaping a harvest from His labours; they learned also that He knew there would be four different results from His labours.

This parable was the first of eight which the Lord told in course of unfolding the progress of the gospel and the development of the kingdom throughout the age of grace. Matthew later wrote down seven of these parables in running sequence in his Gospel, but omitted the eighth. John omits all of them; Luke intersperses his Gospel with a selection of them, while, in his record, Mark includes the first and the eighth. Neither of these two last-mentioned writers was among the chosen apostles at the time the parables were told. It is most instructive to note the different ways in which those writers approached their business of recording the gospel of Christ. They are each so refreshingly different, setting down

the truth in an order suited to their purpose under the Holy Spirit and quite deliberately are not self-explanatory. Mark's commission with regard to the Lord's life and ministry at this juncture was twofold: (1) to record how the Lord used the so-called parable of the sower to teach His apostles the difference there is between people, and (2) to make clear the distinction between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God. Matthew spoke almost exclusively of the kingdom of heaven, but not so Mark; he spoke exclusively of the kingdom of God. He also records something the Lord said which both Matthew and Luke omit, but which shows that the Lord regarded this parable to be of immense importance. He practically said that if they did not know what He meant by this parable they would not understand any other parable: this then is a key parable.

The eighth parable which accompanies the so-called parable of the sower in Mark's Gospel is a very brief story on the same theme; its importance is quite out of proportion to its size. The Lord's estimation of it is revealed by His first utterance 'so is the kingdom of God'. To gain fullest benefit from it, this parable must be added to its larger companion in relation to which it is in the nature of a postscript. It was added by the Lord to give everybody clearer understanding of what He had already said. He longed that His apostles should fully grasp and understand what He was talking about; it was vital that they should be able to distinguish between various kinds of people and how to teach them and to know in what the kingdom of God really consists. It was during this session that the apostles asked Him about His teaching methods. He was the master of the parabolic method, but why did He use it so much? He answered this question by referring to the words God spoke to Isaiah the prophet, thereby corroborating the genuineness of Isaiah, and at the same time assuring His apostles that by telling parables He was fulfilling God's word and explaining His meaning.

The remnant of Israel to whom He had been sent were behaving in exactly the same way as their forebears to whom Isaiah was sent. They were gathering in their multitudes listening to the One they verily believed to be the prophet of the Lord; their hearts were waxing fat on it, their minds were being fed with new ideas and they thought it was all very wonderful. They did not know that their eyes were being blinded by what they saw, and that they were being made deaf by what they heard. Constant hearing of the word and partaking of material benefits, without recognition of who Jesus is and what He is teaching, dulls the understanding. The more they came and listened to Jesus, their popular preacher, without totally responding to God, the worse they became; it was inevitable — such is the law governing human responsibility in the kingdom of heaven in respect of hearing the gospel. The very fact that He constantly called Himself the Son of Man should have alerted them to truth, for, just like Ezekiel in his day, the Lord was becoming to this people as nothing more than a lovely song. With penetrating analysis Jesus later said of His generation that they were like children sitting in the market place playing their music and singing to one another; they loved it, but it was not real, and they were damning their own souls. His descriptive parables and His remarks about them were proven true; it is a very responsible thing to hear the word of the Lord; men's destinies are settled by their attitude towards it.

The Lord was careful also to make a clear distinction between His close associates and those who were without (as He described them). He did not forsake people because they were without, neither did He force them to remain there; He did come though to make clear to all men just who were without and why they were there. One of the reasons why God sent Him was that God might be justified in the sight of all. But although Jesus told and explained some of His parables exclusively in the presence of His apostles, He did not tell them primarily for their sake. They heard them of course, but it was not His main purpose to teach the apostles by parables. He told them that it was given to them to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; they were not to regard themselves as belonging to the company that were without; they were in, they had been chosen. How much benefit they had gained at that juncture from their privilege it is difficult to estimate. It seems they had only a little grasp of truth then, and had not yet come to the full knowledge of who the Son of Man really was, but they were being taught of God and were learning all the time. They recognized their ignorance and were willing to admit it, and did not hesitate to ask the Lord to interpret to them a parable if they did not grasp its meaning. Although they had been given to know, they had not yet arrived at the realization of that knowledge, and did not know the mystery of the kingdom of God as they one day would when born of God. Nevertheless they were with God's King in the kingdom of heaven on earth as it was manifest at that time, and were eager to learn. They had ears to hear and wanted to be taught, so they approached

Him with confidence and asked Him to tell them what was the unrevealed meaning hidden in the parable of the sower; they wanted to know what He was saying to them. Who was the sower? What was the seed? And what did the different grounds represent?

The Heavenly Sower

They were familiar enough with the types of ground He introduced into His story and the results of sowing or trying to sow seed on them. They also knew that no one deliberately sowed seed on wayside ground; no man scattered seed just to feed birds; every farmer's purpose is to reap a harvest; all that was simple. But who was this sower? What sower was this that deliberately sowed seed on wayside or stony or thorny ground? None of the three synoptists say who the sower was, for the simple reason that the Lord did not name him. The reason for the anonymity of the sower is that he could be anybody; in the context of the parable and His purpose in telling it, the sower can be any man sent by God with the seed. It is assumed by most interpreters that the Lord was referring to Himself; so He was, but not exclusively. The assumption is based upon the Lord's interpretation of the parable of the wheat and the tares, which is the second in the series of the parables of the kingdom of heaven recorded by Matthew. The thing that should be noted is that the Lord very carefully and significantly did not say He was the sower upon the first occasion, He only identified Himself as being one of the sowers in the so-called parable of the wheat and the tares.

By the strict logic of ordered thought, this first parable should not be called the parable of the sower, and for that matter neither should the second parable, which more properly should be called the parable of the sowers. The fact is that, in the kingdom of heaven on earth, there are two main sowers, namely Christ and Satan, and two main subsidiary groups of sowers — saints and demons, or if it be preferred, Christ's agents and the devil's agents. Herein lies one of the main distinctions between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God on earth. In the kingdom of God enemy agents cannot sow their seed; the only one who sows seed in the kingdom of God is God. That He does sow seed in the kingdom of heaven also is unavoidable; it is not possible for Him to do otherwise, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth. But Satan cannot sow the seed in God's kingdom; it is exclusively God's sphere of operation. When thinking in terms of the kingdom of God, the more proper approach to reproduction of the seed is to consider the planting of God's seed, not the sowing of it. Mary is the example of this, not a farmer's field. When God sows His seed it is definite, pointed, personal and productive; it is always sown in good ground. Although God seems to mix His metaphors in teaching, He does not mix or confuse His truth thereby. Happy indeed is the man who knows wisdom and gets understanding; where others grope in darkness, he shall see; when others only guess, he shall know. When once the mind, clear from traditional interpretations, passes into the mind of Christ and the consistent truth of God, it becomes obvious that in this first parable the Lord was not directing the apostles' attention to the sower but to the ground. The sower is the same throughout, so is the seed (it should be noted here that Mark does not mention the word seed; Luke does and so does Matthew, but only in the interpretation; the word 'seeds' in the parable is only introduced by the translators). It is the ground that is so different. This is the point the Lord is stressing here, and He is doing it for His apostles' sake, that they should go out to minister to men with understanding; this is Mark's concern.

In a comparatively short while those apostles were to be sent out to become sowers, and the Lord wished them to have proper regard to the word they were going to sow: it was good. Throughout the entire sowing over all kinds of ground the seed would be the same, but they must understand that it would not produce equal results in every place, or among all peoples. They were not to be surprised at the different responses with which they would meet, things would be no different for them than for Him. Further, they were neither to be particularly over-elated nor greatly disappointed at the results they may or may not achieve; these would depend very much, though not entirely, upon the people to whom they preached. The parable is a commonsense analysis of all mankind for the purposes of gospel preaching and, as may be expected, seeing that it is the Lord who made the analysis, it is a brilliant one. The Master Sower makes plain that public preaching is to be regarded as broadcast scattering of seed; it must be sown everywhere, almost indiscriminately. As a whole men should be regarded in much the same way as a farmer would regard different kinds of ground; the Lord defines four kinds — wayside, stony, thorny and good. From these respectively, according to His classification, four different kinds of results should be observed and may confidently be expected.

The Lord sought to make this clear to the apostles during His interpretation of the parable by a sudden and most unexpected shift of emphasis from that which was sown to that on which it was sown; this switch in emphasis is a very important one indeed. Why He did this appears at first sight to be a mystery, for it is unexplained, yet it is most pointed and quite deliberate. He knew it would be mystifying of course, but by doing this the Lord was ensuring that, when they went out to preach, the devil should not be able to gain an advantage over them. Part of the message He was giving them was 'do not be deceived into judging yourselves or doubting the quality of the word you preach by the apparent results you obtain'; what an important truth this is. He knew that this mistake could so easily be made by every preacher of the word and become a stumbling-block leading to their downfall. When they went out to sow they would not only be in competition with the devil, but up against the natures of men as well; besides this, they could also become victims of their own over-confidence; all these are dangers which must be avoided. What an important move the Lord made then, in keeping those men with Him during those days; it must have been a very formative time. The truth of this parable must be proved among themselves, they must learn to test their own hearts; first they must discover their own responses to His word; in a sense they would be their own teachers. He had chosen them in love in order to use them in His kingdom, but they also were ground upon which to prove the truths He wanted them to impart to others. The office of apostle is a very high one, carrying with it responsibility greater than men can normally bear. He was going to send them out to preach the gospel, and He knew that to the people they would unavoidably represent Him; that was absolutely unpreventable, and He did not wish to prevent it, therefore they, as He, must be greater than their task. His work would be tested at last by His choice of men for companionship and office; on the human side He was staking all on them. They did not know that then, but He did: His reputation, His kingdom, His Church, the validity of His choice and the whole of the future was bound up with those men. To Him they were of far more importance than any of the miracles which either He or they wrought, or any words that could be spoken.

He Himself was the Word, and had been in the beginning, but He had to become flesh in order to validate the Word. He had been kept back with God ages before He was sent, and likewise He kept His apostles back with Him as long as he could before He sent them out; their course of training was to be an intense one, they must learn and learn fast. The hearing of the word is the real secret of it all; it is the way people hear the word, their attitude towards it and the attention they pay to it, which counts. The state of the heart, the disposition of the spirit towards God is most important, and whether or not men will listen and pay attention; above all whether they believe and receive the word of God: this is the deciding factor. The key word to the parable is receive this is what the shift of emphasis indicates.

From the Lord's interpretation of the parable it was obvious that He had two other very important things in mind, namely association and identification. With certain types of people He only associates the preached word; with some He both associates and identifies it. It is very important for everybody in the world to know this, for He makes the distinction between people solely upon their rejection or reception of the word they hear. This is a most solemn thing to know; there are scarcely any more important things to know in the world than this. Whatever response a man makes to God's word, and however he regards it, it is a seed, and he is for ever after associated with it and held responsible for it. He may reject it and let some airy creature snatch it away, but he cannot disassociate himself from it; in God's mind he is associated with the word and by that reaction to it he is classified. The wayside ground is Christ's description of a hard man's momentary fancy, a passing interest; it matters nothing to him that God has spoken, he does not receive it; he is a fool. The stony ground is the shallow man who, to a degree, receives the word of God and then lets it die within him; he will not give all his heart, only some of it, and that only superficially. As soon as things get too hot for this man he withers away and dies; the seed has root in itself and rests in him awhile, living on itself, but it never did take root in him at all, he never allowed it to do so. This man has no roots in himself, he cannot stand alone, his roots are always in others, trying to draw from them all the time. He was not so hard on the surface as the wayside hearer, but he was just as hard underneath. It is a terrible thing to kill the word of God within the heart. The thorny ground is the man who grows up alongside his brethren as green as they; he is not hardhearted as Mr. Wayside and Mr. Stony, he is good and tender and has plenty of depth and is well rooted. This man is full of promise but never full of fruit; he is also full of thorns; to the sower he is the sorriest tragedy, perhaps more of a tragedy than either of the other two, for he seemed so promising. What went wrong with him? This is the man who receives the word of God right

enough, but receives other things as well — the 'broad-minded' man. Such men are strange mixtures, very fruitful in all the things they receive, except that which is God's, and the thorns flourish and bring forth fruit after their kind, but God's word is choked to death.

Having dealt with the three different grounds of fruitlessness and death, the Lord turned to the fourth ground. Of all the four this is the only ground of life, and it must have given Him great pleasure to speak of it: 'these are they which are sown on good ground'. Listening to Him it must have seemed to His hearers that He was intending them to reverse the roles of the word and the ground. Was He in reality saying that not the person but the word of God is the true ground of Life and should be preached that way? Instead of thinking that men were the ground, should they think that men are the seed and that they should therefore plant themselves in the word they hear? If so the whole of their thinking must undergo a complete revolution — and what a revolution! How were they to understand the whole of the parable? Were they to think about the ground of death in the same way as He now seemed to be suggesting about the good ground? Is it true that the word of God and not the seed should be thought of as ground? The answer is 'Yes' and 'No', it is both. Jesus was both Son of Man and Son of God and He always spoke from that position. He always saw things from both viewpoints, that is why He could tell stories full of human meaning which rang true in the ears of men, and yet at the same time invest them with the meanings of God so that they rang true to Him also. This was Christ's genius and in this parable it shines through very powerfully indeed. Above all He wanted His apostles to be able to think as He thought, and live and speak and act as He did in the kingdom of God on this earth: to be able to do so was God's gift to them.

This is what the Lord meant and was really speaking about when He said it is given to you to know the mystery. He never hid the fact that it is mystery, human being and nature is a mystery because it came from God who is Himself a mysterious being. To understand Christ's interpretation we must go back to the beginning of creation: in the beginning we read, all was God, God and His word only. God spoke, saying, 'Let the dry land appear,' and it happened; the word, by His intention, became the ground — the word was the ground. That is how it was at first. Then He spoke again saying 'Let the earth bring forth ...', and the ground brought forth every manner of growing thing standing upon its own roots in the earth — tree, herb, grass etc., bearing fruit and seed in itself. This time His Word was seed: first it was the ground, then it was the seed or the plant. So we see the truth from which Jesus spoke and something of the mystery of the kingdom of God. The mystery of God's kingdom is the mystery of God Himself. John, who hardly gives space in his Gospel to parables, reveals the Source of all parables and the key to them (especially this one) in one brief phrase, 'In the beginning ... the Word was God'. Almost before getting started on his own Gospel he gives the key to all the Gospels and their contents. The Lord based His parable upon the miracle of Himself, who was the Word and Seed made flesh. His apostles must attain unto this understanding; the importance of seeing this principle of eternal truth cannot be overestimated; to grasp this is to possess a key to God's method of working. This is why He introduced these elements of truth into the parable of the ground, and why He should say, so mysteriously, that this parable is in the nature of a key. Many locks to the understanding of truth will yield to this key, and many doors will be opened up once this principle is mastered.

The Ground of the Kingdom

The Lord's deliberate move was to bring everything back to 'as it was in the beginning'. The truth is, and always has been, that men are the seed and the word is the ground. In terms of the parable this ideal state can only be achieved by men who: (1) receive the word of God; (2) associate themselves with it, and (3) thoroughly identify themselves with it, letting it take root deep in their hearts; that is the first stage. Then when the word has taken hold in a man everything will change, the word will become the ground of life and he the seed, deeply rooted in the word of God which is in him. Life will then become the expression of the word which is preached to him in order that it should become the ground of life; when the genuine identification has taken place the true identity will be recognized and established.

This is why the 'postscript' parable is so valuable, it is by way of being a final footnote to the parable of the ground and is the reason why the Lord deemed it necessary to add it. Matthew follows up his version of the parable with the parable of the sowers and their seeds, which is mostly known as the parable of the wheat and the tares. In this story there is no talk of different kinds of ground; the whole world is just one field and the ground is man, humankind is the same the world over. The emphasis the

Lord is making in this particular parable is that the sowers are different, so are the seeds. But in this little postscript parable recorded by Mark, except in one thing, the Lord takes a different course from that entirely. At first they may seem very much the same, for in both He speaks of one ground only, but, although they are akin, they are not alike; the ground is not the same.

In this small parable the Lord is taking up again part of the truth to which He drew attention in the first parable; He wants to talk further about the good ground, but not in the same way. His subject here is good ground, God's ground; He is speaking of the kingdom of God exclusively. There is nothing wrong with the ground, there is nothing wrong with the seed, there are no birds, no stones, no thorns, the ground is not shallow; everything is right, so everything follows its normal course. The man spoken of sows his ground and then carries on his ordinary living; he goes to bed at night and rises up next day; it is all very simple and straightforward. No enemy has sown his ground with bad seed, nobody has uprooted his crop. What else should a man expect? If anyone had asked him 'How is it that you have such marvellous results? How do you do it? What is the secret? He might have said, 'I don't know, I cannot tell you, I didn't do it — all I did was sow the seed, the ground has done the rest. The seed was good of course, I only use the best, it is such a good piece of ground that it brings forth fruit of itself'. It seems that the man almost regarded the ground as a woman, a wife, a mother, and he himself as the husband, and in a sense he was right; he was the husbandman, he had married himself to her. Mother earth had brought forth his seed; she did it herself. All he had to do was to carry on normally, and when the fruit was ripe he put in the sickle and the harvest came. What a lovely little story! 'So is the kingdom of God,' says Jesus. It is paradisiac.

This is the knowledge of the kingdom of God which His apostles had to acquire; they could, for it was given to them to do so. God's kingdom is one hundred percent good, there are no wayside places in it, there is no stony ground, thorns do not grow there, neither are there any tares in it. Enemies may try to contaminate it, but their seeds do not take root there. All men must know this, apostles especially. In the kingdom of heaven it is different, many things contrary to God's word abound there, but not in the kingdom of God; when a man is planted in His kingdom all is safe and all is good and all is well. But we must also know that in whichever kingdom a man may live every seed will produce its own fruit; although all the seeds are equally good, they do not all produce equal results. The Lord pointed this out in the longer parable. He said that, even in the good ground, some produce thirtyfold, some sixtyfold and some a hundredfold. At first this seems very surprising; isn't all the seed the same after all? Is some of the seed inferior? Has some less potential than others? Are there three grades of seed? Questions multiply! The answer to all these questions is 'NO'. There is no difference in the seed whatsoever; the word of God never varies in quality.

The basis of the explanation of this seeming anomaly lies in a word found in Hebrews chapter four, the writer is speaking of the gospel which was preached to Israel. He reminds his readers that the same gospel was preached to them also, and then says, 'But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it'. He speaks it as a warning; for the same reason we too, although we be the children of God, can fail of the grace of God. Although we may be good seed in good ground — the very best — unless we live by faith ever after, that is by faith of the same nature and fulness as that by which we become children of God in the beginning, we shall not bring forth the fulness of fruit we ought. In all the seed there is potential for a hundredfold, and we must so order our lives that we achieve that fulness, ever remembering that the harvest is God's.

Everything God speaks to us is packed full with one hundred percent potential. Growing in His kingdom, grace our natural atmosphere, love our sunshine, true doctrine dropping as rain or distilling as dew upon us and the winds of the Spirit moving us, there is nothing to prevent us from being abundantly fruitful to God our creator. From the Lord's remarks it becomes clear that, in the realm of fruitfulness, so much depends upon us. The measure of attention we pay to what He says is a determinative factor in God's kingdom. The measure of desire is immense, but that is not the measure God means; capacity for desire is limitless, and hope is just as boundless, but the measure God fills is the measure of faith. Growth and fruitfulness are determined by faith. If we do not use it faith will be taken from us, the devil will rob us of it. The seed must continue in the good ground by its own roots, but it must not rest from growth, it must fulfil the law of its own nature or perish. We have faith and all that comes with it, and live in all those gifts, the Lord will give us more, He says.

Chapter 4 — WHAT MANNER OF MAN IS THIS?

Miracle on the Sea

Listening to Him telling His parables to the multitudes and then hearing Him expounding them privately in their own ears, the apostles must have felt the most privileged people on the earth; they were. It had been a wonderful day, packed with excitement and marvellous ministry; their hearts were full of love and thankfulness, and, as night drew on, they contemplated a joyous evening. Full of pleasure the apostles were looking forward to a time of peace and quiet, a place of rest somewhere together with the Lord; but it was not to be. The Lord thought otherwise, 'Let us pass over unto the other side', He said.

Already the light was fading, shadows were growing long with approaching sunset; night was drawing on, and they knew that to set out now would mean that they would certainly finish their journey in the dark. Nevertheless, disappointed though they may have been, hearing the Lord's wish they set aside their own feelings, helped Him send the crowds home, and prepared for departure. When all was done to His satisfaction they took Him as He was into the ship and set sail into the coming night. Not surprisingly a little flotilla of small boats, filled with people bent on following Jesus wherever He went, set sail with them. It is not clear how far those little boats went; whether they did any more than accompany the Lord a little from the shore as a gesture of goodwill, and then returned to land, or whether they continued with Him right out to sea is not revealed. Apart from one reference to these persons, nothing more is said about them or their purposes or what happened to them, they remain unknown; the story continues with the Lord and His apostles.

Jesus was tired, it had been a long hard day, He had been teaching and answering questions almost non-stop for hours, so now, with the relaxing of the pressures, helped by the rocking of the ship, He succumbed to nature's demands and fell asleep: the apostles sailed on in the failing light, unaware of what lay ahead, but conscious that it was getting very dark. The night came on suddenly, it was darker than usual — too dark for their liking, and the wind was picking up incredibly fast. Gale force winds began to blow, and soon thick storm clouds began to build up overhead; visibility became nil, and all normal light was blotted out. Many of those men knew that sea; they were experienced fishermen who had lived on it, and by it, day and night since childhood; all the signs filled them with apprehension, and when, within minutes, the storm broke, they knew what it meant. The little ship was helpless. Mountainous waves drove in upon them almost washing them overboard; winds tore at the rigging, and the ship tossed and yawed and dipped about uncontrollably; every moment they were threatened with death. The apostles were desperately afraid. Men of the sea though many of them were, they were helpless; this was no ordinary storm, they had never been in anything like it before, it was terrifying and, incredible though it seemed, Jesus was asleep. It was unbelievable. How could He sleep through this? It wasn't natural! Could a man be so tired that He could sleep through such a storm? They were astounded by it; there was something strange about this. How was it possible?

The question they ought to have been asking themselves was not 'how?' but 'why?' Jesus was not sleeping simply because He was tired — they were all tired, but threat of drowning drives all possibility of sleep away from human hearts; they could not sleep. How could He? He seemed completely undisturbed. They were baffled; surely they were beholding a miracle. Their Lord was sleeping the sleep of eternal security; He was entirely unaffected by outward circumstances, sublimely indifferent to them, and seemingly ignorant of their need, He was completely at rest. What an example, what a lesson! He was in the same boat in the same storm as they were: He felt absolutely secure, they were dreadfully afraid. But neither the storm nor exhaustion was His prime reason for staying asleep; sleeping through a storm in a boat in the midst of the sea was not a habit of His, and it was neither the time nor the place to commence the practice. He was sleeping with purpose. For Him everything was going according to plan, and nothing devil or man or wind or water could do could alter that. He knew what was happening; in fact it was what He wanted to happen — the devil was trying to break His men, and through them to break Him, so He stayed asleep.

He knew it would be a terrible trial for the apostles, but He was confident of them and even more confident of His Father. All unknown to the apostles, He was continuing their education, and the lesson, though unannounced, was still the kingdom of God. Strangely enough His sleep was the main

part of the lesson, though they could scarcely believe it; that sleep was surely the most supreme demonstration of His power possible to imagine; it was also a revelation of His utter contempt for the devil. The raging elements were as much a manifestation of satan's hysterical frustration at being so humiliatingly ignored, as of his hatred and malice against the apostles; it was also a demonstration of the basic conflict existing between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of satan in the universe.

The Lord's object was to teach the apostles the way to handle the situation whenever they were involved in a skirmish with their enemy. It may seem more than ridiculous to say so, but those men should have joined Jesus in sleep. That was impossible to them of course, they were incapable of it and He knew that; nevertheless, amazing though it was, it did not deter Him from showing them the truth. The devil's ragings could not touch Him in Himself; they left Him unperturbed. Being an apostle as well as they, He was showing them how an apostle should conduct himself when all hell was raging in the kingdom of heaven and satan seems to be reigning and not God. The difference between what was presently happening and His former method of teaching was that now He was using natural elements as a demonstration of spiritual elements. Those men really were being given a proper training.

His method was still parabolic, only this time He was not making up stories as illustrations of truth, but using elemental forces instead, and, out of necessity, the apostles were caught up with Him in the vortex of it all. They didn't like it one little bit; they loved His stories but, O dear, sometimes they were afraid of His demonstrations; He never turned from His purposes because of that though. Only a few hours earlier He had told them of the man who sowed seed in his ground and then went home to bed; it was quite natural, there was nothing unusual about that, all farmers did it. The man was sure of his seed and sure of his ground and sure of himself; he obviously saw no reason at all why he should lose any sleep. That was exactly how Jesus felt in that ship; He was as confident of His apostles and the seed He had sown as the man was of his ground and the seed he had sown. The apostles were not aware of these things, and certainly did not share His confidence, but their insecurity did not change Him.

It was not the storm that brought the fear to their hearts; the storm only revealed what was already there. They did not know what was happening, but He did; as the present grows out of the past, so are present events made necessary by past happenings; in this case they were engineered to illustrate the truth they had heard. Those men were beginning to discover the price of apostleship. He had told them that it was given to them to know the things of the kingdom of God, and that they had been chosen for that purpose, but they did not understand what that meant in terms of personal cost. They would never have come to the knowledge of the kingdom and have been able to understand what He meant and why He did such things unless they were put in circumstances where they could prove the existence and power of it for themselves. The lesson was tough; it was a hard way to learn, but the Teacher was unrelenting.

To a certain extent they had been good ground. With the exception of Judas Iscariot they had each received the Lord's good seed and were going through a growing period. Many stones and thorns had yet to be removed from their hearts, but, of the twelve, in the end only Judas proved to be wayside ground from whom the devil snatched away the seed. The others received it and were now being shown what Jesus had meant when He had talked about having root in themselves. At the same time they were also being shown something of what it meant to be good seed planted in the good ground of the kingdom. The Lord was confident of them, for although the kingdom of God had not yet come, in His heart He had planted them there, and nothing could uproot them; they were safe, as safe as He. He knew of course that they were nearly frantic with fear, but that was only because of ignorance; not yet being planted in the kingdom experientially, they had not yet learned to live by knowledge of the powers of the kingdom of God. So, despite their mental pain and total misunderstanding of His purpose, quite conscious also of the sense of impending doom gripping their hearts, He slept on.

A Greater than Noah

The apostles tried everything they knew, but without success; the devil also tried all he knew, equally without success — the situation was at deadlock. Nothing fatal happened. The wind howled more, the terrifying mountains of water towered higher and higher, the ship was rent and torn by unimaginable forces, but still it did not shatter or sink. It tossed and pitched and filled fuller and fuller with water, but all in vain; the devil's rage and might were in vain, the ship was still afloat. The Son of Man and

His fellows were being held firm by the will of God in His kingdom; with Christ in the vessel nothing could sink them.

The apostles did not know that then, they only saw it by hindsight; it was marvellous in retrospect, but it was terrible at the time. With furies howling through the rigging and terrors filling their hearts, they could stand no more of it, and were driven at last to wake the Lord. Perhaps they thought they were saving Him from a watery grave, and certainly they thought it about themselves! 'Master, carest thou not that we perish?' they cried, and immediately He was awake. That too astounded them; it was uncanny. Was there no end to the complexities of His character? Rising to His feet at their call, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still', and it happened: immediately the wind ceased, the seas sank and there was a great calm. It was almost unbelievable, as unbelievable as His sleep had been to them previously. Absolute stillness, not a movement, not a sound; with all nature they waited, and in the silence He spoke again — 'Why are ye so fearful?' He said, 'how is it that ye have no faith?' To Him the mystery was not the storm or the miracle, but why they had no faith after all they had previously seen and heard and been through with Him. Gradually it dawned on them that, far from feeling fearful, He had not seen any reason for fear, and strangely that made them more dreadfully afraid than ever. 'What manner of man is this?', they said one to another, 'even the wind and the sea obey him,' they whispered and floated on in the calm.

The apostles were frightened men. They had been in terrible storms before, but although this one had been frightening in the extreme, the Lord's behaviour was more frightening than anything else that had happened. The sheer unimaginable immensity of His power stunned them. Who and what was He? They had never met or heard of any other man like Him, He was phenomenal, far greater than they had ever imagined a man could possibly be. Plainly He was the greatest prophet of all time, greater even than He had shown Himself to be on that mount of wonderful blessings at the very beginning. Listening to Him there they had thought He was the prince of teachers, infinitely preferable to Moses, and had made their choice. But what now? Who was He? There was not a man aboard that ship who did not know that he must get that question settled.

During the terrible storm it had seemed to them that the end of an era had come, that nature itself — perhaps even God — had erupted against them. Just what had been happening? They needed to know. Had the fountains of the deep been opened up and the windows heaven opened? Had it been the judgement and wrath of God that had been poured out from heaven and risen up from The deep against them? If so why? What manner of person was this man in the ship with them? They must know. He had simply said to the elements, 'be muzzled' and they were. His power and authority were tremendous, that was without question, but to whom or to what power was He speaking? Whatever it was, His authority over it was absolute. But whose authority was it, God's or satan's? Jesus' greatness thrust in upon their souls. He was far greater than Noah — that was obvious — and, perhaps even more amazing, their ship was more wonderful than the ark had been. Noah was a great man, one of the earliest examples of a man of faith, but he had no power over the waters as Jesus had: He had just displayed the same power over the waters that God had exercised over them in Noah's day. Furthermore the ark had never been in any danger of foundering, it had been specially built to withstand the fearsome storm and the prolonged batterings; it was immensely strong and absolutely watertight, and finally it had been totally sealed up by God. Their ship bore no comparison with that; it was a frail cockleshell of a boat, wide open to the seas, and had been flooded with water till it was filled and awash; how it did not sink they would never know. If Noah's survival was a miracle, what was theirs? It was a thousand times more wonderful than Noah's. They had been the subjects of a staggering miracle and they were grateful for it, but ... who was Jesus and what manner of man was He? They must know the answer.

The Lord was not insensitive to their dilemma, He loved them and was fully aware of what was going on in their hearts and, strange as it may seem, that was the reason why He took them out on the sea that night. He wanted to give them all the evidence they needed to draw their own conclusions and resolve their doubts. They had been chosen by God, as chosen as Noah had been in his day, though for a different ministry, and they had to be trained for the coming day and the work for which He had called them. The voyage in the darkness through the storm was a voyage of discovery — discovery of self and of Him. At His call they had come to Him, but if they were going to be sent out by Him in the

future, they must be made ready and proved by Him in the present. The result of the test must have been very depressing to them; the miserable truth was that in the event they had no faith. Possibly also their minds went back to the parables He had so recently told — what sort of ground were they? This near tragedy seems to show that they were certainly not good ground; stony ground perhaps, but not good. The whole affair was proof that they had no root in themselves at all, they had no knowledge and no faith; He had, but not they. The apostles had been living by His faith; they were alive at that moment because of it. When He later told them that they had not chosen Him but He had chosen them they understood perfectly what He meant, and were grateful as well as mortified. Had He not already known without asking, He could have asked them 'what manner of men are you?' But He did not ask rhetorical questions, He was no actor.

It had been a marvellous opportunity; He had taken them out on the sea to show them what He had said and meant about the ground. With none but angels and demons in attendance He had been able to show His apostles their own hearts, and give them a sight of His heart as well; they were ground, He was the sower and the husbandman — He went to sleep. Left to themselves in the tempest all their natural abilities proved useless and all that was in their hearts was demonstrated to them. They were tossed, torn, blown around and about and up and down; heaved up to the skies they discovered blackness, thrown down in the trough of a wave they discovered gloom; death was everywhere) They were overpowered, overwhelmed, overcome, swamped, totally defeated, completely inadequate; they were terrified, baffled, lost, perishing. Had they known it, the elements were more of a mirror than a threat to their hearts; they had no resources; they were dead men and they recognized it. When they called upon Him though He rose immediately, completely unruffled as though He might have risen from His bed, and in a moment of time, with a word, cast out upon the waters the peace of His own bosom. The waters ceased from their raging, stillness enveloped the boat and a great calm embraced them. What rest! Silence: surely the Spirit of God was moving over the waters, brooding upon the face of the deep as at the beginning of creation. It was a moment of awe.

Heavenly Warfare

There was a war on. The apostles had always known that of course, but now the Lord had introduced them to a little of the fury of it. A conflict not of their own choosing or making was raging and they had been caught up into it; the ferocity and power of it was frightening. It was only a brief encounter really, but to them it was a terrifying experience, a major engagement. They were all right though; physically they had come through unscathed and were safe, but the battle for their minds was still on. They still had to be convinced in their hearts about Him — both He and satan recognized that. Satan aside, the Lord knew that, if He wanted their total commitment and full co-operation, He must prove to them who and what kind of man He was. If He wanted those men to have power and be sent out to preach they must be assured that it was the right power and that they were on the right mission. Crisis point had been reached — it would go one way or the other now. If He wanted them to go His way He had to assure them beyond all reasonable doubt that He was who He was.

An apostle's assignment is a tough one; the engagement on the sea had been a toughening-up exercise; without forewarning He had deliberately led His unsuspecting apostles out into an arena of battle about which they had not the slightest knowledge. It was suddenly thrust upon them. He had not given them any instructions or prepared them in any way for what was to come; He was dominating their lives. He did it because He thought best to do it this way, and it was certainly most effective.

In the tranquillity of the beautiful evening, following a wonderful day of success, the apostles had been as men saying, 'Peace, peace,' but He had been as one saying 'War, war'. Why was He so different from them? Why all this great conflict and contradiction? In Himself He had peace; rest was a feature of His life: they found it in His presence. But why did trouble spring up wherever he went? Always it was conflict of some kind, and they were being drawn into it. They knew that there is no peace in this world, nor in this universe of which it is a part; what they did not know was that they were chosen to be leaders in the warfare.

Without intermission, from a beginning somewhere before the creation of the world, a constant warfare has been raging between the forces of darkness and the forces of light. Wicked spirits have been, and still are, in conflict with every other spirit not of themselves, including both angels and men,

and even God Himself. Constitutionally and dispositionally the fallen Lucifer and his host are against God and His purposes with men, they constantly contend with Him for authority over them, with the result that there is unending warfare in the kingdom of heaven on earth. While this age lasts there always will be clashes taking place between men and angels and devils, because the earth is a heavenly body; whether we know about this and whether we like it or not, we are all caught up in the same war. Universal peace, that earnest desire but impossible end, shall not come to earth until Christ reigns on it. Peace only reigns in the kingdom of God; peace can, and for some does, exist in the kingdom of heaven on earth, and can only exist therein, but it does not reign universally there. Wherever, that is, in whomsoever the kingdom of God is, it can only exist as the kingdom of heaven. Being His, it can have no other manifestation, and every Christ-like man must, like God, live in two realms also. The apostles had to learn that when they were planted in the kingdom of God they had been planted in the kingdom of heaven also, and had to live and labour in the kingdom of heaven on earth just as the Lord did. Like God Himself, they had to live inwardly in utter peace, whilst being outwardly engaged in total warfare with the forces of evil.

When they had set out from the shore the previous evening all had been well. The Lord had been sitting all day in the ship like a king upon a throne addressing His people; it was heavenly. That little ship was like the kingdom of God in this world; only Christ and His chosen were in it, no one else. It was stable on the calm water, firmly anchored close to land. Just off from them on the shore the restless multitudes were gathered, standing still or surging to and fro under internal spiritual pressures as the word struck home or as the mood took them. Quite deliberately the Lord, with His own, had taken up a position compatible with His intentions to show the two different elements in which men exist; although so close, the people were a different company existing on the land, an entirely different element from the ship. The Lord was trying to create the impression of two distinct companies existing in two different elements, generally considered to be one. This planet called earth, on which man lives, is a comparatively tiny particle of matter, surrounded by an airy atmosphere, and is moving around in an enormous universe; in fact it is not all dry land as the name suggests, for actually the greater part of it is under water. Nevertheless it is still earth, though earth covered by another form or element called water or seas, derived from a different combination of the gases of which the air consists. The little Sea of Galilee is a landlocked lake, a tiny 'island' surrounded by earth, where creatures of a different nature and different flesh and different habits live in a different element from that in which men live. That is the parabolic impression the Lord wished to create. The Lord and His apostles were so close to the people, as close as sea is to land, so as to be called and named as one with it. Yet it seemed like a different world, a different kingdom. It was the same world, only the elements were different; the Lord and the apostles were related to their fellow men just as the sea is to the land, and could be just as easily distinguished.

To the understanding, this presented a perfect picture of the way in which the kingdom of God, though seemingly the same as the kingdom of heaven, is distinctly different from it. Christ and His apostles were in the kingdom of God and in the kingdom of heaven at the same time, but the people were in the kingdom of heaven only. It was an idyllic setting, but the Lord knew it could give an entirely false impression to His apostles. There were other elements at work too; kingdoms other than the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven exist in the universe, and operate in this world; the apostles knew scarcely anything about these, and it was essential that they should be taught the truth about them. This was also a part of the Lord's intention when He commanded His followers to put to sea that day. Unavoidably there was a complete change of scenery and — what was more important for the Lord — there was a complete change of setting also. As the ship sailed away into the approaching night, the land and its peoples receded from view, until there was nothing and no one in sight, save possibly the other little ships and their occupants sailing along behind them. Even they would soon have been obscured from view as the sky above and sea around became quickly wrapped in darkness; the Lord and His apostles were cut off from human sight; it seemed that they, and only they, existed together in their own little world of love and power. Now the setting was right, the ship was God's kingdom and Galilee was the sea of humanity; the scene was set. The Lord went to sleep.

Suddenly there came the sound of a mighty rushing wind; it seemed to come from the heavens, filling the ship where they were sitting and the atmosphere around them. It also filled their hearts with apprehension and their minds with foreboding and the sea with turbulence. The waters stirred, rose,

stood up and wrought terribly. Splitting up the little ships (if they were still there), it drove them apart with brute force, scattering them until all contact with each other was lost and none knew where the others were. Howling and roaring like the fiends of hell the storm rushed at the apostles, flung them around, pushed them against seas like mountains, drove them into troughs like the valleys of the deep, tossed them aside and swept on. Fear filled the night, they could not flee from it, it was like a solid wall, and whichever way they were tossed they were driven into it; there was no escape. Surely the heavens and the seas were in agreement, they had combined against everything and everybody, joining forces to destroy them; everything was against them. Where now the fine picture of the kingdom of God upon the placid sea of humanity? Where the heavenly dream? Everything was turbulence, death and destruction stalked the waves, the clouds were black crepe, the wind a shroud, the sea a grave and the Son of Man was asleep; He had opted out, or so it seemed. The idyll had vanished, the dream had passed, the kingdom of God had suffered violence, the sea of humanity had erupted, it had risen to slay them, it had rebelled against God and His kingdom. Why? Whence had it come? All had been well until

Until when? Until that sound of a mighty rushing wind came from the heavens. That is what started it all; it came from there, from the heavens. But wasn't that the dwelling place of God? Did He really want to drown His Son and His apostles? No, surely not! That could not be, it could not possibly be — God would not want to drown His own Son surely? Then who would? There was only one answer to that. Had it all happened on land, if some person or persons — Herod, Pilate, the Pharisees — had sought to destroy Him and all His apostles on land, they would have known who it was: 'the powers that be', men of corrupt morals filling positions of authority, the confederation of evil forces working in and through those men and their powers, using them for satan against Christ. But it had happened on the sea, with not a human — enemy or friend — in sight; it could not possibly have been of man. It was entirely spiritual, a cleverly planned attack of elemental force, a primitive, naked assault by spiritual powers, strategically unleashed against Christ and His kingdom. The Lord knew it of course, and went to sleep to show His contempt for it all. Later He would waken to quell it all with a word.

'Be muzzled', He said, rising to His feet. In a moment it was done. It was almost as though He had muzzled the slaving jaws of an unnumbered host of wild things, beasts, serpents, dragons, phantoms, stilling the howlings of every creature whose breath gushed out of its throat as the raging wind of hell. All along He had known it would happen and had allowed it, indeed had engineered it all. The prince of the power of the air hated Him so much that he just had to seize the opportunity when it presented itself, he could not withhold himself any longer. He pounced upon the sleeping Jesus and the labouring apostles with all malice, hoping to destroy every one of them, but that was impossible, he could not destroy the Lord and His men. The apostles, could not have known that the devil had been deliberately provoked to action by the Lord; the miracle was a demonstration of hate and of love. The incident was as a foretaste, if not a preview, of what would one day happen in a more terrible form in the whole nation. Shortly the devil would stir up the sea of humanity against the Lord God and His Christ; the dreadful tempest would rage far more violently then.

Standing on the shores in the fading light the previous day, that multitude had looked so attentive and receptive; they were so eager to listen, and appeared so innocent of all evil intent. All day long they had stayed with Him, polite and deferential, waiting to hear His marvellous stories, hanging on His words, well behaved, there didn't appear to be much wrong with them. When the apostles had joined with the Lord to send them home they had heard no complaints; murmurs of disappointment perhaps, but that was only natural; everything was good-natured and happy. Could it possibly be true that all the time they were harbouring wrong thoughts? Were they enemies of Christ underneath? Were demons hiding under that placid, pleasant surface? Could there be such a dread mixture 'of good and evil in the kingdom of heaven? They would soon see, and that before many months had passed. The seas and waves would roar, men would rise up against them, unbelievable hatred would be unleashed; they would even see demons at work among their own company, for satan would even take possession of one of their number. All of them would be scattered to their own, just as the little ships had been scattered on the sea that night; numbed and bewildered, they would hear Him say to His captors, 'This is your hour and the power of darkness', and they would flee for their lives: the entire sea of Jewish humanity would rise up and some would say, 'Away with Him; we will not have this man to reign over us'. It would all come to pass and they would witness it; they would again see Him lying still and

unresponsive, His eyes shut; but His head would not be on a pillow, nor would He be asleep, He would be cold and dead. Powers and forces and kingdoms and authorities would battle against Him in the dark, the waters would come in unto His soul, billows and waves would go over Him; He would cry out 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and go down under it all and stay there till He died. But He would rise again and come with familiar words to them saying, 'Peace be unto you,' and there would be a great calm; He would also reprove them again for their unbelief. How could it be that still they should have no faith?

That night on the lake the apostles received instructions and were given an introduction; it was a baptism they did not want and never sought, nor had they ever dreamt they would be called upon to endure it. The Lord had given them a demonstration of things as they were, at the same time granting them a prophetic insight into things to come. They tasted of demonic powers, saw into their own hearts, learned something more of the Son of Man, and were amazed at the hatred of the devil. It was all part of their training, and very necessary; it was their privilege, but it left them uncertain and confused, more afraid of Him than they had been of death. The Lord knew that, He expected it to happen of course, so lovingly He applied Himself to correcting it.

He had brought them thus far and they had come through the test very well really; it had been an undeniably tough course, and it was not yet finished, more lay ahead; an apostle must be an apostle of Christ. The further test He had planned must be taken, it would complete this present period of training, and when it was through they would see and understand it all He was sure, but not until then. So, in the calm of the after-storm, He lifted His finger and pointed to the other shore. Thankful to be alive, the apostles once more set course for the further coast and came over the sea to Gadara. The Lord had chosen the spot very carefully; the lesson they had to learn would be taught them there.

Chapter 5 — SON OF THE MOST HIGH GOD

Mountain of the Dead

Long before they reached land and stepped ashore the apostles recognized the place; they had arrived at the mountain of the dead. Whatever possessed Him to come here? It was a horrible place, weird and dreadful. Was there to be no end to fear? They had scarcely left the ship when a man came rushing out of the tombs towards them, running like a soul chased by all the demons of hell. He was totally naked, mad! Pieces of broken chain hung from him, his hair and beard tossed wildly about his head and face as he ran. His body was covered with countless scars of old wounds and suppurating sores; gashes freshly made, still bleeding, made by his own hands during the tortures of the terrible night, gaped among the scars. He was filthy, wretched, miserable, tormented, and close to death; the apostles had never seen a more pitiful, fearful sight. The man was surely beyond all human aid. However did he have strength to run? In the past men had tried to help him, but without success; no one had been able to tame him, he was too far gone. Many times they had bound him with fetters and chained him with chains, but all in vain, as soon as it was done he had broken loose again; he seemed to have the strength of a hundred men. It was impossible to restrain him; an unclean spirit and many devils had taken possession of him, his strength was superhuman. Poor man, he was in a dreadful state, he couldn't live with his fellows; tombs were his home, corpses his companions and evil spirits his family; no one wanted him. Everybody was afraid even to come near him; there was no remedy, nothing worked, whatever they did was useless; they gave up, he was doomed, already living with the dead, perhaps even sharing a tomb with a corpse. Often the nights were rent with his cries, his howls of pain echoed through the desolate mountain, but no one noticed; tears ran down his face, making furrows in the dirt, but no one saw. He cut his body with stones, trying to relieve the pain of his mind, but there was no respite for him day or night; all was darkness, death was his world. If any man heard him crying, beyond a pitying thought he ignored him; didn't anyone care?

This man is probably the most outstanding Biblical illustration and example of that death by sin which came into the world as by that one man Adam. Perhaps more than any other, this man could most justifiably be called Death, for he was surely the embodiment and personification of the results of the death which has reigned over men since Adam's betrayal of mankind at the beginning. Ever since then death upon death has followed in the race, compounding and complicating sin, displaying itself in thousands of ways throughout history, but probably in none has it found such full expression as in this

maniac of Gadara. With the exception of physical death and the ultimate death of Gehenna, every other state of death was manifest in him; so the Lord took the apostles to Gadara to meet this man. Possibly they were not altogether unfamiliar with people like him, but, as yet, they had not seen what happened when persons in his state met with Jesus; they were soon to be enlightened. It was with this in mind that the Lord gave command to set course for Gadara that morning. While it was still fresh in their minds, because it was incomplete He wished to supplement the lesson of the raging storm and the unearthly calm, with yet another lesson; His purpose was to transfer the lesson from inanimate nature to unique humanity. What they had witnessed raging in the sea was rampant in men too — the apostles must make the connection in their minds, they must understand. The basic power which had so recently worked in the elements of the universe in an attempt to destroy them, also worked in men with the same intention; the scope of satan's activities is universal. Man is akin to his environment, one spiritual power embraces the whole and affects everything. This lesson was there for the learning, though whether at that time the apostles were in sufficient light to understand it is very doubtful, for not long after these things the Lord protested to them, 'How is it ye do not understand?' But, anxious though He was that apostles should be men of understanding, He was not more concerned to teach them than to deliver others; He would do both together, and what a lesson that would be! Apostles were called and chosen for this.

From Despair to Hope.

When Jesus stepped ashore from the boat that morning to meet Legion it was as the dawning of a long new day for that man. To the apostles it was the end of a journey; to him it was an entirely new beginning. He did not know this when he ran down that mountain out of the tombs to meet Jesus that morning. John the Baptist had not been to Gadara and the hill of tombs to herald the coming of the Lord. Legion had not been told, yet he came. Why? What made him do it? Hope? Did he come because someone had at last come to him? Someone had heard him. Someone cared for his soul. The night had been dreadful enough for the apostles, but how about this man? It had been far, far worse for him; he lived with terror and pain, and he had no Jesus; everything had seemed to agree together to torture him to death in a world beyond sanity. The storm had been terrible, it had seemed to call to everything in him; the howl of the wind without was akin to the wail of the hosts of darkness within; he seemed to be one with them. He raised his voice and wailed with them and the wind, but the wind whipped his cry from his lips and bore it away into emptiness; there was no one there, no one heard. The dead could not hear him, the tomb mocked him, echoing his own despair, and the spirits within answered him with malice, jeering at him; hope was dead in him; they hated him, laughing at his desolation. He cried and cried and cried again; though no living thing heard him he would still cry; he could not help it, he would die crying. Perhaps the mountain goats and the creatures of the night heard him and were startled by his cries, but they did not come near; instead they withdrew and scurried away at his dreadful groaning. They didn't understand, and if they had understood they could not have helped him. It was dark, so dark, it was like black crepe all around him too, wrapping him up in a shroud of loneliness and terror; surely all nature, the whole creation, was groaning and travailing together with him in pain to be delivered. Someone must hear. Someone did hear: He rose and stepped athwart His bed, He stood astride His pillow, He looked up and spoke into the night, 'Be muzzled,' He said, and whoever and whatever it was was muzzled. Someone far out on the sea had heard him, Someone had seen him, Someone stopped the wailing of the wind; Someone cared! It wasn't the apostles — they hadn't heard him; they were as dead as he, though not so evidently, and not in his torments.

He came from across the sea, He stepped out of the ship. Someone had come for him and he knew who it was, he knew Him, it was Jesus. But how did he know? How could he know? He had never met Him before. Those apostles must have opened their eyes wide that day, they were dumbfounded; even Peter was silent. It must have been the devils of course; all devils know Jesus: 'Go and meet Him on the shore,' they whispered, 'stop Him, don't let Him come any further, this is your territory not His, tell Him to go away, He will only torment you, refuse to have Him'. So, confused, muddled, fighting for the right to live, the poor man went down to the shore, sanity and insanity wrestling within him; the frontier between them had been almost destroyed. But he fought to get to Him; he wanted to be free, become a normal man. He felt that he would never make it, he would die before he could reach Jesus, he would never do it: a voice broke into his consciousness, 'Come out of the man thou unclean spirit', it

said, and suddenly he could make it, he knew he could. A few more steps, a final effort, he stumbled and fell down on his knees, and he was there; somehow he was at Jesus' feet. He worshipped Him. The devils within him fought him, squabbling, screaming like pigs; the unclean spirit had gone, but they were still there. The agony within him was intense; he cried out, 'What have I to do with thee Jesus, thou Son of the most High God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not'. Jesus ignored his demented cries. 'What is thy name?' He asked; 'My name is Legion,' he answered, 'for we are many'. Identity between the man and the devils was total. He did not know himself apart from evil spirits. He even besought the Lord not to send the devils away out of the country — it was bizarre — he pleaded for them as though they were his friends. Only the Lord could distinguish between man and devils and who was speaking and who was not. The apostles must have wondered whatever was going on. 'Send us into the swine that we may enter into them', the devils said. The apostles could scarcely believe their ears. What would He do? Jesus gave them permission to go where they wanted; He actually sent them, it suited His purposes, it would also teach His men another lesson. The result was amazing; the devils cleared out of the man immediately; he was totally delivered; the devils took possession of the swine, which, to the watching apostles' utter astonishment straightway worked up into a violent frenzy, and rushed, grunting and squealing, straight down a steep slope right into the sea, and were choked to death in its cold waters.

It was an unforgettable sight, one of the most amazing and terrible miracles they were ever likely to see; certainly they had never seen anything like it before. For the apostles it was the final episode of the never-to-be-forgotten series of lessons the Lord had begun the preceding day. Everything was clear to them now, they were at last convinced; they knew who Jesus was; they had seen; they had heard — the man had called Him 'Jesus, Son of the most high God': Jesus was the Son of God. The man had been quite mad, he had been out of his mind, a killer full of devils, but he had recognized who Jesus was, and without hesitation had confessed it: they felt ashamed of themselves. The man had never seen Jesus before, yet as soon as he met Him he knew Him, that was amazing, and the expression he used about God too. That perhaps was the most convincing thing of all, he called Him by the same name that Abraham had first used, and not only Abraham but Melchizedek also; they had both used it — 'the most high God, possessor (or maker) of heaven and earth'. They had only just seen that Jesus was greater than Noah; now they saw that He was greater than Abraham also, and, although they felt a bit sheepish, they were glad. What a person He was! This Jesus was the Son of Man and the Son of God; was there to be no end to their discoveries about Him? That is why Jesus took them with Him when He went to deliver the man; they were only apostles in training. A maniac had taught those apostles who Jesus was.

The Lord was not the easiest person in the world to understand though — nobody could blame them for having had doubts about Him — their hesitation was understandable; they had to make sure. Not that they could do anything towards their own conviction; they could only watch and wait and see: this they had done, and now Jesus had proved Himself to them. He had chosen His own way to do it and, for His purposes with them, by the terrible events of that awful night, the apostles had proved themselves to be well and truly in the kingdom. In spiritual experience this was not so, but, that God's purposes according to election may stand, they were, for they were the called of God. When they were regenerate they would see it all, He knew. So, irrespective of whether or not the apostles were in the kingdom of God as He was, Jesus treated them as though they were. If their education and training were to be of any use for the future He had to do it this way — He had no alternative. That morning Jesus had proved Himself to be the Son of God; He had done so during the preceding night, but the apostles had not seen it then. They had witnessed a marvellous display of absolute power; they were sure of that, but were not sure whose power. That had been the unsettling point. Now they knew, but not until now.

The thing that had caused them the problem was Jesus' seeming indifference to them when they were in such danger. They would never forget that sleep, it was phenomenal. He knew perfectly well what was going on, yet He kept on sleeping; they knew it had been quite deliberate. Why? If He loved them how could He do it? They were in mortal terror and extreme danger and He didn't seem to care; that had been the real cause of their difficulty. What kind of a man was He that He could do that to them? They were hurt and offended and had felt they must re-think their position. He had chosen them and ordained them to be with Him, but did they want to be apostles of such a person? Did they really want

to be with Him? What about all those other little ships? What had happened to them? They had all set sail together, they were following Him too, did the storm overtake those other ships also? Where were they? Nothing was said about them; had the storm been localized to one ship? Were they the sole object of the exercise? If so the whole affair was more mysterious and wonderful than ever, and something very peculiar was happening to them. If it was indeed true that not one of the other ships was involved in the storm, then something like what had happened to Israel during the exodus had taken place with them.

Their history taught them that when the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt He made a way through the Red Sea by dividing the waters for them. Pharaoh saw the way and followed in pursuit, but God closed the waters in upon Pharaoh and his host while the children of Israel were still crossing over on dry land; the miracle was entirely controlled and localized. The same God was at work with them, of this they were now sure; even so it was all so overwhelming; there were so many possibilities and alternatives that just didn't fit together. Nevertheless, now that they felt they knew who He was, they felt happier about Him. Long ago father Abraham had gathered his army and had gone through the night, even by a way he had never before trodden with his feet. He pursued his enemies, overtook them and put them to flight; he took the spoil, released the captives and reclaimed his 'brother' and 'son' Lot. It all seemed so similar, for Jesus had come through the night to Gadara by a way He had not gone with His feet. He had put the enemies of the land to flight and had delivered a brother and son (whatever his true name was, it certainly was not Legion). He had put the matter beyond doubt; they now saw what kind of man He was and, believing Him to be the Son of the most high God, made a new commitment. They did not say so — Jesus did not ask them to — but before long, just a few days later, the great confession was made, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God'. It was now the firm conviction of all their hearts.

The Earth Filled with Violence

Those apostles now realized why He had set out across the sea and driven on through the darkness of that hellish night. Above the howling of the wind He had heard the cries of a tormented soul; it was all for that man's sake, for him He had been prepared to put everything — them, their boat, their loyalty, even His own life it seemed — at risk. Whatever they felt about that, it was all so plain, but why had they been so blind, so deaf, so self-centred? How could He love them when they were so selfish? They were so unperceptive, so unfeeling, they didn't know that the whole creation was groaning and travailing in pain; all they felt was their own suffering. The sight of self was awful — they were sickened by it. That poor man! What he had gone through! A night of terror? He had lived with terror, it had always been night with him. How had he survived? He had been full of devils, absolutely full of them, so full that he did not know himself, and was not able to distinguish between himself and them. He had actually called himself Legion. Was that possible? Could it be possible that a whole legion of devils could live in one man? How terrible! If that were true, how many millions of devils there must be in the whole world of men, and look at the results: the poor creature had identified with them, he didn't want them to go, 'Don't send them out of the country,' he had pleaded. Could it be possible that a man should want devils? Could he be so attached to them that he would feel such dreadful loss if they left him? The whole tragedy of a man living in the devil's underworld opened up before their eyes — here was a fellow creature, a human being like themselves, who had been so rejected by human beings that he craved the fellowship of devils. Love he could not have, the sound of a human voice he never knew, loneliness was his habitation, his world was the void; satyrs, ghosts, ghouls were his companions and friends, corruption, uncleanness and death his state; the spirits of the dead were better than no one and nothing. It was heartbreaking; pity filled the hearts of the apostles that morning; it had been self-pity the night before; they were ashamed of themselves. What had Christ opened up to them? Themselves: they hated themselves.

Would they ever forget it? The sound of those pigs screaming their way down into the sea haunted them; the pigs went mad: the devils had done it. Those devils wanted the swine — they were so unclean, and they had been living in that man! Whatever had it been like? Surely the earth was filled with violence; that man was, the swine were. On the sea the night before — that dreadful night — the air had been filled with violence, the sea also. Slowly the picture was forming in their minds; He had as it were lifted the veil: the sea of humanity was a sea of pigs, they only went to their natural element. He

was soon to tell them a story about a man sitting at a swine trough, hungry for their food; but that came later, and in a different setting. Violence was everywhere, in what was being unfolded to them devils and men and uncleanness were all mixed up together, everything was parabolic. No wonder the ship had nearly stood on its end and turned over in the night; the Lord had shown them all they needed to know, but they were not at the end; He seemed always to be lifting the veil on something further. They were so grateful to Him and glad for the man's sake; through him they had learned so much. He didn't know he had been an object lesson to them, but he had. Through him they had learned so much more of man's need. O the depths of depravity to which men can sink; strangely enough, by contrast, they had learned of the mystery of spiritual life also — they saw how totally he and the devil had become one. He was not satan but he had been so totally possessed with the devil and that legion of foul spirits that he and they all were inextricably one. It had been an eye-opener to Christ's men. How completely a human being can be indwelt and taken over by another person besides himself and be one with him; strangely enough also, by contrast, they understood a little more clearly how Jesus could be both the Son of Man and the Son of God. They saw how that in His manhood He could live in the kingdom of heaven and in His deity He could live in the kingdom of God at one and the same time. His manhood lay in His soul, His deity lay in His spirit; He could preach the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God at the same time and as one, for He was in both all the time. They knew also that no one else was in that blessed state, and they included themselves in the observation. He was placing many clues to understanding in their minds. Although Christ and His heralds preached the kingdom of heaven at hand, millions were living in the kingdom of hell; the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of hell existed together on this earth, and the kingdom of God was here also.

The Kingdom Rejected

Jesus lived on this earth in the kingdoms of God and of heaven, He lived in the one and created the other wherever He went.; the man who called himself Legion lived in the kingdom of satan and of hell on earth, created among the tombs, a fitting habitat for that creation. But Jesus brought the kingdom of God to Gadara to establish the kingdom of heaven there, and He did so; the man entered into it. His compatriots, the swineherds, came back and found it so: the former Legion was sitting, clothed and in his right mind, at the feet of Jesus, a new creature. Those swineherds recognized the man, but did not know who or what they now saw. They spread their news everywhere though, they could not refrain, but it was not good news to those who heard, they wanted their pigs, and came to Jesus and asked Him to leave the country. He had created trouble again! The apostles were still more amazed; it was almost unbelievable: surely there were others among them who needed deliverance. Those men could not mean what they were saying; they ought to have been imploring Jesus to stay and spread His blessings to the whole community, but instead they were driving Him away. It did not make sense. Did they value pigs more than men? No wonder the man asked Jesus if he could go with Him; how could rejection go so far? It was better the man should go. He needed to get away from such a place, let him come with them; 'No', said Jesus, 'go home'. 'Go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee and hath had compassion on thee', and that was how He left him. 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways', God says. The Lord went back down to the sea, got into the ship and left the man standing there, a lonely witness on the shore where he had first met him, though now he was a totally different man. With mixed feelings he stood there watching till he could no longer see Him, and then watched the ship until it too faded from view and disappeared into the morning. Turning from the empty horizon, the man went into the city and witnessed to all exactly as Jesus had told him to do. How could he be or do otherwise?

Far out on the sea, drawing nearer to the familiar shore they had left the previous evening, the apostles found time for reflection; they had much food for thought. They Sat in the same ship in the same sea with the same Lord, but everything was different. There were still only thirteen of them; there might have been fourteen, but the volunteer was left behind; he had been marvellously delivered, and had a great testimony; but he was not a called apostle. He was a witness — he belonged there where he was delivered; he must stay where he was; he could not be denied. But they were not wanted in Gadara; all of them — Jesus, His message, His power and His apostles were unwelcome there. It was not only devils who did not want them, men did not want them either. Everything was going exactly according to prophecy though, Isaiah had foretold it all: He was despised and rejected of men, they hid their

faces from Him, and it was going to get worse, of that the apostles were sure, they could sense the growing hostility all around. Whatever made men react like that? Had they no pity? They must be really evil to act in that manner, it was totally unreasonable. Love of money, vested interest, these were the root of the evil; they valued pigs above men, and preferred prisoners of satan to the power of God.

To be with Jesus was to learn everything, to understand everybody, to be given insights into characters, and to taste of the sour streams of the lives of men, their own and others'. They were not only learning the mystery of the kingdom of God, they were learning the mystery of the kingdom of satan too — its depths and lengths and breadths and heights, its extent and its limitations, its power and its powerlessness. They thanked God for its limitations, they had witnessed some marvellous exposures of those in the conflict with God and His kingdom; against Him the devil and all his hosts and powers were powerless. Ultimate strength lay with God, He could establish His kingdom as easily upon the winds and waters as upon the land; He was supreme. On this exultant note their thoughts turned homewards. What awaited them on their home shores? What new lesson were they to learn there? They soon found out.

Chapter 6 — DEATH HATH NO DOMINION

A Father's Agony

Hearts longed for His return to them. At that time He was very popular with the main body of people and He had hardly landed than the word got around that He had come. Before long the people were there and He was surrounded by the multitude again; it was heartening to see; how nice it was to be wanted. The needs of men and women were as great as ever though, and souls were pressing in on Him just the same. One, a man named Jairus, ruler in a local synagogue, wanted very much to get to Jesus. If ever a man wanted to see Him, it was he. He pushed his way through the crowds, fell down at Jesus' feet and besought Him with all his heart to go with him to his home. He was in great distress: his little daughter, he said, lay at the point of death. 'Come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed', he pleaded, 'and she shall live'. The appeal went straight to Jesus' heart; what heart would not have gone out to him? So, accompanied by His apostles, Jesus went with the man. But the crowds were vast, they flocked around, blocking the way; progress was very slow. Naturally the father of the child was distraught; with every minute he became more and more anxious. Every second was vital; when he had left her she had been in an extreme condition. How he tore himself away from her he did not know: it had been an agonizing journey for him, and now the crowds! Jesus did not seem to be perturbed by it all though; the time factor did not seem to matter to Him, there was no hurry; Jairus would have run, but Jesus seemed to keep pace with the crowd, not with Jairus, and then — what agony — suddenly He stopped: it was torture.

To Jairus' heart it seemed as though He did it on purpose. Didn't He care? He couldn't have forgotten: had He failed to grasp the urgency of the case? Jairus watched, helpless, as Jesus turned Himself about and looked around Him in the crowd as though trying to find someone: 'Who touched my clothes?' He said. Jairus was astounded; He had stopped, deliberately stopped; everybody stood waiting, amazed, perplexed; Jairus just could not believe it, it was so trivial. What a question to ask! He was in the centre of a crowd and here He was wanting to know who touched His clothes! A hundred or more people could have touched Him, especially His apostles. Those men seemed: to follow Him closer than His shadow, it must have been one of them mustn't it? But what did it matter who it was? It really was an amazing question; the apostles were as surprised as anybody else, and naturally enough no-one admitted to touching Him. 'Thou seest the multitude thronging thee and sayest thou who touched me?' they said, but He ignored them. He stood His ground and continued to look around; He obviously felt that something unusually important had taken place and had no intention of moving on until the matter was cleared up. They had seen Him take that kind of stand in the boat.

Heart Cry of a Woman

The father of the child was nearly frantic with worry. Fancy this happening. It would soon be too late, if it wasn't already. If his child was still alive it could only be by the mercy of God. Why was Jesus so concerned to find out who touched Him? Whatever did it matter? Was it so important? Nobody else, not even His apostles, thought it was, but He did; so also did a little woman hidden away among the

people. She was the cause of it all: unnoticed by anyone she had crept up behind Him in the crowd, touched His garment and melted back into the crowd again, out of sight; it had been quite deliberate, she had come that day purposely to do it. She had not meant to be noticed though; all she wanted was to touch Him and go away as anonymously as she had come; notoriety was the last thing she sought. For twelve years she had lived out of sight in the backwash of humanity, well away from the crowds, nursing a sickness which was eating away her life. She had never sought the limelight, it was not her nature, but now, suddenly, she was known and would soon be in the public eye: He was looking for her. The Lord had felt power flow from Him at her touch: she was healed and she knew she could no longer hide. But that poor child, what was happening to her? She was only twelve years of age; what a coincidence, the child had been born the year her own incurable bleeding commenced. O what irony that her healing might result in another's death, and one so young! Not daring to wait a moment longer, trembling and afraid, and feeling terribly guilty, she came forward out of the crowd to the Lord and told Him, and everyone else within sound of her voice, all that had happened. The Lord was satisfied.

It was another of those wonderful occasions when everyone marvelled at His power, everyone rejoiced with the woman: everyone, that is, except Jairus. He was happy enough for the woman's sake, but how about his daughter? He was grief-stricken for her. Was she still alive? He did not see how she could be. It was terribly hard to join in another's joy. Scarcely a moment had passed when his fears were confirmed: servants came with news of her death; he was desolated. It had happened, just as he had feared it would: while the woman was being healed his daughter had died. 'Why troublest thou the Master any further?' the servant asked. The poor father standing close to Jesus thought, 'Yes, why?' But he was near enough to the Lord for Him to overhear the servant's words; the fear and disillusionment which welled up in Jairus' heart reached His heart. Before another word could be spoken He said, 'Be not afraid, only believe', and began to move on again towards Jairus's house. Those words of faith and assurance brought hope to the man's failing heart, and he led the way home. Arriving there the Lord called to Peter, James and John, 'Follow me,' He said, and went in, followed by His men.

She is not Dead

The house was packed. Some people were playing the customary mournful tunes and wailing out their traditional laments, tears were flowing copiously, signs and sounds of death were everywhere. Jesus had arrived too late to do anything! Perhaps He had come to offer His apologies and pay His respects and join with them in their sorrow. But the young Master had not come to add His voice to their death dirge, their songs were not His songs. He had come to give life. 'Why make ye this ado and weep?' He said: they were shocked. Had this man no respect for the dead? Had He no heart, no feelings for the bereaved? It was tragic. But as He continued, tragedy turned to farce — it was unbelievable. 'The damsel is not dead but sleepeth', He said. The mourners, at first outraged, became incredulous. Mourning turned to mockery; they laughed Him to scorn. How shallow was their grief and how false their tears. Cruel, heartless comforters, one moment they were weeping, the next they were laughing. What kind of people were they? Ignoring their scepticism and unbelief, without ceremony the Lord put them all out, allowing none but His three apostles and the child's parents to remain. He paused a moment until all was quiet and still, then He went into the room where the child lay; five pairs of eyes followed Him closely. He went up to her couch, took her cold young hand tenderly into His own almighty grip, and said to her, 'Damsel, I say unto thee arise'; she did. Straight away she rose and walked about the room, just as though she had woken up refreshed from a lovely, deep sleep. 'Give her something to eat', He said; she was not a convalescent, she was hungry, she had not eaten for some while.

An Unexplained Command

With the exception of the Lord everyone was astonished beyond measure. The child showed no signs of having been ill even; it was amazing. What would the people say about this? The apostles had been surprised at all His miracles, but this! Wait till the world heard about it. It had been breathtaking to see those pigs fleeing down the slopes when the devils entered into them at Gadara; but this! Bad as it was, the Legion had only been living with the dead, but this girl had actually been dead. The woman also who had touched His garment had at least been alive — she had only been dying — but this child

had been dead. This was the miracle supreme; how the rest of the apostles would wish they had been there to witness it. But Jesus said, 'Don't tell anybody'. He wanted it all kept secret and charged all present, parents as well as apostles, to observe His wish, and taking the three men with Him He left the house. He wanted everyone to see how normal it was to Him to raise persons from death. Raising the dead was not something great to Him — just ordinary, one thing is as great as another in the kingdom, and everything has its place and time.

Peter, James and John, greatly mystified, followed Him back to the group they had earlier left. They were really puzzled. Why had He commanded them to silence? Their friends would surely ask them what had happened; why had He refused to let them talk about it? What harm would be done by telling their fellow-apostles? They too were His chosen. If it was only a question of space and therefore of convenience which made Him decide not to take them all into the house, what would it matter if they were told? People would soon know anyway; everybody who had been associated with the event would know that the child had been dead and was alive again. A miracle like that could not be hidden. What was the point of refusing to let the apostles know in advance of the multitudes? Their Lord certainly did wonderful things, but sometimes He was very mystifying. If He did not want His apostles to know, why take three of them with Him? They were still inclined to ask, 'What manner of man is this?' Although they now most truly believed He was the Son of Man and the Son of God, He was still a mystery to them; His ways were past finding out. What would the rest of them think when they did find out? They would be sure to question them again: 'Why didn't you tell us? Why should you three know it and not us? Are you different from us? Are you the three privileged ones?' They could imagine the questions; it would be embarrassing to say the least. They would have no defence, all they would be able to say was, 'the Lord told us not to say anything about it'. Nothing could be more true, if anyone was to be blamed it was the Lord. But there was no fault in Him, He was working to a purpose. All was being done according to plan as part of their training.

Although none of those men knew it, the Lord was making known His will for the future. As yet He had not revealed much of the distant future to the apostles. Beyond the little necessities of life's ordinary todays and tomorrows He had not spoken of His plans for His Church after He had left the world. He knew that before long He would have to declare Himself to His men, but the time for that had not yet come. He had been preparing them for that day of revelation although they did not know it, and had in fact made His intentions obvious to them all on the day He chose His twelve apostles. From the very beginning He had kept three men in view for special duties, and had indicated His choice in the order in which He had originally called His band together. First He called Peter, then James and John, and so on until He had named the twelve. By hindsight it is obvious that right from the beginning the Lord was shaping the first-named three for special positions, and the episode in Jairus' house was part of their training. All twelve were very privileged men indeed and, if asked, would, without reservation, have said so; all of them were chosen for high office in His future Church, but they all had to understand that even among apostles some are called to particular ministries not common to all. The first three commenced their lives with Jesus and their brethren as being apostles among apostles; they were equal with their brethren, and remained so until the end of their lives. Only in their callings and ministries in the Church, according to the will of God, did they differ from their fellows: Peter became the great apostle of the Jewish branch of the Church; James was the first of them to be martyred and John became the great seer of the New Covenant, and the longest-lived of the band.

All this lay as yet undisclosed in the Lord's heart, but with these things in mind it is understandable that the Lord should wish to give special training to these three. When He halted His journey to Jairus' house that day He knew the child would die; to some that may have seemed heartless, but it did her no harm. In fact it honoured her, for He did not just heal her, He raised her from the dead too. This suited His purpose; He planned to give the chosen three a glimpse into the resurrection life and power that was in Him. By restoring the spirit to the dead body of the child, and re-animating her, a whole new realm of knowledge of Himself and His power would be revealed to them. To them it would be both a most important lesson and a declaration of future intent; so much would be opened up to them by it. At least they should be able to see that spiritual resurrection is unto complete newness, and that by it the old malady is destroyed. The girl was not brought back to exist in the state of sickness which had killed her: raised from the dead, she was cured permanently. Death does not cure physical disease,

it only releases the sufferer from it; normally the disease continues on in the body until it disintegrates. What the Lord was intending to teach His men by the miracle was the spiritual truth it illustrated, namely that He raises men from the death of sin into newness of spiritual life. Everything He did on earth, though so often related to and demonstrated in the physical realm, was always directed towards that which was spiritual, the things that physical events could not touch. In Jairus' house He was laying a foundation for faith.

The Resurrection and the Life

It is important here to distinguish between the, different stages of physical death to which attention is drawn in the Gospels, and to notice the precise point at which the Lord intervened in each case. There are three, each of them illustrating a different state of the spiritual death in which all mankind exists: (1) the widow of Nain's son: (2) Jairus' daughter: (3) Lazarus: each of these and the particular miracle the Lord performed to raise each of them to life has its own significance. Properly evaluated and considered, these afford an insight into the effects of evil in the race, and help to shape the doctrine of sin. This is altogether too great a task to attempt here, and it is not our purpose. Confining ourselves to our subject, we will seek out and learn the lesson about sin as illustrated by the death and resurrection of Jairus' daughter. This girl was neither in her grave, as was Lazarus, nor being borne to her grave, as was the widow's son; she had died only very recently, perhaps only a few minutes, certainly less than an hour, before Christ came. She had not been prepared for burial, and corruption had not yet had time to set in; she simply lay there, tragically lifeless, upon her bed. She must have looked for all the world as though she may be sleeping. This maiden is an illustration of that death, common to all mankind, which consists in living in sin. It is death, and ends in death; in other words it is the normal state of human life. It is a congenital condition, quite unavoidable and inescapable — to be born is to be affected by it. The Lord Jesus came into the life of men to deal with this, and we need to take note that, when He went in to the girl He raised her from that death. We also need to take note that, at the same time, any disease she may have had was cured. Those three chosen ones could surely not have failed to see this.

When the Lord Jesus came into this world, resurrection and life came into it, that men and women might have both. His own greatest personal achievement as a man was to perfect that life in this world and attain unto that highest calling beyond; He was fully aware that for Him the pathway to this lay through death. This was the undisclosed reason lying behind all the other reasons why He led three of His men to the house of death, and had taken the whole apostolic band through the deep waters of death to the shores of death and the mountain of the dead a few hours earlier. He wanted them to understand something of what death really was, to see different aspects of it and by them all be enlightened in mind. When He went to sleep in that ship and left them alone to face the terrors of the night, that was also for this same reason. They were thereby obliged to face and discover for themselves a little of the terrors of the passage to the shores of the mountain of the dead.

It had been terrible; they had struggled and struggled helplessly and hopelessly with unnumbered and unnameable horrors, until at last they admitted their perishing condition; and when they believed that for them it was surely death, and only then, He acted. When He did, all was well as they could see; it had never been any other with Him, why then had they been so fearful? Why had they not gone to sleep and rested with Him? In His world there were no terrors, there had been no storm there. His passage had been tranquil enough; He did not still the storm for Himself, but for them.

Landing on the shores of the tormented, the apostles discovered that the groans and howlings in that place were not the shrieking and keening of the wind, or the flapping of canvas, or the creaking of straining boards, but the cries of the forsaken. The passage had been terrible enough, but this! It led to the indescribable, the unbearable; everything within them was silenced, save the sobs of the heartbroken. Had they come through all that for this? Was this journey's end for them? Those men did not know what they were seeing; He did though, He understood. God forbid that any of them should come to the end which this symbolized for all men.

The Lord could see Himself and a lonely hill and a cross and darkness and the floods and death; He was going to become the reality of all that the apostles could not see, more than they dimly described that day on the other shore. He was going to be Legion, He was going to be made sin and death too.

Unto God and for their sakes He was going to become as every sinner and be made all sin. He would become as the tormented and the devil-possessed, the outcast, the filthy and the vile, the hated and the loathed. Golgotha was the mountain of the dead to Him; there He would taste of death for every man, and pass through the sea of death to do so, and arrive at the place of the ostracized and the damned and the departed.

He would pass through a thousand seas to reach man if it were necessary. To Him what men called death was only sleep. Left to Himself the passage from this world to the next, as a man, would have been pleasant sleep, but for man's sake it was going to be awful beyond description: He was going to die the death that God called death. In company with their fellow-apostles, Peter, James, and John had been through the long dark valley that night on the sea; they also had landed on the terrible shore beyond, and had seen the great deliverance wrought at the end of it. They had also previously witnessed, almost unbelievably, His long sweet sleep and how calm and unconcerned He seemed to be about everything. This was why He took them into Jairus' house with Him; He wanted them to get everything into perspective, and see beyond sleep into the land of wakefulness. Jairus was one of the rulers of the synagogue, the local house of God. Geographically and spiritually it was a far cry from the place of death they had visited earlier; things were different here. But although they were different, they were not right. He particularly wished them to understand this, for they were appointed to fill special positions in the future house of God. They did not yet know that, but he did, and what they were shortly to witness was a very necessary part of their training; the miracle was to be a parable to them.

So into the house of tumult and noise He went to ask His first question and make His first shattering remark:- 'Why make ye this ado and weep? The damsel is not dead but sleepeth'. The apostles knew what would happen — there could only be one response to that and He got it. It was customary to make tumult and noise and weep and wail; He knew that, which is why He said it, hoping His apostles were taking notice. They must understand that there must not be anything like this in God's house; there is no death there: whether there or in her father's house and earthly home, the damsel was sleeping, that was all. He put out all the mockers and led the select few over to the bed where the child lay; there He proved His words: taking her hand He said to her, 'Talitha Cumi I say unto thee arise'. She awoke and got up, fresh and innocent as a newborn babe; He had proved His words, she was only sleeping, as He said. To everyone else she was dead. The seven of them stood there together in the wonder of it all; to five of them it was an astonishing miracle, to Him it was nothing much, quite ordinary; the girl was living in the glory of a dawning realization. What had been the chamber of death was now the house of the living, the girl had an abiding place in her father's house. 'Don't tell anyone', He said; it must be kept secret; 'Give her something to eat,' He added, and left. Would she remember she had been ill, very ill, and that she had died? Or would she herself believe she had only been to sleep?

The Lord's command was clear. In view of what they had seen and heard, the challenge to the three was that they should no longer talk about physical death as death, they had been shown something different: in the presence of Life death takes other forms and meanings. He did not explain Himself to His apostles but let their puzzled minds grapple with it; ultimately they would understand. Apostles must understand, they must not be blind to truth in the day of power. Blindness is a form of death, a state of unconsciousness, a testimony to a whole realm of insensitivity. They must see the difference between the two states of sleep which they had witnessed, His on the boat, hers on the bed: His was the sleep of life, a deliberate state of conscious life of another order in a spiritual world unknown to them; hers had been the sleep of death, an irremediable and involuntary state of total unconsciousness of the world and order they knew. Because He could sleep that deep sleep of joy and peace, free from all conditions of fear whatsoever, He was able to raise her from the dead. Having done so, He left the house of life and with His three apostles went to join the other nine, His mission accomplished.

Chapter 7 — A PROPHET IS NOT WITHOUT HONOUR SAVE IN HIS OWN HOUSE

He Came Unto His Own and His Own Received Him Not

When the four of them reached the rest of the apostles and all the other waiting disciples, the Lord moved off with them towards His own country. He had to go, they needed His testimony there, but He

went with mixed feelings. Nazareth was a place of memories, some of them happy and pleasant, some very sad and terribly bitter. It may have been thought by some of the apostles that His homecoming would be a memorable event, a really great occasion, and it should have been; but His former friends and neighbours didn't think so, they saw nothing in Him. Nazareth could have feted Him, proclaimed a feast, welcomed Him home, but no, the Nazarenes were dead; to them He was nothing but the carpenter's son. Upon Joseph's and Mary's return from Egypt with the child He had been brought up in the town; He had lived there, served the community there. His very first miracle was performed in nearby Cana, but that did not seem to matter to the Nazarenes, and He had never sought fame by anything he did. His return was not to plead His cause with them, or to blazon His triumphs abroad; the rather He suppressed them; His own flesh and blood and boyhood friends ought not to have demanded such things anyway. They of all people ought to have known who He was, and loved Him for it, but they didn't want Him.

On the sabbath He went into the synagogue to worship with them and (if opportunity presented itself) to minister to them whatever they had need of, and to teach those who gathered there. At first they were greatly impressed by what they heard; He was certainly very gifted, astonishingly so. Where did it all come from? Everything they had heard about Him was evidently correct — that was undeniable. But what did those things matter? What was He doing taking the place of prominence among them? Jealousy and antipathy filled their hearts; He ought to be standing back with His family in the congregation, not up there in front of them, setting Himself up as a teacher, and they were offended at Him.

It was the end of the visit; He was full of love and power, desiring only to minister to them as to everybody else, but He could go no further with them; their intransigence and refusal to believe prevented Him from blessing them as He longed to do. He was not offended with them, He had expected it, but their rejection was insurmountable to Him, and fatal to them: all He could do was to heal a few sick folk and leave. He had something further to say to them before He left though; it was nothing substantially new, a repetition of something He had said to them before actually: 'A prophet is not without honour but in His own country and among His own kin and in his own house'. It was the final moment of pathos for Him in Nazareth, His last farewell. He had said almost as much some few months earlier under somewhat similar conditions. He had phrased it differently and more briefly then, 'No prophet is accepted in his own country', but the message was the same, and there He left it. Except for the worse, things had not changed one little bit in Nazareth, even in His own family; what at first was non-acceptance was now dishonour. He was sorry to have to add that about His own flesh and blood relatives, but it was very necessary; it was true.

That same synagogue was the place where He had earlier made His famous claim to be the prophet anointed of the Lord and sent to the remnant of Israel. On that occasion they had at first thought He was the most gracious person ever to preach in their synagogue, and they listened, transfixed, as He read Isaiah's prophecy to them, adding the words, 'This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears'. But when He shut up the prophecy and proceeded to take up events from their history and apply them to His listeners, everything changed: they found it offensive, they utterly misinterpreted His motives, and openly disagreed with what He said. Worse still, they refused to believe Him, worked themselves up into a terrible anger, thrust Him out of the place and tried to push Him over the brow of a hill to His death. Only by withdrawing Himself from them had He averted a tragedy at that time. The place and method of His death had been planned long before He came to earth, and it was not Nazareth, nor was it by riot. A prophet could not perish outside of Jerusalem, He said later: a Saviour could though — just outside the walls, on a cross. It had been a nasty situation while it lasted and He could not help feeling the injustice of it all; to be rejected by one's own friends and relatives is painful, but He had to accept it, there was no alternative, it was part of the price of service. Nazareth's loss proved to be someone else's gain; He was more acceptable to strangers than to His own, but what a loss was theirs!

During His discourse on the mount of beatitudes He had said that a city set on a hill cannot be hid; He was not speaking particularly of Nazareth, but it was just such a city. Just how many of its eons may have been pushed over the edge of the cliff we do not know, but we do know that they sought to destroy their most famous son that way. There was no hiding the fact that they hated Him. He could not forget it; they never allowed Him to. He knew He was running a risk when He went back, but that

did not prevent Him from going, He was fearless. This return visit left Him sadder than ever though; it was not only His countrymen who did not want Him, His own kith and kin no longer wanted Him either. They were ashamed of Him, He was an embarrassment to them and they wished to see the back of Him. This had a great effect on the Lord, actually making Him marvel, which was fairly unusual for Him. If ever He belonged anywhere on the earth it was at Nazareth, but if there was anywhere on this earth He was totally unwanted it was at that same Nazareth; so He turned His back on it and left it, apparently for the last time.

It appears that He never went there again; instead He went through the surrounding countryside, to towns and villages and farms, teaching and showing the kingdom of God. What He found in that district is not recorded, but it is quite likely that the unjustified anger, and the unnatural rejection and murderous spirit of the Nazarenes had affected the whole surrounding countryside, for there is no evidence that any works of power took place anywhere in that region during this period. One of the Lord's instructions to His apostles shortly after this seems to indicate His sad acceptance of the status quo, and that He was following His own advice to others — 'Cast not your pearls before swine lest they trample them under their feet. and turn again and rend you'. Was Nazareth a city of swine? He had certainly poured out some of His pearls in the synagogue there, and without question the men would have rent Him to pieces in consequence if they could have done. He did not want His apostles to be treated as He had been, so He gave them warning.

Came the Time to Send Them Forth

How human the Lord was, and how wonderfully His deity and His Father's plans for Him dovetailed with the progression of events in His earthly life. His rejection by the Nazarenes and the severing of all ties with His family not only had a far-reaching effect upon Him personally, it also signalled the next move towards the completion of God's plans in relation to Israel. The time had come; He had called His apostles in order to send them forth to the people, He had kept them with Him for a long enough period of training; now the moment had arrived, He had been moving to this point all along. He evidently believed He could send them forth as He intended, one with Him in heart, preaching one message and doing His works in His name; this alone would prove their authenticity. Unless they loved Him and were devoted to His cause and had become imbued with His Spirit — unless they were in total agreement with Him and would live only for this cause and unto His ends, He could not send them. He had been utterly faithful with them over the weeks, showing them the kind of things He was going to ask them to do. Their training had been rigorous; lesser men might have been broken by it, but they had continued with Him; hopefully they had benefitted from it all, and knew what to expect when finally He did send them out. There can be no doubt that the decision to do this coincided with His own personal rejection at home and the confirmation of it to His heart by the coolness of His reception in the neighbouring villages. It seems that the determination to thrust forth labourers for the national harvest arose as much from His rejection and sense of personal abandonment, as from God's fixed intention and eternal policy. It was as though, being so manifestly an outcast from Nazareth, He decided that He had fulfilled His obligations to His own family and former friends, and now felt free to devote Himself entirely to others.

He had told the man of Gadara to go home to be a witness there and had left him behind for that purpose. That is always the hardest thing for a man to do, and, as though to share with him in personal courage, He Himself had returned to His own home for the same reason. Tragically He found greater death there than at Gadara or in Jairus' home; the Nazarenes would not let Him help them or even talk to them. With sorrow He finally turned from His own family to the thousands of families scattered throughout the land. Not that until then He had been unmindful of them. He had not, but as well as definite purpose, there is always perfect timing about all the Lord does. Those apostles could not but see that whenever their Lord made a move it was right; everything pointed to it and led forward to yet greater things He had to do. When the great apostle Paul wrote, 'all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose', he was certainly right; those apostles were certainly 'the called'. What the Lord did at Nazareth was a very difficult thing to do, but it was a wonderful example to them. It is not easy to turn from home and family, to count them as enemies and live for God on this earth; yet that is what He did, and the Lord expects the same of every apostle.

Many things have to take place in a man's heart and circumstances before he can do what has to be done, but if a man will follow his calling above all else, he will find that his very ministry will force it upon him; he will have to do it. The degree to which this may become necessary may vary in differing cases. If a man has a family which belongs entirely to Christ the degree of enmity may be diminished or even be nonexistent; but it must ever be borne in mind that family ties are more often than not the hardest to break, and therefore can be the greatest hindrance to the callings of God. The Lord Himself said that His calls and demands would divide families and households as with a sword. He never hid the fact that His claims must be regarded as being greater than any other, and would under some circumstances generate enmity. Most often the true benefactors of mankind are regarded, by them, as enemies; they are the friends of mankind though, and do not hate them, but cannot avoid being hated themselves.

It was like this with the Lord: His recent ministry in Jairus' home had brought the family great joy, but it was tinged with sadness for Him. Everybody else thought it a great miracle, and from their point of view, indeed from every human angle, it was. He did it with foreknowledge of coming events though: underlying it all, the tragedy of what awaited Him shortly in His own home among His own family lay heavily upon Him. The thing that lay so poignantly on His heart was that Jairus' daughter was so greatly loved and wanted by her parents, but it was all so different for Him. She had been physically dead, but there is a greater death for humans than that death; to be unwanted, rejected and cast out so undeservedly by His family when He had so loved and served them was worse than death to Him. It had been bound to happen of course, it was inevitable and He knew it. The simple human logic of it made it unavoidable from their point of view: He had left home, thrown up His job and walked out on the family. He was His mother's firstborn son, but He was not Joseph's first-begotten, so it is not certain that, upon Joseph's death, Jesus received the double portion of the firstborn. However, assuming that He had, it was His human duty to look after His mother until the day of her death, or His own. He was the oldest son and, in respect of the inheritance, He was expected to act in lieu of His 'father' to Mary, and become as a father to His 'brothers'; that is why the double portion was allotted.

Imagine the disgust that would have filled the family and the whole village when Jesus walked out on them; it appeared that He had broken with all tradition and disregarded their culture, as well as rejecting His family obligations. More than that, He had shown marked preference for a band of men virtually unknown to the family, and had chosen to be with them rather than stay with His own flesh and blood. Their reasoning was that if He wanted strangers rather than His own, then let Him have them; He had rejected the family so His family rejected Him. To them it seemed that they had gone 'the second mile' with Him, for after He had left home they had gone after Him to try to restrain Him, but He had refused their kindness. In their hearts, after that refusal, they had cast Him out, and now it seemed to them He was challenging them to do it again publicly. They did it, but this time they did so knowing He was the Son of God and that He was speaking out from the eternal life He was living in the flesh.

Jesus purposely took His disciples with Him to Nazareth, and when all this happened He was glad He had done so, for it would surely happen to them if they continued with Him. He would be no blind leader of the blind; if they followed Him at all they must make up their minds and follow Him with their eyes open. He would not send anyone out on service unless first he had counted the cost. Many a man called of God has fallen down on this point: national culture, family ties and moral and social obligations have proved too powerful for him to endure. Every man who would serve Him must follow Him closely, following in His footsteps, giving attention to detail. Apostleship does not rest in power or position, but in following the Lord, eating His flesh and drinking His blood; that is to say, an apostle must hunger and thirst and deliberately choose to live the kind of life Jesus Christ lived as a human being of flesh and blood; each one must be prepared to have the same kind of things happen to him as were done to his Lord. Only by eating His flesh and drinking His blood can a man prove such close kinship with Jesus that the things which happened to Him happen to him also. This is what Paul found, and consequently he said that he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus. To eat Jesus' flesh and drink His blood as daily diet is a hard thing to do. The Lord wanted fellow-sufferers. Having taught them this, He set about sending them out.

The Day of Empowering

His first step was to call the twelve to Him once more, the day of their empowering had come: they must be sent out and be apostles indeed, but they must not go alone. He said of Himself that He was not alone but that the Father was with Him, and He paired them off into six couples. The Lord made this pairing for several reasons, but primarily with regard to the statement in the law that in the mouth of two witnesses every word may be established. There were also matters of companionship and fellowship and propriety to be considered, and doubtless His move was made with these things in mind also. However, His chief concern was that the testimony should be safeguarded according to the Mosaic law. Having linked together the various couples, He gave them power over unclean spirits and then proceeded to give them their instructions regarding their journey. They were to take nothing with them save a staff only: they were not to take bags or purses, no food, no money, just one pair of sandals, and only one coat. They were not only to be apostles, they were to be pilgrims also: 'In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place,' He said; they were not to settle down anywhere, but to keep on the move. It was almost as if He was not expecting them to find too many people ready to receive them either, and if they did find a welcome anywhere they were to respond to it without hesitation and be grateful. 'Whosoever shall not receive you nor hear you,' He said, 'when ye depart thence shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgement, than for that city'.

At last the apostles were going to become apostles in more than name, but what an onerous task He gave them. It was no. easy calling; the terms of apostleship are very hard. The calling has many hardships, but the sending eclipses them; every apostle must face this, for only by his sending is his calling substantiated. The Lord sent them out with nothing but their ministry; the only gift He gave them beyond their commission was power; He evidently regarded that as sufficient. He had nothing else to give, and in His estimation nothing else was necessary. It was all He had been given when His Father had sent Him! He knew it was sufficient. When they reached their various spheres of ministry their only reason for being there would be because He had sent them; they were to speak to people solely in the authority He gave. It is a tribute to those men, as well as to His marvellous teaching and example, that the apostles never sought anything more of their Lord. (The question may well be asked: 'If these be the original terms of apostleship, how many among us would become apostles?'). Obediently and without demur those apostles went out forthwith, preaching everywhere that men should repent, casting out devils and anointing the sick for healing as He said. In their ministry they were like multiplications of Jesus, and they kept on going as He commanded until the land was filled with their Lord's praise. They did exactly as the Lord said and proved that His words were true; by their obedience the whole nation became aware of Him.

Although the apostles were never sent to the palace in Jerusalem, the good news penetrated Herod's house and reached the king's ears; strangely enough, wicked man though he was, it brought him relief. Herod was a man with a guilty conscience: he had murdered John the Baptist not long before, and when he heard of Jesus' doings he said that John the Baptist had risen from the dead. He had no grounds for thinking this, and could easily have verified or disproved his theory by the simple means of exhumation, but it seems that no one took him seriously. The devil's advocates thrive on irrationality, and fear fosters many illusions. Whatever Herod's motives were, he was without doubt provoked to make his statements because the apostles' ministry was so effective. Quite unintentionally he paid a wonderful tribute to those men. Their fame lay in their ministry, for, as a result of their labours, people heard of Jesus; whatever conclusions they drew from that was not the apostles' responsibility. They applied themselves to obeying their Lord's orders, that was as far as they could go, and it was all He expected of them then.

Total Commitment

In the eyes of the people the apostles' praise may have lain in their power and works, but their real commendation lies in their commitment to Christ. Their secret of success lay in their willingness to stay with the Lord until they were sent, that they may learn of Him and do as He would do and speak as He would speak. He did not tell them this when He called them at the beginning; what He was seeking from them was implicit obedience and total conformity. When He is training people, everything works together to the end He has in view. No opportunity is wasted and no time is lost and nothing is in vain.

Another of the praiseworthy things about those apostles is that they were not seeking power, consequently they were not always begging the Lord for it. This may be because when He ordained them He did not mention power, nor did He tell them He was going to give them any in the future; He intended to but did not say so. They were quite satisfied that He should ordain them to be with Him, for them that was high enough privilege, they did not seek rewards. It would appear from scripture that they were content (at least at first) to be observers and not workers; they knew they had much to learn, and that is how the Lord wanted it. But from the episode on the lake and the remarks He made to them after He had stilled the storm, it seems the time was approaching when He was expecting them to think about doing something more than observe Him at work. Upon waking He had said to them, 'How is it that you have no faith?' Plainly the Lord was expecting that by this time they should have had faith to deal with the situation themselves without His intervention. He was there with them, that should have been sufficient. Obviously He was not wishing to have to still the storm Himself. What had happened was in a way a foretaste of what would happen upon occasion when He finally sent them out to the work. They would be looking for divine intervention, while all the time He would be waiting for them to exercise faith, and live confidently in conscious knowledge that, though unseen by them, He was there with them.

One of the foremost reasons why the Lord kept them with Him for that period of time was that they should learn His methods and discover some of the secrets of His ministry. They did not discover those all at once, and were very likely hesitant to attempt to put to use those principles they did learn. One of the most vital secrets of all was faith, and the exercise on the lake was arranged by the Lord to show His apostles their great need of this power. His approach to this was twofold: (1) how to live by it; (2) when and how to use it. He did this by the best means possible, namely example. He demonstrated that He was living by faith by going to sleep and staying asleep till the apostles called on Him. Faith made Him oblivious of the dangers and fears that wracked the nerves of His companions, He appeared to be quite unconscious of them. For Himself there was no need to rebuke the wind and still the seas; He only did it at last on behalf of His friends. Who can tell what went on in the minds of the apostles — their thoughts, and the exchanges that passed between them? Who can recount the agonized cries and prayers that must have ascended to God from their needy souls at that time? In the calm that descended afterwards it must have been a sickening thought to them at first (though perhaps finally an encouraging one also) that it had been in their power to do the miracle if they had been living by faith like their Lord. What an example He set them!

The whole of His life was lived on behalf of others, that is why He could, and did, so readily die for men. He never performed one miracle for Himself; all personal benefit He gained from what He did accrued from His selflessness in doing it. One of the most outstanding lessons of the whole episode is that apostles must lay down their lives and interests and learn to rest perfectly in the assurance of impossibility and impotence. It was quite impossible for the devil, or the storm he worked up, to drown them; living with Christ on mission as they were, the devil was impotent to destroy it or them. The moment always comes when it is right to use faith in power; when that time arrives the heart must move in the assurance of possibility and power. to the point of certainty and action.

It is very noticeable that when the apostles were with the Lord He spoke to them about their faith, but never once did He speak to them about their power, for they had none. On the other hand when He sent them forth He spoke about power and not a word about faith. It may be assumed from this that if faith be there, power will certainly be granted; power works by faith. As far as the narrative allows certainty of statement, it would appear that when they went out they did nothing by faith but all by power, as the Lord Himself. The word faith is not mentioned in connection with their ministry any more than it is mentioned in Genesis chapter one in connection with God's works, or in the Gospels with reference to Christ's ministry. In the beginning God did it — He just did it; there is no record that He had faith to do what He did or that He believed He could or should do it, He did it; He had the power. It is the same also with Christ and even so the apostles: they just did it. They did not believe they could do it, they did it. He gave them power to do it and sent them to do it and they did it. This affords us a very real insight into the truth of the kingdom of God: all that was required of those men was that they should obey. Another of the most important reasons why the Lord kept those apostles with Himself that length of time was that they should learn the discipline of obedience; when they had learned that He sent them out. He sent them because they had learned the discipline and obedience, as

well as the importance and power, of faith. This is what the protracted period of training was all about; they had to be with Him and learn of Him, that they themselves may be given His power.

Discipline and Obedience

Discipline and obedience have to be learned, nobody is born with them. It is obvious when a man has learned these thoroughly, for they will have become habits of his life; he can then be said to be living by faith, but not until then. Such a man is not for ever struggling to work up or receive faith any more, neither does he try to exercise sufficient faith to accomplish some great work; he is comprehensively living by faith. Therefore He is not particularly working by faith, or specifically doing faith-works; the works he naturally does are by faith because he is living the faith-life. When a man is living by faith he has the spirit and disposition of faith; he does not exist making conscious efforts to try and live by faith, he is living, just living. It seems that even Herod, wicked man though he was, had some grasp of this when he said 'John Baptist is risen from the dead'; the reasoning, though erroneous to a degree, was very simple and quite correct — the works were the result of the life — he lived, he worked. John the Baptist was a man sent from God; that he never worked any miracles of the kind men call miracles is immaterial; he did God's works. If any man is sent by God he does not work for what he has received, or to do that for which he is sent, whatever it is — he does the works, that is the proof of his calling. If a man does not do God's works God has not sent him.

The apostles accomplished their commission, that is all; it was a great one, and because they accomplished it we think they were great men. Had they failed, our estimate of them would be entirely different. The Lord called and chose and ordained them for His great purposes with Israel and the Church; He trained them, commanded them and equipped them for these things, and their praise is that they remained loyal to Him in all. Except that they did command men to repent and believe the gospel, they did not specifically demand that men should believe for anything; like their Lord they were ministers of grace. To the degree that faith is a necessary part of repentance, the people believed, but faith was never demanded of them. The Palestinian crusade was an operation of grace: it was mounted by Christ to show the Jews God's heart towards them; the present dispensation and disposition of God towards all mankind is grace; grace is the function of a higher law than the law of Moses. The apostles had to discern and learn that just as the goodness of God leads to repentance so does the grace of God lead to faith. In His love God generates and encourages faith in hearts by being undeservedly good and gracious towards them; these were the vital lessons to learn. The apostles assimilated the truth, but only slowly; it was a big step from law to grace but it had to be taken, for men possessed of unclean spirits and filled with devils could not be expected to exercise much if any faith. James, who was not one of the twelve original apostles, speaks very significantly about this when giving instructions about healing by anointing: he says it is the elders who have to pray the prayer of faith, not the sick person.

This repression of practically all mention of faith in connection with the ministry of the apostles during the Palestinian outpouring is surely to point out that the ministry is primarily of grace and power, and not of conscious faith. Everything took place because it was the will of God, and was accomplished at the command of Christ. If power be bestowed by Him upon anyone it is given with purpose and directed to an end. Sending is by authority and in power; it is sovereign, and all that is required of the sent one is obedience; this given, everything will function properly in accordance with the will of God, as in the Lord's life and ministry; His ends will then be achieved. During the apostles' Palestinian ministry the whole country was in a state which can best be described as one of faith. It is not possible to assess all that the people did or did not believe, but it is certain that they were in a general state of belief and expectation, if not of total conviction: into this nationwide atmosphere of expectation the Lord sent His men. He Himself had brought this state of national belief into being; He did it with foresight for this purpose, so when He sent His apostles out He knew that all He needed to do was to endue them with power, and commission them into the ministry.

No Mighty Works

The apostle John says that when Jesus was made flesh, 'He came unto His own and His own received Him not'. All the apostles witnessed this — they had been with Him when He had met with solid unbelief in His own town among His own kith and kin. It must have amazed them when Jesus could

not do any mighty works there; to them it must have seemed impossible that such a thing could ever happen. On the lake they had seen Him take command of the very elements, and at Gadara drive a host of demons out of a man. How could it be then that at Nazareth He seemed well nigh powerless? It had been the same upon His return in Jairus' house: He had raised a girl from the dead, yet at Nazareth He appeared to have no ability to do anything remotely like those things. Why, (and perhaps this was the greatest thing of all), a woman had shown them that power even flowed out of His clothes. He had not spoken to her and apparently did not even know she was going to touch Him; she just crept up unnoticed and took healing from Him unawares; seemingly He became aware of it only as it happened. The conclusion was that He did not even need to exercise His will to heal; she exercised her will, and healing was there for the taking. He was just walking along the road when it happened; it was marvellous. Yet in His home town, save to lay His hands on a few sick folk, He could hardly do anything, and He was among His own relatives and former friends! Those apostles would have been completely staggered by it. Why? How could it be? If He had not led them the way He did and allowed them to experience something of it themselves they could easily have been stumbled at Nazareth.

The Lord had taken them there quite deliberately, it had been a further part of their training. He knew that when He sent them out very shortly they would be asking the same questions about themselves. During the course of their ministry they would enter some towns and villages and not be able to do any mighty works there, and they would ask themselves and one another, 'Why?' 'How could it possibly be that, such wonderful things happened in the last town we visited, and here we can do nothing, or next to nothing?' Although empowered and authorized by the Lord, at times next to nothing would happen, and they would think they had failed, but they would not have failed any more than He had done under the same circumstances. General deliberate unbelief held upon the grounds of prejudice and pride will always hinder the flow of the Spirit and prevent the operation of power. It happened with Jesus and it will happen with His people.

It was harder for Jesus to go to Nazareth and stand among His own than to sleep in the boat on the raging sea, or step ashore at Gadara, or stoop over that bed in the ruler's house. In the boat the apostles had no faith, at Gadara the devils would not co-operate, in Jairus' house there was neither faith nor unbelief; it was all the same to Jesus. But at Nazareth there was universal rejection of Him, stubborn refusal to believe, and He could not work. According to the Lord's statements, made later when similar situations prevailed, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah at the day of judgement than for that city. The happenings (and the things that did not happen) at Nazareth were just as necessary for the apostles' training as the miraculous happenings on the sea and on the shore and in the house by the synagogue. They had to learn that the ministry was not only a gospel of grace and power, it was an instrument of judgement too. That is a very saddening thing for any man to think; it was very saddening to the Lord, but it is true.

He Sent Them Forth

All this, and many things beside, led up to the great day of commissioning, preparing the apostles for their national campaign. Altogether their tour of ministry was a great success, and they gradually filtered back pair by pair to the Lord, flushed with triumph. Overflowing with joy they recounted their exploits to the Lord; it was just as He expected. It is most rewarding for a man to see the fruits of his labours and be able to rejoice in his own works and not in another's; but although such fruits are sweet, they are accompanied by a danger which the Lord quickly pointed out to them. They were only beginners, and it is common for beginners to think that power and authority, resulting in signs and wonders, are proof of maturity. The apostles were in very great danger of believing themselves to be real men of God, but they were still only babes. To be able to perform miracles, wonderful as this was, was not then, nor is it now, the mark of true apostleship; they had not been called just for those things, He had far greater things in mind for them. Later on the Lord proved this to them in a most unexpected way. Because there remained so much more work to be done He called another seventy disciples to Him and ordained them to a ministry equal to that which He had given the apostles; the seventy went out and did precisely the same kind of things the apostles had done. Very likely this was most surprising to the apostles; it should have been very illuminating and instructive to all: He made it very obvious that He did not call men and make them apostles merely to go forth and preach and perform miracles. They thought it was great of course, but the Lord had far greater things than that in

mind for those men.

The calling to apostleship was not for the immediate works to which He sent them (as He so swiftly demonstrated), but for the future. He had greater intentions for them, but these He reserved in His heart; the time of disclosure had not yet come. He sent out the other seventy and we do not hear much more of them, but the twelve He kept with Him: for the positions they must one day occupy they needed much, much more training. A great deal more change was necessary if they were to properly fill the positions for which they had been selected; they needed to be like Him in person, and not just be able to do works by delegated power. The delegation of power and authority was easy enough for Him if He wished, but to make these men like Himself was a far, far harder task; no amount of delegated power could accomplish that. Had Christ only wished to make them miracle workers He could have bestowed power on them for that purpose immediately He called them on the mountain, or even before that if it had been right to do so; but He did not do so. One day they would see that the ability to perform miracles was about the least of all their many accomplishments.

Flushed with victory, they had just returned from a most wonderful tour of duty to report resounding successes everywhere; miracles had taken place all over the land. They had been received by the people as angels bringing the blessings of God to them; they had no idea how hard their hearts were. To them it had seemed such a mission of mercy, and, if the testimonies of others were to be believed, hundreds, if not thousands of people thought so too. Christ's men had to learn that success can be brutal, and that unfeeling power degenerates into 'professionalism' so very easily. Of itself success is not brutal; but, unless it is tender and understanding and of God, it cannot be other than harsh self-promotion. Paul said sufficient to make all men of understanding realize that loveless power, even though by it a man may perform spectacular miracles, is a thief; it leaves the person who wields it with nothing, and less than nothing, of value in God's sight. In His estimation, power and success in operation, without love and tenderness and compassion, are retrogressive in effect, and must be regarded as subnormal. In God's eyes everyone who exists and works without His love is actually nonexistent in His kingdom. In the last analysis lovelessness is both the enemy of God and the enemy of all mankind.

Chapter 8 — AS SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD

To Be With Him

As we have already seen, Mark states that the primary reason why the Lord called the apostles was 'that they should be with Him', all other reasons were quite inferior to that. His call was not the call of a Master seeking servants, it was the call of a Man seeking love, a soul seeking fellowship, a Son seeking brethren. Just before His death these men were to hear His voice speaking to His Father through the darkness of the night, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory'. His heart was still the same, the 'purpose of the call remained unchanged, it was the same at the end as at the beginning. He called them apostles as being men of the new age which had not yet dawned, He was the daystar of it; then they would be men of His heart and nature, true apostles then able to fill their office. The everlasting purpose of the call was not to send them out as the mere word suggests, that would only be for a little while anyway.

The main purpose of the call, expressing His dearest wish, was to gather them in and keep them with Him for ever. He loved them and wanted them for more, much more, than immediate service in the land; or future positions in His Church even; they were Father's gift to Him for eternity for whatever plans He had for them in heaven when all earth work is done. The object of the call was not more work, but to be with Him as He is with the Father. John said of Him when on earth that the apostles, and others also, beheld His glory, and there can be no doubting the fact that they all thought He was the most glorious person they had ever met, or even heard of. But Jesus' prayer was that they should behold the glory which He had with the Father before the world was; apparently His earthly glory was not to be compared with that unseen and eternal glory. He so wanted them to behold that.

The great difference between the apostles and the seventy other disciples did not lie in future preferential treatment in glory for the twelve though, but in future position and office in the Church on earth. The seventy, like the twelve, were His followers, but to what degree or extent we do not know,

doubtless that varied from individual to individual; but the apostles had been with Him from the beginning. Perhaps it ought to be assumed that they retained the power and gifts which He had bestowed upon them with their sending, but there is no evidence of this to be found anywhere in the Gospels. Beyond the Palestinian period of ministry there is no mention that they ever did another miracle while with Him on earth; this is perhaps the clearest of all indications that they were being trained for future greater things. The Lord wanted them for foundations of life rather than as partners in enterprise. They, their works, their words and their post-Pentecostal works, were to be foundational in His Church, which, next to the throne of God, is of greatest importance in the kingdom of God. They were not just instruments of temporary service in a temporary kingdom of heaven on earth; they did not know that yet though. The apostles only saw greatness as being men of power on earth, labouring in one sphere of service in a very limited aspect of the kingdom of heaven; to a degree they understood their position and rejoiced in delegated power among men, but they knew little or nothing of divine strength and having power with God — a vastly different, though closely related, thing. They needed a whole lot more training yet, so the Lord set about giving it to them.

Compassion on the Multitudes

Conditions would need to be right though. He had in mind a place in the desert across the lake, near to the shore. It would be an ideal situation for the purpose, so without telling them about His plans He persuaded them to get into a ship, and they set off for their destination. He wanted it to be a private session and a rest period for them, but it proved otherwise. It was impossible to get away from the crowds; some of the people spotted their departure and, guessing what was afoot, set off running round the end of the lake, and as they ran others joined them, intending to find Him on the further side. The Lord must have been aware of this, but He did not order a change of course to some more remote spot; He evidently decided to let things work out. He would accommodate them first, and then continue with the series of lessons He was conducting with His apostles in relationship to the sea. He would also take advantage of the presence and needs of the multitudes, using them as an extra opportunity to further the training of the apostles. By the time the ship reached land crowds of people had gathered on the shore. It was an amazing sight, they had actually outrun the boat and were waiting for Him when He arrived. People were everywhere, they just could not get away from people; it seemed that they were always there. Was there no respite from people? What would Jesus do? He did just what would be expected of Him: He stepped out of the boat, looked upon the multitudes, had compassion on them and went to them. To Him they were as sheep without a shepherd, and He was their shepherd; He heard the call, responded to the pull, and all thoughts of rest and recreation for Himself and His apostles fled from His mind. He dismissed all ideas about taking a break, and gave Himself to the people without another thought; grace engrossed Him utterly in His Father's business; He too was a servant. To His apostles it was one of the greatest of lessons in self-sacrifice. What an example He was of all He sought to teach them.

This was meat and drink to Him; time and surroundings and personal needs and the purpose of their visit seemed to fade from His thoughts, He was absolutely absorbed. The day gradually began to wear away, He didn't seem to notice it though; all that mattered was the needs of the people, and the opportunity granted Him. He seemed to take it for granted that the apostles would have the same mind about it as He. Without even a word of consolation or apology to them He had flung Himself into the ministry, apparently expecting His apostles to think and do the same. They felt they could not very well refuse of course, so, masking their disappointment, they rallied around Him as usual and waited and watched. Although evening was coming on He showed no signs of drawing to a close, so they thought they had better remind Him of the time and mention the people's needs. They approached Him and suggested that He should cease teaching the multitudes and send them away. Their reasoning was faultless and their concern commendable; their thoughtfulness for everybody was manifest — the people were away from home, they had no food, therefore they needed to go home and get some rest and some food; or if not home, go somewhere, anywhere. Obviously they should not be detained here, this was a desert place; they should be off now if they were to get to the surrounding villages and towns, and should go quickly too, before it got too dark to see. They did not say that they themselves were without food also, but He knew that, He also knew what was in their hearts. Quite probably they were not at all pleased with the turn of events!

Give Ye Them to Eat

Imagine their surprise then when the Lord met their suggestion with the words, 'Give ye them to eat'; they must have wondered whether they had heard Him aright. What a suggestion to make! They hadn't even brought any for themselves, so how could they give anything to anyone else? 'Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread and give them to eat?' they said. Scripture does not give any indication of their mood; perhaps they were piqued and were being more than a little sarcastic. They knew that it would take far more than that to feed such a crowd, there were thousands of them. Regardless of their feelings, the Lord, undeterred, said, 'How many loaves have ye? Go and see,' and off they went. A search of the crowds revealed that the people had been as improvident as themselves; except for a lad who had five loaves and two fishes, there was no food among them whatsoever. That touched the Lord's heart. They so wanted to come to Him that they had forgotten all about food. Wonderful! But what would they do? Jesus knew what He would do: 'Bring them ... to me', He said, 'make the men sit down': all eyes were on the Lord. Taking the little store in His hands He lifted His eyes and heart to heaven, and everyone who watched knew that something wonderful was going to happen.

He was determined to feed the people; He was also determined that His apostles were going to do as He said. He had commanded them to give the people to eat, He had meant what He said, and He was going to see that they did so.. They had to learn that He never asked them to do impossibilities, and, whatever the circumstances, they must do His will, that must be paramount. His word must be obeyed; true apostles must not only feed the flock, they must show them that Jesus Christ is Lord; miracles are for this purpose. Healings and miracles of deliverance are all well and good; He had sent His apostles to do them, but they are only momentary things, beginnings, they are not the food of healthy people; for every day living it is necessary to eat. Men and women are not just victims of satan in need of deliverance, or sick people needing healing; they must not be regarded by gifted people as prospective objects of miracle power; they are souls that must be fed, and on no account may they be turned away hungry or be made to fend for themselves. Besides this, it was highly unlikely that there was anyone among them needing physical miracles; no blind or ill or lame people would have been capable of getting to the spot, it was so out of the way. In Christ's view, apostles must be shepherds, or they may as well not be apostles; they are not sent of God to send people away.

Irrespective of any spiritual lessons they might learn, the apostles knew by this time that something of a spectacular nature was about to take place. The crowd was huge; five thousand men were there, about a hundred groups in companies of fifty. Expectancy and excitement hung in the air and all eyes were on Jesus, certain by this time that He was going to feed them; their expectations were not in vain. They watched Him, He was speaking to God, then He began breaking the loaves and the fishes and handing them to the apostles, who in turn began to move in among them distributing the pieces as they went. The miracle was ceaseless, the most continuous miracle they had ever seen: as the pieces were broken they grew, a piece of bread became a loaf, a piece of fish became a whole fish. On and on it went till everyone was supplied; they all ate and were filled, feeding their hearts as much on the miracle as their stomachs on the fare.

Before the eyes of the people, and hopefully to the hearts of the apostles, that day a pattern was set. It was perfectly obvious and very simple: the Lord's hands took the gift, multiplied it, passed it into the hands of the apostles, who passed it on into the hands of each individual. It was all happening just as the Lord had determined. He wanted the apostles to see that feeding of the multitudes must be a joint co-operative miracle in which He and they worked together as a team; the Lord fed the people, the apostles fed the people, and with the same food — that was important, very important indeed. It was something entirely new as miracles went: those people (and indeed the apostles themselves) were fed as a result of a continuous operation of power from the Lord to them through the apostles. The Lord did not feed the people directly but indirectly through His men.

It was another great day of learning for the apostles; they gained fresh knowledge of themselves and of the Lord, and a real insight into His ways; these perhaps were the most outstanding lessons of all. They saw how little He required of men, approximately one five-thousandth; it was astounding. If five loaves and two fishes was only one lad's meal, each loaf and fish must be multiplied by at least five thousand if each one was to be fed equally. And some people may have asked for and received a double portion.

Why not? It was staggering. And what a miracle of grace it was; no one was asked to believe anything or for anything, the Lord just did it. It was all grace, providential grace. The Lord took the most minimal response, magnified it and multiplied it again and again and again, almost to infinity. How large an amount came from so small a response. O how great is the Lord's power, and how great is the lesson. But small as was the amount, and small though each loaf and fish was, it was still too large for the Lord, He did not, would not, do the miracle except He broke down what was given Him. Small as it was, while it was whole it was still too large; to be suitable for His purposes it had to be broken yet smaller.

He so much wanted His apostles to assimilate this. Did they see that the miracle was not by anyone's faith but by His grace? They must have noticed that He did not call for anyone to believe anything. The apostles themselves had been a disgrace; their attitude had been the very opposite of faith, and entirely without grace. He moved in faith-knowledge though; that was sufficient. Except He had, whatever would have been the outcome? Did they notice the boy's generosity though? His sacrifice had made it all possible: what would the Lord have been able to do apart from that? Those apostles had nothing to offer Him. He fed the crowd by what the boy gave Him; His response was to that. How great was His grace to the apostles that He should include them in His grace to men as well.

The Shepherd Heart Revealed

As the Lord had said, the people were as sheep without a shepherd, and what a great shepherd-heart the Lord had, He really cared for the people. That day the Lord showed all who had eyes to see that He was the Great Shepherd of souls, and that the apostles were His appointed under-shepherds. To them it had been a simple demonstration of social care and spiritual principle; He had planned it. In a way it was a kind of repetition of the instructions the Lord had given them when He sent them out on mission some weeks earlier. Strangely enough, on that day they had started out with nothing as they had on this day. The difference lay in this, that at the end of this they finished up at nightfall with a basketful of bread and fish each, plus the discovery of the spiritual law that in giving man receives and in feeding others a man is himself fed. This is the way it happens in the kingdom of God: men, especially apostles, must put others first, if they do this their own needs will be met, though this must not be their reasons for doing so. To some the miracle may have seemed to imply that God's servants only have what is left over; others may have seen that they ate of His abundance; all learned that the hungry must never be sent away empty. Every preacher of the gospel knows the truth of this. He waits upon his Lord for the word that he may minister it to others; if he does that he will finish up with a basketful of choice food for himself, and have enough to give others yet again.

It was a wonderfully satisfying ending to a totally unexpected day for everybody concerned. For the apostles it may have been a disappointing start, but in the end they had enjoyed it; what happened next though must have sickened them, perhaps it surprised and rebuked them also. Again it was disappointment for them; they were certainly being put through a rigorous programme. The Lord told them to get into the ship and go to the other shore, and would not go with them; He would remain behind to dismiss the people, He said. This kind of thing distressed and mystified them. Why did He act so unexplainably at times? In many ways He was entirely unpredictable. They knew He had His reasons for everything, but what lay behind this particular move? They had always helped Him with the crowds. What had changed? Why would He not allow them to help Him this time? Had they behaved themselves so badly that He now thought them unfit even for that? Bad moods are miserable things, and often very costly; sometimes they result in forfeiture of privilege, and speculation about it only deepens the gloom. By His unfailing grace the Lord had more than made amends to the people for His apostles' rudeness; their behaviour had been inexcusable; but, loving as ever, in the end He had made them ministers of bountiful grace. Their attitude had been partly due to limited vision; that was quite understandable to Him, nevertheless it had distressed Him, and He did not want them to undo the good He had done, or unnecessarily offend the people.

Naturally the apostles were unwilling to go and leave Him there, but He laid constraint on them: 'Go to the other side,' He said. It was the last thing they wanted to do. Go without Him? Surely He knew that their failure did not mean that they did not love Him. Besides, they remembered a most unpleasant and terrifying experience on a dreadful night not so long before; they could never forget it. That night the familiar sea had felt like a wilderness to them, a battlefield where they had been beaten and bruised by

the enemy. There were scars in their memory, they had been at their wits end, helpless, lost and dying — and He had been with them. What if it happened again and He was not there with them? It did not bear thinking of, and if they had their way it would never happen again. Not only that; how would He get back to the other shore if they took the ship away? Had they so deeply offended Him that He would not travel with them any more? Had He finished with them? They knew they had behaved badly: was this their punishment? They dare not disobey Him though.

Reluctantly they got into the ship, thrust out from the shore and slowly pulled away, watching Him. Should they wait? He showed no signs of changing His mind; He didn't seem to need their help or want their company, not at present anyway. He was in complete control and quite resolute; the people were obeying Him, and He was directing them away. The apostles watched as the crowds finally dispersed, toiling off along the shore and over the countryside away to their distant homes, leaving Jesus alone by the sea. At last, His purpose accomplished, the Lord began walking along the shore too, heading towards a close-by mountain; reaching it, He began to climb. They must have guessed what He was going to do then, but what should they do? He had said they were to go across to Bethsaida, but should they go back or go on? With mixed feelings they bent to the oars and set course for the distant shore.

Chapter 9 — I AM THAT I AM: JEHOVAH

Far Above All

The last time Jesus had gone up a mountain it had been very different; they had been close to Him, wide awake, alert and ready to hear His call. Apostleship for them had started on a mountain — they wished they were there with Him now. It still lived in their hearts: they could recall the anticipation that gripped them as they had listened, hoping He would call their names; how quickly they had responded to Him. Every one He had named then was in the ship now, all pulling together for the unseen shore; but they did not like it. He had separated Himself from them. Why? Since their return from mission they had hardly been with Him, and when He had announced a private trip somewhere away with Him for a rest they were pleased beyond measure. Hope and delight rose in their hearts, they would have Him to themselves for a while; what an opportunity to enjoy Him alone, a rare enough privilege these days. But instead of that their hopes had been dashed, it had all gone wrong, crowds had appeared from nowhere and their day of joy vanished. They had reacted badly they knew, but surely He knew that their churlishness had only been because they loved Him and had been so disappointed.

Sometimes they felt so distant from Him; He was so different from them, and at those times there seemed such a great gap between themselves and Him. He was so great, so far beyond them, and often did such surprising things; He was so able, nothing ever caught Him off balance. They felt so completely inferior to Him, yet they had discovered that although at times they felt shattered by Him it was always for their good. Perhaps this would have a happy ending too. After all, He had not just told them to go away, He had also mentioned a destination as though He would rendezvous with them there. The thought lightened their sadness, and they gave themselves to rowing.

Also Under Authority

High up on His mountain the Lord looked out and followed their progress, He knew His men, and with what reluctance they had left Him; He knew they had gone against their will. It was only natural that they should wish to be with Him, He was their Master and they loved Him; He loved them too. He also had a Master though; He had a work to do, a plan to fulfil; that is why He had sent them away. For their sakes as much as for His own He must let His apostles into something more of His heavenly secret. He knew who His Master was but they did not, nor did they know who, their own Master was. They had heard the Gadarene man who was delivered from the Legion say that Jesus was the Son of God, but He had never said so Himself. He had done many things and given them enough signs, each one pointing to a certain conclusion, but it had not yet dawned on them who He really was, or if it had they had not yet confessed it. Now the time had come for Him to declare Himself; they must hear a clear statement about Himself from His own lips; every apostle must make up his own mind about Him.

He was well aware of what had gone on when the apostles had passed among the people with the

loaves and fishes. Besides receiving their thanks for the food and noting their reactions, they had also given their opinions and made speculations about Him. The apostles had also become aware that there was a new move afoot, the people were wanting Jesus to be their king. To the apostles that may have seemed a very wonderful idea, but not to the Lord; very far from it, it was ominous; things were becoming very serious. It was plain now why they had chased after Him round the lake, insurrection was brewing in their hearts; whether He wanted it or not they were planning to take Him by force and make Him king. Rebellion was in the air; the crowds were in the mood for civil disobedience and open revolt. Jesus could foresee trouble, He wanted no part in that; He had not come to do on earth what Lucifer had done in heaven; He was neither a political agitator nor a militant. Warfare and bloodshed were abhorrent to Him. He knew also that Pilate, the Roman procurator, was a notoriously bloodthirsty man, who would not hesitate to murder people at the slightest pretext. Bloodbaths belonged to warring kings of earth, not to Him. His kingdom was not of this world. He had no more come to take the kingdoms of the world by force than He was prepared to take them as a gift from satan. He was not going to have His name associated with national or international rivalries; He had not come to recruit an army but to raise a church. The only bloodshed He would countenance for the establishment of His Church was His own (no other was needed) and the time for that had not yet come; He would have something to say about that later.

He decided to send away His apostles immediately; they must not for any reason be contaminated by popular political ideas or implicated in party feelings or movements; it is so easy to become infected by inflammatory talk. Such is the state of human hearts that, even under the sound of the gospel, they had no heart for truth; that place of grace had become a hotbed of nationalistic ideas breeding seeds of civil disobedience. The hands that handled bread and fish must not handle the sword; oars yes, let them handle oars, let them pull for their lives or sail away, but apostles must not become slaves to nationalistic ideas, He would not have it.

All the time the people were eating, the situation had been worsening; they had been trying to settle the most vexed question of all — who was Jesus? He was a prophet they were sure, perhaps a reincarnation of one of the great prophets, but which one they were not certain: all sorts of ideas were in circulation about Him, all of them wrong. Although He did not question the apostles about it until later, He knew that some men did think He was a prophet — or 'that prophet'; some, more specific than that, had named the prophet, but none of them was right. The apostles had heard it all and had their own opinions about it; they did not say what they were though. They had taken Him as their king, but not in the same way as the crowds wanted Him to be their king. They were utterly deceived of course, no one could force Him to be king, that was impossible; no one can force Jesus to be anything. What they did not understand was that He already was King. If it was only by the majestic way He controlled that inflammatory situation and dispersed the people He proved that; the wisdom and courage with which He dismissed His disciples and sent them away also proved it; He held sway over all.

What a great King He was, and in what realms of power He moved. By His power that day He had both established kingdom of heaven conditions on earth among men, and had defeated the purposes of satan on their behalf also; but O He longed for more for them. The whole situation had been fraught with devilish traps, but it had also provided Him with the opportunity He needed to reveal Himself to His apostles in a new and decisive way. So important was the moment that He would not attempt to proceed any further without a period of discussion with His Father and Head about it, so for a while He retired from social activity and public view altogether. He even withdrew from His apostles and went into the mountain alone. He really belonged in the kingdom of God; God, His Head and His Father, was His Master; it was He who had sent Him, He discussed everything with Him and did everything for His sake. David said that the earth and the fulness thereof belonged to the Lord; the multitudes certainly had that demonstrated to them that day; He had proved Himself to them by supplying them from His own fulness by using a little of earth's provisions. When He ascended the hill of the Lord that day it was with clean hands and a pure heart. He wanted nothing of this world; He was an apostle from another world and His purpose was to bring that world's good to this earth. All He wanted for the people and His apostles and for Himself was the will of God; to Him nothing else mattered.

Times spent with His God and Father alone were very precious to Jesus and always much too short, the hours sped by almost unnoticed; they always did when He was in communion with Him. It was sheer bliss to be alone with His Father God, love overflowed, joy filled their hearts and peace reigned supreme. These were times of refreshment and confirmation for Jesus, and of decision-making too; His apostleship was always renewed on those occasions, and when He left that mountain some hours later it was with new determination to carry the plan of salvation right through to completion. Meanwhile, to these men in the ship out there on the sea it was the fourth watch of the night and they were feeling tired. As usual they had carried on, non-stop, through another exhausting day, and it was proving to be another long hard night. There was a strong wind blowing which showed no sign of abating and the seas were running high; the signs were ominous. Was it going to be a repetition of that other dread occasion? The thought of it made them shrink; they were no cowards, but it was sufficient to fill the strongest heart with fear — and Jesus was not with them. Where was He? Minutes without Him seemed twice as long. Conditions were just right for the Lord though, so was the time, and He left His night watch. As though coming forth afresh from the Father He stepped down from the mountain of holiness on to the sea and started out for Bethsaida in pursuit of His apostles.

Be of Good Cheer — I AM

This Man! What can be said about Him? Who is He? What is He? Where was He and why? The apostles were soon to discover. Almost unbelievably He appeared, stepping out of the gloom, spectral, striding across the waves, drawing nearer and nearer to the ship, coming abreast of them, passing them by. They were absolutely astounded; He wasn't coming aboard, He was ignoring them. What was happening? The apostles were utterly confused. They were certain it was Jesus, walking on the water to come to them, surely, yet He was passing by as though unaware of their presence. It couldn't be Him though, they must have been mistaken, He wouldn't do a thing like that; it must be someone else — a spirit — they cried out in fear. Whether they cried His name or just shrieked in terror we shall never know, but it was sufficient: He stopped in His onward surge, turned to them and started to speak. Once again His voice rose clear above the sea and the wind, but not as before; then He had said, 'peace be still'; this time He uttered the most amazing words they ever thought they would hear from human lips, even from His, 'Be of good cheer, I AM, — be not afraid'. They were astounded. I AM? Had they heard aright? Could it be? Was He really saying He was That I AM? First the apostles could scarce believe their eyes, then they could scarce retain their senses, now they could scarce believe their ears. What had He said? They were sure He said it, He had spoken the sacred name, I AM; Jesus had said He was the I AM.

What a moment to make the declaration! The Lord certainly had a sense of occasion. Who among them could have anticipated this or, being asked, would have said that Jesus was or would have claimed to be that I AM? For some while they had been increasingly convinced that he was the Son of God, but to have said so was quite another thing. Was 'Jesus' one of the names of I AM? He had claimed so; there was no avoiding the issue now. But what a time to thrust it upon them; the apostles had no opportunity to give the matter considered thought; in any case they were not religious philosophers cozily calculating percentages of truth and error from a remote distance. They were in a crisis, caught up into something undreamed of for which they had not asked, emotions were running high and they had to make a decision. They had seen and heard most tremendous things, unseen and unheard by men before. Jesus was standing on the sea, waves tossing Him up and down, wind tearing at His clothes, hair blowing about His head; what a sight! And He was claiming to be God. It was impossible for a man they knew, yet, there He was, declaring His deity, completely unaffected by any of these things. Ever since they had known Him He had done and said surprising and wonderful things, but never anything like this. Would there be no end to their amazement?

This whole episode was so different, but yet so similar in many ways to that former recent experience; this was not an encounter with the elements as before; He seemed to be using them this time, not rebuking them. On that former occasion He had been with them in the boat, but this time He was noticeably outside with the elements. Before, to them He was a man asleep in the boat and they had asked themselves, 'What manner of man is this?' This time He had seemed to them to be a spirit of the wind and the waters. Before, He had rebuked the elements and made them cease from their raging; this time He let them blow and toss. Before, He was the Man, this time He was the Spirit; before they

saw the spirit of the Man, this time they saw the man of the Spirit. Before there was much of satan in the event, this time there was nothing of him; this time all was of the Man and the God, and everything lay between the apostles and the I AM.

Jesus spoke and the name, the name by which God first identified Himself to Moses, came across the sea, and the voice of God was upon the waters. Was He going to pass them by as when He had put Moses in the cleft of the rock while He declared His name to him and passed by? The Lord let them see His back parts; He almost passed them by, but they saw His face too and it was familiar: it was the face of Jesus, and He was I AM, as well as their Lord; they knew that they knew Him. God had said that He would identify Himself in every generation by this name; it was as though creation and the burning bush and the cleft rock were on the sea that night; history and eternity had merged; Jesus had certified to His apostles that He was God. If it had happened on land, if Jesus had stood on the shore within hearing of all the people, especially the scribes and Pharisees, and had said what He had just said to them, He would almost certainly have been stoned to death. Likewise, if He had said it when He was feeding the multitudes, they too would most probably have done the same thing, even though He had fed them. It would have been blasphemy in their ears and, however popular and powerful and good He was, they would not have wanted a blasphemer for their king. When later He made an almost identical statement before the high priest, the whole nation rose against Him and raged for His blood — "Away with Him, away with Him, we will not have this man to rule over us".

Jesus had not made His declaration upon the land before all men precisely because of these things, but what a place to make the announcement. Why wait till they were in the midst of the sea, and in such dramatic manner, in the dark, in the storm, when they were full of fear? He did the strangest things. No one could ever say that life with Jesus was tranquil or predictable; apostolic training was far from easy. What can be done with a man standing on the water in a dark night of storm, declaring that He is God, the Great I AM? There could be no doubting His words or His meaning; nor yet, (as He changed course and began to move towards them across the sea,) could they mistake His purpose. Perhaps by this time it was beginning to dawn on them that the Lord had a special reason for revealing Himself to them when they were in the midst of the sea. Surely they were the men who David had in mind when he said that they who go down to the sea in ships discover His wonders in the deep, for that is precisely how they were finding it to be. How else could they have described what was happening to them than 'His wonders'?

They had been familiar with the wonders of His creation and of His powers in the sea since they were boys, but now they were discovering the wonders of Him; but why choose to make His revelations in the sea? Why not the land? Quite simply because He found it impossible to get them alone on the land; always when they were on shore or inland the crowds were around, clamouring for attention as they had just seen. If He had anything to say to His apostles it was perforce in the hearing of His other disciples or the multitudes; He found so little opportunity to speak to them privately. A ship on the sea was the ideal place; there He had them in isolation without any possibility of interference. Besides this, so great was the magnitude of the revelations He had to impart to them, that people in general could not be expected to receive what He had to say. 'Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God', He had told His apostles. To the people this knowledge was not as yet given; they had to be told everything in parables, that seeing they should not see (all) and hearing (some things) they should not hear (all). The apostles had to see and hear secrets hidden from other people's eyes and ears, that those secrets should not be forever lost, or Christ's coming have been in vain. So it was that the wonderful revelation was borne above the wind to their ears that night, where there was no one else but He and they, and He could say to them, 'I AM your God,' and each of them could say to himself and to each other, 'I am His apostle'.

Whom Say Ye That I Am?

Those men knew that this was the moment of decision and committal for them, and that the way they responded at that minute would be of absolute importance. Both the Lord and the apostles — every one of them — were aware that everything would turn on this issue, all was at stake; it was now or never, and they scarce had time to think. What they did must be done in a hurry. All the crises of God's chosen ones are engineered by Him; this whole incident was thrust upon those men unasked, they could do nothing about it; they were not entirely helpless though, they were free to make response

as they would later. The Lord came right up to them and boarded the ship before they could do anything about it; not a voice was raised against it, but they were powerless to stop Him even if they had wanted to. As soon as He came aboard the wind dropped, the waves ceased: they were amazed beyond measure to the point of soreness, almost like a pain in the mind. They were speechless. The atmosphere in the ship was dreadful; in its way it was worse than the storm; their hearts were as hard as stone. The apostles had never been reached in heart, nothing He had ever done or said hitherto had reached their hearts; they were His servants but they were not one with Him; they had only been at one with the person they believed Him to be. They had not really considered the miracle He had wrought on the shore, even though they had co-operated with Him in it; the greater implications and deeper meanings of it were hidden from them. What was the use of knowing the mysteries of the kingdom if they did not grasp the mystery of Him?

The steps by which they had arrived at their present position were progressive; perhaps they recognized this. He had first taken them over the sea to Gadara to show them that He was Lord of the elements; arriving there He had shown them that he was Master of the demon world. Following that, He had proved to them that He was the Lord over the departed spirits of men, and most recently had demonstrated His complete ability to supply and satisfy men's bodily needs. These were not the ordinary kind of miracles with which He seemed to fill His days; each one in its order was a sign purposely given to demonstrate the fact that He was indeed God manifest in flesh, and now, to complete the series, this final one was accompanied by an outright declaration of His Godhead. These men were now without excuse; they should have been utterly convinced that He was their God; indeed, their own senses with the minimal degree of spiritual insight should have told them that. They had first seen Him walking on the water and were convinced that He was a spirit being; then when He came up into the boat they were equally convinced He was a human being, for they felt His flesh and bones. It really was Jesus, they knew it was, that was why they received Him aboard so willingly. Yet, so full of unbelief is the human heart, that despite all this they still wondered deep down inside if He really was who He said He was. Their hearts should have been overflowing with joy; to have Him with them again was wonderful; but His latest claim put everything, especially this particular incident, on a different level altogether. Could He possibly be right? He never once boasted about His miracles, He was amazingly humble, but they had heard Him say at one point, 'the works that I do testify of me'. Thinking back over the past there was no evading the fact that all He had done and said had been leading to this end, and if there was any one group of men on the earth who should have known by now who He was it was the apostles, so He presented them with the test first. He expected them to know; by His choice they had witnessed things none other had seen, and, as He had said, 'unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required'. The Lord was forcing them to a decision, they could not run away, they just had to face it and make up their minds one way or the other, and then be brave enough to state their conclusions, or rather make their confessions.

He had the future in view; He was not training them for high office in the nation, His kingdom was not of this world, nor is it to this day. He had no political or commercial or industrial executive positions in view for them; He was not running a military academy or an educational institution; when He sent them out, His call was for labourers in the harvest or ploughmen in the field. He had come to lay the foundations of a new city and to create a new society — a Church — in fact a whole new creation. They did not know that, He had not told them yet, nor did He intend to do so for a while; that could wait. He bribed nobody, nor did He try to win men by offering them top positions in the Church or by promising them preferential treatment in the future kingdom; He never attempted to buy their loyalty. Their reasons for following Him must be on an altogether higher level than that; they must be personally convinced of Him and accept all His claims, fully convinced in heart as to who He was, and devoting themselves to Him for that reason alone. They must believe Him to be God as well as man, and love and worship and follow and serve Him without thought of reward, or because He was the most pleasant and lovable human being they had ever met and had chosen them to be His companions.

One Master — Even God

Jesus had proved that He loved humankind, He was unquestionably their greatest benefactor and teacher; it was a privilege and joy to serve mankind with this popular Master, but that was not enough. All men who serve with Him also love and serve Him personally out of deep inward

convincement that Jesus and God are one. The things He was expecting of each apostle was utter devotion to Him on a person to person basis, and total spiritual commitment springing from the fusion of his inmost will with His. He had not as yet mentioned all this to them, but He could not delay the issue any longer; by their own choice as well as by His election they must become martyr-spirits, and know what it is to embrace His cross and espouse His cause. No man, however great his gifts and personal abilities and however constant his following and whatever his achievements, has ever embraced Christ's cause until he has embraced His cross. Those men had followed Him closely, been on mission, preached the gospel as they knew it, and performed miracles, but without knowledge of the cross in relationship to sonship their apostleship would be temporary only. Until then He had taken them along as they were able to go, leading them into truth as they were able to bear it; admittedly it was faster than others had gone, a crash course in fact: now they must face the greatest of all truth — Jesus was more than their Lord and Master, He was their God — He, the person of the unwritable name — I AM before Abraham was or anything else could have been.

He knew their hearts were hard; He had known that from the beginning. He also knew that they themselves did not know their own hearts; that was one of the reasons why He had sent them away from the multitudes. The people He had just fed must make up their own minds on the evidence He had given them, and the apostles must do the same. He had called them apostles and to a certain extent they were, but they certainly were not shepherds, for their behaviour showed that they did not have shepherd-hearts. It was not that they did not have the food to feed the multitudes, or had not the power to multiply the little they had, it was their wish to send the people away that belied their calling. Their attitude and what they had said was plain common sense of course, but apostles must not react to people's needs on the basis of humanistic common sense, nor seek to rationalize away Jesus' commandments — He had said, 'They need not depart; give ye them to eat.' They had said, 'Send the people away'. Apostles, above all people, may not talk like that. Shepherd-apostles must neither leave nor send away human sheep to fend for themselves as best they can. If, as everybody could see, apostles are men next to Christ, people have a right to expect great things of them. An apostle must not be a wolf to scatter the flock, any more than a prophet must be a wolf in sheep's clothing! Christ had not been angry with them because they had no power to multiply loaves and fishes, but He was greatly disappointed that they wanted to send the people away. The apostles had many things, but not tender hearts.

A shepherd-heart is caring and tender, it will always provide food for the sheep; it is a gift from God. The man who possesses it seeks neither success nor his own good, he puts the welfare of others first and supplies their needs before his own; a good shepherd lays down his own life for the sheep. A shepherd-heart is large and strong and tender, it enables him to go on when he is tired, walk on when he is weary, know the way and lead on when he wants to rest. Compassion will move him when He would be still, rouse him when he is tired, stir him when he looks upon the masses, lift him to the superhuman, if not the miraculous, and make him so want to give that he will somehow find a way to do so. These things and many others like them had yet to be learned by the apostles; but, although that time had not yet come, when He left His mountain-top appointment with the Father that night He was determined that the present issue must be settled immediately. He had chosen to make the revelation exclusive to His chosen men in the midst of the sea, but all was done with a view to its outworkings in public. When they accepted Him on His own terms and for who and what He was, those apostles were caught up into the power of God in a new way. Before this they had been given power and authority to go out and do works, but now they were caught up in the power rather than the power being given, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they were transported over the sea to another shore.

They must have felt they had been caught up in something far greater, almost terrifyingly greater, than themselves, something unimaginably bigger than they had ever thought or dreamed. Whatever they had thought or had been taught about the Messianic kingdom of heaven on earth, their conclusions could not have been anything like this. Who could have foreseen or foretold the things which were happening to them? They had become involved in frightening things, and perhaps if it had not been for Jesus they would have opted out long before. There had been thrilling times when it seemed to them that they had been exalted to heaven; those were wonderful moments, they could not deny that, but there had also been occasions when they had seemed to hover on the brink of destruction, moments when they could have felt almost thrust down to hell; they had to admit that too.

But through it all there had been Jesus: He, Him, His personality held them; a bond had been forged between themselves and Him that nothing could break, and they had stayed on with Him.

They did not really understand the things that were happening to themselves or to Him; He knew that, and did not expect them to understand, how could they? He was deeply appreciative of their loyalty; even though at times they had been baffled beyond description they had remained with Him, and He was determined to reward their faithfulness. Months later, before He finally left them for the cross, He commented on their tenacity, 'Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me'. He did not say what His temptations had been; in some respects perhaps they themselves had partly been the means of some of them. Certainly their hard-heartedness and inability to see into what was happening, and above all their lack of compassion, were all very grievous to Him. He just could not carry on, nor allow them to think they could continue with Him any longer except He had their wholehearted co-operation. He had given them power, but, unless it flows from a heart of compassion, power only hardens a man and makes him callous; they must be made to see what compassion is and what it can accomplish. With this in mind He moved swiftly and brought them all over to the further shore; for them it was to be the land of final choice and open declaration.

The overall effect of the miracle beyond the sea was far greater than anyone but He knew; He had performed it for this purpose, His eye as much on the future as upon the present need. He was aware of the conversations that had gone on among the crowds during the meal and was well aware of the power of speculative assertions; originally sin had been strengthened in heaven among the then un-fallen angels by these means. He also understood all the fears and doubts with which His men were battling; they had to get beyond all that though and come absolutely clear on this issue, or He and they could no longer continue together. The prime reason He had ordained them to be with Him was that they should discover who He was, not what He could do. When He had sent them out on mission they had not made the discovery, they had obeyed Him and used His power and authority without knowing who He really was, but that could no longer be; hard hearts filled with confusion were not the rock upon which He could commence building His Church. Uncertain foundations would result in an unstable edifice and total collapse; that must never be, hence the move.

Chapter 10 — THE TRUE BREAD FROM HEAVEN

God in the Midst

They had not long been back on land before the crowds caught up with them again, hundreds of them from across the sea. All were talking of yesterday's miracle, asking questions, mostly from wrong motives and for wrong reasons; few were genuine, and those who were hopelessly confused and mixed up; ignorance abounded. They were not entirely to be blamed for that; their national teachers and their rulers knew no more of truth than they themselves; more significantly, none of them had been called to apostleship and none had been in the boat. However, with so little time left and such vital issues at stake, the Lord simply had to face everybody with reality. The times of national blessing were running out, Messianic providence must lead to recognition and acceptance of God in the midst of His people, otherwise the blessings must cease. The thing to be decided was not whether it was time for all men to serve God under Jesus' rule and guidance, but whether they would believe He was God and accept Him as God. They were all taken up with the miracle of the loaves, it was the latest sensation, but few, if any, had considered what it meant. They must though: all, including the apostles must make decisions and choices, so in His own masterly way He took charge of the situation and directed things to the end He had in view. Carefully He led the conversation round to a topic of vital historic importance which would provide Him with the perfect illustration for His purpose.

The latest sign was a live talking point among them, though neither the miracle nor the Lord had made the impression on them for which He had hoped. Whatever else it did, it did not prove to them that He was God, and that had been the whole point of it. Their reasoning followed a very normal pattern — their fathers had eaten miraculously supplied food in the desert, and not on just one occasion either; moreover they were not sitting on the grass at some seaside spot, they had eaten manna all the way across the wilderness for forty years. That did not prove that Moses was God though; he never made any such claims, how then could Jesus claim to be God when He had only provided them with one

meal? His answer to that was, 'Verily, verily;' He agreed with them. It seemed as though they had made their point and had shown Him His folly, but He had not finished — 'I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world'. Would they agree with that?

This was the crux of the matter, and He brought them right to it knowing full well that this would bring everything to a head; it did. The Jews immediately started to murmur at Him. They understood plainly now that He was not just claiming equality with Moses but something much, much more. If He had been content to let His reputation rest upon their estimation of Him all would have been at least well, if not completely acceptable, for there was a very real sense in which Moses was (a) god, for God had told him that He had made him a god to Pharaoh; but he never claimed to be God to Israel. Israel did not worship Moses as God, he had never wanted them to; if they had attempted to do so and he allowed it, God would have punished them for idolatry, and him for blasphemy and devilry. The apostles themselves were having difficulties with the same problem; they knew that if they accepted Jesus as God they would have to worship Him; they also knew that if it was wrong to do so they would be in sin, and so would He. Worse still, it would mean that the Pharisees were right and He was Beelzebub indeed as they said. When they had formerly enquired among themselves 'what manner of man is this?' it had been as much from reason as from fear. What made this human being more than human, what spirit addition did He have? From whence did that 'extra' come? Were He and His power of God, or was He of the devil? By this latest and greatest of miracles to date their problem had been resolved, but they were a mere handful; perhaps, other than His mother Mary, no one else knew who He was. This was the vital point that had to be settled by everyone though, so the apostles listened to the questions and answers with sympathy and understanding, and perhaps more than a little apprehension; something decisive would be bound to emerge.

It was evident that He was forcing the issue, the apostles could sense it; He had forced it upon them just previously in the midst of the sea, and they were glad. Somehow there seemed to be a new resoluteness about the Lord's manner; it appeared to have taken hold on Him since the miracle beyond the sea. He had been very firm about feeding the multitude — the way He had insisted upon it (He had made them search and search till they found the lad with the loaves and fishes), and then the way He had done it — everything about it had seemed so ordered and predetermined and unusual. His insistence that they should set off for the further shore, for instance, plus the fact that He would not go with them: that was not usual, they knew something was afoot, but could not tell what. It was all so plain now of course, they knew why He had gone up the mountain alone; it was not so much that He did not want to go with them or that He did not want them with Him, it was because He had to spend time alone with God over the matter of His self-revelation — first to His apostles and then to the rest of the people. He had reached crisis point and so had they, He knowingly and they unknowingly but just as really, hence His resoluteness. Those apostles felt He would never let things go now till the matter of who He was and who they believed Him to be (and accepted Him as) was cleared up — at least as far as was possible at that time.

His statements were unmistakable. He was making the people face up to truth. They had talked about manna, but as much as they venerated Moses they knew it was not He who gave their forefathers that bread from heaven, God did that. Surely they were guilty of putting Moses in the place of God weren't they? They were doing with Moses what they were accusing Jesus of doing with Himself, and by implication they were also accusing the apostles of being idolaters. They were totally wrong of course, wrong on every count, chiefly in that Moses was not God, and what God gave Israel was not bread, it was manna. It had to be gathered from the desert and converted into bread; every day except the sabbath they had to go out and gather it, they had to do it all for themselves. Ready-made bread had not come down from heaven, only the wherewithal to make it. Why then should they demand that He should come down from heaven bodily? They were being inconsistent. On the confession of Israel, manna was a mystery; they described it as seed and called it 'Man' ('na' should be written in italics), It was an acknowledgement on their part that they could only live by eating it; the manna became their life, they lived by it, without it they would have starved and died. Yet history proved that they were not grateful to God for it; they openly said they loathed it, calling it 'this light bread'.

True to their spiritual tradition, the Jews of Christ's day were objecting and refusing to accept what God was giving them. Contrary to their own national testimony, they were saying in effect, 'no-one saw you come down from heaven, you can't be God: we know that Joseph and Mary were your father and mother, you were born into the world just like the rest of us'. They would not receive the truth of His unique birth, even though their scriptures predicted it. They had convinced themselves that God was not His Father, that He was not born of the Holy Spirit, and that consequently the Father was not giving them the true bread from heaven; but He was. Jesus was God's bread, and He was sent down from heaven to be man's bread. Though of a different kind than manna, and given in a different way, He was God's seed; He had to be made bread by Mary, that is to say He had to be made flesh and blood by her in the normal way. The Jews and everybody else had and still have to accept that the flesh and blood Man Christ Jesus of history was and is God — I AM.

By the miracle He declared His identity and showed His intentions by making them eat what He provided from the original seed gift of the five loaves and two fishes. There was no alternative, they ate of Him and did so willingly; similarly everybody must accept what Jesus says about Himself, namely that He is both bread and meat and drink, and if any man wishes to live he must eat Him. Jesus is the Son of Man simply and solely because He is the Son of God, and He is the bread of man because He is the bread of God. No one has or can have God, unless in spirit He eats the flesh and drinks the blood of Jesus Christ; eternal living is only possible by reason of this food and drink. Christ's flesh and blood is the spiritual man's only sustenance; there is no other basic certainty that a man has eternal life than that he eats and drinks Christ. It would have been completely pointless of God to have given men eternal life without providing the food necessary to sustain it after it had been given; people must eat and drink to live. All food is eaten for that which it contains, not just for what it is; the food itself fills the stomach, its content imparts life. Jesus had not given them manna in the desert just across the sea; neither had He given them a vessel full of seeds — He gave them solid food. When He spoke of the bread of life He meant His eternal life lived out solidly and consistently in human flesh and blood. He could do so because He was both the Seed of God and the perfect human being; only the perfect Man is and can be perfect bread for mansoul.

This insistence that they must eat Him was provocative in the extreme to His hearers, yet He persisted with it, knowing full well that His words could only gender strife and lead to division. Everybody was under stress; even those who claimed to be disciples were feeling the strain, it was most severe and the break would surely come soon. The people at large and the majority of disciples had not received all the teaching or been put through such severe training as the apostles. How then could they be expected to know? Whoever then were the people to whom all this teaching about eating His flesh and drinking His blood was most pointedly directed? The apostles! It held meaning for everyone of course; where substance and sustenance of spiritual life is concerned there is no difference between man and man, but it was to the apostles that the Lord was chiefly directing the truth. In His wisdom He did not say these things to them privately as He had done on other occasions previously, but chose to say what He said publicly because He wanted the public to hear it also. There is always great wisdom in what the Lord does; His sense of occasion and timing is perfect. He was shortly going to leave the world and when He did so His apostles would find it utterly impossible to follow Him as they were doing at present, for He would no longer be visibly with them in a flesh and blood body. Being with Him everywhere and listening to His words the apostles, without knowing it, had, to the extent possible to them then, been eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Perhaps to have suggested that to them would have surprised them, but it is true — those men did not commit themselves to a cause or to mere words, but to Him. Without saying so, this is what He wanted and what He taught them from the beginning by the simple method of keeping them with Him.

Eat My Flesh and Drink My Blood

It naturally followed that they also embraced His cause as well as Him, but He made it unmistakably clear from the moment He chose them that their calling was to Himself, not to service or to a cause. So they followed Him, and as they followed He became meat and drink to them because they fed on His words and drank in the spirit of everything He said and all that His works indicated and meant. They probably did not know that at the time, nor that by His words and works He was actually speaking and working out His life, that is the life that was in Him, of which His flesh was the embodiment. His

words were His life, and because His life (that is He Himself) was in His flesh (that is to say in the flesh and blood body which men saw and followed and handled), when men devoured His words and drank in His Spirit and the glory of His works, they ate His flesh and drank His blood as well. The actual flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus was a manifestation of the word of God, it came into being as a result of God's word to and through Mary. Quite contrary to what spiritually minded men may think, they do and must feed on flesh and blood. Men must follow men; Paul realized this, and said 'Be ye followers of me, even as I also am. of Christ'. This is also the reason why men are called shepherds; they are the God-ordained leaders of the flocks of God, and we are under command to follow their faith. The flesh and blood bodies of these men are. of no moment: 'the flesh profiteth nothing,' as Christ says of His own body. We do not follow that; we follow what it embodies; in this connection it should be the embodiment of the man's faith, as was Christ's.

Undoubtedly when God pronounced that 'the life is in the blood,' and forbade man to drink it, He was speaking with all these things in mind — He would not have men drinking animal blood or human blood. But Christ, having commanded us to drink His blood, poured it all out on the ground precisely so that men should not drink it. Men must not imagine that they actually drink the physical blood and eat the actual flesh of Christ at the communion; the 'magic' of priestcraft is illusory — a deception deliberately practised against the declared will of God. We need to eat and drink the spiritual (that is the real eternal) life and person of Christ, whether at the communion or in the every day. To do so is the clearest if not the only acknowledgement and declaration of human faith and need; by this we declare that Jesus Christ is God and that Jesus of Nazareth was God manifest in the flesh for our initial salvation by sacrifice, and for our continual life by sustentation. These things must be for ever made clear, and unmistakably so, even at the risk of confusing some men's minds. Those apostles had got to confess publicly that He was God, and that they were following for that reason. Not for a moment did He ease the pressure; on the contrary He increased it, taking everybody beyond the bounds of human credulity or possibility. He left them no option; they must now take the leap of faith and come clear or drop back into unbelief.

It is amazing how much a man can do because he believes in someone or something. Every person listening to Jesus that day believed something about Him; what it was or to what degree, and what difference it made to each person's life, varied considerably no doubt, but they all believed something. Many of them had come a long way since they had first believed, but although they had come so far, they had not yet reached the point of faith and committal which God at some time requires of every believer. Mere believers must be disillusioned; they must either be galvanized into faith or else become disbelievers; He could no longer entertain hangers-on among His disciples. He therefore spoke the offensive words, and then asked, 'Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life'.

That did it. It was too hard for many of them to take; they could not walk with Him any more and just dropped out. It really was strong stuff, altogether too much for mere believers to accept; that is why He said it. When He had said, 'I came down from heaven,' they had not found it the easiest thing to accept, but when He suggested that there was a distinct possibility that they might see Him go back up to heaven bodily it was too much. But that was the final proof that He had indeed come down from heaven originally. He said it because people of mystical inclination might possibly have believed, irrationally enough, that in some metaphysical way He had come down from heaven. No one had witnessed it, but, despite its illogicality, to a certain extent that could perhaps be accepted by some; but there could be nothing metaphysical about ascending to heaven. Reason says that that is impossible, for there could be nothing metaphysical about that, it would have to be both bodily and physical. If He meant that He was going to ascend to heaven as He was, a human being of flesh and blood and bones, they couldn't believe it. They had either quite forgotten or were deliberately refusing to remember that their scriptures recorded that Elijah had ascended into heaven in a whirlwind, and that Enoch did not die but was taken directly up from earth to heaven by God. If some of them had remembered they may also have recalled that neither of those men had talked to their contemporaries about eating their flesh and drinking their blood.

When Jesus revealed that the secret source of His human spiritual life was the Father, and then said

that because this was so His flesh was to be the daily source and sustenance of men's lives, He was making statements far beyond the imagination of everybody else who had ever breathed. This was the ultimate claim to deity, and not just deity but unique deity. They firmly believed that God had occasionally come down to earth previously and that presumably He had ascended up again, but no one had seen that happen. Only one man had ever claimed to have seen another man caught up to heaven bodily, and that had been during the course of a very unique miracle. Had Elisha not seen Elijah caught up bodily it would have been presumed that he had just vanished like Enoch had done before him.. Quite obviously none of the prophets contemporary with Elisha had believed his story; they could accept the possibility that the Spirit of the Lord for some reason had caught up Elijah temporarily and then cast him on to a mountain somewhere, but it was just too hard for them to believe that God had taken him up to heaven. They went and searched for him but never found him, for God had indeed translated him straight up into heaven just as he was, a full-grown man. Elijah was a 'really great prophet and a terrific man; he suddenly appears in scripture without any mention of father or mother or kith or kin or birthplace, but it had never been claimed that he had come down from heaven.

Although in human terms Jesus' claims seemed excessive; they were absolutely true; they were also utterly unique. He knew when He made them that He was asking men and women to believe things which reasonable people had never before been expected to believe. His hearers were not superhuman; therefore, as politely as possible, without entering into any argument about it or causing any disturbance, people began to withdraw from Him. Knowing their difficulty, the Lord did not seek to detain or dissuade them but let them go. If they could not believe Him, especially about this, they were not the calibre of men He wanted for disciples. When He said such things as, 'except a man deny himself and take up the cross and follow me', and except a man take up his cross and follow me he cannot be my disciple', He had this kind of crisis situation in mind. He was not just talking about being persecuted and becoming an outcast of society, or a man marked out for death; these are perhaps the least and most bearable aspects of discipleship. He was meaning much more and far greater things than that; He was talking about self-crucifixion, that is the crucifixion of the will and of the mind, the deliberate choosing of God's will, the determination to receive and act upon God's word, even if it be totally contradictory of one's own thinking and expressed word.

Jesus expects every man to crucify his own fleshly lusts; his prior religious beliefs' and his personal interpretations of scripture must, if necessary, be put to death. The cross is total, the whole man in every realm of his spiritual being must be impaled on the cross and permanently affected by it. The cross is both the way to, and the means of, the release of the spirit from bonds of self, and the ascension of the soul to life in Christ. Those disciples listening to Jesus that day refused the cross and left Him; millions have done it ever since. Jesus, knowing that to men His bodily ascension to heaven would be proof of His deity, planned it to be public and visible; men would see Him rising from earth to heaven before their eyes. He would not be mysteriously taken in secret like Enoch, or suddenly whisked away like Elijah, unseen except by one devoted man. His ascension would be open and obvious, observed by accredited men appointed for that purpose, and it would' be attested to by the angels of God; when it happened it would be the final proof given by God at that time.

When Jesus said these things, to the majority of those who heard Him it was in the nature of the proverbial last straw that broke the camel's back. They knew that if He ascended up bodily to heaven, and was seen to do so, it would mean that He had also come down from heaven originally. This would leave them with no option but to believe that He had indeed been born of the virgin and that He was being accepted back, as well as up, to heaven, and that He was God. They therefore left Him, thereby giving notice prior to the event that they had rejected the claim. There were others, at least twelve, who received His testimony and stayed on with Him, thereby testifying of their faith in Him. They did not fully, or perhaps even partially, understand the mystery of the bread, as He later rather reprovably implied; but, even if they could not receive them as Spirit and Life at the time, His words had been very acceptable light to them. If nothing more, they were convinced that He was who He claimed to be; He challenged them though: 'Will ye also go away?' He asked. It was an hour of testing for Him as well as for everybody else. Would He lose everybody? To their eternal credit, in the crisis the apostles remained steadfast. With Him and for Him they had been through much in many places, hearing and doing and seeing many things, and they had made up their minds to follow on despite all. At last they

believed and were convinced that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, and they confessed it. Going even further Peter said, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life'. As usual he was speaking for them all. His words reached Jesus' heart, the truth was seeping into their minds; joy rose in His heart, 'have not I chosen you twelve?' He said, and then the sorrow came surging in, 'and one of you is a devil,' He added. What a response. It had been an attestation of loyalty, but Jesus knew that it was not true of them all. Judas was one of the Lord's chosen; selected and taught and sent out by Him on service with his fellow-apostles; he was a special man. Yet time would come when he would choose eternal death and not eternal life. Judas was a devil.

What a time it had been! The feeding of the multitudes had sparked off a train of events which were to have eternal effects, as well as mark the apostolic band for life. The miracle itself, tremendous as it was, had been the least remarkable of everything which had taken place within the last few hours. The events and effects resulting from the miracle were far more numerous and of greater importance altogether than the miracle itself. To name but two of these: (1) the first plain declaration by Jesus that He was God; (2) the first open disclosure by Jesus that the devil was already operating within the apostolic band. The first declaration, breathtaking though it was, could not have been so devastating to those men as the second must have been; that second revelation must have been shattering; all the more so because He did not say who the devil was. In His wisdom the Lord left each of those men to work it out himself. Even at the very end they had not discovered who the Lord was meaning: 'Lord, is it I?' they asked at the supper. What a dilemma! They must have been amazed and shocked, but Jesus had let the devil and Judas know that He was not deceived by them.

From its outset that day had been a time of very straight talking and hard sayings. In every relationship with Jesus the time always has to come for hard sayings and plain speaking. Sooner or later all men, especially apostles, have to face up to facts and see things as they really are; by Jesus' honesty with them those men had done just that. The glamour had gone, the popularity had passed, original attraction had deepened into committal; they knew what they wanted and where they were going and with whom they wanted to be. Peter had meant what he said. Although they had not yet entered into all the Lord meant them to have, they all understood in measure what He had been saying; many times as they had listened to His words they had been inwardly fed and built up and strengthened in their minds. Although many found His sayings difficult, the apostles grasped somewhat of what He meant about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. They had not been subjected to a voice like a trumpet speaking a barrage of words from heaven out of the weird firelight, as their fathers had been at Sinai. The voice to which they had responded was a man's, and the words coming from His mouth were His spirit and His life; He only spoke what He lived in the flesh, He was true bread for men, the bread of God supplied from heaven. The apostles feasted their souls on all they saw and heard.

Little wonder then that they had taken no bread with them when they crossed the sea a few days earlier. From the very beginning it was all planned right down to the last detail. Bread for the multitude could not be bought anywhere, even if the apostles had enough money — the search was on for bread. Out of all that great crowd only one lad was found with bread; he only had five barley loaves and two small fishes — what were they among so many? It was incredible, only one among that huge crowd with any bread. But of course! For the sake of the miracle it had to be that way, for he was not only going to share his bread with others; in his way he was also going to be an illustration of the One who is the bread of life to all. That is why the Lord was so adamant about the fragments that remained after they had all eaten. It could not have mattered so desperately much if some of the scraps were left lying around surely, but He said, 'let nothing be lost'. Those fragments represented His flesh, His blood, His words, Him — they must not be left for wild animals to eat or the birds to scavenge or the crowds to trample underfoot. For those who had eyes to see and ears to hear, everything was plain; in so many of its features the miracle was a parable.

The lad gave all to feed the multitude and so did Jesus. Wherever He was He spoke the words of God; they were the true expression of His soul, and because of that they were bread; His soul was bread. At a later date, standing in the temple at Jerusalem, the Lord carried this point further under another figure. This time He spoke of water, bidding men who were thirsty to come to Him and drink, promising them that, if they did so, rivers of living water would flow out of them. John assures us that

Jesus was speaking of the Spirit which they that believed on Him should receive when He had been glorified. What an amazingly new man He was! As they listened to Him the apostles' education on basic elements of human being and personality was altogether revolutionized and advanced, though it was by no means completed as yet. They learned that, when thinking in terms of human personality, spirit is to be regarded as water, even as soul is to be regarded as bread. They also learned that the sustenance, continuation and retention of eternal life in the human being is as vital as the reception of it. These were the things the Lord was majoring upon during this period of ministry. This truth was the main emphasis throughout His teachings, following the miracle of the loaves in the desert and the outpouring of the water in the temple: His strong insistence was upon flesh and blood and not upon soul and spirit; though perhaps surprising, this was necessary for very good reasons.

The Jews could speak all sorts of high-sounding words about soul and spirit in such a way that everything could become entirely unrelated to flesh and blood fact, and in the end come to nothing. The apostles had been in great danger of falling into this trap. This is why He kept them with Him so long before sending them out. They had to learn that, unless what they believed was manifest in (that is outworked through) the flesh, their faith was vain. The incident of the terrible storm on the lake was included in their training partly for this reason. They had implicit trust in Jesus; had they been asked they would have declared that they had great faith in Him, and the fact that ultimately they appealed to Him for help is undoubtedly proof of that. The miracle was wonderful when it happened, and the lessons to be learned from it are many and greatly beneficial to us all. Which of them is the most outstanding to us is perhaps not the easiest decision to make, but there is little doubt that to the apostles the greatest miracle of all was Jesus; their question — 'What manner of man is this?' reveals it. The thing that gripped them was that here was a man of the same kind of flesh and blood as they themselves, subject to the same conditions as they were, who did not react to those conditions in the same way as they did. To them that was the mystery and the majesty about Him. In the same way, though with a slightly different meaning, to Him that was the mystery about them also; that is why He said, 'Where is your faith?' and asked them why they were so fearful.

When it came to the test, the apostles' faith was found to be non-existent; it worked in neither realm. They were afraid of death: obviously their faith was not working spiritually: they could not affect their outward conditions, therefore it was not working in flesh and blood. The Lord's final word to them on the matter was, 'How is it that ye have no faith?' What a summary of their state! A later apostle said this, 'Great is the mystery of godliness', and then specified that mystery, 'God was manifest in the flesh'; he was speaking of Christ. Except we now positively eat and drink that flesh and blood manifestation of God, we have no spiritual life in us at all. For all human beings presently living on earth, the only eternal life and godliness we can possibly have is that which is manifest in the flesh. If it is not manifest there it is because it is non-existent, in which case faith is only an empty boast. This is why the Lord so insistently reiterated that men must eat His flesh and drink His blood. We must either accept God manifest in flesh with a view to Him being manifest in our flesh, or reject Him altogether.

The apostles had been coming to terms with this in their minds; they had accepted the truth of God in Christ, and Christ as the Son of God. What they had seen and were now seeing much more clearly, as a result of the feeding of the multitude and the things He had said since that occasion, was most convincing: He had told them to give the people to eat and had made them do it when they thought it was impossible. He had compelled them to act as shepherds and that was fine, but it was what He had said since then that was causing them so much thought. When He gave the people the food, He looked upon it as giving them His flesh and blood; so really did He give Himself that even in giving bread it was as though He gave His entire self, with the result that they ate of Himself. The power whereby He did the miracle and His thoughts towards them and the words He spoke, together with the love wherewith He loved them, all were identified in His heart with the food He gave; they were one, the bread and fish were the expression of all that.

The apostles saw that, since they had been selected to feed the flock, if they were to do it as He commanded they had to do it in the same way as He. It was not so much the miracle of the loaves, vital as that was; they would not be called upon to perform that same kind of miracle, but they would be expected by Him to feed the flock from their hearts; their flesh and blood must be in it just as His were. Having now considered the miracle in the context of who He was and all He had since said, they

understood it as He wished them to understand it, and they saw their total failure to measure up to their calling. The immensity of apostleship is that a man must so live that, when he gives whatever he gives or does or says, his whole soul and spirit and flesh and blood must be in it. In other words it must be an outworking of the twin commandments, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all ... and thy neighbour as thyself. So really did this truth grip those men that it changed their whole outlook on calling and ordination, and they felt that to be apostles they could do no other or less than He; this is how He viewed shepherding.

A typical example of this total change of understanding which came over these men is furnished by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles after the power to be and act as Jesus had come upon them. The very first miracle of the new era took place as a result of this revolutionary concept, and the truth of it is based upon this realization. Peter's whole approach to the man at the gate of the temple was, 'Such as I have give I thee,' Peter gave all he had and he gave it 'in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth'. Having given himself over, spirit, soul, flesh and blood, to Christ, he could and did give of his entire self to the unnamed man also. Peter and John were utterly identified with the gift and the Giver., and also with the man. That is how they had come to see it now; the miracle of the loaves was perhaps the Lord's most effective of all miracles, and most probably this is the reason why it is the only one recorded in all four Gospels. It was the miracle whereby He taught His apostles why He did miracles.

There can be little doubt that this is most probably the reason why all four Gospel writers included it in their accounts. It was a turning point in the life of everybody connected with the Lord in His earthly ministry, and it was the miracle whereby He taught His apostles why He did miracles. Its effect was not only local and immediate, it extends throughout all time also, and far beyond into eternity. Certainly it brought forth the Lord's most wonderful, as well as His most devastating teaching to date, it also brought the apostles to understanding and precipitate decision. Their knowledge and training were not completed thereby; by no means were they ready to become foundations in the Church; the Lord had not yet spoken to them about that, they were not yet ready for such disclosures. In any case they were not called, to be apostles of the Church: they had to be apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ. They would have a future position and function in His Church, a very important one, but it was not to be the most important by any means. Among men their role in the churches may appear to be so great that they may be held to be the important people, but in reality this is not so. Everything in Christ's Church is judged upon its merits; office only bears importance and power in relationship to the person filling it. That is decided entirely upon the quality of the relationship of that person to Jesus Christ, and his likeness to Him. This is what was decided during this episode; the apostles came to the conclusion that Jesus was God manifest in flesh. That settled, they were ready for further training, and their Lord took them on into it.

Chapter 11 — WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING

Apostles in the Making

One of the most noticeable things about the language of the four Gospel-writers is its unpretentiousness; what humble men they were after the Holy Ghost had come to them. In nothing is this more marked than with regard to their attitude towards the use of the word apostle: the name is comparatively little used throughout the whole length of the Gospels. This is both surprising and remarkable when it is remembered that two of the four Gospels were written by apostles, and the other two by authors in close touch with the apostolic band. From internal evidence it is plain that, rather than to be called apostles, these men much preferred the general title disciple. This is possibly because the name is more closely associated with following than the word apostles suggests, but more likely it is because their own hearts and the overshadowing Spirit preferred the humbler title; it is a description far more suited to their state at that time. It is also an indication that, whether called disciple or apostle, all who devotedly followed Christ on earth were classed as His disciples; titles, as such, meant very little then, and the passage of time has not improved their worth.

Apostles were really chosen and entitled by the Lord for the position they should hold and the work they should do when He left the earth. To a degree they occasionally fulfilled the meaning of the name during Christ's ministry here, but not properly; they could not, they were not able to because Christ was not in them. His purpose at that time was to lead them on to that event, namely the baptism in the

Spirit, whereby He could indwell each of them and make him an apostle indeed. Before then the thing that marked them out as being different from their fellow disciples was the extra training which Christ gave them. He selected them for this, and devoted Himself to it, preparing them for the positions they would hold in the future after they were regenerate and could live in the same Spirit in which He lived.

Mark is very careful to emphasize this, and takes up the events surrounding the miracle of the loaves and fishes to make the point. He refers first to 'His disciples', then to 'the twelve', saying, 'He began to send them forth'; not yet in this section has he directly called them apostles. Upon their return, when they 'gathered themselves together unto Jesus', he does directly call them apostles, only to fall back again later upon the general term, calling them 'the disciples' once more, and this is the way he continues. Mark is not alone in this; both Matthew and Luke hardly use the name apostle in their Gospels, and John ignores it altogether in his. They all prefer the name disciple, for the simple reason that the apostles, during Christ's ministerial life on earth, were not apostles in the truest sense, nor could they properly fill the office that the name denotes.

Mark helps us to a closer understanding of the many reasons for this, mentioning one of the most outstanding of these which was so strongly brought out in the moment of Christ's self-revelation to them on the sea. The terrible fear that gripped the twelve disciples in the ship at the coming of their God, Jesus, was caused entirely by two things: (1) they had not understood nor had they considered the miracle of the loaves; (2) their hearts were hard. This is a most enlightening piece of information, a unique comment on the miracle. This confirms that, like so many of Christ's works, this was a sign-miracle, that is, a miracle with parabolic meaning. So many of the miraculous works which Jesus did were signs deliberately given, pointing to something far more wonderful than the miracle itself, directing the mind to certain conclusions important for them to believe. This implies that, had the apostles understood the meaning of it, that self-revelatory episode on the sea might not have been necessary. It appears from this that the miracle was specially suited (if not purposely designed) by the Lord to His purpose to reveal to them who He was, and they had not grasped its meaning. This is all the more sad because, as He had said to them, it was given to them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Obviously they had not availed themselves of the gift; the blindness and hardness of their hearts had prevented it and, even in the face of such a miracle, they were still without understanding; they completely missed the sign. How extraordinary it is that mighty miracles and works of power, even if they be performed by men themselves, have no ability to convince hearts of deity. Neither those who observe them nor those who benefit from them nor they who do them become convinced thereby that God is, in this case God manifest in flesh and at work among them. The apostles were not really apostles then; they were disciples, but not yet apostles, for apostles know God.

The Spirit of God moving in Mark, directing him, draws his attention next to the effects of the ex-Legion's testimony in Gadara. Mark does not dwell upon Christ's exposition of His deity to those who had benefitted from the miracle of the loaves, instead he points out what witness to Christ in a hostile world can do. The apostles (so-called) who were with Christ all the time, were unbelievers, (at least as far as the most vital ground for believing was concerned, namely that Jesus was the Son of God) but the Gadarene knew and believed who Jesus was immediately he saw Him. This man had not even been a follower and disciple of Christ, he had not had the favours and privileges that had been heaped upon those twelve men by Christ, yet, without all the opportunities they had of gaining knowledge of Christ, he, not they, knew that He was the Son of the most high God. That is why the Lord left him behind at Gadara to be His witness.

The man was far more advanced in knowledge than any of the apostles; despite all their advantages they were still so ignorant of His person that He dare not leave any of them on the hostile shore to be a witness unto Him. They had left all to follow Him, had eaten and drunk with Him, had baptized people in His name, preached the gospel, healed the sick, served Him and were called apostles; yet He could not leave or send one of them to be His witness among the Gadarenes. When He had sent them out He sent them two by two, but He sent the ex-Legion alone, and single-handed he turned many to Christ. There they were lining the shore, waiting for Him to come, eager to receive Him; people who earlier had been fearful and hostile, begging Him to go away, now wanted Him. Why? How? Because a man knew that Jesus was the Son of God most high, and had said so before Him and His apostles, and had been delivered and healed because of it.

As Alive From the Dead

The great and obvious lesson for all to learn is that the ex-Legion was, to his countrymen and to all, a type of a man raised from the dead, a regenerate man. He had been living among the dead, filled with a living death, existing among the tombs, and Jesus Christ the Son of God had come and made him a proper man; he was a witness unto Him. He later said to His apostles 'after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you ... ye shall be witnesses unto me'; when He said it they were not yet witnesses to Him. They were not witnesses to Him at Gadara either, so He took them away and left behind the man who was a witness to Him. The saddest thing about those apostles was that, only just a few hours before He died, at least one, if not all of them, still did not know Him: 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?' He said in the upper room — the ex-Legion knew who He was the first time he met Him: what a contrast! And he was not an apostle; but as the Lord said, 'by their fruits ye shall know them'. The lesson every man is to learn is that lack of understanding, unless rectified, renders a man unusable by the Lord. The apostles seemed at times to be unable to grasp the meaning of even the simplest of things.

The miracle of the loaves was such an important sign that some time later the Lord virtually repeated it. The effect on the disciples was to leave them still unchanged though, and consequently the Lord found it impossible to hide His disappointment: 'How is it that ye do not understand?' He said. He was not exasperated with them, but reasonably enough He was greatly disappointed at their obtuseness; it was amazing to Him. If a man filled with devils, a stranger, could recognize Him, and being delivered could witness to Him among his people with such effect, how was it that twelve men, specially chosen by God to live with Him, could be so ignorant?

Not only were they ignorant, it appears that they were also very mixed up, for they completely misunderstood a simple statement the Lord made, even though He had particularly said they should hear and understand it. They so failed to grasp the plain, simple truth He spoke that they thought it could only be a parable, and asked Him to explain it to them. He began His answer to them with these words, 'Are ye so without understanding also?' He expected them to understand. Had He been asked to describe the state of the people at that time He may well have answered, 'they are so without understanding', but He did not want to have to say that about His apostles also, yet He did, He just had to.

Long before this He had told them that parables were not for them but for the people; they, the apostles, did not need them, He said. To apostles it was given to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but events proved otherwise, they did not understand them. This was a case in point; they did not understand that nothing which enters a man from without can defile him, or that a man is defiled by the things which come out of him. Those apostles were looking for hidden meanings where there were none and failing to see the signs indicating hidden meanings when those signs were plain for them to see. At that period of their training it appears they could scarcely, if at all, detect the difference between the parabolic, the literal, the material, and the spiritual.

A Special Sign

John, in his Gospel, records very few miracles; those he does record are all sign miracles; he leaves out all others as though he considered them all to be at least of less importance, if not unimportant. Noting this degree of selectivity, it must surely be that when he wrote it he looked back upon his trainee period with a regret that was very real indeed. Being one of the chosen twelve he had been deliberately involved by the Lord with his fellow apostles in the miracle of the loaves. It was a very special miracle in a way that the generality of non-sign miracles were not. The miracle was not only very special for that reason alone, it was important in that both it and another like it were the only miracles in which the apostles had a part. That of itself should have been sufficient to have made them aware that something out of the ordinary was taking place; it should have been a sign to them, but alas, at that time it was not.

The Lord repeated the miracle for a reason, and it is difficult to escape the thought that the reason was His deliberate inclusion of the apostles in the distribution of the food if not in the actual process of the miracle. It is certain that the Lord repeated some of His miracles over and over again as He discovered

identical needs in different parts of the land, but in none of them did He involve His apostles as co-workers in the miracles in the same way. The distinctive feature about this particular miracle was that the Lord did not do it in response to faith but as an act of bounteous love; it was sheer grace. If Christ had not fed them, the people on each occasion could have gone off somewhere and found food eventually if not immediately. Some may have fainted by the way and that concerned Him, but no one would have died as a result of it. They would have continued hungry a little longer, and might perhaps have wondered why someone with such power had not had pity on them, but nothing much worse than that. In any case a day's abstinence or a few days' fast from eating would have done no one any harm. Why then did He do it and do it that way? He was giving everybody, especially the apostles, a sign of particular importance.

It is a feature of Biblical writings that, when repetition of anything is made it is for the purpose of emphasis. This is particularly a feature of the Hebrew language and style. The Lord Jesus was by human birth and culture a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a master of the Hebrew idiom and, upon occasion, when making an emphasis He employed this method of speech. John cites occasions when the Lord said, 'Verily, verily', and by the double affirmative made people realize that, in His eyes, the thing He was saying was most important. We see then that by doubling up on the sign of feeding the multitudes the Lord was endeavouring to teach the apostles, and even the multitudes involved, a most vital truth.

This truth is made the more important to everybody when it is realized that in no other case did He repeat any of His signs. This fact, when considered, is of itself really significant, but when it is taken into account that the second feeding of the multitudes took place at a time when the Pharisees were seeking a sign from heaven it becomes of greater significance still. Whether they were genuine or not, the Pharisees were seeking something from the Lord (they called it a sign), which would satisfy them that He was genuine: He gave them nothing; He had already given to His apostles and everyone present upon the occasion a sign from heaven and all who had eyes to see could have been greatly enlightened and deeply instructed by the miracle. This is why He sighed so deeply in His spirit when He was asked for a sign: the whole generation was seeking one, but they were only willing to accept what they thought to be a sign; the ones He gave they never saw.

Blind and Deaf

The most disturbing thing to the Lord about the whole affair was that the apostles did not see the signs He gave either. When they are considered, the things He said to them, either in the ship or on the shore when they landed, reveal that a very serious spiritual condition existed among those men. The Lord virtually charged them with being blind, deaf, unable to reason properly, incapable of remembering even the most recent happenings, having no understanding (this He repeated) and being inexcusably hard of heart. These things were put to them in the form of questions which perhaps lessened the force of their impact, but His words must have gone deep. He intended them to, they came from the deep of His being and He wanted to reach theirs.

At times like these it is with gratitude that we read Mark's kindly description of the twelve — disciples; save in name and the fact that they had, been sent out once to the people they certainly were not apostles, that is, men most nearly in the mould of Christ. Men of the condition implicit in the Lord's words are not apostles; apostle was a name for the future; the twelve were chosen beforehand, by sovereign determination and with foreknowledge. At that time they still belonged to and lived in the condition of that generation, not the regeneration. The Lord knew that, but He was human enough to be saddened by it, and tried once more to show them their state and how different they yet must become. Landing at Bethsaida once again He did another of His most mighty works for which the place became famous.

Chapter 12 — BETHSAIDA

The Blind Man

Bethsaida, it seems, was one of the fishing ports from which Jesus often set sail, and to which, after a while, He returned. Almost certainly whenever He put out to sea He was accompanied only by the twelve; He did this quite purposely, taking advantage of the opportunity to turn the ship into a

teaching class and, upon such occasions, the sea became a great training ground for the apostles. Thus it was that, stepping ashore at Bethsaida with His men one day, the Lord took advantage of a blind man's need to demonstrate to the apostles something of their own condition. The miracle the Lord performed on this occasion was indeed a peculiar one. It was not a clear-cut miracle like the one by which, with a word, He gave Bartimaeus instantaneous sight; this was a two-stage miracle of a strange character. First He spat on the man's eyes and then laid His hands on him, the result was that the man could see, but he did not see the truth: he saw men as trees walking. He had sight but something was very wrong with his vision: he could see but he could not see aright. Hearing the man's incorrect description of his fellow men, the Lord laid His hands on the man's eyes again and this time his vision was corrected; he could see things as they were.

Following this ministry the Lord's words to the man strengthen the conclusion that He probably did the work in two stages for the sake of the men standing by watching and listening. Jesus told him to go to his own house and not to go into the town of Bethsaida, or tell any man what had happened to him. That may seem a strange command, for how could a thing like that remain hidden? But the Lord knew He was dealing with a people fast becoming satiated with miracles and sensations and this was not for their good. This latest of them, being new and so different, would only provide them with a further talking point; besides it was not intended for them but for His disciples: He wanted them to see the point of the miracle and read its meaning.

A phrase of Paul's may be very applicable to the condition of the apostles at that time: 'Blindness in part is happened to Israel ...'. It is a very significant statement, seeing that it was made by a man who, while on a journey to Damascus in time past, had himself been blinded by the Light of the Lord. Those apostles had received some degree of knowledge and understanding, perhaps as much as any unregenerate man could be expected to have under the circumstances. Perhaps they saw the Man Christ Jesus as a walking tree; who knows? Certain it is that, more than all other men, they had some light and had more vision, but they, needed the Lord to do something more for them so that they could see and understand properly. As that depended entirely on Him they could do little about it; they just had to wait until their Lord's mission to Israel was completed. When that was accomplished He would be free to get on with the mission closest to His heart, namely building His Church. Then the apostles would be translated into the kingdom of God and made apostles indeed, foundational men upon whom Christ could build His Church. Until then they must be with Him and labour as His servants, only half conscious of spiritual things in the kingdom of heaven on earth.

In that condition they had failed to see the truth which the Lord later sought to demonstrate to them by the two miracles of the loaves. Upon both occasions, by what He did in the present He had tried to make clear to them what their position would be in the future. When the loaves at last lay in the hands of the Lord, and He was standing in the midst of His apostles who were grouped around Him before the whole multitude, everyone there knew that something extraordinary had to happen. Even though He did a miracle, (and they knew He was quite capable of that), if He was going to feed them He still had to get the food to them. How was he going to do that? There were thousands of them, and there were precious few hours of daylight left. He certainly couldn't walk to each one and give them each enough to eat, even if He ran He couldn't do it. Would He do it by securing their help and getting them to pass the food to each other row by row, or from front to back? But that too was out of the question time-wise; it was possible, but certainly not practicable. They just had to wait and see.

They did, but how much of the miracle they saw is not known. It was not to be a direct miracle to each of them from the hands of Christ; He 'had planned it otherwise: the miracle and the miraculous food was mediated to them through the hands of the apostles. Whatever the multitudes understood by the continuous miracle is not known, and what the apostles saw more than the crowds is equally unknown, but what the Lord expected them to understand from it is surely this: that, besides being a miracle of breathtaking proportions, it was a kind of preview of what was going to happen later.

The True Bread

When He had left the earth and they received life and power from above and became apostles indeed, they would also receive revelation from Him of a nature and quality not given directly to ordinary men. With this they must feed the children of God, it was to be their staple diet, as bread and fish was

staple diet to the ordinary man's physical life. They could not give that life, but they must nourish and feed it in whomsoever it was manifest. They were to receive directly from Him the revelation and doctrine of the Church, which He had been unable to give to them or to the multitudes while on earth. It would be instantaneous, continuous and spontaneous, and must be ministered in abundance; they must give as freely as they would receive, without fear that anything would be lost. That they failed to understand this as they fed the people that day in the wilderness is only to be expected, the Holy Spirit was not yet given to them; nevertheless the Lord was very disappointed with them at that time.

He was looking into the future, and was very concerned about the kind of bread they should minister to the people when He left the earth; it must be the right kind of bread. The apostles themselves must make sure that they ate the right food; in particular they must beware of the doctrine of the Pharisees. Doctrine works in a man like leaven works in dough. By substituting the word doctrine for the word leaven He made clear to them what He meant by leaven, and laid down for all time how the figure should be interpreted. The leaven in the bread they were to feed to the multitudes was to be the doctrine of Christ: He is both the bread and His doctrine is also the leaven in the bread. It is the leaven that makes the bread what it is, causing it to rise, transforming it from a flat piece of dough into a loaf. But they did not seem to understand the significance of these things, which was a grief to His heart, hence the miracle at Bethsaida which proceeded from sightlessness to partial sight and distorted vision to full sight and corrected vision. It was both a sign to them of their present state, and a surety that one day, now not so very far off, it would be rectified.

There was also another thing He might have hoped they would not miss (though He probably did not expect them to understand it then) namely this: the source of the loaves. The apostles themselves supplied the loaves this second time, not a lad in the crowd. Nothing whatsoever was borrowed from the people this time; the Lord took the bread from the apostles, the bread was theirs and His, they lived communally and shared their food; they had seven loaves between them, conditions were perfect. When He and they had fed the five thousand the main emphasis was grace, that is why five, the number of grace, is so prominent: five loaves, one hundred groups of fifty. This time the emphasis is upon the number seven, the number indicating perfection. The multitudes were fed by the Lord and the apostles as from themselves alone the second time; it was perfect, just as He wished it. That is, exactly in accordance with His plans for Himself and His apostles regarding future ministry in His Church.

Chapter 13 — CAESAREA PHILIPPI

Whom Say Ye that I Am?

How amazingly everything developed according to plan in the scheme of teaching and training the Lord had in mind for His men. Having brought them thus far, and having shown them their distorted view of things, He moved off from Bethsaida into Caesarea Philippi. There He put to them the question, 'Whom do men say that I am?' Having received their answers He followed it by another much more vital question: 'Whom say ye that I am?' The answer to the first question was varied, and though indicative of the multitudes' guesses, was largely immaterial at the moment, though not inconsequential in the long run. What the people thought did matter in view of the subject He was about to raise with the apostles, namely His crucifixion, but His immediate concern was the answer the apostles would give to His question. Speaking for all of his companions, Peter said, 'Thou art the Christ'. As far as it went the answer was correct enough, He was the Christ, but, upon hearing it, His heart must still have been tinged with sadness. The revelation He had made to them on the sea was greater than that; He also knew that their understanding of Christhood, like their understanding of apostleship, was very limited indeed. Their knowledge of Christ was according to the flesh, they did not know Him according to the Spirit.

Even after His crucifixion and resurrection His conversation with two of His disciples revealed the dismally low and limited hope they had in their Messiah; it was all so very earthly, fleshly and materialistic. When therefore Peter voiced the apostles' conviction about Him, He knew exactly where He stood with them, and what they anticipated from Him, and could not but have felt disappointed. They were still either very doubtful or very fearful about Him, or both; what Peter said was only a repetition of what they had said following His discourse on the bread of life after the first miracle of the

loaves, yet on the sea that night He had told them plainly that He was I AM. Doing so He had committed Himself to them, but they were not prepared to commit themselves to Him. Had they done so all would have been well; not one of them need fear that any confession he made to Him or about Him before the company would be leaked by Him. He charged them that they should not tell any man of Him, and having given them such a charge He would certainly not betray their secret. The doubt was whether they would keep His, especially in relation to what He was going to say next; the real reason for His coming and their calling lay in His next sentence.

Contrary to the rosy hopes and false ideas and expectations they entertained of the kingdom, the Christ they followed was the Son of Man who had come to suffer at the hands of men. He must be rejected, He said, killed even, and after three days He would rise again; not as from Bethlehem or Nazareth this time, but from the dead. It was shattering to them, and for the first time an apostle turned on Him and rebuked Him: it was a really bad time in everybody's experience. The release of the secret had just the effect to be expected, but it was necessary to them, this was their only hope; they had no possible hope of becoming real apostles in the kingdom of God and Church of Christ except He should die and rise again, yet they rebelled against it. He had no recourse but to rebuke Peter, he really had gone too far; he was an apostle-elect, the first named of the twelve, and the self-appointed spokesman for the band, and what a band they were! One was a devil, one had been called satan, and one at least was a chronic doubter; what the rest were we may only guess. Whatever was He going to make of a company like this? Without the cross to which they all so heartily objected, nothing much at all! The plight of Peter at that moment was parlous, without hesitation Christ called him satan. It was a devastating thing to say, but it was true. Peter, like Lucifer, was the first called — Lucifer of the angels, Peter of the apostles; Lucifer was a leader, so was Peter. There was difference between them though: Lucifer knew what he was doing, Peter did not; Lucifer acted deliberately, Peter did not; therefore Peter was not cast out as was Lucifer, but was put behind for a while.

The Real Cross

Everything was all right with the apostles all the time the Lord used the cross figuratively, they were quite prepared to accept it as a symbol of death and rejection; after all He was bearing it Himself: if that was the price of being with Him, then so be it, they were not cowards. But actual suffering and rejection and crucifixion was a different thing altogether: talk about rising again from the dead afterwards left them unimpressed. At that moment, to the Son of Man, the apostles were just about the same as every other man, they looked and talked like the rest. To them He was Christ, but not I AM, He was wrong not right, worthy of rebuke and not praise. The revelation of His crucifixion and resurrection, which should have been the mountain peak of all truth to the apostles, was regarded by them as being the complete opposite — they felt it just could not be true, but it was. Commanding Peter with his satanic suggestion to get behind Him, He called the people and His disciples together and began to preach to the whole company. The time had not yet come for the truth of the cross to be preached to the masses, it was as much for them as for the apostles, but the people were not ready for that yet.

The things that had to be destroyed from the minds of the apostles were the ideas associated with their interpretation of His Christhood; unless that was done they would never get the concept of apostleship right. They thought He had come to save them all from Roman domination and to set up a Messianic kingdom on earth; in short they wanted Him to head an insurrection and take back the land from the Romans for Himself and His people. He killed that idea completely when he said, 'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' Far from wanting to gain the land and all the people in it, He wanted to keep His own soul. He did not think as they did: He knew that the world could not be gained unless He accepted the cross; if He refused that and evaded crucifixion, His own soul and everybody else's would be lost. The trainee apostles had to learn that, and understand that they could not be His disciples, leave alone apostles, unless they took up the cross; He said that to save self, that is to keep the soul from the instantaneous and permanent death of the cross, is to lose life altogether.

No soul can have salvation unless it accepts both the shame and the discipline of the cross permanently. The Lord was vehement about this; He knew His words were devastating to His hearers, cutting across all their imaginations about the kingdom of heaven and shattering their fond dreams about His

Messianic mission. This was His deliberate intention, and He pressed on to His next shocking statement which must have stunned them all, none more than Peter. This entire generation was adulterous and sinful, He said, and if any one of them was ashamed of Him and of His words, of him the Son of Man would be ashamed when He came in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. With that he closed the session; what more was there to say? In a space of about five minutes the Lord had disillusioned them about Himself and Israel's grandeur: their hopes had been raised only to be dashed because they were false hopes. He left them bruised and bitter, smarting under His accusations, and sure of at least one thing if not more — He was not going to be king over a lot of adulterers. They were married to their own ideas, but their ideas were misconceptions based upon misinterpretations of scripture — they had divorced themselves from God and were later to declare it openly.

Crisis point had been reached; that must have been obvious to all, especially the apostles. Had those men been ashamed of Him and what He had just said? If they were, how mixed up and confused they must have been; if not, why did Peter rebuke Him? Poor Peter, it is not the easiest or most desirable thing to be spokesman for a group; the position is often thrust upon a man by other people's default rather than by personal choice. The Lord knew everything about it though, He loved Peter despite his blindness and was already planning to restore his soul. The time had come for Him to make yet another of His exclusive revelations about Himself, the third in series. This one, He decided, though as important to them all as the other two were, should be even more exclusive than they had been — it should not be to all the people, nor to all His apostles, but only to the chosen three. A little earlier He had spoken quite openly before all of His Father's glory and had said that He would come in it; but, as usual, nobody had the least idea what he was talking about.

The True Glory

What is glory? Unless one of the shepherds who saw the glory on the plains of Bethlehem was there, none of them had ever seen it. The word was in use among them and they had a hazy idea of what was meant by it, but who knew what glory was or could define it? The priests in the temple talked about it, the scriptures mentioned it, but no one knew what it was or could describe it. When He said He would be coming in His Father's glory what did that mean? Without conceding anything to popular inquisitiveness, the Lord decided to let at least three of His apostles have a glimpse into the background of what He was talking about. Peter, the spokesman, being one of the three, was included in His intentions, and this would in some measure be a gesture of love towards him: it had been a nasty blow to be told that he was satan and put behind the Lord's back. To be included still in the Lord's special choice would assure him that his Lord was not petty or easily offended. The Lord had left him in no doubt that he had offended Him and hurt His feelings; this must have made Peter realize that the cross, with its sufferings and death leading to His resurrection, must be of the greatest importance to Him.

It is doubtful whether Peter and all the other apostles connected these things with the Lord's mysterious words about coming in the glory of His Father with the holy angels. If he and they had made the connection it is most likely that their conclusions about its timing would have been wrong, for even after the Lord's death and resurrection they were still hoping for a great national coup to take place; but it did not. The Lord was not after that kind of glory. When the Lord spoke about glory He meant and spoke of His Father's glory, not earthly glory. Before he could come in Father's glory something else was scheduled to take place on earth first — the kingdom of God must come with power. Knowing this, the Lord passed on immediately from talking of future coming glory to an imminent coming kingdom; the former could not be yet, nor must they hope to see it happen now, but the latter must soon be established, and they could expect to see it and be in it.

Some of them standing around Him as He said these things would not taste of death until they saw the kingdom of God come with power, He assured them. Some of them? Why not all of them? Why did He not say they would all be in this? He would have loved to have said so, but if He had it would not have been true. He was looking out over a very mixed multitude, and He knew that some of them would taste of death before they saw the kingdom of God come with power. To Him it was tragic that some standing there would never see it at all, either before or after they tasted of death, for to see the kingdom of God a man must be born from above. All who heard Him, if they lived long enough, would see the coming and going of the historic date set for the establishment of the kingdom of God in power on the earth, but not all would enter into it, for not all would desire to be born again. The Lord knew

that He was talking to the people in riddles, it was unavoidable; if He had spoken to them any more plainly they would not have understood it any better. Nicodemus, their great and honoured teacher who came to Him in the beginning, had not been able to grasp what He told him; the more He went into detail with him the more mixed up Nicodemus had become. The Lord felt He might expect His apostles to grasp something of what He said though, for He had told them at the beginning that it was given to them to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of God: they were the privileged ones.

The True Power

The Lord had carefully led them along to this point, telling them that the kingdom of God was like this or that. They had not heard what He had said to Nicodemus though, and He knew that this latest statement would set their minds, if not their tongues, working hard. What did He mean by 'come with power'? If it was not already here how could He have expected them to understand Him when He said it is like this or that? Was it still future after all? Anyway they had power, He had given it them, and by it they had gone forth at His bidding to establish kingdom of heaven conditions in the land; hadn't the kingdom of God come to Israel with power then? If so, was He talking of a different kind of power? Or, if it was the same power, was it to be revealed in a new way, accomplishing new things and directed unto far greater ends? It was difficult to define it or phrase the question, but was it to be THE POWER as compared with power, that is the power they already had? Power unlimited, God's power exercised by God alone? They believed stoutly that the power they had been given by Christ was God's power, but they had discovered that it was very limited in them, they had not been able to accomplish with it what they had seen Him do. Whatever else they may have thought about this power, the Lord knew that it had not accomplished in them what they most needed, the birth-power had not come upon them, and that is the greatest power of all

Obviously too there was a greater power than they had ever known, the power of a greater person, whose power was far, far greater than power to perform miracles: the power to be, and be the person He is, the power of I AM: THE POWER. The apostles could recall the moment on the stormy sea when Christ had revealed to them for the first time that he was I AM. With the announcement He gave such a demonstration of power which convinced them that He had only told them to cross the sea for that purpose. As soon as He came into the ship the wind ceased and in a moment of time they were transported, ship and all, to their destination. It was an incredible miracle, almost an unnecessary one; it was entirely gratuitous; there was no need for them to be transported in an instant to Bethsaida. With Him in the boat and the sea calm, they could easily have got to shore; the only explanation is that the I AM-God was with them and THE POWER. But they knew nothing as yet as they ought to have known, nor had they seen the kingdom of God as He saw it, and as they should shortly see it; they were not yet in it, nor could they be until it came.

How gracious the Lord was with His men. Although they did not know it, He was actually taking them through another series of teachings; this time the course comprised four lessons. To be with Him was always to learn, but at times He gave particular attention to teaching them things vital to future Church doctrine; this was such a period. Although by this time He had introduced to them His intention to build His Church, He did not tell them that they were now to be instructed in truth related to it; that was not His method of teaching; He did not run a college with set classes, nor did He publish a curriculum of lessons: He simply opened His heart to them as they continued with Him on His itinerary. The sad thing was that as soon as He mentioned to them the very first of the four subjects, namely His crucifixion and resurrection, He was rebuked, but this did not deter Him. He passed on straightway to the next point He wanted them to grasp, namely His second coming. He did not fill in all the details, now so well known, but without actually saying so He nominated the two major events within which the Church age should be comprehended. From that again, without using words, He passed on to speak of the day when the Church would actually be founded on earth, that is the day of Pentecost. On that day the Holy Spirit would come and the kingdom of God would be established with power in people's lives. Some of them would live to see that, He said. He would die and rise again and go home to His Father and glory, and there He would stay until an unannounced future day; but in place of Him the Holy Spirit would come and stay, that Christ's Church could be born and built in Him.

Chapter 14 — THE HOLY MOUNT

The Privileged Three

The Lord rounded off this series of revelations with one of those lovely touches, so characteristic of Him — a glimpse into the kingdom of God, including a revelation of Himself and the glory into which He should pass when He left the earth following His resurrection. This was a more exclusive revelation, which for His own reasons He granted only to the three selected apostles.

This revelation was wonderful in the extreme, and must have been a real eye-opener to the men. Although given only to the chosen trio, this was the third in the series of revelations of Himself to His apostles. It was not the last though; there was another one to come, but that was reserved until after the resurrection. Like the first two, this last would be made to all the apostles, but this particular one was not made known to all, and by His orders it was not to be told them until after He rose from the dead. It was now quite obvious to the rest of the twelve that, by selecting these three only to accompany Him on special occasions, the Lord was saying something of real significance to them all. Although there is no hint of jealousy or even of discontent among the nine about it, this constant seeming preference for Peter, James and John must have seemed strange. What was He trying to tell them by it? They all knew that the Lord never did anything in a haphazard way; whatever He said or did was Spirit and Life. As He said when He had fed the multitudes, nothing must be lost, everything had significance and importance and meaning.

They were all aware by now that He was going to be crucified, that He would rise from the dead, and that He was going to build a Church for Himself: not all the powers of hell would stop Him; He had made that clear to them. They also knew that the kingdom of God was going to come with power and that some of them would see that happen (not all of them — Judas Iscariot committed suicide before it came); but no one knew why He had selected Peter, James and John for special knowledge, nor did they know what that special knowledge was to be. Were they special men, supermen of a kind? Were they greater in themselves than other men, and therefore deserving to be privileged beyond their fellows? Nobody ever claimed that they were; certainly they themselves never thought so, neither did Christ say so. Paul later observed and said that they appeared to be pillars of the church at Jerusalem, but nothing further is said along that line to imply that they were to any degree men of different nature, deserving to be exalted above their brethren; they were just men. Yet the Lord, by His constant preferential treatment of them, might have been thought to be showing partiality and displaying unwarrantable favouritism among His apostles.

This was not so and they all knew it, for although they all had to be reproved by Him at times, none came under His rebuke and criticism as severely as those three. James and John were once told that they did not know what spirit they were of, and were surnamed 'sons of thunder', while Peter was openly called satan. Those three men were no better than the rest of them, they might even have been called the worst, so they were not specially selected and granted sights, if not insights, because they merited them more than the others. Perhaps their brethren were annoyed at their reluctance to speak of the things revealed to them by the Lord and wondered at their silence, they would have been superhuman if not; but they kept His secrets and earned their brethren's respect. Had they been asked, the trio would not have been able to give a reason for being so honoured by the Lord, for He never told them why He did it; beyond saying that it was His will there was nothing to say. The Lord was saying something by it though; He had been saying it right from the beginning.

After spending that night alone in communion with His Father, He emerged in the freshness of the morning as a man with His mind made up, clearly determined on a certain course as those disciples well knew. They did not know what decisions had been made on that mountain; all they knew was that He called out the names of twelve men who He wanted to be with Him. He called the names of Peter, James and John first and that was very significant; had they known it, He was making known His intentions to them all then. As with so much that He said and did, the order of His choice was full of meaning; that trio was to be to them all as a parable. Gradually he brought those three into prominence among the apostles, it was as if He forged them into one. Their names were linked together almost as one, as links in a chain almost; nobody else quite knew why, but He did. Nobody on earth knew what was in His heart, or saw the vision of the Church so dear to Him; nor did those apostles,

including the famous trio, realize that their fullest and truest function would be in the Church, not in Israel. Least of all did they know that by these three men the Lord intended to reveal facts about God hitherto unrevealed.

The apostles knew that there was one God, and that being one He was also first. They also knew that their scriptures began with the words, 'In the beginning God ...' and recorded Him as saying, 'let us make man ...'. They believed therefore that God was the one and only living God, that He was first and that He spoke of Himself in plural number; but they did not know that God was triune. By calling Peter, James and John first, and forming them into an exclusive group of three that should have superior revelation and knowledge, the Lord was seeking to make them to the rest a faint picture of God. They represented the idea of trinity, that was what the Lord wanted. He knew this would not be seen then, but, when the kingdom of God came in power, His purpose by this trio would be seen the more clearly. Peter, the initial preacher, prophet, apostle of the Church, having the keys of the kingdom of heaven and being so markedly appointed by Christ to shepherding, represents the Son. John, mysterious, loving John, unfolding the mysteries of God, spanning all time from the beginning to the ending, lying in Christ's bosom, revealing His bride, speaks of the Spirit. John's direct connection with James through blood ties is a faint indication of the fact that the Spirit proceeds from the Father. Of course no human relationship or grouping could properly set forth the mysterious trinity, and can but feebly serve to that end; nevertheless, by these pointers, we may perhaps legitimately discern the deep underlying truth. Those men were not three in one, but were joined by the Lord to project the idea of the Blessed Trinity, who in some measure they were called to represent.

These three were specially blessed upon this occasion, because they alone of the apostles were granted the third of the four revelations by which the Lord made Himself further known to men. All twelve were there when He made Himself known on the two former occasions, both of which took place on the sea, that is at sea level and on a very unstable element indeed. As if in utter contrast to those, this revelation was purposely made on the most stable element on earth, a mountain: a very high mountain we are told. The first revelation was of Christ the man, the second was of Christ the God, this third one was of Christ the King. On that mountain top that day those men were granted the crowning revelation, the Man-God-King, and were allowed a peep into the glory of the kingdom He had been talking about. Peter said of it later that they were eyewitnesses of His Majesty, and called that mountain the holy mount. They actually saw Him transfigured into glory within Himself. Before their eyes He became a far more glorious looking person than they had ever seen Him to be before. Everything which could be changed was changed, not beyond recognition though, they knew it was still Him. He did not step out of and leave His body and assume another, neither did He take another form; He was still the same flesh and blood Jesus they had always known. He did not change His clothes and don royal robes, nothing of that nature happened at all; everything remained the same, yet everything was so different. His face changed, as though it had been re-modelled, and His peasant clothes turned white and began to shine, and they heard the Father's voice talking to Him.

The Everlasting Glory

Peter, James. and John were overawed; they were in a kingdom of glorified spirits, a kingdom beyond death, yet they had not died; it was glorious, they were exhilarated. The glory, the everlasting glory, was there, yet they did not feel glorious for they were not yet glorified; everybody else they saw except themselves was changed, but they were not, they were onlookers. There were seven persons there, six visible and one invisible: He spoke, but was not seen. Of the six visible ones three were of earth, two were of heaven and one was of heaven and earth. In that glorious realm the apostles were the odd ones; they were completely out of their natural element. The only four visible human beings of that generation present were themselves and Jesus, and He was transfigured, He belonged to both realms, but not they. Moses was there, so was Elijah; both were changed and glorified and in communion with Him, but Peter, James and John were not. They could see what was happening, they could hear what was being said, but they were not part of it and did not understand what was going on; they were living in a different world altogether. This became altogether too apparent as soon as Peter opened his mouth to speak: 'Master', he said, 'it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses and one for Elias'. The revelation ended immediately — Peter had finished it: it was an intrusion, an imposition, an impertinence, the intervention of unregenerate flesh; it ended

the audience with God, the glory departed, the privilege was ended. Poor Peter, the first called of the apostles; his carnal mind was at enmity with God. He felt awful; he and his remarks were right out of place; his profoundest desires and highest 'spiritual' motives were obviously offensive to God; he proved no better on the mountain than on the sea. His companions felt no better either; all three of them were gripped with fear.

The predominant feature of all the Lord's extraordinary revelations of Himself to His apostles was shock, the result was always fear. Upon this occasion greater fear still was to come. Peter's well-intentioned words drew the Father into the conversation: He spoke to them very clearly, and in what a voice! It was the voice of supreme authority in the kingdom; after it no one spoke another word. Conversations and discussions which had been taking place between various ones when Peter broke in immediately ceased; Peter had done it again. He had not meant to, his well-meant contribution was made in answer to things he had heard said by Jesus and Moses and Elias, but what he said was totally unacceptable to everyone in heaven. Those men were chosen to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven but O how ignorant they were; despite all the revelations received and lessons taught they did not know the mysteries yet. God the invisible God spoke; Jesus' Father, understanding but indignant, broke in, and those apostles learned that all the Lord's claims about Himself were true; His Father said, 'This is my beloved Son: hear him'. It was the end of the revelation: the glory disappeared, a dark cloud overshadowed them — and fear. Cowering on the ground it was like heaven to hear the familiar voice of the Lord speaking to them again, comforting them; they were back to normal. He led them down the mountain; the lesson had been given, but what had they learned? Following Him from the scene they felt more bemused than when they went up the mountain, and when He spoke to them He added nothing to their understanding, for it was again about His death and resurrection, cautioning them not to tell anyone the things they had seen until 'the Son of man was risen from the dead'.

Mystification increased in the minds of the chosen three. Why place this burden of silence upon them again? Was it right for some apostles to be granted more privileges and have more knowledge than others? Apparently the Lord thought so, but it did not make their position any easier; they were bound to be misunderstood, if not envied, by the rest, and what did the rising from the dead mean? They had just seen and heard Moses and Elijah alive and conscious in glory, actively engaged in conversation with Christ. Elijah had not died, he had not risen from the dead, neither had Jesus, and they themselves had been included in the bright cloud without dying. It was all a great mystery to them and the Lord offered no explanation; they had once more been made privy to secret spiritual mysteries, but this time with a difference. Before, the secrets had been introduced to them, but this time they had been introduced into the secrets. They had actually been in the cloud of glory in what they could only assume was the kingdom of God, at least a temporary manifestation of it, but they knew that although they were in it they were not of it. In the glory Christ was transfigured as of nature, but they were not, the glory was not natural to them.

Another Kingdom

How truly the Lord had spoken to them about the kingdom of God. They had known that something new and wonderful was about to happen when He led them up the mountain, but they had not expected this. This revelation opened it all up to them: they had seen and heard things undreamed of, they now knew what He meant by the mystery of the kingdom of God; they had proof of its existence, it had been manifested to their physical senses; more, they had actually witnessed its presence here, and had been in it. It had been a mountain top experience indeed, and although they were strangers in it and their experience of it had not lasted very long, the kingdom of God was here, unseen and unheard by men, but here nevertheless. No glory, no voice of God speaking, no spirits of just men made perfect holding conversation with their Lord, no radiant transfigured Christ, but the kingdom was here. It had not yet come in power, but it had come, or was it that they had ascended into it? Whichever it was they had been in it. They could now grasp a little of what the Lord had meant when He talked about coming in the glory of the Father and the holy angels, although they had not seen any angels. Many things were still hidden from them which they would see and understand later; but the Lord had not said they would understand, He had said it was given to them to know, and what knowledge they had! The secret lay only with the three though, no one else knew, or would know until the kingdom came with power; then it would be an open secret. The privileged trio could hardly be

expected to understand that everything was happening according to the election of God in His eternal kingdom. He was revealing in His kingdom on earth a pattern similar to that which has always been in heaven. Father, Son and Holy Spirit have always known everything in advance, and Peter, James and John were in measure their representation on earth, though they did not know that at the time. Perhaps after the resurrection, when they were released from Christ's sanctions and could speak freely with the other apostles as He said they could, they were able together to get things into perspective. The significance of the Lord's actions could then be understood, especially as two of the trio continued together awhile as the Church began to take shape in the future era of the Spirit.

Chapter 15 — IN THE NAME OF JESUS OF NAZARETH

Servant of All

During the very earliest days of the Church the two apostles more prominently active than the rest were Peter and John. Of the two Peter is by far the most prominent. After being mentioned in the beginning as being an activist James disappears from view and is not mentioned again until his execution by Herod some years later, so in the wisdom of God he is removed from the scene. But James the Lord's brother, who was not one of the twelve, becomes the presiding elder in Jerusalem. By this means James is shown to be there in the background of the apostolic band, and then, removing to be with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the first martyr apostle. Meanwhile Peter and John are the ones in full view, promoting the kingdom of God among men; Peter, representing the Son, is the active preacher. In a remarkable way and with great boldness, one day he actually assumed the role, if not the mantle, of the Son, by announcing at the Beautiful Gate of the temple that he was there speaking and acting in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth; that was greatly daring, but it was no idle boast. He demonstrated the truth of it by telling the lame man lying there to rise up and walk. So confident was Peter that he lifted him to his feet: he was acting as Christ Jesus. John, Peter's companion, said nothing, did nothing, save stand with Peter; he was there but scarcely noticed, silent and quite content for Peter to have all the glory.

It was the same when John was imprisoned with Peter and the healed man; Peter and the man are the prominent ones — both are mentioned, but, except being referred to in company with Peter as unlearned and ignorant, John is not in the foreground at all. He stands with Peter to hear from the council that they must not speak in the name of Jesus, and as one person and one voice with him, defies them. When the gospel reached Samaria through Philip, John again displayed the same kind of self-effacement. Being sent there from Jerusalem with Peter, John appears in a supportive role as usual, while Peter takes the lead; without overtaxing credulity, it is possible to imagine Peter saying of his modest companion in those days, 'he is glorifying me'. After this, except for information that the two preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans, John slips out of the picture, leaving Peter, and later Paul, to hold the focal, leading positions.

Both the Father and the Holy Spirit together exalt the Son. The Church is the Church of God, but it is not called the Church of the Father, neither is it called the Church of the Holy Spirit, it is the Church of Jesus Christ. The Father and the Holy Spirit begat the Son through Mary, and the Father and the Holy Spirit, without Mary, beget all the other sons to be members of the Son's Church. Apostles are apostles of Christ, and, if only they had known it, these three who came down the mountain with Him that day held the key to His Church in their hearts. It was in their conversation as in wonderment they gazed upon His receding back and puzzled over His words. What did the rising from the dead mean? It meant that all they had just seen (although it had been shown them before Christ's death) only belonged to an age of resurrection: the rising from the dead is the key. The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom, which can only be entered and enjoyed by human beings when they have experienced the death and resurrection of Christ, that is when they have been born of God from above.

Alas, at that time none of the apostles knew the experience. They believed the kingdom of God existed; indeed three of them had to some extent seen into it, but none had entered it. The Lord lived in it permanently, and Peter, James and John knew that should it manifest itself anywhere at any time He would be transfigured in harmony with it, but not they. They loved the idea of the transfigured Lord, and wanted to make Him a tabernacle and forever keep Him like that up the mountain. It was a

ridiculous suggestion of course, just as satanic as the earlier suggestion that He should not go to the cross. He had come to build His Church, He wanted nothing made for Him by man. Besides, how could He stay in isolation up a mountain transfigured in a tent, while down below Satan was destroying the souls and bodies of men living in a faithless and perverse generation which knew not God? The apostles did not know, neither for that matter did they appear to care; they were an inconsistent group, at times they seemed to be without self-interest in their calling, but at heart they were a selfish and jealous company, very concerned with personal prestige. This was all brought to the surface when the Lord led them away from the mount towards Jerusalem.

He was heading for death and resurrection and all that it would mean, but this seemed not to have sunk very deeply into the apostles' understanding. Their concern was as to who was or should be greatest among them. Names came up and claims were considered and disputed, and it is easy to understand why; this was the second time the Lord had apparently shown marked preference among them. It had been Peter, James and John again, why should it be only they? Was it always going to be only they? If so, who of them was the greatest one? Pride had been injured, and venom was spreading among them; the poison of asps was under their tongues. Unlike Lucifer, they were not directly challenging the Lord, but they were contending with each other, and what was that but challenging the Lord's choice? Peter, James and John had not asked the Lord to choose them instead of the other nine, it was His sovereign choice; incipient rebellion was arising among them, and the Lord warned them of its consequences: 'If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all and servant of all'. He was both the first and the last, both the Lord and the servant of all.

As a Little Child

How deceptive and destructive is self-importance: deceptive because self-importance means self-unimportance, destructive because self-importance means that the person can never be important. Self-effacement is the hallmark of all true spiritual life; in the kingdom of God what I am is more important than who I am. To demonstrate this the Lord took a child, nameless and unknown, to the apostles, and set him in the midst of them; who he was He did not ask, nor did it matter. Having established that, He then took the child in His arms and said to the apostles, 'Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth not me, but Him that sent me'. What did the apostles make of that? It seemed to make no impact on them at all; not even John gave any indication that he had the faintest understanding of what the Lord had demonstrated to them. It was just as though the Lord had not said it; Peter, the spokesman, was silent, and when John made answer he turned the subject altogether and started talking about someone casting out devils.

Well might those apostles flounder about, snatching at straws; they were out of their depth. It did not seem to matter whether He was on a mountain top transfigured in a secret kingdom or down by the sea, a man in full sight of all, He was way beyond their comprehension. That child He took in His arms was so like Himself: He was a nameless child in the world. All the apostles had a known father; the chosen three had — Peter was the son of Jonah, James and John were sons of Zebedee, but Jesus was the son of no man, He was just Jesus of Nazareth. There were others like that boy in the land — nameless. The apostles had been seeking the big name, wanting to be number one; who among them wished his father to be greater than he? Christ said in effect, 'take a nameless child in my name, and thereby take me, and receiving me receive My Father'. What self-effacement — receive a child, receive my Father; the Lord was somewhere in the midst of it all. He always thought His Father was the important one; after Him others, nameless ones, unimportant, unknown, perhaps unwanted and without a father's name. Poor apostles, they were confounded; in their embarrassment they could not find an answer to give Him, nor could they think of anything to say until John blurted out, 'Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us'.

It was all there, all the pride and self-importance — 'followeth not with us'! Followeth not with whom? US. Sad to say humility did not grace the apostles during their traineeship; instead the desire to be first and greatest consumed them, particularly John and James. The sight of Christ transfigured in glory set off desires in them that seem at first to be so good and commendable, yet were so utterly selfish. They imagined the Lord enthroned in glory and themselves also enthroned with Him, one on the right hand and the other on the left, holding the chief places in the kingdom. That was the measure of their

own estimate of themselves. They never gave a thought to Peter; he also was one of the chosen three, and had been with them on the mountain. There was no concern in their hearts for their fellow apostle's eternal welfare. Perhaps it may be charitable to think that they believed he had forfeited any right he may have had to a throne when he tried to dissuade Christ from the cross: they had heard him called satan and ordered by the Lord to get behind His back.

If this is so, it only shows how lamentably they had misjudged Christ, and how little they knew Him. Whatever may be the truth of the matter, their reasoning was misplaced and entirely ineffective; their premise was also without foundation. They had heard the Father say 'this is my beloved Son', and because of that knew perfectly well that Christ was a man under authority; they had also heard a centurion say things which showed that he recognized this. There was no excuse for the two brothers, they had given way to pride and selfishness, and on the day when they brought their request to the Lord they completely revealed the things which had been working in their hearts. The request was refused of course; the Lord neither had the power to grant it, nor had He any wish to be embroiled in their selfish schemings. He dealt with it in His usual gracious way, but the rest of the apostles were very angry with James and John; to them it was a deceitful act, they did not like it at all and did not hesitate to make their feelings known. James and John had been given privileges and entrusted with knowledge denied their fellows, and were using, or attempting to use, these things to their own advantage, perhaps they did not recognize it, but such abuse of privilege was, to say the least, very distasteful to the nine.

For Whom it is Prepared

The Lord's response to the rather subtle approach of the two erring apostles must have been very reassuring to all the rest. 'Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall request': that was the way they approached it, but with masterliness befitting the name He refused their request and answered, 'What would ye that I should do for you?' They wanted Him to say 'Yes', but He did not; He could not so easily be caught. He did not want them to think that they were barred from sitting on either side of Him though. Those seats are left open but they have to be earned.

A throne is prepared for a certain kind of person, a person who has been prepared and fitted to occupy it, one who has lived a certain kind of life on earth. Let everyone understand that desert, as well as desire, has to be taken into consideration when allocation of position is made in heaven. That is how it was for Him, that is how it must be for everyone else; they did not know what they were asking. By requesting a throne and a crown and glory they were asking also for a cup and a cross and shame, a baptism into another kingdom not a glimpse into it. They said they could drink the cup and endure the baptism but learned that even that would not ensure the throne for them. There was not a man among them who was not affected by this world's ideas and practices, its favours and positions and authority and power. All conceptions of lordship and greatness and exercise of rule based on gentile kingdoms and methods of government must be banished from the apostles' minds. Christ was not going to have His Church ruled by any of the many earthly methods developed by men, whether they be Jewish or Romish. His Church, when it was established, would be a theocracy, namely a kingdom where every man would be directly ruled over as an individual by God and as a company by those He appoints.

Seeing that all the men to whom the Lord spoke were Jews His reference to gentile government must surely have been made with special purpose and must have sounded strange in the apostles' ears. The power of rule is a most glittering prize in the eyes of men and is very much sought after by them. It represents absolute power, enabling whosoever has it to dominate people's lives; it is extremely deceptive, because it brings the illusion of supreme authority and of having people's lives in hand. The deception of this form of rule was exposed by the Lord by the word He used: those that are accounted to rule — 'accounted', the word really means 'appear to'. The rulers, governors, lords and authorities of this world do not rule, they only appear to rule; they pass and enforce laws, they use force and at times violence, and make people do their will. Some of this is approved of God, but this kind of rule is not to be in the Church. All that kind of rule rises from ambition and pride, and of necessity must use force to impose its will. The apostles were directly commanded by the Lord not to set up any kind of government; whether gentile or Jewish it would not be of God; in due course He would reveal what He wanted. The Lord did not proceed to outline to the apostles any form of government for His Church;

they were not even proper apostles yet, nor had the kingdom of God come with power, nor was the Lord building His Church. His purpose was not to lay down a framework of law, then to force His Church into it, but to bring His Church into being and let government emerge in and from it. Law is dead and will spread death; the Church is living and will produce life.

It is a remarkable fact that the Lord never laid down a set of rules as such for His disciples. He gave commandments, which had to be obeyed if men wanted to be His disciples, and took the chosen twelve through a severe course of training, but everything was purely voluntary. He left everybody perfectly free to make their own choice; the relationship between Him and His was made and kept by mutual agreement: at any time everybody, even the apostles, could have left Him. Because there were no laws there were no punishments, the Lord laid down no penal code, such as Israel's or the Jewish or Romish legal systems exacted on the criminal. That He gave warning of punishment was more from the position of foreknowledge than of citing from a legal code or a criminal law. He spoke as from living by the law of the Spirit of life within Him, which is the only law that can save and keep men from the law of the spirit of sin and death. To live and be affected by either of these laws is to enjoy the benefits of the one or to reap the consequences of the other. In a man's experience each of those opposing states is destructive of the other, they cannot exist together in any man's life. These laws are not of a legal system, neither are they imposed by a governing body of any sort; they are basic, moral, and spiritual.

He Shall Be Your Slave

Those men must have listened to their Lord with amazement as He continued His discourse. He could have said of Himself what Paul later said to Timothy about himself: 'Thou hast fully known my doctrine and manner of life'. Neither Christ nor His apostle laid down laws, they gave commandments. Speaking to His men, the Lord mentioned three things which should be looked for in a man if he is to be considered for any kind of office in the Church; He did not codify these things, He used not to speak in that manner, He did not come as a lawgiver. Moses had been that to Israel, but Jesus brought grace and truth into the world. Nevertheless, only as these three qualities are found in a man's life will he qualify for office or be able to bear any form of rule in His Church. The first has to do with a man's estimation of greatness, and the degree to which he exercises his will and deports himself to achieve it. If any man rightly understands what real greatness is, he will at once forsake all human estimates of it. Thrones and crowns and offices and government and rule and all desires for authority will flee from his mind; his one desire will be to serve all others in the lowliest of all positions: 'he shall be your slave', said the Lord. This true slave will not lay down his life in service with an eye to earning anything thereby, nor will he labour with a view to promotion; he will take on the form of a servant and stay in that form, nor want to forsake it for ever. The second is like it and is really a reinforcement of the first. All ideas of being first or the chief among the great ones, or even a leader among equals, must be abandoned. Slavery, addiction to the humblest, lowliest, most menial tasks — lovingly fulfilled for all — shall be the hallmark of the chiefest saints and apostles. The third is the most salutary of all: in simple humility the Lord pointed to Himself and His own example, and although He did not say it, inferred, 'be like me': He never said 'I am the chief, I am the greatest among you', nor did He say, 'I am the Son of God', but instead began by saying, 'even the Son of Man'.

So much so-called apostleship is based upon the spirit which says, 'I am a son of God'; it is the wrong mentality, a prohibitive approach. Sounding so spiritual, it is so carnal. Every apostle must be and think and say he is a son of man, and know he has been born into a family of slaves; this and this alone is the only correct approach to apostleship; it was both the concept and practice of Christ. Never was this so openly demonstrated than at Calvary; it gripped and flooded Peter's mind on the day of Pentecost, 'Jesus of Nazareth, a man', he said. He did not say that the Christ of heaven was a God approved of men. The thing that filled the hearts of those apostles when they were made apostles indeed was the wonder of the man called Jesus. The Lord was a man approved of God among them. This was what the Lord sought to impress on His apostles that day. Apostles are not to be ministered to; they must not come to any people with any such thing in mind; to whatsoever group or church they go, it must be to minister. An apostle must have a supreme end in view as Christ did, and give his life for it; the whole life must be spent for the salvation of others. The purpose of God in creating apostles is that sons of God should prove to be sons of men: the object is not to prove that sons of men can be

sons of God, but the exact opposite. The Apostle sitting there among the apostles talking to them was the Son of God; He could have said, had He wished, that already He had become Son of Man by laying down His life (that is the life to which He was used as Son of God) with the intent of further giving His life in the future to ransom the souls of men.

Apostleship is by example: meekness is the qualification for lordship, rule is by influence, persuasion by pervasion of the senses bringing heart-assurance to men, and authority is affirmation of it. Apostleship is not open to self-seekers; seeking things or positions for self, either in this life or the next, even for the best of reasons, is sufficient to disqualify even the choicest from the office. Trainee apostleship for those men was an extraordinary time of instruction and correction not now available to men, and was very chastening indeed: upon this occasion it was James and John who received the correction. The Lord had a wonderful way of teaching; sometimes He deliberately engineered circumstances, sometimes He allowed things to develop as of natural order. He knew that if they want to do so men can learn much from everyday happenings as things take their normal course. His next lesson was of this latter order.

Chapter 16 — JESUS, SON OF DAVID

Bartimaeus

To the apostles the event was probably what might be called an ordinary everyday occurrence. It was one of those by the way experiences, as unplanned as it was predictable. The Lord was on His way to Jerusalem and had reached and passed out of Jericho. As usual the crowds thronged Him, lining the road impeding His progress and slowing Him down. The Lord showed no signs of irritation though, He always moved with purpose, He never seemed to be in a hurry. He made appointments in His heart and always kept them on time. The final passover was one of the times appointed by God, and, whatever happened, Jesus was determined to be at Jerusalem for the occasion. He was in fact moving towards Jerusalem for that very reason. He had already kept an appointment at Jericho with Zaccheus, the taxman who He surprised up a tree; calling him down He surprised him even further by insisting that He come and stay with him that day, which He did. Leaving the surprised and disgusted city again (presumably the next day, almost certainly along the same road. where the sycamore tree grew), the Lord continued His journey. By the side of the road, probably on the spot which he had made his own by usage, sat a blind beggar named Bartimaeus. Hearing the noise of the passing crowds he, not unnaturally, enquired what was happening, and was told by someone 'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by'. Immediately, to the astonishment of everybody, he began to cry out, 'Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me'.

It was not unusual for beggars to call out to passers-by. They were expected to; it was the way they drew attention to themselves. What was so astonishing to everyone was the way he addressed the Lord — 'Jesus, son of David'. Bartimaeus was a blind man, but he was also a man of great discernment; he had great faith and being a beggar he was also most importunate. No one could shake his convictions or shut him up: 'Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me', he kept crying. Louder and stronger and clearer he cried, till his cries reached the Lord's ears, halting Him. 'Call him', He commanded; they did. Bartimaeus rose, cast away his garment and, led by willing hands, went to the son of David. 'What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?' He asked; 'Lord, that I might receive my sight,' he said; 'Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole', said Jesus. Immediately it was done; Bartimaeus received his sight and, without further reflection or any hesitation, followed Jesus in the way.

Just what did the watching James and John think of that? He had granted Bartimaeus his request but had refused theirs, and they were apostles! The Lord had actually invited Bartimaeus to make his request, but had virtually told them that they ought not to have made theirs. The apostles had so much to learn about their Lord and His ways, and so little time left in which to do so. What conclusions they drew from these incidents is not possible to know, and perhaps if conclusions were drawn they may have been incorrect. They may not have connected the two events, nor thought of them as they are laid out by Mark for our reading, though possibly before they died they may all have read his work and seen the two events in this perspective. By then, of course, the Holy Spirit had come to bring all Jesus' words to their remembrance, and to lead them into all truth: surely their joy must then have been full.

As they continued in the way towards Jerusalem they learned much as they listened to the Lord. They did not know what next to expect of Him, but it was in His heart to demonstrate to them what Bartimaeus, in his blindness, had in part seen and expressed. Bartimaeus was not alone in believing that Jesus was the son of David: many accepted that He was of royal lineage, though whether they believed that He was God's child at birth is another thing. Just what this meant to everybody and how each person thought it would work out for them all we cannot know, but that it was quite different from what the Lord meant we may be sure. The time had come for Him to present Himself to the nation as their king, and He proceeded to prepare for that. The company had reached the Mount of Olives, and there He made the first move towards the accomplishment of Bartimaeus' heraldic cry. That man had been both a sign to the nation and a revelation of its condition, specially to the apostles, though probably unrecognized at the time. To them he was an example of those of whom the Lord had spoken at the beginning, preceding His interpretation of the parable of the ground: 'Unto them that are without all these things are done in parables, that seeing they may see and not perceive; and hearing they may hear and not understand'.

Blind Bartimaeus, sitting by the wayside and so surprisingly ignored or seemingly unnoticed by the Lord, was, to the Jews, a parable, and more than a parable, a sign. The parable lay in what the Lord did to that man; it was 'a parable in deed' having exceptional national significance. The Jews had eyes and did not see, and by passing Bartimaeus by yet halting awhile in His progress to Jerusalem to heal him, the Lord was showing them that their day of grace was almost past. When Bartimaeus cried out the Jews tried to stop him; tragically they did not want him to be healed, and tried to prevent it. For His part, before he stopped His journey the Lord let him keep shouting, so Bartimaeus shouted yet 'the more a great deal'. It was all carefully calculated by the Lord; He was not heedless of the man's cries as seemed to be the case. By continuing as though unheeding His purpose was to alarm the people and alert them to their need; the nation must be made to act before it was too late; it was vitally important that they should lay hold of the opportunity within their grasp while they may. Whether or not the apostles understood the significance of all this, or wondered why He should pass by Bartimaeus so seemingly unconcerned for him, the Lord did it most of all for their instruction. In all that He did the Lord was working to a pre-arranged plan which none but He knew, progressing to a certain place in Jerusalem and to a point in time when He should stand and say, 'My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer'. With that pronouncement, now so soon to be made, time for the Jewish nation would enter its final period of privilege which, in turn, would last but a few more days and then run out. In a matter of weeks, with the birth of the Church on the day of Pentecost, Peter would announce gentile salvation and worldwide grace with these words, 'Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved'. The Church gospel period would supersede the national gospel, which because of its limitations would have passed away, being swallowed up in the gospel of the worldwide love and salvation.

Quite probably, indeed almost certainly, except for the healing of Malchus' ear in the garden, the miracle wrought at Jericho was the last physical healing the Lord performed on a human being before His death, hence its importance. The very last miracle of all, that is the resurrection, was wrought in a different realm altogether; it was the great sign to which the Lord referred in that game temple in the beginning. It is of some significance that the replacement of Malchus' ear was almost certainly the final miracle the Lord did before He was apprehended, jailed and crucified. Sight was given to Bartimaeus, hearing to Malchus: seeing and hearing are the two most important senses to which the gospel makes its appeal. John says, 'that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you'. So the very last miracle was on the organ of sound — we must 'hear' the word, for that is how all begins, as John says again: 'In the beginning was the word'. Bartimaeus, so greatly blessed, his eyes now opened, an unwitting sign to the nation, followed the Lord and witnessed His next moves as He prepared to present Himself at Jerusalem as David's son. If Bartimaeus stayed on with Him to the end he must soon have realized that his convictions about Jesus, though true enough, were woefully limited and totally inadequate. His eyes were open and he had some degree of spiritual perception, but beyond that he knew very little, save, to follow Jesus as He went. The way led to the capital city and Herod's palace, and to all kinds of happenings that he could never have anticipated when he made his declaration by the roadside.

Bethany

First of all the Lord sent a couple of His men to Bethphage to fetch a young donkey for Him; it was tied up outside a house which stood at a place where two ways met, He said. They found the place without difficulty, and, as the Lord had told them to do, they began to loose the colt to bring him to Jesus. But the owner of the colt and some men were standing around, who, seeing they had not been consulted, naturally enough wanted to know why the disciples were untying the colt: 'The Lord hath need of him?', they answered, and immediately the owners let the colt go: there was still some goodwill towards Jesus among the people. The apostles therefore brought the colt to Jesus, who mounted it and rode into Jerusalem. The crowds loved it, waving palm branches of greeting, some even casting their garments on the ground for the donkey to walk over. Everyone was chanting blessings and crying out, 'Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord'. 'Hosanna' they cried, asking Him to 'save them now'. 'Hosanna'. They felt that their great moment had come; but He that came in the name of the Lord did not go to Herod's palace or to Pilate's house, He went to the temple, God's house. Entering it He looked round about at everything, and then, with His disciples, left for Bethany, leaving behind Him unnumbered disappointed hearts. The kingdom of David had not come as they thought, neither had they been saved as they expected; He that had come to them in the name of the Lord was a big disappointment to them. The day had dawned full of hope, but it passed away in hollow emptiness. Their faith was rootless and died without fruit.

The Lord turned His back on His own house, it had been commandeered by spiritual brigands; He went to stay at Bethany (the house of ripe figs), in the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Bethany was indeed a place of fruitfulness to Jesus; there he found love, the love denied Him at Nazareth where He ought to have found it. No one in the house was an apostle; the two sisters and their brother were three simple folk, ordinary people who loved Him and ministered to Him. In that home He found His 'family, Martha and Mary were His sisters and Lazarus was His brother. Martha served, Mary anointed, Lazarus lived. In a sense Lazarus was nearest to Him of all, for he was alive from the dead; Jesus loved them. By everything He did at this period the Lord was saying something which He wanted His apostles to see and hear and understand, but despite their many privileges they were still so slow to see and hear. The very fact that He chose to stay in the town of Bethany should have spoken much to them, especially when they witnessed an incident which took place the very next morning.

The Lord was on His way with the apostles from the house of ripe figs to His own house, the temple, in Jerusalem, when He saw a fig tree some way off; feeling hungry He went over to it hoping to find some fruit to eat, but when He reached the tree there was nothing on it but leaves. Disappointed, He said to the tree, 'No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever', and turning His back on it left it and continued on His way to Jerusalem and the temple. To His apostles it must have seemed an extraordinary thing to do; they did not know He had done it specially for them and that it was part of His final message, a symbolic word to the nation. Those men did not see in Him all He was, and almost certainly they did not make the connection between His action and what Adam did in the beginning. The Lord had several reasons for going to the fig tree, one of which was that, unknown to them, He was the last Adam. Unlike first Adam, He had no use for fig leaves, He had no shame to hide, nothing to cover. Leaves! He had no use for them; if there was no fruit, then there should be no leaves. He cursed the tree.

To the apostles He must have seemed in a strangely aggressive mood that day, for when He entered the temple He began once more to create havoc in it just as He had done three years earlier. He cast out the moneychangers, overturned the seats of the dove sellers, and spread general confusion everywhere; it was pandemonium. He was very angry indeed and would not so much as allow a vessel to be carried through the temple — it was a den of thieves, He said; they had made it like that. 'My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer', He cried, and all who heard Him knew that He was making claim to Godhead, it was absolutely unmistakable; the temple was His house; Jesus was God! Moreover His temple-house was no longer exclusively for the Jews but for all the peoples of the earth; He could not have made Himself more unpopular. Furthermore He was not going to have people coming into His house to be robbed by men. What a day that was! He astonished everybody but Himself, and, as it began to close, He retired with His apostles to the Bethany home, leaving His house

to the scribes and chief priests plotting to destroy Him.

In the morning He carefully returned with the apostles by the same route to the temple, making sure that they should pass by the fig tree; to the apostles' amazement it was completely dead, dried out from the roots. Ever the spokesman, Peter, astonished, said, 'Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away'. Astonished as they were, the response of the Lord astonished them even more; without offering any kind of explanation for the incident, He said, 'Have faith in God, for verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith', and that was the end of the episode.

Unlike the occasion when he passed by Bartimaeus, He did not halt in His onward journey but kept going. The fig tree died because He spoke to it, answered it in fact, Mark records, as though it had spoken to Him; it had. The condition of the fig tree when He first approached it was the condition of the nation which it symbolized. Nothing could have spoken to Him more plainly. He had come to the nation when He was thirty years of age to work upon it, and after about three years of unceasing labour there was still no fruit unto God. Because of that He cursed the tree, and in doing so symbolically announced the end of that period of ministry to the nation, He therefore passed the tree by on the second occasion, it was dead. Everything was done with deliberation and forethought, His action was a calculated sign intentionally given to the apostles. Three or more years of divine visitation of love and power from on high had produced nothing for Christ as it ought to have done. The nation had been given its opportunity and had failed to produce what it ought to have done and was rightly expected of it; early promising signs had faded away, the green leaves had given hope of life and eventual fruit, but no, nothing for Him, so He left it dead. The 'passing by' of, and then the pause to call and heal Bartimaeus had been very significant; it was a warning sign, the last of many, but it had gone unheeded, perhaps even unnoticed, as He knew it would, so He shrivelled up the fig tree; it was a solemn pronouncement of judgement to come. The apostles knew He was not moved by selfish motives when He cursed the tree, there was not an ounce of selfishness in Him. But there was no escaping the assumption that, because there had been no fruit for Him, He was not going to allow anybody else to have fruit of it either. Whatever else the Lord meant, and for whoever else the episode held a message, for the apostles it was a further step in their training in relationship to His future Church. It was no good their thinking that they would be able to obtain the fruit which He had been unable to get from the nation, they would not. He would reinforce this later with the command to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, but the apostles were not ready for that yet, so He left them wondering.

The Faith of God

There would be a little response from the Jews but it would not be national or for long; He had indicated this by the sign of Bartimaeus. Jerusalem and Judea would be reached to begin with, but then they were to go to Samaria, and afterwards to the whole gentile world. The days of exclusive ministry to the people of the fig tree were over; the gospel was to them first, but not finally, it was also to the Greek. The apostles did not know, nor did He tell them, that before many months He would raise up a man without their nationalistic prejudices, a new apostle free in heart and mind to carry the message to the whole world; He was determined that His house would be the house of prayer for all nations as He had said. Christ knew that what He was determined to do would require great faith; even to believe it was a big thing for the apostles, they had been brought up on narrow nationalistic views of Messiahship. 'All nations', He said. When John wrote, 'God (so) loved the world', grace had wrought a great work in his heart. The mind of the whole apostolate had been changed by then, but O it took a long time to get there. The Lord knew that what He said could not be accomplished by man's faith; that is why He said, 'Have the faith of God'. Much as He loved and admired them, and although He had given them much, they could never accomplish His will by their own faith, only by God's.

By what He was doing and saying in the present He was seeking to teach them lessons and give them instructions for the perplexing future. If they had enquired of Him how He caused the fig tree to wither away and die He would have said 'by faith', but they did not do so; they had no need to enquire, they had seen Him do similar things many times in the past and knew how He did them. What they did not understand was the vast and immeasurable difference that lay between His faith and theirs. How

painfully they would have recalled the occasion when He had said to them, 'where is your faith?' Except it was He, and He was so kind, He might have said again, 'where is your faith now? Are you still so Without understanding?' But He did not; He was asking big things of them and He loved them. They had tried their own faith on so many occasions and it had failed. It failed precisely because it was their own and not God's; by God's standards they had no faith, and after he had shown it to them the Lord told them so. 'How is it that ye have no faith?' He had said on that memorable occasion. They, and perhaps everyone else, would have argued that they did have faith; had they not left all and followed Him? They surely believed. Such is the power and extent of human faith, it can accomplish much, but not enough.

Apostles must have the faith of God. Men must be able to assume that in them the human and the divine are wedded and are one. Divine faith in a man is the conviction and operation of God's will, plus the knowledge that He purposes to do this particular thing and has the power to conform everything, even contrary things, to His designs. Those men had lived with Him long enough to discover that His faith was His own, and theirs was theirs — and O the vast difference between them! His was the faith of God. Faith is constitutional in God; without it He would not be God, indeed could not be at all; this was the faith which Christ was inviting them to have; it is a basic requirement for apostles, and in His view without it no man can be an apostle. Like God's love, God's faith is eternal, it never fails, it cannot. Christ did not doubt in His heart about anything He said, He gave commands and things obeyed Him; all things answer to His will; that is, they respond to His faith, and the fig tree was no exception. This was the power that killed the fig tree; by doing it the Lord showed to all who had eyes to see that the times of the Jewish nation should end at a certain point of world history, and the times of the Church should begin. All that the man Christ Jesus did was to act in co-operation with the will' of God. When a man does that, it is faith; that is, power, and the results are assured.

When the Lord held before the apostles the possibility of moving trees and mountains He was neither exhorting them to try a few experiments, nor inciting them to attempt great things according to their own will; rather He was warning them against attempting anything outside God's will. Mountains and trees are part of God's creation; mountains especially were placed in position by God, so, unless it is God's will that they should be removed, His faith cannot be operated by man to remove them. This is one of the reasons why the Lord taught His disciples right at the beginning of their discipleship to pray 'Our Father ... thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven': prayer in the knowledge of His will, wanting that and that only to be done on earth, is prayer with the faith of God. However, His instruction to them then was only an attempt to lay the foundation of prayer in their lives, it was a general approach to prayer. The apostles had to learn how and when to apply the general principles of prayer to their particular desires, for, except they be the will and desire of God, attempts to move mountains will prove abortive. Unless there be first a heart conviction, consonant with the tenor of life, that it shall be done, it will not be done. The apostles could not have failed to notice that at no time did the Lord remove any mountains — rather He climbed them! To Him they were the high places of teaching and prayer and election and communion and transfiguration and tears. According to the Lord, to speak with the faith that can move mountains a man must speak without a doubt in his heart, and with nothing unforgiven between him and his brethren. The faith of God knows no doubts and no division; doubts divide the soul, and unforgiveness divides between souls; both destroy wholeness and unity. God always operates in calm assurance.

All apostles must learn and practise these lessons; Christ never taught theory, He taught by example and demonstration. Among the many hallmarks of apostolic calling and appointment, some cardinal features we must all look for and expect to find are revelation, manifestation and demonstration. How slowly those men learned of Christ. Paul, the great apostle by eternal generation, said that the lesson a man learns from Christ is 'the truth as it is in Jesus'; Christ teaches Christ in Jesus. Jesus had the faith of God, so had Paul; but none of those trainee apostles had it. By the Lord's own words they discovered that they had no faith, and by their own confession they could not pray; so now, at the end of their apprenticeship in the kingdom of heaven, He took them via the fig tree to the temple to teach them about the will of God and themselves. The temple was for prayer, the tree was for fruit. Earlier in their discipleship they had heard a man say he could see men as trees walking, and now they had seen Christ destroy a fruitless tree because it bore nothing for Him. There were two basic lessons to be drawn from this connection: (1) a man must bear fruit unto God or his life is useless; (2) the fruit must

be there when Christ wants it. Amid all the tumult of the questions and theories in their hearts, they heard Him say, 'Have the faith of God'. With their questions unanswered they followed the Lord to the temple, watched Him as He entered and took command of it, stood in awe as He cleansed it, and listened in silence as He pronounced it a house of prayer for all nations of men. Faith and prayer. Had they discovered an equation, namely that faith and prayer equals fruit unto God? But equations are only theories unless they prove correct in practice; they must produce more and increasing fruit.

Chapter 17 — QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Pharisees and Herodians

The next time the Lord specially called His apostles' attention to something, He was sitting in the temple by the treasury. He was particularly concerned that they should not miss the importance of what had just taken place there; it was a kind of culmination of the cumulative teaching He had been giving in the temple over the last day or two. The temple authorities had challenged Him over the recent happenings there; they could not deny His power and dare not defy Him, but they questioned His authority and the source of it. The Lord refused to disclose it; He knew very well that if He told them they would not believe Him. Without saying this He asked them a question which He knew they could not answer without admitting that He and His power were of God. Being astute enough to understand that they were being manoeuvred by Him into making that admission they *said* they could not answer Him. They very well knew the answer and were lying to Him, so the Lord refused to answer their question and turned to telling them parables. In the first, without directly saying so, He told them: (1) He was the well-beloved son of God who had come to them to collect the fruit of His vineyard; (2) He knew perfectly well that they recognized Him and had planned to kill Him; (3) because of this, the Lord would destroy them and their temple and build another. Their own scriptures declared this, as also that He would become the headstone of the corner of that temple. Their response was to desire even more to murder Him, and they would have done so there and then but they were afraid of popular opinion. The apostles must have listened to this with almost heart-stopping apprehension; the clash they had always felt must come must be very near now, the Pharisees and the Herodians were all gathered round Him. It seemed the second wave of attack was being mounted and the apostles watched with anxiety as the enemy took up position and threatened to engulf Him. 'Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?' they asked; it was such a seemingly innocent question. Knowing their hypocrisy, the Lord asked to see a coin of the realm, 'Whose is this image and superscription?' He asked. 'Caesar's' they said. 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's', He said, 'and to God the things that are God's!' They marvelled at Him. It was all they could do; there was nothing more to be said on that subject; it was closed. They just could not catch Him.

The third attack followed at once, but compared with the first two it was lightweight and stupid; anyone else but Jesus would have answered it with the contempt it warranted. The Sadducees produced a parable to insult His intelligence, but only succeeded in revealing to everybody that they themselves had little or none. Their story turned around a supposed family of seven brothers who each in turn married a certain woman and died leaving no issue; afterwards she died also. The question was, to whom did she belong and whose wife would she be in the resurrection? (not that they believed in that). The Lord's answer was very direct, the woman did not belong to any of them, but to God. The trouble with the Sadducees was that they neither knew the scriptures nor the power of God, in fact they did not know God at all. Having heard His answer to the Pharisees and Herodians they should have known better than to ask their question, but such is the nature of intellectual pride that it rushes to establish itself in further ridiculousness as a horse rushes into battle, knowing nothing till it dies.

Not Far From the Kingdom

What would happen next? A scribe, a genuine soul, nearly convinced of Christ, acknowledging to himself the Lord's great wisdom, asked Him which was the first and great commandment of the law. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all ...' came the answer, 'the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself': the man was perfectly satisfied with his answer. 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God', the Lord said, and everybody's questions were silenced. Then the Lord launched His counter attack, asking His own question and pointing to the scriptures which would help them to find the answer. He was David's son, but how was He David's son if He was David's Lord? How could

that possibly be? The answer (which neither He nor anyone else gave) was 'by being both'. But that was humanly impossible, for in David's day and in his own words his Lord was sitting at the right hand of the Lord in heaven. How then could anyone say He was his earthly son? There was only one way that could possibly happen, the Lord would need to perform a miracle whereby He became a man: He was forcing them to this conclusion, and some were gladly receiving it. With His stories and doctrines and answers to questions He had been carefully leading on His apostles to the final point He wished to make that day. So far He had taught them that they must render to God the things that are God's: that primarily all souls were God's: they should love God with all. Now they were to be shown the logical end of such a faith as this.

Over Against the Treasury

All the while He had been speaking the Lord had been observing the people, watching how they had been casting their money into God's treasury; Christ was a most observant person, very interested in money; how people handle it is a sure indication of the state of their soul. Watching people give to God is most instructive. The Lord was really keeping watch over the treasury of souls. God is not dependent on money, but such is the state of humanity that money has been promoted among us to life-saving proportions; undoubtedly it is worshipped. Only once had Christ ever called a man a fool; it was in a parable involving the use of money. On another occasion He challenged His hearers by asking what price a man would put on his own soul, and what profit a man would gain from gaining the world and losing his own soul. Giving to God is a man's estimation of Him; amounts are not reckoned by God according to their actual sum, but according to what they represent; money talks.

A poor widow woman caught the Lord's attention; she was moving along in the stream of men and women coming to pay their dutiful tithes or make some special offering to God; He was greatly moved by what He saw. She was obviously a widow and very poor; when she reached the chest she stretched out her hand and cast two mites into the treasury and passed on without a word. The Lord did not stop her or ask her name; self-effacingly she passed on, and He let her; unknown to herself and anybody else she had made a very real impact upon Him. The amount of money was negligible but her gift was incalculable — the woman had cast in all she had, and, not for the first time, the Lord marvelled at the faith of a human soul. To Him it was wonderful, 'She has cast in more than everybody else', He said. Many had given into God's treasury that day, how much had been gathered is not disclosed and it does not matter; however many had given and whatever the amount was, that poor widow had given more than all the rest put together. As He watched, the Lord was thrilled with her, she had demonstrated to perfection all He had meant when He said, 'Render ... to God the things that are God's'; the two mites were Caesar's, they had his image and superscription on them, but her soul was God's and so was her money, and she converted what was both Caesar's and hers to God. The tragedy is that most people convert the larger portion of what is God's to Caesar. This poor widow, casting in all her means of living, loved the Lord with all she was and all she had; she thought nothing of herself and her own needs but gave Him all her means of living; God knew that He was her treasure. Calling His apostles to Him, Jesus said to them in effect, 'take note; the measure of a man and the state of his soul is not gauged by what God gives to him but by what he gives to God'.

The Lord saw this incident as a priceless opportunity to make His apostles face reality; it must have humbled them to know how much He thought of her, and that He thought they could learn so much from this poor widow; compared with her they had little of which to boast. A short time earlier Peter, speaking for them, had said to the Lord, 'we have left all and followed thee'; it was a very commendable thing to do, not many had done it; they had much to boast of. It was true, and He reassured them that because they had done so they would never want, either in this present world or in the world to come; they were quite safe, their future as well as their present was safe. No such assurances were given to this poverty-stricken woman though; she gave with no guarantees. The apostles were well provided for: the Lord could command stones to be made bread for them, or take a barley cake and multiply it into more than enough to feed them and thousands more besides just because they followed Him; but she was not so privileged, He had not called her. She made no avowals of faith or works or devotedness to Christ: she entered God's house, cast in all the (means of) living she had and left without saying a word, slipping quietly away to nothingness, back to her poverty. What went through those men's minds who can say? Surely they must have learned that office-bearing is

nothingness, emptiness, if a man does not first cast all the living he has into God's treasury. Not for the first time had the Lord made a woman's action a lesson to the apostles. He let her come and give and go without guaranteeing her anything, or making her one promise or promoting her to any position. What did those men think? How about if it had been them? In an earlier exchange between the Lord and the apostles, they had said, 'what shall we have therefore?' They had wanted something in exchange for their allegiance: she wanted nothing. James and John had sought the highest rewards for their hire: she asked for nothing. Quite possibly that may have been because she already had everything she wanted — a loving, life-giving spirit and a warm and generous heart.

Shall a poor widow shame an apostle? By this time Jesus' own mother was a widow. What if the throne on His right hand and on His left hand, so much sought after by apostles, were prepared for Mary and this unknown woman? Neither had worked a miracle, but each in her own way had cast in all the living she had, asking for nothing in return. In all her limitation of knowledge, this poor widow had quite possibly 'cast in' more than all the apostles put together. The Lord did not say this to them, but it was not for nothing that He called their attention to her; He so much wanted His men to lay hold of the secret of God which this woman had learned. To love is to give, to give fully and selflessly, without seeking notice or wanting a compliment or even an encouraging word, is to live. There is no evidence that the woman even realized that the Lord had noticed her, nor is there any indication that He blessed her or supplied her with more than she had ever possessed before, much as we may love to fondly think that to do so would have been just like Him. How fervently He hoped that His apostles would learn their lessons that day; without a shadow of doubt they were equal to any He had ever taught them at any time, whether on sea or land. Apostles have to face the fact that there may be (perhaps certainly are) whole tracts of life in which they have never moved and have had no experience. There are degrees of love and understanding still lying beyond us all, and sometimes men in office, even highest office, are far outstripped by people of lowlier knowledge and humbler position. All those men could do was stand and observe; Jesus marvelled.

Signs of the End of the Age

Beyond the few words He spoke about it all at the treasury the Lord made no further comment; what he had said was the crowning statement to everything he had said in the temple that day, and He rose and left the building, followed by His disciples. As they walked out one of them said, 'Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!' He answered, 'Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down'. He must have been torn within at times by the stony hearts of those men; it seems as though nothing He had said so recently to them at the treasury had made any impression on them. He halted and sat down over against the temple. Eager to learn more, four of the apostles approached Him for a private session about the future — when? what sign shall we look for? A sign? He had shown them one in the temple, a poor widow casting in all she had, but apparently that had aroused no curiosity in them — perhaps because it was so personal and very much concerned with the present! What is the use of asking about future signs if present and obvious ones are ignored? When people seek signs they become vulnerable, it is so easy to be deceived in that realm, so the Lord starts with a warning, 'Take heed lest any man deceive you'.

Apostles are men of whom much is expected; they are considered to be men of revelation; the Lord called them for that, they are the teachers of the churches; if they be deceived, how shall the churches stand in truth? The first reason they were called and the greatest revelation the apostles ever received was that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of Man and Son of God — I AM, indeed — and it was on this point that the Lord issued His first warning. Men would arise and give signs enough if apostles were looking for such things, sufficient to deceive even the very elect of them; they were not to look for or be deceived by any of those kinds of signs, they were no indication of the fulfilment Of His words. The Lord gave them three clear signs: (1) the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not; (2) the fig tree becoming tender and green; (3) the sun, moon, stars and powers in heaven darkened, eclipsed, falling and shaken. There would be much else of great significance taking place, but these three signs were the ones to look for. The first one they would all perhaps live to see, the latter ones would come to pass in time, but the apostles would not be on earth when they happened; they would have finished their course and gone home.

Those apostles had no real need to know the things the Lord had unfolded to them, they did not so very vitally affect them. Nevertheless the Lord, in His wisdom, thought good to release to them, at least in broad outline, some of the knowledge in which He Himself moved and which had shaped His life. Besides this He wanted His Church to be given some guidelines, so that in their day men and women would be as fully instructed about the general direction of events as were the apostles. We all are under command to watch as events unfold throughout time; not that we should forever be looking for things that are coming only to pass. The Lord wants everybody to be concerned with eternal things, that which has come to stay and not to pass; if a man gets the certainties right, the uncertainties will not bother him. The most significant thing about His great prophetic foreview of things that must come to pass is where it begins and ends: the Lord commenced it by sitting over against the temple, and finished it by talking about a house. Whether or not the apostles noticed it, this was the more significant because only a day or so earlier He had stood with them in the temple and called it His house.

So it was that He began His great prophetic word of knowledge to His apostles by telling them that the temple they so much admired was going to be razed to the ground. In the purposes of God it would be replaced by another which He would build Himself, as unlike that temple as it was possible to be. Although He had not yet told them, those apostles were chosen to be foundation stones of it, He was going to build on them. He, like them, would be in the foundation too, the chief corner, but unlike them He would also be the headstone of the corner. He is the Master of the house, the apostles were His servants to whom He gave work to do and authority to do it; above all, it seemed He set a porter to watch. The work of the porter is to watch the doorway; he carefully scrutinizes everyone who attempts to come in, his eyes are on persons, he is not looking for signs. The signs are there, they will come and go in the Master's absence and all will point to His return; He has not said when He is coming, but He is coming and all must be in readiness for that great event. Whatever may be the events of the age he wants His people to be alert, that is why He was not too explicit about things; He gave them enough, but not too much knowledge. A man's ignorance is as valuable and necessary as his knowledge in these affairs; He would come when the time was right. It was no use asking Him when it would be, He did not know; only Father knew that. Their business was to watch; He says it unto all, and the apostles' job was to pass on the message — Watch!

Chapter 18 — THE ALABASTER BOX

Back in Bethany again soon after with their Master, the apostles were invited with Him to a meal in the house of Simon the leper. If they had ever been in a leper's house before it is not recorded; nor is it certain that Simon was in the house or at the meal with them, or whether he was excluded by reason of the disease. They certainly were not there without being aware that they were running a certain amount of risk, but the Lord made no mention of it, nor it seems did He care at all about His own or the apostles' physical welfare. In view of what happened it was exactly the right place to be. Simon's house was obviously one of the Bethany homes open to the Lord; the households of Martha and Simon were evidently on very good terms and had joined together for a meal. It was a carefully planned occasion: Martha served the meal, Lazarus her brother sat with the Lord at table, but, as before, Mary was not there apparently, or if she was she was not at first visible. Whether or not this had all been planned between them is not revealed, but Mary enters the idyll as a benefactress and prophetess, a woman having an alabaster box of ointment.

This was to be a never-to-be-forgotten occasion for everybody there, especially the apostles who had followed in close attendance upon their Lord. As may be expected Lazarus was a centre of attraction; he had been recently raised from the dead, literally brought out of the tomb by the word of the Lord with his graveclothes still on; the house was the leper's house, the house of the creeping death. Martha served, and helped serve the meal there; Mary entered the scene with her box of ointment and anointed the Lord for burial: the connection between these things is too obvious to be missed. The link between them was death: Lazarus had been overcome by death, the leper was being overcome by death, the Lord was going to overcome death, the ointment was always used to anoint the dead. What a setting.

The connection between Lazarus and Simon was very real, the name Lazarus is rooted in the word 'leper'; somewhere back in its history, whether ancient or modern, the Bethany family were associated

with leprosy, they were branded, which may explain their friendship with Simon's household. The connection between Lazarus and the Lord is so well known that little need be said about it. The connection between the Lord and Simon, and therefore his household, is not so obvious; it may have been through Judas, who, we are told, was the son of Simon. Whether or not the traitor was the son of this Simon is not disclosed, but the possibility of it, though unprovable, is worth considering. It was most probably an all-male supper: perhaps fifteen, certainly fourteen men had gathered for the meal, and before long everybody's attention became fixed on the Lord Jesus and Mary. How many ladies were there besides Martha and Mary and what their reason was for being there is not said. The one woman among them whose purpose for attendance was distinct from all the rest was biding her time, waiting for the right moment.

The supper was made for the Lord. The apostles were simply invited because they were His men, that is all, and they knew that. This would be made abundantly clear when the great moment planned by Mary arrived. They must have looked back upon this occasion with very mixed feelings, for it was one of the occasions when the apostles were shown up in the worst possible light; their behaviour was abominable. Mary was the only one in Bethany, (perhaps the only one in all Jewry) most certainly in that room, who had any understanding of the Lord's person and objectives, and above all of the time. The apostles seemed to have no idea of those things; their complete insensitivity and lack of belief and understanding was little short of tragic. Despite all He had told them they still did not believe He was going to die. They had no understanding of what He meant when He talked about Himself as being the bread of life, or of how He could possibly become that. Worse still, from remarks they made, their estimation of Him as a person and what He was worth was incredible to the point of being almost unbelievable.

We cannot tell just how the sacred act was done. Certainly the Lord would have occupied the place of honour. All we know is that at some stage Mary produced her precious ointment and poured it over His head. Whether it was announced or unannounced, the Lord accepted the gesture with humility and grace befitting a king. The unmistakable odour of spikenard filled the room, the house, everyone's nostrils; all eyes were upon Him and the woman. Approval and disapproval rose in hearts and eyes, murmurs of praise and criticism filled mouths — there were none so critical as those men who were believed to be so loyal to Him. It doesn't seem possible, but it is true, that every single one of those apostles felt and said that Mary's generous outpouring of oil upon His head was a waste of money. Once again a woman's uninhibited love and generous gift showed up and completely condemned the miserable, miserly souls of the ignorant apostles. They knew much about miracles and power and authority; privilege and knowledge denied others had been granted them by the Lord, but their estimation of Him was so abysmally low that they begrudged Him the love and devotion of just one woman. That supper proved a disaster for them, they were a disgrace, yet to Him it was so important; they couldn't tell why. With love in His heart, He said that the occasion must be remembered because of the woman and what she did, yet in kindness to them it would have been best forgotten. He wanted it remembered though. Why? With the exception of Himself and the next great supper so shortly to be celebrated, He never said that of any other person or event. That these two suppers should be so pointedly emphasized, and that the supper in Bethany should be linked thereby with the unique supper in Jerusalem, can only mean one thing, that supper in Simon's house was very important, they both were. The first one was to be recorded in remembrance of Mary, the second is to be enacted in remembrance of Him.

Mary's act was far more significant in the Lord's eyes than either she or anyone else in the room but He realized. All four Gospel writers record it; only seldom does this happen, and this very fact alone is sure enough testimony of its importance to Him. Just how much Mary understood of what she was doing, or what her loving act implied we cannot know; the Lord understood it though. For all time and for all eternity, for the sake of earth and heaven, for men and for angels, what she did must be recognized. What the apostles felt after He made such a statement can only be left to the imagination — perhaps envy, even jealousy. Humiliation? They had certainly been indignant at what she did, and full of reproof against her. They did not see her as the Lord saw her. To Him the woman and what she did was as the fulfilment of the word of God, reminding Him that He was the seed of woman and His Father — even though she was not His mother who gave Him flesh. Her name, as His mother's, was Mary, and at that moment she represented the womanhood that had borne Him, coming to anoint Him

and mark Him out among men as the Son of God. She came also as representing the Holy Spirit to anoint Him for His burying, pouring oil upon His flesh, seeing through and beyond His flesh into the spirit of the Man. She anointed Him unto His burying, but not as a pitiful victim of a murder plot; somehow, uniquely, she knew He was the mighty triumphant Victor of death, the King by whom death would be defeated.

Throughout this whole time Lazarus, Mary's brother, sat beside Jesus observing all. Lazarus had been dead, slain by disease, but, much as she loved him, she had not given her precious ointment for him when he died; she had withheld her spikenard for the Lord. For some time Mary had been aware that the Lord she loved was going to die. Whether hints of it had drifted through to her from the disciples or not, when He had raised her brother from the tomb she realized that her intuition had been right. Her brother's illness and death, followed by his reanimation, had convinced her of that; upon consideration she saw that the Lord had wanted Lazarus to die; if He had come to Bethany when they had sent for Him her brother would not have died. He could and would have healed him if He had been there. At the time it had grieved her very much that He did not come, but His delayed coming, coupled with His claim to Martha that He was the resurrection and the life, led her to the belief which she now held and upon which she acted: most likely the whole family were convinced of His intentions. His response to them had proved that He had power over death and the grave and the spirits, souls and bodies of men. Obviously He was the sole arbiter of life and death and of the destinies of men, and it was not such a great step to the realization that, in order to be this, He had to die Himself: He must.

Perhaps during the past few days while staying in the home, the Lord had insisted that He must die. This conviction had been the dominant theme of His conversation with His disciples much of the time lately, and if she heard it Mary had not sought to dissuade Him from it. He must die; as she saw it there was no other way; being truth, He could do no other. The apostles had not seen this, they thought that if He wanted to raise people from the dead He had to stay alive. Surely that was logical, wasn't it? But Mary's logic was different; she saw to the heart of the matter: a man does not conquer death by remaining alive, he only eludes it. Mary had come to see the truth of identification; how complete her grasp of it was we cannot tell, but there is no doubt she saw that the Lord had raised her brother from the dead because He Himself was going to die. Therefore she went to Simon's house that evening to anoint her Lord to His burying. Maybe the whole event was staged for that reason.

'Stop', cried the heart of Judas; 'stop' cried the hearts of all the rest of the disciples. Judas put it into words for them, 'why was not this ointment sold and the proceeds given to the poor?' 'Let her alone', cried the Lord's heart, 'she hath wrought a good work on me, she hath done what she could', He said; no one could have done more. Perfume of Spikenard filled the house, the scent of death and burial was everywhere, it smelled like a place but a few steps from a tomb, an open tomb where there was no death or corruption or graveclothes, and He was the living One. And Mary — she was the bride worshipping the bridegroom, anointing Him in this marriage of death and life. Not for her the pretentious boastings of men who said that they would die with Him; the uncomprehending apostles might (and surely did) say that, but not she. Hers was the gesture of faithful love reaching through the veil; theirs was the cry of banality. The oil was on no one but Jesus and Mary, on His hair and head and feet and on her head and hands: they were one in heart. As far as she was able Mary understood Him and His mission; He needed not to say to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life'; she knew He was, and by her ministration had told Him so. She had done what she could, she could only anoint His body to the burying; His spirit was already anointed, she could not anoint that. He came into the world as the Christ; His Father had sent Him as the Anointed One; Mary had perceived and was finally convinced of that. If an apostle has to be a pioneer, a person with spiritual perception and courage, what, an apostle she would have made. And those who were apostles, what of them? They all murmured against her, criticized her action, accused her of waste, said she was wrong and, by implication, that the Lord was wrong also for allowing and approving of her extravagance. How tragic; what a monstrous thing to imply! She shamed them all. In vain to say they wouldn't have done so had they known; they should have known, they had every bit as much, and more reason than she or anyone else to know the Lord, but they didn't.

This supper was of great significance to all there, especially to Judas, it proved to be one of the turning points of his life. He was the one who led the rest of the apostles in their united criticism of Mary and

the Lord. How truly had Jesus spoken when He said, 'have not I chosen you twelve and one of you is a devil'. What did He think of them now? He must have been hurt to the core; how thankful too He must have been for the love of His three friends; they seemed to value and understand Him more than all the rest. Being Jews, the apostles would never have suffered a woman to teach or to usurp authority over them, yet in a trice, without opening her mouth or attempting to rob them of one privilege, Mary taught them more than any of them knew or had been prepared to admit. Mary became the lowliest servant of all and stepped into a position higher than any of the apostles could fill. As far as is known none of the apostles had ever washed His feet or anointed His head, but she had anointed both — and they thought it was all wrong. Poor, poor apostles! They acted like lost souls, blind, deaf, unfeeling, misguided, weak, having no sense of value or knowledge of what was really going on. As for Judas, he was most lost of all, and for him Christ made the final decision; it was one of the greatest decisions either of them had ever made, an irretrievable act of committal. Leaving the supper room, Judas went straight to the temple and arranged with the priests to betray the Lord into their hands. In the traitor's judgement an alabaster box of ointment was far too precious to 'waste' on the Lord; all He was worth was the price of a slave, and that is all he asked for. Perhaps it was with this in mind that a later apostle wrote, 'the love of money is the root of all evil'.

It is impossible to read the stories of Judas and Mary without making comparisons. Each was called by the Lord, he in heights of joy on a mountain top to be an apostle, she in depths of sorrow in her home, and then only indirectly through her sister, to nothing special. He could claim to be an apostle, she could only claim to be little sister to Lazarus and Martha; he could heal the sick and cast out devils, she could not even get her prayer answered; he had a love for money, she had a love for Christ; he took the place of the devil, she represented the Holy Spirit; he handled silver, she handled oil; he was cast out, she remained; he hanged himself, she saw the Lord crucified and risen; Judas became less than a man, Mary became more than a woman. Who was greater, Mary or the apostle?

Thank God that not all the apostles were like Judas Iscariot, and we have reason to be glad that they were just disciples, only trainee apostles, at the time. They may not have counted it a compliment if they had been told that there were rivalries among them unworthy of their calling. The fact is they were a lot of 'old men', forgiven but carnal as can be, trying to follow and serve and emulate the 'new Man' who they had come to love. To give them their due they were only with Him because, in the first place, He had called them for that purpose. Despite their failures He loved them and had done His best for them under the terms of the covenant then in being, but all His efforts proved woefully inadequate to meet their basic need. They were not therefore entirely to blame, and, as He said, He had not come into the world to condemn sinners. Therefore, without condemnation, though with candour, we will pass quickly over the next few events, pausing only to notice with sadness the way those apostles staggered through the closing days of that age.

Chapter 19 — THE SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAH

A chapter of tragic apostolic failures must have left people like the Bethany family wondering what those men were made of. Another supper, the exposure and expulsion of Judas, avowals of loyalty and bravery from all the rest, unreliability in the Garden of Gethsemane, falling asleep on duty, the final betrayal of the Lord, and the utter cowardice; all of this followed by total abandonment of their Master by the whole company; it was a sorry story. Worse was to follow: in the judgement hall before Pilate, perhaps with the exception of John, not one of them admitted that he was a disciple, let alone an apostle, or raised a voice in support of the Lord; one of them actually denied that he had ever known Him or been near Him. Out of all the men in the land, a counsellor named Joseph and the famous Rabbi Nicodemus, neither of whom were apostles, were the only ones who lifted a finger to help Him and then only when He was dead. Of His apostles, save John who stood by the cross with Mary His mother, there was no sign. It was the same when He was buried: no apostles, only another couple of Marys sitting by the tomb. Where were those men? Hiding! Why? There was no price on their heads, they had nothing to face but ridicule and shame. But of what were they ashamed, or rather of whom? He had said 'follow' and they had done so, but at the critical moment they ran away from Him. They couldn't face the cross, and it was to this that He had called them; if a man is not an apostle at the cross he is an apostle nowhere. It is not therefore surprising that they gathered themselves together in a room and shut themselves in locking the door, hoping they would not be found by anyone connected

with the authorities.

For three days they wallowed in fear and misery together — dark days of despair lightened a little with hope. Three of them were nursing secrets they could not reveal to their companions unless the hope was fulfilled. It had happened to Him exactly as He predicted about His death, so perhaps they had reason to hope He would rise from the dead as He had also predicted. But their hearts were hard, and they had no faith, so they sat and cowered and mourned, while three women made their way to and from the tomb, making plans, lovingly preparing spices with which to embalm the body as soon as the sabbath was past.

To those courageous women, standing trembling before the tomb, bearing their odours and preservatives in the dawning light of another day, angels spoke the first message of the resurrection. Half fleeing in fear and half flying with joy they raced to Peter and John with the news. Cheer and courage flowed into them, immediately the men were lifted out of their gloom; excited to some sort of belief or inquisitiveness, they ran and ran till they reached the tomb. John, first there, stood and waited, while Peter, less fleet of foot than of tongue, pounded and panted up to the entrance gaping open like a cold dark throat in the rock. John stood by as he had stood by the cross earlier, waiting and wondering; Peter went in, leading the way, John following him. The light penetrating into the inner gloom was not bright, it was enough though, sufficient for them to see that the body was not there. As their eyes became accustomed to the dim light they made out the graveclothes lying flat on the rock, collapsed as though the body had been dissolved into thin air or spirited away out of them, but there was no sign of Him.

The two men stood gazing on a sight they never expected to see and would never forget, Peter very confused, John gradually believing; things were beginning to fall into place and come clear to him. He was a man who waited and observed, a thinker; inner things, the things of the spirit, meant more to him than outward things; to him miracles, though they may be great and wonderful, meant less than that which they indicated: they were signs. The place was full of miracles and suggestions; standing there, the dawns of what later he wrote when reporting his meeting with Christ on Patmos, began vaguely to appear — 'I am He that liveth and was dead and behold I am alive for evermore and have the keys of hell and of death'. Peter had not been given those keys, he could not unlock or even begin to grasp the mystery of the miracle: the tomb had to be opened by Christ and the stone rolled back by an angel; it was all becoming plain. Angels sat in the tomb, lighting it up for the women to enter and see that the One they sought was not there; but, when John and Peter went, there were no angels, no light, no one to speak to them — apostles were expected to see and believe. The light of faith was considered by God to be sufficient for them; the sign of the prophet Jonah had been given, and so had the sign of the temple.

Peter and John returned to their companions in the apostolic hideway: there all was unbelief. The atmosphere was dominated by a strange mixture of emotions, ideas and beliefs; some said one thing, some another, no one had it right, not even Peter and John, they all needed more yet, but what? The Lord knew and returned to show Himself to His men with the infallible proofs of His resurrection that they alone could verify; their training must be continued further, it was not yet finished. Their ground of knowledge and belief must be shifted from seeing and handling to hearing only, that is, from carnal knowledge to faith knowledge, from the human to the divine. It was a big transition for them, He knew, but until that happened the whole of His future plans were at risk. Those men were His and the Father's apostles; humanly everything now depended on them, and here they were plagued by fears and doubts, victims of their own imaginations, rejecting everything they heard, refusing to believe anything they could not see with their own eyes and handle with their own hands. Thomas is the one usually singled out and blamed for this kind of attitude, but, with perhaps the exception of John, it was equally true of all the apostles; there was very little difference between them.

Even at the empty tomb John, who might be quoted as being more perceptive and therefore thought to be more spiritual than the rest, saw and believed, so he says; he might even have handled the graveclothes as well. Wherein then was he or any of the others better than Thomas when he stated his famous preconditions for faith? He was only demanding equal privileges with his brethren; their believing was the result of having been given proofs or evidences. At that time none of them merited the special blessing reserved for those 'who have not seen and yet have believed'. Their minds might

have gone back to that supper in Bethany and the sight of Mary anointing Him in faith and love, to His burial, or to the centurion at whose words the Lord marvelled and said, 'I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel': both he and she believed to the point of conviction, and proceeded to the point of commitment on what they had not seen. They are examples of true faith and they received honourable mention. Even so all of them were living and moving in a different day from the Church era; they had a long way to go to reach the faith spoken of by Paul, which had yet to be delivered to the Church. The weaning process from treacherous human belief to the divine, that is, from the faith of man to the faith of God, was a long and laborious task.

The effects of the Lord's appearance among His apostles were almost ludicrous, the men were incredulous; fear and joy competed in hearts for the ascendancy, astonishment filled every mind, but not faith in anyone. 'They believed not for joy'. It seems impossible that they should rejoice to see Him and still not believe, but it was so: to Him that was a serious state of affairs. 'He upbraided them because of their unbelief' — they never had believed as they ought, and they still didn't believe, even though they had all said they did. With one voice they all affirmed Peter's statement that they believed He was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Only a few days before — less than a week — they had said to Him 'by this we believe. 'Do you?' He had questioned, 'do you now believe?' Really?

They were between the supper room and Gethsemane when that conversation took place, and, hearing it, He broke out into prayer to His Father: 'Father ... they have known surely that I came out from thee and they have believed that thou didst send me, I pray for them'. They said they believed, so He prayed for them because He knew that although they believed they were believing on the wrong grounds; it came out of their own mouths — 'by this we believe' — by this. That was their trouble, they had to have reasons for believing, this reason or that reason: the faith of Christ had not yet come to their hearts. Theirs was a belief which rested upon human calculations, deductions from given facts, personal assessments. O how much lay in the Lord's exhortation, 'Have the faith of God'; this faith comes from hearing the word of God alone.

The source of the apostles' trouble was themselves; their hearts had not changed. Nothing they had seen and heard and done or believed had changed them in heart; they were hard men, and the Lord told them so. He had told them fairly recently that they had continued with Him in His temptations and that rewards were granted them; they had done as well as anybody and better than most, and, though they did not know it, the end of their trainee apostleship was at hand. Before long they would be baptized in the Holy Spirit and everything would change; they would have the nature of faith then, a new heart also, and would be able to live the eternal life as they had seen it in Him. The birth from above would accomplish all the basic changes their calling and election demanded, and He commanded them to tarry in Jerusalem for it. They would be real apostles then, with an apostle's nature as well as an apostle's call and name; they would also be fit to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and the Lord could and would build His Church.

PART II — THE NEW APOSTLE

Chapter 20 — AN APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST

Introduction

Apostles are very important people. They are not important in themselves, neither can they be made important, either to God or to the Church, by men or by themselves. Unlike men who are born eunuchs, or can make themselves eunuchs, or can be made eunuchs by men, apostles have neither this birth qualification nor this ability; they are called and made apostles by God alone. 'Apostle' is a name given by Jesus Christ to a man of His selection bearing an office in His Church, but to bear that name does not of itself make a man an apostle of the Church. Surprising as it may at first appear, scripture does not anywhere indicate that any man is, or can be, an apostle of the Church. Whenever the title apostle is given to any man in scripture it is always used in relationship to Christ; for example, 'an apostle of Jesus Christ'. Although it was the Lord Jesus who first used the word as a title, He did not coin it, He simply took up the word, invested it with special meaning, turned it into a title denoting an office and ordained men into it. When the Lord did this the Church did not exist; He had the Church in mind, and called men with purpose of heart to build it, but as yet the Church was not in being. The

title was originally given by Him to a very select band of men He chose from among the thousands who followed Him during the early period of His ministry. Those men were first and more properly called disciples, that is, 'learners', but subsequently became known variously as 'the apostles', 'His apostles' or 'the twelve'.

Although the office of apostle was an innovation among men at that time, its functional meaning was not new either to men or to God. The Old Testament is full of stories of men raised up of God and sent to their fellows with His word and to do His works. God called and sent and equipped Moses with powers as great or greater than those He gave any man, either before or since. He also made reference of Himself to Jeremiah as 'rising up early' and sending men to Israel; in this sense each of these was an apostle of God. John the Baptist, the forerunner and herald of Christ, was also a man sent by God as the apostle John tells us, but he was not known as an apostle. All of these men were God's sent ones; they were His mouthpieces to Israel and represented Him; their lives and ministries were foundational to the spiritual life of the nation. As far as office went they were prophets and kings, in some cases priests; but, though never given the New Testament title apostle, there is little doubt that in course of their ministry they partially, if not completely, filled that role.

Confirming this basic function of the true apostolic ministry, Paul says that the Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. It may well be that the close association of the two offices for the purpose of church-building is to point out that there is very little difference between them. All apostles are prophets, they must be; the apostolic office includes and embraces all the others. The apostle does not have a monopoly of the gifts of the Spirit, nor is he a specialist in one only: he must be able, when need arises, to function in every way needful to that situation. The prophet on the other hand is not expected to exceed his office, though he may at times accomplish things not usually associated with that calling but with an apostle's. Certainly neither of them, apostle or prophet, or both of them together, are the chief foundation stone of the Church, for Christ is that; nevertheless the work of both apostle and prophet is foundational in the Church, next to Christ the most fundamental of all.

Quite noticeably, in all periods of history these two offices have been combined in a man without his being specially called by either name. Abraham was not called an apostle, but it was never clearer of any man that God called him and sent him to Canaan; later He said of him that he was a prophet: consistent with this there was never a more fundamental person than he in all Israel. Moses, already referred to, was a prophet mighty in word and deed before God and man also, yet God gave neither of them the titular position of apostle or prophet. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself was never called an apostle in His lifetime, nor was He referred to as 'the prophet Jesus', yet He was the supreme manifestation and example of both offices, and prior to His crucifixion His earth ministry lay chiefly in both these offices. It was He who first used the word apostle as a title, bestowing upon selected men of His choice the title which was first bestowed upon Himself in heaven by God; significantly enough, in the epistle to the Hebrews, as mentioned earlier, it is used in combination with its companion title and office, High Priest.

When he calls Christ 'the apostle and high priest of our professions', the writer links together two ideas which, to the Hebrew mind, denote opposite extremes of thought: the apostle is a man sent out (from God to men), the high priest is one who enters in (from man unto God). Christ the Apostle was the Man sent from God to men; in this God set the pattern for all time; every true apostle is a man sent to his fellow men by God; Paul says apostles are Christ's gifts to men, they share Christ's office and represent Him. Paul very definitely knew and said that he was elected and sent by Christ personally; God uses no intermediaries in his election. It was the same with the original twelve: Christ only gave to men those who His Father had given to Him: every apostle is an apostle of God. In Christ's eyes this was the most precious thing about His apostles, they were given to Him by God that He should give them to men: 'Thine they were and thou gavest them me', He said, speaking of them to His Father. Whatever their intrinsic worth, those men were precious to Him chiefly because His Father had chosen them for Him: He was God's, they were God's. Whatever other impression He made on them during the last hour or so of His life with them on earth, He made sure that they knew they were given to Him by God: they had to know that they were apostles of God and of Christ.

At the moment of speaking they, with Him, were approaching the greatest crisis of their lives; unknown to them, they were accompanying Him to the garden tryst with His Father and His

appointment with death. When the time came they would run away, but He would go through with it — it was His appointment, not theirs — yet. God had made the appointment for them, it was pending, but as yet neither death nor they were ready. He had said that He was going alone before them to prepare death and what lay beyond it for them, but had not yet disclosed the fact that they too needed preparing for these things. It is doubtful whether they understood very much of anything He was saying to them at that time. He did not blame them for that, they were on the wrong side of the cross to understand essential spiritual things clearly. They were also mere men; they had not been baptized in the Holy Spirit, nor did they know that they had yet to be baptized into their Lord's death and that they should be buried and, planted with Him there and rise again into newness of life. The Lord knew that in their present state such things were altogether too much for their minds to grasp, so He did not speak of them. He only unfolded truth to the apostles as they were able to bear it; the more important things were reserved for the future when the Spirit of truth should come to them from the Father; they would understand then. Besides, God had in mind to add to them another man who He had not yet called, a man who would say things like, 'to me to live is Christ and to die is gain', 'I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live', a man who understood and would write much about apostleship. A man who, like his Lord, would come unto his own and not be received of them, who would be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, yet one through whose ministry many would receive eternal life. When God did raise him up he was not at first accepted by the original apostolic band; for various reasons they were loath to accept him. For one thing they had not chosen him, and for another, unlike them, he had been the Lord's worst enemy.

Saul, Who also is Called Paul

For fourteen years the original apostles were not fully persuaded of the genuineness of the claims of Saul of Tarsus; they had already chosen another to take the place of Judas, and, blinded by their choice, could not believe that Paul had been chosen by the Lord to be an apostle equal in status and power with them, but he was. He never had it easy and never once boasted himself above Matthias; he had no jealousy or pride in him to exalt himself above the one they chose to be the twelfth man. Quite the opposite: when writing to the Corinthians he honoured him equally with the eleven original men by including him in 'the twelve' of whom he spoke. 'Saul who also is called Paul' was the thirteenth man — a very odd and humble man indeed. He called himself an abortive, though all he meant by that word is not explained. It could have a dispensational meaning but that is highly unlikely; it could also be a reference to the fact that he was born from above in a most unusual manner and in a quite unexpected hurry. There were no preparations for apostleship, he did not have three years of intensive training as in the case of the eleven, all was over and done in a few hours. More than likely it was a comment on his election to apostleship. As far as it is possible to tell, following the selection of Matthias which was perfectly acceptable to all, Paul was the first new apostle chosen by Jesus from among all who were being born from above since Pentecost.

Paul was called and presented by God independently of men in such a manner that his advent was a complete shock to everybody, including himself. It is not therefore surprising that in many things Paul's statements about apostles and apostleship differ from those which the other apostles made in their writings; he came into the office in rather a different way from them, and from an entirely different social and cultural background. This resulted in an approach and an understanding of a different order from theirs. Besides being inspired, his words on apostleship are also very illuminating and explicit: one of them in particular is most expressive: 'I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death'; he understood. In reality of course he was appointed unto life, but as it were unto death also. He was only paraphrasing Christ's own words and putting them into another context: Christ said except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit'. Paul was interpreting the Lord's thought in terms of the lower apostolic office he held — he certainly had a way of putting things. Having made that terse statement, he proceeds further to explain to the Corinthians why he said it and what he meant by it; again his words are very trenchant and explicit: 'For we are made a spectacle unto the world and to angels and to men, we are fools for Christ's sake'. He was under no delusions as to the purpose of the apostolic calling; he was a very practical man and entertained no visions of himself being exalted to heights of fame and grandeur thereby; instead, in some strange way, he saw himself, and indeed all apostles, as a theatre. His whole being was a stage, he felt, a kind of platform, a setting where the life of salvation was

being portrayed, acted out by God. He was completely gripped by this idea, and realized he had been chosen by God for this very reason; he knew that in his life the fullest meaning of salvation and the utmost consequences of the gospel were to be enacted to the full before all: the thought thrilled him.

We should be thankful that this disclosure of the apostle's thoughts was made representatively. Indeed it would not be difficult to imagine that they had been expressed or written by any or all of the original eleven. Not one of those men could have doubted that Jesus had appointed them all to death. His oft-repeated words, 'Take up the cross and follow me', though figurative, were plain; they understood His meaning perfectly. In those days when any man took up the cross it was his own; everyone who saw him knew he was appointed to death, it was the last public act he did. After that he was crucified — by others — and became a public exhibition and scandal: that was his final association with the cross, the cross bore him. Paul understood this and translated it into experience so really that, when writing further about this death, he said, 'I die daily'; it was a permanent daily experience with him, which is exactly what Jesus wanted. Paul knew exactly what Jesus meant and had rightly interpreted His words; it was the only way to live, indeed it was both the basis and reason for life. He found that, because of this, he could fight with the bestial natures of men, or the beastly spirits of devils in men, whatever they were. Wherever he met them, whether they were wolves or foxes or lions or bulls or dragons or serpents: anything, anywhere, he could face and conquer them; being already dead he was more than a conqueror in every place; they simply could not slay him. Being risen with Christ he was able to live daily in the death of Christ, thus making death permanent in him by adding each day's death to the previous days of death. In order for an apostle to be an apostle there must be no resurrection of (the) self: Paul had come to an agreement with his Lord to eliminate it. He knew there was no once for all death for the self life; that old Adamic, devil related nature was crucified, dead and buried, but he had discovered that the natural part of him needed putting to death also, daily. Being born again and being able to see himself as apart from the old Adam, he also recognized and saw himself for the first time. At last he saw 'I myself' — his person as distinct from Christ, the new Adam within him. Both he and Christ were as distinct from old Adam as it was possible to be, it was wonderful — and he knew that he had to be kept dead. This apostle knew that, as he lived on earth daily so he must die daily lest, through his natural human appetites, he again became very much alive to sin and the flesh and the world and to satan and satanic powers. By the application of this furthest extension of Christ's death to man's needs Paul was able to overcome all his own enemies as well as the enemies of the Church and of Christ and His cross.

A Spectacle to the World

This death of the cross was such a permanent feature of Paul's daily living that he became most usable to God, He was able to use Paul most powerfully; humbly recognizing this and desiring it too the idea of the theatre was born. Taking it up, the apostle used this figure to great purpose, applying it to himself and his fellow apostles with great power, and what a figure it is. Can it be true? Can it possibly be that a man should look upon himself as a theatre and want to be one? He did. But a theatre is a non-person, a thing, a background, a room for a platform or stage; it has no personality, it is only a place where something is enacted by some person or persons playing a part. Of itself the theatre itself does not do anything; it only fulfils a purpose, indeed it is purpose built and only exists for that purpose. A theatre is inactive, lifeless, a place where other persons who live and think and speak present themselves and their message to others. The platform does not live or move or think or speak, it is a facility only, it has no power, it has nothing to say or do; the spectacle being presented within it is what everyone wants to see and hear. A theatre has a use, but it is useless of itself, it is dumb, blind, deaf, dead. A theatre cannot even make itself, it has to be constructed by someone else in accordance with its maker's wishes and the architect's plans; it is designed to exist for their pleasure and purpose alone. A theatre may be considered a work of art and classed as an architectural masterpiece, but even to that it makes no contribution and can make no claims; it has no beauty as of itself, it is an expression of a living soul but not its own.

Primarily though a theatre is functional, it is desired, designed and created entirely by someone for someone's use. That preliminary work accomplished, the theatre becomes a place where people gather to view a spectacle and hear a message; except that were so, there would be no reason for its existence. A theatre is a place for the display and advancement of art and culture where history and prophecy

meet and past and future are joined in the present, where great personages and names are revered and their work and words treasured, almost adored. The theatre does not exist for itself but for others, always others. Except living persons are in it, it is cold and expressionless and empty, a shell only; authors, actors, audiences and technicians alone give it life and meaning and warmth and make it useful and relevant to mankind. To have fullest effect, noises other than the voices and music of the cast must not be heard; the theatre must be soundproof; nothing must be allowed to distract or detract from the real purpose for which it is built. It must also be audio-visually perfect — people must be able to see clearly and hear correctly; they attend only to enjoy the advertised production.

This then is what Paul so plainly saw about himself and all others called apostles. He puts it so pertinently: 'Apostles', he says, 'last as it were, (we are) appointed to death'. That is a penetrating and succinct observation about the theatre, it is appointed unto death — to be dead enough for someone's use. He is really repeating to the Corinthians what he had previously said so plainly to the Galatians in a different way: 'It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by His grace to reveal His Son in me'. In these words the apostle presents the substance of God's activities in the theatre — the revelation of His Son, His 'production'. Paul did not confer with flesh and blood about that, he saw quite clearly what regeneration by the Spirit is all about; from the very beginning he understood that he was the dead theatre, not the living production. God crucified him when He crucified His Son, He had to; if He wanted His Son to be revealed in Paul there was no other way. From that moment Paul only lived by the faith of Jesus Christ. He was God's theatre; as a theatre comes alive by the presence and power of the persons on the stage, so did Paul by the presence of God. God had chosen him for the direct purpose of using his person for the revelation of His Son. Paul had no objection to this, rather he rejoiced at the privilege; moreover he saw that, although it was not clear to anyone except Christ at the time, this was the very reason why God gave his predecessors to His Son and why He called them apostles.

Men are not called apostles just because they are sent ones; God is not interested in mere definitions of words, nor is He primarily concerned with bestowing titles, or filling offices, or giving power, or distributing gifts; these all have their place in His kingdom and are necessary for that reason, but are not of paramount importance in His Church. This is the basic reason why He did not bestow the title 'apostle' on John the Baptist or others who, like him, were sent from God before him to do or preach mighty things according to His will. Other titles were bestowed on them, denoting the work they did and the office they filled and the function they had in the kingdom, but none were called apostles for the simple reason that they were not apostles. Whatever a man is or does in God's kingdom is by God's sovereign choice alone. No man can earn or deserve the title he is given; whatever the title is, it is bestowed by God before ever the man is saved. No man becomes an apostle, he either is or he is not according to God's choice. On earth positions and titles have to be earned, but not in God's Church. An apostle may have to win acknowledgement of it from men but not from God.

While the twelve were with Christ on earth He called them apostles, but they were apostles in name only; they were not apostles in themselves until Pentecost; it was the baptism in the Spirit that made them true apostles. Before that they really did no more, if as much, as many Old Testament prophets had done before them; indeed during the three years spent with the Lord not one of the twelve ever prophesied, or if he did so it is not recorded that he did. We may well ask the question, why then did Christ call them apostles? It cannot be that He did so because in the strict etymological significance of the word they were at a certain time sent out by Him to their countrymen, for He also sent out seventy others and did not call them apostles although they did the same works. He obviously chose them with an eye on the future, that is, what they were going to become according to the will of God after His decease by that baptism. Concerning the first point, it should be noted that the Lord only sent them out once, and then only for a very short period and in their own country; He really chose them to be with Him as Mark says. They were little more than privileged disciples given opportunity to serve Him and His purposes, most of which lay in the future and were as yet undisclosed to them.

Concerning the second point, a man is not an apostle because he is sent out, and certainly not because he is called an apostle by men: to be an apostle a man must be called an apostle by Christ, this is the first qualification. The second is like it, he must be indwelt by Christ who is The Apostle. These two are the basic requirements for the office. While Christ was with His men on earth He was not dwelling in

them, He was without them as both He and they were painfully aware. For about three years Judas Iscariot was as much an apostle as any other of the twelve; he was called and chosen and equipped and sent out with Peter and James and John, or any other of them, but neither he nor any other was an apostle from the beginning as was Paul. Unlike him they were not indwelt by Christ from the beginning of their call, they were disciples called apostles, followers of Christ in the flesh; they were not crucified, dead and buried with Christ and therefore indwelt by Him, nor could they be. No man is an apostle who is not indwelt by The Apostle, any more than any man is a Christian unless he is indwelt by Christ.

Called an Apostle

In the mind of God, when a man is designed by Him to be an apostle he is called that from the beginning, that is, when the idea of the Church first formulated in God's mind. Paul was, as he said, called an apostle. Translators of his letters had some difficulty with this; trying to interpret the truth correctly they inserted the words 'to be' in the text and made it read 'called to be an apostle', but that is not what Paul wrote; he was an apostle when he was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. He said he was an apostle by the will of God, he was indwelt and taken over by Christ right from the beginning with this in mind. Paul was not primarily called to be an apostle, he was called because he was an apostle, although in the outworkings of life he had to become what He was called; but this same thing is true of all God's children. Even father Abraham in his day had to become what God had already made him, as Paul tells the Romans. Christ indwelt His man Paul with special purpose to make him an apostle, he really was an apostle of Jesus Christ. What every man is in Christ, whether member, apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher etc., he is such because Christ is in him in that capacity. So greatly was Paul overawed and appreciative of God's grace to him, that he said, 'I am not meet to be ... an apostle because I persecuted the Church of God... I am the least of the apostles'; he meant it. He was a modest man, but it was not to display a measure of modesty and humility that he said so; he said it because it was true and he knew it was true. On the very day of his conversion he was sure of it; Christ gave him to understand that he had been persecuting Him, He opened their dialogue with, 'Why persecutest thou me?' The question laid bare Paul's heart and opened his eyes to see himself. From that moment onwards Paul had no delusions about himself at all; he immediately became Christ's slave.

Least of the Apostles

The fact that from the beginning he was destined to become Christ's apostle made no difference to Paul's self-estimation; one flashing moment of revelation was sufficient to make him realize that he was nothing and less than nothing. When later he discovered his calling and office it left his reasoning unaltered, in fact it further convinced him that if he was an apostle he was the least of them. When he considered what the other apostles had gone through, their personal loyalty and love to the Lord, the suffering they had endured, much of which he himself had inflicted on them and on the churches of Christ, he felt ashamed of himself. If a group of men ever deserved to be called apostles they did, but he had done nothing to deserve the honour; he could find few points of comparison between himself and them. On the contrary he knew his attitude and actions were sufficient to have disqualified him completely from all honours and favours from God for ever. Paul did not need persuading that all was of grace. Christ had come to live in him; that alone would have satisfied his grateful heart for ever; to be chosen an apostle was grace upon grace undeserved. All that was commendable in him was of Christ, he wanted no more or other than to be possessed by Him utterly, that He should have complete monopoly of him and bold unhindered sway in his being for ever. His desire was granted him; Paul became the theatre of God. Paul's humanity and person became Christ's, he was completely taken over by God. All the actions and works and words people saw and heard in him were Christ's; if there was anything to applaud or to praise in him it was of the Lord. 'I live no longer I, Christ liveth in me', he said with truth and triumph. 'His spirit worketh in me mightily', he insisted, 'not I but the grace of God that was with me': people listened to him and read his words with wonder and full acknowledgement; they knew he was not one whit behind the company of acknowledged apostles, though they seemed to be among the last to accept his call. Paul was completely occupied and taken over by the Lord.

Appointed Unto Death

In Christ's mind His apostles had always been appointed unto death; unless this was so they could no more be apostles than He was the Apostle. Time and time again He had hinted at this to them and following His death and resurrection and their Pentecost they knew the reason why; Paul here expresses it: that others might live. These men embraced this; for this reason they were firmly appointed, thoroughly adjusted and totally disposed to death. Every one of them was mentally conditioned for it and never sought to avoid it, but rejoiced that they were predestined, chosen and led to death. It appears this was understood and agreed upon in measure among the apostles even before Christ died. When He was so determined to go to Bethany all of them fell in with Thomas's suggestion that they should go with Him and die there. They did not then know the meaning and power of the cross or all that death to sin and self meant, but they loved Him. Their prognostications were unnecessarily gloomy and unfounded, but they were prepared at that time to face what appeared to them to be their last hour, and that is most commendable.

As men go, those first apostles Jesus chose were good, devoted and reliable. Theirs was no easy lot; they found conditions of apostleship hard and their minds were carnal; their very fleshiness prevented them from recognizing what was meant by death; we all should have been the same had we been one of them. They loved the Master they could not understand, and when they first followed after Him they thought they were privileged above all others; He had called and predestined them to a most marvellous life, and in one sense they were quite right. Their minds could easily envisage Messianic glory, but they could not grasp and believe that they were predestined to the spiritual death which all that glory presupposed. At that stage of their calling they could not accept the thought of crucifixion or of what the death of the cross meant; in any case they did not know what that implied or what could be accomplished by it.

They could comprehend discipleship in measure, and responded to apostleship in a Messianic kingdom on earth according to prevalent fleshly understanding of these things, but not crucifixion and death. Being His most important men was easy, within limits it was a delight to them. But death? No! Normal human reasoning has it that, in order to serve a man must live and that is so true, but Jesus seemed to reverse that idea. He was so different; He taught them that in order to serve God a man must die. So foreign was the idea of death to the apostles' philosophy of life and service and so repugnant was Jesus' repeated statement to them about death, that at one point Peter actually reproved Him for it. Nevertheless the truth, even though it is hurtful, is the truth and the Lord persisted with it; 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters,' (whatever was He saying?) 'yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple'. It was shocking; He intended it to be.

Yet There is Room

He had just concluded a parable when He said it. The story was about a certain man making a great supper and bidding many to it. It was one of those sad yet happy little stories He sometimes told when depicting the hearts of men, for many, He said, refused the invitation (or was it a summons?) and sealed their doom. They excused themselves upon such trivial grounds that the master of the house was justly angry and in the end changed his attitude towards them; he turned completely round and utterly refused to have them on his premises. Insulted, he turned from his former generosity towards them and commanded his servants to go out and bring in the poor, the maimed, the halt and the blind. Many of these underprivileged ones came as soon as they were called and he was greatly pleased by their response; but, being informed that still there was room for more, he sent the servants out with fresh instructions: 'compel them to come in', he said; he wanted his house to be filled. Although at first many had despised his invitation and were rejected by him in consequence, happily in the end he succeeded in thoroughly furnishing his house with guests as he desired. The original guests refused his generosity but his provision was not wasted; for everyone that refused there was another willing to accept what those first foolish people had lost for ever.

It requires very little stretch of the imagination to see that the Lord intended us to grasp who the master of the house is; it is Himself; His is the house, He made the provision, He does the bidding. The feast significantly enough is a supper. The supper meal in that land served a dual purpose, it was the final meal of the past or passing day and the first meal of the coming new day; in Jewry days ended and commenced at sunset. When Christ came to this earth the Jews had a standing invitation to the

feast, they were God's people, but they rejected His Christ. Their refusal to accept Him and His provisions effectively resulted in the invitation being withdrawn from them and extended to the gentiles, many of whom gladly respond to the call. It could not have been difficult for the apostles to guess who fills the role of the servants that know the Lord's intentions and desires, and are shown to be combing the streets and the lanes for those not formerly included in the invitation. What an unlikely company is finally gathered in to what to them was an entirely unexpected feast. The abundance of the provision and the vastness of the house results in the report that 'yet there is room' for more to come. This time the search is among the highways and hedges; all who could be found must be compelled to come to the supper. So the blessed Spirit, through many servants, moves in compulsion on people's hearts to fulfil the Lord's will. His words must have seemed unusually forceful to those men listening; they were certainly left in no doubt about His intentions and perhaps also His methods: first invitation, then bidding, then compulsion; His house was going to be filled.

Compel Them to Come In

This then was the reason why the Lord called men to forsake all and take up the cross. To serve Him properly a man, especially an apostle, must have very definite qualifications. To invite men to supper is not difficult, but to bid and if necessary compel them to come is not the easiest of tasks: of himself a man cannot do it, he needs power beyond his own. The very fact that men should need compelling to come to God's supper is evidence of itself that something is radically wrong with them. Men are their own enemies, their minds are at enmity with God; they do not know what is good for them, or if they do they will not respond to it; all men are by nature fools, the only difference between us is that some are bigger fools than others. This was quite plain to the apostle Paul, who said of himself from another standpoint that he was a fool for Christ's sake and seemed to find extraordinary joy in the experience. He realized that all he was called for by Christ demanded that he should become a man utterly dead to self-life and self-interest. Only then, he knew, would the Master of the house have complete freedom in him and be able to use him fully for the ultimate work of compulsion if need be.

To follow his calling among men, especially among his own relatives, is not an easy task at all; already he may have offended them deeply by refusing to go their way and instead taking up the cross. Only Christ in him can do that, it is not natural in any normal man to wish to take up the cross and be dead to his own dear ones, loving them enough to hate them in this respect as Christ said. Unless a man be dead to his own interests in his own dear ones and to their interests in him he cannot be sufficiently dead to be alive to Christ's interests in them and to bring them to the supper of the Lord; it is such a difficult thing to do. Only the Holy Ghost in him can do it. It is very often a far easier thing to win strangers to Christ than to bring one's own wife or husband or father or mother and sisters and brothers and children to that supper.

The supper of the Lord was introduced into the world for men by the Lord Himself. The Master of the house actually prepared the meal and made it ready Himself; He did not employ or make use of another to do it, the supper is entirely His own work. At the last meal He ate with His apostles in the upper room He made quite plain to them what the supper was: 'This is my body which is broken for you ... this cup is the new testament in my blood'. It was truly a supper, for it was both the final meal of the day or dispensation of law and the first meal of the day or dispensation of grace which was about to dawn. It was the symbolic meal of the New Covenant; He said it was in His blood. It was in His body too, it had to be; it was in His flesh, for His blood was in His flesh and they all sat down and ate and drank of it together, the Lord and the small body of apostles; it was one common meal over which He presided. It was highly mystical too and primarily spiritual, for they ate bread and drank wine yet they ate and drank the body and blood of Christ. Later, when all that was in Jesus was consummated by the cross and death and by resurrection and ascension to God, when the feast of love was fulfilled in heavenly communion between Father and Son and everything was perfected as it had always been, the apostles partook of the Spirit too, for He also was poured out to them.

The Holy Ghost has Come

He had to come of course, He is the final necessity. He is the One by whom the body and blood of the baby Jesus came. It was He who ensured that Jesus' flesh and Jesus' blood could be the flesh and blood of the Son of God. Without the Spirit, bread could not be or mean other than bread, and wine

could not be or signify other than wine; only the Spirit of God in a man can create the reality of which these elements speak and make them mean something other to him than they naturally are; he who thinks other than this is deceived. This is why the final blessing of Paul, given to the Corinthians following months of patient waiting and ministry by letter on most vital issues, was couched in these terms: 'The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all'. The communion is only by and in the Spirit, it is not in bread and wine. This is why Paul said to those same Corinthians that he had personally (not traditionally note) received from the Lord and delivered to them the Lord's original request to the Original apostles in the upper room: 'This do in remembrance of me'. Paul had to lay it down as a commandment to the erring church in the same way as he had to lay down rules to them about other things over which they had gone wrong. But the commandment was not so much a command to do it as a directive to do so in remembrance of Him; apart from the Holy Spirit that is quite impossible. The wine of true communion in the Spirit is the spiritual content of the life in the pure sinless blood of Jesus; human communion with God can only exist in that life, for it was the life of the one human being who lived all His days in unbroken communion with God. Thereby the spiritual impact of His flesh on others was also pure; His body was the means of expressing His life in flesh.

I and My Father are One

Jesus was unique, a wonderful complexity of persons and natures. He was a human being 'made of a woman', as all other humans are, but not by the same means. Begotten of the Father, He was God the Son as an individual, yet although so distinctively the Son, God the Father and God the Holy Spirit were in Him. Birth as a man was new to Him; His human spirit was kept divine by being indwelt by and integrated with the divine Spirit, which identified Him distinctively as the Son. Besides this, He was conscious that the Father dwelt in Him, and confessed that the Father and He were one. People who observed and listened to Him were amazed to hear Him claim that the words coming out of His mouth were not really His but the Father's, and that it was not actually He but His Father who was doing the works He did. This was staggering and hardly believable to them; did He mean He was an automaton? Was He saying He had no will of His own? Hadn't He a mind of His own? Had He no power of His own? They did not understand it and never really discovered the secret; when He said such things he was speaking as the Apostle. What Jesus was saying was, 'I am a theatre, I am appointed unto death, I live yet not I, Father liveth in Me'. Apostles are — must be — a complex of persons, a kind of theatre in which persons appear each to be themselves and to play their part and to do their works and to present a message. These must so behave and act and speak that they give an overall effect of unity and oneness. As with Christ the Apostle, so with an apostle. The degree is different and that difference is very great, but the principle is the same.

Chapter 21 — A PATTERN

By the Grace of God

Another point of significance, which should also be of great interest to all the churches, is Paul's word to Timothy concerning the importance of his (that is Paul's) position in the Church. As we have already seen he referred to himself as one who was born before the time. In his modesty he supposed he was not a whit behind the chiefest apostles when, but for his humility, he could have said that in some realms and for some things he was unique. It would be a profitable exercise for all of us to go through the New Testament and list the things in which, as far as the records go, he was the one apostle to experience them. This we will not do here, but will select an event or claim which was his alone. Perhaps the greatest among these was the claim he made to the young man he called his son. It is greatly to his credit that he did not make the statement publicly but as it were privately. It would have been equally true had he said it publicly to one of the churches but such was his modesty he never did so. We could all learn so much from this man's conduct if we would.

Before proceeding to examine his claim, let us note that the letters he wrote to Timothy and Titus and Philemon were not written with a view to publication, whether by mouth to a church or by being included as chapters of a book. Perhaps not one of the New Testament writers ever thought that their works would be included in a book; certainly Paul's private letters were only intended for the eyes of those who received them. That they were treasured and kept and later published as part of God's

inspired word is our gain; we thank God for them and perhaps most of all for this letter to Timothy.

A little over half way through the opening chapter of his first letter to the young man he breaks out into a testimony to the exceeding grace of God in his life. Describing himself prior to his regeneration he cannot refrain from self-recrimination as many former unspecified atrocities carried out in the name of God flood into his mind. He had been a religious fanatic without equal among his contemporaries actually bent on murder and destruction when the Lord saved him. This abundance of grace he found in Christ Jesus towards him, such love and faithfulness, was a constant source of amazement to him: 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' he wrote, and added 'of whom I am chief'. What an insight into this man's estimation of himself, and what an indication of the kind of thoughts that kept him so humble. Happily that was only one of his discoveries: he also said that the Lord enabled him for that which He counted him faithful and put him into the ministry, 'the glorious gospel of the blessed God' was committed to his trust; what an honour and what a gospel and what a man! In this Paul was unique among the apostles: he was given a personal revelation of the gospel, as he testifies to the Galatians; as far as we can tell no-one else, either before or since, was so privileged. But more to the point, his next claim is the one which concerns us here. He knew, presumably from the same source, that God had a further purpose for him than this. He states it in these words: 'Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting'. That was one of the most sweeping statements Paul ever made; again it makes him unique among the apostles.

Last of All

Given sober consideration it is a staggering claim, all the more so because it is absolutely true. It has never been denied or contradicted by anyone and was never modified by himself; among his fellow-apostles everybody recognized that it was true. Let every teacher and preacher of the gospel recognize its truth. God not only set forth the apostles last, in this one man He also set forth an example of His ways with men and of His calling and election to apostleship. Paul thought and said that God had set forth the apostles last, but all he meant by that he did not make clear. We know what he said and what he did not say by those words, but beyond that it is difficult to know exactly what was in his mind when he said it. He did not say that he was the last of the apostles, but later added 'last of all He appeared unto me'. Reading this in context of the risen Christ's manifestation of Himself in human bodily form to various individuals and groups before His final ascension, it seems that Paul is claiming that Christ appeared to him in the same manner, if not the same form also; this may well be. If indeed this be true, the greatness of Paul's claim over the rest is that he saw the Lord after Pentecost, that is, more recently than the other apostles; if this be so his gospel was given in order to be complementary and confirmatory to theirs.

We also know that, though not in the same way as Paul, John the beloved saw the Lord at a later date still. The Lord came to him on Patmos, but it was not an 'appearance' as when He appeared to him with the rest of the apostles following the resurrection; on the isle the Lord came to him in a vision. The only description of the risen Lord given in scripture is the one given by John following this vision; other than that we know nothing of His appearance to the apostles. Of His appearing there is ample proof, it needs not to be discussed; what He looked like is immaterial in the main. The point is that apparently He revealed Himself in different ways at different times to different people. Paul was one of these; he was visited personally by the Lord following his birth and there is no doubt he was so visited because he was a chosen apostle. 'I am nothing' he said (a statement ranking with his remark about himself being a theatre) and did so as part of a statement setting out his claim that in nothing was he behind the very chiefest of the apostles. He greatly disliked to speak of those things but the necessity was thrust upon him; only this kind of pressure made him reveal the fact that Christ had appeared to him. People were saying that he was not an apostle when he knew that he was. They were also saying, 'well, if he is he's not one of the chief apostles'; the inference from that is, 'as far as fundamental things go, he can be ignored'. This is why Paul advanced his claim. It was absolutely vital to the churches that they understood the gospel which had been entrusted to him; both the gospel and his apostleship had to be defended. Following His resurrection, Christ had appeared to Peter personally, as everyone knew; to some superstitious minds this proved that Peter was the most important figure in the Church. Many believed that no one else had been granted such a personal and distinct audience and inferred

from this that Peter must be the very chiefest of all the apostles, which was not true. Paul also saw the Lord. It was a personal private meeting at a more recent date too; there were witnesses of it also, which Peter could never claim.

Born Out of Due Time

As previously stated, Paul called himself an abortive. Christ had said, 'Ye must be born from above'. But Paul's was no ordinary new birth, nor was his election to apostleship according to the previous pattern either. In principle it was the same but the manner and order of it were not; he expressly says that he was born again before he was elected an apostle, a claim which none of the others could make. His election to that select company was not according to the pattern Christ set when He chose His apostles while on earth, nor was it according to the pattern they had instituted among themselves after he left. They had chosen Matthias according to their own wisdom, using the traditional method of Jewry; they cast lots for him, asking God to confirm their choice by electing one or other of the two men they had cited. They knew positively well that they themselves had not been chosen like that; they had heard Jesus Himself say that the Father had given them to Him, yet they would not wait for anything remotely like that to happen. Without a word of commandment or any hint of instruction from the Lord they assumed that someone should be elected to fill the gap left in their numbers by Judas' suicide and decided to cast lots to (supposedly) ascertain the will of God. Tradition dies hard; they had not yet moved out of that Old Covenant under which they had been born, they needed a new birth, the kind that Saul of Tarsus later had and into which they themselves entered at Pentecost. The disappointing thing about this sad fact is that, since His resurrection, the Lord Jesus had been regularly visiting them and not once had He breathed a word about making up their number to the original twelve. Judas went 'to his own place', Luke assures us, but it may always be doubtful among us that Matthias was put into the position the former apostle had forfeited. 'Who hath known the mind of the Lord or who has been His counsellor?' His ways are past finding out. No one can tell Him when or why or how to do anything, but surely the Lord Himself would have replaced Judas with Matthias if it had been His will to do so. Although it may mistakenly arise, we may perhaps be forgiven the thought that the apostles' choice was an officious presumption by men and not an official election by God. Perhaps the greatest mischief arising from it may be that they set a precedent among the churches which has lasted to this day. Procedures by which men fulfil their own will may have changed, but hearts have not; presumption is not faith and bears tragic fruits.

There can be little doubt that Paul was Christ's thirteenth election to apostleship: he was elected to be the teacher of the gentiles and what a gospel he taught. Unlike Nicodemus, the teacher of the Jews, he needed not to ask, 'how can these things be?' Being born from above as Christ said, Paul knew all about the method God employed and set it out in his writings. This man was specially raised up of God for this, and we must never forget it. By the time the Gospel accounts are finished and we reach the Acts of the Apostles only eleven of the original apostles were left. Anxious to make up their number they short-listed two men and in effect asked God to confirm their choices and cast their lots; the lot they cast had to fall on someone and whichever it was he could only be one of their choices. They asked God to pick one of the two who, in their opinion, was fit to be an apostle and should be promoted to that position; by doing this they were allowing God no alternative. The folly of it all apparently did not occur to them. They did not appear to see that whichever way the lot fell they would without fail finish up with their own choice. God was not to be drawn into that; the Old Covenant and its ways was finished forever. There is no clearer evidence in the New Testament that those men had not yet been born of the Spirit. Sons of God would not have cast lots to know their Father's will; the indwelling Spirit tells them, that is one of the reasons why He is given. Perhaps the mistake was due to their impatience and short-sightedness, plus the strange almost obsessive idea that there must be twelve apostles, no less and no more. But even if the idea had been right they should have waited for God to choose His man and make His addition to the number, they could then have confirmed His choice and all would have been well; alas, they did not do this, but instead reversed the spiritual order. Perhaps this found acceptance with men, but did they please God? Although it seems that none of these proceedings were according to God's will it did not frustrate His purposes; He knew how and why it had happened and did not reprove the apostles in any way. They had meant well and He had already endured their carnal ways for some three or so years, knowing that only the baptism in the Spirit could change them: they could not be different till they were made new. Why, just a few hours before

His crucifixion when they were all together in the upper room their abysmal ignorance of Him wrung from Him the sad, sad question: 'Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me Philip?' Neither Philip nor any of them knew Him, therefore they did not know His ways. 'How can we know the way?' Thomas had asked.

Weak and Beggarly Elements

They should have known the way apostles are made though; they had learned that, as well as being chosen by Christ Himself, a man has to be given to Him by His Father also. God had not formed them into an apostle-selecting committee; they were not authorized to try and recognize certain men and then ask God to elect them into their company. God has not handed over that privilege and authority to anyone. Unless they thought they were a special people, unique in time, chosen by an exclusive method never to be repeated again in heaven or earth, they knew that what they did that day was a presumption based upon an assumption. Although not directly mentioning lot-casting, Paul included that practice in what he called weak and beggarly elements, it was a rudiment of the world; soldiers cast lots for Christ's garment at the foot of the cross as He hung dying there. In His mercy and wisdom God had incorporated very many weak and carnal things into His Old Covenant with Israel; He did so because they were a carnal people, they had not received the Spirit. God had planned to pour out His Spirit upon them, as both Isaiah and Joel prophesied, but not until the great day of Pentecost, therefore He had no alternative but to adapt and move in worldly elements. Although things had changed quite a bit during Christ's ministry on earth, to a large extent it was still the same with the apostles before Pentecost. To Christ was committed the task of bringing in the spiritual things of the New Covenant, but until the Spirit came He had to superimpose them on the fleshly things of the Old Covenant which had not yet been done away. Because of their spiritual significance the Lord chose to include in the New Covenant two ordinances involving the use of worldly elements. His wisdom in so doing cannot be questioned, but apostles should note that, these have been nothing but a source of carnal and divisive trouble ever since.

The Lord set about the elimination of carnal elements by first choosing men and enduing them with power that they should move among their fellows under His authority and in His name. Then, after He had died and risen again, He breathed on those same men (with the exclusion of Judas and Thomas) and imparted to them the Holy Spirit with further authority to remit or retain sins. Before His final ascension He followed this up by visiting them fairly frequently, joining them in meals, spending time with them, preparing them for the future, teaching them by the Spirit the things they ought to know. However, there was yet another and most vital position into which they had to be brought, namely life in Himself; this He accomplished by incorporating them into Himself and Himself into them by baptizing them in the Spirit as John Baptist had said He would. At that time they received the life of Christ, that is, they were entirely regenerated by receiving His spirit and mind which kept them from reverting to the old carnal methods again. What they then thought about the day when they had resorted to the lot, and the results of it, is not disclosed. Matthias was numbered with them, but if he ever was an apostle and did the works and showed the signs of an apostle is not known. Like those who chose him he was chosen pre-Pentecost, but not by the same means or by the same person; what he became after he was regenerate we do not know. Did he and they who chose him regret that the lot had ever been cast?

Chapter 22 — BY THE WILL OF GOD

An Example

When Paul commenced writing to various churches, he authenticated his epistles by calling himself 'an apostle of' Jesus Christ by the will of God', or by using a phrase akin to that. To the Galatians he wrote, 'Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead'. By this he was also stating his authority to write to them; perhaps too he was defending his position. This was certainly the case when he wrote to the Corinthians. But was he also protesting against the carnal method employed by his fellow apostles in the matter of Matthias? If so, bearing in mind what he wrote to Timothy, a third point emerges. Possibly Paul was laying down the first law and only true basis of apostleship for the whole of this dispensation. Without acrimony and entirely without malice also, in faithfulness to the apostles and for everybody's safety, he is insisting

that, since the coming of the Holy Spirit, apostles must be chosen by the risen Jesus Christ and God the Father alone. This is so obviously true that it ought to be accepted by all without exception. No men, even if they are apostles, have any say whatsoever in the election of apostles; it is done entirely by God.

Paul knew the attitude of the apostles at Jerusalem towards him; they were very wary of him at first. He understood that perfectly, they were quite right to be cautious of him; he was equally cautious of them; no one can accuse him of trying to curry favour with them. He did not even present or commend himself to them for over a decade following his conversion and election. He did not go up to Jerusalem to confer with them, nor did he think he ought to submit himself to them or work with them or serve them in any way. Whether or not people may have been surprised by that, or think it would have been better if he had done so, or if some argued that it would have shown love and humility if he had done this, was immaterial to him. Quite probably it never crossed his mind to do so; he was not highhanded or disrespectful, but simply got on with the job for which he was called. People at Jerusalem had nothing to do with his election; in fact they must have thought it about the unlikeliest thing that would ever be; but there is evidence that he longed to be accepted by them and wished that things could have been different. Whether the apostles were piqued with him at first is not revealed; in such grave matters caution is always commendable if it is not another name for prejudice. It would be quite wrong to impute unworthy motives to them, and to speak wrongly of others, especially our betters, is sin; but to read Paul's writings is to become aware, (indeed it is distinctly noticeable), that in some quarters among the churches, if not among the apostles, Paul had to fight for recognition of his office.

All this adds significance to Paul's claim to Timothy, his spiritual son, that God had set him forth as a pattern to all men for the rest of the Church age. Every man who believes on Jesus Christ must take Paul as his example; we may not take any man we choose, or select some other great person as God's pattern-man for us. Reading the Acts of the Apostles (both before and after Pentecost) and Paul's epistles, it is easy to see why. Whether it be conversion or regeneration or election to the apostolate, Paul is the pattern-man. When stating his claim he is very careful to select a word meaning under-pattern. He does not attempt to usurp Christ's unique position, but neither does he minimise his own; humbly but unequivocally he states his own. Things that happened prior to Pentecost in the lives of those who were apostles before Paul, wonderful as some of them were, were pre-Christian, therefore at that time they were sub-Christian men and their lives and conversions were not exemplary and must not be copied. Christ called them disciples and apostles and friends; it was true, but He did not call them Christians because they were not Christians. The name Christian was a later introduction, it came into use after Paul arrived on the Church scene preaching his gospel; the Lord gave the name 'Christian' to the church at Antioch by divine revelation. From there it passed into general use and is now the most common name for Christ's people throughout the world.

The name Christian should be understood to mean 'Christ's one' a person belonging to Christ and, by extension, a person bought by Christ or owned by Christ; more than that, by intention of God the word Christian means 'Christ in a man'. The reason the Lord never called the apostles Christians before Pentecost was that until then it was not true of them; He was not in them. They were His by gift from His Father and by His own personal choice, but not yet His by redemption or by purchase, nor yet by possession or by reason of occupation. Unlike them, Christ's life was manifested in Paul almost immediately from the moment he was called; this is why he is set forth as the example. Those who were apostles before him are not to be taken as typical examples of God's salvation for this age; they did not become regenerate until three years or so after their initial conversion to Jesus Christ; in this their example should not be followed. They needed a series of conversions before they knew Christ was within them, they did not even know the Christ who was without them, so He said. Those of them who were inspired to write about themselves for God's book knew better than to commend their experience as being that which God wanted for any man. Not so with Paul though, he was specially raised up of God to be the person all men should take as an example throughout this entire age of grace. To miss this point is to leave the door wide open for error and make allowance for sub-Christian experience.

Followers of me

Further proof of Paul's uniqueness in this thing is that no one else but he among those early apostles makes so bold as to say 'be ye followers of me'. Most probably they would not have dared. What an amazing statement that is! Knowing the inferences that could be drawn from his statement, Paul adds,

'even as I also am of Christ'. Remembering their own former fickleness none of the other apostles could have written like that; their following had been far from perfect, but how boldly Paul speaks; he could. As well as being typical of the man it is a testimony to his positive assurance and proper self-assessment. It is an extraordinary command (for command it is); he is really telling people to imitate him — 'be ye imitators of me'. He is not asking people to leave all and follow him as people literally left all and followed Christ around Palestine; Paul did not mean that he was seeking disciples for himself, he disciplined men to Christ. The imitation he was attempting to secure from his readers was by example; he was an imitator of Christ, who as a man was Himself an imitator of God His Father. Christ said of Himself that He could only do what He saw the Father do and it is written of Him that He was led of the Spirit: He followed, He imitated. Paul was saying 'this is what I do; you do the same, imitate me, follow my example in this'. He was really confirming the fact that he was their example and ensample. He was an ordinary man; Jesus was not. As the New Testament unfolds the word disciple, with its idea of follower/learner, is purposely phased out by the Holy Spirit. As if by common consent those who wrote the later books of the New Testament deliberately omit it from their works, for although it appears in profusion in the Gospels it occurs scarcely anywhere else in the whole Bible. Luke, who wrote two books of the Bible, uses the word frequently in his first work, the Gospel bearing his name; he also uses it, but much more sparsely, in the opening chapters of the second book he wrote, the Acts of the Apostles. Before he lays down his pen, about two thirds of the way through, the word disciple disappears altogether from the book of Acts and thus from the entire Bible. Seemingly, before any of the epistles were written, the word had dropped out of the Church's vocabulary completely, for it is not to be found in any of the epistles of Paul, or James, or Peter, or John, or in the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ; He did not use it. True to His word He refused to refer to His men as disciples again from the moment He declared them friends. Luke was not an original apostle and there is no certain evidence that he subsequently became one: it appears he was a Greek convert who became a biographer of Christ, a travelling companion of Paul and the historian of the Church. He not only recorded the life, acts and facts of Christ, he also reflected the language and terminology of the apostles, who apparently ceased using the word disciple at a fairly early stage of spiritual understanding and church development, therefore he did so too.

The element of danger implicit in the word was not unrecognized by the Holy Spirit and the apostles, indeed by all who were raised up of God to further the record of the New Testament. It is not that words themselves have any power, but that except in the realm of the suggestion and distinction of ideas they have little significance; this is especially so in the preaching of the gospel. Paul says, 'the gospel of Christ ... is the power of God unto salvation'. Words, to accomplish what people understand by them, must be accompanied by power; of themselves they can enlighten the mind, but without the power they are empty and can be misleading. Those pioneers knew that all too readily men attach their own ideas and meanings to words; they also know that some men become disciples of another man because they are 'devotees of their own convictions' and not of Christ. Therefore, most likely to avoid error latent in men's minds, the Holy Spirit dropped the use of the word 'disciple' altogether in favour of the word 'saint', meaning 'holy one'.

It is mostly Paul who uses the word saint. Peter refers to 'strangers', 'pilgrims', 'sojourners'; John wrote of 'children', 'sons of God', 'young men', 'fathers', and James frankly addresses the twelve tribes. All four use the ideas implicit in the names they introduced, but generally each follows the particular line of expression suited to his special commission and distinctive message; they did not copy each other. This is only to be expected and is very praiseworthy, but, even among such great men, Paul is outstandingly different. Above all his contemporaries and fellow-apostles the man was a message in himself; he and they knew this — it is the reason why he alone is found saying, 'Be ye therefore imitators of me even as I am of Christ'. Nor was this singular statement to the Ephesians an isolated instance of his apostolic counsel; in one of his letters to Timothy, who he sent to Ephesus on his behalf, he went much further than this even. To this young man Paul wrote explicitly of himself that he was the pattern for all men who should afterwards believe on Jesus Christ.

Paul knew the testimonies of all the other apostles, he knew their experiences and how they became disciples of Jesus of Nazareth; he also knew that they could not possibly be the pattern for everyone to follow; he realized that God had specially raised him up to be that. The things that had happened to him were in principle the true pattern of God's dealings with all men in this age. Those twelve men

were called in the closing days of a dying age; none of them knew, nor at the time could know, what regeneration was; their actions and behaviour therefore cannot be taken as the pattern for all men in the same way or to the same extent as Paul's. He was called in the new age and therefore straight into regeneration, and although events and circumstances may differ and almost be unique to every man, God still uses the principles of the method He used with Paul; they do not change. Paul was not seeking to make himself better than the others, he was simply stating the truth.

The meekest of Men.

Moses once wrote of himself that he was the meekest man on all the earth; it was a tremendous claim but it was not idle boasting, he wrote it because it was true: he was meek enough in the hands of the Spirit to write it, and so it was with Paul. He could write of himself that he was a pattern, the first of many, the prototype of millions of fellow human beings yet to follow. All those other mighty men were great in their day and great and many are the lessons we all may learn from their lives and teachings, but they are not the pattern set forth by Christ for this age. The reason for this distinction is very simple: the records show that in their beginnings their lives were defective; they did not show forth the way of eternal life as truly as the Lord wants it to be revealed. This was quite unavoidable of course, in the nature of things it could not have been otherwise; Christ did not blame them for this, it was not their fault. Nevertheless, for this reason, they could not be the perfect example of the salvation He wished to reveal unto all mankind; but, as we have seen, in Saul of Tarsus He found a man through whom He could do this.

'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief, wrote Paul. Neither Peter nor John wrote that or anything like it, neither did any other contributor to the New Testament. They may have thought it of themselves and perhaps said so too, but the fact remains that none of them said so in writing: Paul did, he heralded it forth. And not only that, he also said he was the least of the apostles and the least of all saints; no man could think or write lowlier things of himself. Far from self-exaltation, this man was, by his own designation, the least of all God's children who described themselves in scripture (except perhaps David, who said of himself, 'I am a worm and no man'. This he said by the Spirit who, through him, was speaking prophetically of Christ, the rejected King, the great Pattern-Man for all men, for all time). Paul, with his vast knowledge of scripture, would have known that; perhaps this is why he followed up his claim to be the under-pattern with the words, 'Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen'. The apostle wanted no glory and honour for himself, all must go to God, the King eternal.

When Christ Jesus came into the world, He came as the promised Messiah in the fulness of time, everything about Him was perfect; but, as before noted, Paul wrote of himself that he was an abortive, born before the due time. He was speaking of his new birth of course, not of his natural birth, which presumably was as natural as anyone else's. To the Galatians he refers to this as being separated from his mother's womb and makes reference to his second birth as having been 'called by His grace to reveal His Son in me'. His conversion and regeneration, already referred to, were so sudden and dramatic that, upon consideration, he could only liken his experience to an abortion. One moment he was riding along the road and all was well, the next minute he was blinded by a tremendous light, thrown to the ground, named personally from heaven and challenged by Jesus for persecuting Him. It was utterly bewildering and totally new.

The Lord had never done such a thing before. There was not one among all the other apostles who had been so treated by the Lord. Perhaps the nearest thing to it was Matthew's call and his immediate response, 'he rose up, left all and followed Him', but it was not nearly as dramatic as Paul's conversion. All the Lord's first apostles were chosen from among His followers; they had each been disciples of Jesus for some while before being placed in office. Being selected they became known as chosen servants of the Lord, absorbing His teachings, going on missions, preaching, baptizing, doing all He asked. They knew His mother, talked with His brethren, found out all about Him, left all for His sake and were faithful to Him for three or more years until He died. They witnessed His arrest and trial and crucifixion, entered His empty tomb when He rose from the dead, followed Him to Olivet and saw Him ascend to heaven. They were convinced 'by many infallible proofs', and finally they were born from above when the Spirit came at Pentecost: they were founder members of the Church. Paul neither

witnessed nor experienced any of these things.

According to John those earliest apostles witnessed and heard many many more things, so varied and great, that they could not possibly be published in their entirety; there were sufficient to make them the envy of all men, but their very privileges were the reason they could not be true under-patterns for their less privileged fellow creatures. They were called by Jesus to live with Him through an interim period of time in which He should take away the first covenant and establish the second.

Dispensationally they lived through the final stage of the Old Covenant and the introduction of the New Covenant; how then could their experiences be patterns to others who could neither know those experiences or live in that time? The things they saw and heard and experienced were unique, they could never be granted to others and will never be repeated on this earth. Those twelve men were privileged above all men to live exclusively with Christ through that little age within the ages. But not so Paul; his experience was the classic demonstration and epitome of the new birth into the new age then unfolding.

There were other great apostles also in the early Church, Barnabas and Apollos, to name but two, but little or nothing is known of their conversions. Both were important men but neither of them were patterns of salvation in the way Paul was. As already commented, though preceded by the goadings of which the Lord spoke, Paul's birth into the kingdom was swift and sudden and without any previous preparation. His conversion was a marvellous demonstration of power from on high, containing all the elements of the gospel he so soon afterwards embraced and effectively preached. Those may be summarized quite easily: (1) he saw the light; (2) he heard the voice calling his name; (3) he fell to the earth; (4) he made his response; (5) he discovered who Jesus was; (6) he accepted His authority; (7) he was led to a street called Straight in Damascus; (8) he prayed and fasted for three days; (9) he was baptized in the Spirit and then in water; (10) he straightway commenced preaching Christ.

The End of All Things

Right from the beginning Paul knew the truth that sets men free. Much that had already become tradition among the earliest apostles was reversed in his experience; perhaps he could rightly be called the apostle of the emancipation. Things which had become accepted as truth and were being preached as doctrine and fast becoming 'law' in the church were shown to be false; his conversion was new. But not only was his conversion new, the 'order' of his baptism was new also. Unlike the first apostles, he was baptized in the Spirit before he was baptized in water; that was revolutionary and quite the opposite to what Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. Almost everything of 'order' and 'practice' was changed by this man. Whereas with them the call to office came before regeneration, it was not so with him; likewise with everything to do with the cross — with them it came after three years — Paul commenced there; spiritually he went straight into the death that was the death of death wherein he engineered and spread death. At the time he was Saul of Tarsus, hater of Christ, murderer of Stephen, persecutor of saints; when Christ had dealt with him he was Paul of nowhere and everywhere. This was the man who became a slave of Christ Jesus, called an apostle, that is all, but it was all. The Lord smote him to the dust, blinded him, had him led to a place where He intended to straighten him out, and left him there praying and fasting. That street called Straight became to Saul the narrow way to life; to him it was as the narrow tomb, the one and only direct road to new life for all men. The Lord slew Saul outside the city and buried him for three days within it to await a resurrection into newness of life and the whole wide world of men.

Nothing could be plainer. Neither could it be more plainly demonstrated to the open mind that Paul's resurrection was by the baptism in the Spirit; nor could it be more convincingly displayed that, by that experience, the man was raised from blindness to sight, from darkness to light, from death to life. Old man Saul was slain and new man Paul was born as a result. It all happened at once; the proud Pharisee, the enemy of Christ, the epitome of satan, the serpent of Eden, the dragon of Jerusalem, the scourge of the Church, disappeared; in his place the humble saint, the friend and brother of Christ, the revelation of Jesus, a lamb of God, the founder and promoter of churches appeared. It was a miracle far exceeding all the experiences of the former apostles; Paul's experience, not theirs, is the example and pattern of the birth of the sons of God. From them, their spiritual experiences, pilgrimage and testimonies we may all learn much, but in His wisdom God selected none of them to be the pattern,

under His Son, of the birth of sons and of apostolic perfection.

Years later, very near the end of his long life of service for his Lord, Paul wrote to his dear Philippians and in few words indicated the kind of thoughts that went through his mind and the exercises of his heart while lying in that 'straight tomb'. 'What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung'; in the preceding verses he lists some of those things he now counted as fit only for dogs. Lying there, at last seeing everything in truest possible perspective, he took stock of his life before the Lord, weighed up the differences and made his eternal decision. He determined to get to know this Lord. For the past three or four years he had lived a life of continuous opposition and offence to Christ; now he was going to win Him, get into Him, into His heart, His mind, His ways, His Spirit, His pains, His death, His resurrection, everything that was possible for a man to be and do and have.

Paul was like that, he was absolutely determined to know the full power of God. At first he could have thought it was the power of the mighty baptism in the Spirit, for he had been raised up out from death by it, and truth to tell it was the beginning of it all; but wonderful as that was it was only a foretaste, an experience, one event in a lifetime. He hungered for more; he wanted to know what was the secret power of that resurrection, how it was possible for Christ to attain to rising from the dead. How did he do it? He wrote of this often and thought of it more; how was it that He could rise from the dead when no one else had been able to do so? The spiritual quest drove him on. To the Romans he wrote 'Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father', and in slightly different words told the Ephesians the same; but why should He be raised from the dead by the Father's glory? How could it be? Wonderful though the Father's glory is, full of resurrection power and vital to the occasion, Jesus had said of Himself that He would rise again: first He said that His Father would raise Him, then He said that He would raise Himself. How could it be? Why should He be so sure of resurrection and why the duality of it? With his utter single-mindedness and devotion to Christ Paul soon found out: Christ was able to rise from the dead because of His own righteousness as well as by the Father's power.

One of the astonishing things about Saul of Tarsus was his claim to perfect righteousness. He was righteous before ever he knew Christ; he knew he was and said so: 'as touching the righteousness that was in the law blameless', he said of himself and he was not the only one able to make the claim. Throughout Jewish history and even earlier there had been righteous men on earth, and God had borne testimony to the fact. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, to name but a few: these and many others were righteous in their day, but they had lived and died and their bodies had remained dead. Wherein then lay the secret of Jesus of Nazareth that He should be able to say with confidence, 'Destroy this body and in three days I will raise it again'? His righteousness must have far exceeded the righteousness of every former saint of God; certainly, Paul thought, it absolutely outstripped all his own past concepts of the virtue; it was a new righteousness altogether. So utterly new and great was this righteousness that once having seen and tasted of it he wanted no more of his own righteousness, he only wanted Christ's.

The Righteousness of God

Paul came to see that the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ included, perfected and transcended the righteousness of all others and he did not want his own or anyone else's righteousness. His own had been the righteousness of the law; the righteousness of Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Sarah, being pre-law, was by faith, but he saw that, though wonderful, it was partial. He wanted completeness, Christ's own personal righteousness — the true, original righteousness of faith. Nothing could satisfy Paul but the righteousness of the God-Man and he wanted it direct not second hand. He wanted to be in Christ in conscious experience in everyday life, and know faith and righteousness as Christ knew it within Himself: this, Paul knew, was the secret power of Christ's resurrection.

All the early apostles knew it too, it rings through Peter's thrilling words on the day of Pentecost when he spoke of Christ, 'Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death because it was not possible that he should be holden of it'. Jesus was so righteous that death could not possibly hold Him; righteousness was the power of the resurrection because righteousness is the basis of incorruption and therefore of eternal life, a life impossible to corrupt. Christ was born righteous, there was no sin in Him

at His birth; this was the basis of the sinless life He enjoyed on earth. But He knew that He had to live righteously before God and man all the time He was here: like everyone else He had to work out His own salvation. Because He did this to perfection, when at last He laid down His life for us the salvation that was in Him was made available to all mankind.

Paul's great driving ambition was not just to be righteous though. To him righteousness was something far greater than being made righteous by imputation through faith, like Abraham. He needed that initially, as do we all, and in common with all men he also needed that righteousness to be imparted to him so that it could become his nature. But he realized that, though so great and necessary, it was only a beginning; from then onwards he had to live a life of righteousness and do works of righteousness. This he accepted without reservation and succeeded at it more than most of his contemporaries; but his devoted soul could not rest there even, he loved his Lord so much. Realizing the purpose of God in making him righteous, he said that all this was done so that he could be found in Christ having the righteousness of God. The possibilities granted him by that privilege were so great that he set out wholeheartedly to reach the mark God had set for him to reach; he pressed towards it, he said. Likewise God has set a mark for every one of us to reach.

At first light no one sees it; Paul himself did not see it when that light first struck him, but as it increased he saw it all clearly, and once seeing it he never let it out of his sight; tenaciously he set his soul to attain to it. The pursuit never wavered, nor did his determination slacken. Consequently the light never grew dim in him but increased more and more unto the perfect day. His reward was that he saw clearly what the prize of the high calling of God in Christ really was and understood it; the mark set by God for His Son was set by Him in turn for each of God's sons: the mark for the prize was the death of the cross. From the moment he realized this Paul made it his aim; everything he wanted lay beyond it, and the prize for everyone who reached it was to know the power of Christ's resurrection. When Christ came into the world He came as the resurrection and the life, He brought it in; but, having come into humanity, He had brought it into a new element, He had to attain unto the resurrection of the dead as a man. The apostle's vision stabilized on this, his heart was fixed. At new birth resurrection and life came into him; he was of it but he knew also that he had to attain to it just like his Lord, and that in order to do so he must be made conformable unto His death. By nature Paul was the type of man who must achieve the highest. It was not that he wished to be better than everyone else, he wished to be the best he could be that is all; whatever he did he did it with all his might. It had always been like that with him, whichever course he took he always pressed along it all the way with all his strength to the end, confident that he would eventually reach his goal.

His testimony, given at various times in different parts in verbal or written form, reveals the kind of person he was. At one time he called himself a Pharisee of the Pharisees; 'exceedingly zealous', is another of his self-descriptive phrases. To piece together his self-deprecating testimony and the testimonies of others about him is to discover an exceptional soul indeed: he was a most remarkable man. Salvation did nothing to lessen his zeal, it corrected it; formerly it had been misplaced, that was all; being born from on high he gave his powers as completely to Christ as he had given them in the past to the devil. The Lord had totally redeemed him, he acknowledged it and kept nothing back from his Redeemer; he had never been one for half measures. As he had both reached the top and had gone further than his contemporaries in Judaism, so would he do in Christianity. The good news is that the top prize is open to all who will go for it, there is no competition; in attaining to the reward we do not deprive anyone else of the opportunity to gain it. But because there is no competition it is not to be thought that there is no opposition, there is, very much, very much indeed.

For Me to Live is Christ

Before a man can begin to attain to anything of high degree in Christ he must realize that he is expected to work out his own salvation in his own life just as Paul and Christ did in theirs. Because Christ did that, His own personal salvation became our redemption by the cross, and thereby became salvation for others. Our salvation is nothing other than the result of Christ working out from Himself the inward spiritual and soul states of His manhood right to the final moment of earthly life on the cross where, at the last, He poured out the life blood of His body also. That same salvation is evidently in us when, in course of daily living, we also are able to work out from ourselves soul-states comparable to His. That being first understood, a second equally important truth must also be

thoroughly grasped, namely, 'for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain'. This is a basic principle of eternal life and absolutely vital to achieving the prize. The verse is set by Paul in context of physical life and death; it could be set there because it is everlasting truth. The principle involved here is unvarying because it is of itself invariable, whether in terms of earthly life in the body of man's flesh or in the spiritual life in man's soul, or indeed in the life of pure spirit, even in God Himself, it cannot change.

It requires very little thought to understand that, to a man living Christ in the flesh, as Paul says he did, on this earth, physical death can be nothing but gain. Death gives such a man entrance to God's glorious presence. Paul is using this principle in this sense here, but his statement is only an application to his circumstances of a long understood reality; he had done some deep thinking and was stating his conclusion. 'To me', he says, '(I want you to know that I have weighed it all up) to die is gain'. In principle he had already proved it, the life he lived he had achieved through death. Before any man can live the Christ life he must know the Christ's death, he must 'be made conformable unto His death'. The death of Christ must be made effective in us before we can live Christ. Each of us must fully grasp this truth and be able to say, 'Yes, Paul, as to you to live was Christ, so it is to me; I think about it as you do, I have learned that to die is gain'. Paul learned this from Christ Himself by the Holy Spirit; he actually learned to think like Christ; so must we all. Unless a man learns to think like the Lord he will never be like Him. Once the great spiritual birth has taken place the equally important mental change must take place or the life will not change. The fundamental change is part of the regenerating process. Regeneration changes the spirit and thereby the nature of the mind, which in turn governs the disposition of the mind, changing it from wanting to sin to wanting to please God and finding in itself the ability to do so because its nature has been changed. From then on the content of the mind is a most important factor in the development of life; this plays such an important part that it is simply not possible to exaggerate it. It is utterly impossible to alter a man unless his thinking is changed. Christ Himself knew this about His own self and said, 'as a man thinketh in his heart so is he'. Every man's mind must therefore be changed from the mind of his own self to the mind of Christ. This is accomplished by the unifying and blending of the two minds so that identical thoughts, words and actions seal the assertion 'for me to live is Christ'. This is what Paul discovered in himself, the mind of Christ was 'to die is gain', so was Paul's; this is what made Him so different among men. No man can be an apostle who does not manifest this in his life and make it imperative in his preaching. This is the very heart of apostolic teaching; if the heart be lacking the talking is empty, treacherous and false.

Chapter 23 — TO DIE IS GAIN

Willing to Die

These were the things the former apostles had to learn. To their utter amazement the twelve apostles heard from His own lips that their Lord was actually living to die. They couldn't believe it at first and tried to change His mind and sought to turn Him from it, it was so unnatural; but this they found could not be done, His mind seemed fixed on it. At first He talked about being killed, later He said He would be scourged and slain, then He spoke of being betrayed to sinners, then again of being crucified (lifted up) and finally of dying. Perhaps to them all these statements may have appeared to be the same, but not so to Him or to the spiritual mind. They are all about the same event, but they are not the same; killed, slain, crucified, these things are what men did to Him, but the final thing He did Himself. His death was voluntary; to the former He voluntarily submitted, but to death He never submitted. He conquered death, all the forms and powers of it, and then dismissed His spirit from His body because, in the plan of God, He had to die in order to rise again for the sake of men.

Men tried to make Him die, they tried their hardest and did their worst, but they could not accomplish it; He died Himself, His death was an accomplishment, a glorious exodus. When soldiers came back to try and kill Him by hastening death by shock, as they thought, they found He had died already. They killed the two thieves, but not Him; that no man could do, He died voluntarily, offering Himself without spot to God. That is why He came; to Him and to God death was gain, all gain, sheer glory. What preceded it at men's hands was not glorious, but that moment of dying was glory, sweetest victory, His greatest triumph. The death of the cross was the most wonderful miracle He ever accomplished: it was the application of an eternal principle to God's deepest desires and man's greatest need, it was perfection outworked to greatest degree. Christ died. The cross of the death was pain and shame to Him, but He made the death of the cross glory and perfection to us because it was that and so much

more than that to Him.

The Servant of All

Paul saw this so very clearly, he could because he had developed that same mind of Christ in himself; he thought about things exactly as Christ had always viewed it in eternity from before the beginning of time. That is why Paul, when about to unfold the way to highest exaltation and show the way Christ reached it, said, 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus'. Everything commenced in the mind of God; Christ was exalted by God above all others because, though in the form of God, He did not think He should reach out and try to catch hold of and hang on to equality with God. He did not think like that, He just was not like that, instead He quite deliberately emptied Himself and took on the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men. Being found in that fashion He continued the process already begun, and, humbling Himself still further as His earthly life progressed, became absolutely obedient in everything, until in the end He found no difficulty in obeying unto the death of the cross. Everything was unto death, He knew death was the reason for it all, He had to die, death was something He had to do, something to accomplish — a new death. This death became the death for God, ousting and replacing the death of sin which for so long had so reigned over men that every man was born in it. When the moment of death arrived for Jesus He was absolutely fitted for it; since then it has been the desire of every one of God's children to live that same life.

'Even the death of the cross'; God made Him in the likeness of men because He was able to, and God also has highly exalted Him because He was righteously able to. God does things because He is able to do them; He does them because He has the power to do them and also because it is right to do them, that is, because all righteousness has been fulfilled. The death of the cross did exactly that, it fulfilled all righteousness, and so did the resurrection. Jesus was so absolutely righteous that He was righteous enough to die, to rise again, to be exalted in consequence, and to be given a name which is above every name. Whatever that new name is we are not told, very probably it is the same one to which John alludes, saying that only the Lord knows it. But we know the reason why it has been given Him; His Father has given Him an additional name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

What was Jesus' secret? How could He do such a thing? How could He stoop so low and be exalted so high? Paul set himself to discover that secret, and having done so he knew the answer: Jesus could do it because of the kind of mind He had; being in the form of God His mind was already formed. Wonderful as it was to be God He obviously would not think it was a great thing to be equal with God. Why reach out to be what you already are? A man, because he is a man, does not think manhood is something yet to be grasped after: he is a man, why reach out for something he already is? Even so with Jesus, being God He did not think it marvellous to be God, He could not reach out to be who He was or to become anything higher than He was; He could reach out to become something lower though, and this He did. He thought He should become a man, a servant of God and man, and while still God He poured His mind into that mould. He had a servant mentality, which prompted Him to be born of a virgin in a manger. He did not think He was being humble, it was natural to Him; thought and disposition and action were one in Him, He found no difficulty in this. The particular miracle of being born a human was not difficult for Him; nothing was too difficult or beyond the power of God.

The Lord Jesus took upon Him the form of a servant long before he became a human being, He did not need to change in that area; servitude was not new to Him, He only changed form, not function. He did so that He might take up another form of service, the most vital service He had ever rendered or could render to His Father, namely to die the death of the cross, that was all; He became man to do this. It was terrible and wonderful, possible to Him only because He had formed the cross mentality in Himself. Jesus thought the cross; He mastered the cross because He had the mind of the cross; it was the only way He could possibly endure the cross when He came to it. He mastered it in His mind before He left heaven, this is why and how it was the mind of His spirit on earth when He became a man. Paul had discovered this great secret of Christ's, it became the mind of the apostle; it must be the mind of every apostle, and he wanted every other believer to discover it too; unless Paul had found it he could not have accomplished what he did. In the steps of his Lord and in his measure Paul emptied himself and took upon himself the form of a servant, and being in the likeness of men he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. This man does not make these claims about

himself, he was far too humble for that; but who can read the statements he makes about himself and not find a remarkable parallel between his spiritual life and experience and Christ's? Earlier he says, 'look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others', and from this exhortation passes on to his wonderful sevenfold declaration of Christ's glorious progress to highest exaltation:

1. Paul was equal with his peers, in his own set there was none higher than he, he had nothing to reach out after; in the Jews' religion he was perfect.

2. Paul also emptied himself; he did not divest himself of his manhood and humanity; like Christ he retained his original essential being and identity. What things were gain to him he counted loss, and suffered the loss of all things.

3. Paul also took upon himself the form of a servant, 'I made myself servant to all that I might gain the more' (for God). He was a prince among the apostles, perhaps the very chief, but he became a servant and 'laboured more abundantly than them all'. He did so quite voluntarily as did Jesus, yet (as with his Lord), though necessity was laid upon him, he did this thing willingly and there was reward for it.

4. Paul was among the chief of the apostles but he never thought about that or himself above what he ought, and was made in the likeness of men; 'Be as I am for I am as ye are,' he said, and 'Sirs, we also are men of like passions with you'.

5. Paul was found in fashion as a man among them, not a god, and he told the Corinthians not to let anyone think of him above what he was seen and heard to be by them. He sought no unproved position or honours among men.

6. Paul truly humbled himself; so lowly did he become that he knew nothing by himself; if ever he did attempt to speak unaided, as by or from his own understanding, he said so.

7. Paul once said, 'I have no commandment from the Lord,' and revealed how completely he was under obedience to Christ. 'I speak this by permission, not of commandment', was his honest statement on certain issues. Paul was an obedient man, as far as is possible to discover he was utterly obedient, unquestioningly so, and his obedience was constant, like Christ's it was unto death. 'The time of my departure is at hand', he once wrote to Timothy, 'I have finished my course'. At his death he had completed the 'Course in Christ-likeness' set by God and offered by Him to all His sons, that before they leave this earth they may be able to complete their education in sonship.

Unlike Peter his fellow-apostle, Paul was not crucified as Jesus was, he did not undergo quite the same physical torture as his Lord, but with Him he knew the secret and power of death in a way known to few others. He died the death that Christ made available for him by the cross; he did not end his physical life thereby, he died at the very beginning of his spiritual life, and what began then he maintained all through his life in the flesh. 'I am crucified with Christ', he said, 'nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God'. He saw that unless he knew permanent death to sin and self, leading to the constant life of Christ in himself, God's grace to him and His purposes with him thereby would be frustrated; he would be useless to God, to himself and to others, and would die an absolutely frustrated man.

All the basic requirements and conditions necessary for this life were wrought in Paul during that first encounter on the Damascus road and in the city. At the time he hardly knew what was happening to him, but in retrospect he saw it all so plainly. He was dashed to the ground, cast down to the dust, taken back to man's primitive state; he was of the earth earthy: God reduced him to His original creative material; he heard the creative voice, he saw primeval light: he was a serpent. He knew he belonged to the generation of vipers damned to hell for his destruction of men: he realized that, of His everlasting mercy, from that dust God was going to make (create) a new man of him. All former light was blinded out of him, superseded by the Light of the glory of God in Christ, blacking him out from the knowledge of the light of this world; he saw that the light in him, in which he had been walking,

was darkness.

By nature he was the sinner, the man Adam of his day; in spirit he was the progeny of the serpent satan, a combination of devil and man, an angel of light like Lucifer himself, a minister of false righteousness, the embodiment of sin and anti-Christ by disposition. O how he thanked God that he had found mercy; what if the Lord Jesus had never wanted him? The thought was like a nightmare to him. Three days of inward pain, buried out of sight, as it were physically dead — unable to eat, unable to drink, unable to sleep, praying while Christ preached to his imprisoned spirit in the heart of the earth (his body). He too had been disobedient in the days of Noah (Christ) while the ark (salvation) was preparing. His heart and all the wisdom of it had been earthly, sensual, devilish, so had his body and flesh; he had been soulish, his spirit had been dead, buried in trespasses and sins. His was the dark, dark night of self-revelation and self-understanding by the Spirit, he saw what he was — and then the Holy Spirit came. It was morning.

A New Creation

In the light of God Christ commenced a new creation in him; he was made a new creature to live in the new creation in Christ; it was the key to all his enlightenment, in a flash and with increasing vision he saw that all is in Christ. Christ was his teacher, Christ was his lesson, he had Christ's Father, Christ's Spirit and Bowels and Mind and Joy and Faith and His High Calling; all were his, he had them and was in them. They were his new creation, created by Christ for him and he was in it — in Him; he was entirely new, already in the life beyond death. He had had to die before he could get into it, there had been no other way open to God; everything was quite obvious to him, the whole secret of life turned on death, and he knew that unless he made men see this as he did he would utterly fail in his calling and mission.

Paul's ministry was based on the certainties of experience, the experience of the Christ of God and the experience of the man born Saul of Tarsus and born again Paul the apostle. Christ's experience of death on the cross was dreadful, not only because it was so barbaric and beastly (He said Himself by the Spirit through David that bulls and unicorns roared and raged and mauled and tossed Him about there) but because He also had to bear the wrath of God at the same time. O how He must have praised and thanked His Father that, although He hated sin with an eternal hatred, He did not keep His anger against Him for ever. Hanging there, impaled by men, He bore them no malice, He had nothing against them, He was doing everything for them, this particularly. He was bearing the sin of the world and its cause and deserts; He was being made sin itself, all of it and its results: He was being made Adam, the man of sin who co-operated with the devil through his own flesh and bones (Eve) to bring sin and the sinful seed into the world; the man who illegally stole us all from God and sold us to the devil for less than thirty pieces of silver and traded away our birthright for less than a mess of pottage. Jesus paid back the price He did not owe, it was not His debt, nor was it ours; we did not do it, Adam did it and in him we all died and were rendered incapable of doing anything but sin. Only God could do anything about it; the situation was beyond the power or even the knowledge of men. Someone of the persons of God had to become a man, someone who had the knowledge of it all and the power to rectify the situation, someone who cared. So it was that Jesus became the sinner as well as the sin for every man; He also became our death and resurrection.

The death He died was the death of the cross because He had to be made vile and helpless and unclean and immodest and twisted and disjointed, a reject and disgrace of a man, a dreadful caricature of God's noble handiwork, a contradiction and denial of everything good and pure and holy, a rebel, a criminal, a wretch, the devil's man. That was the reason for the cross; it was a purposely chosen means of death for the man identified with sin-insemination and consequent nature and subsequent practice. By the cross men vented on fellow men their outraged sense of justice, exacting the fullest possible price for crimes against humanity, and by it God exacted the fullest possible penalty against man for Adam's and the world's sin, and He exacted it from His Son. Jesus paid the price and bore the punishment as though He were Adam and every man, and as though He was besides all this the devil himself who had caused it all; He found He could do it because He loved His Father and loved mankind. What a wonderful person He is, what a wonderful disposition, what a mind He had and still has that He should think out such a death and carry it through. He thought it out because He had that kind of mind

because He was that kind of person, the kind of person Paul craved to be.

The apostle knew his desires could never be fulfilled unless he was made conformable unto death. For life to be life in a universe of sin a man must know death so profound, powerful and permanent that he is able to live completely and consistently unaffected thereby. This was Jesus' secret; in the world He lived as totally unaffected within Himself by sin as He had been in heaven before He came into the world. When sin commenced in Lucifer's heart and spread among the spirits of heaven it affected God to the extent that He took counter measures against it. He punished those sinners and cast them all out, putting some in everlasting chains under darkness to await judgement. Angels are free moral agents, as able to sin and partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as we humans, and those who chose to sin against God were suitably punished. Maybe the greatest temptation of God was levelled at the Son as being thought by Lucifer to be the most vulnerable person of the holy three because He had taken upon Himself the form of a servant. If so he was entirely mistaken; unlike Lucifer, whose ambition was to ascend to the heights, even the highest of all personages and positions in heaven, in the thought of His heart the Son had stooped to the lowest: His desire was not to be ministered unto but to minister. The devil was already defeated because he thought wrongly; incorrect thinking and calculation brought about his downfall.

Whatever may have been the point of attack on the Godhead in heaven, we do know that Lucifer, as a great dragon, stood waiting to devour the man child as soon as He was born on earth; he hated the Son. But though helpless in flesh, being born of obedience and humility, Jesus was kept by His Father because of His very virgin purity. Both in His birth and in His death Jesus was in utter physical weakness, the chosen weakness of servitude, and by it His strength was made perfect. To the human mind all this is incomprehensible because the human spirit is in rebellion against it and wants to be. Man thinks strength lies in the developing of all his powers, marshalling all his faculties to the task in hand and straining with all his might for its eventual accomplishment. But not so Jesus; He lay in Mary's lap and hung on Adam's cross at rest, helpless in any case on both occasions, vulnerable to everything yet invulnerable and inviolate through all. He was the great Conqueror, He defeated the devil in heaven and on earth; so did Paul, so must every apostle. If he does not and does not teach men so it is because he has not known the experience by which alone a man becomes an apostle: his name therefore is an empty gibe to God, his calling a lie and his position vanity.

Chapter 24 — WHAT'S IN A NAME?

As Those that Serve

One of the more distinctly noticeable features of the Gospels 'in relationship to apostles is that the writers seldom make use of the word; in view of the fact that two of the Gospels were written by apostles this is rather surprising. Of the remaining two writers one of them wrote at the dictation of an apostle (it is thought) and the other as the result of diligent research among many witnesses of the events recorded therein. Seeing that few people had so much opportunity to observe the Lord and His activities as did those early apostles, it is safe to assume that, if they were not the chief sources of this writer's information, they were consulted whenever their information or confirmation were deemed necessary by him. It therefore seems that the apostles, by common consent yet with regard to truth, agreed to keep themselves out of the limelight as much as was possible. The records bear unmistakable evidence that they much preferred to be called disciples rather than apostles and except upon occasions where it was necessary for some reason to use the more imposing title these men chose the more general one. It also appears that they did not do this because usually there were more than themselves present and it was therefore correct to use the inclusive term, but simply because they were humble men. Primarily they were disciples, that is learners; they never regarded themselves as being lords over God's heritage but labourers and slaves. There may be also two other overriding factors affecting the whole: (1) the Holy Spirit is the supreme author of the scriptures; (2) the apostles may not have been too happy with some of their behaviour during the period covered by the Gospels. If these are valid reasons for the sparse use of the title apostle we must accept that: (a) the Holy Spirit was responsible for the suppression of the title, and (b) the apostles did not wish readers to associate some things with the true office of apostles lest others should copy them.

However valid or invalid this latter point may be, the Lord Jesus certainly encouraged them in a lowly

attitude of mind. Surely one of His most unforgettable statements about Himself must have been, 'I am among you as one that serveth', but they could not have failed to recognize that, especially when He set them the prime example of washing their feet; this was the Lord's constant emphasis. When He sent out the twelve on their tour of duty He put it like this: 'Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest'. On another occasion He told them to look upon themselves as unprofitable servants and to tell themselves that they were indeed that. He also told them that He did not call them servants but friends and said, 'you are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you'. In a breath He made it clear that only obedient servants were His friends. Labourers, unprofitable slaves, friends, apostles: what an array of classifications — scarcely titles any of them.

In view of these things the title apostle is certainly not a very romantic one, and seeing it was the Lord Himself who chose it we must conclude that when He names people He does so with exactitude; the name is precise and descriptive. We love to think that an apostle is a sent one', and so he is, but not in any sense is he to regard himself as an exalted one. He cannot go on his own initiative, nor can he choose where he is sent, he has to go wherever it is; he is a slave under orders. By this the Lord does not mean that an apostle is a friend degraded to slavery, but that he is a slave exalted to friendship with His master, who was also a slave.

Slavery is a most honourable condition. It is only associated with ignominy and shame because of sin. Slavery had nothing to do with nakedness and bondage and humiliation in the beginning, it was not the worst form of compulsory service under shameful conditions then. Men lusting for power, full of cruelty and brutality, have degraded slavery to mean that a man has no life of his own and exists almost like an animal under the most inhumane conditions, sighing and groaning for release — even death. But that is not the proper concept of slavery. Slavery is the highest form of service possible to man; it is self-addiction in love to the person loved. Slavery is delightful freedom, it is emancipating, exalting, glorifying, elating, satisfying — pure joy. Jesus, the amazing Slave, said of Himself, 'I am not come of myself ... my Father hath sent me', and struck the note to which every devoted heart responds with conviction and gratitude. He was creation's greatest slave. Unless a man is sent to slave because he is a slave he is not an apostle and is not sent of God. On the other hand, that a man goes is no indication that he is sent; there are many running un-sent. To all who have eyes to see, far from being apostles these are not even disciples, for had they been disciples they would have learned that disciples do not go unless they are sent, and that even if they do go they do not thereby become apostles.

The Test of Apostleship

It is Luke who, more than any other, popularizes the title 'apostle', especially in the Acts of the Apostles. He does not do this with flattery, neither does he do it with a view to elevating the person concerned, but chiefly for purposes of distinction. Paul also makes use of the title frequently, more than any other of the apostles because the necessity to do so was forced upon him. He knew he was an apostle and said so forthrightly, but only because his claims to apostleship were not accepted by the churches. This may be (almost certainly was) because the original apostles did not at first receive him as an apostle, he had therefore to contend for his position. Not that he was wrongly over-impressed by it, he was not, but (and here we come to the nexus of the matter) in those days the title apostle meant so much more to everyone than it does today; it was imperative for him to fight for truth. The Church on earth was in its infancy so the churches in which it stood had to be very sure about claims being made by men. No more so than today. of course, but particularly so in those days because foundations for faith were being laid and doctrines were being formulated. It should be noted that Christ, in his day, did not advance or seek. to formulate anything remotely resembling doctrine or schemes of theology. He came to show them God, not to teach the service of God. His business and unavoidable responsibility was to live His life, be made sin, die His death, create resurrection for men and thereby to lay down the foundation for all eternal life and doctrine. Another important thing to be noted is this: for the main part it was the apostle Paul who formulated the truth of Christ into doctrine. Neither Peter nor John ever attempted to do so. Paul did not know this when he was called at the beginning though, but there can be no doubt that he was raised up by the Lord for this ministry. How much we owe to him who can tell? This is why Paul contended so earnestly that he was an apostle. To him the importance of being an apostle lay in three things none of which was the desire to have a title or hold an office. The first of the three was that he was an apostle by the will of God; the second was that by

that will he was an apostle of Christ; the third was that he was an apostle of Jesus Christ to the Church (not of the Church it should be noted). No church produced Paul; rather he produced the churches; he said he fathered them and implied that he gave birth to them also.

It was absolutely imperative therefore that the churches should both acknowledge and receive Paul as the apostle he was. In those days there were many who called themselves apostles. Christ, through John, pointed this out to the church at Ephesus, commending them that they had not hesitated to judge these men and publicly exhibit them as liars. There were several recognized criteria by which a man's claims to apostleship could be tested, one of which was whether or not the person making the claim had met or known Christ. Not that this automatically qualified such a person for the office, but to the existing apostles this seems to have been a major qualification. It certainly seems to have been a dominant factor in the minds of the eleven when they gathered to select a successor to Judas. They chose two candidates, one of whom, subject to God's hoped-for approval, they wished to ordain to apostleship. According to Peter and by the consent of the other ten the two men so favoured had of necessity to be known followers of Christ, consistent in discipleship and fully able to identify Him after He had risen from the dead. The reason for that qualification emerges in the statement that Christ showed Himself openly, not to all the people but to those who He had chosen to be His witnesses, with whom He ate and drank after He had risen from the dead.

That generally sums up one of the major conditions in the apostles' minds for election to the select company, it was therefore one of their main objections to Paul. Their reasoning was very logical: Saul of Tarsus had not followed Christ and he had not been among the company to whom the Lord appeared in resurrection. Quite the opposite, he had been a persecutor of the Church and 'had done many things contrary to the name of Christ'. They had not chosen him neither had he submitted himself to them, therefore he could not be an apostle, so they thought. It appeared logical enough; since he had not known Christ in the flesh how could he be a reliable witness that He had risen from the dead? One of the main factors advanced by the writer to the Hebrews when stating the genuineness and originality of the gospel was this: it was 'first ... spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him'. The fact that men had actually heard the gospel from the lips of Christ was of major importance in men's minds; such people were regarded as trustworthy witnesses.

This is what makes the four Gospels so invaluable; their worth is so incalculable because they are of such historical importance. Matthew and John were both followers and friends of Jesus, they knew Him. Mark is thought to be Peter's amanuensis and is said to be the young man who fled naked from the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was betrayed by Judas there. Luke is frankly a historian; his genuineness is attested to by his history of the early Church. The reliability of that document has never been questioned, it is the only thing of its kind in existence. Luke never knew Christ in the flesh or heard Him speak, but he opens his Gospel by claiming to have consulted eyewitnesses and to have thoroughly checked his sources of supply. It seems that none of his contemporaries doubted his capabilities and literary honesty and if one of his works is accepted on these grounds there is no sensible reason why the other should not be. Neither Mark nor Luke presented any problems to the apostolic company in Jerusalem, they did not lay claim to being apostles; if they laid any claim to fame it was as writers only, raised up by God to record historic events.

Paul was a different person; he came on to the scene proclaiming news. It was this that presented the apostles with their second major problem; Paul was preaching and teaching things that had an originality and authenticity about them. Unlike Luke, who later became his travelling companion, Paul did not consult nor consort with any of the first apostles, he checked nothing with them and that to them seemed highly suspicious. So far from doing what they expected of him, Paul made claims (almost boasted) that this very thing proved both his genuineness and the genuineness of his message. This troubled the apostles even more and, when he claimed that he received his gospel by revelation from Jesus Christ direct, they were alarmed: without doubt he was claiming equality with them. This brings us to a further vital point in any attempt to establish the genuineness of an apostle.

As already pointed out an apostle is not an apostle just because he is a sent one, it is more important for him and everyone else to know who sent him: everybody must know that an apostle is a man sent from God. He and everyone must also be assured that he has come from Christ with a gospel revealed to him personally by the Lord Himself; as far as he is concerned it must be original too. Each of the ten

original apostles could claim that he had received the gospel he preached from the Lord, but only as being one of many; there is no scripture to prove that any of them had private tuition from Him; theirs was group instruction. Not being one of the original twelve, Matthias did not receive this tuition. Being a disciple and an ardent follower of Jesus for years he would have heard most if not all Jesus's general teachings. He may also have been one of the 'other seventy equipped and sent out by the Lord to preach and to heal the people as their famous predecessors had done. Because of this Matthias may not have been among the number to whom Christ 'showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs'. If this was so he would not have heard the Lord speak of 'the things pertaining to the kingdom of God'. Therefore what he knew about the ministry of the risen Lord he would have received second hand. It is surely significant that Luke, commenting on this period, commences the whole section with a very clear statement about apostles, distinguishing them from all others by these words 'whom he (the Lord) had chosen'. The number of these by this time was precisely eleven.

By Revelation

Imagine then their reaction when Paul came on the scene declaring that he also had met Jesus Christ, and that the gospel he preached had been received by the Lord's revelation of Himself to him. Paul wrote this into his epistle to the Galatians together with a brief outline of his contacts with the accredited apostles and his reasons for making those contacts. He went up to Jerusalem to see them, he says, only when God revealed to him that he should, and that was fourteen years after his first meeting with Jesus Christ. To the apostles assembled there he declared the gospel he was preaching, which to everyone's delight was received unquestioningly. As a sample of his revelation (though almost certainly not written for that reason) he makes a series of statements to the Galatians about the cross and the Holy Spirit not previously declared in writing by any man and unequalled anywhere else in scripture. These are of such a nature that they are either patently true or self-evidently false. Nobody had told him what to write or taught him the things of which he wrote and as far as we are able to judge from Luke's account of the twelve apostles' teachings before that date none could have done so, or if so not in that way.

It is probably right to assume that, if not at the time of Paul's advent (or before that time), they all realized the fulness of the truth Paul preached, most certainly it was common knowledge among them before they finished their course on earth. It may also be true that part of the Lord's purpose in coming to them by the Holy Spirit after He was risen from the dead and before He ascended finally to His Father, was to teach them what later He revealed to Paul. If this be so we are not told and not one of them, by so much as the slightest hint in any of their recorded preached ministry or subsequent epistles, revealed that he knew the things revealed to Paul. Yet perhaps, despite this, it ought to be accepted that all the apostles had at least some basic knowledge of the things Paul taught, else how could they have judged what he said?

Knowledge of truth is subjective. All objective knowledge in the realm of the human spirit is recognition of possibility only, that is, recognition of what is possible by or because of the things it learns or observes, and is not real knowledge. If this knowledge be of historic facts it is belief, if it be of future things it is hope; all hope is based upon conscious or instinctive calculation, which in turn is either based upon or affected by belief in the historic thing. To be real, knowledge must be subjective or experiential; such knowledge is present knowledge, a living thing, which can only be present: knowledge is now. It is not the sum of a person's education or of his beliefs or his hopes, it is the sum of a person's experience — I experience this so I know it. This will be affected both by a person's belief in historic things and his hope for future things, and perhaps owes more to both than he is aware of; but all judgements of the human spirit are made upon subjective experience. It was Paul who said, 'What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?' That is why he was prepared to submit what he taught to men's judgement: 'Judge ye what I say,' he said.

So it was that eventually he went up to Jerusalem to the apostles there to communicate to them the gospel he preached. He went without fear for he knew that, being apostles, even if they did not know all the things he taught they would 'know' him and recognize his gospel as being truth. After all they had been shown by the Lord Jesus Himself that not all apostles were equal in revelation, nor were they all equal in position. This is actually brought out in the Galatian letter itself: Paul acknowledged it in these words, 'James, Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars'. Paul was not a person to be

overawed by titles and personalities; as he said, 'God accepteth no man's person'. It did not matter to him who or whatever a man claimed to have been made; it was what a man seemed to him to be when he met him that counted to Paul, nothing else, and that is how he wished to be received himself, he said.

My Gospel

Of all the apostles chosen by Christ, Peter, James and John were selected for special privileges on at least three occasions; they were given particular revelations or granted privileged glimpses into things denied the other nine, who just had to accept the position. There should therefore have been no difficulty among them about accepting that perhaps Paul was a specially chosen and gifted man, and so to be prepared when he declared his gospel to them, to believe him. He declared it with forthrightness — 'My gospel' he called it; he knew he was a man sent from God to preach around the world and write a gospel, though none of his writings are called by that name. He knew his presentation of Christ and the gospel was entirely different from that which was already written or was eventually to be written in any of the four Gospels, but he did not allow this to interfere with his own contribution or in any way to intimidate him.

Their presentation was entirely objective and historical, his was entirely subjective and vitally present; the Gospels speak of a cross unknown by the writers during the time of which they wrote: Paul's epistles speak of the cross known and understood; his writings were new. The degree of newness was emphasized by Peter's comment about their being hard to understand, but even so he made a point also of stating that Paul was a beloved brother, which indicates that by that time he was accepted by the apostles. The truth is that, although Paul made most use of the title it was not because he thought to be called an apostle was a thing to be grasped at but because he knew that unless he was accepted as an apostle his gospel would not find acceptance either. Everybody accepted the fact that the gospel was entrusted to the apostles, they were taken to be the official teachers and interpreters of its truths, and to them men sought for explanations and definitions and advice on their problems. Yet, for all that, there is very little of these things to be found in the New Testament from them; the major burden of teaching was laid upon Paul. It is from Paul's writings that we learn the great doctrines of the faith and of the Church; he knew his calling and was therefore forced to make his claims and establish his office in unmistakable terms, especially in some quarters. This was necessary not only for the Jewish element in the Church and for that generation of believers, but also for all people for the rest of time.

One of the vast areas of difference that lay between Paul's calling and election and that of the original twelve was the time factor involved in their coming to a knowledge of the Lord. After being with Christ for three years the twelve did not know Him, whereas Paul knew Him from the moment he met Him in the very beginning. The first enquiry Paul (at that time called Saul) made of Christ came from the ground on which he lay blinded and frightened, smitten down by the Lord: 'Who art thou Lord?' he cried out in astonishment and fear. The man was utterly bewildered and demoralised; confessedly he did not know the Lord; we can imagine His confusion then when he discovered that the Lord was Jesus. That is exactly opposite from the way the twelve came to know Him; they knew Him first as Jesus and only afterwards as the Lord, and then only in a titular sense; they never knew Him personally, that is spiritually. Perhaps one of the more amazing features of Peter's address on the day of Pentecost was his closing statement, here it is: 'God hath made ... Jesus ... both Lord Christ'. That was an amazing statement by any standards. Hadn't He been Lord and Christ before? Hadn't He always been Lord and Christ? Peter himself had, at various times, called Him both Lord and Christ previously, why then did he make this special emphasis? It reads almost as though it was a new revelation to him! It was. At last Peter knew Him; Jesus had come to him in a new way and had baptized him and the other eleven (together with about nine dozen more) in the Holy Spirit with the baptism wherewith He Himself was baptized; now they knew Him within. After about three years they now knew He was Lord and Christ for He had proved it to them. Not so with Paul though, he knew who He was right from the beginning, and after three days he knew Him within! What a difference. This difference is so vast that it is altogether too great to be discussed here; it affected the early part of their respective ministries to such an extent that they cannot be compared, they can only be contrasted.

The change in the man was so great that it was almost unbelievable; the disciples found difficulty therefore in accepting him. Not until the apostles in Jerusalem had examined him was he allowed to

consort with those who were saved and be received by the church there. Perhaps the changing of his name from Saul to Paul is the best commentary on the work wrought in him, though whether the change was ordered by the Lord or initiated by man is not said; Saul means big or large, Paul means little or small. If it was the Lord who ordered the change it would have been for spiritual reasons only; if it was the disciples it may have had some physical overtones as well. On his own 'confession' he was a Benjamite, and Saul, Israel's first king, was also a Benjamite. He was head and shoulders above every man in Israel; he truly exhibited his name. Saul, therefore, was a favourite name among the Benjamites and was bestowed by his ambitious parents upon the babe. Perhaps the babe did not quite achieve the gigantic physical stature of his illustrious forebear, he might even have been quite short, thereby giving ground for the disciples and apostles to name him more appropriately. Who knows? In religious stature he truly was head and shoulders above most, if not all, his contemporaries in his own nation, and who will say he was not the same among all his apostolic contemporaries? Whoever or whatever it was, the name Paul proved to be an accurate enough description of him, for he became one of the humblest and greatest of men in the churches of Christ and among the apostles and elders. From a cursory reading of scripture this may not be very evident, for with the exception of Peter none but he calls himself an apostle. When writing to the Philippians he omitted to use the title; this may have been because there was such a loving relationship between himself and the saints there that he felt no need to assert his position. It was the same also with Philemon; he and Paul were old friends, they each accepted the other for what he was; there was no need for Paul to write to him in the name of an apostle; Philemon knew his friend was an apostle. Paul also felt no compulsion to tell the Thessalonians about his office or authority, he simply linked his name with Silvanus and Timothy and wrote on behalf of all three. Seeing then that he wrote fourteen letters and only called himself an apostle in ten of them, and Peter wrote two and called himself an apostle in both of them, it may be conceded that, on percentages, Paul might be thought the more reticent about the matter.

Chosen by God

We have reason then to be very grateful for the caution of the twelve apostles, even though their objections were wrongly founded. Their steady insistence on what they believed to be the essential qualification for apostleship, namely knowing the Lord and being chosen and sent by Him with the revelation of the gospel, has been a bedrock of resistance and defence against untold abuses through the years. On the other hand their limited ideas for a while endangered the spread of the truth they were safeguarding. But they were living in the world during a time of rapidly changing spiritual ideas affecting whole nations of men, and we are greatly indebted to them for their caution. Assuming that they had an agreed standard of judgement for the election of apostles (and this is only an assumption), it is nowhere to be found in scripture; this may well indicate that no such criterion existed and that they realized the sorry failure of their one known excursion into that realm. It does appear from Luke's record that, as the churches grew, men of apostolic stature emerged from among them and were acknowledged as such without causing any undue stress among the original eleven. Whether or not those men were vetted by senior apostles before acknowledgement or certification was granted them is not disclosed. There is evidence that letters of commendation were passing to and fro between churches concerning certain men, though whether or not the practice was universal or met with everybody's approval or achieved its purposes cannot be assessed.

What is certain is that a spiritual church is quite capable of judging whether or not a man is an apostle of Christ, or more seriously, whether he is an impostor and his claims false. Paul's strongest claims of apostleship were made to an unspiritual church; he was forced to do it, it was distasteful to him and he called his attestations 'foolish boasting'. He felt more comfortable about it than he might have done, he said, because he knew that the particular group to whom he was writing suffered fools gladly. Whether or not by that he was referring to the church members or to travelling claimants to apostleship he does not say. What is beyond doubt is that argument about office and position is odious to a genuine apostle; except carnality compels it, the necessity to defend a calling should never arise.

However, quite apart from the defensive position and the reference to 'foolish boasting', there are certain general standards of life and behaviour required of a man who is an apostle. These are best stated in the passages which give instruction on the election of elders. All apostles are elders of the Church of Jesus Christ and are elders emeritus in every local church they may be visiting in course of

ministry. Quite obviously then their quality of life and standard of behaviour could not possibly be lower than that of the local elders. He who would be an apostle must first learn that he will not be accepted by any true church of Christ just on a name. An apostle is a man first, not an official; Christ does not believe in or promote officialdom.

Bureaucracy is not a creation of Christ, it is a development of man. In its worst form it is dictatorship by a group instead of by one man, and being a human invention it inevitably produces officiousness, domination and cruelty. An apostle is not a dictator; he is not a bureaucrat; he is not a lone man assuming office and ruling over his fellows because he is a very powerful personality either. He may be greatly gifted or more talented than others, but these things are not the criteria; he is not a person elected to hold a position among his peers that together with them (because of their combined talents and gifts) he will form a body of men who bear rule over their fellows in the churches. Apostleship does not lie in any of these things, it is far, far higher.

The eleven were in grave danger of falling into this latter error. Peter's emphatic (perhaps dogmatic) assertion that a man of their company must be chosen by the eleven (presumably to make up their number to twelve again), seems to have been born of his human assumption rather than divine command. Certainly there is no mention in the record that Christ commanded this to be done, nor should it be presumed that He either directed the lottery or approved of its results. Apostles are not elected that way, they are chosen of Christ direct, the reason being that they are not apostles of the churches as elders are elders of churches. Unlike elders, apostles are apostles of Christ to all the churches and all men; being His apostles, that is, apostles of Christ, they are appointed by Him to the whole Church, which is His body, and therefore only one body throughout heaven and earth. His body subsists as many churches worldwide and is manifested in them. Apostles cannot be elected or appointed by men, it is not in their power to do so. Elders may be chosen by men and so may deacons, but neither apostles nor prophets may be appointed by the churches. They may, indeed they ought to be accepted by men, but they may no more be elected and appointed by men than was Christ Himself.

In the very nature of things it is impossible for men to choose apostles or prophets. How is it possible for men to choose who shall be sent to them by Christ, or decide who shall prophesy His word unto them? John, who in his Gospel does not use the word apostle or mention that he was himself one (being so humble), is a wonderful help to us all in this realm. He gives an indication of the direction of his thinking by telling us that in the beginning was the Word and that the Word was with God and was God, and he follows that up with 'and the word was made flesh', the word of God was made flesh. In his own sweet way the apostle also conjoins this revelation with the information that a man was also sent from God who in himself was not God.

Nevertheless John the Baptist was a word sent from God to the nation, he was a prophet; the Lord was the Apostle: both came from God; the prophet by a more human method than the Apostle. The prophet openly said that he only came to prepare the way for the Apostle, and that, although he appeared on the scene first, he was not the first, the Apostle was first. He was before me,' he said; he also said, 'He is preferred before me' — apostles first, then prophets — a divine order has been established in keeping with moral and natural order among the persons of God, that which has always been in the Godhead was established on earth.

Apostles are chosen by the Father first; secondly they are chosen by the Son; thirdly they are born and endowed and endued by the Spirit. Christ Himself made this quite clear, both by: (1) direct statement and (2) personal method. 1. Speaking of His apostles at the end of His life He said to His Father, 'Thine they were and thou gavest them me'. 2. He did not call them until He had spent a night in prayer with His Father. This latter constitutes at least a double check which all men should regard with understanding. Scripture makes obvious that the very first men He called to discipleship were those He later called to apostleship, which seems to confirm that: (1) right from the beginning He was working to an eternal plan, pre-arranged in heaven before He came and (2) He was careful to re-appraise that plan with His Father before launching it officially in embryonic form on earth. At this point it is important to pause and consider that, in the heart of God, the Church is greater than any of its offices and therefore also of its officers (if we ought to use that term) including apostles. The body is greater than any of its particular members, and is the sum total of them; offices are held by members of the body only. Speaking of the body in another connection altogether, the Lord once said, though not in

these precise words, it is better to enter into life maimed than, being unmaimed, go to hell. The plain implication of His words is that, rather than lose the whole body we had better dispense with some of its members, important members too; for instance eyes, hands, feet. That is a perfectly commonsense, practical way of looking at the body and its members.

Excision from the body is a serious matter and not a pleasant thing to contemplate, but it is not entirely foreign to the mind of Christ as His words reveal. This is not an isolated statement either, for He introduced this same idea into His teaching on the vine: speaking of His Father, He said, 'Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away', and then, as though to add horror to shock, He added, 'men gather them (those branches) ... and they are burned'. In these two instances both the human and the divine element of judgement is introduced to our thinking: in the former, men are told by Christ that, under certain conditions, men should, without hesitation, maim themselves if necessary; in the latter it is God who, for certain reasons, performs the excision. In the former it is an intensely personal and individual human matter; in the latter it is also an intensely personal matter, but it is between the members of the Godhead — the Husbandman is dealing with His many-membered vine, and men only burn up what God excises from it. In this latter connection it must be understood that in the body of Christ no member may say to another, 'I have no need of thee', and presumably in consequence excommunicate or excise it from the body.

Christ — The Great Apostle

All judgement involving eternal life or death in the Church, which is the body of Christ, is in the hands of Christ, the head of the Church, working under the headship of God His Father. It must always be held in mind that it was God His Father who raised up Christ from the dead and gave Him (the words 'to be' are not in the original and may well be substituted with 'for the purpose of being') the head over all things to the Church which is His body — His fulness. Christ is the head over all things to the Church, but although to the Church He is the overall head (and He is this unto God, that is, for God and unto God) He is not the head of God: God is the head of Christ, as scripture says. The fulness of the Godhead bodily dwells in Christ; this makes Him the logical head of the Church, but it does not make Him the head of God. The fulness of God was in Him and He was the fulness of God; the Hebrews writer speaks of Christ as, 'the effulgence of His glory'. The fulness of Him is (in) the Church; every gift, office and function in the Church is some 'thing' He was and had and filled and did, and whatever the thing was and however He did it, was the fullest, highest, greatest and most wonderful possible expression and manifestation of that particular thing. In every office He held, and in the way He discharged it, He was the proper Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher, and His use of and function in each and all of these offices proclaimed Him to be head of those things, for He used those offices and powers to perfection and was better than any other at being and doing that thing. He is also the direct head to, of and over all the members of His body, not just as being a body but over each person in it as an individual, for each one is a member or part of His person, that is of the body of His corporate subsistence. Under God His Father and with His approval He has chosen to subsist in the Church in every one who belongs to it that He should fill every part with His fulness, that all of us together, added each to each to make the whole, should be the fulness of fulnesses — 'His fulness'. His fulness is the multiplicity of fulnesses, which is the aggregate of the fulness of Christ in every member. This is incalculable, but in its sum it is only the fulness of Christ, His body, His subsistence. He is the head over all persons and over all things He has given to those persons; both things and persons are only expressions of Him.

Over-consciousness of office and position is obsessive and is a sign of paranoia. Although the Lord did call the twelve and name them apostles, it is an interesting fact that there is no evidence that He did so immediately He chose them. It may be right to think that He pronounced the distinctive title upon them at the same time, but it is not at all certain that He did so. He could have done so when He sent them out. Matthew does not even mention the name in that connection with the original selection. To him they were still disciples and that is what he called them, including himself. In fact, with the exception of Luke, none of the Gospel writers mentions the title at that time. Mark does not; instead he quickly passes on to the far higher calling — mother and sister and brother! John does not mention the word apostle, nor even record his or anyone else's election to the position, but he uses the word disciple frequently. From all this it may be deduced (and perhaps not incorrectly) that to genuine apostles the

title meant and still means very little. At the same time the ability to be or to be given the opportunity to be trained for apostleship indeed meant and certainly resulted in a great deal. The fact that Jesus had carefully chosen each of them to become a band of brothers meant everything to those men; the Lord certainly knew His business. They had been chosen to know Him.

Thursday, 28-APR-05

To print this document requires at least 120 pages of A4.

The Blood of God

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The Blood of God

Bloodshed

The book of Genesis is sometimes called the seed-plot of the Bible. This is because thoughts and ideas and truths which are later to be developed to their ultimate fullness in the following books are originally to be found in seed, or genus form, in this first book of the sacred scriptures. No less than with many other similar truths fundamental to the revelation of salvation in the Bible, the basic idea concerning all that we mean by and associate with 'the Blood' is to be found in Genesis.

Perhaps to those who love and glory in the gospel there is hardly a theme more sacred than this, and the pursuit of it is ever a delight to the heart. We need therefore to grasp and to treasure the clearest possible understanding of its preciousness and place and power. It is therefore proper that we see first of all the original idea implanted by God concerning the Blood in the Bible, and for this we must go back to the book of the beginning(s). Other things are said later as truth is revealed about it in the story of mankind and sin unfolding before our eyes. All of these are important as they are God's adaptations or applications or amplifications of the original idea, but the fundamental and most important truth is the first one. Though much may intervene before that which is seen in Genesis comes to perfection, nevertheless it will eventually arrive at its fullness and ultimate glory according to that which is spoken originally in Genesis, rather than that which is spoken in the other books that intervene between the beginning and the end. This is not to say that the same truth or allusions to and hints of it are missing from the later writings, but that God has to adapt and condition truth to men because they go away from His original intention. Because of this He graciously allows changes and deals with things as He finds them. Nevertheless the first revealed idea remains steadfast, and with inflexible will He moves through time and waits and works to bring men back to it.

As an illustration of this we may take the subject of divorce referred to in Matthew 19: 3-9, where we find the Pharisees tempting Jesus saying, 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?' In the answer of Jesus lies the point we seek to make, 'Moses ... suffered you..., but from the beginning it was not so.' What God suffered or allowed in this case was not His original intention. Yet we read He gave it in commandment. Which shows that what God sometimes commanded under law, was not always what He basically desired (or originally intended for mankind) in a free relationship based on obedience to and acceptance of the perfect intention. In this instance we see that the Lord recognised sin, and because of it allowed certain adaptations to His original desires concerning marriage. The word 'suffered' is a most expressive one. In the beginning God made them male and female to become one flesh — Man; and He said, 'What God hath joined together let not man put asunder.' That is the original idea and truth expressed in scripture, and it is (in turn) based upon another and still greater spiritual truth, that of the unique unity in the Godhead, which is the great spiritual mystery of God Himself.

Returning to our theme, we will therefore remember that although later in the Old Testament further facts are revealed and specific commands are given concerning it,

the original ideas and intentions for and about 'the Blood' are not thereby outworked. Instead, recognition of failure is implicit in them, and adaptations are made to tide men over a period of time, and dispensations graciously granted to them by God.

God first introduces us to the great subject of 'the Blood' in Genesis 4. Reading the chapter we see that Cain and Abel, Adam's two sons, bring an offering to God; Abel's, because it was a blood offering, was acceptable; Cain's, because it was vegetarian, was not. Consequently Cain in anger and jealousy slew Abel, and God said of his blood that (a) its voice cried unto Him from the ground, and (b) 'the earth hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood.' Now that is the original idea revealed in scripture concerning the blood — it was drunk; the earth opened her mouth and drank it in; received it. Here then is the primary truth — 'the Blood' must be drunk. Yet we do not find in the whole of the Old Testament canon one instance of man being commanded of God to drink blood. In fact it was later strictly forbidden; all we note here is that in this seed-plot of the Bible God has sown an idea, and a perfectly natural idea at that. It could not be otherwise.

Turning from this fact of history wherein truth is deliberately sown to await germination millenniums later by commandment and faith unto spiritual life, we will examine the story of the Passover in the twelfth chapter of Exodus. Here we shall notice quite a different idea concerning 'the Blood.' As we read down the relevant verses we see that the blood of the lamb was to be struck upon the two side posts and on the upper door posts of the houses wherein the people were eating the flesh of the lamb in which it had formerly flowed. The striking of the blood was important only in association with the eating of the lamb. It had no power at all of itself; it had to be in the right place at the right time for the right purpose, that is all. It was but a token of the people's obedience, bespeaking the fact that they were all inside their houses eating the lamb and ready to depart for Canaan as they were commanded. The blood would have meant nothing and afforded no protection at all from the death that was passing through Egypt that night except it was the token God required of them upon that occasion. Its application was entirely external. Moreover, although this fact is not generally recognised or the underlying truth of it sufficiently, if at all emphasised, this is the only time that the blood of the Passover lamb was ever so used. Never again were the children of Israel commanded to strike the blood on door post or lintel. Its token use was only demanded once by God. So we pass from the original idea which implies the thought of indrinking to the new fact of outward application.

This new idea of outward application is taken up and further strengthened by God into commandment in Leviticus 17. Commencing to read this chapter at verse 10, we find the basic concept of 'the Blood' and its place and power under Law in the Old Covenant. The central truth is contained in the words, 'the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.' The Hebrew word translated 'life' throughout the whole of this section is the word for 'soul.' Selecting a few phrases as instances we may say, 'the soul of the flesh is in the blood,' 'it is the soul of all flesh,' 'the blood of it is for the soul thereof.' Here the thought of atonement is introduced because with the giving of the law, God, by prohibiting or authorising certain activities and behaviour, had communicated to the people the knowledge of sin. Gracious as God was to forgive sin, He had to do it under a complicated legal system that only dealt with outwardly committed sin. Internal sin and its cause(s) could not yet be atoned for, for no-one had then been found who could atone for it.

This is the reason we find great men like David crying out in Psalm 51 for inward purging, to a God who required truth in the inward parts. It was simply because the blood they knew and used could not take away sins, neither from before God nor from their consciences; all such blood was intrinsically valueless and only implicitly typical. Because of this it could only be used outwardly. Which left God with no other thing to do as an alternative but to impute forgiveness and cleansing to His people upon the obedience of faith to His commands. They could never feel what they believed.

The Lord had to move from the original idea. He wished drinking to be the method, but not yet and not that blood. So having caused the idea to be introduced in the beginning, He disallowed the action because of sin until the time appointed. It was not that the entrance of sin into the world took God by surprise or created an emergency. It was that He could not yet bring in what He wanted, so He stayed in the medium but changed the method.

This introduction of the inferior method of outward application is demonstrated to us most fully in Exodus 24. There we see Moses sprinkling the blood in great profusion: on the altar, on the book, on the people. As it says in Hebrews 9:16-22, it was the blood of the testament which God had enjoined unto them. He sprinkled with blood nearly everything that belonged under that Old Testament arrangement, and we are told that 'without shedding of blood is no remission.' The application of blood was a fixed law unto the people, and we find it much in evidence on that day of dedication and subsequently right throughout the Old Testament period. But nothing was done haphazardly. There was no application of that blood, inferior and external and symbolical as it was, until they all had confessed and promised that 'all that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.' Only when they had said that did Moses sprinkle the blood upon them, not before; it was 'the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words,' he said. Not concerning eternal life: 'concerning all these words.'

So we see that the blood of the Old Covenant was never to be taken internally. It was given upon an outward altar and sprinkled upon all kinds of people and things to hallow, and dedicate, and sanctify, or signify. It was ever only a token, having no power in or of itself to do any of the things for which it was used by commandment of God. Everything was by imputation only. The blood of that Covenant had no virtue to impart, no value to atone, no goodness to bestow; all righteousness and holiness and blessing was reckoned over to its users by God from Himself sheerly upon obedience by faith. David, who of all men wrote of the glories of that ancient Covenant, said, 'Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.' (Quoted in Romans 4 : 7, 8). But God had something better in mind and hand for us, as we shall see.

[Atonement Typified](#)

The limitation of that Old Covenant, which for that reason is now done away, is nowhere better revealed than in the word used to express atonement throughout the Hebrew scriptures. It is a descriptive word meaning 'to cover.' God, in speaking of atonement in the Old Testament, never promised to remove sin, but to reckon it as covered. The blood they shed had no power to cover it, but obedience to God's requirements caused coverage to be imputed to them as they followed His instructions. Always sin was there, unremoved, unremovable, until He should come

who would, because He could, shed the Blood that should remove sin once for all. When the blood of animals and birds was shed by law it was God's insistence that without shedding of blood is no remission of sins. Constant remission was only available to them through constant bloodshed, and it was accepted by God as coverage for their sin provided it was done according to the correct order.

Now from this idea of coverage it is sadly true that much erroneous phraseology and practice has been incorporated in the churches, and unwarrantably superimposed upon many present day believers all too unaware of the great mistake. It is an axiom of scripture and manifestly true that the greater includes the lesser, but in this vitally important realm where we can least afford the practice, the lesser has displaced the greater. For all around one hears such conventional phrases as 'cover it with the Blood,' or, 'I put it under the Blood,' or, 'We sprinkled it with the Blood,' and much other such talk, and this from good Christian people for the most part. These all have unwittingly slipped back into the Old Testament idea of blood and are not moving in the true knowledge of the power of the Blood of the New Testament at all.

Knowledge of the truth concerning the power of the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ will bring about a freedom from such phrases. Better still, as the understanding is enlightened and convinced with regard to the true value and worth of Jesus' Blood and what it accomplished, the whole personality will pass from the realm of ignorance and fear into calm assurance before God: moreover and more importantly, the Sacrifice and Blood of Jesus Christ will be honoured as it ought.

When Jesus came into the world He said, 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.' To this He added his knowledge that His Father had never found any pleasure in the holocausts of blood and bodies and fire He had seen fit to demand of the Children of Israel beforetime. To Him they had been a distasteful necessity imposed upon them until the time of reformation, when He would reshape the whole idea of atonement and reintroduce His original intention concerning the Blood. This is based upon the fact that He would bring into the world His original Lamb. Not Abel's, nor Abraham's, nor the many lambs of Egypt or Sinai or Canaan, were any of them the first and last and eternal Lamb; God had yet to give Him to man. All other lambs given in sacrifice before this had only remotely borne but the faintest typical resemblance to Jesus, God's Lamb, and all their blood in its application had only superficially suggested the atonement for which the Blood was shed. God had decided that with the shedding of the Blood of His Son He would do away with all the ramification of the Hebrew system of atonement(s) and, returning to the original idea first implanted in Genesis, go on to perfect it in practice. Moreover, with the passing of the system He intended its phraseology to die also. That is why it cannot be found anywhere in the New Testament as referring to the sacrifice of Christ.

Upon the occasion of Jesus Christ's manifestation to Israel He was declared by John Baptist to be the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. This, coupled with Jesus' own consciousness that His body was specially given Him in connection with God's distasteful acceptance of unpleasurable animal sacrifices, made John's statement one of the most significant in the whole of the Bible. Those sacrifices had never taken away sins, and their 'stricken,' or 'given,' or 'sprinkled,' or 'poured out' blood was woefully inadequate to reach the inner man. All had left even the very priests who made the sacrifice(s) and atonement(s) with a guilty conscience and miserable consciousness of sin. Guilt and fear created complexes so deep and

ineradicable that even the beauties of some of David's greatest Psalms are marred and spoiled by them.

That is why mercy is the great cry of the Old Testament; they were forever crying out for mercy. God sat upon a Mercy Seat. Sin, fear, torment, only found relief in belief and hope. But now God sits upon a throne of Grace. Grace is the great theme of the New Testament, even the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Sin is removed, taken away: the sacrifice for sin and sins has for ever been made — it is perpetual, eternal, present, now. The suffering of death, the bearing of sin, the atoning work and deed are over, and the completed act is here, held in the Spirit for ever. As it was, it is, and ever shall be; that is the nature of things eternal. Jesus' atonement is by one sacrifice for sin for ever.

This one great eternal act of Christ accomplished at Calvary had been set into the national life of the Children of Israel as a sacred feast. It took the form of a recurring annual event called the Day of Atonement, kept on the tenth day of the seventh month every year. It was a living picture full of pointed meaning, enacted for around two thousand years regularly before the eyes of the entire nation. The account of it as originally commanded by God is to be found in Leviticus 16. He told the people that upon the chosen day they were to gather in soul affliction at the entrance to the Tabernacle, bringing with them two goats: these were to become the focal point of the solemn rite. The High Priest was instructed to receive them at their hands and follow God's instructions regarding them with great care, that by these cleansing from all sin may be imputed to His people.

In simple logical order one goat was slain and its blood was sprinkled by the High Priest within the veil upon the Mercy Seat, but the other had to fulfil quite a different role. Upon its head with all solemnity the High Priest was commanded to lay his hands and make confession over it. A complete breast of everything had to be made; 'all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat.' Following that public confession and typical transference of all the sins from the people to the animal, it had to be sent away 'by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited,' said the Lord. Thus these two goats were combined in one ceremony to set forth two factors in the act of Christ's atonement:

1. Bloodshed and death, and acceptance of the blood sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat.
2. Sins confessed, transferred and borne away.

In this important matter the goats formed a fairly comprehensive type by which God could reveal to the nation something of the meaning of atonement.

All other blood shed for sin in the land was given by God to the people upon the Altar, but this particular blood by God's commandment was carried in and given to Him. It was sprinkled upon the Seat of Mercy, where God sat and accepted (may we say, drank?) it, and because of it could still stay and dwell in the midst of this people which were the nation of the broken law. He personally could only accept the blood of a sacrifice that set forth, however feebly, the active removal of sin. Even in type God would not teach that He accepted (drank) blood that only covered sin. This amazing ministration of blood to God was the High Priest's most important function. Following this, his second most important duty had to be administered, and that before he

engaged in the second part of the twofold type. In fact the two administrations of the first part were really one in their implied meaning, but were performed in sequence in their correct order. Just as God personally would only accept the blood that bespoke the utter removal of sin from His Presence, so also the Altar upon which all other blood(s) of 'covering' was given to His people throughout the year had to be sprinkled with the same blood. This was the blood of removal, real atonement. For though in the type it was not the actual blood of the goat that bore away the sin, yet it was reckoned as the same.

For this purpose they both had to be presented to the Lord and stand together before Him as one, that the action of the one and the blood of the other should be as one for the establishing of the type. The Lord was thereby teaching them the truth that He could only allow the continuance of the idea of coverage of sin because the time was coming when He would remove sin altogether. On this basis alone could that present system which consisted in coverage for atonement(s) be at all reconciled to and acceptable by Him. The High Priest's ministry in the second action of the first part of the twofold type was to reconcile to God the entire Holy Place with all its furniture and furnishings, and all the other articles of worship and sacrifice used by the priests for the people. The Holiest of all did not need the reconciliation; it was the Holy of Holies — entirely without sin or taint of uncleanness because it was entirely God's. But despite the thousands of sacrifices, and volumes of blood consumed upon the Altar throughout the course of the year, the transgression and sin and uncleanness remained with the Children of Israel unremoved.

It could not be removed by such sacrifices; why, even the very priests who alone could offer them had guilty consciences whilst they were performing their rites, we are told. Hence the necessity for the great Day of Atonement. Not that they or the people were any the more free from sin and a guilty conscience then. They did not know inward removal of sin or its power even though they witnessed most of the solemn sprinkling and reconciliation of the holy things, and watched and listened intently during the ceremony of the laying on of hands, and the sending away of the Scapegoat. All was real enough, forgiveness was genuine, righteousness was imputed to them, reconciliation was effected, but to them their sins were only covered. To us with greater knowledge than they the type is clear, but to them it was still coverage only. God had covered over their sins once again and had forgiven His people, but the memory and conscience of them still remained undying in their hearts.

The precision of the type is wonderful even by suggestion, for anticipating at this point the truth that was (at that time) later to be revealed, we may notice the utter exactness and consistency of God when pictorially He does but suggest eternal realities. Considering the relevant significance of quantities, we note again that hundreds of gallons of blood must have been poured upon the Altar during a year's offerings and sacrifices, yet on the Day of Atonement God only asked a few drops of blood for His own personal consumption. Outside great quantities, inside a few drops.

When Aaron, or later his successor, went in to God to bring Him His blood in a bowl it must have been an awe-inspiring experience for him. There was the Lord God sitting upon His throne, yet no form did Aaron see, only glory. God was there waiting to receive the blood. Aaron, carrying the bowl of blood in one hand and a censer in the other, must slip round one edge of the veiling curtain, swinging the censer, that the cloud of incense from the fire may fill the little room of skin with the sweet scent of

Jesus. Then he placed aside the still smouldering fire and, dipping his finger into the bowl of blood, advanced toward the Mercy Seat sprinkling the blood on the ground as he went. The One he came to satisfy sat all glorious on His throne, immobile, inscrutable: waiting. Blood in a bowl or sprinkled on the earth could not satisfy Him, He waited until man, this man, should behold and see the miracle for which all the blood shed by His command was shed. So, careful lest he tread on the blood just sprinkled, Aaron, taking his last step forward, once again dipped his finger into the bowl and, lifting his arm forward and upward, put his hand into the glory and sprinkled the blood in all he knew to be God. The man watched it drop down in a short crimson cascade and darken into scarlet upon the gold, but God had drunk the blood He required at the hand of man.

Aaron's instructions had been explicit enough. He must not sprinkle the life-drops at random, fearful to be there, hastening to be gone, but in the prescribed manner under the Lord's direct command. The Tabernacle had always to be pitched from East to West, having its articles of furniture set out in simple cruciform pattern with the Ark of the Covenant at the head within the Holy of Holies. From it, extending in straight line through the Holy Place to the entrance of the outer court, stood the Altar of Incense, the Laver and the Brazen Altar of sacrifice. Within the Holy Place and on either side of the golden Altar of Incense, North and South respectively, stood the Table of Shewbread and the sevenfold Lampstand. Thus was the clear course of Aaron's ascent to the throne levelly marked out and set, all prepared for him as he took the blood from the place of death and sacrifice westwards and proceeded eastward along the line that led to the Mercy Seat. There, in all grace and patience, God sat waiting during the few minutes that must elapse while Aaron paused awhile in the soft light and fragrance of the Holy Place to change from his elaborate outward garments to the simple inward habit of pure righteousness in which he must present God's blood to Him as He wanted it.

Moses upon Sinai had been allowed to see God's backward parts. Aaron also, in company with others of the nobility of Israel had been privileged for a moment at the law-giving to see God, but none had ever gazed upon His face. But here in His chosen sanctuary God had elected to sit thirsting for the blood of atonement facing the people. Aaron could not, must not see His face; it was not visible to human eye in any case. But the clouding incense, sweetly rising, warm from the glowing fire, would both please His heart and sufficiently veil the brightness of His glory; all was perfect as could be for His purposes under the circumstances. So with His backward parts toward the east and His face toward the west He awaited Aaron's ministrations. He had chosen to drink the blood; so Aaron, taking the last wondering step to the throne, put his hand into God and sprinkled the blood. Eastward, directly eastward, from the front to the back of the sacred seat his hand moved. Not sideways, not diagonally, not in a circle but in line, straight, the purpling drink went into the invisible God. Not much, just a little, a few drops, a sip, but it was all He wanted; it was enough. He was satisfied. Quantity did not matter. Neither the amount nor the substance really counted, for the blood eventually became only a stain on the throne. A Spirit, God, could not drink blood; He commanded and received it as the medium of the life of the one in whose veins it flowed, that the invisible life may be drunk in while the medium dropped away upon the gold. The type, though fragile, is nonetheless exceeding full of suggestive truth to the mind that sees and the heart that knows and understands God. He had never departed from His original intention and the idea He had set in the scripture in the beginning.

Atonement Illustrated

Because this is so, and because He was moving up to the great eternal act of atonement, a few hours before His sacrifice the Lord Jesus took His disciples into an upper room that He might show them eternal truth. Passing over the intervening years of Hebrew practice and thereby displaying them to be parenthetical, He took a cup filled with wine and said, 'This cup is the New Covenant in my blood ... drink ye all of it.' So they drank the New Covenant in His Blood. To them the whole idea was entirely revolutionary. They had first heard it when, having fed the five thousand men plus women and children, Jesus had taught them that He was the bread from heaven. He had said that they must eat His flesh and drink His Blood or they would have no life in them. They had not understood it then, nor did they understand what He was saying now, but they knew He was introducing to them an entirely new and (what was considered to be) unlawful practice. Blood drinking was prohibited by the Law, but here was Jesus commanding them to do exactly the opposite from what Moses had said. True it is that He never once intended them to drink His actual blood, and that all was spiritual, but there was no denying that His teaching was absolutely revolutionary.

And revolutionary it surely is, for the Lord was not introducing a new idea, but simply turning them back to an old one: drinking. Instead of 'sprinkling,' 'striking,' 'pouring out,' or any of the other various usages of the blood of the Old Covenant, it was now and for ever more to be drinking. The New Covenant is not an external covenant like the old one, but an internal and therefore an entirely new one. True it is that the Blood of Jesus Christ had to be poured out, and upon the occasion stamped into the ground like the blood of many another who had hung on Calvary's hill or ever the Lord hung there. It had to be shed for remission, but it was the life of, that is, in the Blood, that gave it its true value. Isaiah has it right. He poured out His soul unto death. It was the life He lived in the flesh, the soul He created in sinlessness, that was really poured out as the actual blood outpoured onto the ground. The soul is in the blood. When a man drinks the Blood he drinks the soul of the Lord Jesus of Nazareth.

Anticipating Calvary, before His death the Lord as it were presented His whole soul-life as Man on earth in the cup He gave them to drink. It was as though He caught and compressed the real virtue and value and purpose of Calvary into the loving cup, that He might impress upon our tardy spirits the critical importance of the inward action above the outward manifestation, lest we lose the significance of the epochal and eternal thing that was being wrought and instituted as law in the New Covenant. The New Covenant in His Blood is a covenant to create in His own people the soul that was in Him, that being regenerate in spirit they too may live on earth the eternal life He lived whilst here. 'Drink it,' He says.

Oh, the soul of Jesus! How wonderful! The soul-life of that Man for every man who will drink. God manifest in the flesh, His uttermost perfections, His glorious reality, His sweetness ineffable; the wonder of Him, the righteousness, the holiness, the purity, the loveliness of Him; all that Manhood lived out under all kinds and conditions of life; trials, temptations, provocations, hatred, deceptions, lyings and blasphemies, betrayal, and tortures, and crucifixion; all that perfect soul that loathed sin, and that leapt out against hypocrisy, all the preciousness of this wondrous life that always obeyed the Father — He says, 'Drink Me in, drink in My soul, My life, My all in the Blood.' The concern was and still is not so much that the wine be drunk; one only takes a sip anyhow, a lip-moistening, a little swallow; of itself it is nothing, a

mere token thing of the gushings of His soul into ours as we open our being and drink and drink and drink in the perfect life of that Man, that God in Flesh.

So we see that immediately we reach the New Covenant we are brought back to the original idea of the open mouth; 'the Blood' has to be drunk. Yet the idea of sprinkling is also to be found in the New Testament, for the Hebrews letter speaks of the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. The comparison is apt, for Abel's blood was spilled on the ground as valueless for atonement as his brother Cain's, but Jesus' Blood is sprinkled on the throne of grace. I do not know quite what I expect to see when I stand before that throne, but this I know, that as of old the High Priest went every year into the Holiest of all and sprinkled the blood of atonement upon the Mercy Seat, so Jesus has gone into the Heavenly Jerusalem with His own Blood and has sprinkled the throne of grace with it. Moreover, the Holy Spirit has come forth, the second Apostle of the Trinity to be sent by the Father, to sprinkle hearts from an evil conscience.

All sprinkling of the Blood of the New Covenant is done by the Holy Ghost. His work by it is the inward disinfecting of the human personality from all sin and uncleanness and evil. There is not the slightest ground in the New Testament for believing that men are expected subjectively to handle and use the Blood; to the contrary they are plainly shown to be the objective beneficiaries of another's handling of it. Without question this is because of the redemption in that Blood. Redemption is not only through the Blood, that is because it was shed (meaning that unless it had been outpoured on the cross there could have been no atonement, which is absolutely true), redemption is only through the Blood because also redemption was in the Blood of that wonderful Man.

There was no redemption in the blood of animals; it contained nothing of the moral and ethical worth of a life free from sin; it was not precious Blood but common blood. Superficial innocence it may have, sufficient enough for the Lord to allow Himself honestly to use it for imputed coverage and token implication, but it would have been immoral to have used it for anything further than that. So the Lord God did not do so. But the precious, unique, eternal soul-life of Jesus was utterly righteous, holy, pure, love-filled, virtuous, and positively redemptive. His Blood covers nothing, but removes everything contrary to its moral, ethical and virtuous nature, and brings into everyone who drinks it the soul-life of the Man who shed it. In one eternal act He shed it in that manner as the procuring price for the souls of men; just once in the end of an age of bloodshed He did it to end the age of bloodshed and put away sin thereby; and with the consummation of that age came also the passing of its practices, and phraseology.

No more must men use its limited vocabulary when speaking of such precious Blood; no more may men speak of covering anything with it; it is impossible, it cannot 'be done. The ideas are incompatible. Neither must men conjure up ideas of sprinkling it upon anyone or anything or anywhere. It is already sprinkled in the only places it may be sprinkled. We must not vulgarise it or impute unto it any superstitious uses. We must drink it; it is the blood of the new man which is entirely spiritual while living in the flesh.

[Atonement Realised](#)

Perhaps the greatest tragedy underlying much of the unwarrantable misuse of precious spiritual Biblical phraseology is the failure to distinguish the difference between the Old and New Covenants. Because a phrase is Biblical it does not follow that it is correct when used outside of its historical and dispensational setting.

Another great tragedy is surely the fear that underlies so much of the practice now made obsolete by God and therefore unacceptable to Him. It chiefly arises from a misplaced emphasis upon the power of black magicians using black arts to destroy people, or the work of God. Persons who ought to know better are teaching other persons who know less than they to live and move in fear of mediums and magicians, whose power against them was all destroyed at Calvary. This gives rise to all such superstitious uses of the Blood as covering oneself with it and sprinkling one's possessions with it. Everything must be treated in this way it is said — houses, rooms, cars, situations. People will not get out of bed or enter homes, or go near a demon-possessed person, or even at times converse with another child of God unless some kind of prayer, pious enough in all conscience, is breathed concerning some use, or application, or coverage with the Blood. The sad, sad reason implied if not plainly given is that because the agents of Satan have blood, human, animal, birds', or mixtures of bloods, so also must we have blood to answer, combat, or afford protection from that devilish medium. But this is not so. One real deep inward soul-drink of the spiritual value and eternal preciousness of that Blood of Christ is sufficient and more than sufficient to undo all the works of Satan. To find, collect, and use the finest selection of Biblical phrases concerning the Blood is not a Biblical prescription for overcoming Satan or giving protection from his powers. Superstition is not faith, and superstitious use of the Bible is not the least common fault among Christians today. This all must be banished from the churches for it does not honour, but dishonour the Blood.

There can be no doubt that the practices of the early Church are the surest guide to correct behaviour in all matters. The account of their habits, together with the epistles of guidance, and correction, and instruction, and edification, and education, form a major part of the New Testament canon. Nowhere in any of these, throughout the Acts of the Apostles and onwards (or, for that matter, in the Gospels either) is there any suggestion that the Church of Jesus Christ should act in such a manner as has been described. Not once is coverage or protection sought from or by the Blood. Instead the real reason for the shedding of the Blood is set forth in plainest terms, the forgiveness of sins, redemption, cleansing, drink. These things being had in experience there was nothing to cover, no protection needed. If a man is made the righteousness of God, does that condition need covering? And if so, from whom and by what? It is the basic moral and spiritual quality of the Blood that has been drunk, and that righteousness is as needless of protection in us as in the One whose originally it was. In understanding we must be men.

Pursuing the theme a little further we notice that the saints spoken of in Revelation 12 overcame the dragon, that old serpent called the devil and Satan, by the Blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they were not a lot of self-lovers. Obviously, since we must love someone or something, they loved the One who shed that Blood and were quite prepared to lay down their lives for Him or their brethren: more, if the word in chapter 1: 5-6 is any indication, they loved the Blood He shed also. By it and their testimony they had no difficulty in defeating the devil. We are not told what they said, nor are we told that they 'used' the Blood in any way; just the

honest facts are stated, by these two things they overcame the dragon, fallen Lucifer in his most terrifyingly powerful form.

The absence of reference to any method or 'use' of the Blood in this case is quite typical of all the New Testament scriptures wherever it is mentioned. Nowhere are we told that the apostles practised blood-sprinkling, neither did they teach that the Blood of Jesus Christ was ever intended for that use in general practice when dealing with any variety of demon personage or demonic situation. It is an entirely gratuitous assumption, as erroneous as it is extra-Biblical, to believe or teach that the sons of God need either to sprinkle or cover themselves or others with the Blood. We must surely take it for granted that the early Church would have known the proper attitude to the Blood of the Lamb so lately shed. Therefore, it permits of no other interpretation than that the complete absence from scripture of any such practices as have sprung into popular use since the closing of the sacred canon shows them to be wrong.

Neither the Lord Jesus Himself during His earthly ministry, nor yet any of His chosen apostles after Him gave any instruction concerning blood-sprinkling or covering or pleading. They did not set any such example for the churches to follow, nor did they allude to any such practice, nor even hint at it. Nor can one example of it be found throughout the entire length of the Acts of the Apostles to give any ground for believing it to be Church tradition. To imply that the New Testament allows or promotes the practice and teaching of such things in connection with the Blood of the everlasting covenant is entirely erroneous: to infer that it may do is both mythical and repugnant; all are absolutely unnecessary and sheerly human, and if not directly devilish such practices are at least utterly sensual. Coverage is not provided by the Blood of God's Lamb.

When God sent His Lamb into the world, it was a move back again to the original revelation in Genesis as contradistinctive to the teachings given later under the intervening Mosaic system. When speaking to the Jews in His day the Lord Jesus did not say, 'Your Mediator Moses rejoiced to see My day'.. . but, 'Your Father Abraham rejoiced to see My day'. . . for Moses spake of '... a lamb the lamb your lamb,' Exodus 12: 3-5, but Abraham said, 'God will provide Himself a Lamb.' Thus Abraham saw Jesus' day. But Moses had to deal with the blood of men's lambs; so coverage, sprinkling, striking, were its commanded usages. Because blood drinking was prohibited, men were inhibited and salvation was limited. Acts 13 : 39. Moses could not speak of salvation to the uttermost, whereas the Blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleanseth us from all sin. When we drink the Blood we are washed, sprinkled, purged, loosed, redeemed, forgiven — according to the riches of His grace, not covered according to the limitations of law. All is internal, externality is finished.

It may be that Balaam has a word for us in all this. A wicked king had hired him to use witchcraft against Israel, and for love of money the hireling prophet was for a while willing to do so. But he soon discovered a most remarkable and patent fact which is recorded for us in Numbers 23 : 23. 'Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel.... What hath God wrought!' Higher up we read, 'God hath blessed and I cannot reverse it. He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel: the Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them.'

Let a man, even each member of the Israel of God, believe this truth, and he will not have need to relapse into Old Testament clichés, as sacred as they may appear. He will no more need to use its phraseology concerning blood than he will have need of that blood itself. The Blood of Jesus Christ goes on cleansing everyone who, having drunk it in order to become a son of Light, goes on walking in the light. A constantly cleansed man has no conscience of sin and no fear of evil; more than this, he is seldom if ever conscious that he needs protection. He does not believe his Lord is so forgetful of him that He needs continuously reminding to protect him. He lives in the glorious knowledge that all things work together for his good always. He finds that not only can he obey the injunction to give thanks in everything, but beyond that he also enjoys the mature word which fullness of the Spirit brings within his experience; viz., he finds himself giving thanks always for all things. Ephesians 5:18-20, a vastly better condition and attitude, and a much higher and fuller concept to be sure.

It must never be forgotten that the Bible says it is in **Him** we have redemption; not in His Blood but in Him. Of course it is through His Blood, but not in it. All redemption, even in historic Israel, was because of Him and the Blood He would shed; all is Him, in Him, of Him, and through Him to the Father. He and His Father were before ever He actually took flesh and blood, which He did in order that He should shed that Blood, so that by that act and through that Blood alone we might be born into Him. We do not, cannot drink the actual human physical substance of the Blood; instead the Holy Ghost has come, that in Him, the blessed Spirit, as from a sacred cup of Heavenly Life placed to the lips of the inward man, we may drink in all the virtuous Life of the soul of the Man Christ Jesus. As there are eyes of the heart, so are there ears of the heart, and lips of the heart even as also there are hands and feet and all faculties and senses and functions of the heart: we all have them; greater and more powerful than the outward, the inward man of the heart exists in us all in a state of death or life. Dead until he drink the Blood, alive only when he has drunk and as he does constantly drink it.

This is the perfect picture and truth of the Body. Does not every member of a body partake of and live by drinking in the blood of and in that same body? Even so does every member of His Body the Church live by drinking in the nature and virtue and life of Jesus Christ in the Spirit. This is why we are told that we are made to drink into one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). For the Life that was once manifested on the earth in the soul of the Man Christ Jesus, and is the truth for ever for every man, is brought unto us by the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, from whom as a babe in the flesh on earth Jesus came by Mary to be life and truth for us all. Not outwardly now as distinct and separate from us, but inwardly, wholly, spiritually: that is, entire in spirit, as complete and wholesome, and actually He as ever He was when known as Jesus of Nazareth.

A man's redemption is Jesus. He is not only the Redeemer but also Redemption. As Redeemer He is generally only thought of in connection with a redemptive act — Calvary, a price paid, a purchase made, a death died. But wonderful and indispensable as that was, it was and is of no avail unless He is also my Redemption. The Redemption is in **Him** through faith in His Blood. Redemption is Jesus' Life. Laid down it purchased me, taken up and lived in me it redeems me from myself and sin. Redemption is Jesus. Jesus in me is made Redemption to me. Jesus, as **He** lived and walked on this earth was Redemption. As the Son of man He redeemed human nature; that is, He was God's reason, just and holy and righteous, for redeeming me, because

He proved that it was possible for human nature to be in the midst of sin and yet not sin, be beset by demons and not be defeated by them, be hated by men and still love them compassionately, tenderly, everlastingly, and ah, so much, much more. Where all men failed He succeeded; in every detail of life where I sinned He remained sinless and more beside; that is how and why He was and is Redemption. He, that Life, is God's justification for justifying me; He is made justification to me. He is Redemption. Redemption is not some thing God gives me, but a personal life, Jesus. He was made Redemption to me having been and being Redemption in Himself as a Man on the earth before me: this is God's magnanimity, and munificence to me. In him I have Redemption: through His Blood He was made Redemption to me; this is the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace.

The end of this is that the life I now live in the flesh is His life not mine, and as He did not in the past need to be sprinkling blood, or pleading it, or getting under it, or covering Himself with it, neither does He require or need to do so in the present. He is the same, yesterday, today and forever, whether in Himself or in His people. His flesh is their meat, His Blood is their drink. 'He that eateth Me shall live by Me,' He said. It is quite impossible to eat raw flesh and not drink blood, for flesh is by blood. The Church of Jesus Christ is His Body — of His flesh and of His bone. Let all who are His members know that all is within them as they are in Him, and let them slip out from under a yoke that neither their fathers nor they were able to bear. The Old is done away with all its irrelevant phrases. The practices and the language went together. The New has replaced the Old. therefore let spiritual and mental renewal result in newness of speech.

We are told that His Blood speaks. It has a language of its own which leaves us with no need to say anything. Abel's blood had to cry to God from the ground whereupon it was shed and by which it was absorbed. There was no-one to carry it to the heavenly Jerusalem, so it cried for vengeance. It had to be avenged even though vengeance may not have been in his heart when it was shed. But the Blood of Jesus speaks in Mount Zion where the glorious Christ mediates the Holy Spirit in unending love to bring us all back up into the image of God. The blood of sprinkling speaks to God and His answer is the outpoured Spirit. Where the Spirit dwelleth no protection is needed, for the Spirit is as the Blood and Him Who shed it. He is the Spirit of the life in Christ Jesus, even the life that was in the Blood, the exact life. Being filled with the Spirit I am filled with all that the Blood stands for; there is no difference, none at all. Now I have no need to find a form of speech for the Blood, instead I have the name. Jesus was the name given to that man of flesh and blood, and when I both bear and use it in all propriety and power, it carries all the virtue and meaning of the Blood to whatever need I have.

9-MAR-01

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THE ALTAR

The Eternal
Sacrifice
of God

G.W.NORTH

First published June 1978.
Revised June 1983.
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THE ALTAR

The Eternal Sacrifice of God

The Eternal Sacrifice of God

The Altar theme is one of the most important truths of scriptural revelation. Either by direct or indirect mention, or in parallel or closely associated ideas, the truth of the altar is presented to us from beginning to end of the Book. Part of the purpose of this issue is to trace and develop the truth related to the altar as it unfolds from Genesis onwards throughout the two testaments. To do this exhaustively is altogether too great a task; in some connections, however, we shall pause to inquire into the text more fully than in others. This will be necessary for the sake of the truth which God wishes us to understand, that understanding, we may give Him greatest pleasure by entering into His life.

One of the wonderful things about truth is that it is greater than our understanding of it. God has sent forth the Spirit of truth to guide us into it though, that entering in the enlightened heart should see the truth to be as vast as God Himself. It is therefore not surprising that what is often at first thought to be the truth about a thing is soon discovered to be only a part or partial view of the whole truth. Because this is so, every new discovery ought to be regarded only as a truth, or a facet of truth about the truth. Certainly this is so about the truth of the altar, as we shall see.

As is so often the case, the New Testament supplies the key to this subject. At first this may seem more than a little strange, for in it there are so few references to the altar. This is because under the New Covenant there is no place for a literal, earthly altar. With the passing of the Old Covenant and the earthly priesthood there remains no need for any of the means or instruments or place of service necessary to its function. Upon the rare occasions when the altar is referred to in the New Testament, it has mostly to do with the former earthly legal system given by Moses. From the time of the death and resurrection of Christ this became obsolescent and has long since passed away. Other than in this connection, it is mentioned either with regard to the order of priesthood now functioning under Melchizedek in heaven or with reference to heathen religion, or else with the intention that it be understood only in a figurative and spiritual sense. Nevertheless, in whichever connection it may be mentioned in the New Testament, what is said about it furnishes us with a key to its meaning in the Old Testament.

Perhaps even stranger still, the New Testament passages which provide us with the best lead to the understanding of the whole range of truth associated with the altar do not in fact mention the word. For instance Peter speaks of 'the Lamb (of God) without blemish or spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you', and John says that Jesus was 'the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world', but neither of them mentions the altar. How long

before the foundation of the world Jesus was foreordained to be its redeeming Lamb we are not told, nor do we know the precise occasion when He was slain, but the knowledge that sacrifice and death took place long before men ever made an altar on earth introduces a new element into our thinking about it all. Evidently sacrificial offering as known and practised by man is not an idea that originated with him, neither is it an emergency measure devised by God as of political expediency; it is an absolute necessity, apart from which eternal life could not be. This is brought out to us by the revelation that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world.

Except God had told us this we should never have known, but being in possession of the fact, we see that sacrifice is so fundamental to being that without it the world itself could never have been created.

The Invisible Sacrifice

It is a most sobering and significant thought that when God laid the foundations of the world, He laid them in sacrifice. Almost involuntarily there spring to mind all the things it normally associates with that thought — animals, blood, altar and fire; but not in those things did God make His sacrifice. The sacrifice to which Peter and John refer is not flesh and blood but spiritual sacrifice. There were no flesh and blood creatures in existence when this great sacrifice was made, so all 'normal' sacrifice was completely impossible. This being so, it must also be true that sacrifice did not originally exist nor could then have been made for specific ends such as redemption or atonement or forgiveness, but was practised for some other purpose altogether. This may be quite new, perhaps revolutionary to our thinking, because we have been reared in the evangelical tradition of sacrifice for sin, but this sacrifice had nothing to do with sin, nor was it made for that purpose; it is eternal. The sacrifice of God was not, is not, nor ever shall be made in connection with anything except life itself; it has to do with being, not expiation. For this reason it is without precedent or repetition, and is impossible of imitation; sacrifice is constant in the divine order of being and life.

Sacrifice and offering lie at the heart of God, eternal as He. God is love, and love cannot be apart from sacrifice. That is why God laid it at the heart of Israel's national life. He did not command sacrifice of His people just because of sin but of necessity to proclaim to them Himself; they must know His manner of being and His love. Sacrifice as Israel knew it was the adaptation and application to men's spiritual needs of the divine science of being. It was the physical phenomenon of a life-principle of deity. At that time sacrifice became sacrifices, repetitious and various. When bodies and blood were sacrificed for various reasons defined by God, they were intended by Him to be outward manifestations of spiritual realities; apart from that they had no value. How many in Israel understood this is a matter of speculation; David almost certainly did.

In process of time physical sacrifice had to be of course, for God had decreed that without shedding of blood remission of sins should never be available to anyone. However, vital though the need for forgiveness is, and necessary as the sacrifice was, whenever it was made the visible sacrifice was not the most important of the transactions then taking place; that for which it stood, and so poorly represented, was always the greater.

The Lamb of God

Sacrifices of animals made on God's altar pointed on through time to the actual bodily sacrifice of Christ Jesus; that was their limitation. They could not point backwards to eternity and the spiritual sacrifice that God made then, for flesh does not typify, nor can it understand spirit. Nevertheless the Levitical sacrifices were instituted to be reflective as well as predictive. By them hearts taught of God to know that the spiritual sacrifice is the real one are afforded a backward look through all time to that occasion when the Lamb was slain by God before the foundation of the world.

Looking forward from the time of institution, they dimly and dumbly foreshadowed the least part of Jesus' sacrifice — that is the physical, outward sacrifice and death of the Lamb. Looking back with understanding from that time to the beginning of the world, they are seen to be projections from and adaptations of the eternal spiritual sacrifice which neither human eye saw nor human hand ever handled. Meditation upon the miracle convinces the heart also that they were but pale reflections of it.

Whether any eye but God's ever saw this miracle we do not know, but certainly if any did it was not a man's. But then it was not a miracle to God, only a natural demonstration of love — substitution — any sacrifice is only an application of the necessary principle of eternal being to present need. In whatever realm of natural life we move, the invisible, inaudible, intangible things are always vastly superior to those which we can apprehend by human sense. Real as the outward is, it is only of spiritual value to us as an indication, a parable or type of that which is inward; God intended and created it to be so.

Such Bible phrases as 'which was a figure for the time then present' for instance, specially inform us of the typical nature of the whole tabernacle complex and associated worship. Those things were solid and real enough, but they are none the less pictorial and teach us more by the reality of their existence than by what was accomplished by their practice. All were foreshadowings of the person and works of Christ; like the law itself under which they were ordained they found their fulfilment and end in Him. Spiritually, naturally and humanly He is their terminal point, for He fulfilled all. However, having said that, we have again arrived at the heart of the matter under consideration, for the physical person and sacrifice of Jesus of Nazareth only fulfilled that which was material and outward. When humanly manifest on the earth, especially at Calvary, He not only fulfilled inward truth, but the more pointedly and visibly expressed it.

Care must be taken lest in thinking along these lines the outward be divorced from the inward. In actual fact it is quite impossible to do this; nevertheless in our minds we must strive to keep them together as they truly are in Christ. In Him they are one, but while wholeheartedly confessing this, we must clearly understand and firmly assert also that the outward sacrifice at Golgotha was the least part of that which was transacted there. The endurance of the cross was vital to Him as a man and to God as the Eternal Being; it was also necessary to us men for our salvation and eternal being. Indeed the cross and all He suffered there was completely unavoidable to Him if He was to fulfil what the scriptures predicted and He Himself had said. However, save for the inward, unseen things, which the visible, audible things indicated, the events of Calvary would have had little value. Since the unnamed thieves crucified one on either side of the Lord lingered on in their death-throes longer than Jesus did it is to be presumed that they also shed blood more copiously and suffered bodily tortures for a

longer period than He did; it is almost as certain too that, with the possible exception of a few next of kin, their blood and death meant nothing at all to men, and have no spiritual value whatsoever. In common with all men of normal mentality, they fought death: Jesus did not.

Perhaps a fuller grasp of what was happening may be gained if we understand at least part of the reason why God blacked out the awful scene for three hours. He did it partly because He was seeking to emphasise that the outward, physical suffering of His Son was not the chief thing to which He was directing our attention. By drawing the veil of darkness over the whole scene He was attempting to redirect our gaze to what was happening in invisible realms. Paul says plainly 'we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal'.

The Indestructible Christ

The Christ is eternal. The Christ did not die. Jesus died. The physical body of the human/divine Jesus died, but the eternal Christhood of the Man of Calvary did not die, nor could it. Because the body of the man of the cross housed that Spirit who is the Christ, it was raised from the dead. The departing of the Spirit of the Christ from the body of Jesus brought about its death, so we say with Paul that 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures'; but to say that does not mean that the Christ died: He is completely indestructible. At His birth the angels said, 'Unto you is born a Saviour which is Christ the Lord', and He is recorded as saying to His Father, 'a body hast thou prepared me'. He said so at the time He joined the body formed in Mary's womb in preparation for the birth of the child Jesus, resultantly He was born Christ the Lord. He was the Christ — God manifest in the flesh.

The Jews said, 'we have heard out of the Law that Christ abideth for ever', and they were right. It was precisely this mystery that stumbled them, for calling Himself the Son of Man He was saying that He must be lifted up to die. They knew that the Christ is eternal and therefore cannot die. They were mystified because they stumbled at the stumbling-stone laid for them in Zion. Jesus died according to the scriptures; He suffered death, that is He allowed it and told others to do so too. 'Suffer it to be so now', He said, as He moved on to Calvary. According to scripture 'He should be the first that should rise from the dead'. He 'endured the cross', suffered death as well as suffering when dying, and rose again: Luke called it 'His passion'. Christ did not die; He conquered and destroyed death. He was found in fashion as a man and became obedient (unto God) unto death (as any man would have to) that His manhood might be highly exalted — His Christhood remained intact and eternal as ever.

John says of Him, 'the Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory the Word was with God and the Word was God'. God the Word joined the tiny body of flesh for the purpose of dwelling on the earth in human form. It was a miracle and He did this in order that He should be the true tabernacle which God pitched and not man. God was moving along the line of scriptural fulfilment. Whilst living on earth among men in that tabernacle of flesh, He first displayed in it God's glory before all and then at last, by means of it, gave to His Father the one human sacrifice He required. Unto this end all the sacrifices made of old under the Mosaic Covenant pointed. At the time they were offered in connection with the tabernacle and temple erected with men's hands, but to God they spoke of Him. He

once said of His body 'destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it again'. The voice of Him who indwelt the temple was speaking from within the temple; they could and did 'destroy' that (not permanently though as we know) but not Him.

Israel's Altar

From the day the Children of Israel were constituted a nation with a law and land of their own the Lord dwelt in their midst. From that time onward He commanded that sacrifice should become daily routine; each day was to begin and end with sacrifice. At set times throughout the year supplementary sacrifices were also to be made to Him; apart from this He would not, could not dwell with them. There were also great commemorative and prophetic feasts of Jehovah in which the people were invited under command to join with their God. This was the background in which they lived; in Israel sacrifice was as permanent as God's being and presence in their midst.

Israel may not have known that sacrifice was as necessary to Him as to them, but it was, so He secured their continued union by ensuring that His superior knowledge and will should be acknowledged and done. He did this by the simple means of enforcing the sacrificial system upon them as their only means of gaining entrance and approach to Himself. Their acceptance by Him and their continuance with Him as His people and His presence with them as their God depended primarily upon what took place at the altar. This has provided the ground for the concept of Calvary as being the means of atonement, forgiveness, redemption and cleansing. In short, the altar with its sacrifices are almost exclusively associated in our minds with the means of procuring salvation for men; few seem to realise that the sacrifices of ancient Israel were intended by God to signify far more than that.

The Cross — God's Altar

It is difficult for men of evangelical persuasion who love the cross of Christ to dissociate that cross from the human sacrifice and blood-offering He made there. They rightly see them as one. That is to say they see Him as God made man to accomplish human sacrifice for human sin. This is spoken of in numerous scriptures and specifically stated in words like those in Hebrews 13.11 — 'the bodies of those beasts whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin are burned without the camp'. Because the Lord fulfilled this scripture and died without the city, they see Him crucified and sacrificed upon the cross as the sin-offering. Such realisation causes them to hymn their thanks to His name with undying gratitude, and rightly so, for the knowledge of their own sin and utter inability to change themselves fills them with self-loathing. Thus Calvary is their constant theme, and because they do not normally go beyond the simple and vitally necessary understanding of the Lord's human, sacrificial death, the greater truth of eternal sacrifice from which it came is lost to them. Despite the fact that God so specifically ordained and carefully fixed this truth as a constant factor of life in Israel, it is all too frequently unseen. Yet the series of invisible miracles accomplished by Christ on the cross was unspeakably marvellous and not the least of these was the way He changed His cross into an altar.

How gracious is the Lord who suffered for us without the gate in the place of a skull. Calvary was the mound of execution where criminals were hanged on trees and left to die; it was outlaws' territory where outcasts, lepers, thieves and wild beasts lived and fought and suffered and died. What compassions He felt, what love He showed, how

wonderful He is that He should go there and suffer so for us! It is certain that the worshipping heart shall enter into no height except that height be equalled in experience, if not excelled in understanding, by the depth it has first plumbed. Yet how slowly we understand the mystery of God. It must be a real sorrow to Him that, although He has sought to reveal these things to us in so many ways, so few have grasped His secrets. All the Lord Jesus accomplished on the cross by paying the penalty for sin and bearing away its mass from us would have been to no avail if He had not at last turned the tree of curse and punishment and shame into an altar unto the Lord.

Only to the understanding heart does the cross become the altar of God. No other eyes but the eyes of our understanding can or may see the transformation. The high priest of Israel dealt in many parts and divers manner with strictly limited means and repetitious ceremonies. His ministry was only with woefully inadequate substitutes and signs, but our glorious Melchizedek did all at once. Moving in the eternal realities of His own life, He accomplished at the same time and place, in one act, everything that was required by God of Him, for God and man. Crucified, made sin, shamed, outcast, He contrived by His virtues to use the cross for His purposes, converting it to an altar whereon, by the eternal Spirit, He offered Himself without spot to God.

The word 'altar' first appears in scripture in connection with NOAH following the flood. When he came out of the Ark and entered upon the purged earth as a new man, the first thing he did was to build an altar unto the Lord, and offer sacrifices to God. If he had ever done such things before we are not told of them; he may have done and perhaps it is right to assume that by building an altar and sacrificing to God he was following the habit of a lifetime, but we do not know. What we do know is that, on leaving the Ark, the first significant work this new man wrought upon the renewed earth was to build an altar, take of the life within the Ark and sacrifice it to God. God then smelled a sweet smell.

All was at rest in heaven and on the new earth; though in a way different from how it was in the beginning, man was at one with God. It was as paradise regained, or the commencement of a new age; except for the presence of sin, because of the sacrifice all was as it was in the beginning. But even so, despite sin, perhaps because of it, through this man Noah God had established on earth an everlasting principle.

Almost certainly Noah was ignorant of the significance and function of the three persons in the being of God, and the principal manifestation of the love which is the most basic factor of eternal Being, namely self-sacrifice. God had not been able to reveal this in quite the same way before, so Noah was not following a precedent. Nevertheless the idea of self-sacrifice is easily discoverable in His method of creation. It is obviously incorporated into His plan of life for mankind, for the way He built woman from man reveals it for all to see. First of all He caused ADAM to pass into a deep sleep and then extracted from him a rib; closing up the man's flesh again the Lord then made the woman and presented her to the man. The parallel between this operation and the principle underlying the altar and sacrifice lies here: the deep sleep represents death and the woman the life which could come into being only because of it. In this manner the eternal principle which was later developed and demonstrated as altar and sacrifice was woven into the creation of the woman; it really could have been done no other way.

It is highly unlikely that Adam was taken into the counsels of God about this, or that he consented to and volunteered for the operation. No man has been God's counsellor and there is no record that the first man was consulted as to its alleged benefit to him, or whether he even wanted a companion. It is probable that the Lord told him about it afterwards, for he said, 'this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh'. But whatever may have been God's procedure in the matter, we now know what happened. The truth implicit in God's creation of Eve is that Adam had to lay down his life and sacrifice a part of himself in order that she might live unto him. That is how truth eternal in God was adapted by Him to the art and science of creation. Long before it was manifest to man as a principle of life in God, it existed in him as a basis of life union and duplication and was eventually demonstrated to him by the compulsory altar.

The altar is as much a symbol to mankind as it was a necessity to Israel. Its chiefest function and greatest glory is humble, voluntary self-giving for the promotion of another's life; this is perhaps the most vital of the many characteristics of true love. Certainly without it eternal life cannot possibly be. That it involves and implies death is inevitable, indeed altars demand it and only exist for it.

In man's thinking the altar is generally associated with the ideas of placation, propitiation, substitutionary giving and atonement by sacrifice. He seldom thinks of it as God does, therefore much of its basic meaning, the glory of self-giving has been lost. Often because of the death involved in sacrifice it is only with difficulty that the altar can be thought of as a revelation of a principle of life. This is simply because we do not view death aright; we do not understand what it means. Death as men know it is horrible, dark, dreadful and mysterious, something to be feared and evaded as much as possible. That is because death came to man by sin. All too often it comes finally as a result of disease or accident or war or some kind of tragedy attended by pain. However, what is known to man as death is really nothing other than a principle of life in God, and for that reason was originally very good.

[The Everlasting Burnings](#)

It is quite impossible for any principle fundamental to the function or 'mechanics' of any person or thing to exist in this universe except first it existed in God. Evil itself could never have existed except, in another form, it had first existed as good. Evil is not an eternal principle, it is the perversion of an eternal principle. Its author, the devil, could never have existed if he had not been originally created good Lucifer by God. Death came into the world by sin as by one man, Adam; but God did not create Adam in sin, nor sin in Adam. The man was created to pass on fullness of life to his progeny and if he had abode by the true principle of self-sacrifice as demonstrated in his Creator he would have succeeded. Instead of doing so, however, he co-operated with the devil and received and operated the power of sin from satan the pervert; consequently he was the human instrument who introduced present death into the world.

The article of death itself as known among men is simply the act of final departure of the spirit from and cessation of personal conscious being in one particular state and form and passing into another. Death is not annihilation, a going out of existence in one form and for ever ceasing to exist in any state or form; it is an experience, and a state or condition and a destiny. Since the entrance of sin, the ultimate terminus of all

unregenerate spirits is the state of death; this condition is entirely irremediable; it is unending existence in a state strangely like — yet absolutely opposite to God's.

'Our God is a consuming fire' — so, apparently, is hell. Just what is the difference between these two states we will not discuss here, but simply note that whether in heaven or hell, men finally have to dwell with everlasting burnings. It would seem that the difference between these two destinies lies as much in the kind and quality of spirits that reach them as in the fires themselves. This in turn brings us to consideration of the life of God, the original consuming fire.

The Lord Jesus found no difficulty in suffering death. He only found the death of the cross so distasteful and revolting because it was associated with the God-forsaken condition of sin. He had always been familiar with that death which He called 'laying down His life'. He spoke of this with joy; it is the principle of life. His Father loves Him because He laid down His life that He might take it again. He loved the thought of doing that; He was only going to repeat as Son of Man on earth what He had ever been doing as God the Son in heaven. He had ever done it there as God for God, so on earth, while still doing it as God for God, He was going to do it also as man for God and God for man. He was going to do it because of sin also, but chiefly for men and for God and at His Father's commandment.

That which is known and called death by man has only become an enemy because of sin. To understand this properly it is necessary to master Paul's argument in Romans chapter 7. That which is good can never be made death to us, but sin that it might appear sin to us. Its exceeding sinfulness lies partly in that it makes something which is good and beneficial appear evil. Sin turns friends into apparent enemies and good into apparent evil, because to the mind it loads the innocent and innocuous with the vicious and harmful. That which is called death by men is only the enemy of the body. It debases this temple of the Holy Ghost to worms and dust; truly is the body called the body of humiliation. For the children of God it never need be the body of sin, but it has ever been the scene of man's humiliation.

What is now humanly known as death is quite an involuntary act among normal people; but in its perfect form it was originally known and still is functional in God as the voluntary act of laying down one's life for sheer love to another. In Him this is an eternal principle of life. It did not then, nor does it now, entail cessation of existence, or mean ceasing to exist or be manifest in one form and changing into another. Following Lucifer's fall and the later creation of physical existence it did come to mean that and still exists as that among men, but it was not so in the beginning with God. In the eternal love of God in heaven it meant that one Person of the Godhead, in His humility, by an act of will, laid down His life in order to promote the glory of the other.

Self-sacrifice is an indispensable condition and a basic principle and practice of eternal life; without it it cannot be. Humility is a state of mind; it is also a condition of spirit: it results in a permanent attitude, innocent of pride and precluding self-exaltation. It brings about that state of selflessness which enables love to seek not its own but always another's glory and promotion, giving itself constantly to work to that end. This state of lowliness to the point of nothingness, so characteristic of God, has been warped and changed by sin and transplanted into the human race as death, but with this difference — in Him it is a necessary causal virtue, but in men, because it

came via satan and Adam, it is a noxious perverted result. Nevertheless, the virtue is so real that any person displaying absence of self-seeking and concern for others' good is sometimes spoken of as being dead to self. Thereby we reveal that unconcern for self is thought of and described in the same terms as is death to the physical body. Such selflessness or freedom from self-interest always leads to self-giving, developing into acts of self-sacrifice.

It must not be inferred from the above that any person of the Godhead thinks of Himself more highly than He ought to think. Self-worth or any kind of self-evaluation is never taken into consideration in the act of self-sacrifice. The thought of personal value does not lie at the root of sacrifice in God; self-esteem is not part of love. Not one of the persons of God counts His life dear unto Himself or thinks He is of greater worth or of more importance than the others. One does not think that He must sacrifice Himself in order to impart His life or devote Himself to the other in order to give Him some worth, standing or being. Sacrifice only came to bear that meaning and assume that character when it was later adapted to man and applied to his spiritual needs, but it was not so originally with God.

This may at first appear very strange to us, but the eternal Life which is God, is this kind of life and can be no other. Therefore, because sacrifice is basic in the highest form of life, it is necessary to all other which is made in its image. As already mentioned it was incorporated in an adapted form into creation when God made man and woman, the highest form of animate life on earth.

Sacrifice is sacred offering. Among men it is always looked upon as sacred offering of something or someone to some higher being, greater in degree or power than the person making the offering. In scripture it is associated with the ideas of approach to God, as in 'approach' or 'ascending-offering'; it is always linked with the altar and fire, so that we read of the burnt-offering or offering made by fire.

These are to be carefully distinguished from the sin-carcass. This had to be burned without the camp because it was totally unacceptable to God and could not be brought into His presence. Unlike Jesus, of whom it dimly spoke, being made sin it remained sin for it had no power to overcome sin. In the type the animal passively received sin by an act of transference from the sinner by imputation through the laying on of hands accompanied by confession of the sin over it. It had no active righteous life which of itself could combat and overcome sin, nor could it rise from the dead to confer its victorious life upon others for justification. But the Lord Jesus rose from the dead triumphant; His life had overcome the sin which He bore in His own body on the tree. To this day His life is the active combative force which overcomes sin in whomsoever He now dwells by the Spirit. This is only possible because of who He was and what He had always done in the Godhead before the world was, or ever the need arose among men for sacrifices to be offered to God.

That it should be the Son who offered Himself to the Father is only right and proper; Jesus said, 'my Father is greater than I'; so the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. The Father person of God begat the Son person on earth and then had Him slain by man so that, without intermission, under all circumstances, the Son could offer Himself in perfect love to His Father. In this way the eternal principle of life and the everlasting order of love was established on earth among men also. According to the will of God these things shall remain for ever the same among the redeemed.

The Voluntary Submission of Love

Everything was committed into the hands of the Son. At no period of His being and life in any form or place did He count that equality with God was a thing to be grasped at. He knew it and understood all it meant, but deliberately humbled Himself from it. He was content to give all to the Father who gave all to Him. 'In Him most perfectly expressed the Father's glories shine; of the full deity possessed, eternally divine'. God's act of putting Him to grief was incorporated into man's act of putting Jesus to death. It entailed unspeakable pain and suffering, made possible only because of His complete self-denial. Total non-existence of desire or will or word or deed to obtain, attain or promote His own right to recognition or glory is as utterly natural as it is eternal in Jesus.

In God equality does not breed over-familiarity, for over-familiarity destroys sacredness. It is a noxious poison, vitiating relationships and attitudes of men; it is an evil leading to worse evils. One of its worst manifestations is the way it has tinged expressions of praise and worship of God in the churches. True sons of God must reject these repulsive expressions; they show bad taste, rising from the natural annihilism of untaught minds. Equality can only exist by the kind of self-sacrifice which is advised among us by Paul, 'love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, seeketh not her own', 'in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than himself' — this is true humility. Jesus said, 'my Father is greater than I I and the Father are one'.

This always was and still is His attitude — 'He humbled Himself'. Father, by whose will His Son was slain, did not need to slay Him Himself; Jesus Himself did it. In scripture this fact is so evident; He said of Himself, 'I lay down my life that I might take it again', and others said, 'He offered Himself without spot to God, He gave Himself a ransom for all'. It is true that He said His Father had given Him commandment to lay down His life, but that was not because He Himself was unwilling to do so, nor was it because He was inferior to and only a mere subordinate of His Father, it was the crowning glory and visible point of voluntary obedience rendered in true filial love.

Father's — the Greatest Sacrifice

Great though this sacrifice of the Son is, it must not be thought that among the persons of the Godhead the Son is the only one who makes sacrifices; the Father makes them also. This ought not to be any surprise to us for it is brought out most poignantly in the saga of ABRAHAM and ISAAC on Moriah. In the end of the drama enacted there, it was not the son who was slain but the ram which was caught by its horns in a thicket. What thoughts and emotions rent the hearts of father and son as they undertook the journey to the mount we are not told. Nevertheless we may well imagine what mental torture wracked the heart of Abraham who faithfully led his son to the slaughter. He fully believed he must slay his son and was purposed to do so. Therefore, before he reached the mount, in heart he faithfully did it, receiving him back again from the dead as a gift from God.

Undoubtedly the Lord, by this incident, has taught us more of the truth about that loving self-giving and painless sacrifice in God which is hinted at by death. In order to have God's eternal life, man must know death and resurrection, for only resurrection life is eternal life. But Isaac did not die, Abraham did not slay his son; so

also is it in the Godhead: the Son never dies, the Father does not slay Him. Abraham and Isaac were stopped short of death — it only took place in a figure. So God has demonstrated for all time that with Him all is voluntary and therefore real; by this sacred enactment the principle of eternal love and life has been revealed, and it is the Father who is seen to be the one who makes the greatest sacrifice; it is He who slays the Son.

The Conquering Lamb

At the same time the Son is shown to be the one who makes the sacrifice, for unnoticed at first, though at last revealed, He is seen as the ram caught by the horns (symbol of kingship and power) of His own manhood and Godhead in the impenetrable thicket. He stood awaiting death as a result of man's intrigues and hatred entwined with God's simple, determined love. The Man — Jesus of Nazareth — the 'animal' side of the lamb-like life of Jesus, was especially assumed for the purpose of death. However, even in its worst power and at its greatest degree, death did not mean extinction to His spirit. He never saw death although He died; at that moment the Principal of Life applied the principle of Life to death and destroyed it. Hallelujah!

Although Jesus' death on the cross embraced into itself the principle of sacrifice as its principal factor and deepest foundation, He accomplished far more than that there. Sacrifice and offering are not the only glories of the Man of the cross. Those horns, curled and inoffensive as they may be, represent His twin powers of kingly authority to destroy satan with his kingdom and host. However, in this contest the horns are not as prominent as the ram that grew and bore them.

The Lord came to deal with the vast maze-like thicket of man's complicated needs, and He engaged Himself with them for man's deliverance. So being held by them, He was taken and led as a lamb to the slaughter, and being slaughtered He slaughtered His and man's enemies. Dying, 'He destroyed him who had the power of death, that is the devil, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage'. He also conquered adverse death itself, leaving His people with nothing else to do but engage themselves with the eternal beneficial aspect of death. This is a side and meaning of the cross which for the most part has not been understood, therefore to our loss it has been left unexplored. This has caused incalculable harm, for it is related to the demonstration of pure sacrifice known in God.

This aspect is unfortunately often overlooked when men view the cross only, and fail to see the Jesus of the cross. We mostly hear of the shame of the cross and in our thinking this is usually associated with cross-bearing and following Him. It is often illustrated by the incident of Simon of Cyrene, the coloured man coming up from the country, who was conscripted and compelled to carry the cross of Jesus en route to Golgotha. There is a verse about it in the Hebrews letter, 'looking unto Jesus, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross despising the shame'.

The endurance and shame are very real to our hearts as they were also to the sensitive Hebrew hearts to whom the sacred writing was first entrusted. But long before the author spoke to them of these things, he spoke of the Jesus of the cross like this, 'we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man'. To suffer that death He had to be lowered beneath the angels' state to men's that He should taste death for them. But for personal sacrifice in heaven He

needed neither to be lowered in form nor to assume any other relationship than that of God with God. In the Godhead He was only crowned with glory and honour because of it. He suffered no pain while making love's eternal sacrifice, nor endured any mockery; He only gained more glory and honour. This is why we are informed by God that by dying on the cross Jesus was crowned with glory and honour. He despised the shame; there is no shame attached to heavenly things.

The Man Jesus was not degraded to earth when He came to die on the tree as the dishonoured man cursed by God. By appointing His Son to the cross and not taking it upon Himself to do so, the Father honoured and glorified Him. In more senses than one it was a real sacrifice for Father to do so, but He loves the Son deeply, so He found no pain or jealousy growing at His heart about it. That man should hate and curse and wilfully reject His Son hurt and grieved Him, but He knew there was no other way; sacrifice is absolutely indispensable to God's life. By all this, light is cast upon the fact that the altar is more valuable to us as a symbol of what goes on in God than for the actual function it has as an instrument of death and sacrifice and offering among men.

The Altar — A Basic Principle in Man

In whatever age they have lived, the idea of sacrifice has always pervaded men's minds. So strongly is this rooted in their thinking that even the heathen build altars and offer human, animal or vegetable sacrifices to their deities. These people have no bibliographical reason for doing this; it is natively embedded in their hearts to do so. The power that motivates them is mostly fear, and the purposes behind their sacrifices, though very mixed, are generally associated with appeasement. Sometimes these may be defined as either placation of wrath or atonement for sin, or persuasion to certain kinds of action, or seeking a favour of the spirit or spirits (beings) to whom they sacrifice. The idea of payment to a superior powerful spirit being or force is seldom missing from the ceremony. Whatever is offered is sacrificed only as a token payment and is brought and given as a material substitute for the person who actually makes the offering, or on behalf of some other person for whom the offering is made.

Altars and sacrifice however have not only been associated with the heathen; throughout recorded time they have also been part of the life of the true saints of God. The Old Testament scriptures are replete with records of men and their altars. Long before God's portable altar was made, men of understanding and faith erected and used their own. Wherever they lived, whether in the shape of a mound of earth or a cairn of stones, the little hill of sacrifice was raised to God and offerings made by fire ascended as sweet savours to Him.

Referring again to ABRAHAM, who is often spoken of as father of the faithful and quite probably was the greatest man of the Old Testament, we find that he built many altars. In fact, as already noted, the most famous story about him turns around the occasion when he erected the altar on Moriah; altars were undoubtedly one of the most outstanding features of this man's life. It is significant that there is no record that his life had been in any way directly connected with sacrifice until he responded to the call of God, yet he was seventy five years old when he entered into the land of Canaan. It seems that as soon as he obeyed God and left the land of his nativity he built an altar to the Lord. Without doubt altars are deeply involved in the call of God to a man, for this became the first of many altars which marked the route and progress

of his pilgrimage and the places where he dwelt. Wherever he pitched his tent for any length of time he built an altar; moving on he left it behind as a testimony that he had been there. Anyone who had a mind to do so could have traced Abraham's movements by these altars.

At the beginning these altars bore witness to the reality of communication between God and man; it seems that Abraham built them at the exact spot where it took place between them. The original altar was built in commemoration of the first time God spoke to him in the promised land. The second fixed the place and proclaimed the occasion when he first called on the name of the Lord who appeared unto him. Soon after that occasion, as the record goes, there was a famine in the land and Abraham went down into Egypt. As a consequence of moving out of the land of promise, which was the chosen place for the outworking of God's call, things soon went wrong with him. However, according to His covenant with him, throughout this period God preserved Abraham, but he built no altar to God at that time. Sadly enough Abraham left no testimony in Egypt; he went up out of it very wealthy in goods but sorely reprov'd in soul. Chastened in spirit, he retraced his steps to the place where he had last built an altar; standing there he again called on the Lord. So the life of Abraham continued, until finally the Lord led him to the highest mountain and greatest altar of all.

It is a remarkable feature of Abraham's altars that throughout all this time there is no record of sacrifices being made upon them. His predecessors, Cain and Abel and Noah, each in his day built an altar and sacrificed offerings of one kind or another to God; it seems however that, unlike them, Abraham built his altars but offered nothing thereon. He, as they, knew that the whole purpose of building altars was as a means to an end; they have no other function and are not of any use except as places of sacrifice and offering, yet apparently he never used them for that purpose. He had come from a heathen culture wherein sacrifices were quite commonplace; moreover, in common with all mankind, he knew in his heart that some kind of expiation or expression of desire to approach God was in order and therefore required of him.

Why then an altar without a sacrifice? Every other altar which had been erected throughout the entire length and breadth of Canaan would have been stained with blood and blackened by fire, but not so Abraham's. All those other altars were testimonies to the devil; Abraham's were easily distinguishable from theirs. Everybody knew the difference between Abraham's God and theirs, but none could have given a satisfactory explanation as to what it was or what unused altars signified.

We do not know much about the original revelation from God to man of the mystery of redemption and substitution and expiation of sin. Just how it was that God communicated His wishes and commandments to men in the beginning of time we have no information. After the passage of centuries He brought His people out of Egypt and informed them, through Moses at Sinai, of His wishes concerning sacrifice. All He said then is plainly set out in scripture, but how people knew in the very beginning we are not told.

It may be assumed that Adam was told after the fall but we do not know that he was. Certainly God would not have told him before then, for there was no sin to expiate, beside which death was not known in Eden. Death, we are told, came by sin and Adam and Eve were sinless, so Adam had no reason to slay any of his fellow-

creatures. During communion with God he may have been told of the vital necessity of the principle of sacrifice in the eternal life and being of his Creator, but nowhere is this recorded. It has been thought that God's provision of skins instead of fig-leaves for clothing after the fall of Adam and Eve is an indication of death. It is said that this implies substitutionary sacrifice made necessary by their sin, that in order to provide their coats for Adam and Eve lesser creatures had to be slain by God. It is commendable to some as an indication that substitutionary sacrifice was practised by God immediately sin was manifest by man, but it is an unproven theory and only a remote possibility. It no more follows that in order for God to provide His creatures with animal skins, animals had to be slain than that in order to supply wine for a wedding God had previously to grow and crush grapes.

What preceded light at creation? Or from what matter did God create stars? It could be suggested as a premise that the clothing of the pair in Eden and the turning of water into wine at Cana should be equated as being the first miracles of two different eras. Should this be acceptable, the episode in Genesis is almost certainly a miracle requiring no more naturally related matter of its kind for its basis than did the miracle at Cana of Galilee. Whence came the sight that was given to the man at Siloam? From God the Creator. Natural explanations for Bible mysteries need not be sought; as the hymn says, 'God is His own interpreter and He will make it plain' — if and when He will.

The offerings of CAIN and ABEL heighten the mystery still more, for reading the Word we do not find any record of Adam and Eve making any similar or comparable move toward God. Those boys were evidently not instructed by their parents concerning sacrifice and offering; the simple if not sure reason for this may well be that no instructions had been given to them by God. It must surely be that Adam and Eve did not know how to regain favour with God, for is it not to be taken for granted that if they had known how to do so they would have done anything within their power to regain it if it were at all possible? We know that upon his fall Adam became a spiritual force in the world. His name has become a patronymic, conferred by God upon the evil sin-potential / fallen nature with which all the sons of men have since been born.

Nevertheless, before He expelled the pair from the garden God made promise to them that the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head. Therefore, when her first child was born, Eve thought and said she had gotten a man-child from the Lord. Probably they pinned upon him their hopes of restoration, believing that he would know or somehow discover and show them the way back to God. Of expiation and forgiveness of sin they had no knowledge; there was no reinstatement for Adam and no tuition in the ways and order of sacrifice for his sons either; this the boys, becoming men, had to discover for themselves. That they did so is now common knowledge.

[The Unacceptable Sacrifice](#)

The story as it is recorded in Genesis reveals that Cain and Abel did not at first know what was acceptable to God. Upon the occasion mentioned they each brought to God the results of their own particular labours. Cain being a tiller of the ground naturally brought of the fruit he had produced; Abel being a shepherd just as naturally brought of the increase of the flock. Each offered his gift to God, who had respect to and accepted Abel's offering, but had not respect for Cain's offering and rejected it. At this

Cain was filled with wrath, 'and his countenance fell'. He was evidently expecting God to accept his offering; he obviously did not know beforehand that it would not be received by God, for if he had known that he would not have offered it. He would already have been familiarised by his parents with the dire consequences of deliberate disobedience of God's expressed instructions. If he had persisted in bringing fruit contrary to God's ordinances passed on to him by Adam he would have been guilty of trying to force his own will upon God, and he already knew that was utterly impossible.

Why then did he not bring a lamb or a kid from the flock which crouched around his tent? Simply because he did not know what God wanted. Abel did not know either. None of those four human beings knew; they were each equally ignorant of God's requirements. That is why God spoke to Cain as He did. There was no censure in God's voice, only concern and grace when He said to Cain, 'Why art thou wroth and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted?' At that point God did not blame or rebuke or punish the man because He knew that Cain had made a genuine mistake. The man was only punished finally because he refused to obey.

Following his first failure, God showed Cain what was acceptable to Him and invited and exhorted him to copy Abel's example, assuring him that by so doing he would be accepted equally with his brother, but he would not do so. Instead he awaited an opportunity to vent his jealous rage against God and Abel and slew his brother. But not before Abel had discovered and revealed the secret of the way back to God. Adam and Eve did not know it until that moment when Abel their son found it by offering a lamb. Whether the parents ever followed Abel's lead we are not told; we do know however that Abel paid for his discovery with his life. God had to punish the murderer; the mark of God upon Cain was God's testimony against the rebellion and stubbornness of a man who, when he knew the truth, refused to obey God. It was also an act of grace; as yet the legal dictum of 'eye for eye, tooth for tooth' had not been uttered so Cain's life was not forfeit. In mercy the Lord forgave him the crime, but whether he repented and later turned to God with the correct sacrifice we do not know. The whole episode does not make pleasant reading.

It is recorded in Hebrews that 'by faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, so he being dead yet speaketh'. Abel's parents had truly brought sin into the world. Its dreadful consequences must have struck horror and terror into their hearts as they beheld their son lying murdered upon the ground, slain by his own brother, their other son. Although he was born following the advent of sin and his parents' expulsion from the garden, Abel was nevertheless a righteous man. He did not know the righteousness of Christ but God is his witness that he was righteous. God testified to Cain of his brother, saying that he had done well and he and his gifts were acceptable to Him.

Cain and Abel were sons of the same parents (some have suggested that they were twins) and had equal opportunities; what is it that makes one man's gifts more excellent than another's? Primarily the faith of Abel lay in the fact that he made his offering, not in what he offered. Cain also offered, he also had faith; his sin lay in the tragic fact that, despite God's counsel, he still refused to offer the correct sacrifice. Abel's more excellent sacrifice lay in that fact that he brought both a lamb (or kid) and

fruit, while Cain brought only fruit. Both are acceptable to God providing they are brought together; this was Abel's excellence; fruit by itself is unacceptable; this was Cain's mistake. What is dead Abel yet speaking to us? To arrive at an answer we must search the scriptures.

Man's Inescapable Responsibility

PAUL, in his Roman letter, is quite clear that, when born into the world, even heathen men show the work of the law written in their hearts and to some degree are able to do things pleasing to God according to nature. He also makes statements which give ground for believing that God shows to every man certain things for which He holds him responsible. These things are apparently invariable but not inviolable in each of us, whether saint or sinner. Speaking of the celestial bodies which God made and set in the heavens for signs and seasons, Paul, quoting from David, says their lines run into all the earth and there is no speech nor language where their voice is not known. So he concludes from this that all men are equally without excuse, and are answerable to God on at least three counts:

- (1) The work of the law written in their hearts to which their own conscience reacts.
- (2) What God has done and shown in them individually.
- (3) The testimony of the heavenly bodies.

Luke in Acts records Paul as saying that God left not Himself without witness among men by supplying food to fill hearts with joy and gladness. So we may add a fourth to the apostle's three counts above stated.

The witness of these four may have been to a large degree dimmed in some due to the growing depravity of the race, but nevertheless men's unbelief and rejection does not affect the faithfulness of God or the responsibility of the race. But men are not equal and will not be held equally responsible before the Lord. in the day of judgement when God judges the secrets of men by that man Christ Jesus.

Beyond these four basic things, some men, like Noah and Abraham, have had personal visits and instructions from God; others received His plainly written law and were privileged to build a house for Him to live among them on the earth. Still further, some in their generation actually had the incarnate Christ with them and witnessed His life and death and resurrection. Others of us have been privileged to hear the gospel and have received the completed canon of scripture and know the Baptism of the Spirit and have become members of the Church of Christ. In these things all men are not equal and cannot be held equally responsible, but on the other hand those who have had the greater privileges and received the greater revelations also equally share the identical four basic blessings with the whole of mankind. Therefore their responsibility is so much greater than those less-privileged who have been denied these blessings; they will be judged upon that basis. God is just with all men, as well as the justifier of them that believe in Jesus.

We are again indebted to Luke for another insight into apostolic understanding and statement; this time it is Peter's. When speaking to Cornelius he said, 'I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him'. Until that occasion when he had to use the keys

of the kingdom to open the door of faith to the gentiles, Peter had thought that except they had previously been proselytised to Judaism it was quite impossible for gentiles to be saved. Unless God had shown him that great vessel full of unclean animals coming down from Him and caught up again into heaven, he would never have found it possible to believe that unregenerate gentiles could work righteousness, but God said that they could. Prior to that he could not believe that gentiles to whom the law had not been given and who had not as yet been privileged to have the gospel preached to them on an official basis, could possibly do things which made them acceptable to God, but they could.

Peter had been wrong; His use of the word 'but' is the plainest proof that he had arrived at new conclusions. He revised his whole thinking as a result of the vision at Joppa and the commandment of God. If he had used the word 'and' instead of 'but', he would have revealed that he had always understood that gentiles could do righteousness and be acceptable to God, even though they had not been proselytised to Judaism and were unregenerate. What a revelation this is! Reading the whole tenth chapter we find that Cornelius was a man of very fine character indeed. The mounting summary of his many virtues is most impressive, and yet he was a heathen, though perhaps he may have been mistaken by many for a Christian. Like the heathen women who gathered for prayer by the river at Philippi, he was not saved, but his heart was toward God.

This word of Peter's is profoundly revelatory, for it also shows the principle of righteousness upon which God Himself acts in His dealings with all men; 'that word ye know', is the basis of all His judgements. How we act upon knowledge imparted, inwrought or revealed to us is the criterion of judgement. Because Cornelius responded properly to what he knew by whatever means he knew it he was accepted of God as being righteous. He had walked in all the light he knew. That did not mean he did not need to be born from above, he did and eventually was. It does mean that he did not have the absolute righteousness of Christ imparted to him and that he did not know the righteousness which is in the law; it also means that he had the righteousness of a heart that perfectly responded to all he believed and knew. Whether or not he had ceased from all his heathen idolatry we are not told; we do know however that Peter did not challenge him on the ground of knowledge equal to all men but on his advanced knowledge of the word of God in and through Jesus of Nazareth. If he had not responded to that he would have been guilty of Christ-rejection and would presumably have lost all claims to righteousness upon former grounds.

In exactly the same way the Jews (even if they were Hebrews of the Hebrews as was Saul of Tarsus, 'and as touching the righteousness which is in the law perfect'), from the moment they were challenged with the gospel immediately forfeited all claims to justification upon legal grounds of righteousness; if they rejected the gospel they became totally unrighteous. This is why Paul so severely reprimanded Peter at Antioch for compelling gentiles to live as Jews. He had been shown by God that the Jews' religion was now void of righteousness, but through fear of man he had gone back on his revelation.

In the gospel which He has commanded to be preached to all men God has revealed His righteousness according to a higher law than that of Moses. Much of our thinking and therefore our theology and many of our doctrines need reformation. Our

preaching has been too severely narrowed by: (1) falsely limiting the purpose of Christ's death to atonement, (2) failing to understand the exceedingly greater truth of redemption; (3) confusing the whole nature and scope of regeneration and (4) inexcusably overlooking the full import of reconciliation; this despite the plainest expositions of these mighty truths in the New Testament scriptures and the many allusions to them in the vast scriptures of the Old Testament revelation.

The Glorious Cross

We have been told by Paul that we are not to look at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen. By refusing to look at the things which are invisible and seeing only that which is visible, men cripple their understanding of God and man. The reason for this is simply because the things which are seen are temporal (and therefore have only temporary existence in this world) but the things which are not seen are eternal. The temporal things of God can only give temporary expression to things which are and have been and shall for ever be; even now they are better expressed in invisible, eternal reality in heaven and God.

As an instance of this let us take the most precious thing of all, the crucifixion of Christ itself. The four Gospel writers faithfully record accounts of the actual happenings at Golgotha. Beside these, there are also frequent allusions to the historical event of the crucifixion throughout the length of the whole New Testament. To such good effect is this done by the inspired authors that our gaze is for ever firmly focussed upon that vital, indispensable and unique act. Yet it was only temporal; that is to say, although its import and implication and effects are eternal, it was enacted in all its tragic glory and outwardly seen by man only for a brief moment on this earth.

Necessary as it was, planned and prophesied in all its detail as it had to be, what was seen at Calvary was emphatically not the most or most important part of what took place there. If one may be permitted the use of such a phrase here, it was only the tip of the iceberg. As a matter of fact it was only the enactment and revelation at a certain point in time on the earth of the combined principles of love and sacrifice at the heart of the eternal being of God. It was a reproduction by God in flesh in history of what He had previously specifically done, and in principle had always been doing in another media, from and before the foundation of the world. The life continually yielded, the person continually sacrificed, the Lamb continually slain, became the Man eventually crucified. Beginning and end He is; His crucifixion was a manifestation of a permanent pattern of life in God; Calvary was the outworking and adaptation of Himself and His will against sin in perfect love for mankind.

Perhaps our limited grasp of eternal truth may be due to the fact that we have been habitually taught that all the righteousness of God which was imputed to ancient Israel was only as it were the shadow of the good things to come. This view presents the crucifixion as though it was the substance from behind which the sun shone, casting its beneficial shadow backward to Israel; it says that what God accomplished at Calvary covered all the millenia of sin since the fall, as well as the centuries of sin following the resurrection. The truth of this is vast beyond degree. It satisfies the understanding, explaining the whole range of repetitive temporal sacrifice throughout the ages. Moreover it has the backing of the scriptural words, 'the law having a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of those things'. But it fails to

grasp the greater truth that long before ever an altar stood on the earth, whether built of earth or stone, or forged and fashioned from brass in fire, God had already slain His Lamb. All sacrifice since then, including Calvary itself, has been because of that original act and has significance only because of it and no value except in spirit it conforms to it. This is that which is invisible and eternal; all the other was temporal, even though it witnessed of the eternal.

Understanding this we see that all the righteousness imputed by God to man since the commencement of sin in the earth was projected forward from and was a result of the prehistoric sacrifice of the Lamb, as well as being a projection backward from Calvary. True it is that Jesus said, 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad', but whether Abraham understood all he saw is another thing. The patriarch built an altar, bound his son and laid him upon it, heard a voice from heaven, saw a ram caught in a thicket, slew and sacrificed it instead of his son. The sight and experience of it all brought him joy and gladness, but it was all so very temporal and momentary. Did his inward spiritual eye look forward to see Him who is invisible die in His day and rise again? Or did his faith look backward to see the slaying of the Lamb at the world's foundation? Is the working of this principle the hidden secret of light and day and is this what is alluded to by 'the dayspring from on high'? I wonder, but do not attempt to answer the question.

The whole enactment at Moriah was prophetic of Calvary; whether Abraham saw it all does not for the moment matter. It was most truly as much a reflection of the beginning of the earth age as a foresight into the end of the age of law. Altar and lamb were there on Moriah, but except it be dimly prefigured by the wood first laid upon Isaac and upon which he was later laid, there was no cross. Perhaps it teaches hearts eager to learn every precious lesson and to note every slightest token of Calvary that the cross became an altar. Even so, every foreshadowing sacrifice and every drop of blood spilt or burnt in promise of Calvary love could only be because the bodyless, bloodless sacrifice of deity was made before ever a body of flesh and blood was created or earth itself was formed.

[The Just Shall Live — by the Faith of the Son of God.](#)

Everything, all creation, flowed from that; it was not only anticipation, foresight, foreknowledge, incredible wisdom and infinite love, it was also immeasurable grace and promise and inexhaustible provision; the Lamb slain was an application of a principle of law of divine life and being. Because of this, righteousness did not become immediately extinct on the earth following the advent of sin. Depravity set in and with the multiplication of men on the earth became almost total, so that by Noah's time he only was righteous in all his generations. The line of righteousness which had continued down through Adam's third son SETH (born after the death of Abel) had preserved its purity, but the progeny of Cain deteriorated with every successive generation throughout the centuries, until by Noah's day it was ripe for destruction.

Being themselves fallen, men did not wish to retain the likeness and knowledge of God, nor would they worship Him as God, but without restraint changed His image into the likeness of corruptible beasts and birds and creeping things and worshipped them. Doing so they became inwardly like them. Without contesting their impudence, God's Spirit strove with them to no avail, until at last He gave them over to their contemptible lusts and abominations. The result of it all was that in process of time

everything within them became twisted and perverted to wrong uses and ends. Sacrifices and offerings were made to devils, the work of the law written within them became bias and. power to sin and corruption of the vilest order and in the end God repented that He had ever made man. The knowledge of the principle of sacrifice and acceptability which God originally made known to Cain did not die out in his strain — on the contrary it became perverted. They deliberately prostituted everything to satan, therefore God decided to destroy them by the flood.

Through the Seth line however this principle was retained as it had been originally discovered by Abel and upon Noah's exodus from the ark following the flood it reappears on the cleansed earth. What Noah did was quite voluntary; he did not receive commandment from God to sacrifice to Him and the offering was entirely without reference to sin. He did it in faith; he was just acting in harmony with his conscience in accordance with his inward knowledge of God, therefore he was righteous.

At this point care must be exercised to distinguish between different kinds of faith lest we fail to grasp the reason why there is so much difference between one man and another. This distinction is nowhere brought out more clearly than in the great section on faith in the Hebrews letter, which commences at the end of chapter ten and continues unbroken into chapter 12. In chapter 11 many of the famous worthies of the Old Testament are named, together with the great variety of works they accomplished by faith. It is a portrait-gallery filled with word-pictures which men have studied for centuries to their eternal profit. But when we reach chapter 12 we are told in no uncertain terms to take our eyes from these men and women and to look off unto Jesus. All these others are but a cloud, He is the sun. They witness to faith but He is the author of it. That is why we are to look off and away from them all unto Him. He, (not they) is the author of all faith, especially the faith of the New Testament saints.

Paul in the Galatian letter clearly speaks of a time which he describes as 'before faith came' and contrasts it with 'but now faith is come'. He is plainly speaking in terms of B.C. and A.D. There is obviously a distinction being made. Seeing that Hebrews 11 is filled with the faith exploits of men and. women who lived B.C., 'what manner of persons ought we to be' who live in the age of the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ? Again the apostle deals with another aspect of faith in Romans 10, where he says that by some means or other every person in the world has heard the word of God. Referring to the heavens and the heavenly bodies, he declares that by them all men have heard the word, therefore they have no excuse.

DAVID speaking in greater detail of God's handiwork in the firmament says 'their line is gone out into all the earth, there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard'. We may therefore conclude that there are different kinds of faith, yet all are developed from a common root:

- (1) That which observes nature and deduces the existence of God and seeks to find Him.
- (2) That which comes by hearing the word of God, responding and living according thereto.
- (3) That which is spoken of as the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ which is imparted to us.

These may be described as: (1) natural faith, (2) limited faith, (3) original faith.

Abel's faith may be described as 'natural' in that, although he offered to God the correct kind of sacrifice he did not do so in response to a direct word from God. Unlike present day heathen, he did know of the true God, for his parents were His direct creation and had known Him intimately over a period of time before their expulsion from the garden. It would be totally unreasonable to assume for the sake of mere literal accuracy that Adam and Eve had never spoken to their children of the former life they had lived with God in Eden. Reason has it that, as with all parents, they would most surely have instructed their sons about the ways of the Lord with them and taught their boys all they knew of their own personal creation and the Creator. Many hours must have been spent with their children recounting the anecdotes of a lost communion and sharing with them the facts of creation as told them by the Lord. The eyes and hearts of Cain and Abel must indeed have seen that the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork.

However, Adam and Eve could not tell their sons how to regain lost Paradise. The angel with the flaming sword kept the way of the tree of Life — there was no way back. Nor could the parents instruct the boys in the order of sacrifice and offering, for they themselves had never made any. They had never built an altar in their past life, nor did they do so following their fall. There had been no need in Paradise for there was no sin until the day they were expelled; worship and communion had been as natural a process as was walking with God. Except perhaps in the limited sense with which inanimate vegetation and floral life in process of time renews itself, they had never witnessed death; they had slain nothing and had never seen the expiry of any animate creature; everything in the garden was glorious with the beauty of life, unmarred by corruption. They knew nothing of death or of ways back from death to God; how then could they tell anyone else?

Therefore on the day Cain and Abel brought their offerings to the Lord neither of their parents could give them any guidance even if they offered advice. They could no more assist Abel with a clear word of guidance from God than they could restrain Cain with a word of warning. Not one of those four knew the way with certainty; Abel was a pioneer. Thank God he discovered and led the way for us all.

The knowledge he gained was passed on and as time progressed successive men of faith also built altars unto the Lord in their day. These were sacred spots of earth, places of elevation, platforms to heaven and to God to which they often resorted to worship. Abel's original discovery bore fruit. He did not die in vain, for, smelling Noah's offering after the flood, God was at rest. But He could not let the matter rest there, nor allow the continuance of this highly personalised manner of approach and worship, for it did not best exhibit eternal truth.

Only One Altar

Thus it was that in Moses' day God set about a complete reformation. First He prohibited the random building of altars and men's desultory manner of approach to Him. In addition to this He regulated the offerings, both in kind and procedure, making some obligatory and leaving others to be given at men's freewill. He also had an altar made and placed just within His courts at the entrance to His tent. By this means He finally established the altar as the sole official way of access to and acceptance with God. The altar of men to the Lord was now the altar of the Lord to

men; it was the Lord's own altar, specially made by a man filled with wisdom and skill by the Spirit of God for the purpose.

Long before this, beside Abel, Noah and Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses also had built altars to the Lord. These all were built under the most significant circumstances and for very important reasons. Isaac's was built at Beersheba, to him forever a place of poignant memories. From there, years before, he had set out with his illustrious father upon the never-to-be-forgotten expedition to Moriah, where he had watched his father build his last and greatest altar to God; to Beersheba they had returned following the miraculous happenings which took place on the mount.

What experiences they had shared together then! With a submission born of long discipline he had co-operated with his father to make the supreme sacrifice; lying there bound upon that altar waiting for the terminating knife he had heard the voice of God speaking. Never-to-be-forgotten words of acceptance and approval flowed to his father's heart and had brought assurance and consecration to his own. He had seen and heard and experienced it all, but what he had seen and heard he did not quite know: he did, however, know that the altar was as much his as his father's. Abraham had called it Jehovah-jireh. It was the first time he had ever heard Abraham name an altar. Everything about it was new; but then Moriah's altar was the place of the vision and the voice and the vow. In a new and special way Isaac was God's; he, as well as his father and God, knew it.

Whether or not Isaac ever returned to Moriah is a matter for conjecture; what we do know is that he certainly did go back to Beersheba — congruously enough its name means 'well of the oath'. By this time Isaac was a mighty and prosperous man. Since Moriah and the death of his father he had passed through many troublous times; he had to live in the presence of his enemies, but despite all, God had made room for him and he had become very fruitful in the land of promise. During the whole of this period of passage through Canaan, he had pitched his tent in many familiar places where he had previously lived with his father. At that time he re-opened some of his father's wells; perhaps his father's altars still stood by those wells, but there is no record that Isaac built any altars beside them.

Not until he came to Beersheba is Isaac's name connected with any other altar than that of Moriah. Sowing, reaping, prospering, digging, striving, moving to and fro, all are there in the narrative; but there is no altar-building until he reaches the well of the oath, where God appeared to him. There he built his altar. There is no record that he had built one upon the occasion when God first appeared exclusively to him. Perhaps already an altar had been built at that place by his father and he used it, or perhaps some other person had built one since that time, but he would never have used that. But when the Lord appeared to him with renewed promises, he did not rely upon nor look to anything of the past, he builded his altar, called upon the name of the Lord, pitched his tent and digged a well. In due course Beersheba, the place of the oath, became a city called by that name.

Again we notice that although the altar and the oath and the well and the city are mentioned, sacrifices are not referred to. Weren't Isaac and the lamb the sacrifice and were not identity and substitution combined in one offering? Was there any difference now? Had things changed since his father's day? Had not the offering been given first and then the sacrifice made in that order? If that had been established between God

and man by God Himself, what was the point or where was the need for anything less or other? Isaac understood. An altar, yes, but no sacrifice. The altar was an acknowledgement and a testimony; a sacrifice would have been almost a blasphemy, certainly a tragedy, as well as a superfluity; in any case the word sacrifice has not as yet appeared in scripture, only the word offering.

The idea of sacrifice itself is not introduced into the text until the later activities of Isaac's son JACOB in relationship to God are revealed. Until then the only two thoughts presented directly to us by the use of the word offering in connection with the altar are: (a.) (making) a present or a gift, or (b.) to cause to go up (in flames and smoke); upon consideration this is quite significant.

Along this line it is also of some significance that when Jacob made sacrifice he did so following an oath he had taken to man, swearing upon 'the fear of his father Isaac'. He did not build a special altar, but sacrificed upon 'the mount', which was nothing but a great heap of stones which he and his servants had built in conjunction with Laban and his servants. They all sat down on it, made their covenant upon it, ate and drank on it and finally Jacob slaughtered his sacrifices upon it; it was a heap of witness' or a watch tower. It was no altar of the Lord but seemed more a symbol of mistrust, for it was raised in the belief and for the desire that the Lord would 'watch between me and thee while we are absent (hidden) one from the other'.

Laban and Jacob, each a party to the oath, swore according to their own beliefs, and it is evident that neither of them had a clear faith in God, for each swore upon the deity that somebody else knew. It may perhaps have been perfectly described in words then unspoken, but which centuries later Paul immortalised — 'I saw an altar to an unknown God'. But He of whom Jacob was in ignorance and had described in an oath as 'the fear of his father Isaac' was planning to meet and make Himself known to Jacob. Within less than forty eight hours the Lord was wrestling with Jacob at the fords of Jabbok and Penueel. There the change took place — from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge, from Jacob to Israel.

Following this and other closely related incidents, upon arrival at Shalem Jacob bought a piece of ground. It was outside the city and after spreading his tents he 'erected there an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel — God the God of Israel'. Right there in full view of the city he raised testimony to his recent discovery of God and showed his intention of making his testimony permanent by calling his altar by that name. God and he were identified with the altar. Of offering and sacrifice there is again no mention. The means not the end is being presented to us. The purpose and use of the altar are not emphasised; Israel set forth the principle, not the practice. The names of God and Israel are linked at the altar, not the names of animals.

Only once more during Jacob's lifetime is the altar mentioned. This time he is commanded by God 'go up to Bethel and dwell there and make there an altar unto God that appeared unto thee'. Without hesitation he went and did as he was told, whereupon God again appeared unto him and renewed with him the covenant He had made with Abraham and Isaac. This time Jacob/Israel named the altar El-Bethel, 'God of the House of God'. To him God and the altar were one. Not that he thought that God and an altar are literally one, he was not an idolater who believed that God could be made by men's hands. Nor was his action merely the result of an association of ideas; it was the recognition and demonstration of an eternal principle, as well as a

confession of ignorance of God's wishes. He offered no sacrifice — instead he raised a pillar there; he was no architect, but it was he who had originally renamed Luz 'Bethel'.

Whether or not the stone he raised for a pillar was the one he had earlier used for his pillow we cannot tell. We do know, however, that Bethel was the place where he had dreamed his famous dream and upon waking had been convinced that he was at the gate of heaven and that the place was the house of God. Now again, upon his return to the very spot under God's orders to erect an altar, he raises a pillar. It was to be his mute testimony to the fact that he believed God wanted a house on earth. On the pillar he poured a drink-offering followed by oil; the house of Israel he erected was offered and anointed to God.

So there they stood together, altar and pillar, one representing the God of the house of God and the other the house of that God. What could be more fitting? Jacob did not worship the altar as God, but in some way he recognised the impossibility of God being God apart from all the altar symbolised. He also dimly pictured, even if he did not fully see, that there could be no house of God apart from the altar. This is probably the most important part of the reason why God ordered him back to Bethel. Jacob had called the place 'God's house'; if this really was to be so, then God could not allow him or anyone else to be under any illusions about it. Everyone must know that He Himself could not be, nor could possibly live anywhere, except by the altar principle.

He was preparing for a future which Jacob could not visualise. If He was going to build securely the foundations must be well laid. He could not allow Israel to think that there was any way of approach to Him or any possibility of entering into the life to which their name referred, apart from self-offering upon the well-understood basis of giving by self-sacrifice. It had all happened in this man. When Jacob stopped wrestling and resisting in fear and yielded and clung to the Lord he became Israel, the prince who had power with God and man. This was the story told by the two pillars. The first was fearful Jacob, the second was powerful Israel. The first had stood on its own without the altar, the second could only stand by it. The first was anointed, unoffered, the second was offered and anointed. What a historical, prophetic place Bethel was. On the day Jacob raised the altar and the pillar he not only made history, he also established eternal principles of truth.

MOSES, the man raised up of God to take the place of honour among the great patriarchs of Israel of whom he wrote, was also a man of the altar. He actually built two and supervised the making of a third. At this point we will consider the first and then pass to the third, leaving the second for later consideration. The first was erected at Horeb following a battle between Israel and Amalek at a critical point of Israel's history. The entire nation was then en route for Canaan and had just been miraculously supplied with water by God. From the smitten rock living water was gushing out and down the hill to Rephidim, the waterless land below and Israel was at rest. Just as they were enjoying this, Amalek suddenly appeared to contend with them; they wanted possession of the waters, but God had not provided water from the rock for Amalek to drink.

The name Amalek means 'the people who lick up' and true to their name that was precisely their intention in attacking Israel, but the Lord did not allow them to lick up

His people. He had led them to Horeb for the purpose of the miracle. They were as much the people for the water as the water was for the people. Amalek would ever rue the day they sought to interfere with God's plans; for daring to attack His people God said that He would destroy Amalek, blotting out their name from under heaven.

There are many lessons to be learned from this incident though, one of which is that danger lies in Rephidim, which by definition is the land of 'reclining places'. Amalek will always invade and attack those who lie at rest, drinking at the fountain, if they do so supposing that there is no need to watch for and repel the incursions of the flesh. Rejoicing in the abundance of waters bounding down the hill it is easy to forget that continual vigilance and prayer is necessary if enjoyment of the privilege is to be maintained. This truth is strengthened by observing Moses sitting on top of the rock with the rod of God in his hand and his arms supported heavenward in prayer. With Aaron and Hur in support he keeps constant vigil, while Joshua below wages war to the death against Amalek. Conquest gained, Moses is told by God to record in a book that He 'would utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven'. God had taken Amalek's invasion of Israel as an attack upon Himself and His throne, so the result was a foregone conclusion. Moses built an altar of victory, calling it Jehovah-Nissi, 'the Lord is my banner'.

This whole incident is an analogy of absorbing interest full of spiritual meaning. The rock cannot be other than a representation of CHRIST; the rod first represents the sovereign power of God that smote Him on the cross; the water represents the life-giving Spirit that was poured out as a result. The name Aaron means 'enlightened' or 'illuminated', while Hur means 'noble' or 'free-born' or 'fine white linen'; Moses first standing and then sitting on a stone on the rock, with the rod of God in his hand, represents the enthroned CHRIST. At present He is engaged in ceaseless intercession and the rod is now revealed to be His sceptre, the symbol of majesty and authority by which He rules. Last and greatest of all, the altar once more brings to our notice the basic principle upon which all life depends. In this case it displays utter devotion and complete self-dedication to God, by which alone life was maintained for Israel.

It is noteworthy that the altar stands on top of the hill, as though crowning all, plainly setting forth the position the altar principle holds above the actual bodily sacrifice that may be offered thereon. Jesus Himself sought to fix our attention upon this truth when He asked His famous question, 'which is greater, the gift or the altar which sanctifies the gift?' There is only one answer to that, 'the altar', for the altar had power over the gift to turn it by fire into a sacrifice and offering in an acceptable form; the sacrifice had no power over the altar. It is surely extraordinary that an absolutely inanimate object such as an altar should be called by Moses 'Jehovah is my banner'. We may ask 'and what is inscribed upon this banner?' With equal certainty the answer would be 'ABSOLUTE LOVE'; fixed self-devotion to the desire and will of another.

Reflection upon the discoveries made so far about these named altars gives rise to the conviction that by them in a special way God has revealed His plan of salvation. Beginning with Abraham and his altar on Moriah we are introduced to 'JEHOVAH-JIREH — THE LORD WILL PROVIDE'. Upon that occasion Abraham said 'IN THE MOUNT OF THE LORD IT SHALL BE SEEN', and so it was. As we have formerly noted, Jesus said 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day, he saw it and was glad'.

The whole pattern of divine life and eternal love related to salvation was unfolded there before the Lord that day. No human eye saw it; all was enacted in secret; it has only been related to us by God through Moses in order that we may be allowed to enter into some of the most important things of salvation which no-one but God sees and knows. These may be listed as follows:— utmost union, unquestioning obedience, unresisting submission unwavering determination, uncomplaining trust, unswerving faith. On Moriah the life was offered to God; the seed was preserved; the son rose from the altar; the substitution was made; the blood was shed; Isaac returned from the dead; in a figure Abraham received him and the promise was made sure to all the seed. So perfectly in the type was the foundation laid that we can joyfully proclaim that we have clearly seen it from this mountain-top of truth.

The Outpoured Gift

Passing on to Beersheba, we find Isaac's altar built by 'THE WELL OF THE OATH'. This is a remarkable connection, laying emphasis upon the altar with the water of life. It is a most important link-up, bringing to our notice the truth which Paul states for us in Galatians 3 v.1 ,2. Presenting the crucifixion in verse 1, he puts the question about receiving the Spirit in closest juxtaposition to it in verse 2: 'received ye the Spirit?' he asks. The death and resurrection of Christ and the outpouring and gift of the Holy Spirit are found together in: (1) the Old Testament in type, (2) the New Testament in print, (3) in fact in history and (4) in experience in truth.

The unfolding plan is made yet plainer as we observe Jacob's emergence into spiritual clarity. Establishing the altar at Shechem, he gave testimony to his direct personal encounter with the Lord at Jabbok. He had emerged from the uncertainty of his former trust in One who was 'the fear of his father Isaac', into a new direct knowledge of God and himself. When he named his altar 'GOD THE GOD OF ISRAEL', he was drawing attention to this. God and he who had first met and wrestled and then clung together at the waters of Jabbok and Peniel, were declared by him to be permanently joined together at the altar of Shechem.

Upon the basis of Jacob's newly-discovered reality God commands him to go back to Bethel, the place where he had been granted his first revelation of God. Purging himself and his household from the last remnants of idolatry, he obediently went up to Bethel and there built another altar as commanded by the Lord. He had not built one upon the first occasion but had simply interpreted his dream to mean that Luz was the house of God and had therefore renamed the place Bethel. Raising his pillow into a standing memorial, he anointed it for prophetic significance and passed on into Syria. This time, however, Jacob, in the light of the new day now dawning, with clearer understanding, built an altar there calling it 'GOD THE HOUSE OF GOD'. Once more he raised up a pillar of stone, but before anointing it he poured upon it the drink offering of wine. Usually the drink-offering was made to the Lord as part of a sacrifice embracing some more substantial offering, which constituted the major part of the whole. In a special sense it represented that degree and quality of the outpoured life which God deemed could not be properly typified by the flesh and blood of the body. It really showed what was in the blood, what it represented — that is the soul-life, the spiritual and moral beauty and calibre, or character and disposition of the life. This is what God drank in.

Animals and birds had no virtues of spirit and soul to offer to God. They compulsorily lost their existence, they had no life to give. By command their meagre qualities had often to be augmented by the blood of grapes, the wine of life. But even then all was woefully short of that which their combined powers so poorly symbolised.

Jacob left the altar empty, but saturated and anointed the pillar with wine and oil. The altar was of many stones, the pillar was but one. Perhaps Jacob saw it all in a very personal way and meant it to represent himself, Israel and, hopefully, all who according to the promise should proceed from him through his twelve Sons. Prophetically, however, they were to be God's house of Israel; God had planned it so and later they did make Him a house to dwell in. How much of it all Jacob foresaw we do not know. To us he has left the message of his altars, 'God the God of Israel' and 'God of the house of God'.

Linked with the altars of Abraham and Isaac, Jacob's show the development of the line of spiritual truth which God first began with Abraham, Jacob's grandfather. Death and resurrection of the Seed, followed by the giving and receiving of the Spirit, accompanied by abundant fruitfulness, logically eventuates in the building of the house of God — the Church — 'the pillar and ground of truth'. If it were by the message of the altar alone, God is indeed seen to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Much more than this lies to hand and will repay patient search, but let us proceed yet further to consider Moses' altars.

Before doing this we ought here to notice that, unlike his patriarchal forbears, MOSES never once built an altar for himself alone. In this matter he always acted in a national capacity; he built altars for Israel. When Abraham, Isaac and Jacob raised their altars they were acting as individuals. Although prophetically and typically their actions have wide and varying implications, they did not build for the nation. The nation did not exist in their day; they were the fathers of it, so they could not act mediatorially as did Moses in his day. But, even so, Moses could have built an altar for himself or just for his family but there is no record that he did so. He always acted for the family of God, the nation of Israel.

Moses was commanded by God to direct Israel to make an altar of brass. This was to stand within His courts to be the altar of the Lord and of the children of Israel from that time forward. The altar that Moses built at Horeb was Israel's also, but in another way. Having earlier noted the details leading up to and surrounding that episode, we will not again go into them, except to underline one or two points. At Horeb Israel was presented with a vision of itself. Soon they were to be given instructions to provide living-accommodation for God. When they did so they became in a more visible way the house of God, for then God dwelt in the midst of them and walked among them; from then on they were God's Church in the wilderness.

So, beyond Horeb's mute testimony to the Christ, its voice speaks no less strongly to His people themselves. On the day the great miracle was wrought, Moses was acting for God. According to His word, there on the top of His own handiwork stood God. At His Command the rock was smitten; unto Him Moses had stretched forth his hands and built his altar; it was He who had allowed Amalek to attack Israel. His people had much to learn of their heredity and pre-destiny and He had brought them to Horeb to teach them many things. Not only must they learn the facts of Calvary and Pentecost and the relationship between them, but they must also be taught the difference

between the flesh and the Spirit. They must also be shown the likeness between themselves and the thirst-quenching rock.

Jacob's pillar was a piece of rock; it was raised up to be the first intimation in scripture that the Church is God's house, the pillar and ground of truth. Without flesh and blood that pillar was offered to God as representing the solid, righteous, eternal character of God's people. Over this the drink-offering was poured and the anointing applied; it stood there as a permanent testimony to God for His purposes in the earth. Now the Lord is showing Israel that, beyond anointing, the rock must know a smiting that the river of living waters might gush forth from it.

Beyond indrinking the Spirit to become a well within for the quenching of its own thirst, the Church must also know a great outpouring from itself, that all may come to the waters and drink. It must wrestle in prayer continuously, going on far beyond its own strength, enduring and outlasting its weariness; mediatorial in intercession, with princely power and priestly devotion, it must hold up the sceptre of the cross, that Jesus (Joshua) may win the battle for victory in the lives of His people. The house of God is a house of prayer that it may be a house from which the living waters flow out from under the altar.

If we would desire to have Jehovah as our banner we must live a life upon the altar principle. Amalek can never be allowed to drink of the water supplied by God for His people or all will have been in vain. The Church may recline to drink the Spirit but they must stand up to wage war against the flesh. What a wonderful symbol of the cross is that rod of Moses; it fills so many roles. Here it appears in the unusual symbol of a flag staff from which streams the banner emblazoned with an altar bearing the words 'Jehovah my banner'.

Twelve Pillars of Witness

As referred to earlier, before making the brazen altar to God's design, Moses also built another of his own — this time in the desert of Sinai, in fact right under the hill. At that time, by God's command, the mount had been bounded off; it was prohibited territory, sanctified from the people and enveloped in the cloud of God. Moses had been up and down it, to and fro between God and the people, carrying the word from the one to the other. During this time such supernatural demonstrations were taking place that it was evident something was afoot of a most extraordinary nature and the people were very frightened — even Moses said that he exceedingly quaked and trembled.

Upon returning from his latest journey up the mount and announcing to the people all the words that God had given to him for them, Moses also informed them that it was God's intention to enter into covenant with them on the terms stated. Hearing these, the people reaffirmed their former consent and intention to do all that God said. This secured, 'Moses wrote all the words of the Lord in a book and rising early in the morning builded an altar under the hill'. Having done so, in much the same manner as Jacob before him, he raised up twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Lonely Jacob's solitary pillar at Bethel was prophetic of the twelve pillars of Israel at Sinai under the hill. Builded of stones, these twelve stood grouped around the altar of stones in solemn order, mutely testifying to God's faithfulness. Moses was showing them that Israel were to be a people of the altar. What a long way they had come from

Egypt. The distance must be measured in terms of spiritual pilgrimage rather than in miles. There had been no altar there and only one had been built between there and Sinai.

Over four hundred years had passed since, at the first, Abraham had laid out his animal and bird covenant victims upon the ground that God should cut His covenant with him. During the whole of that time not one altar had been built unto the Lord in Egypt; Abraham had not built one there and neither had they. Now out of the land, soon they were to have a permanent altar of brass for the Lord of the promised land. As yet they had no knowledge of that fact, but by this one that Moses had now built God was going to prepare them for it. In that land the brazen altar was to be dedicated unto blood, specified offerings, ceaseless sacrifices and the continual fire of God.

A Covenant of Blood and the Fire of God

In Canaan the Lord was going to dwell among His people upon the ground of a blood covenant and upon no other. Since the days of Abraham and Isaac at Moriah not a word about sacrificial blood in connection with altars has been mentioned in holy writ, but now Moses sends young men to the altar with offerings and sacrifices to burn for acceptance and peace. The gathered people standing around the stone symbols of the nation, facing the altar, watch him as he catches half the blood of the animals in basins and sprinkles the other half upon the altar. This done, he read to the people all the words written in the book. Again receiving their affirmation of obedience, he sprinkled the book and all the people with the other half of the blood, saying to them, 'Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words'. The same blood was both God's and the people's, though neither had shed it. Moses, the man of God, the mediator between God and man, had provided it, saying, 'this is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you'.

Having accomplished his immediate task, from the ground of the blood-sealed covenant Moses again ascends into Sinai, accompanied this time by Aaron and seventy of the elders of Israel. The blood-sprinkled people standing around the smouldering altar watched them go, but did not know for what reason they went nor what the future held for them all. They knew that they were heading for the promised land, but they had yet to discover that they were to be the host nation to God — that He was planning to come and live among them.

When Moses finally reached the Lord at the top of Sinai he was given instructions to make Him a house and how to assemble and distribute the furniture. The altar of burnt offering was to be placed at His gates. It was not to be built of stone or made of earth as formerly, but of metal. It was to be different because it was to have a different function from any which preceded it; it was to be the altar of the blood of atonements. No previous altar had been built for that purpose; hitherto the idea of sin had not been introduced at any altar, but this one was deliberately ordered by God that it should be used for sacrifices for the coverage of the sins of Israel committed within the covenant. It was to be a kind of means for the continuation of the passover, the logical conclusion of it under that covenant. Obedience to the Lord in the matter of remission of sins by means of the brazen altar resulted in entire forgiveness — the Lord regarded their sins as covered by sacrifice and would pass over them because they were covered by the blood.

This altar was the seventh since Abraham's on Moriah, but it was not to be the last one made in Israel. This may seem strange, for with the making and positioning of the brazen altar God had finalised all His demands concerning it and therefore would not accept any other. Notwithstanding this, the final altar made in Israel at that time was the one erected entirely without instruction, simply for the purpose of witness. Existing jointly with the brazen altar, this one was never used for sacrifice; it simply bore testimony to the unity of the nation and of their total acceptance by the Lord. The Lord fully accepted this uncommissioned altar. Standing there in all its unused glory, it existed solely as a symbol and confession of man's understanding of the principle of eternal life.

There is no clearer testimony to man's firm belief of this than the great altar which the two and a half tribes of Israel built upon the borders of their inheritance. The motive behind their action was completely misunderstood and misinterpreted by the many and caused so much alarm to the greater part of Israel that they were prepared to go and destroy both the altar and those who built it. However, the retributive action was averted because upon arbitration they learned that, although the altar was built, it was never to be used. Their brethren had erected it purposely to let everyone know that, although they were not living in the mainland of the inheritance of the Lord, they were still God's people.

Perhaps they may have chosen any one of a half dozen other things to set up as their particular emblem of unity, but they built an altar. There can scarcely be clearer evidence than this that they understood the significance of it, though to what measure who can say? To be cut off from God's altar was the worst punishment which could be inflicted on anybody in Israel; it meant that God had completely rejected that person and had cut him off from His inheritance and all hope of salvation.

It is significant that those men did not attempt to erect another tabernacle. If they had been guided by purely human, aesthetic desires they might have done so, but they knew that in that event both it and they would have been entirely unacceptable to God and their brethren. The altar was a different proposition however, it was theirs, it belonged to all the people, it was as necessary to their life as it was to God's. When it was erected no-one but they who built it seemed to appreciate it and perhaps even they did not understand the deepest significance of the gesture. They sought for some symbol of the unity they felt with their brethren and their God, a real testimony to the corporate life of the nation, and without division decided upon the idea of the altar. To the majority of Israel it seemed blasphemous and divisive, portending disinheritance and destruction, and who can blame them? No-one, not even Joshua, had been given any instructions about it, but the minority built it and God accepted it. The thought that had inspired their action was God-given, the expression of their desire was perfect; that small group had arrived at truth, they were right. The altar must remain.

Once again as it had been at the very beginning with Abel, without divine instructions, though not without divine aid, men had arrived at divine truth. In them also we see repeated the same kind of thing that Abraham did in his day. With united voice these all say that the first and most important thing to discover is the meaning of the altar, not the sacrifice laid upon it. They were confessing that Abraham, who left his bare and unused altars all over the land, was their father.

It was as though with this man God began all over again. Abel, who had made the original discovery, lost his life in doing so, but not in vain. The truth for which he was martyred, though lost sight of for centuries, was preserved through those years, reappearing on the purged earth following the deluge. But as time progressed and men continued to degenerate and turn from God it is lost sight of again and again; Babel is an example of this. By that time men had completely forsaken the earthly symbol of heavenly life; endeavouring to reach heaven by their own powers they started to build their own tower brick by brick. To frustrate their efforts God confounded their language and curtailed their labours; He also scattered abroad those men who tried to substitute a tower for an altar, but the judgement never cured their hearts of waywardness nor turned them back to God.

For this reason God chose Abraham, a descendant of Abel's brother Seth through Noah and Shem, and started again. By Abraham God restored the altar to the permanent place it must hold in a man's life and what it should symbolise to his heart. It is not surprising then to discover that the only blood to stain any of Abraham's altars was the lamb's which was shed on the holy mount. There is no record that the patriarch ever shed another's, though he built altar upon altar. It is remarkable how purposefully and completely God took hold of this man. Undoubtedly He did so that through him, who was the 'father' of the Seed, He should reveal the needful truth.

As we have already seen God had something greater to show us than the doctrine of atonement for sin. This He unfolded later to the fullest detail through Noses; but by this man Abraham, the father of the race, He revealed the deeper secret of the life principle of God. Because this man refrained from offering to God that for which He had not asked, and refused to act in presumption to give the impression that he already knew what God desired, he was granted at last the revelation of what God actually wanted. How great was Abraham's patience that he never once asked God what he should offer Him, and how much greater is God's wisdom that during this whole period He never once told His chosen one what it was He wanted of him as sacrifice. So Abraham continued faithful in obedience to his inward knowledge, firm in his convictions about the altar, yet fully content to rest in his ignorance of God's mind.

[The Eternal Elements](#)

The patriarch was probably helped and confirmed in his beliefs by an incident which took place fairly early on in his pilgrimage. This event was one of the most notable experiences of his life, indeed of the whole Book. It happened one day when he was returning from a victorious battle over the world powers of the darkness of the age. Tired and battle-weary as he must have been, he was met by a couple of kings, one of whom was named MELCHIZEDEK — whom Abraham immediately accepted as his own high priest. As far as we know the patriarch belonged to no religious order; he had built many altars but had never made one bodily sacrifice. Without a system of religion he had no priest and in his humility he made no pretence or attempt to be one. Whatever passed between him and Melchizedek, Abraham meekly recognised and accepted this man's claims and ministry. From him Abraham was to discover the truth of eternal sacrifice and true priesthood in the spirit of which he had already been moving for a long time.

This Melchizedek was then reigning on the earth as the priest of the most high God. Whether there were other priests of this order on the earth at that time we do not

know. That other men with other priests served other gods is certain, but Abraham had nothing to do with them. He was great, but great as he was, Melchizedek was a greater and far more important person than he.

Seeming to appear from nowhere, Melchizedek approached Abraham and offered him bread and wine. No word passed between them; there was no temple, no tabernacle in evidence; he built no altar, slew no sacrifice, shed no blood, lighted no fire, burned no incense. There was no ceremony, Melchizedek came from God to the patriarch; he neither preached nor prophesied, neither did he catechise him or inform him of God's requirements for sacrifice; there was no knife in his hand. He did not reprove the man for his bloodless hands or fireless altars, Abraham neither needed nor deserved it; instead Melchizedek blessed him and gave him the now familiar tokens of a past sacrifice. He brought him nothing of man or man's labours, but the twin elements and age-abiding memorials of the sacrifice of God.

Abraham had been right, all along he had moved in the obedience of a little child, knowing nothing, attempting nothing, waiting to be shown. Just how much he understood or was told of these secrets of God, now so well known to us, we cannot guess, but our understanding is sufficiently enlightened to see that those symbols testified then, as now, that the great sacrifice had already been made. Redemption had already been achieved by God; even at that early hour of the world's history its day had long since dawned in eternity and by Melchizedek God displayed to Abraham the evidence of it. There never had been, nor was there then, any need for Abraham to make a blood sacrifice; the Lamb was slain by the Father from the foundation of the world.

Melchizedek's ministry to Abraham was absolutely confirmatory, a testimony to his faithfulness: Abraham's procedure at the altar had been quite correct throughout; what a confirmation! He could and did retain the altar, for that must for ever stand among men as the pointer to God and the skies; that for which it representatively stood was precious and eternal. Its chief function was to reveal the life-principle of God. All we understand by the cross was originally developed from that. Finally it was brought forth as from God on earth.

Eventually, because he had not forced animals upon the God Who had not forced them upon him, Abraham was led to Moriah, the place where he discovered the knowledge of God and true sacrifice. But for the time being we will reserve any attempt to assess and evaluate it; instead we will trace some further developments and outworkings of the altar theme in scripture.

DAVID, who was raised up of God in the fourteenth generation from Abraham, was taught much of God about sacrifice and offerings. Following in the footsteps of his father Abraham before him, though under completely different circumstances, he also was led of God to build an altar on Moriah. The importance of his action can scarcely be overemphasised for this was the place where Solomon his son later built the temple; perhaps he even placed the altar upon the exact spot. What an example of divine planning this is! God carefully marked the spot in Abraham, re-marked it in David and permanently fixed it by Solomon.

All of this shows that in God, long before the earthly temple and all that went on in it existed or could exist, the altar was and had to be. What an order and what an

emphasis. The temple system included an altar for men, but long before that existed the altar paved the way for the temple.

It is true that David, like Abraham centuries before him, offered sacrifices on his altar. Both these men were commissioned by God, though at different times and for different reasons, to go and do so; but neither of them was under any delusions about them. When the command came, David, as Abraham before him, could do no other but obey; therefore he went to the mount and responded to God in the manner commanded him. It was absolutely necessary, but his heart-knowledge concerning the whole matter of sacrifice and offering is revealed in Psalms 40 and 51. He knew that God did not want those as such, He neither had desire for them nor took pleasure in them upon an altar. He originally made animals and birds for His own and man's pleasure; He did not make them to be slaughtered.

God first allowed and afterwards ordered the sacrifice of living things, because only by having them slain and offered to Himself could He teach man the lessons and truth he needed to know. David seemed to understand this perfectly; he saw and said that God did not want sacrifice and offering as much as He wanted His will done on earth. 'The sacrifices of God' he said 'are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart O Lord thou wilt not despise'.

David knew that what was sacrificed and offered on the altar meant nothing to God and was of no avail to man unless his heart be pulverised into purity and his spirit broken from sin. The events which took place in his life leading up to Ornan's threshing-floor furnish evidence of this fact. When he built his altar and sacrificed there David was indeed a man of broken spirit and contrite heart, wanting only to be obedient before God. His sacrifices were only outward means and tokens of giving himself afresh to the Lord, who had been more merciful to him than he had right to expect. He had fallen and he did not try to hide it; undeservedly and mercifully enough he had not fallen out of the Lord's hands but into them and O how gracious he had found Him to be. David ascended Moriah, purchased the spot where the angel stayed his hand from slaughter and built his altar in a threshing-floor; he knew his need to be threshed by God. With deepest penitence he submitted to it; in the end the man is found to be pure wheat. As far as we may judge this episode marks the time of his final defection from the path of righteousness. It was a period of unspeakable tragedy, but the building of the altar marked his return to the paths of righteousness and his complete acceptance by God.

With inspired foresight David saw that this very spot was the place where the temple should be built. Therefore, with equally inspired zeal, from that time onward David devoted himself almost entirely to the task of preparation. Plans were drawn up and materials assembled for building an 'exceeding magnificent' house for God on the site of the threshing-floor in which the altar stood. With the direct intention of facilitating this, during his last days David made his son king and, soon after his father's death, in compliance with his father's wishes, Solomon built the temple with the materials which David had prepared.

All of this further points the lesson that God is not, nor can be, without sacrifice; it is not only a principle of eternal life, it is also a domestic necessity apart from which He cannot abide anywhere. Even if only temporarily, wherever He dwells there must be

an altar to symbolise the spiritual sacrifice so vital to life and without which it cannot be.

Beside signifying this principle, to men of spiritual perception like David the other purpose of the altar was its functional means of offering visible sacrifices to God. In paradise there was no altar, nor could be, consequently God did not live there; He only visited the place in the cool of the day, for He cannot abide anywhere at any time apart from sacrifice.

We know that sacrifices for sin must always be made from the broken spirits and contrite hearts of the sinful men who offer them. Perhaps it was in fulfilment of this aspect of sacrifice that, before rising and going to hang broken-hearted on a cross at Golgotha, the Lord Jesus went to Gethsemane and did what He did and said what He said there. There is no aspect of sacrifice which the Lord did not fulfil; Gethsemane's awful, mysterious events seem most likely to furnish the proper testimonials to the brokenness of spirit which God required of Him on behalf of man. There had never been, nor is there now, neither can there ever be sorrow like unto Jesus' sorrow. He did not only sorrow personally, that is to say because of the unwarrantable injustice and utter rejection He received from man, but also vicariously and representatively. In this capacity He sorrowed: (1) as penitentially for all convicted men who have been made aware of the heinousness of their sin, (2) profoundly as God for His creatures.

Beside this, He delighted also to do God's will and this pleasure swallowed up all the sorrows in joy. This made His spirit whole and healed His aching, breaking heart, so that He could gather all sacrifice into one and give His all as a great ascending offering to God. His sacrifice and death for sin was so perfect and all-inclusive that it ended all further need for outward physical or inward spiritual sacrifices for sin for ever. Jesus' sacrifice and offering as Man for men is as complete as it is comprehensive.

Living, Spiritual Sacrifices

Yet the writer to the Hebrews tells us that we have an altar and Peter tells us that we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices. We know therefore that, although we are to be sacrificing priests, we are not to attempt to offer to God any kind of sacrifices for sin, whether they be physical, material or spiritual. In any case we have not been given any physical equivalent to an altar upon which to offer any such sacrifice. The Lord Jesus offered one sacrifice for sin for ever and sat down, and we are told to enter into that rest.

Under the Old Testament constitution, annually on the day of atonement, the Lord accepted blood freshly sprinkled upon His throne from the hand of the High Priest. It was a token offering speaking of Christ's blood. The action signified the people's deep repentance and total renunciation and confession of sins. The result was the remission and riddance of twelve months of sins 'that were past through the forbearance of God'. Only under these conditions could He continue to sit there and reign over His people and be their God. Under the Old Covenant this had to be continuously repeated, because forgiveness then was only by an arrangement of repeated coverings or atonements. But now, reconciliation being brought in, we may enter through the rent veil and sit down with the Lord in perfect rest. Concerning this aspect of His sacrifice there is no more to do, it has been eternally accomplished by Jesus so we sit down

with Him. Never again is there to be any daily standing for ministry and offering by Him or anyone else along that line.

However, under the NEW COVENANT there is still desire and expectation in God's heart, as well as a place and need for gift and freewill offerings and sacrifices to be made. Unlike the one eternal sin-offering these must be made eternally, repetitiously. It is to this class of offering that the following verses refer:

(1) 'present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto Him, which is your reasonable service';

(2) 'by Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of our lips, offering praise unto His name'.

The former verse is statedly connected with service and has directly to do with the particular function of the Aaronic family. It was their duty-service in the age of law to present to God the bodies of the living animals which were brought by the children of Israel and were slaughtered beside the altar for sacrifice. The final act of presentation to God by fire upon the altar was the priests' reasonable service because that was their duty.

It would have been most iniquitous and utterly unreasonable of those priests if, after their brethren had bred and brought their sacrifices to the altar at God's command, they had refused to make the final act of presentation that made them acceptable in His sight. That age is now past but God is still calling for bodies to be presented sacrificially to Him. Not as formerly, dead upon an altar, but nevertheless as truly given over to do the will of God as were the bodies of Jesus in His day and Paul in his.

At the end of his life Paul could write, 'I am ready to be offered', or better 'I am already being poured out'. Once he wrote to the Philippians exhorting them to rejoice with him 'if I be poured out upon the sacrifice and service of your faith'. He lived a life of continuous sacrifice and so also did many in the early church, such as Epaphroditus of whom he wrote in high commendation. Likewise Luke tells us of Stephen who offered up his body first unto the Lord in selfless service as a deacon and then with equal devotion in final sacrifice as a martyr. Paul said that he himself sought only to fill up that which was behind of the sufferings of Christ in his body of flesh for the Church which (he recognised) is His body.

These are the kind of bodily offerings and sacrifices the Lord is expecting from His people today and if the altar principle be in their lives as it is in His He will not be disappointed. In view of these things we all ought to ask ourselves, and perhaps each other, to whom are we sacrificing ourselves? For what are we sacrificing our lives? Are we all now wholly presented to God? If so by whom and to what purpose?

The second verse quoted above is undoubtedly connected with the tabernacle-temple service of the Sons of Asaph. The book of Hebrews is largely linked with David; quotations from his psalms abound everywhere throughout the epistle. The writer was obviously very familiar with the ancient writings of Israel's poet-king; those sacred songs had been incorporated into the religious life of the people and had always held a place of honour in their worship. David had written many if not all his psalms with the direct purpose of training men to sing them accompanied by 'the players on

instruments' in association with the functions of the priests. The two forms and means of service were combined by David and. were each the respective duties of those appointed to participate in them.

A reading of the psalms, especially those that in the title are designated for singing, ought to give us instruction in the kind of things which are acceptable to God as sacrifices of praise. Perhaps we may find it instructive that they do not all consist of 'Hallelujah, Hallelujah, praise the Lord', but the greater number are categorical statements of historic or devotional truth. Sometimes they are revelatory, sometimes prophetic, or they may be eulogistic, or hortatory, doctrinal, Messianic, explanatory, penitential, judgemental; they are variable in pattern and length, thoroughly reflective of the writer's character and all inspired of God. In the daily ritual of the temple service, as the bodily sacrifices were made so also were the verbal ones; in the temple sacrifice and offering was attended with song. People who dared not touch the altar could nevertheless engage in singing psalms.

So also it is with us today. We dare not touch the altar in relationship to the one full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice and oblation for sin, but we can stand and offer the accompanying sacrifice of praise, and because we can we must because we ought; it is all part of our reasonable service.

Beside this, let us remember that praise must not always be thought of in terms of singing. STEPHEN would hardly be thought of as a psalmist, but thinking comparatively about his great 'apologia' it would not be very difficult to liken it, at least in parts, to a psalm. In much the same way as David did at times, he makes a historical survey of God's covenant dealings with Israel, then with inspired power he applies a singular, unforgettable lesson to the hearts of his hearers. He paid for his boldness with his life; so we see that both kinds of sacrifice are offered by this great saint and martyr — he offered his last great sacrifice with blood and praise and prayer.

The other principle was finely manifest in Stephen's life — he was and still is a living sacrifice. When God receives into His hands our spirits, will He, as was the case with Jesus and Stephen, receive a living sacrifice as well as a living son? If the living God lives by the altar principle, ought we who are His people to think that we can live by any other?

A Consuming Fire

One of the great cries that ELIJAH the prophet of God made against Israel was 'they have digged down thine altars'. It was a terrible indictment calling for severest punishment, yet for the sake of the remnant in Israel and by the faith of the prophet, the Lord spared the people. The story of the contest on Carmel makes tremendous reading. At the crucial point we are introduced first to hundreds of the prophets of Baal building and leaping on their cold altar, mingling their own blood with the blood of their sacrifices, all to no avail. Then we behold the lone, brave prophet of the Lord, triumphant in faith, building his altar of twelve stones to the Lord.

Elijah was more than a prophet at that moment; he reigned over his circumstances like a king. Like the high priest of God he would make the sacrifice for all Israel; the altar upon which the offering would finally be laid should be the whole nation, each stone must represent a tribe. Needless to say God was entirely satisfied. Upon Elijah's altar

the all-consuming fire fell; it devoured the sacrifice, the water that saturated and surrounded it and also the very stones upon which it was supported, elevating all to God.

The key to all lies here before us. Elijah was a man of great faith. The abundant rain, the revival of life, the fruitfulness of the land, the ultimate overthrow of the demonic despotism of Ahab and Jezebel, all came as a result of Elijah's faith. The prophet is a greatly admired man among us to this day, but great as he was, and however greatly we admire him and seek to emulate his faith, we shall miss the greatest lesson of all if we overlook the fact that everything sprang from his spiritual insight into the ground of truth in God. Like David and Abraham, and perhaps an unnamed host of others, he was a man who understood that the visible altar was but a symbol of a spiritual principle of God's life.

His main function that day on Carmel was to represent to the people what they were. He showed them that they were the altar people of God and drew attention to the means of their real spiritual life. The genius of the man lay in the fact that he saw and understood that to be God's people men must live as God. At the hour of national crisis the altar on Carmel was nothing other than the way into the Temple, the gate of heaven and the entrance into the house of the Lord. Saturating the sacrifice and thoroughly wetting the stones, Elijah precluded the possibility of ignition by any fanatical false prophet seeking to create false fire in an attempt to destroy the purposes of God. The water was poured in until it filled the trench; it flowed round the base of the altar until it completely isolated it. At last there it stood alone, the object of everyone's gaze and Elijah's expectation, separated from the surrounding earth by its moat like an island separated from the mainland by the sea.

Israel was for God and God was for Israel. That day, by God's grace and faithful Elijah's symbolic act, God and His people were isolated from sin and heathendom by the sea of love, joined by sacrifice and consumed together in one fire on the mountain-top of His kingdom. Israel had dugged down God's altars, but Elijah built them up into one altar again, placed the sacrifice upon it and the fire fell. But they could not retain the blessing; the desires of God and the intentions of His prophets could not withhold them from their folly. Despite the unforgettable lessons, Israel did not learn the truth which Elijah knew and so singularly taught on Carmel.

[A Husbandly Covenant](#)

HOSEA, another mighty prophet of similar insight and understanding, says of his people that since altars had been to Israel to sin, then altars should be to them to sin. What a dreadful state of affairs this was. That which had been revealed to them as a means of blessing had irretrievably become a means of causing the absolute opposite of God's original intention. Instead of the altar being the place where sin was forgiven by atonements, it was the place where their sin increased. They were using all kinds of self-made illegitimate altars to offer many sorts of self-chosen abominable sacrifices to a variety of different self-devised idol-gods in increasing numbers of self-built temples. All of these were expressions of self-willed sin and studied insults to God. The opening chapters of the book make it very plain that Israel were living in spiritual harlotry.

Yet God loved the people and regarded Himself as married to them. He had entered into spiritual covenant and union with them by a great oath that He would be their

God and they His people, so He felt that the onus lay upon Him to act toward them as a faithful husband. Although Israel's behaviour toward Him merited punishment and He would have to administer it, He would do so in love and mercy. At the worst it would only be corrective, He could not bring Himself to be altogether destructive toward them. He would limit His anger, directing it to the elimination of the divisive abominations which had become such a barrier between them and their God.

He loved them dearly and felt jealous and hurt over their conduct as would a faithful husband over the behaviour of an unfaithful wife; He would therefore punish them, but He would not divorce them. His covenant and oath to them had been sealed with blood; He had meant every word of it. When He made His vows He did so without any desire or intention in His heart to break or deviate from them, nor would He. But on their part Israel did not see or know, nor did they seem to understand in any degree that their relationship to Jehovah was to be as a wife to a husband. Isaiah had cried it out to them in his day, but whether they had ever read or still read his prophecy is very doubtful.

Their history is one long story of almost unrelieved backsliding. It is almost certain that their forefathers had never understood the full meaning of the events recorded in Exodus 24. Events proved that they never grasped the full implication of God's covenant. Why, even before the tables of the covenant were in their hands, they were making a golden calf and wishing they were back in Egypt. At that time, by a series of unparalleled miracles, the fathers of the nation had but lately come out of Egypt across the Red Sea and were gathered at the foot of Mount Sinai. Having earlier briefly referred to this, we will consider it now more fully, for here it finds its natural place in the exposition.

At the call of God, Moses, their saviour, leader and mediator had been up and had returned from the mountain with instructions to inform the people of the covenant God wished to make with them. At this juncture the ten commandments which were to form the basis of the covenant had not been written. As recorded in chapter 20, Moses had already received them from God whilst in His presence under the power of His Spirit, but as yet God had not inscribed them. So, descending the mountain under commission from God, Moses gathered the people together and reported to them what God had said to him. The object of this was to acquaint them with God's terms so that they could voluntarily enter the covenant of love with understanding. When the people heard God's terms they unanimously promised, 'all the words which the Lord hath said we will do and be obedient'. Well pleased with them, Moses accepted their vow and in God's behalf took them at their word. Not until then did Moses commit the commandments and ordinances he had so far received to writing.

This sacred writing was the first 'Bible' ever given by God to man. We now know it was really only the first instalment of the inspired Word. Viewed in the light of all the foregoing, it is surely a most remarkable fact of great importance to us that the first thing ever to be put into writing by God should be this covenant. It is perhaps as remarkable also that around it the other great revelations should be later assembled. Just how and when the rest of the Pentateuch was received and written and ordered in its entirety we cannot be sure. Whether Genesis came last and was placed first we do not know; we can only thank and praise God that we have it.

We do know practically to the point of certainty however that the Book was commenced under the shadow of Sinai and that the first words written down by Moses were not 'In the beginning God created...' but these which now comprise chapters 20-23 of the book of Exodus. 'I am the Lord thy God thou shalt have no other gods before me'; what a beginning — God, just God, all God, only God. From this ultimately flowed the words of Genesis 1 — 'In the beginning God'. But let us see how Moses continues with his first great revelation from the Spirit: 'I the Lord thy God am a jealous God ... thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. God is come to prove you ... an altar ... if they will make me an altar'. Thus the writing continues, but what a surprising course to take. 'I am the Lord thy God ... if thou wilt make me an altar'; who would have expected that?

By this we can see most clearly into God's naked Spirit; by saying such things He has revealed Himself. Right from the beginning the Lord's primary insistence to Israel was that they were to be the people of God and the altar. The commandments were given to keep them from sin, and the altar was devised to reveal both the principle of life and the way they could offer themselves to God. The wording is significant, 'thou shalt not come up by steps to my altar'; note that the Lord does not go on to say 'to offer thy sacrifice'. The whole implication is that the sacrifice is the person, not something the person offers.

The Pattern of the House

When saying these things the Lord was also intending to show Moses very shortly the pattern of the house and furniture which He wished His people to make for Him. As we have already seen, one of those pieces of furniture was a large brazen altar which was to be so positioned that it should be to man as the doorway through which the first step should be taken to approach God. But even before He stated His requirements for that, or time be found to make it, He wanted His people to know the importance of the altar to Him and to them. The order in this chapter is: God, the people, the altar, God's altar. The great link between God and His people was to be the altar.

The interim period between the giving of the law and the building of the tabernacle at Sinai was to be the altar period. The command was clear, 'an altar of earth thou shalt make unto me and thou shalt sacrifice ... in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee and bless thee'. The altar, the earth, the sacrifice, the name, the blessing. God left them no option, they were to make an altar. If they wished to continue and keep in touch with Him as He did with them, it could only be upon the condition that they made His altar.

The ten commandments were connected with the altar. To Him it was as important as the bow in the cloud at Ararat and the blood upon the houses in Egypt; the altar must be His symbol upon the earth. Even though the significance of it be not grasped nor the principle understood by those who obeyed Him, the wish must nevertheless be acknowledged and the symbol accepted. True to the original order of creation, God's first thought and instruction in giving command concerning the altar was that it was to be made of earth; only as of secondary importance was instruction given about building an alternative altar of stone. In doing this the Lord was following the principle of the plan He had employed when making man.

As Adam and Eve were one, yet two slightly though obviously different people, so the altar symbol was one, though obviously of two slightly different materials and erections. In Eden Adam was first made entirely of earth; some time after that Eve was made / builded from one of his ribs to be a help, meet for him. God in giving instructions about the altar carried through this method exactly; the altar of earth, made: the altar of stone, made/builded.

As we read the Book of God's words and works and ways, the basic simplicity of the Lord in all things utterly amazes us. His profound ethics, His undeviating laws, His methods of procedure, His unshakeable righteousness upon which all is founded, and the scrupulous care with which He fashions the whole, all flow together into the enlightened understanding as a mighty river; the heart thus filled expands into immensity like the sea which never overflows nor bursts the living spirit within, though it swell with unspeakable wonder and divine rapture. Without controversy surely meditation and understanding are the deepest fountains from which the river flows with grateful love in ceaseless praise.

This chapter of the covenant, which is the beginning of all scripture, holds the key to that which by rearrangement is now read as though it is the beginning of scripture. Logically Genesis takes its place at the beginning of the Book because it gives the narrative account of the commencement of creation. It records the beginning and therefore bears that name; but in keeping with the truth that God is the God of second things, that which is recorded in the second book was written first and holds the key to creation. God made man of earth first and next builded woman from a rib taken from man, as a stone taken from earth, and this He did to show us that man must be an altar of sacrifice and offering to his maker and God.

Something of the vastness of this unchangeable truth comes through to us from Abraham, of whom the writer to the Hebrews tells us that 'he looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God'. Like Man, the eternal city must be an altar; and so indeed it is; it is God's temple city, His tabernacle. For foundations it has the twelve apostles of the Lamb; men who in their lives were altars upon which the Lamb was offered to God. Upon their lives was built the Church, which upon inspection is found to be nothing but the altar of God.

Right there in the midst of all, eternally held in the heart of New Jerusalem, are God and the Lamb. New Jerusalem is the Eve of the heavenly Adam coming down out of heaven from God; she is the bride, His wife, a help meet for Him to show forth the secret of God and eternal life and pure everlasting love. She is one with Him, helping Him to reveal that God is Life and God is Love; by it and because of it she is pure, simple, transparent, glorious, eternal light.

The principal principle of God who is Life and Love and Light Eternal is sacrifice and offering; apart from it neither Man, nor the City, nor God Himself can possibly be. In God life and death are one. That is why Paul so emphatically says that neither life nor death shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. To be in His life we must be planted (eternally) in His death, for He is Resurrection. We, like Him, must be crucified ones, lambs as they had been slain; called lions by angels, sons by the Father, bride and wife by the Spirit, body by Christ, house by God, Israel of God in scripture, inner heart-temple by insight of His lovers.

Concerning these things and in a way suited to their day and age God sought to bring Israel into covenant with Himself at Sinai. So writing down the terms of the covenant, Moses rose early in the morning to build an altar under the hill and set up twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel; having done so he sent twelve men to offer sacrifices to God. As yet the priesthood had not been elected, so in a manner Moses was putting Israel to their fundamental business of national priesthood unto and before the Lord unto whom they were gathered.

Following this he took basins (perhaps one each for a tribe) in which he put half the blood of the offerings, sprinkling the other half on the altar. Then he read the book of the covenant to them and, having received their affirmation, sprinkled both it and the people so that the blood was now on the altar — first: the book — second and the people last (see Hebrews 10 v.17-19). Proceeding to the actual marriage oath he pronounced these words, 'Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words'. By the blood of the covenant the whole nation was joined as one with God.

The altar symbolised God's basic principle of life, the book symbolised God Himself — John 1 v.1,2; the blood symbolised their incorporation into and union with God; the people represented God's house. By these things Israel should have seen God, how He lived and where He lived and why He lived. Only after this could men see God and live; not until the marriage vows were taken and the sacred covenant sealed did God give Israel His own writing in stone and ask them to make Him a tent to live in. He had no wish to live with and be as a spiritual husband to Israel unless they covenanted to belong solely to Him and to love Him as He loved them. He knew also that they could and would never do that unless they understood the principle of spiritual sacrifice and self-offering upon which all life is founded. So He tested them by asking of them the sacrifice of love, 'speak unto the children of Israel that they bring me an offering, of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering'. The heart must be in and with everything that is given.

The symbolic altar involving flesh and blood sacrifices, real though it was, is not in view here, but the actual altar is very much envisaged. God was calling for extremely sacrificial giving by asking such things of a nomadic race. He was taking from them the things by which they spoiled the Egyptians ere they left Goshen, probably the only valuables they had. Were they willing to give sacrificially to Him? Moses, speaking from behind the veil that covered his shining face, spoke unto all the congregation of the children of Israel saying, 'this is the thing that the Lord commanded, take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord, whosoever is of a willing heart let him bring it an offering of the Lord'.

'They came everyone whose heart stirred him up and everyone whom his spirit made him willing and they brought the Lord's offering'. So vast and spontaneous was the response that it was reported to Moses 'the people bring much more than enough'. They gave, and giving gave themselves, 'the depth of their poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality'; that is the principle of the altar in man and in God. In a way these words are as true of God as of men, for rich as He is, He only had one son. When giving Him He was impoverished in sonship, for there was not another to give: behold then His liberality in giving Him up for us all. What riches of love and grace!

The unvarying principle of life and love runs through all these sayings, 'we. through His poverty have been made rich'. Ancient Israel never heard or read them; Paul was not their apostle. What a wondrous insight he had into spiritual truth which they apparently did not see. Until Hosea and Jeremiah voiced it, Israel did not appear to understand their God to be a lover and a husband who had espoused the nation to Himself through the blood and the lamb in Egypt, and who had married them at Sinai. He said He was a husband to them, taking them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt; Israel were holiness unto the Lord then and went after Him in the wilderness, but they broke the husbandly covenant. Despite that, He loved them with an everlasting love, and at one time asked — 'how can I give thee up?' At another He asked, 'where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, or to which of my creditors have I sold you?' But no bill of former legal divorcement could be found, nor was there any evidence of a present bill of sale into slavery.

God's love is based upon self-giving by sacrifice; so is all true love. He cannot deny Himself, so He caused Hosea to record His promises of future restoration. By their own wishes the people were now no longer to Him as a wife; they had estranged themselves from Him and He could no longer be to them as a husband. But in the justice that demanded they be punished He remembered mercy and graciously told them that there would come a day when He would betroth them unto Himself for ever. The basis of that betrothal will be righteousness, judgement, loving-kindness, mercies, faithfulness and knowledge of the Lord. They had been unrighteous, unjust, brutally unloving, unmerciful, unfaithful and ignorant; a shifty, shallow and transient people. God had 'desired mercy and not sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings', He said, but they had other desires and preferred the outward show of ritualism. The real root of their terrible behaviour lay at the point God laid bare here, 'they like men (Adam) have transgressed the covenant, there have they dealt treacherously against me'.

Adam in the garden, Israel at Sinai, Ephraim and Judah in the land all broke covenant faith with God; the issue was the same every time. Old Adam always does this; in Eden Adam broke the covenant by failing to be a faithful husband to Eve; therefore he became as a faithless wife to God, his husband and maker. Israel did it at Sinai by failing to be as a true wife to God, making an idolatrous golden calf to replace Him; Ephraim and Judah also did it quite openly in Canaan by playing the harlot with other nations to go after their goods and gods and accept their standards of living. Multiplying altars, idols and temples with religious fervour, they finally succeeded in selling themselves into slavery in foreign lands as a result. Having first made themselves slaves estranged from God while yet in their own land, they were eventually cast out and carried away captive to serve the devil in another.

All this happened to them because they failed to recognise what the altar symbolised. They saw the outward altar, the blood and the bodily sacrifices, but they had no spiritual insight or heart-grasp of what these things represented. Israel were a complete spiritual failure, therefore they became a national failure and an international disgrace.

[The Cross and the Altar](#)

Spiritual blindness is a malady by no means limited to olden days and ancient Israel; it is a widespread modern disease too. Few there are who recognise the Christ or

understand His meaning or the import of His apostles' words. Consider this statement by Jesus, 'if thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift'.

The altar is an expression of a basic principle of God's way of life; it symbolises unity by union based upon the sacrifice of self-giving. How then can He possibly accept a gift upon His altar if it is offered in face of possibility of disunion between brethren? First go and be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift, He says.

Too few have fully grasped: (1) the difference between the cross and the altar, and (2) the identity of the cross with the altar. In material, shape, size and purpose the Roman cross was as different and distinct from Israel's altar as it could possibly be. One was an instrument of punishment and shame devised by a barbaric heathen nation to apply civil justice to extreme criminals, the other was a piece of religious equipment whereon gifts and offerings could be given to God. One was the place of rejection, the other the place of acceptance. In some ways they are alike, even as regards their physical associations, for the altar, like the cross, was a place of physical death and each was a representation of sovereign power, the first God's, the second Caesar's. There the resemblance ends.

There is that about the cross of Christ which in no way resembles the altar because of its association with sin. The cross was the pillory upon which God chose to identify His Son with old Adam; He impaled Him there in order that He should thereby be punished to death without mercy. In that respect therefore Jesus had no place at the altar and was cut off from it. The cross was the direct antithesis of the altar; it points to God's judgement on sin and the sinner and the whole rejected manhood of sin. But having conquered in that sphere and finished that part of His work on the cross, the Lord then proceeded to use it as an altar whereon He offered Himself without spot to God. This done, He had completed His work and He dismissed His spirit.

In fulfilment of His own statement, on behalf of mankind with its age-old rivalries and divisions and enmities, at Calvary He did five things: (1) He brought His gift to the altar and (2) (so to speak) left it there while He (3) went to the cross of and for reconciliation and (4) having accomplished it in one body, (5) came and offered His gift. By so saying and doing He made sacrifice the primal life-principle of the Church as well as of God; it was in view of the cross that He made His earliest statement about the altar. That was His art. He who knew no sin was made sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

In the midst of all that sin, right there at the heart of it, was righteousness, for He remained righteous throughout. This is the great mystery which resolved the problem of sin and iniquity. By this God was able to deal with the impossibility of redeeming, reconciling and regenerating and receiving man and at the same time, by one act, righteously finalising and eternally dispensing with the temporary measures of atonement and the need for man-made altars.

[The Throne and the Altar](#)

The whole principle is divinely laid out for us in fullest detail by the exactitude of tabernacle typology. The tabernacle was assembled for this purpose and is scientifically precise in all the details of Redemption and Atonements it presented to

Israel. It was really a house of God adapted to Atonements. The throne upon which He sat under the cloud, manifesting Himself in glory beneath the wings of the cherubim as the Shekinah, was only called the Mercy Seat because upon it every year was sprinkled the blood of the Atonement and for no other reason. By bestowing upon it this name, the Lord deliberately related the throne to the altar whereon blood was daily poured and burnt. The blood was the link between the two and by this means God was trying to show Israel the indispensability of the principle of sacrifice; how far He succeeded who can tell?

The throne and the altar were one; they still are and always have been one. In the same way that sacrifice is the basis of the one life in the three persons of God, so also sacrifice had to be both the basis of the national life of Israel and the basis of relationship between God and each individual Israelite. God was showing them that He could only live and dwell on earth with men upon this principle. Therefore He ordered them to sprinkle blood upon His throne that it may be turned by them into an altar for Him. This being done, He abode thereon in living glorious fire among them. By night over the top of that throne, towering away into the heavens as an immovable pillar and suitably adapted to human vision, that fire could be plainly seen. By day the glory was clouded and veiled, by night the fire was in full view.

It was the sacrifice being consumed under that column of fire which caused it to burn with such eternal intensity. But there was no body of animal or man within that Holiest place; why then this steady, unending, powerful fire which seemed to leap so spontaneously from earth to heaven? Whence came it and how? The answer is Jesus. There was no body of flesh and blood and no fat to burn within the sanctuary of sanctuaries; that is why the pillar, though of fire, was not of smoke. Instead, isolated in splendour within the veil of inward holiness right in the centre and at the head of all, stood the Ark of the Covenant of God. It represented Christ Jesus: He was the altar there just as He was the altar of the Court gate.

Altar and throne are one, all is Christ. Out there at the gate, the flesh and blood and fat could be seen and smelt, the body could be handled and the fire heard, but in the Holy of Holies there was no voice or smell or sight of burning, it was a different altar; God's is an eternal sacrifice; everything there was spiritual, original, unchanging, fundamental.

[The Union of the Altar and the Sacrifice](#)

O God, wilt Thou not give us all eyes to see, ears to hear, senses to smell, hands to handle and a heart to understand, lest seeing we see not and hearing we do not hear, nor taste nor handle nor believe; lest our hearts feel nothing and we be all as cold and dead as bodies of useless animals. Of old the Lord did not adapt and accommodate Himself to man by inanimate things, on the contrary He took of man and things and adapted them to Himself. He lost no glory nor laboured in vain when ordering His tabernacle, but, consistently with His being and true to Himself, He accommodated all that He commanded of Israel to one invariable principle of eternal life.

This He did, that by many things He should speak of One only and continuously until He should come Who is the fulfilment of them all. The multitudinous details scrupulously and repetitiously practised were imposed under the limitations of the system of atonements then in force. At that time, because of the nature of the

covenant, the Lord had to deal with different issues separately in order to distinguish them; but by the reconciling Christ He dealt with all things at once.

Christ has made the altar of God plain and meaningful and absolutely indispensable to us. He has explained and interpreted it; in His own inimitable way He has forever established it in the midst of the churches and has had the fact recorded for us in the last book of the Bible. The revelation of Him given in the first chapter is of the Voice speaking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. John turned to see and describe for us the vision he saw. It was of the Lord Jesus; standing there as the Son of Man all-glorious, He was shining, flaming, burning fire. His feet supply the clue to His whole stand on the various counts concerning which He has come to judge in the churches — they were like fine brass as though they burned in a furnace, says John. He appeared to be exactly what He is — the apotheosis of sacrifice.

In Israel the only furnace that counted with God was the one which stood at the entrance of His courts. It was the altar of Israel and God. At His commandment it was made of brass and the fire that burned in it was as a furnace that never went out. So fierce was the fire and so intense the heat that it withstood all the tempestuous winds that blew and the rains which torrented upon it summer and winter. Fed by the countless offerings of the myriads of Israel, that fire ate its way through flesh and bone and lapped up the blood of the carcasses heaped upon the altar in fervent devotion. Under such power the bodies quickly turned to ashes, which in turn ultimately found their way on to a heap outside the camp where they lay, grey and dead, far away from the altar. Lying there, mute and lifeless, they gave testimony that the sacrifice had indeed been made; it had ascended up as a savour of love in fire to Him who sat upon the Mercy Seat. And the heart of Him who watched and smelled and tasted the sweet savour rested upon the Christ represented in, though yet unknown by, His people. The Father heard and handled the Son who, all unawares, they offered to God.

It had to be like that. Ignorant as they were of the Christ, they could have neither national nor individual existence or acceptance except He be their all. He it was who symbolically rose up in all His self-sacrificing beauty and glorious love from Israel's brazen altar and stood before God in the midst of His people. If it had to be so for those, how much more must this be also for the Church.

So it is that, burning as fire, with glowing feet, the Lord of love and glory presents Himself to His churches. At first He stands still, right in the midst of them, mutely symbolical, holding before our vision the testimony to the supreme sacrifice still ascending in love to His God and Father on our behalf. Then, in complete accord with His visual manifestation to John and us, He becomes vocal and reveals the reason for His coming to the churches in this form and manner; it is to recall His people to first love. Well may He do so, for who as He should, or is able, or is more prepared to do this? It is of incontrovertible significance that, of all the manifestations of Himself He vouchsafes to John in course of the unfolding revelation, the first should be in connection with the altar in pursuit of first love.

The second vision of Him is as THE LAMB upon and in the midst of the throne. The altar and the throne. This is nothing other than a repetition of the order and connection we observed in the tabernacle — the altar and the mercy seat. It was the same in John's day as in Moses'; it is still the same now and always will be; it cannot change,

for this is the eternal order with God. The form or manifestation may, indeed must, change; but in whatever form it may appear, love and sacrifice cannot exist apart from each other, any more than water can be, apart from being H₂O — they are one and the same as are substance and analysis.

So we have laid open for us to see what first love is; it is that quality of love which is in God. He is that first love, and 'He first loved us' says John, and from this source all that is good, pure, holy and beneficial flows, and basic to it all lies sacrifice. The Christ of the churches stands as though rising up from the altar fire, the living sacrifice in a furnace of love. The Vision Glorious manifests the reason for the call and is its reward. If we love Him and would respond to His call we must first acknowledge the eternal sacrifice, repent and count all things but loss to gain Him in life, join Him on the altar and pass into God.

Hearts may well wail who never were shown this, who have wasted life, time and effort to achieve that which, when gained, is only ashes and has passed from them in the gaining. All that is not motivated by sacrificial love and founded upon the altar life of Christ is rejected by God, for it is a denial of His very life.

'I AM' says the voice that speaks from the altar in the midst of the churches, 'the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, He which is and which was, and which is to come'. His face shining like the burning sun and His feet glowing like the fiery furnace surely testify to the point of moral certainty that His body also must be burning fire too. How could His face burn and shine so that His eyes are leaping flames and His feet glow with the intensity of furnace-heat because of the fire that burns within, and His body not be fire also? It is covered for God's good reasons, but it is surely an open secret.

Truly enough the churches are veiled fire, lamp stands only, but how can the lamps shine except they burn? Surely the Lord is telling us that the light of the churches is Himself as He here manifests Himself to be. If this be not their light, then there is no light for the dark world. The light of the churches is not for themselves but for mankind.

If we will join ourselves to our Lord in sacrificial love, then we shall know exactly what first love is; we may only join Him in first love in order to give ourselves constantly in self-sacrifice to Father. Only then shall we be light and be able to show that kind of light He wishes to shine in this world. Failing to do so, churches will be removed. Organisations created and sustained by men's will and considered by them to be churches may continue as substitutes for genuine churches and be thought to be what Christ instituted, but the true Church will not be there.

Apart from first love there can be no Church nor any churches, for the Church is nothing other than an embodiment of Christ; it is His Body. It embodies and is all that He is — all that He ever was and shall be; it can be no other; if it differs from that, whatever it is it is not the Church. The Church is here to be in and to this generation what Jesus was in His day to His generation; but not only so, it is also here to display and be a continuing manifestation in and to this age of what God ever has been and shall eternally be.

Way beyond demonstrating the life and powers of Jesus' manhood which every man saw and tasted while He was on earth, the Church has to be a manifestation of His

Godhead also. She has to reveal what He eternally was known to be in God and seen to be before angels before He came to earth. The Church throughout its many churches must reveal its God-head or head-ship in God, for He in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily is the Church's head. The Church is the body of Him and because of this is the embodiment of all that. This is its greatest mission in the world.

This is why the Lord appeared as He did to John. He wanted the revelation which God gave to Him of Himself and the future to begin on this note, 'Let love, first love, be in you, consume you, burn you up, keep you eternally alive, as it has been and has done in me from the very first; come, join me on the altar; to sacrifice self is no pain. There is no hardship or suffering here; all that could have felt pain is now dead, only that which lives and rises eternal lives here; you are come to God by me. I have shown you the principle of life, abide here in me, and I in you, on the altar of God, always ascending with me in this love-life to my Father and your Father; I am the resurrection and the life. I am He that liveth and was dead and behold I am alive for evermore and so now are you, for I am this in you and you in me. All that I manifested and revealed on earth I am and ever was and shall ever be. I did nothing new on earth, nothing new to me. What I did was new to men under the sun on earth but there is nothing new under the sun; all that men can know as newness is above the sun, and what I show you now is eternal. As it has been so it is now also; the cross is an altar for you too; come my beloved, join yourselves to me here, offer yourselves also with me without spot to God'.

The Lord emphasises these things with tremendous power when He breaks the fifth of the seals with which the seven-sealed book was so securely closed. When He does this we again see the altar, and under it the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. From the following verses it is unmistakable that those who suffer martyrdom for the reasons stated have been slain because they have lived upon the altar. Many who have been put to death and called martyrs for reasons acceptable enough to men are not accepted as such nor called martyrs by God.

The Lord states very clearly the ground upon which He classifies men as martyrs. These are they who have lived upon the altar in self-sacrifice which is borne out by the word of God which is in them; that is, they have received, held, lived and spoken the Word of God and their testimony has been that with the Son of God they also are sons of God. These and only these are called martyrs by God. Death by torture or persecution or murder for any good work or cause, wrong as these things are, are not ipso facto classified by God as martyrdom.

Martyrdom as considered by and accepted among men entails physical death, as it does also in the verses in Revelation 6 v.9-11, but originally the word translated witnesses in the New Testament is the Greek word 'martus', and occurs in various grammatical forms in connection with the subject of being a witness and bearing witness or testimony. To be a martyr in this sense did not always result in undeserved and premature death, but it did and still does entail living on the altar. True witness to Jesus Christ cannot be borne by any person except that person lives a life of loving self-offering to God through personal sacrifice. The reading leaves no doubt that this altar principle shall endure until the end of the age, for those slain at the time of which

John writes are told by the Lord that they must wait for others to be killed as they, and for the same reason.

However, the altar we have is not the same as that which Israel after the flesh knew; ours is only for those who are after the Spirit. Looking at it through the enlightened eyes of John we see that there are no ashes under this altar; instead gathered there are the souls of the martyrs. What an altar, what a gathering! At the point of death the spirits of that brave and noble army, men and boys, the matron and the maid, departed to be with the Lord, ascended in the sacred flame and their souls remained under the altar. The soul in which the Spirit was revealed and by which it was manifest in the body rests and awaits the reward and shall receive it when finally placed among the glorious company of its peers.

So we see that the Lord is not seeking ashes of dead bodies, but the souls developed by human spirits united with Him on the altar while living in their bodies on earth. Keeping ourselves with Him on the altar, ascending in constant spiritual love to God, ensures that the soul eternally lives the spiritual life of Christ indestructible on the earth among men. This must be the residual remains of every one of us; then, whether or not we die a martyr's death in the flesh, our souls in white await their investiture, which shall be bestowed upon them in the future day of the coronation honours of the Lamb.

21-DEC-02

First published June 1978.
Revised June 1983.
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COMMUNION

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First published Jan.1977.
Revised Jan.1979.
Reprinted Dec.1991.
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THE COMMUNION

Deep Calleth unto Deep

Baptism and Communion - the Alpha and the Omega

The Way and the Life

A former pamphlet in this series was devoted to an examination of the scriptural significance of Baptism. In it emphasis was laid upon the introduction, practice, typical importance and spiritual meaning of the ordinance, and was undertaken with a view to establishing its proper place in the Church throughout the entire age. This pamphlet is a study on the companion subject of the Communion. This is most fitting, for Baptism and Communion are companion truths, and belong together as do a doorway and a room.

Perhaps it may be more suitable to the truth they represent if we think of them as a gateway and an estate. This figure need not be regarded as incongruous; it shows no disrespect for Baptism. Baptism may truly be looked upon as a doorway opened for men by Jesus, granting access to Communion. The Communion is both the reason for and the ultimate goal of The Baptism. The Baptism was designed by God to be a personal crisis, the beginning of spiritual life: The Communion is the state into which The Baptism grants him immediate entrance, it is the end in view. The Baptism is the Alpha; The Communion is the Omega.

The Mystery of Faith

Water is the element in which the Baptism is symbolised; it represents the Holy Spirit. The experience of baptism betokens the powerful application of forgiveness, cleansing, death and resurrection to the believer, namely regeneration. Bread and wine are the elements by which the Communion is represented. Participation in the act of communion is a personal testimony that the Baptism has taken place, and that the participant is eating and drinking Christ after the Spirit. As truly as the water of baptism represents the Spirit of God, the bread and wine of communion symbolise the body and blood of Christ. In these three, spirit, body and blood, (or if we slightly rearrange the order into one more readily suited to our minds, namely body, blood and spirit) we have the three basic elements without which life cannot exist.

Herein then lies the wisdom of the Lord in combining baptism with communion; in reality they are as indivisible as are body, blood and spirit. By the Baptism we are baptised into and made members of the body of Christ (who is) in the Spirit; by the Communion we live in that body which is and can only be in the Spirit. The elements and enactments of these two ordinances set forth in proper relationship the mystery of the faith in clearest symbolism, and this is the reason why the Lord ordained them. The doctrine of their combined typical meaning is so unmistakably complete in itself that nothing need be added to it or them. They are as logically necessary to each other as are two parts of one whole, each of which needs the other to complete it.

That which God has Joined Together

The marriage of these two is finely displayed by Luke in Acts 2. The opening part of this chapter records the establishment of the Church on earth by the Lord Jesus. He accomplished this miracle by baptising the 120 into the Baptism which He had previously undergone at Calvary, and He did it with or by means of the Holy Ghost. The major reason He endured His crucifixion was that this should be accomplished. Following the record of the founding of the Church and the swift addition of a further 5000 to them, Luke loses no time in telling us that 'they (all) continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship (Communion) and in breaking of bread (the symbol of Communion) and in prayers'.

So we see that right in the beginning, upon the very threshold of Church history God set the pattern — it was first baptism then communion. Every single member of that first church assembly went straight from one into the other. God and the apostles joined these two together that they should remain for all time the most fundamental and necessary ordinances of the Church. He added no other to them as though He were implying that together with them it should form an obligatory trilogy of common acceptance among His people; He ordained these two and made them universally obligatory upon His Church, and that is all. Other ordinances there are and each has its proper place and in that place is binding upon the person or persons concerned, but consideration of them reveals that none is obligatory upon every member without exception as are these two.

The Eternal Communion

Of the two the communion, by its very nature, is by far the more spiritually significant. Baptism is plainly intended by God to represent a once-for-all-time-and-eternity experience; Communion, by implication, is in itself a constantly recurring act. By the ordinance of baptism, God revealed His intention that a man is baptised to remain in that state; but he communes to commune again and again, in fact eternally. The Communion was and is and ever shall be; it was before Baptism, it is greater than Baptism, it shall still be when Baptism is practised no more. Baptism was created to bring people into the Communion, and unto the ordinance of communion.

Though the practice of baptism was introduced into time before the Communion was made known to men, in truth the Communion was before ever the world was created or time began. Yet, although this is so, the Communion, though hinted at in Old Testament scriptures, was not revealed to men until the time of the introduction of the New Covenant. The Communion belongs exclusively to the Church. Baptism had a place in the purposes of God during the closing days of the Old Covenant under the ministration of John Baptist, but communion did not. In common with many other Biblical ordinances, baptism was introduced by a man under God's instructions, but not so the communion; that had to be brought in by God Himself. Man and means are always only to an end; they are temporary and must lead to the everlasting; the momentary must proceed to the permanent. Man and baptism are a means; God and Communion are eternal.

The Elusiveness of Infinity

Names used by men to describe the ordinance under consideration are many and varied. Each of them is descriptive of at least one aspect of meaning connected with

its practice and is attached to it for that reason. Some of these names have been taken directly from scripture, others have been bestowed by men according to the doctrines they wish to propagate, or the emphasis they wish to make. Sifting through them all, it may be true to say that those who believe the Bible to be the inspired word of God usually prefer to speak of this ordinance in the simple phrases used by the canonical writers. These scriptural terms are three in number, namely:

- (1) [\(the\) 'breaking of bread'](#),
- (2) ['the Lord's supper'](#) or (in close association with this) 'the Lord's table',
- (3) ['the communion'](#).

Other names, such as the Mass or the Eucharist, have been bestowed upon the ordinance by men without authorisation or inspiration from God, but these will not be considered by us here.

1. THE BREAKING OF BREAD

The Common Meal

The first of the three scriptural titles is used in Acts 2.42. It is referred to in a list of four practices in which the Church steadfastly continued from the day of Pentecost onwards. It is a most homely phrase, obviously adapted by the writer from everyday life, and is admirably suited to create just the right atmosphere for the new-born family of saints. Luke deliberately sets it in that background with divine intention, thus introducing the ideas of naturalness and continuity.

Breaking of bread is a comprehensive term indicating to the eastern mind more than the literal wording of the phrase. It embraces the idea of participation in a whole meal, a normal practice of life as Luke shows in verses 46 & 47. But in verse 42, breaking of bread is distinctively spoken of in connection with apostles, and fellowship, and prayers, and connects with these the virtues of steadfastness and continuity. Obviously this is purposely done with the object of delineating early Church practice. In verses 46 & 47 the term is linked with the idea of ordinary (or is it extraordinary?) social hospitality; with singleness of heart the saints shared a common experience and life. The whole conveys the picture of a glad, joyful company, praising God and having favour with all the people.

In those few sentences Luke has presented two aspects of the Church's life:

(1) the Church extraordinary gathered together into one; (2) the Church ordinary dispersed abroad in their homes. He has simply taken a phrase in common use, lifted it out of its normal setting and applied it in all its simplicity to what had by then become the one common meal of the Church, thereby giving it particular emphasis. By doing this he : (1) purposely changed the entire meaning of the phrase, (2) he set it in a new age-abiding context, (3) he established its vital necessity.

The Intimate Meal

The Lord Jesus originally instituted the ordinance. It all began so simply — though not without an element of drama — one night in an upper room in Jerusalem. Jesus and the apostles were at that time gathered together in a guest-chamber selected by the

Holy Spirit; the Lord borrowed it specially for the occasion. He did this, Luke discovered, so that He might act as host to His chosen guests at the last supper they should eat before He suffered. During this intimate time together, and as the Passover supper drew to an end, the Lord 'took bread and gave thanks and brake it and gave unto them'; it was such a simple, ordinary everyday act.

Undoubtedly Jesus had done something similar to it many times before; but what made it so different this time was the things He said; they were of such an extreme and complicated nature. To their amazement He spoke in similar vein also when He handed them the cup of wine, but the implicit simplicity of it all vested the occasion with extraordinary and unique meaning. Having described in his Gospel with what naturalness the Lord took and broke the bread, in full knowledge of what it all meant, Luke takes the fact in all its simplicity and uses it as a name for the ordinance which since has become the most dearly-loved practice of the Church: the Breaking of Bread.

No name is more appealing to the heart of simple folk than this; in a natural way it implies sweet ideas of a father with his children, or of a husband with his wife and children. It suggests an entire family being fed by the breadwinner; a meal where each one present is an intimate blood-relative of him who sits at the head of the board, or else a specially invited guest. And that is just the feeling that both Luke and the Lord wish to convey. The ordinance must speak of mealtime, fatherhood, son-ship, brotherhood, love, intimacy, abundance, exclusiveness, sharing by breaking, which is the common manner of eating among people who do not ordinarily use table-cutlery. The bread was universal, central, one. They each broke their piece(s) from the whole. The unit(y) was shown by each individual breaking it for himself; the act was vital, but more of this later.

2. THE LORD'S SUPPER

Jesus Christ is Lord

The second title, the Lord's supper, is used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11.20. The emphasis here is laid not so much upon the manner in which we partake of the ordinance as upon the nature and timing of it; it is the Lord's supper: it is the Lord's supper. A thorough reading of the chapters surrounding this section will be sufficient to convince every heart as to why Paul mentions the ordinance at this point. It is part of a lengthy and necessary rebuke to the church at Corinth.

In the first pamphlet of this series it was shown that much of the trouble which existed in the church there was caused by open rebellion against the Lord. This was quite blatantly displayed in their meetings; all authority was flouted, division promoted and love destroyed. As may be expected in these circumstances, when they came together carnal, egotistical demonstrations of powerless 'gifts' ruined the meetings. Instead of true communion, their gatherings became orgies of eating and drinking; weakness and sickness was prevalent among them, and a spirit of deathly lethargy hung over everything like a cloud. The result of this was that where formerly spontaneous life and ministry had flourished, heavy, monotonous ritual ruled the meetings. To make things worse, on one hand poverty abounded and on the other riches were callously and ostentatiously paraded; complete disorder reigned and the Spirit of God was

grieved. They had sunk so low that they could no longer distinguish between their own gluttony and the Lord's supper.

It was to this vitiated condition that Paul addressed himself when he wrote this letter. Therefore he did not hesitate to rebuke them sharply and to inform them plainly what he had received about it from the Lord. Strongly reproving, he reminds them that when Jesus originally established the ordinance, He did so as Lord of the table, and that all He provided then was bread and wine. This therefore must be considered as law, and any refusal on their part to accept those bare elements could only be interpreted as an insult to their Host. They must understand that their action was nothing other than an open rejection of the Lord and His bounty.

Surely they knew that He not only commanded and provided the means of the feast, but was also present at it Himself. Their behaviour was inexcusable; they were acting like brute beasts. They impudently substituted self-will for obedience, and denied and destroyed the purpose of the ordinance. Their suppers had become their greatest testimony to their profoundest ignorance. Paul's correction and instruction reveals that the feast is no more to be thought of or made an excuse for pagan orgies than to be thought of or made an excuse for the Jewish Passover. By it the Lord has outlawed and displaced both.

Food for the New Man

The time element inherent in the description of the meal holds very real significance also. Surprisingly it is a supper. We may think that had it been called a breakfast it would more properly have introduced the element of newness best suited to its institution. But however strange it may seem to our western minds, supper in the east was not the last meal of the day but the first. Unlike our days, which begin and end at midnight, Jewish days began and ended at sunset. The first meal of our day is breakfast, but theirs was supper. Realisation of this fact brings a whole new range of meaning to the ordinance.

The Lord purposely instituted His supper with meagre elements so that we should understand that they are to be regarded as purely symbolical. In themselves they have no value at all, and to look upon them as nourishment for the mortal body would be foolishness. We are being pointed to the fact that God's great concern when instituting the first meal of His new day was that we should see it to be nothing other than a testimony of His provision of nourishment for the inner spiritual man. To the outward man the provision is negligible — a token, that is all. To the carnal appetites it is ridiculous, and God intends it to be so too. He is not at all concerned to feed the carnal man. Likewise He is not primarily concerned to sustain the outward man either. His first and great emphasis is upon the inward, spiritual man. The feast is provided for him, because he is God's eternal concern.

This meal is of strictly limited supply to the physical body, and by it God plainly insists that in the new era it is the new man that must be fed, and he can only feed on the reality of which the bread and wine are symbols. He must realise that he is a member of a new body, and that body is Christ's (1 Corinthians 12:12); Christ's body is no longer a body of flesh and blood. God's new man by regeneration must be nourished and built up so that he may function in and build up the body of Another, even Christ. If a man desires the Lord Jesus Christ to live in his body of flesh and

blood, he must realise that he himself must live in and for a body which is not flesh and blood.

The feast teaches us that the Lord laid down His body of flesh and blood (in a tomb) for the sake of others. It must also teach us that God expects each of the members of Christ to lay aside the needs and concerns of his body of flesh and blood for the sake of that other greater body. The body of Christ is entirely spiritual. It must be seen also that this is to be done not merely for the duration of the supper. Far beyond the momentary act, each person must understand that by partaking of the elements he thereby testifies that this is his lifelong concern. God has designed that token nourishment should be taken in a purely symbolical act of eating and drinking, and done deliberately in order to show that the soul feasts solely on spiritual food; this is what participation in the feast implies.

This ordinance, by its bare elements, outwardly stands as a permanent demonstration of self-denial exercised before all; it must also speak of inward denial of the flesh. Both these are necessary in order that the spirit may live in health and strength and endlessly apply itself to the task of edification of the body of Christ. The whole is done for others; real life lies in living to lay down our lives for one another; this is the will of the Lord, the Head of the body. It is His table, His supper, and we are His guests and members of His body. Jesus Himself set both the table and the living example of which it speaks. In reality, had we eyes to see it, He is the table upon which the feast is spread. He also sits at the head of the table presiding in fullness of love and power, proclaiming in our ears and to our hearts the need for this constant memorial and reminder of sacrificial love.

The Bread of God

At that first great feast no-one was hungry or thirsty, for each one of them had already eaten well. Roast lamb was the main item of the good, solid Passover meal they had all taken just beforehand. Presumably, when about to establish His supper, the Lord first carefully selected from the remains of that former ordinance some bread and wine. Having done this, He gave thanks to God and proceeded to install the new feast. He did so by elevating the two ordinary elements from their ordinary usage and ordaining them to speak to us of His body and blood. By this He established them to be for ever the memorials of His sacrificial death. Quite as obviously, since they were not selected for their food value, they were pressed into use as being most suited to His purpose. Moreover, their frugality and simplicity testify also to our Lord's tender discrimination, for they are not beyond the means of the very poorest members of His Church.

From that time forward, these alone are to be the viands served at His royal banquet. If therefore any person among the Corinthians ate and drank anything other than these, or under any pretext sought to indulge carnal appetites when sitting at His table, they would do so at risk and to their own condemnation. On the other hand if any member of the body of Christ knowingly eats or drinks less than both these, or does not partake of the supper at all, his action or abstinence is reprehensible. To say the least it is impolite, at the worst it is an insult to the Lord; the rest is best left unspoken. In this matter we are not consulted at all, nor are we asked for an opinion about the substance or amount of the provision. We are summoned by His command to attend, and under His supervision do we all partake.

The Royal Simplicity

Considering the honour bestowed upon men, and realising God's purpose in granting us the favour, our hearts should respond with joy that we are invited to such a princely feast. We are left aghast that such blasphemous behaviour as that which Paul censures should ever have been imagined by the Corinthians, but it was. Looking for a reason for such a grossly wrong attitude, we are forced to the conclusion that to them Jesus was no longer Lord. He was not even Lord in the sense in which Paul speaks earlier in the epistle when, quoting David, he says, 'the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof'. The fact that the Lord of all the earth decided to use only bread and wine at His table, when He had all fullness from which to choose, should have caused them to realise that there must be some very important reason for the choice.

He quite purposely did not reserve a piece of lamb from the Passover feast and press that into service. Had He done so we might have seen some very real meaning in it, but He did not do that. Without need to restrict Himself at all, He quite deliberately chose bread and wine. Then let us not fail to learn the lessons which the Corinthians had not learned. When He bade two of His disciples go to a certain place and there make ready the meal for His coming, it was with full knowledge of what He would do following the Passover. Had He wished, He could quite easily have ordered extra things to be placed on the menu, but He did no such thing. He knew the two elements best suited to His intentions would be there, and no better media than bread and wine could possibly be found anywhere on earth. They were present in the room and nothing could be more admirably suited to His purpose to reveal to them the truth He wished them to know.

They were royal enough dainties in any case, for had not Melchisedec, priest of the most high God king of righteousness and peace, brought forth these same elements for Abraham in the beginning? At the dawn of Hebrew history their most famous patriarch ate and drank of these same things and was blessed of God. Bread and wine are the traditional food and drink of kings and priests and prophets and patriarchs of God. Bread and wine spoke then to Abraham, as they speak now to us, of a past sacrifice and of royalty and sainthood and those mysteries of God we cannot now investigate.

Except it Die

Beside this, the meagre meal is so full of further meanings, which although not at first apparent are nevertheless there for us to enter into and enjoy. We know that 'except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die' there can be no bread. But bread is an end-product; it does not grow on the top of a stalk. Bread is a result of a process, of which death is but the beginning. To reproduce itself the corn must pass through many stages of change. For transformation it must be planted in the ground for death, that through death it should spring into resurrection. That is only a beginning though, for then it must endure reaping, garnering, winnowing, crushing, sifting, mixing, kneading, baking. All these must play their parts before it is finally bread, and even then it must be broken again before it can be eaten. So many and varied are the processes and changes through which grain must pass before it becomes bread and food that except one knew the facts, it would be quite impossible to recognise the relationship between the corn of wheat and the finished product.

It is like that also with wine, for like the bread, wine is the end-product of a long and skilful process, It is the heart-sap, the life-blood of the vine drawn from the root and formed into fruit upon its branches, that it may be smashed and extracted at last as wine. But unlike the hard, tough grain of corn, the grape needs no grinding; the fruit of the vine is tender and succulent, and easily yields its juice to pressure. Yet although this is so, pressed and crushed it must be — trodden in the wine vat — until in the end nothing of the original shape and size can be seen, only the dark red blood and bits of skin and pips remain to remind us of its origins. The fruit turned to wine at last lies utterly liquid and still in the vat. In Christ's day it would have been transferred from thence to the specially prepared skin of a slain animal, no longer bearing any resemblance to its own original form and shape and size — new wine in a new skin. Ultimately it would have been poured directly, or via some other vessel, into the cup

There they stood on the table before Him that night, bread and wine; nourishing dust and tasty, refreshing liquid; each the memorial of a life laid down, changed and utterly refined. These were His choices for the meal, and who would challenge the discerning purpose with which He made His selection, or question and flee from the love which ordained the simple elements?

The Lord of Love

The bread, He said, is His body; it shall forever speak of the outward form in which His life was contained on earth. The wine, He said, is His blood; it represents to us the soul of Jesus of Nazareth, the essence of the inward life of a Man who lived totally after the Spirit. All that could possibly be pressed and wrung from Him, all His flavour and savour is in The cup of the New Covenant. It was as though He was saying, 'bury my body and lo, it shall rise up into the bread of everlasting life; liquidate Me and I shall but turn into the wine of spiritual life. Bruise Me, crush Me, grind Me, destroy Me in this form, bury Me and I shall rise, springing up again to become the indestructible life of millions more'.

In that Man was stored the covenanted Man. That life will only nourish and stimulate new men. None but they can partake of it. What He gives at His table will not feed flesh, nor does it fill the stomachs of men. It is only a token to the bodily appetites. The bread is a crumb, the wine a sip, but to those who see and understand in heart it is the feast of the Lord. To these all the loving appeal of Him attracts and commands their beings; they feel it in His voice, they see it in the bread and cup in His hand. 'Do this in remembrance of Me' He says. He is love, but He is the Lord of love. He is to be obeyed. 'Do it', He says.

But Lord, what is it Thou hast done? 'I saw the bread lying upon the table, I saw the cup standing by its side and I took the bread and broke it. I knew it was myself, so I took and broke it myself. I broke myself for thee. I knew that thou couldst not take me until I broke and gave myself to thee personally. I likewise took the cup. I knew the wine in it was my blood and the cup was the New Covenant in it. I knew that it had to be shed on the cross, but I poured out myself, my life, my all, for thee beforehand, and I took the cup of my life and drank it to covenant with thee in my blood. I knew that unless I did so thou couldst not live. That is what I did and this is what I still do. Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake as I did for thee? Wilt thou do this in remembrance of me?' If we do it, let us do it with understanding.

3. THE COMMUNION

The Language of the Heart

The third title, 'the Communion', used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:16 & 17, names the aspect of the ordinance with which we all should be most concerned. In a very special way this phrase is language of the heart, for it leads us right into the heart of God and the deepest reason for instituting the feast. The scriptures make plain the fact that Paul and Luke were brought together by the Lord to become travelling companions in the gospel; they were also fellow-contributors to the sacred canon. Whether or not they had access to the same human sources of information for their respective writings, we do not know, and we have no certain knowledge either as to whether or not they talked over the things they each later committed to the Church in permanent form. Perhaps they did so; it seems improbable that under the circumstances it should be otherwise. Certainly they were both inspired by God, and it is observable that in many things they spoke alike. We know that neither Paul nor Luke was present at the original gathering in the upper room, but each of them had a very wholesome grasp of what took place there, and what the ordinance is all about.

Paul claims that for the purposes of his ministry the Lord specially informed him of the events which took place there. He gives a somewhat streamlined account of the occasion, which seems to gather up into itself all the important features mentioned by the others. To read Paul is to become aware that whenever he partook of the bread and wine he did so in a twofold way. To him the feast was at once the Communion of the blood and the body of Christ, and also the Communion of the Church. This was most important to him and many are the lessons we must learn from him about it.

The first of these — and it is a thing of outstanding magnitude — is that this ordinance is the Communion. It is an endearing enough term, but long acquaintance with it has not been sufficient to help us to a proper understanding of its greatest meaning. Over-familiarity must not be allowed to lull us into thinking of it in any ritualistic manner; note that it is not spoken of as a communion, or a communing, or a communication, but the Communion. This is a most important point, and the apostle is at great pains to make us aware of it. It ought to be repeatedly emphasised among us, lest in the context of successive acts, as week succeeds week, it becomes one of many, just 'a communion'. The fact that by practice it becomes one of many is perhaps the least important thing about it. We must be sure to discern and learn what God is wanting us to know, for it is indispensable to us.

It is unavoidably true that to a certain degree during the administration of the ordinance, verbal communing and communication do take place, but that is irrelevant. Were it to be omitted altogether, it would make no difference to the ordinance, for it is not a necessary part of the feast. In any case it is clear that Paul is not here referring to a meeting or a specific occasion; he is underlining the eternal truth of the media and actions involved in the ordinance. We must always remember that whatever be the ordinance, the thing ordained is of far greater importance than any occasion upon which it is observed. As we have already seen, the symbols or outward elements in which the truth is constituted, and by which it is typified, are very carefully chosen by the Lord. Because of this, they also act as a visual aid by which we are the better able to see Him who is greater than the lesson, namely God Himself.

The Living Body

This being so, when we use the term 'the communion' as a name for the ordinance, we must not let the simplicity of Paul's words rob us of the great truth he is revealing here. He is not just speaking of 'the communion' in order to introduce an alternative name for the ordinance, lest through sentimentality we lose esteem for a sacred observance; he is directing our attention to a far more wonderful thing than that: 'the communion of the body of Christ'. He is explaining what the Communion really is.

Well-considered, this is a most amazing statement. Luke's homely title, 'Breaking of Bread' is descriptive of 'manner', and Paul's later title, 'the Lord's Supper' lays a much-needed emphasis, but here he spells out what it is actually taking place when we engage in breaking bread and drinking wine at the table of the Lord. He is revealing to us the spiritual meaning lying behind the memorial act. Most basically of all, the feast is the Communion. This is the real reason for doing it.

There is scarcely a better figure by which we could learn the fact and result of Communion than a living body with blood flowing through its veins. The human body is a universe of its own; it is a marvellous entity, a glorious union of many co-ordinated parts, each one of which, if studied for its own sake alone, would enthral and hold our rapt attention. Yet of all these systems and organs within the human frame, the most vital is the blood's union with the flesh. Blood without a body cannot live, nor can a body live without blood. Body and blood are so completely one that it is normally impossible to think of one without the other, nor does it ever cross our minds to do so. Except by the discoveries of modern science, it is quite impossible to preserve life in either the blood or the body if these two be separated, and to attempt to do so would be most unusual and abnormal. The union between body and blood is so wonderful that no better non-scientific word could be found to describe their oneness than this word communion.

The Common Preciousness

The Greek verb from which the English word communion is translated can best be understood by the phrase, 'the act of making common'. In this connection 'common' does not mean base, or of a low order, or lesser nature, as when we compare that which is precious or rare or of high degree with that which is base or of low degree. It describes that which is in plentiful supply and belongs to everybody, yet is of a quality so rare, having a function so basic and necessary, that it is extremely precious — as breath is to lungs, or nature to being, or light to day.

For our purposes, beyond the bare meaning of the word, communion may best be thought of as common union involving the action of the will, a result which is achieved by an act. In this case the act is something done deliberately with specific intention, and being done, makes or causes whatever is involved and intended in the act to become the common property of all; it is purposeful sharing. This is one of the most precious things about the feast, and is probably the reason why its elements are reduced to merest tokens.

The real food and drink of the spiritual meal are the body and blood of the Lord, who instituted the feast because He knew it was the best way of telling us that He wanted to give Himself to us. Jesus' symbolic act of breaking and giving His body and shedding and sharing His blood was a demonstration of His future intention to make

Himself and His personal communion through organic union common to all His own. In order to become effective in us, that original act must be reciprocated and repeated by us — we must take and eat and drink also.

I and My Father are One

Simply stated, the Communion Jesus made possible and inaugurated for men is nothing other than the common union that exists between the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. It is the eternal state of life which the three persons of the Godhead enjoy in one Being. The Lord Jesus came with the double intent of bringing men into the Communion in heaven, and establishing this same kind of Communion among men on earth. Because Jesus was in that heavenly Communion He was completely qualified to say:

(1) to men: 'I and my Father are one'; 'My Father worketh hitherto and I work'; and

(2) to His Father: 'as Thou Father art in me and I in Thee, that they may be one, even as we are: one'.

The degree of union known by God in Himself is unique; we understand it to be exclusive. With a hush in our hearts we read the simple phrases, astonished to learn the basis of the Communion opened to us. The perfection of union in God alone enjoyed by the three glorious persons of the ever-blessed Trinity is now ours, nothing less.

Of all the realisations to which the Church of God could possibly come, this is the most overwhelming. It is wonderful in the extreme. Yet more wonderful still, what appears to us men as so absolutely unique, is quite common and ordinary among Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is almost unbelievable that He wishes to make this Communion which is the common state of God alone, common to us, but it is so.

This does not make us equal with God. It relates us to God and one another in the same kind of union by which God is one. It will at once be seen that this Communion cannot be achieved by any form of common decision or consent by people to belong to one another. Just as plainly also it is not an agreement among a group of people to become members of, and form, and belong to 'a church'. Again it is certainly not a method of establishing any kind of schismatic exclusivism among men, to which ends sadly enough some have misguidedly used it. This Communion is the actual experience of the state expressed in Jesus' words to His disciples, 'ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in me and I in you,' and to His Father, 'that they may be one in us'.

In its outward form among us, the communion is a parabolic enactment, involving the use of minimal tangible elements perfectly understandable to men, and the purpose of it is to display the method whereby the Communion of God was established for men by Christ on earth. This method is plainly declared to us by each of the men who wrote about the ordination, whether they were present at the original gathering or not. That this is so is strong evidence of God's powerful insistence that this method should be kept permanently before us. All who participate in the feast must see it as clearly and cherish it as dearly as did those earliest members of the Church of Christ.

We being Many One Bread

Any one of the Gospel writers' accounts will serve to instruct us on the point, but of them all, Luke, who wrote his Gospel from material gathered from eyewitnesses, is the most specific. His report concerning the breaking of the bread is as follows: 'and He took the bread and gave thanks and brake it and gave unto them saying, this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me'. The Lord gave them bread which He had Himself broken, saying it was His broken body. In other words He broke His own body and gave it to them, instructing them to do this same thing to each other. Matthew and Mark add that Jesus also said to them, 'take, eat'; so we arrive at the aggregate of the synoptists' records on this point.

Paul adding later to these says, 'we, being many, are one bread: for we are all partakers of that one bread'; so saying he introduces a completely new dimension of thought. Joining all the records together, we arrive at the compound truth that by taking and eating the body of Christ and in turn doing as He did, we not only eat His body and remember Him in and for His unique act, but following His example also become that body to repeat and perpetuate this sacrificial act. We cannot enact redemption, but by the symbol we can and must testify that we can only be in the Communion by sacrifice.

This is My Body

This is the special emphasis which Paul makes, and how grateful we must be to him for revealing it. As earlier suggested, it may be that he and Luke had talked over the events of that historic institutional occasion and had seen the whole import and meaning of the Lord's actions and words. What did He actually do then? What did His words mean? What may we rightly infer from them? How ought we to perpetuate the simple rite? Finally the apostle was able to set down what he had 'received of the Lord', and that seals the matter. His inspiration from God was both to immediately deliver to the Church, writing down for all time, 'the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He brake, and said, this is my body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me'.

Thoughtful reading of all the scriptures concerned may lead to the conclusion that when establishing the ordinance, as well as following a familiar course of action and making a request and giving a command, the Lord may also have set an example as to the method He wanted us to adopt. We cannot be exactly sure what took place, but it is practically certain that He did one of two things: (1) He broke the bread and gave a piece to each one individually directly from His own hands, without it passing through the hands of another: or (2) He broke and gave to one of the disciples that he should do the same to another and he to another and so on until all were fed.

To Love is to Give

In these two alternative methods two different aspects of communion are represented. The former order lays the emphasis on taking and eating; or receiving only, and directly, from Him. This method is exemplified among us today when communion is administered to a company of people by one man or a few chosen men only, and no-one else. When this method is adopted it is probably because people believe that only one or a few may be ordained to represent the Christ from whom alone the communicant must receive the elements. In this case the devout Christian believes that he receives the spiritual communion direct from Christ and at that time eats the spiritual flesh and drinks the spiritual blood by faith.

The latter method, without minimising the import of the former, shifts the emphasis from receiving only, to both receiving and giving. This is of much greater significance, for it reveals a far deeper truth; it exemplifies the most fundamental principle of truest love and union known by God. More than that, it also demonstrates that kind of sacrificial giving exemplified by the cross alone. By realising that 'we being many are one bread' and by the self-breaking symbolised by breaking the bread, the cross is kept central at the heart of the Church. God wants it kept there, for that is where sacrificial self-breaking for others was accomplished among men on earth.

The Lord knew He could only give Himself to us by crucifixion, and that is why everything He did in the upper room was anticipatory of the cross. The feast was entirely conceived and inaugurated taking the cross for granted. Golgotha was the only place where it could be fulfilled and the cross was the only means He could use if He was to give Himself in the way He desired. Unless He did so, God's will could not be done, or His own wish be consummated; the whole design was to establish the Communion on earth among men.

The Greatest Glory

But the act of real Communion is not intended only to demonstrate the greatest sacrifice that Christ Himself had to make. It also portrays the perpetual sacrifice which all the members of His body need personally to make if the Communion is to be sustained. Giving Himself up to the cross to die was Jesus' greatest personal glory, but for Him to make it the greatest glory of other persons also is the miracle of miracles. Doing so, He has perpetuated and glorified His own glory to the glory of the Father. When He broke and gave the bread to others, it was as if He was saying, 'if you wish to remember me properly, do this and do it like this'.

So, although their uncomprehending minds could but dimly grasp His meaning, one of them took the bread from Jesus' hands and in obedience did likewise. He first took from Jesus both the bread from which the piece had been broken and the broken piece and having done so, ate the piece he had received from the Lord. Afterwards he broke off another piece from the bread (body) broken for him and gave both the bread from which he had broken the fragment and the piece itself to the next person. Whoever it was then ate the piece, repeated the process of eating, breaking and passing, and so it went on until each person had joined in the act and by doing so was brought into the communion.

Broken for You

It is noticeable that none of the synoptists use the particular word 'broken' in the same way Paul does when he introduces it into his statement. However, all three tell us that the Lord gave the blessed and broken bread to the apostles with the words, 'this is my body', and Luke uses the word 'given'. But although they do not record the fact which Paul reveals, His body was evidently broken in His hands and theirs. It was a marvellous lesson, even if at that time they did not fully apprehend it. Soon His beaten, bruised and bleeding body was to hang disjointed and cursed upon the cross. But He did not give them that body. He gave them the body which was sitting in full view before them, whole and vigorous and sinless. Yet, according to the truth He came to impart, there it lay symbolically broken by His own hands in their sight. This then is the first of the great lessons we must learn from Him about Communion.

Just previously they had together kept the final feast of the old order. The Passover lamb they had eaten had been dismembered and wholly consumed according to divine command. Its bones, said the Lord, must on no account be broken — disjointed, lacerated, cut or torn asunder it may be, but its frame must be retained whole. And that is exactly how it was with Jesus in the end at Calvary.

The observant John faithfully tells us this in recording what he saw at the cross when the soldiers came to Jesus hanging in the midst of the two thieves. Intending to hasten the death of all three and about to break Jesus' legs in the customary manner, they found Him already dead. Unable to believe it, one of them plunged a spear into His side, and out flowed blood and water. He was dead all right. He needed not to have His legs broken — He had died and was buried whole. The scripture was fulfilled. Neither man nor devil nor sin, nor all that these together could do broke Jesus. He took all and at the end could still offer Himself, as unbroken as He was spotless, to God for us.

One Body

Yet that night in the upper room He took bread and deliberately broke it. In the event, He offered Himself to God whole, but to us He gives Himself broken. He did it knowingly — they saw Him do it; He broke Himself for us. The broken body is given to us; the body is ours. We are His body, His broken yet mysteriously whole body. 'Take', He says; 'eat'; He insists that we make it ours. 'This is my body', and Luke adds, 'which is given for you, this do in remembrance of me'. O sacred Covenant!

Whenever we take the elements of the communion, we must enter afresh by understanding into the Communion. The body, though broken, is still wholly given with thankfulness on Jesus' part; blessed and broken as it is we must take it; more, we must eat it, we must do it — in remembrance of Him. He wants us to do exactly that; He does not want us to try and remember Him. How can we remember a person we have not seen? We can only recall what others have said of Him. But if we love Him we will do this, for by repeating His action we commemorate what He did. This is the remembrance: He wants the Church to receive the gift of the body. It was only broken for us to eat it. It did not need to be broken for God to eat it — He took it unbroken. God eats God whole, man eats God broken, and feeding on the fragments finds a whole God.

That Others may Eat

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul opens wider still the immensity of truth, more widely than any other man has done: 'the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' Paul saw that when Jesus said, 'this do', He did so having Himself broken the bread. Like John in another connection, the apostle 'saw and understood'. No wonder he later pleads with us to put away childish thoughts and things and speech and understandings and become men. To be in this wondrous Communion we must do more than receive and eat the bread; as Jesus Himself, we too must break the bread. He broke it for others to eat, so we too must break it that others may eat.

The logic of it is inexorable. He laid down His life for us; we must lay down our lives for the brethren. He broke it for us so that we should see and follow His example. We must or we shall not commune. Strange though it may seem, the act of breaking, not the act of eating, is specified as the act of communing. He broke for others to eat; so

must we. In the act of breaking it is as though for the purposes of communing, each member of the body in turn momentarily becomes as the Head Himself who brings the whole body into the Communion. The Communion is of the whole body, Head and members. That, beloved, is the most high and holy of all our privileges, even as it was His on that solemn, dreadful day.

Give Ye Them to Eat

Here let us pause to note one of the most remarkable features of the four Gospels, namely the manner in which the synoptists differ from John in their presentation of the Lord. In one way or another, the first three writers cover the whole life-span and activities of the Lord, but not so John. Differing from them he leaves un-mentioned the bulk of historic facts which they record, and presents the soul of Jesus. Among many other things, John is very selective about the number of miracles he records. He chooses to omit the majority of those mentioned by his fellow-writers, but includes some the others do not record. Unusual as we see this to be, in it we observe the absolute sovereignty of God, for He caused all four of them to give space to one particular miracle, namely the feeding of the five thousand. This is the more remarkable for the fact that we may not have thought it important enough to warrant such repetition.

Strange as it may seem, this may quite easily be the most important miracle that the Lord Jesus ever performed; certainly to no other is so much prominence given. We may ask then why it is that when others appear to be of more importance, this miracle should be the one to which attention is so repeatedly drawn. The reason for its prominence may well be this — by it the Lord taught His disciples one of the greatest lessons connected with the (as yet unknown) Communion. John, in his sixth chapter, recounts how calculatedly the Lord conducted the whole episode. First He performed the miracle, then He proceeded to use it as a text for the exposition of such unique and revolutionary teaching that many of His followers left Him — they were angered and shocked by it all. He had outraged their sense of decency, and challenged their credulity and negated cherished beliefs.

The Christ of Many Members

Observing the Lord's procedure and instruction during the administration of the miracle, we see how He used the occasion to teach us the very truth we need to learn about Communion. Reading through the four accounts, we find that the Lord insisted that the apostles themselves should feed the multitudes. It is clear from the very first that He had no intention of feeding them Himself; knowing they did not have the ability, He actually commanded the apostles themselves to do it. This was far beyond their resources, but John tells us 'He knew what He would do'. Jesus knew exactly the way He would use the situation, and had determined He would make it an absolutely unforgettable occasion for them all. His apostles would feed the people that day, as He said, and they would never forget how it was done, nor the lesson they learned.

The sequence of events leading to the discovery of the lad with the five loaves and two fishes is so well-known that we need not recount it. We will, however, detail the activities that followed upon the discovery: He took the bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitudes. That was the order of events by which the miracle was manifested. The Lord, according to His word, did

not give the bread to the multitudes Himself. What He actually did was to give the bread to the disciples and the disciples with the bread in their hands to the multitudes.

The implications of His actions are perhaps very different from what we may at first have thought, and more amazing. The disciples did not break the bread themselves at that time, but could they have had prior knowledge, they would have learned a wondrous lesson from what they observed that day. By insisting that they give the broken bread to others, the Lord involved them in the act. In performing the miracle the Lord made them co-workers with Himself, and applied a basic principle of eternal truth to them and the multitudes. He could only go so far at that time though; He would teach them the greater spiritual implications of the miracle later, under far different circumstances. The Lord reserved the deepest meaning of the miracle to be learned privately by His own at the Communion. The miracle, though illustrating part of the truth, was still only anticipatory.

As from the Head

All real Communion is and must forever be based upon the principle of personal breaking and giving. Too readily we fill the place of the receiver only, when we ought also to be the giver. Any person wishing to be in communion with another must be ready to take the position of supplier, and not primarily the place of the suppliant. Having first received of Him, we ought, as He, to break the bread in order to give to others also. That is the way Communion, THE Communion, is established.

We normally break off our own piece and eat it and pass the loaf on to the next person; or else perhaps give it back to the person who handed it to us. Perhaps also we believe that symbolically we are passing the body of Christ from one to another. But O how much we miss and forfeit thereby, for He is trying to show us that we should break and give to others. Ought we not to discern 'the body of Christ' as Paul exhorts us and know what it is and that we are particular members of it? We must do this thing. We are not to try and remember Him hanging with unbroken body on a tree, wounded, cursed and dying, crying out in agonised bewilderment as untold contradictions meet in His mind, crowning His baffled head with unanswered and unanswerable enigmas.

We must understand the mystery in our hands and give ourselves with the bread we break and pass on to others, for that is the communion of the body. By this means we partake from one another as from the Christ who is the Head of the body in each member. If we were to do it like this, we should receive from one another in an entirely new way, for this kind of enlightened reform would bring us more nearly to the meaning of the real Communion.

The Testimony of Union

It is paradoxical, that breaking, the symbol of disunion, should be the testimony of union, but it is so. The whole mystery of redemption is bound up in this 'act of making common'. By it we are brought most nearly to the heart of God. The Communion that God wanted man to enter into and enjoy was His own. It had been unbroken from the beginning; it was divine. How then could humans enter into it? There was no known way, no breach, no door, no opening for men. It needed an act of breaking of extraordinary significance, and it must be by God in order to make it available to us.

So it was that John Baptist came to prepare the way of the Lord, and the Lord who is the Way came. 'I am the door' He said, 'I am the way', 'do this in remembrance of me'. He who is the Way made a way for men to enter into God's Communion. Jesus came and hung out on a cross, cursed and forsaken by God and man, to make a way where there was no way, and a breach where there was none. That man should forsake Him was inevitable, but it was equally inevitable that God should forsake Him too. It was utterly indispensable to the plan, for only by God doing so could the breach be made. He therefore did it. At Golgotha the break in THE COMMUNION was made for man to enter in — into THE COMMUNION — into God. We have been called into the fellowship communion of His Son.

The Bread which I will Give

On that dreadful day when the Lord instituted the communion in the upper room, He hoped beyond everything else that those men would understand what He was saying. They witnessed what He was doing, but could He make them see what He meant by it? O that the living truth may reach their hearts and never lose its meaning to them lest it fall into deadening formality and carnal repetition. He had earlier said, 'the bread which I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world; whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day'.

However, although at that time He was opening up truth relating to the Communion, He was not then directly speaking of the Communion. He was informing His hearers of the basic facts and means of eternal life, warning them of the dangers of mere believism, that is of believing without receiving. Man can only live by eating and drinking Him every day. The daily exchange of our life for His — the constant preference for, choice and appropriation of His life above and instead of our own — is the only continuing means of eternal life.

Although there is an association of ideas linking these two things together, to do this is quite a different thing from partaking of the elements of the communion, and is much more important. Without this, the Communion of the body is utterly impossible, for except a man already has Jesus' eternal life, he has no place at the Lord's communion table, and if he should attend, only eats and drinks damnation to himself.

In Living Union

By the act of eating and drinking the communion, a man is testifying of his own fitness to be a member of the body of Christ, he is saying that he is worthy to do this because he is living in present communion with Christ. He does not come to the feast to be made a member of Christ thereby, neither does he come in order to have himself restored to Life in Christ and communion with his fellow-members; he comes to testify that he is in living union with Christ. Thereby he is helping to build up the body of Christ, in communion or common-union with all the saints. Otherwise participation is in vain; worse still, continued eating and drinking is destructive to self and obstructive to others.

It is because of the seriousness of this dreadful possibility that Paul says, 'let a man examine himself'. When a man eats and drinks, he must do so from the position of self-examination and self-judgement. He must judge whether or not he is in The Communion, and has been living in communion with the Lord. If this has not been so,

he must rectify that state or else he may not eat and drink. If he is eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ, he is living as Christ in this world; if not he has no part in the feast. Eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ is permitted to those who, in a common union of life, display their love and loyalty to Him and His Church.

The Intimate Cup

The act of drinking the wine of communion is a symbol of a much more intimate and personal nature than that which is displayed by eating the bread. The wording of the command given by the Lord on the night of institution is very poignant and pointed. Paul says He gave both the command and the cup to the disciples 'when He had supped'; it was the night of His betrayal and apprehension. Although His manner was the same as when He gave the bread, His actions this time were different. He drank of the cup Himself before He handed it to those whom He loved. He blessed the cup, gave thanks for it, sipped from it and shared it among His disciples with these words, 'this cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for you — for many — for the remission of sins, drink ye all of it, this do as often as ye drink it in remembrance of me'. In this comprehensive statement, gathered from all the records, many things are brought together: the cup, the shed blood, the New Testament, remission of sins, Jesus, you, many; seven in all.

The Blood of the Covenant

It is noticeable that although Matthew and Mark do not mention the Cup, both speak of the shed blood, while Luke and Paul both speak of the Cup and of the blood, but not of its shedding. However, there is that of which they speak with unanimity, namely all the writers draw our attention to the real content of the blood — the New Testament. This is obviously the most important point. Matthew and Mark use the word 'many' when speaking of the blood-shedding; the former alone adds that it was shed for the remission of sins. Luke is very pointed about it, moving from the wider sphere of 'many' to the more exclusive 'you', while Paul speaking directly to the Corinthian church uses no such term, but simply says, 'this cup is the New Testament in my blood, this do ye as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me'.

The later apostle adds a further comment upon the rite with this illuminating question, 'the cup which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?' So we see that Paul, like Luke, does not mention the blood-shedding at all, neither does he talk about sin or persons, whether many or few. He does, however, emphasise the Lord Jesus and the cup and the New Testament and the blood, and by talking of communion introduces an entirely new dimension. Paul's double emphasis upon the cup, joined together with Luke's report of Jesus' actual words, draws attention to the fact that the cup is directly mentioned three times in all. Add to this the knowledge that both Matthew and Mark also refer to it in the context of the supper and a significant fact emerges, namely that in this context a comparatively unimportant item such as a cup suddenly becomes invested with a very special meaning — it is the cup.

There is a noticeable change of language here. When speaking of the other element of communion, no article is used, 'He took bread'; but when speaking of blood, the definite article is used, 'the cup' or 'this cup'. This cup is the New Testament in His blood which was 'shed for many' — how many we are not told. When the Lord spoke

the words He was telling those men that, important as they were to Him and the Church, His blood was not shed just for them, but for many more than they.

As it had been Slain

It is beyond doubt that by the use of the word 'many' a necessary limiting factor is introduced. In the immediate context of their acquaintances, for instance, the blood of Christ was not shed for such persons as Judas. But even so the Lord's first intention in using the word was not limitation. Consistent with His former words and actions, He was still bent upon widening the apostles' vision. He was thinking also of the whole creation — human and divine. His blood was shed in relation to God's purposes with angels and all Israel. It has significance in every sphere of life, but only the Church of Jesus Christ may drink it. Jesus' blood was not shed for angels' redemption, it was shed for many, but not all of God's creation. He was restating His compassion on the multitudes, causing the few to lift up their eyes and look beyond themselves and that little room — on the many.

When they drank the wine that night, the blood was still in His veins, yet He spoke as though it had been already shed; He had spoken in this same way when He had broken the bread. Everything was steeped in mystery. They did not then understand His words and actions; only afterwards did comprehension come. To ritual was added meaning, and later understanding by the Spirit. The Lord was acting and speaking according to plans made before the foundation of the world. To Him the future and the past are always as the present. He is and always has been and ever shall be. He later said of Himself, 'I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore.

Occasionally during His ministry among men the Lord had let out little hints of this secret, but for the greater part of the time He had kept it concealed. This episode in the upper room was one of the times when He deliberately allowed a ray of heavenly light and purpose to shine through. 'The New Testament in my blood which is shed', He said. Although it was still coursing in His veins, in His heart it was already shed; He had not just recently become the Lamb of God. He did not become the Lamb when John identified Him at Jordan, or when men nailed Him on the tree; He was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. He is the Lamb of God now upon the throne. He ever shall be the Lamb in the bosom of the Father in New Jerusalem. He was already the Lamb of God, whether at birth or baptism or crucifixion. He came forth unto men from an ordination and designation in a past eternity, He was speaking that night of the age-abiding love and purpose of God. When He took that cup and spoke, He was looking 'way out beyond that room and those men; His heart saw and longed for the many more.

His actual physical blood was shortly to be shed, some at the whipping-post in the prison, some from His thorn-crowned head in Herod's palace, some in Pilate's judgement-hall, some along the road to Golgotha, some upon the hands of the soldiers as they crucified Him, but mostly it flowed from the cross to the ground, which opened her mouth to receive it. Pigment and plasma of physical blood stained and soaked into a cursed earth. But it did not redeem it. Men shed it to curse their God; they trampled it underfoot; but it came upon the heads of the Jews. It was the innocent cause of Judas' suicide; it validated and consummated all past atonements and redeemed the Church.

In Covenant with Jesus

Jesus knew all this when He gathered His own together for the sacred occasion that night. So into the cup He poured the entire meaning and intention of God, as yet stored in the blood still flowing in His body. His desire was that by that cup He should tryst with them and they with Him to enter into covenant and communion with Him. At that time He personally was in an eternal bond with His Father that He should bring many sons to glory; what He wanted them to do was to share in that oath of commitment. At that time they knew nothing of it, but they loved and trusted Him. 'Drink ye all of it', He said, offering them the cup, and they drank it.

He had already given them the bread of His body; it was all part of the communion; but a bloodless body is a dead body. In order to have life they must have the blood of that body too; so with Him they drank His blood from the covenant cup. Within it was the covenant He had made with His Father. By a solemn exchange of immutable promises they had committed themselves each to each, that God's will may be accomplished; the commitment was absolute. Because of the nature of this oath, not all people may drink it; it can only be shared by those who are prepared to enter into covenant with the Father and the Son, and upon the same grounds. It is only for His elect; it is not for all; only those who have entered into the spiritual truth displayed by the outward act are members of His Church, and they alone.

The many for whom His blood was shed for remission of sins must have clear understanding that they have been forgiven those sins for this purpose. Having been freed from guilt and shame and punishment, they must forthwith enter into sacred covenant with Jesus. Without reservation they must as one solemnly agree with Him to fulfil His Father's will. This involves the absolute necessity that they should become members of His spiritual body and share the spiritual content of His blood. In other words each member must have His nature and personality, and live as He in this world. For this every member must have His Spirit. It is this covenant in its entirety implied by the wine in the cup, which at the feast was referred to as the blood of His bodily life.

He intended the cup to mean and convey to us the entire spiritual content of His combined Godhead and Manhood. Although the blood of this life was spilt on the ground and trampled underfoot at Calvary, the life of the blood was not spilt on the ground; by symbol that was poured into the cup. God's will cupped the life of Jesus unto us; it was as the secret mixture of the divine life with the human. For this He became first a babe, and guarding the sacred union through boyhood and youth grew to manhood. Having perfected it in the fires of temptation He kept it for this moment when He could share it with them. It was for them, only for them, and all the 'many' they represented, though at the time they did not understand what that meant.

You and I are One

Profounder truth than He could then express lay deeper in the cup waiting to be revealed. In Him resided all the seed chosen by God before the world began. Everyone who has been born or shall yet be born of the Spirit is of the life which was in His blood, and already a member of His spiritual body. He is the Seed of all the seed; all are in Him and together with Him comprise His body. 'You are part of Me', He was saying, 'You and I are one'. This is one of the more important reasons why He said, 'do this in remembrance of Me'.

It is by doing these things that we 'show forth the Lord's death', said Paul. He has given us His body to eat and His blood to drink and partaking according to His will, we exhibit His death. What a wonder this is; it is almost a paradox. And yet how true it is, for except He had died the food and drink would not have been available. He laid down His life for us. We remember the all-important occasion, the great triumph, the demonstration of conquest, the achievement of the impossible. The act of breaking the communion in order that we may enter into it is the most important of all the many important things which Jesus accomplished on the cross.

Obedient unto Death

Hanging there He was more deeply concerned about creating the possibility of Communion for men than anything else. He knew that the whole reason for His incarnation and life would climax in that most dreadful moment of forsakenness. It had been known to Him before the foundation of the world. He had faced and undergone it in anticipation then, but the actual manifestation of it lay yet ahead. By the sovereign choice of Jehovah, He was designated the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world, and the immensity of the result of His consent lay weighty upon Him from that point onward — as heavily as when, millennia later He lay sweating in Gethsemane adjacent to Golgotha.

Similarly, when God defined and Moses wrote down the many different sacrifices required by law for the multiplicity of sin's atonements, it all loomed up again in His heart and brought nearer the awful day. It had been ever with Him; there had never been any respite from it, always He was the slaughtered Lamb, the slain lion, the dove destroyed as if it was the dragon. Yet nothing withheld Him from the eternal purpose, and one day, having humbled Himself into a man, at Father's request He went lower still, right out alone into the long-foretold and oft-figured death.

The Supreme Task

Golgotha was the chosen place where it should all be accomplished; from all eternity God had planned for this. Crucifixion was Roman and barbaric, but to Him the cross was a chosen instrument. In the flesh He would suffer the necessary human counterpart of an eternal principle of life. He told Pilate that he could have had no power to crucify Him except it was given from above. How could a heathen man unaided apply God's principles to God? Wood makes a cross for the outward man, but a human judge could not apply the spiritual principle of death to God's Son — only God could do that. God decided that the impossible was going to be achieved that day on the cross. So hanging there at last, Jesus related the unrelatable; He resisted unto blood, yet accepted with all His power; strove with all His might against sin, yet yielded the strength of His body unto death; hating satan, loving God; abominating sin, absolving the sinner, He made the way for God and man to be one.

This was His supreme task, involving many things, each important in its place. Like this, His greatest task, they could only be accomplished here and at the same time. But great as each was, not the unimaginable volume of their united weight, nor the vastness of their combined scope could in any degree resemble the magnitude of the work He had come here chiefly to do. Sacrifice for sin, total redemption, the act of justification and regeneration itself all depended and turned upon this one thing to which He bent all His power — was it possible to open the Communion to men and to create men for the Communion?

The Union of Love

God is The Communion. He is the original unique, eternal life concerning which the Bible is written. Three persons living together in one being is the same as three persons living together in communion; the bond of such perfectness can only be love. Into this Communion the Lord Jesus came to bring us. Yet how He should accomplish it none but His Father and He with the Holy Ghost knew. It is no wonder He said, 'I am the way'; there surely can be no other. The final end in view was so horrific that the final moment of decision was greeted with repeated cries — 'Abba, Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me.'

His pleas at that late hour did not mean that He was drawing back or refusing to go through with the ordeal. He had known and committed Himself to the sacred covenant from the foundation of the world. How could He withdraw from that? By sacred symbol and heartfelt words He had already established the commemorative feast among the apostles. To Him it had been done as though it was all over already, His heart had been brimming with love at the time and still was. With everything in His own hands He deliberately took and broke and gave the bread, and poured out and circulated the wine for His friends to eat and drink. He had no intention of going back on His words and actions. His oath had been as much to them as to His God and Father.

Men only trust with whom they trust, and He had invited their trust without attempting to explain to their understanding all that was involved in what they were doing. They would not — could not — have understood had He attempted it anyway. But He does not ask man's total commitment only to betray it. His cries in the garden were not the cowardly cries of the traitor; He does not betray men. That man lying before God was not failing for fear, He was enquiring of His Father whether or not after all some other way could be found. But no, The Communion of God could only be established for men by Him; there was no other. Being both human and divine, He was the sole hope of men, the true Communion of God and man, He must bear the greatest contradictions of all.

And Myrrh

He cried out from the fires of agony, His sweat pouring from Him for all the world like drops of blood, but the chosen on whose behalf He cried were lying asleep behind Him. He had no illusions. He fully realised that they represented the whole vast company of people, who, oblivious as they, would be for ever unaware. Yet neither their sleep nor their inability to watch with Him through one dark hour embittered His soul; He loved them. He had always known that when He reached the last terrible ordeal now lying so close just ahead of Him, He would be out on His own. He knew that in the final event no-one would be with Him, not even God.

That had been perfectly understood between Father and He from the beginning. Long ago in eternity past He had agreed to it before ever He undertook to be made a man. So desire it as He may, He did not really expect men to stay with Him; why, even God was going to forsake Him. Peter, James and John, who had been chosen by Him to become future pillars of His Church, completely failed Him; they were a disappointment to Him, but He felt no bitterness. All He sought of them was human love and companionship while He committed Himself afresh to His Father's will, that was all. But it was not to be. And so to crucifixion.

A Land not Inhabited

He went to the cross knowing exactly what He must do. It had been talked about, thought through and prayed over again and again. On the Mount of Transfiguration He met Moses and Elijah, His glorified servants, to discuss with them the forthcoming event. He had looked radiantly lovely then, His face changed and His garments had shone with unearthly whiteness as they talked together of the departure He should accomplish at Jerusalem. Strangely enough the word they used while in conversation together about His death was 'exodus' or 'outgoing' (Gk.).

We can only conjecture what it may have meant to Moses, who led and wrote a book about the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, or to Elijah, in whose spirit John Baptist came to Jordan to introduce his Lord to Israel. We only know that to Jesus it meant something much more than either of His companions in glory could comprehend, or be expected to understand. Were they thinking and conversing with Him of His exodus from the world to the Father, or from the grave to glory with the multitude of captives released by Him from captivity? They may have been; it is quite likely that these things were referred to in course of conversation, but to Jesus, even if all the world should be gained thereby, such an exodus would not have been the greatest of all.

The heart that beat beneath His glistening robe was occupied with far more weighty and tragic things than those. For Him the exodus meant outgoing from God. All the world, the whole universe, and all eternity itself hinged on the moment when He should go out from God as did the scapegoat of old into 'a land not inhabited' — by God. It was the darkest moment of time, the black hole of the ages, the supreme test of God; but in Gethsemane, with face on the ground and body bathed with sweat, He finally attained unto it with strong crying and tears. Rising from the dust, Adam the second strode out triumphantly to accomplish God's will with stronger cries and blood at Calvary.

That We may Enter in

Jesus had ever lived in communion with His Father. Nothing had ever broken their communion, it was The Communion — The Fellowship. No-one else was in it but God — Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Cherubim and Seraphim adored and worshipped and served the glorious and mighty three who enjoyed but one Life and Being. With admiring eyes and wondering hearts they hovered around and waited upon their God and King to do His will, yet they were not in The Communion they beheld. But the man Jesus was ever in that holy Communion. On coming to earth He laid aside much, but not that; all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily.

Being made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, He lived on earth as an only-begotten with a father. He only came out from God because Father longed to have many other sons like Jesus with Him in that same Communion. But how? How were they to accomplish it? Could it really be done, and if so when and where? At which point could it be arranged for men to enter into the Communion of the Holy Three? God thought out a plan, charged Jesus with it and commissioned Him to create this opening for men. Therefore, sanctified and sent into the world, His was the duty both to be, and to make the way whereby His Father's and His own wishes should be fulfilled.

Thou art My Beloved Son

We have to be in the Communion. God has never asked us to celebrate it; it is not a service. We have not been instructed to keep it; it is not a memento. We have not been exhorted to observe it; it is not a spectacle. We must be in it. We are either in or out of this Communion. Every man desiring to enter it must go the same way as Jesus the Christ, and in order that he should do so, all the merits of Christ will be imputed to him. Therefore, except a man repent and accept this grace, he cannot enter into the Communion, but must remain forever without. But so surely as he sees and confesses to his basic state of excommunication from God through Adam's sin and seeks salvation from it, he will be forgiven, cleansed and justified from all things and brought into the Regeneration.

However, all these, great as they are, are but the overtures of God's grace, the means and preparations for the highest honour of all, which is entrance and acceptance into the Communion of God. O the honour of being greeted with the words, 'thou art My beloved son, this day have I begotten thee', and again 'I will be to him for a Father and he shall be to Me for a son'. This is the very holiest of the holies. Not now a secret place of the Most High within a tent, a figure of the true copied out from a heavenly pattern, but a Being, and that Person — God. The sons of Israel had a land, the sons of Aaron had a tent, but the sons of the Father have God. Israel never had communion, they had a Passover; they never had reconciliation, they had atonements (many); they never had regeneration. They had redemption, sanctification, purification and a host of other necessary, though lesser things that God provides for men, but we have God Himself.

After the Order of Melchisedec

How carefully Jesus distinguished between the Passover and the communion in the upper room that night. Just which of these was the last supper it is hard to decide. Whichever meal it was, it was surely the last one He ate with them on this earth; except for the fish and honey He ate before them in the evening of resurrection day, we do not know that He partook of another meal. In the case of the communion it is perhaps more true to look upon it as a breakfast rather than a supper, for it was the first meal of a new era, even as the Passover was on the day it was inaugurated.

Upon that occasion God also instituted a great time-change for His people. True enough it was eaten at night, but although it was the last meal of the day, it was the first meal of an era then dawning as new as could be for Israel. But when Jesus partook of it with His disciples in His day, it was truly a supper, for it was the final meal of the closing dispensation of the law which He fulfilled. Fulfilling it He removed it, swiftly replacing it with another which was to be the inaugural meal of the opening dispensation of grace, a breakfast indeed.

There must be no ground for mistake though, no confusing the two meals. He made a complete break between them by an interlude of foot-washing. 'Rising from supper and laying aside His garments He girded Himself' for the task (how significant the words seem now) and washed His disciples' feet ere He allowed Himself to institute and they to partake of the communion. They had walked that old path long enough, now they must walk the new. They who were not priests of the Old Covenant were to be priests of the New; they were to handle and eat the New Sacrifice and drink the New Blood.

The Supreme Sacrifice

It was all symbolical; there was nothing sacerdotal or actually sacrificial about their actions as they sat at that table of love in communion with their Lord. Matthew was a Levite, but he gave no attendance upon priests fulfilling their duties at an altar that day; with his companions he was elected to become a priest of the New Covenant and his great High Priest was installing him with them into office. There was no doubt that by these things the Lord was introducing to them all a wholly new concept of priesthood. 'Do this', He said, 'in remembrance of Me, and broke the bread and gave it to them.

What He did was an example and exposition of voluntary self-breaking for the purposes of self-giving with a view to total self-distribution. The supreme sacrifice so soon to be offered was at that moment being tendered to them as their example. Presently they were to see Him give Himself up to those who should finally put Him to death; He even restrained Peter from fighting to prevent it. There was to be no resistance; He gave Himself. Treacherous betrayal, cowardly denial, brutal savagery, mock trial, false condemnation, cruel crucifixion and cold death must be suffered with dignity and take their toll, but none of these would find Him a reluctant slave forced to do things against His will. Whatever He felt about it in Himself, His act was love. He, the High Priest, did this, therefore all the priests must do the same. They could not make the reconciling sacrifice, but cannot live except they make the spiritual one.

Only once need the redeeming sacrifice be made; Jesus Himself only did it once. It was the final act in the end of the age of atonement by bloodshed for sin. Unlike men of old, or of His own generation, He never made the actual bodily sacrifice daily or even yearly, but once and eternally. Yet according to the plan of the ages He instituted the communion on the anniversary of the day when the feast which most nearly corresponded to it was originally established in Israel. No other day but this would have served the purposes of God — He always does everything with absolute correctness in age-abiding affinity with truth.

A Kingdom of Priests

It was pure perfection. By God's command throughout Israel's national history the annual Passover was a most individual occasion. On that day instead of the Aaronic family functioning in their substitutional capacity for all Israel, each householder became a priest unto God. Every family took and slew its own lamb and handled and sprinkled the blood for themselves. In addition to that, instead of one family of male priests exclusively eating some selected portions of the sacrifice in God's house by divine command, each member of the race took and handled and ate his or her share of the entire lamb in his or her own house. So we see with what wondrous felicity and inspired insight, as well as absolute simplicity, the Lord instituted the basic meal of His New Covenant. The Passover was conceived, inaugurated and framed for this very reason. The Lord Jesus did it all precisely in order to introduce to them the next phase of God's predetermined plan to establish His kingdom in the hearts of men.

The Passover lamb(s), whether slain initially in Egypt, or successively in the desert, and finally in Canaan, were not brought to an altar to be consumed in fire by God. Only what was left over, that is what was more than the people could eat, was burned up. Even then it was not burned upon an altar as a sacrifice, nor was it offered up by a priest. It was done by the master of the house. Israel's Passover lamb was not offered

up to God; on the contrary God gave it to Israel. By eating the lamb Israel offered and gave themselves to God. As He said, Israel is my firstborn.

The Passover feast was commanded to the people by God with direct intention, the implication of the ritual was that the entire nation should consider themselves to be priests. This was the righteous ground upon which God could later say of Israel that they were a kingdom of priests unto Him. At that time the Aaronic priesthood had not been ordained, nor had the men of the tribe of Levi any more privileges than the men of every other tribe. The head of every house was the priest, he slew the lamb and sprinkled the blood according to God's commandment. Israel was God's house, His firstborn — every single one of them. They were a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people to Him, and as such needed no special priests. Only later for practical purposes was the priesthood established and men ordained to be servants in God's house.

A Chosen Generation

Reading Peter's first epistle, it becomes very evident that he had a very clear grasp of these things. In chapter 2, verse 9, he plainly states it; he further substantiates it in chapter 1, verse 2. The blood of individual and national redemption was first shed in Egypt where Israel were strangers. It was not shed at the altar of the Tabernacle. At that time it did not even exist. When at last the altar was made, the blood shed there was the blood of atonements, not redemption. Redemption took place in Egypt by national bloodshed, not in Canaan by priestly bloodshed.

When the Passover was subsequently remembered, the priesthood had been established, but even the priest, as well as people, had to shed the blood of redemption for himself and his own house just as everyone else. He could not do it for another or another's house, but only for his own. When he was elected he could shed the blood of atonement for another. Indeed he was purposely ordained to do that, but he had to shed the redeeming blood for himself and his family. This was not done at the altar, but at his own house; the Passover was as absolutely personal as God could make it.

In the New Covenant however all is one. Whatever it is that God has intended and provided for us is comprehended and included in the once shedding of the blood of Jesus, but it was not so in Israel. What a wonderful scheme God devised when He ordained multiplicity of blood-offerings for Israel. By them He set forth the things which differ that we may easily distinguish truth. Where redemption is concerned we must each know by experience that we are an individual member of the chosen generation (which was redeemed in and out from Egypt), a royal priest, a holy person, a being peculiarly precious to God, to show forth the praiseworthy virtues of Him (the Lamb whom we have eaten) who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.

The Lesser Light

The Children of Israel ate their lamb in the dim glow of the artificial light which lit their mean hovels in Egypt. True it was better than the midnight darkness without, or the stygian gloom which a few days earlier had enwrapped and depressed all Egypt beyond Goshen in the prophetic blackness of doomsday now swiftly advancing. But compared with ours, their light held no marvels, although it held joy that the firstborn of the home was preserved in life. Peter, who was there in the upper room with the

other apostles and the Lord, ate the Passover lamb according to the law. Whether at that time he understood the silent testimony to his own priesthood involved therein is open to question, but there is no questioning the fact that he thoroughly grasped the implied meaning of his nation's and his own personal past history when he wrote his epistles. He knew then that he was indeed a royal priest.

The Lord in the Midst

Bearing all this in mind, perhaps we can furnish a reason for the foot washing episode described by John. It certainly was an outstanding action by the Lord. He knelt and washed His disciples' feet at the time they were passing from the old, typical redemption of Israel to the new, present, actual and eternal redemption of God's people. The Lord was deliberately intending to end the repetitious Passover and the annual attestation to their priesthood it implied. No longer was their meal to consist of slain lamb and herbs of bitterness eaten behind doorways sprinkled with blood within, and under which Jehovah their almighty Saviour stood for their protection.

Instead the meal which was established only in unleavened bread and a cup of wine was eaten with and in the presence of the Lord who was in the midst. They saw the Lord, heard Him and handled Him and He saw and heard and handled them; they were in true fellowship and were proclaiming that fact. They were the first priests of the new order; seeing what He did and doing it as He said they bore testimony to permanent, personal redemption. Their act symbolised complete reconciliation to God for the purpose of regeneration into His communion, in which every man is a priest communing with his God and with his fellow-priests, one glorious family, nation, temple, body. So it was that the Lord brought in and established in symbols the real communion for His Church for the rest of time.

We have Fellowship

In this simple meal, properly understood, lies the true basis of all spiritual sacrifices, Although by it we primarily show His death till He come, by it also we show forth our own death till He come. It is the simplest yet profoundest manifestation of both Christ's and the Church's universal sacrifice. Doing this we proclaim that we, as He, are a broken body — a breaking body and yet a whole body. The symbol of our unique union is demonstrated by breaking bread in common. It is utterly paradoxical, and yet that is why and how it is so true. We do this in remembrance of Him who did it thinking of us. He did it in prospect, we do it in retrospect, for the Communion is the foundation of the priesthood so dearly loved and taught by Peter.

Not only he, but John also taught it, although he does not introduce the theme as such; rather his thought is brotherhood through son-ship. Listen to him as he unfolds the same glorious truth in another way. 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and handled of the Word of Life. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that you also may have fellowship (communion) with us, and truly our fellowship (communion) is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ if we walk in the light as He is, in the light we have fellowship (communion) one with another'. This is the way in which Communion and Priesthood are spoken of by John. In their own different ways all the New Testament writers make the Communion the central theme of their message.

Into the Holiest

Following the birth and institution of the Church on earth, there is no record of the communion meal being repeated between the time of the actual Passover at which Christ died and rose again and the occasions referred to as 'breaking of bread' in Acts chapter 2. The reasons for this are: (a) the feast is only for the Church, (b) the Lord had first to complete and crown the system of atonements under which Israel had for centuries existed as a redeemed nation. By His superior death He fulfilled atonement and replaced it with Reconciliation, He then entered into the Holiest in heaven and poured forth the Spirit. By this He promulgated that Reconciliation and installed the Communion in the Church. Until this was done there could be no Communion, for it was not yet established for men.

Communion is referred to by Paul as 'of the Holy Ghost', who, John tells us, was 'not yet given' while Christ was on earth. The Communion was therefore impossible for men until Pentecost. Because this is so, the fact arises that just as the Communion is impossible outside of the Spirit, so also is it impossible outside of the Church. Therefore, of all things that could possibly happen to a person, excommunication is to be the most dreaded, viz, to be refused the symbols of communion because cut off from the Communion. The sentence symbolises being cut off from God and the Church — damned.

Union with God

After leaving Egypt, except during the Passover, no man but he who belonged to the family of Aaron was a priest in Israel. During that era the heavily-veiled presence of God testified to the nation that everything was covered, Even the substitutionary lambs and blood, and all offerings for atonement, gracious as they showed God to be, declared God's policy of covering sin until He who was the unique and original Lamb should come and shed His reconciling blood. At that time being made man's sin, He completely bore it away and making man God's righteousness, brought him into union with God.

The thought of reconciliation started in the counsels of the Trinity in the heart of God; just when we cannot tell. Conceived originally in the mind and will of God, it had for its foundation the oneness of the Trinity. Brought to earth in the incarnation, it was displayed to perfection in the union of God and man in the Man-God, Christ Jesus. Later it was effected for man by God in Christ at Calvary and is now made effectual to man in the Holy Ghost. This effect is finally displayed by man and God in Communion.

Ye do Show Forth

The passage most quoted when the saints partake of the elements is to be found in 1 Corinthians 11. In the tenth chapter Paul speaks of the elements in quite the reverse order from which each of the synoptists refers to them and indeed to his own order in the later chapter. Some have found difficulty with this; some even have suggested that by so doing, Paul has set forth an alternative method for the order of the feast. Most find it incomprehensible. In any case we may well ask why the apostle in this passage should so definitely place the cup before the bread. He undoubtedly did so in wisdom under the inspiration of God, but why this should be so remains a mystery to the majority. The truth is that in doing this Paul pens one of his most profound and

inspiring passages, introducing the surprising statement by saying that he speaks as to wise men. He asks all to judge what he has to say. With what wisdom God has given us let us do just that.

Members One of Another

Paul is here speaking in plainest terms of the Communion of the body of Christ. His emphasis at this point is not on the usual theme of remembrance of Christ and our communion with Him, but on our communion with one another as members of His body. Upon thought this is seen to be just another way of speaking of communion with Christ. He has already stated in an earlier chapter that each member of the body is a member of the Christ of many members. His main stress in this section is perhaps best expressed in a phrase he uses to the Ephesians: 'we are members one of another'. This is the mood in which he approaches the commemorative meal here — it is 'the communion of the blood' 'the communion of the body', it is the communion of member with member.

Because this is his particular intention at this point, he departs from the usual order and speaks of the elements in the order by which we originally enter into the Communion. The later time-honoured order is the perfectly correct and logical way in which we partake of the elements once we are in the Communion. But to enter into the Communion we must first drink His blood, for the New Covenant is specifically stated to be in His blood. Every man who would enter into and become a member of the body of Christ must realise that he may only do so by drinking the blood of Christ. Having entered by the blood into Christ and become members of the body, we afterwards continue in the communion by the symbolism of first breaking and eating of the bread, and having done so, taking and drinking of the cup.

The Cup of Trysting

How truly we each in turn bless the cup so full of blessing to us, which signifies the sum total of all heavenly blessings in Christ. It gathers blessing unto itself as we thankfully own our communion to be in His precious blood and in turn bless and add our blessings to it. The symbolic blood in the cup is not to be thought of in this aspect as redemptive, sanctifying or cleansing, but as the blood of the cup of trysting and covenant, cumulative of blessing. It is His blood containing the blessings of His life, to which we add the eulogistic, heartfelt blessings of our life also, so that it overflows with the blessings of Christ and His Church. It is the communion of the body; the Head with the members and the members one with another and all together.

We eulogistically aggregate the conscious mystic communion of our lives too as we break the bread, for it is we who are that one bread. In the other passages it is written that the Lord is the bread, and so He is, and thanks be to God that this is the aspect most deservedly emphasised. But in the jubilation of our thanksgiving for this, let us not overlook the clear insistence of the apostle here, 'we being many are one bread and one body'. The bread is ours and us, the wine is ours and us, the body is ours and us, the blood is ours and us. O the miracle of it! 'All things are yours', writes this inspired man, 'and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's; ye are the body of Christ and members in particular; as the body is one and hath many members so also is Christ'

We, being Many, are One Body

What truth! What a Communion! Such a communion is The Communion indeed. The breach has been made, the gap closed, the way made clear and the end achieved, Hallelujah! By this we see the immensity of the folly and sin of schism. God hates and condemns it. Schism is that which breaks the Communion among men.

Difference of opinion does not, but deliberate schism does, Its worst feature is that it appears (if it does not attempt) to falsify the truth that The Communion cannot be broken ever again.

O how great is the need amongst us to discern the body of Christ in these days. Praise God, Communion does not rest upon denominational emphases or exclusivism, or the various 'communions' of men, but is of the Holy Ghost. We who are regenerate have all been made perfect in one and are come to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn ones written in heaven. The full gathering is there. On earth we are of necessity separated into little groups, but there on Mount Zion we are all gathered together, one large assembly around the throne in New Jerusalem, with an innumerable company of angels and perfected spirits in the presence of God the Judge of all and of Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant and the speaking blood. Our communion is in the Spirit with the Father and with His Son through grace and love.

The Communion is entire. It is of the whole body. We all together with our Head are the Christ's body; the body and the blood and the Spirit are all ours now. We with God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, are all one. That is the Communion. Hallelujah"

01-09-01

First published Jan.1977.

Revised Jan.1979.

Reprinted Dec.1991.

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THE CROSS

Experienced
and
Revealed

G.W.NORTH

THE CROSS

Experienced and Revealed

To read Paul's epistles is to discover that his greatest reason for writing always was to present Jesus Christ to his readers. Whatever else Paul wrote about, his main theme was always Christ and could be no other for He was Lord of his life; he was totally devoted to Him. In some of his epistles, side by side with this main theme Paul also presents the cross. Whenever he does so it is as his secondary theme only; it never takes first place; he does this because in his opinion next to his Lord there is no theme so important to mankind as the cross. Sometimes when speaking of the Lord Paul emphasizes this, deliberately uniting the Lord with His cross with a kind of phrase like this: 'Christ crucified'. He did this because he had discovered that the Lord and the cross are for ever joined, both by experience and by revelation he knew that in the plan of God the Christ and the cross always were joined. Jesus Christ the Son of God is the crucified Christ of God for all eternity. He is not now hanging on the cross bodily — that could never be or He would be eternally dead and totally ineffective; it is His bodily resurrection that makes the cross all the more important, for it proves the effectiveness of the spiritual cross.

Paul had much to say about the cross to the Galatians. It is not a very lengthy epistle but for its size this epistle has more of the cross in it than any other of his writings; into it he packed a vast amount of information about the crucifixion not so directly stated elsewhere in his own works or in anyone else's either. As may be expected, the Gospel writers have much to say about the cross: it is the focal point of their ministry; they were raised for this purpose. These tell us of Calvary and all the events which took place there and between them furnish all the world with all it needs to know about the historical cross and the resurrection that followed three days later. Unlike them, Paul, not being a disciple of Jesus Christ during His earthly day, was unable to write an eye-witness account of the crucifixion. Instead to him was granted the privilege of writing about the cross from a different viewpoint altogether. We are greatly indebted to him and to the Spirit who inspired him for all the wonderful things he revealed so full of truth and power. He said amazing things about the cross, unparalleled in the whole of the sacred writings; quite a lot of these are in this epistle.

One of the most astonishing of them is in the opening verse of the third chapter: 'O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you?' At first glance this is one of the most astonishing statements in the whole Bible and appears to be a mistake. Jesus Christ was crucified in Palestine outside the walls of Jerusalem and not in Galatia. How then could Paul tell the Galatians that Christ was crucified before their eyes? He was not even crucified before Paul's eyes — he had not been at the crucifixion, he was not a believer in Christ when it happened and was certainly not among those who stood around or near the cross. Far from being a heartbroken disciple at that time he was an enemy of Christ; he thought then that Jesus was a Nazarene impostor, a religious charlatan. However, when he wrote his epistles he knew plenty of people who had been present at the execution; since his conversion they had become his friends.

It may be taken for granted that as often as he could he discussed with the rest of the apostles the details of that death and could have talked about them as they had been reported to him by eye-witnesses of the event, but he never did that. When he wrote to the Galatians or anyone else about the cross he was not recounting stories he had heard or facts he had gathered, reliable as they were; he was speaking of things he knew by personal experience. His sources of knowledge were twofold: (1) his own personal experience; (2) Christ's direct revelation and tuition. His claims in the epistle are likewise twofold: (1) 'I have been crucified with Christ'; (2) 'I certify you brethren that the gospel which was preached by me was not of man, but by revelation of Jesus Christ'. These are tremendous claims and they present the irreversible order of God for the impartation of all such knowledge: first he was crucified, then he was taught. Something happened to him and then it was explained to him; it is important for us to note that - the truth was only revealed to him following his experiential knowledge of the truth of the crucifixion. It becomes much clearer to us when we realize that the words 'evidently set forth', are better translated 'graphically described'. The meaning of the verse should be interpreted in the light of his earlier statement in the first chapter, 'it pleased God to reveal His Son in me'.

The fact of the crucifixion is indisputable, as both secular and sacred historians record, and seeing that so many trustworthy people had written of it, Paul did not regard it as part of his duty to describe the crucifixion scene again. Being a Roman he was familiar enough with the Roman method of capital punishment; it was practised worldwide throughout the Roman empire and he was a free-born member of that empire. His four friends, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, wrote copiously of Jesus Christ; they were ideally suited for the task. Two of them wrote from first-hand knowledge of events; one of them, it is thought, wrote at the dictation of Peter, who also had first-hand knowledge of the proceedings; the other wrote a thoroughly researched account gathered from many eye-witnesses. These four were inspired of God to write as they did according to the knowledge they had, and their combined testimony is authentic. That was not Paul's field of investigation or testimony. He wrote of the cross from experience, plus the revelation and explanation of it given to him by the Lord Himself.

It was this that enabled Paul to write so comprehensively about the cross. Not that he wrote about the cross itself very often or very much - by far his greatest writings were about the person who hung thereon and what He accomplished by it. The death Christ died there was what engrossed him so; Paul saw the cross in the same light as the Lord Himself saw it and spoke of it with Moses and Elijah on the mount. In discussion with them He spoke about His decease (Gr. exodus) which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Peter, James and John who were with the Lord at the time did not hear what He was saying; they did not know anything about it; they were asleep! They did not hear how He talked about His death, what they heard were His later declarations about being delivered into the hands of men and being crucified; they heard about the cross and eventually saw it, but they never saw His accomplishments thereby. What those apostles missed through sleep then Paul received by direct revelation later and, being better informed than they, he talked about the accomplishments of the death of that cross rather than the details of the cross of that death. He thoroughly understood what they found to be such a mystery at the time. Doubtless they too came to understanding about it eventually, but though they did so, they never wrote about it as did Paul.

Because Paul understood it so well he was able to preach and write of it with clarity and great understanding. To the Corinthians he set down in masterly fashion God's philosophy of the death of Christ. It was not the philosophy of this world though, he made it clear to them that by the cross of Christ God had made foolish the wisdom of this world. The basis of all his reasoning and consequent preaching was the Logos of the cross, but it made nonsense to the princes of this world. Man's philosophies are not built upon the principle of death and resurrection; it is the antithesis of all worldly wisdom and He did it purposely that He may introduce His own eternal wisdom into men's thinking. The illuminated Paul wrote: 'we thus judge that if one died for all, then (by that act) all died, and (we also judge) that he died for all (so) that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him which died for them and rose again'. It is a very matter-of-fact premise on which to approach all life and a most penetrating one too. How very true it is, a revelation indeed; but this wisdom is hidden from men, it is nowhere to be found in the whole of Greek Philosophy.

So Great a Death

To be a God of wisdom God has to be a God of reason too. This is why He revealed to Paul: (1) the reasoning behind the cross; (2) the reason for the cross; and (3) the power of the cross. This revelation became the fundament of Paul's gospel, it furnished him with the ground of all his arguments; by it he was intellectually equipped to stand among his equals and with solid reason state the gospel of total salvation for the whole of mankind. He did not lay a foundation for universalism though; he thoroughly grasped the fact that though all men died when Christ died, all men did not come alive when Christ was made alive. In heart-conviction he fearlessly stated truth so that God's methods should be understood by all who wish to know them. He saw what few men have seen, namely that by Christ God dealt with the entirety of man. What Pilate said to the people at Christ's trial was perhaps more perceptive than most men think; when "Jesus came forth wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe Pilate saith unto them, 'Behold, the man. "Crucify Him, crucify Him"' they said. It filled their hearts, so He who alone was the real, complete man was crucified.

To God that was the important thing - the man had to die. It was all-important to the enraged mob of religious fanatics - they wanted the man dead, but it was more important to God that He died; God wanted the man dead. He wanted Him dead for other reasons than the ones for which they wanted it, far greater reasons, in fact the greatest of all reasons, the most important reasons in the universe, reasons important to God. Beyond human concepts or understanding, even to the initiated — those who are made privy to the secret and the mystery of it — God wanted Him dead. Beside Christ none of those who were included in the crucifixion or who witnessed it had any conception of what was most truly afoot in the invisible world of spirit that day. They could not see what God was doing. They did not know what had to be done, hence the folly of trying to formulate opinion. Most probably this was one of the reasons why darkness descended on the scene and covered the people and the whole land for three long hours. It held while Christ endured the agonies entailed in changing the source and course of man's spiritual life and the sources and laws of human heredity.

Men could not see the love in the heart of the Saviour. God was showing them that they could not see; they were blind, they had always been blind, they had never understood. Everything was beyond them in a different sphere, a world into which

they could not enter. Men had no knowledge of what was going on, they were groping in the dark. Paul had been one of that company once, but now he knew; for our benefit by the election of God he was given to understand. When the glorified Christ revealed it to him he saw it all as clear as daylight. In the world's great darkness at the cross that day God was resolving His own problems and man's problems too. These problems were not problems to God in the same sense as they were problems to man; they never overwhelmed Him or left Him puzzled to know what to do about them, but they were nevertheless great and troublous things to Him. Since before the creation of the world (and since the creation of the world when troubles had arisen in Eden) these had remained with Him unresolved and unresolvable throughout history until Golgotha. That is why there was a Golgotha - there had to be a Golgotha so that God could resolve them all.

In order to settle the matter once for all God had to have a man, for it was with man that His greatest trouble and heartbreak lay; God made Adam, he was His and Satan slew him. Satan put Adam to death. Not by crucifixion, nor by stoning; it was not a physical thing at all; it was a death more sinister and deadly than that and utterly irremediable by man. The effects of that death were terrible to contemplate in the immediate, for it was a living death — Adam became a living, breathing death. But, bad as that was, it was as nothing compared with the long-term effects of that death; it was corrosive, corrupting, spreading death, all the more insidious and dangerous because it was invisible and undetectable, and so contagious. Adam was such a powerful person, he was so potent that when it happened to him all mankind died with him; when Satan put Adam to death he put us all to death, as Paul saw and said - 'death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned'.

When God made Adam He made us all; all mankind was in him. Proof of this is that one day He put Adam to sleep and took a rib from him and of it made another person; she was in him and had been in him all the time. God made her in him first and then from his substance made Eve. Her inward substance and shape was in him all the time. When she first appeared to Adam in outward form he called her 'Isha', meaning taken from within man' (Ish); except that she was a woman, when made she was exactly like Adam. In nature, character, personality and potential she was the same; God's purpose in making her in female form and potential was that from within her others like them both may be begotten from Adam; the whole race of men was in them right at the beginning. Since the fall of Adam and Eve the whole human race has been dead; in effect we all died then — we were put to death by Satan when he put death into Adam, even though we had not been born and had not personally sinned we died with Adam. We died in Adam when, through his sin, he lost spiritual contact with God.

Adam lost the power to beget righteous children, all the potential governing the spiritual life and possibilities of his seed was changed then. He became a power for evil and not for good from that moment. That is why Paul said, 'In Adam all die'; thank God he also wrote 'In Christ shall all be made alive', thus completing the couplet. He was speaking of spiritual states and potential, not guaranteeing life universal for all mankind, for we are all sinners by nature and quite dead. We are not dead because we have sinned, on the contrary we sin because we are dead; death is the result of sin and sin is the evidence of that death. The fact that we have sinned proves that death has passed upon us. We sin because we are cut off from God and exist in a state of death. Sin is death's corruption.

This is the reason why the Lord Jesus, when on earth, never condemned sinners. God says He did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world and Jesus never once did it. He came that the world through Him might be saved. He loved to say things like 'neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more'. He never once directly called a man a sinner; it would have been true if He had done so — He could have called every man a sinner, but because He was the perfectly sinless one He never did so. Marvellous as this is in our eyes, the reason for it lies in His very sinless perfection, He was too good to say such things to men. He knew that if He had not been born the sinless Son of God He too would have been a sinner. A man cannot be blamed for being a sinner; we sin because it is natural for us to sin; He sinned not, because it was not natural to Him to sin. He had not the nature to sin, He did not desire to sin, He never chose to sin, He could not be tempted to sin, He kept Himself from sin, He would not succumb to sin and finally He expiated sin; He is Adam the second. Surely in spiritual life and power He is Adam the first.

He was the last Adam also. The first Adam was made perfect by a perfect Creator in a perfect creation, the last Adam was made perfect in an imperfect environment; the first Adam succumbed to sin through temptation, the last Adam resisted sin unto blood and was made even more perfect through suffering. The first Adam was of the earth - earthy, the last Adam was the Lord from heaven, a life-giving spirit. There were two Adams. Jesus Christ was not in Adam — He was in God and came forth from the Father. As God chose to put all men in Adam, so He chose to put all His sons in Christ and He did so potentially before He put us all in Adam. The first Adam was put to death by Satan, the last Adam was put to death by God, and as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. The fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead is the guarantee that every man shall rise from the dead; every man's experience was in some measure chosen in Christ.

We all, whether saved or unsaved, were for some purpose and to some degree included in Christ. God determined everything and everybody by His Son. Not every person was chosen in Him as is the Church (called in scripture the elect of God) but nothing was made apart from Christ. All things and persons were made by Him and for Him; all things consist by Him, they have done so from the beginning and still do to this very moment. He is before all things; in all things He has the pre-eminence, He is the firstborn of every creature, He is also the firstborn from the dead. 'In Him we (all) live and move and have our being and He is the Saviour (Preserver) of all men, especially of them that believe'. There is no exception to this, nor can there ever be - the whole creation, animate and inanimate, material and spiritual, celestial and temporal, was cast in one mould and that mould is Christ.

Everything was chosen and settled either in or in relationship to Christ before the foundation of the world. Each according to its order and in its time was designed to be in and of and by and through Him. Even sin itself could only exist as being somehow associated with Him; it was not in Him as of divine nature, nor yet as of human nature - it did not originate with Him, indeed it was entirely foreign to Him, but it became His by gift of God at Calvary. Satan could not give Him sin, man could not give Him sin, He would accept it of neither, but He accepted it from His God and Father; so really did He accept it that He became it - 'He was made sin for us'. He who knew no sin, who could not be made to sin, was made sin by His Father whom He loved; God made Him the horrible nature and ugliest form and worst manifestation of sin. The Man was made the man of sin, the best and highest became the worst and lowest, and

because the second Adam took this nature, form and personality of the first Adam, God slew Him. The devil could not kill Him, man could not kill Him, sin could not kill Him, Rome could not kill Him, Jewry could not kill Him, civil law could not kill Him, ecclesiastical law could not kill Him, yet He had to be killed. Only God could kill Him, so He did - He had to.

This is precisely why God made a second man on the earth; it just could not be that Satan should have the final word about anything. When Christ was slain for us it was not as a result of a contest between God and man, though on the surface it seemed like it; it was the outcome of the conflict between God and Satan. In Eden Satan took the initiative, on the cross God took the initiative; indeed He did so at Nazareth by approaching Mary. Both God and Satan started with virginity, Adam was virgin, so was Christ. Adam lost his virginity, Christ maintained His, Adam became old Adam, Christ is the new Adam; He was also the last Adam. There has not been another Adam since Christ, Adam is a beginning: Christ is The Beginning: old Adam has ceased, God who made him slew him, Christ lives and continues for ever.

This is what lay behind Christ's mysterious words, 'and I if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me', signifying what death He would die. All men were drawn unto Him on the cross and slain there; they were either put to eternal death as being in old Adam or presented to God as being made new in the new Adam: by His greatness and glory all were in Him. Whether in condemnation or salvation God ended the race there. Every man since, though born of the same humanity and in the same physical form as first Adam, is now totally responsible to the superior second Adam. This has far-reaching implications and effects, altogether too numerous to be dealt with here. Among the greatest of these is the implementation of God's intention that no man shall go to hell for first Adam's sin - men will die eternally only if they reject Christ. Adam will have to answer for his own sin and so will everyone else; it is comforting to know that no man is responsible for another man's sin; with the exception of Jesus Christ each one is answerable to God for his or her own sin. Herein lies the wonder of Christ — He was made responsible for the sin of the world, first Adam bore the responsibility and guilt of bringing sin into the world, second Adam bore the responsibility and glory of taking it out.

All men became sinners by Adam's sin; because of that sin they also had the death sentence passed upon them. This death sentence is not sentence to eternal damnation in Gehenna, it is sentence to the death of being cut off from God. Of itself this death, being the logical result of the act of disobedience against God, manifested itself in and still consists in a state of unawareness of God's presence or even of His existence and a complete inability to do His will or even to desire Him. This is the result of the compound sins of generations of men and it has confused the real issue between Satan and man, against God; it has also brought the world to its present state of corruption. The proof that death has passed on all men is that all men have sinned and that most men still do; as sin brought in death and death reigns over all, so sovereign death brought compulsive unavoidable sinning to all. Without Christ it is impossible for man to exist without being a consistent sinner.

Both first and second Adam were sovereigns. To be born of first Adam's line meant that a person must sin because that was what was involved in Adam's transaction with Satan - it was a sovereign act affecting heredity; he made a choice and conformed the race. To be born of second Adam's line means that a person need not sin because this

is what was involved in Christ's transaction with God; He also made a race-conforming choice. Adam need not have sinned any more than Christ needed to sin. Both Adam (originally) and Christ were free from sin; Adam was not compelled to sin, he was not compelled to be sinless either. When he sinned no-one made him do it, he did it quite voluntarily; satan breached his obedient love for God through his fleshly love for his wife. He was vulnerable and weak through love, and an incorrect evaluation of the seeming results of her sin caused him to sin with her. The results of his sin have continued, unavoidable and utterly disastrous, all the worse because the sin was an entirely voluntary choice. Likewise with Jesus, no-one compelled Him to remain sinless; when satan tempted Him He chose not to sin. His strength was His love for God and His Church; His correct evaluation of the immediate, as well as the eternal results of sin, made Him choose aright and the results of His unwavering choice are blessings incalculable. The effects of these two men's lives and deaths upon the lives and deaths and destinies of all mankind are totally immeasurable. God have mercy upon us all.

From all this two facts emerge, one of which we will consider here: (1) all men of first Adam's line are born free from righteousness and bound to sin; (2) all men of second Adam's line are born free from sin and able to live in righteousness. The first of these points we considered earlier as it is exemplified in Paul and set out for us in scripture; we will not return to it here. The second we will spend time on here, for it holds good for every child of God as well as Paul. From the moment he is born again no child of God is bound to sin; on the other hand neither is he bound not to sin, neither is he forced to live in righteousness all his days. He has been born of God's purpose that He should sin no more, but as with Adam (both first and second) he is left free to sin if he chooses. The new birth is in sinlessness, it consists in the re-creation of the spirit and the reclamation of the soul and the reformation of the whole moral nature. At that moment the will is unshackled, the body is quickened and newness of life commences, the man is redeemed and set free to obey God. He is not made free from sin for any other reason; this is God's love-gift to him, it is eternal life. But he is not forced to obey God, God does not want slavery in His kingdom — everything must be done voluntarily. Because this is so the possibility that a man may lapse back into the old Adam state at any time remains; if he does not

obey God it is inevitable that he will do so. This cannot happen accidentally — sin is not inevitable for the saint. Being made free from sin he can keep free from sin by choice. A phrase borrowed from Oswald Chambers puts this more perfectly: he says that growth is by 'a series of moral choices'; this is why in regeneration a man's whole moral nature is renewed.

God makes men free; the only bond God forges round a man is holy love. God wants the love of free moral agents; for this a man must bind himself to God in faithfulness as Christ did — this alone is freedom. Every man wishing to do this will receive grace from God to do it; this is man's righteousness. This is the reason why Christ's righteousness is first imputed and then imparted to men. The righteousness of the man Jesus hinged upon His moral choices. He chose to obey God. This basic original and accumulated righteousness of Christ became the ground of our salvation. The accumulated righteousness of His constant obedience as a man — even unto death — added to His innate righteousness as being one of the persons of God, secured regeneration for us.

The reason lying deep, almost like a compulsion, in the heart of God for the cross was this — the death of man — it was an absolute necessity. The old man, first Adam, must be put to death, so the new man Jesus, the second and last Adam, was put to death as that man; this was the basic necessity. Other great, far-reaching things took place on the cross also, things affecting angels and devils, things of eternal consequence, but none more vital for God and man than this. To God the death of His Son on the cross was the act and the moment and the point of resolution of all mysteries of iniquity, mysteries beyond the comprehension of man's mind. God needed to be justified and exonerated, shown to be right about His dealings with angels and men over sin. By the cross God was justified and because God was justified man was justified also, all happened at once. At the cross the sentence of death was carried out to the full in all realms of morality far beyond man's knowledge.

By the mercy and grace of God something of the vastness and terrors and power of this death were made known to Paul, who sought to compress its meaning into a phrase and express it in these words, 'so great a death'. So great was this death that the apostle found himself in constant need of deliverance from some aspects and degrees of it. With what gratitude he spoke of having been delivered from it in the past, with what joy he testified to being delivered from it in the present and with what confidence he declared he would be delivered from it in the future. He once wrote to the Ephesians about this death saying 'ye were dead in trespasses and sins'. He was not then so much referring to death itself as to its environs, that in which it consists and those things that are related to and associated with it, in much the same way as we associate death with graveclothes and a cemetery and a grave where death is placed. The grave is not death, it is where the dead are buried, the place of the dead; even so, trespasses and sins are not death but in this connection may be thought of as graveclothes.

A living man can put on and wear graveclothes if he pleases; a man does not need to be dead in order to wear the clothes of the dead: it would be unusual and unexpected, in fact distasteful, but not impossible. Possible though it is however, all who beheld it would at best think it a joke or at worst think such a person was unhinged or most peculiar, or more charitably, ill. There is a sad spiritual lesson to be learned here though — many a man who has honestly been given life by the Lord. Jesus is still wearing graveclothes. He has turned back to his old sins and is trespassing against the law of Christ, forging habits and binding strong bands around himself greater and stronger than the chains which bound Legion and from which, unlike Legion, he cannot break free. But because he is a son he can turn again to Christ with all his heart and find repentance and forgiveness and. cleansing and. liberty from the Lord. Christ will then in love restore him to his first condition of life, fill him with the Spirit, clothe him with the garments of salvation and walk with Him in the light. But Paul was not speaking of this when he spoke of death. He was speaking of the deadness and the sheer desolation of it, its total ignorance of God and good. Oh, the terrible power of death, so great that a dead person is absolutely unconscious of the state he is in. He exists in this world cut off from God and does not know it until he departs from it to the place of the departed and the further-removed from which there is no return. There he may only anticipate without hope the second death to which he must be despatched, together with all those who, like him, have rejected Christ.

So universal and great is this death that Paul himself had no knowledge of it until he was delivered from it. It was this that made him so aware of its vastness. He had had

no idea of his need, he had been dead, utterly dead, he said, and had not known it. When he did. discover he was dead it was frightening; he was devastated. He had lived a Pharisee, and as touching the righteousness of the law had been perfect — faultless even — yet he had been dead. He had thought he was alive but he had never known life; except in the will of God in Christ he had never existed even. He once wrote of his experience of self-discovery and of the condition of his existence under law in death. He said he had once been alive (presumably from his birth) without the law, and had existed in that condition until the law came — at what age that happened he does not say, probably from bar-mitzvah onwards — but when the law came he died, he said. He claimed that it was the coming of (the realization of) the law and what it was saying that slew him. Until then sin had lain in him dead, but when the law really reached the true condition of sin in him it revived, and rebelled and he died.

Sin is like the light which Jesus says is darkness, great darkness, how great none but He can tell. Sin in a man can be as holiness and righteousness, this is its greatest power. Paul seems to be referring to a personal experience remarkably similar to the dispensational racial experience of Israel, which is not surprising; God seemed to raise up that nation in order to demonstrate in it every feature of human possibility. Upon consideration this is to be expected, for a nation is only made up of individuals so it must be the sum total of all the individuals in it. More than that, since the whole wide world of men is the sum total of every nation in it, what is basically true of every individual is true of the whole world. Sin came into this world 'as by one man' long before Israel's birth as a nation. Adam was not the first person in the world to sin; tragically he was neither the only one, nor yet the last person to sin in the world. Adam was the second person to commit sin in this world; the very first sin committed in this world was his wife Eve's.

Eve sinned by listening to satan's blandishments, she succumbed to him, believed his lies, partook of the fruit of the tree and gave to Adam who also ate and joined in the transgression. The eyes of them both were immediately opened and they knew they were naked. They had always been naked but until that moment they were not conscious of it. They did not know what nakedness was for it was natural to them and proper. Until that moment presumably the only clothing they had was inward and spiritual; they were naked and unashamed and had lived in that manner outwardly from the beginning. But when they partook of the forbidden tree they knew they were naked and were immediately ashamed. Feeling totally exposed and not understanding why, they contrived some form of clothing for themselves to hide their bodies from each other; they were afraid and when God came into the garden they were so overwhelmed with guilt that they hid from Him. It may be true that until then they had been clothed with ignorance, certainly they had existed in innocence before the Lord and each other. It is also certain that they had lived in righteousness, not the righteousness of the law of Moses, nor yet the righteousness of justification, for Moses had not then written the law, nor had justification been wrought. Their righteousness had been the righteousness of obedience. Until they disobeyed God by eating of the tree there had been no righteousness in them; theirs was the unconscious righteousness of faith, the unselfconscious state of natural life.

The risen Christ had a revelation; God gave it to Him. It was so wonderful that He chose to make it known, so He approached His servant, the apostle John, with this intention and gave him a commandment to pass it on to us. John, being an obedient servant, agreed and disposed himself to his Lord's will. Therefore, pictorially by

vision and directly by dictation, the Lord made known some of the dearest secrets of His heart. One of the things He disclosed to John was that righteousness is like fine linen and should be regarded by us as the raiment He gives to the bride and wife of His heart. It is glorious clothing, He wore it Himself when He hung on the cross. Men would not have believed it, for they did not see it; in their eyes He hung there naked; they had stripped Him and taken away His clothes from Him and nailed Him to the tree, which became at once the tree of the knowledge of evil and death and the tree of good and life. He hung on it naked and unashamed; He did not care what men saw or thought. He had long been dead to that. In the eyes of God He was clothed with an inward clothing that needed nothing outward to cover it. His vesture was all the more glorious because it was dipped in blood — His own righteousness, fine and white, clothed Him there, but it was red; His finest white linen was dyed with His own blood, it was perfect in God's sight. Even when He was made sin on the cross the second and last Adam never lost His righteousness; His death itself was righteousness to Him, and through it He was made righteousness to us. How finely it was woven that day, a fine web of wondrous virtue, whiter than snow, to be imputed to us and imparted to us that we may be clothed with it. O how gladly we wrap ourselves in it! Blessed Spirit robe us in it to suit that heavenly bridegroom, for we love Him. Through Him living righteousness came into the world before, but Adam lost it.

Sin came into the world of men by Adam. He could have prevented it from passing into mankind if he had wished even though he was not the only person to sin on the earth. Eve was not responsible for bringing sin into the world of mankind of herself. She couldn't simply because, being one person and a woman, it was impossible; she could only bear children, she could not beget them. Unless Adam had sinned with her, her misdeed could not have been passed on to other human beings. Adam could have prevented it if he had wished, but in his heart he would not divorce from her, but chose to disobey God and sin with her. It was in this agreement together that sin was passed on — first to his children and thence to the whole race of men. Part of the tragedy of the incoming of sin (perhaps the most tragic part) was the death that came in with it and by it. By Adam's transgression the race became a race of sinners, even though none since has sinned in exactly the same way as he. The whole of mankind is exceedingly sinful, but being dead does not know it; as Paul says, all outside of Christ are without understanding, past feeling and alienated from the life of God — that is death.

So it was that, in common with all men, sin lay undiscovered in Paul's life; as it was in the race as a whole so it was with him as an individual, and with the exception of Jesus Christ so it is with every other individual. Sin never came to light in the race until God gave the law to Israel via Moses; it was there and had been from the beginning, affecting everyone since Adam, but it lay dead in the sense that it was not recognized for what it was, therefore it was not imputed to anyone because everyone was unconscious of its sinfulness in God's sight. Adam's original sin and consequent death was passed on to everyone as a nature to sin and a state of death. Although God has never imputed Adam's sin to anyone else, He could not prevent it from influencing everyone else, even though He knew they would be unaware of the reason for their deadness and would not know they were dead. Death is so universal and so great that even Job, who became a mighty man of God, did not at first know where or how to find Him.

Sin took on many forms and so did death. Perhaps there are as many forms of death as there are expressions of the nature of sin. In another context and with a different emphasis and meaning Paul once said he was in deaths oft. As a result men were in complete ignorance of God and of what He wanted. Strangely enough this death and unawareness is often accompanied by a desire to know God or by becoming a religious zealot. This may be one of its deadliest forms. Atheism is not the only form of death, though it is certainly the suicide of fools. Atheism is the snobbishness of intellectualism, the last stronghold of ignorance, the empty boasting of sin. Thank God not all have been so stupid and from the beginning it was not so. Here and there throughout history men have appeared to whom God revealed Himself or who reached out and found Him, but they were very few. Men have mostly been careless of their state and very defiant and critical of God. So eventually the Lord raised up Moses, that by him He should reveal Himself to men and give them His law and expose sin in some measure. Saul of Tarsus was one of these. The law came to him with such power that he died under it for by it he discovered sin, what it really is. He says these things about the law and sin — 'by the law is the knowledge of sin', 'by the commandment sin became exceedingly sinful', 'by the law sin was enhanced', 'the strength of sin is the law', 'when the commandment (law) came sin revived and I died', 'sin working death in me by that which is good'.

As in Adam, so in Paul, sin worked death. The difference between them lay only in this - Adam knew what sin was and Paul did not, even though he knew the law. Saul of Tarsus could boast that as touching the law he was blameless, yet he discovered he was the chief of sinners. The exceeding sinfulness of the nature and working of sin is revealed in that it used the law, which was spiritual and good, to destroy its victims. We may thank God the age of law is past; but although that is true, the danger is not past. In this present age sin, which once used the law, now uses the gospel to slay its victims. The law and the gospel were not given for this reason though, God gave them to men, that by them He may expose sin and bring His salvation to hearts and lives. When the law really came with power to Paul's heart it brought light to him; it also brought tragedy. For the first time he saw what sin really was and as a result of it promptly died in hopelessness and despair; death was compounded in him and he was confounded by it: 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?' he wailed. When he saw sin as God sees it, sin appeared to him as a body with as many members as there are forms of sin and that body was his self. Confused he groped his way through endless realms of darkness but could find no permanent relief, even though he contrived mental escape by delighting in the law. Sin was in his members, it was inescapable and unbreakable law in him. He had discovered himself to be a totally sinful and utterly wretched man. Then Christ, the original Light, came to him and brought him hope.

Paul was not saved by hearing a gospel message and responding to an appeal, he learned the gospel from Jesus Christ after he was saved. He was saved by Christ coming in blinding light to him on the Damascus road. In the glory of that light Christ slew him in the dust outside the city wall. Broken and humbled he was led by the hand into the city to the street called straight and there he was buried for three days. Praying there without sight in the dark, he lay before God and on the third day God raised him up by the same Spirit by which He raised Christ from the dead. Paul was raised, given sight and filled with the Holy Ghost in one sovereign move of God; Paul was born again. That happened to him when Christ 'came' to him. When the law 'came' to him it slew him and left him dead. The law was given by Moses but could

not give life to those who received it; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ who gives life to all who receive Him. The law came into the world thousands of years before Paul was born; Christ Jesus came into the world possibly about the same time he was born, but neither came to him personally at that time. When and where the law came personally to him we do not know, likewise we do not know precisely when or where Christ came to him, but we do know it was at a precise time and place on the Damascus road. It was God's time for him, sin and death left him, he lived.

Looking back on it all with the light of revelation shining upon it and under the instruction of Christ he saw everything that had happened to him then in clearest reality. He had been a serpent, like his great fellow-apostle Peter he had been a vessel of sin, a spiritual configuration and human manifestation of satan, the devil. That is why it had been necessary for God to smite him down into the dust. He belonged there, he had been persecuting Christ and His Church. Praise God it was only a temporary measure and not eternal judgement. He was not smitten down into the dust of physical death and put into God's prison for rebellious spirits to await final judgement and the inevitable fires of Gehenna. He deserved that as we all did, but Jesus saved him despite the fact that he had been rebelling and kicking against the goads for a long time. Paul became a very grateful man and a most devoted servant of Jesus Christ. Just when he was caught up to the third heaven and what he saw and heard there we do not know, but he has left on record an amazing Gospel of grace and love, a precious testimony and a unique revelation of eternal truth.

As well as his understanding of the death of our Lord Jesus, it is his view of the events surrounding the cross also that is so arresting. Almost certainly he was not present at any of the several trials to which the civil and religious authorities put Christ, yet he spoke of the death sentence passed upon Him as did no other. Each of the four biographers of Jesus records the historic events with varying detail, but none speaks of a death sentence in so many words. They do record that Pilate delivered Him to be crucified and that he wrote a superscription and had it placed on His cross, but death sentence, no. No man passed sentence of death upon Him as sentencing is known today when a man receives his just deserts for crimes committed. Jesus never committed any crimes; how then could any man formally sentence Him? Sentence of death was passed upon Him by God His Father in Gethsemane precisely for that reason. He had been alone when the sentencing took place; no man witnessed it, even the most select of the apostles were asleep. Whatever it was God said to Him we do not know. His words are not recorded, but Christ's are: 'if this cup may not pass from me except I drink it, thy will be done'. The agreement was perfect, the sentence had been passed, He arose from His place and presented Himself to His captors for its execution.

Paul saw what happened in this spiritual court of appeal and understood it perfectly and fully grasped its meaning and implications for men. He saw that it was a sentence of death for the whole human race and accordingly received it to himself. His written testimony is that he had this sentence of death in himself and that the purpose of it was that he should not trust in himself but in God which raiseth the dead. That is precisely the same attitude in which Jesus faced His death; He did so with complete confidence. It is recorded that He often said He would rise again from the dead. He knew that if He first accepted the death sentence and went to death without murmuring God would raise Him up again. It was an accepted fact of logic and of spiritual law that except He died there could be no resurrection; resurrection-life can

only be experienced after death. When the man Christ Jesus went to death He did so trusting His God to raise Him again. Praise God He did not refuse to accept the sentence of death in Himself but received it; if He had not done so there could have been no gospel. The consequences of that reception were devastating to Him, but He did not for that reason refuse to accept the cup from His Father's hand. He submitted to His Father, accepted the sentence, received the cup and drank it to the dregs.

Paul saw all this, he also saw that unless he too accepted, received and drank in the sentence of death and experienced it himself he could not preach the gospel in its regenerating fulness. It is an amazing thing, but absolutely true, that even Christ Himself could not preach the gospel in all its fulness while He was here on earth and neither could any of His followers at that time. He could talk of the cross and of taking up the cross and of bearing the cross, but He could not talk of the death of the cross, or of the blood of the cross, for He had not yet hung on it and shed His blood; during His lifetime on earth the gospel was limited. The reason for this was that there had been no cross as yet, in the sense and meaning we understand it the cross did not exist. In the nature of the case He could give no direct teaching about the cross and its purpose and power before He hung on it; had He attempted to do so it would have been meaningless to His hearers. Worse still it would have been entirely cut of place, and being so glaringly out of order it would have appeared quite farcical to the many earnest souls who had left all to follow Him. He therefore confined Himself to teaching them elements of truth about it which they could more easily understand and assimilate and reserved the most vital teaching of the cross till He should rise from the dead. It was necessary He should do so lest illogic destroy all hope of credibility.

It was equally necessary that when He rose from the dead He should set forth the mystery and true purpose of the cross which was not revealed during His lifetime and which none of the four evangelists included in their biographical works. He knew that unless He did so the bulk of His teaching prior to the cross could have no present-day application. Because all His words are vital to us He raised up Luke to write two major works, each complementary to the other; the first is a record of His own birth and history called a Gospel and the second is a record of the birth of the Church and its earliest history, called the Acts of the Apostles. Luke commences his second work with these words: 'The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach until the day in which he was taken up'. It is at once clear that while on earth Jesus had only commenced His teachings and that, having risen from the dead, He took up and continued to teach His apostles again. This time He began to teach them the things He had left unsaid when He died, things He had to finish by that death and which therefore could not have been said before: chief among these was the vast fulness of truth related to His cross and death.

In His wisdom and because of its very nature the Lord selected for this a man who did not belong to the original group of apostles, in fact a man who had dedicated his life to the destruction of His church. He was a man of many parts and great accomplishments who was both a true-born Hebrew and a free-born Roman and a scholar; his name was Saul of Tarsus. Perhaps above all he was chosen because he was a zealot. The story of his conversion and how, by grace, he was made a son of God is now famous in history. To this man the Lord committed the bulk of His further teaching about the cross that he should commit it to men. This he did first by his life, then by preaching and ultimately in writing. Paul regarded this as a most sacred commission and he gave himself to it without ceasing for the rest of his days.

Disappointingly some of his writings have been lost; at least three of his epistles are missing, but sufficient material has been preserved for us to make an assessment of the man and the matchless grasp he had of the truth and power of the cross of Christ. What a wonderful soul he was and what an apt scholar he proved to be; the Lord found just the right man.

Doubtless others of the apostolic band were just as quick to understand as Paul was, but to none of them did Christ grant the honour of writing His further teachings about His cross. That they all equally understood its power and glory cannot be doubted; only this could have qualified them for continued apostleship. They had witnessed the Lord's crucifixion, yet for reasons best known to Himself the Lord did not commission them to write of the cross in the same way or in such breadth and length and depth and height as Paul did. It might seem appropriate to us that they who saw the actual cross and were witnesses of everything that went on there and saw the death and burial of the Lord should have been entrusted with the further ministry, but it was not to be. The Lord decided otherwise; He raised up Paul to do it.

Why the Lord did this is not for us to question; His sovereignty and wisdom are paramount in His kingdom, but it is not beyond our power to think of reasons why perhaps He should do so. Saul of Tarsus was a fanatical Hebrew, a bigoted religionist and a nationalist of the highest order; he was famous in Jewry. His hatred of Christ and the Church and his persecutions of the churches were carried out with such venom and fervour that throughout the Christian world his name became linked with imprisonment and death. Saul of Tarsus was a tool of Satan, a human dragon breathing out threatening and slaughter, a most injurious man. He was a willing and enthusiastic observer, if not the instigator and engineer, of the death of Stephen. By Roman law it was an illegal death: all those Jews who stoned Stephen knew they should not have done it, but such was their hatred of Christ and those who loved Him that they defied Rome and took the law into their own hands; it was plain murder and Paul knew it and delighted in it. However such was the mercy and grace of God that He took up this man so full of misplaced love and zeal and made him one of the most glorious lovers of Christ and His Church of all time. Paul was a rabid nationalist who believed in everything Jewish, their method of capital punishment by stoning included. Then when God got hold of him He made him the chief preacher and expositor of the Roman method of capital punishment; it was a complete reversal of Paul's thinking. He knew that God had ordained execution by stoning so that His anger against sin should be fully expressed by the whole nation. Stoning was not only a method of execution, it was also a symbol of the identification which existed between Himself and His people. Paul knew that crucifixion did not imply that; God held back His Son for the cross because it exhibited foreign anger against Christ, God's anger against sin and the sinner. To Paul's mind the change of method signified the commencement of a new era; the thoroughly new man had a thoroughly new message.

Paul knew all about the literal crucifixion of Christ; he had known of it when he was Saul the persecutor; he had most probably witnessed many other crucifixions similar to it, the details were familiar enough to him. What he did not know were the spiritual meanings of the Lord's death; the mysteries of the cross were as unknown to him as to any other until the time Jesus took him into His confidence and revealed these things to him. Just when the Lord included him into His school we do not know, but the evidence that He did so is clearly shown in the epistle he wrote to the Galatians. In this letter he certifies the brethren that the gospel he preached he received directly

from the Lord; he was not taught it by man, he said, neither did he receive it from man. Just how long it took the Lord to impart the revelation we are not told — perhaps as long as it took Him to give the old covenant to Moses at Sinai. This gospel of Paul's is the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ delivered by Him to His apostle following His ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In itself it is a miracle of some magnitude.

In this epistle he discloses the two main lines of his revelation: the one concerns the death and work of the cross of Christ and the other the coming and ministry of the Holy Spirit. He includes other things in the epistle as well, because they are necessary to the Galatians and incidental to life, but everything is related to the central themes which comprise the main body of truth being imparted. All the apostle says about the law and circumcision and grace and other gospel truths is developed from this standpoint. The central passage correlating these two themes is first introduced by the statement, 'Jesus Christ was evidently set forth crucified among you and then followed by the question, 'received ye the Spirit?' The heart of God and the heart of the revelation and the heart of the gospel is revealed at the heart of the epistle. This is the second of the seven references to the cross he makes in the epistle. Set out in their order of appearance these are as follows:

- [1. The cross and the crucifixion of self.](#)
- [2. The cross and the giving of the Spirit.](#)
- [3. The cross and the redemption from the curse.](#)
- [4. The cross and the scandal.](#)
- [5. The cross and the crucifixion of the flesh.](#)
- [6. The cross and circumcision.](#)
- [7. The cross and the crucifixion of the world.](#)

It is a fact little short of amazing that so great an amount of information about the cross should be packed into so brief an epistle. Even though some of Paul's writings are more than twice as long, in no other epistle is the cross mentioned so many times. This achievement is the more outstanding and most significant also when it is realized that this is possibly the very first epistle Paul wrote.

1. The Cross and the Crucifixion of Self.

If it is indeed true that this is his first epistle, it is evident that Paul believed the cross to be of prime importance and was convinced that before attempting to write anything else he should expound the truth and power of the cross first and foremost. Not only so, it would also appear that the Holy Spirit by whom Christ taught and inspired the apostle must likewise have considered he should write on this theme first. Of course the Galatians needed to be taught the truth of the cross, but so did all the other churches as we shall see, but to no other did he write on the subject in such detail or at similar length as to the Galatians. We may then perhaps, after reading the epistle, agree with the apostle and the Holy Spirit that all spiritual problems are related to the cross and were dealt with there and proceed further to the logical conclusion that all man's basic personal needs can be resolved by personal experience of crucifixion.

This is the most enlightening thing about Paul's introduction to the cross. If this is his very first excursion into apostolic writing then the very first thing he wrote about the cross was 'I am crucified with Christ;' how distinctly individual. Even though this whole epistle is about the virtues and glories of Christ and the cross, this is an amazing statement with which to open a written ministry, quite unique in fact. With such an approach it must become obvious to all that Paul's whole teaching about the cross is frankly subjective.

In this he differs completely from the four Gospel writers; they present the cross and the consequent resurrection objectively. Their business is to point out to us historical facts; it is the major reason for their writings. The only hint of subjectivity in all their accounts is the one statement of Jesus that His disciples must take up the cross and follow Him. He was most insistent about this and in this sense every man must make the cross his own. Even so, by the Lord's very language it is referred to as an outward cross and although it is personal, it is not the intimate cross that Paul declared. This is not because the Lord Jesus did not want it to be so personal to man in His day; He did, but He knew He could not talk to His disciples about being crucified with Him without posing serious problems to their minds; that He would not do. His teaching was masterly, His logic was impeccable, but they were no greater than His love.

In the upper room just before His apprehension He told His apostles, especially Peter, that they could not follow Him to the place to which He was going. He had previously said as much to the Pharisees, and the disciples were not surprised to hear it said to that company, but wherever He was bound they did not expect it to be said to them. Peter voiced the general feeling of the apostles when he said, 'I am willing to follow thee to prison and to death — I am willing to die for thy sake'. Each one really believed it to be true of himself, but at that time, alas, it was not. In any case, even if it had been true, it was completely impossible for Peter or anyone else to do what they so fondly hoped.

By Paul's day, having completed His work on the cross, Christ had made it subjective and available to all mankind. With this in mind Paul saw the cross as both objective historical fact and subjective spiritual experience; his approach to it was very very personal. He made it intimately his and therefore preached a gospel of personal revelation in which the cross was central and all powerful. His presentation of it was most effective in the lives of others, as effective as it was in his own. In his grasp of truth and especially of the cross he seemed to excel all his contemporaries; in the understanding and presentation of the gospel he was an acknowledged prince. Comparisons can be odious, therefore without any intention of evaluation but in order to establish truth we take notice of a fact that will illustrate the claim. Even after Pentecost Peter's presentation of the cross was still objective; this is shown by his declaration to the men of Jerusalem, 'ye by the hands of wicked men have crucified and slain' (Jesus). What Peter said was absolutely necessary of course, his preaching was trenchantly convincing that day as the results show: those men had to be faced up to what they had done. Yet this is not an isolated incident, for years later he wrote of the Lord, 'who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree by whose stripes ye were healed'; again his approach seems to be objective.

Perhaps this objectivity about the cross stemmed from experience. In common with the other apostles he actually witnessed that terrible crucifixion, its horrors were so ineradicably stamped upon his mind that when he spoke of it he could do no other

than think of its literal effects on Jesus; it marked him for life. On the other hand Paul, not being there had no such memories, so he could not be influenced by them or talk about them with the same certainty and authority as the eleven. This does not mean he never thought of those dreadful hours and what they meant to Christ, nor does it mean that none of those early disciples knew the cross subjectively as he; the early Church shared a treasury of knowledge through a complementary ministry. What it suggests is that in the realm of inspired ministry the Lord generally moves consistently with the writer's personal observation and experience, and wherever possible causes men to speak of what they know.

In context of that thought it is not difficult to believe that if Adam had recorded some of the events referred to in Genesis 1-4 he would have written of them in a totally different vein from Moses. Moses wrote of them objectively; he could not do otherwise, but sadly enough Adam could have written of them very subjectively. The fact that Moses wrote by inspiration of the Spirit of God strengthens the idea that God led him to write objectively because he could not project himself backward into subjectivity. Contrary to Moses, this is exactly what did happen to Paul in spiritual experience; he had been crucified with Christ and he said so because he knew the power and truth of spiritual identification. The wonder of this gospel of ours is that, beyond the power of mortals to project themselves backward or forward in time, by the power of God human souls were incorporated into the experience of Christ, the second Adam, on the cross.

It is important at this point to clarify the extent to which identification with Christ on the cross may be claimed. Men were not included in the redemptive work of Christ, so they are not identified with Him for that; for this work we needed a substitute. We were not excused that; we were excluded from it; Christ took our place as sin-bearer also. We were not identified with Him in that either, neither were we identified with Him in the work of atonement or reconciliation; we were excluded from them all. There are other equally important areas of spiritual experience though in which He died for men as being those men; His death in respect to these was both substitutionary and representative. Such is God's provision for man that Christ took man's place and fulfilled every requirement of God for man's salvation. That is what God meant when He gave Him (a) man's name and called Him Saviour. In the light of these things far deeper levels of meaning than may ordinarily be seen appear in such texts as 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth', and 'we preach Christ crucified, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God'. When these things are thoroughly understood it is difficult to believe that it is possible to benefit from Christ's work on the cross when viewed objectively unless it be experienced subjectively. Equally with Paul we must all be able to say 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live'. Only the living can confess it and no-one is living except he be crucified.

Occasionally the apostle wrote of the cross objectively, as when writing to the Corinthians: 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures'; that is a statement of historical fact. The provable historical facts of Christ are indispensable to the preaching of the gospel, they are its foundation. Paul believed in them firmly and never moved off them; whenever he touched on them he wrote most convincingly. So firmly did he believe in the cross of Christ that he made it the starting point of his written gospel. how could he do otherwise? The historic cross had meant the possibility of regeneration for him, he gloried in it. Careful reading of his works

reveals that Paul was clearly conscious he had a gospel to present to the world. It is not of the same events as those of which the authors of the four acknowledged Gospels wrote, but it is of the same person.

Paul is not credited with a Gospel in the same way as were his famous brethren though. There is no book in the New Testament headed 'the Gospel according to St. Paul'. He preached his gospel rather than wrote it, nevertheless it is clearly discernible in all his writings. His great friend and travelling companion, Luke, like himself was not among the number of the apostolic band who originally followed Jesus on earth. Unlike Paul though, he did set out to ascertain the historic facts about Jesus, and having done so he set them down in accredited Gospel style. Not so Paul; God did not commission him to do that. Nevertheless he could as surely speak and write of 'my Gospel' as any of the acknowledged Gospel writers could have done had they wished. All that is required of any person wishing to discover this gospel according to St. Paul is patient reading of his epistles; augmented by careful selective reading from the Acts of the Apostles this will be quite sufficient. This done, the discovery will be made that Paul starts where the others finished, namely at the cross and its immediate related events.

So we find that Paul's writings are unique and are totally unlike those of the acknowledged Gospel writers Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Each of these commences their Gospel in different ways: Matthew with David and Abraham, Mark with the prophets, Luke with Zacharias and Elizabeth, John with the Word; but not so Paul. Being raised up of God to be the apostle to the gentiles, his duty was to write specifically for a people who never had a king David or a father Abraham, a people who could not boast of prophets and knew nothing of a Zacharias and Elizabeth. The gentiles had no John Baptist, no temple of God, no scriptures of truth, no ten commandments, no spiritual heredity save of the devil's seed of sin, therefore of what immediate practical use would it have been to them if he had written from the same viewpoint as his friends?

Israel had a wonderful spiritual heritage, but the gentiles had only inherited myths; so instead of a stylised Gospel, with love and skill and wisdom from on high Paul wrote down some, if not all, of the gospel he first preached. He ignored Herod and wrote nothing of the baby Jesus or of His boyhood, nor even of the days of His manhood; his aim was entirely different. The Gospel writers wrote mainly with the purpose of showing the development of their faith in Jesus' manhood to faith in His Godhead, but Paul wrote from the position of Christ's proven Godhead. Paul made very few references back to His manhood. Paul did not write about Jesus who was called Christ any more than he preached about Him; he first preached Christ who was made Jesus and only later wrote of Him. Paul preached the only Christ he knew because He is the only Christ anyone can know, that is Christ crucified. The uncrucified Jesus could not live in anyone, but Christ crucified indwelt Paul. Paul lived Christ because Christ lived him — a rare enough phenomenon in all conscience.

In his own way Paul did make reference once or twice to the birth of Christ, but only indirectly: 'God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the law to redeem', 'Christ Jesus was made in the likeness of men': these are samples of the kind of reference he made to Christ's human birth. It is noticeable that in none of his references to Christ's coming does he mention the human side at all. He speaks only of God's side and then only briefly. Paul's greater concern is with Christ's second

birth, that is His resurrection. Paul realized this was a birth and says so; he calls Him the first begotten from (among) the dead. His Father begat Him from the dead; this, and the events which immediately preceded and followed this most amazing series of all miracles, is the beginning of Paul's gospel. Christ's first birth was not a miracle; the events which preceded it were the miracle; His birth was quite natural. That He ever was born on this earth is most wonderful; it surely is miraculous that God should have given His Son to men, but His birth was not a miracle; it was the result of a miracle but it was as normal as any other man's and more normal than some. His conception, with all the great transactions leading up to it, was the miracle, His actual birth nine months later was quite ordinary.

The great miracle is that He was conceived by the Holy Ghost in Mary being yet virgin; she was virgin when she conceived and she was virgin when Jesus was born. Many miracles were involved in the wonder of His coming, everything about it was miraculous except the actual birth. However, wonderful though these things are, Paul scarcely concerns himself with them; there were enough proofs and protagonists around for the establishing and propagation of these truths; he gave his tongue and his pen to the revelation of God's gospel of further truth. Therefore, by the dispensation of God, his gospel is chiefly concerned with the greatest miracle of all time and perhaps of all eternity, namely the death and resurrection of Christ. By the resurrection from the dead Jesus is declared to be the Son of God with power — that to Paul was conclusive, for him it is the great beginning.

Reading the Acts of the Apostles it may seem to appear that the early Church, especially the apostles, thought that the resurrection, not the crucifixion, was the greatest of all miracles for they were always talking about it, but this is not so. They published it so greatly because to men it was such a great miracle. They had seen so many die, but none had seen anyone who had risen from the dead never to die again. The re-animation of Lazarus had been a most amazing miracle, but he was still with them; Christ was not. He had not only risen, He had ascended back where He was before; His was resurrection. Lazarus' was only re-animation, he died again, Jesus did not. Lazarus was as near a testimony to resurrection as possible, but no more; Christ is the resurrection and the life, the ascension proved it; the resurrection was indeed a mighty miracle. Yet of the two the crucifixion and death which preceded the resurrection was by far the greater miracle. The wondrous resurrection was but the logical result of that, just as the birth was the logical result of the conception.

When it is remembered that the Lord Jesus claimed to be the resurrection and the life, it should not be considered a thing to be wondered at that He should rise from the dead. What else should be expected? It was natural to Him. On the other hand at no time did the Lord ever say or even hint that He was the crucifixion and the death; crucifixion and death were not natural to Him; it would have been wrong for Him to have said they were. He did say He was the resurrection and the life for that was truth, but so saying He posed a problem in His disciples' minds: if He was the resurrection and the life how could He die? Yet how could He prove He was the resurrection and the life except He did die? God solved the problem — before He could die He had to be made sin; God did exactly that to Him, on the cross He was made SIN.

That was the way God's greatest miracle was performed. This was to Christ as the conception was to Mary; He was made sin, it was the beginning, The Great miracle. This was the most impossible of all. Incarnation of God by virgin birth is but an

infantile miracle compared with this. Through Mary the babe was born; through death THE MAN was born. It was quite simple to God to work contrary to nature; the measure of impossibility was only on the human side, not on God's. It was Mary, not God, who said 'how can this thing be?' The angel's answer was, 'with God nothing shall be impossible'. Gabriel's remark was not so much pragmatic as prophetic — he was looking into the distant future, not the immediate future. His reference was not to the enormity of the wonder filling Mary's mind, but to the enormity of the wonder that would fill the apostles' minds when they discovered the reality of the resurrection. 'Nothing shall be impossible', he said: he was not referring to God's omnipotence, nor to Mary's incredulity; if he had been he would have said, 'with God nothing is impossible', hoping to bring her assurance of the simplicity of the miracle suggested to her. Gabriel saw nothing tremendous about that. But how full of meaning his answer becomes when we think of what God had in mind when Gabriel said it. Spoken with intention of Golgotha in His heart, it was said with deep undertones of pain and sadness. God knew it was a certain step toward the time when He would have to make His Son sin. That to Him was the most terrible thing He would ever have to do — it could be nothing less than the greatest and most horrible miracle of all, possible only to God. There are many classes of miracles, requiring varying degrees of power, done for a variety of reasons by different types of persons: God, satan, angels and men. The greatest of these are done personally by God; they are not entrusted to angels or men, and certainly not to the devil. Notable among these greatest miracles are the creation and dissolution of the universe and the destruction of the universe of sin. Of them all this latter is the greatest, for it was the most impossible of all. How could God the Son be made Man the Sin? To make Him Man, the Son (or as we more easily say it, the Son of Man) was one of the simpler miracles — God used an angel for it — but in order to make Him Man — THE SIN God had to do it Himself. It was shocking, shameful, terrible, contradictory, unjust, impossible — but He did it. Glory to His name — glory to the name of both of them. God did it on the cross and He did it totally, so totally that Jesus became contrary to nature, so contrary and ugly that God slew Him there.

Life was natural to Christ, so death, being overcome, the resurrection followed naturally; it had to, one of the reasons He died was that He should rise again in accordance with His nature. It was wonderful though for all that it could not have happened any other way. To have been in any other order it would have been wrong. Resurrection being natural to Him was of no great moment really, it had taken on death and destroyed it. Being so really a man, He had to wait for His Father to raise Him from death; being God He also Himself rose from among the dead ones — He did not find those things difficult. Death was the harder thing and the greater miracle, He accomplished nothing so great. The resurrection was a marvellous demonstration of power; God accomplished mighty things by it, but of itself it simply testified to the fact that He had died; this is the reason why those jubilant apostles made so much of it. To them it confirmed that Jesus did not die as other men die; John had told them that — standing by the cross he heard Him give out that great cry of accomplishment and then at last dismiss His spirit into His Father's hands.

Everything about His death had been different; it was not only wrong and undeserved, it was different. Having accomplished His mission, He whom they could never kill died, and He did it as He said — 'I go My Way to Him that sent me'; He was life — how could He die as other men do? Death was impossible to Him, yet by His own will and willingness He accomplished it. What happened on that cross was so wonderful

we scarce can take it in; these minds of ours, under best instruction, still only dimly apprehend the smallest part of what it meant for Christ to die. Yet this we do know, He was in perfect control throughout; He had been all along. He once said quite publicly, 'I lay down my life that I may take it again; no man taketh it from me; I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again'. How true: He was God.

Perhaps the intensity of Christ's purpose may best be expressed by adapting and applying to Him a Pauline phrase which the apostle used about himself when writing to the Philippians, 'He made Himself conformable unto death'. Christ who was in the form of God took upon Himself the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of man precisely that He should become conformable unto death in every form and manifestation but one — Gehenna. In Him death took its most horrible form in the sight of God — sin and old Adam, the nature of anti-Christ — satan. This is how Paul saw the truth and why he embraced it; the natural, personal subjectivity of it all made it so powerfully appealing to him. Christ was so wonderful in his eyes, Christ made the cross Paul's so that to him it was the place, the point, the instrument of self-riddance in every form that self took or was expressed. He discovered that Christ's crucifixion was total over the whole field of human existence, not only his personal self but also his aged self, old in the ways of sin which came through to him from Adam and the serpent by his parents. The death of the cross was his, he saw it and rejoiced in it, embracing the truth with gratitude; he had been crucified with Christ. Like Christ he lived a crucified man. Only when a man can say 'I am crucified with Christ' is the cross his and has become operative in his life; until then it is not his, though on it Christ tasted death for every man.

Paul saw this clearly and actually wrote of his experience in the past tense, 'I was, or have been crucified'; it was true, because historically Christ's crucifixion had taken place in the past, but because it was God's work it is not only past it is present. The crucifixion is eternal in power and effect — it is here, now. The act was in the recent past for Paul; for us it is the more distant past. But although it happened in the past it has not passed away. It is present because it was wrought in the eternal Spirit; by the grace of God the power of the cross and the experience of crucifixion are always in the present. Had Jesus been an ordinary man the crucifixion would have taken place and been forgotten, but because He was God manifest in flesh it is for ever. Whatsoever is wrought by God in Himself or upon Himself is eternal. By His grace God associated His people with Christ in that one crucifixion, it was an all-inclusive act. But in order for it to be real in our lives we must come faithfully to it in the present. When Paul said 'I was crucified' he referred to a realization that had been to him the end of all his struggles; it was swiftly followed by the continuous revelation, 'I am crucified'. This same revelation must live to us also or else the grace of God toward us will be frustrated. To be able to live with Christ for ever we must be always crucified with Him, for the life He lives now can only be a crucified life. We are not being painfully crucified by men, bearing our own sin, making atonement, bearing our own punishment — that was His part and His alone — but we are and must be permanently crucified as is our Lord.

This is what the apostle intended us to understand when he said the Christ he preached was Christ crucified; the tense in which he writes expresses both the fact of the crucifixion and the result of it, implying everything brought to perfection. We preach Christ crucified perfectly and permanently; He was crucified, so He is crucified now, He can be no other. Christ is permanently crucified — the permanence

of it is due to its perfection. This is not the same as saying He is permanently dead. He is not, He is eternally alive; but He is not now being crucified, because His crucifixion brought crucifixion to perfection in every aspect and every virtue in every degree to all eternity. Because He was perfect He was crucified that His perfections should perfect the cross and fulfil it. In the same way as He fulfilled the law He fulfilled the cross; being alive He is now living crucified, perfected and complete.

This is part, if not all, of the reason why He dismissed His spirit into His Father's hands straight from the cross. He had endured the crucifixion, taken it into Himself; as a man He wrought it into the eternal life of God and it cannot cease to be. The message is that the Crucified is now living, crucifixion is now existing eternally for all mankind. Ordinary men could not live crucified; thousands have been crucified who are not crucified now; they were crucified and then ceased to be in human form, therefore all the marks and proofs of their crucifixion are gone — they disappeared with the dissolution of their form. But He was crucified and lives on indestructible in human form, crucified, the Crucified made whole. He is not still being crucified; crucifixes are wrong for this reason — they should never be made nor displayed or worn, for they give the wrong impression. The true Christian Church rejoices in the knowledge that Christ is neither dead on the cross, nor dying on the cross; He is alive for evermore, and by His use of the cross and His victory there He has the keys of hell and death.

'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live' ('too' Paul and we could add); Paul saw it all so clearly and knew that what was true of Christ was true for him also, for it was true in him. As Christ lives crucified, so he lived crucified; Paul knew that he truly lived the resurrection life on earth as Jesus did. This is the only kind of resurrection life there is for us all. Paul's words were a declaration of triumph. He told the Romans that being 'baptized into His death' we are buried with Him thereby into death and planted therein, and if we are 'planted together with Him in the likeness of His death we shall be of resurrection' he says. 'Obviously', the enlightened heart cries. The words omitted from the quotation of the text, namely 'also in the likeness' and 'His' are omitted here because Paul did not write them; they were inserted by the translators. These men did it with the best of intentions to try and help in the understanding of Paul's words. This kind of help is most profitable in many places and we are most grateful to them for it, but alas they are not always so helpful and this is one of these instances; the attempt to interpret the truth here has proved rather a hindrance to arriving at its best meaning.

Paul is here stating plainly and positively the truth which lies at the heart of the gospel he preached:

(1) we have been made dead, that is slain by His death; (2) we have been buried with Him in that death; (3) we have been planted together with Christ in the likeness of His death; (4) we are of resurrection, that is of resurrection 'substance' and quality. Paul is not speaking of a future resurrection, neither is he so much speaking of Christ's resurrection as a historic event, rather he is referring to the life that made it possible; he is speaking of resurrection life. Christ is Resurrection as well as the resurrection; unless we are of resurrection we are not of Him; Paul is powerfully stating the negative side of the truth because it is vitally necessary to put it down clearly. As much as the heart may love to think of being of Him and in His life, it is not on this that the writer is here placing the emphasis. Paul's major concern at this point is to

emphasize the death and the burial and the planting lest we miss it. Given this comprehensive experience the resurrection is assured to any man; in the spiritual life it as naturally follows this death, burial and planting as in the order of nature dawn follows sunset and the death of the day and darkness.

Here then lies Paul's secret. Stated more fully and positively, the text is 'I was crucified with Christ nevertheless I live no longer I but Christ liveth in me and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me'. Having spent time over what may be called the negative aspect of truth, the positive side of it is very sweet, none the less we may find it very searching. Condensing the form and structure of the text, we may understand Paul to be saying, 'I who was crucified am alive, yet it is not I who live; Christ in me lives the life I now live. I with my beliefs am no longer the source of the life I live, He is. He has human being in me and I have divine being by Him, I do not have to live my life, He lives it for me'. I live by faith, but not mine, His. Paul was very careful to ensure that no-one should think he was drifting away into fantasy, so he added 'in the flesh'. It was so powerful in him that he found it easy to live in the flesh in this world for Christ, he had discovered God's secret art of living eternally, it had been revealed in him — briefly summarized it is no sin and no self-effort. With great relief he discovered he did not have to try to do it himself; it was a matter of incorporation; he had been incorporated into God and God had been incorporated into him.

The revelation to him was that it was not a matter of doing but of abiding — the struggle was over, Christ was abiding in him and he was abiding in the Christ abiding in him. It is a matter of identification and oneness, the union and integration of the 'I myself' with Christ the 'I am' within; it is the shared and integrated life. This is God's way of preserving the distinctiveness of a person while infusing him or her with His own life and personality. It must be this way — God knows no other way of doing it; human personality cannot be preserved by any other means; apart from this it must be destroyed. I must be rid of all things objectionable and unacceptable to God and kept clear of them. Crucifixion is the only way and self-crucifixion is not possible to me. Self-crucifixion was not possible even to Christ; crucifixion cannot be self-administered, it has to be administered by others — that is why God chose it for His Son. There are many forms of suicide but crucifixion is not one of them; a man cannot nail himself to a cross. Christ had to be crucified, it was a matter of being, not of doing; His was to allow Himself to be crucified, but others had to do it.

This was one of the things finally settled between Him and His Father in the garden of Gethsemane; there He lovingly yielded up His own will to God, who in turn delivered Him up to men to be tormented and slain. Before ever a cross of wood was made on earth the cross lay in the foreknowledge and will of God for His Son, so He first sacrificed Himself as a man to His Father. That was the initial step of faith, for it is the Father who presides over and directs that consensus of will of the holy three which is the will of God. He then sacrificed Him on the cross. Jesus' final sanctification was unto this and He went as a lamb to the slaughter and remained dumb as a sheep before its shearers. He said, nothing to justify Himself and nothing to condemn Himself. He did nothing; it was not a matter of doing but of being. He knew that. By keeping silent and obedient all the way through unto death He allowed it all to happen to Him according to God's will; everything that was done to Him was done for Him, He understood perfectly. It was wonderful, awe-inspiringly wonderful, miraculous; so also shall it be for everyone who will let it happen to him or her —

other than that it cannot be at all. Crucifixion has not changed its nature, it cannot; God has not devised any new techniques, there are none. He has not developed any forms of words called texts to which to pin 'faith' (so called) in order to be justified either. He had His Son pinned to the cross and the Spirit declares we are justified individually by the personal faith of Jesus Christ then and there, not by our faith in Him here and now. Necessarily we must believe in Him before it can happen to us. Faith in Him is obligatory to salvation.

When we believe Him for it, that justification of Christ's is imputed to us; at that moment it is an immediate gift imparted in this present world. But even then the actual justification is not self-procured; because it is by faith no man must think it is self-wrought, all is done by the faith of Jesus Christ. He justifies a person with the justification He wrought by His own faith in God on the cross. This justification by the faith of Christ is justification by grace alone. Grace alone gives a man opportunity to receive it by faith, but being received, it is sheer gift. The person thus justified by the faith of Jesus Christ can commence to live by the faith of the Son of God, no-one else can possibly do so. The real truth of the life of faith is living by the faith of God's Son; this makes a man a son of God. It is a dazzling prospect for any man, more, it is a present possibility for all men, but it is entirely impossible without the cross. To achieve it a man must live crucified like his Lord. As we have seen, except a man has resurrection life he is not alive with the life which God counts to be life, and except a man is first crucified he cannot be raised from the dead in order to live it. In the same way and at the same time, except Christ lives in him no man can have righteousness, for Christ is the righteousness of God. Life and righteousness are one. It was just as impossible for Christ to justify us without the cross as it is impossible for Him to live in us apart from the cross, in heaven or in earth, in God or in man, Christ can only live crucified.

There must come about a change in our thinking; it is customary and correct for us to think of the life of Christ and of the cross of Christ and of the death of Christ according to scripture and that is as essential as it is good. But it is just as essential for us to think of the Christ of the cross and the Christ of death and the Christ of life, and we must do so in much the same way as we might think of Him being born; He was born and lived as from the dead. He who lived before He was born of Mary and lived from Mary on the earth, lived through death also. We must never lose sight of that. He defeated death by conquering it. He conquered it by proving death's inability to kill and destroy Him. He lived through death, He never died by death, He defeated it and having done so He dismissed His spirit. He only used death for a few hours by enduring the cross, the means of death. When He had done that sufficiently to prove His superiority over it He yielded up His spirit to God and His body physically died by the expiry of His breath. He endured death, lived through it, used it and forsook it. He took His life through death, rejoined His body and raised it from the dead to prove it, and this is what Paul saw. He saw that for all men Christ was the firstborn from the dead. He had to be or He could not have been the firstborn of all creation, neither could He have saved us. Thank God, although He was the first one to be born from the dead, He is not the only one. Through this miracle the Lord has translated millions of persons into this kingdom of His Son. By passing His Son triumphantly through the realm of darkness and the power of death, God made the way through into the kingdom for all His sons.

The method God chose is awesome and wonderful and we must remember always that this extreme measure is the only way for all mankind. Christ must not be robbed of His pre-eminence in all things; He is the king but He is only king of those who by this means will become His new creations in this kingdom. The life of redemption is only to be had and enjoyed in this kingdom, for it was only obtained by this means. The visible man Jesus was the Christ who is the image of the invisible God: He became a man by a marvellous procreative act of God. Uncreated God, by one of His most outstanding miracles, became a procreated man, that by His cross-death He should be able to rise from among the dead and qualify for the title 'the firstborn of every creature'. He was not a mere creature as men are creatures; when He came into the world He was not a descendant of created Adam as other men are — though a woman was His mother no man was His father. God made Him of a woman and by that act and in this sense became the generator of Jesus' human life and the father of His body and because that was so His body was eternal. Jesus took that body and life into and through death that He should swallow up death in victory and be the first one to rise from the grave. No creature of any order, by whatever means it was created or procreated, had ever done so; Christ was the firstborn to God from the dead; in order to accomplish it He had to become as a creature. Being found in fashion as a man He was the image of the invisible God, and what happened in Him is law in the kingdom. By His death and resurrection He set the pattern for every person who desires to bear that same image, and by His cross and grave He established the means. None but they who bear this image are in the kingdom of the Son, and none can bear it who is not translated into that kingdom; basic transformation into His image is accomplished in process of the translation.

The translation of human beings is by means of His wondrous crucifixion and resurrection in our behalf. The spirit and power of that wondrous crucifixion and resurrection of Christ is just as wondrously made effective in all those for whom He died and rose again, who for love of Him want to die with Him from sin — its nature, its laws, its rudiments and principles. The death of the cross accomplished all this, it was God's means of applying all His power to destroy the basic elements of sin. By dying He negated the operation of the laws of the terrible invisible kingdom into which God's fallen son Adam entered by disobedience. Adam was God's direct creation, but he consciously stepped out of union with God and as a result was thrust out from His presence and His Eden. Adam emerged from Eden into a kingdom of estrangement from His creator, and all he knew of God died within him; tragically for God and man, so did all life and potential life. Scripture says, 'in Adam all die'. All who would live must therefore come out of him and out of all that kingdom of spiritual death in him; no-one need stay there. All God's children may live in the kingdom of the Son of His love, where all is made alive by the miracle of the death and resurrection of the one who was alive to God.

In those terrible hours of crucifixion that old man of death was inescapably with Him. He took him on Him and went with him to crucifixion to kill his death-states there; He slew him, the whole nature of him, together with the laws of that nature of death which had claimed him. God by Christ crucified the old man of every one of us He chose in Christ, that He might translate us into His own kingdom of love. In the Godhead Christ is the only begotten of the Father, there are no other sons there, only Christ — He is unique in God and among men, though by Him God has since begotten many sons from among the dead, which is part, perhaps the best part, of the marvel of the cross.

'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live' is now seen to be most vital self-realization; apart from it no-one is alive; that is why Paul goes on to say, 'yet not I but Christ liveth in me'. It is self-realization arising from Christ-realization; Christ must be realized within or else He cannot be realized at all by mortal man. He can be imagined by men, and believed in by men too, but unless He lives in him, mortal man is terribly dead. Great as is the love of Christ for men, unless a man is living primarily by the faith of the Son of God only, His love cannot be known by him. A man may know of the love of Christ and believe all about the love of God's Son, but he cannot know that love as his own until the Son of God lives in him. Man cannot live till he lives by the personal faith and love of Christ. Eternal life is so very individual, it is personal to each of God's sons, 'the Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me', is the basic realization of eternal life of every child of God within himself. Every man must know it in himself, he must realize it personally; he must believe and know and feel it for and in himself; that is realization. It is not sufficient to know that eternal life is only because of this love, true as that is; although such love may engender great admiration for Christ within the mind, it is insufficient; with Paul each one must be living the Christ-faith-love-life of the Son of God.

God's provision for us may be stated as 'Christ's self for my self'. Astounding as it is, this is the amazing truth, and until this is realized within himself by every man the crucifixion is in vain as far as he is concerned. Far too many believers are in this sad state and because of it the grace of God is frustrated in them, rendering Him powerless to accomplish all He wants to do in that life. Grace cannot be frustrated in God's heart, nor is it destroyed in principle or withheld from others because it is frustrated in any individual; God in heaven is not a frustrated being. But many a man on earth is a frustrated being because within his own self he is frustrating the love and faith of Christ and therefore the purposes of God for his life. Christ's crucifixion was for the fulfilment of God's purposes as originally stated by Him and recorded by Moses, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'. Christ is the image of God, the effulgence of His being and the express image of His person, and when He was made a man He was a man in the likeness of God; therefore when He comes into a man and lives in him He makes God's original ideal possible to Him and us.

Christ did not die in vain, He died to obliterate from man first Adam's fallen image and to restore and reinstate him in the kingdom and favours of God, elevating him into the life of his creator, lifting him above all He first did when He began with Adam. In this transaction man receives a new spirit and becomes a new conscious self. Moreover this new self is combined with another Self whereby he becomes a greater person and realizes he has been made anew. This other new Christ-Self or Christ-Himself is the greater, stronger, dominant partner of the union and takes over the life. Following this miracle, providing he does not become foolish and allow someone to bewitch him and lure him off course, he will remain new and consciously grow up into the full stature of Christ.

This is what Paul found. Following this initial and most vital experience of the cross he not only had power to remain in newness of life, he had ability to evidently set forth Jesus Christ crucified before people's eyes — his life was an example and exposition of it. Wherever Paul went and whatever he did Christ crucified went and was manifested in that place and among those people. The undeniable Christ and His undeniable death and resurrection were set forth in the man, which is what God intended. The New Testament keeps the historical cross before men's minds

objectively, but wonderful as the Book is, it is only print on paper, it is not animate as Jesus was animate. God had to do something more. So knowing that only human beings could keep the crucifixion subjectively before men God planned and provided for men to enter into it.

The order of the revelation of the cross is in three simple steps or stages: first in the world, second in man, thirdly in the New Testament: (1) revelation; (2) realization; (3) record. The historic revelation being now past, only present human realization remains, if men do not see it in humanity it cannot be known. True we have the Gospels and we are grateful for those holy records of facts — what should we do without them? But inspired though they are, the combined record is still only the documentation of truth. The writers tell us about the crucifixion and the Christ of the cross, but good and absolutely necessary though this is, the truth needs more than words to reveal it. God needs men and women to display it here and now in this world in flesh and blood bodies as Christ did. Not that our bodies should be crucified as was the Lord's, but that our spiritual natures should be crucified from sin that our soul, the embodiment of sin, should be slain unto resurrection into new manhood.

Paul understood this clearly, especially in relation to us gentiles according to the flesh who did not have the advantages of the Jews. Beyond the few who were involved in the events of the crucifixion the gentiles could not have seen or known much about it. Very few could have read the hints and foreshadowings of it in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, for they did not have them; gentiles needed something up to date and authentic, something they could see and hear and feel. It is perhaps for this reason more than any other that in their ignorance gentiles have made to themselves crosses of wood and metal and stone or straw, even of leaves or paint, and have carved effigies of the imagined crucifixion, all to their own hurt and shame. When a man is able to set forth in his own flesh Christ crucified and living in himself he has no need of artificial or manufactured symbols produced from people's imaginations. Such a man could not reproduce in art form something which he knows in the event can only be imaginative and untrue. To create and foist on others lifeless copies and sterile reproductions without life is abomination to him; he has reality. This restraining knowledge has nothing to do with artistic talent or the lack of it, but with spiritual law and morality; understanding of the sheer impossibility of it renders him incapable of trying.

2. The Cross and the Giving of the Spirit.

Paul does not directly state the relationship of the cross and the Spirit in the plan of God, but it may be inferred from a question he asks at this point, 'did ye receive the Holy Spirit?' At this point he is seeking to bring his readers to realization of truth. There is no room in the gospel for those who wish to gain anything from God by works of law. Everything to do with salvation is of faith, so he asks them a proof-question, 'did ye receive the Holy Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith?' Although this is the stated reason for the introduction of the Holy Spirit here, it is difficult to avoid the conviction that he is deliberately drawing attention to the importance of the crucifixion in view of the desire of God to give men the Holy Spirit. Textually Paul is correcting the mistaken view then being pressed by Judaizers that things can be received from God by the works of the law. He spent much of his life contending that nothing can now be obtained by law-works and he here chooses to make the focal point of contention the reception of the Holy Spirit: Paul found the

suggestion not only ridiculous but blasphemous. The Holy Spirit is God Himself, how can He be received by works of any kind? Israel had always known that the essential things of salvation had never been earned by law-works, salvation had always been upon the ground of faith, it has ever been by grace, never by Sinaitic law and its works. He says 'we who are Jews by nature know.... that a man is not justified by the works of the law'. Even under Moses, justification was by faith in the blood, never by works: no less today than then, perhaps even more so, the Holy Spirit can only be received by the hearing of faith.

It was for this reason and to this end that God put His Son to death and raised Him again. Because it is all of God it is all of gift, it has to be, so upon the completion of the age of law and at the beginning of the Church age God poured out the Holy Spirit. This could not have been done at any time during the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. Before He left heaven and all the while He was on earth the Lord knew He was going to be made sin and would be punished as the sinner, indeed as the original sinner Adam, the cause and originator of human sin. The plan for salvation was made around that concept of Jesus. We must never lose sight of the perfections of God: He is so perfect. Everything He does is flawless and faultless and in this perfectness it was agreed that God would only outpour the Holy Spirit through His Son after He was crucified on earth and glorified and magnified in heaven. The reason for this is very simple: God's prime purpose in outpouring the Spirit was that in Him men and women may be regenerated in the image of Christ; this could only be accomplished by the power of the crucifixion and the resurrection.

Everything God does with regard to generating Sons is according to an unvarying pattern. As with human birth the biological law does not vary, so with spiritual birth the spiritual law is unchangeable. Before Jesus could be born the Holy Spirit had to come upon Mary because the One who was going to be born of her was God's Son. As with Mary so with everybody; if a man is to become a son of God the Holy Spirit must come upon him to regenerate and re-form him. This also was all planned and must be carried through according to God's will and the original choice He made before ever the world was or sin and death had entered it. This concept was very wonderful in imagination, the decision was perfect, God knew that nothing of this marvellous creation was possible for men except they received the Holy Spirit. The divine choice for the Holy Spirit and the prime purpose for His coming was that He should take His rightful place and fulfil His indispensable function in regeneration; His work is to recreate the spirits of believing people in the nature and image of Christ in order that He should reproduce the life of Christ in them for the Father's good pleasure.

It must always be borne in mind that God does not just do something because He thinks He will, He always works according to the perfect law of liberty (of His Being) from sin or error. In all He does love and law are both the same; this is His grace. If He makes a law He does not break it; He says 'I the Lord change not'. For this reason God had to receive the risen Christ back to Himself alive before He could pour out the Holy Spirit through Him (that life). All sin had to be banished, taken away by the Lamb, before God made another move; when that was done He made it. He gave the Holy One so that we should all have opportunity to live on this earth as God's sons. That is why, before mentioning the Spirit, Paul first spoke of and set forth the crucifixion. Having done so he immediately spoke of receiving the Holy Spirit.

Paul's approach to truth shows great consistency with the Lord's own words to the apostles in the upper room before His crucifixion. Having told them He was going to prepare a place for them He assured them also that He was coming back again for them (because He wanted them to be with Him for ever) and then He spoke to them further about the Holy Spirit. 'I will pray the Father', He said, 'and He will give you another Comforter that he may abide with you forever'. He was not teaching them doctrine or theology, He was telling them order of events. He did not fill in all the details, He simply moved from one major point to the other — first the crucifixion, then the Resurrection, then the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's coming was fixed. It was to be the major event between the ascension of Christ and His coming to the earth. First the crucifixion and the resurrection, then the ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The connection is obvious and the conclusion inevitable: He was to be given in consequence of the crucifixion and they were to receive Him — the result — eternal life! It is all so free and so simple for us; God holds every man responsible before Himself in this matter; 'did ye receive the Holy Spirit? Was it by works or by the hearing of faith?' It is all by the hearing of faith; God did all the work. Every one who will be faithful and listen to what God is saying shall receive.

3. The Cross and the Redemption from the Curse.

The third mention of the cross is in connection with redemption: 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree'. It may perhaps seem a little strange to us that God should have made such a pronouncement until we realize that He never decides on anything arbitrarily. God does do things because He wishes to, but He never says or does anything just because He wishes to; He never does anything against His will either! God always has a reason for everything He does, so when He said, 'cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree' there was a reason for that, in fact more reasons than one. The most ancient of these reasons goes back to the beginning of time and the coming of sin into the world and the fall of man and the heartbreak of God. Most unexpectedly the tragedy resulted from man's disobedience to the expressed will of God in relationship to a tree. Adam and Eve were forbidden to partake of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil standing in the midst of Eden. They could eat of the tree of life — that was not withheld from them and they did eat from it and gained thereby both life and the knowledge of it. They were not commanded to eat of that tree, it was for them. In common with all the other trees its fruit was good for food; all that is, except that one tree. The command of God was not to eat of that, for if they did so it would be death to them: God's will was against it and for a while the will of man was not to eat of it either.

But there was another voice beside God's speaking in Eden, it was very subtle and most persuasive and Eve listened. Under the devil's flattery desire got the better of curiosity and, against God's will, His creatures partook of the fruit and died as God said they would. What a curse sin is: in every way it is a curse and how cursed a creature is the devil. Because of what happened in the garden between the devil and man Christ had to be nailed to the tree. No name save the one Pilate wrote has been put upon that tree; it cannot be named really, it is not possible to name it, it is so complex, so incomprehensible, so all-inclusive. It could be called the tree of death, it could as equally be called the tree of life, it could be called the tree of satan or the tree of God, the tree of sin or of righteousness, of evil or of good, of hatred or of love.

Paul could have called it the tree of man, 'my tree, I was crucified there'; it could be called nobody's tree or everybody's tree for it belongs to everyone, but chiefly to God. The tree, just THE TREE: that is what He calls it, and that is all we need to call it. By it and by Him who hung upon it countless multitudes of men have been brought to the truest understanding of good and evil. By the cross we learn the exceeding sinfulness of the sin which came into the human race by man's wilfulness in the garden; because of it He who knew no sin had to be made sin and the curse.

Sin is much more evil than we know. If a sinless, blameless man, without spot on His character or even a wrinkle on the surface of His visible life, who fulfilled all righteousness and kept every spiritual, moral and civil law, had to be made sin; if the perfect man had to die because of sin, then sin is more vile than men know or can know. Sin was revealed by God for what it was when He introduced the law into the world, but only partially — it could not be revealed fully by the law. Sin was only seen to be so terribly evil when at last it could be contrasted with Jesus who was so good. By Jesus and by what happened to Him, sin was shown up in all its unrelieved vileness. For what a man did thousands of years before and for what myriads have continued to do ever since, Jesus was crucified. Sin is evil; evil is the nature of sin and good is the nature of Christ's sinlessness, more — of His positive righteousness. Jesus Christ was nailed to the tree so that the nature of sin could be slain by the nature of good; by His sheer goodness He overcame evil and turned the tree of good and evil into the tree of life, thereby turning the curse into blessing, for He was both cursed and blessed of God there.

Paul, however, is not particularly referring here to the curse pronounced by God in Eden, but to the curse which came in with the law of Moses. God did not give the law to be a curse but to be a blessing. He pronounced blessings upon blessings to the obedient; by and large the law was altogether a commandment unto blessing. One of its greatest blessings was its power to expose sin, both toward God and man, in much detail. But side by side with the blessings, God pronounced curses upon the disobedient as well. This was not done in a spirit of vindictiveness but in love, to warn men and women of the consequences of disobedience; the blessings are only for the obedient. The ethic of law may perhaps best be summarized as follows: 'blessed is everyone that continues in all the things written in the law to do them' and 'cursed is everyone that continueth not in all the things written in the law to do them'. Just as the law itself was in two parts and can be summarized into two commandments, so may all the blessings and the curses be summarized in the same way. Moses' law in effect was given to reveal in detail the human, social, moral and spiritual power of evil by specifying the sins by which it is manifest. By the law God attempted to offset sin and contain evil; Israel were 'kept under the laws in great blessing, safeguarded by equally great and terrible curses which acted as deterrents.

This was nothing but sheerest grace in operation, for the law was an interim measure intended by God to protect His people from leprous evil and contagious sin until He should send Christ to remove it all. When the Lord came to this earth and was crucified here He was made both the sin and the curse for us by God. That death was so great and comprehensive in effect and so fulfilling and compensating to God that all evil and all curses, as well as all sin (with the exception of one) were taken away. That is both the immeasurable fulness of God's provision and the extent of His blessing in Christ toward us. The only sin from which, for obvious reasons, His death cannot deliver is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit; the person who commits this

sin cannot be blessed, he is evil beyond redemption and must suffer the curse without reprieve. But to all other the message is clear and positive, 'being made a curse for us'.... Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.

God has done this so 'that the blessings of Abraham might come on the gentiles (us) that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith'. The blessing to which Paul refers came upon Abraham from God in the simplest of ways, he just believed God; that, simply that, was accounted to him for righteousness. It was almost unbelievably simple: he did not have to work for it, he did not have to pray for it, there was no need to, he did not have to earn it in any way, he just went along with God in what He said, that is all. Sweating to achieve something came in with the curse, no man has to labour to receive what is being poured upon him, no struggle to hear when God speaks. Quietness, stillness, the opening of the heart is all God requires — in other words faith.

What God did in Abraham's hearing was to make a commitment to him, He promised to fulfil the unspoken longings of Abraham's heart. Isn't God good? He did not ask Abraham to believe anything horrible or distasteful or make any big demands of him then. He came to Abraham in love, with purpose to bring him joy and untold blessing, blessings far more exceedingly wonderful than justification by faith, though that is the point Paul is making here. God is greater than the points we make about Him. This is another example of His ways with men. In this instance God is summarizing the unspoken blessings upon blessings in His heart. He is hiding His beatific face behind a veil of promise, He is making one promise the promise of many more promises. Faith in Him is the key to many thousands of blessings. Abraham is always the one chosen by the Lord when He wants to illustrate faith. He did not only believe God once for one blessing or for thousands of blessings, he believed God continually for constant blessings.

All the blessings of God are of similar nature to those God gave to Abraham, and they all hold similar potential. What may be considered lesser blessings are always summed up by and contained in the greater and most important blessings and they must all be received in the same way. Abraham believed in God and his faith was accounted to him for righteousness; he was thereby accounted to be a righteous man. What good news this is for us! It is not so much the fact that Abraham was blessed, but that he was accounted righteous, not because of any works he had done but because he believed God. It is most important here to note that this blessed state is contrasted by Paul with the works of the law and not with the righteousness of the law. This is a very important distinction sometimes overlooked. Elsewhere he explains that this righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. The righteousness of the law is the same as the righteousness of faith; there is no difference. Righteousness is righteousness, whether it be under the law or under grace, because it is the righteousness of God. It is not the righteousness of man, yet it is the first and most basic requirement of God for every man: righteousness is the basis of our salvation. The beginning of a man's righteousness in God's eyes is heart faith in God. It is a righteous thing to believe God; it is a demonstration of unrighteousness when a person chooses to not believe Him. Stimulation of the heart to believe God is the work of the Holy Spirit, it is the prelude to salvation.

The purpose of God in redeeming us from the curse of the law into the blessedness of justification by faith is that we should receive the promise of the Spirit. This is God's order and we must beware lest we believe He has made the promise and fail to receive Him about whom the promise was made. Only when we receive the person of the Holy Spirit are we made sons; justification is not the end — it is a beginning. It was for this reason that Christ gathered up all the curses of the law unto Himself on the cross and died to them. On the tree Christ was made both the embodiment of God's curse upon Adam and the world and His curse upon sin in all its forms also, that only the blessings of God should remain for His people.

What a way to think about Him — Christ the Curses Only temporarily though, praise God, but while it lasted it was very real, it broke His heart. By the power of God the curses that should have descended on our heads descended on His, crushing and piercing like the thorns wherewith He was crowned on the tree. Thorns came in with the original curse pronounced by God in Eden; for man's sake He cursed the very earth itself with a curse which still holds power in every realm of man's existence and shall do till earth is no more. Christ who without remission, had borne with the works of the cursed satan ever since he fell in heaven did so continually till He hung on the cross. There He bore the curses of God, whether they were pronounced on the ground or on rebellious law-breakers or against ignorant sinners and He bore all away. The tree ensured that; He was nailed to it by men, but God transfigured Him to the tree like the wilderness serpent Moses made and fixed to the pole in the midst of the camp. It is terrible but true when understanding dawns on us that Jesus was crucified and punished mercilessly as though He were the cursed serpent, the original cause of all sin, the one whose workings made God curse His creation. Dear Jesus bore it all uncomplaining. He was lifted up that He should attract all eyes to Him on the cross, the focal point of deliverance and life. Ultimately He bore the curse right away and He did so while pouring out the blood of redemption. The curses still stand against all who rebel against God and disobey the gospel. We needed to be redeemed from all that as well as the curses. Believing we receive full release, exoneration, exemption, because we have been brought back to God. We have received the Spirit.

4. The Cross and the Scandal

Paul's fourth reference to the cross is to its unacceptability; he speaks of 'the offence of the cross'. He is really continuing his theme, for this is closely related to his previous reference to it. Precisely because the cross was in itself the symbol of curse and execration it was a terrible offence to everybody. There is no doubt that to the outsider and the merely religious believer the emphasis upon the true nature and purposes of God by the cross is the most offensive thing about the gospel. To the normal mind the cross is an affront to decency, it is immoral, undignified, distasteful, illogical, inhumane; how therefore could it be thought acceptable that God should make it central to all salvation? The idea is scandalous; that is exactly the word Paul uses — 'the scandal of the cross'; he is not trying to hide it, he is deliberately forcing us to face the shame of the gospel. He is setting out methodically to destroy pride — no proud person can be a child of God. Christ humbled Himself to the cross and so must everybody else who wants to be a son with Him. The cross will humiliate everyone but the humble. Refusal or inability to bear the scandal of the cross has been the downfall of many. The crucifixion of Christ is mankind's greatest condemnation, the crime of the ages, proving man's unqualified hatred of God; it reveals man's insanity and outlawry. To be bloodthirsty for His death and that particular form of it

would have been stupid and barbarous even if He had only been a man, but because He was the Man it was an infamy and because He was God it was a blasphemy. Worse, far worse than this, it was indescribably sinful and should a man in any way unrepentantly defend and justify it he is unforgivable.

The seriousness of the gospel for all of us lies just here, because Jesus was raised from the dead. His crucifixion is not only a matter of history; it is also a contemporary issue. The cross and the crime are not a dead issue; it is a live subject to this day. The prime purpose of the gospel is to focus attention upon this. Every man who has heard the gospel is in some degree drawn to the cross and the crucified One. From that moment he is obligated by God to pass his personal judgement upon what happened those years ago; God has furnished us with the documents containing all the evidence we need to have. Christ was the Man and the God and each man's future shall stand upon his own evaluation and judgement of Him. What was done by the Jews through the Romans at the dividing of time was superseded entirely by what God did by the same act for us all — it was the decisive hour for all mankind. All must be awakened to their accountability to God for what He did then.

Moral complicity in the Jews' and Romans' crime and criminal culpability are not imputed to us; we do not have to answer for what they did.. No individual is held responsible for what another individual does in his own age or in any past age or shall do in the future. The presentation of the crucifixion to modern man is a fait accompli by God though; all men are as inescapably shut up to it as were the Jews in their day and Israel to the law before that. Those who then rebelled against Moses' law were cut off without mercy; likewise they who now purposely and unrepentantly rebel against Christ's cross and law shall as irremediably as they be cut off without mercy. This is unpleasant truth terrible to contemplate, nevertheless it is predetermined by God; having fixed it, He has made or will yet make all men face up to it, either in this age or in an age to come.

The Offence and Superiority of the Cross

The gospel of the cross is thrust upon us unasked; of themselves it is almost certain that men would never seek it. Crucifixion was a most distasteful and shameful method of capital punishment. Beside and beyond being a mere instrument of death, crucifixion was devised by the Romans as a punitive measure for several other reasons (mostly offensive to our taste). The Romans were a civilized nation, one of the greatest civilizations the world has known, but they were also a very warlike nation, heathen, fierce and cruel. By many and frequent battles and conquests they forced their way into foreign lands afar and built an empire over which they imposed their iron will. They did this with such success and to such degree that to this day their mark remains ineradicably impressed on the nations they successively conquered and ruled. Wherever they went they introduced crucifixion; in the Roman world justice was a byword and the cross was its ultimate symbol. No country under their authority would have been left in any ignorance about the power and meaning of the cross, though not its saving power — the Roman cross did not symbolize salvation but death.

Today the cross is regarded as barbaric and loathsome; the whole civilized world now condemns the savage nature which could devise such a thing and the heartless system which could apply it. How then could modern man be expected to accept and look

with equanimity upon this most inhumane method of imposing the death sentence? God knew that it was almost beyond expectation — why then did He send His Son into the world to face that kind of death and incorporate it into salvation? It should be borne in mind that God sent His Son into the world at the end of an age specially to be crucified. The crucifixion was foreshadowed, though not forecast, in such scriptures as Psalm 22: what God did was quite deliberate — it was done in full cognizance of what effects it might have in the twentieth century A.D. It should also be taken into account that it was precisely because of what took place by the crucifixion that men and women of this century think it to be an atrocity. Christ not only accomplished redemption by the cross, He started something in the mind of humanity that has changed the world so radically that men and women think crucifixion is barbarous. But at that time Romans were not considered barbarous; they were the leading nation on earth, educated, civilized, law-abiding and victorious; when they came to Britain they brought the inevitable cross with them. This land was then heathen, our forebears were savages, scarce removed from cavemen we are told; they were defenceless against Rome and were soon made slaves; many who escaped the sword were hung on crosses.

In this modern age it is not what Rome accomplished by the cross but because of what Christ accomplished by it that people think the cross to be philosophically and aesthetically wrong. It is no longer a legal or historic matter, it is a spiritual matter; God used the cross, that is the challenge. It ill becomes sensible people to despise that which God has made their only hope. Yet still the cross is a scandal. Even in those far-off days many other methods of putting people to death were known to men, yet God chose none of those for His Son. He chose the time and sent Him into the world precisely that He should suffer death by crucifixion and we are told that for Him it was the fulness of time. Why? And why did He do such a thing? He knew that the death of His Son would need to be preached throughout all time in all the world as the central determinative factor of salvation. Whatever made Him choose the cross? Why not decapitation or poisoning or even stoning (primitive and torturous as that was) or some other method equally well known to men, just as effective and certainly less barbaric; why did it have to be the cross? He realized that the cross would cause disgust and shame and be outwardly offensive to countless human beings, furnishing the gentle and the civilized and the cultured and the merely religious with sufficient aesthetic grounds to reject His proffered salvation, yet He chose to do what He did. What then are His reasons for so doing?

It is an axiom in law that when crime, especially serious crime, is to be punished, the judge, in passing sentence, should bear in mind that there must be an exhibition to public justice and that it is his duty to include that in the sentence. Crime against society, though it be perpetrated against one person, must never be treated as a private matter; it must be treated as a public outrage and punishment must be meted out accordingly. Punishment may not be inflicted according to the tastes of, or to suit the desires of, an individual or a small group of individuals in society; the judge passing sentence may not do so according to his own whim or because of any personal injustice or damage he may have suffered. Punishment must be imposed according to outraged public conscience. When passing sentence the mentality, decency, standards and desires and intentions of the whole people must be interpreted by the judge. He may not act as an individual but must apply the verdict of the people because he is acting as their representative; the judge is the servant of the nation.

A judge is as a president and must pass sentence as from a body of law agreed upon by a law-abiding nation. His own personal tastes or standard of ethics, his views on the particular case or person on trial, though they may be identical with the people's, are not primarily taken into account. The body of law is an expression of the will of the people. It is either the agreed opinion of a nation of people or the decision of their received head(s) of state; ideally it should be both. Therefore the sentence when passed is the will of the people and before passing it, it is the judge's duty to rightly ascertain by proper investigation whether the accused is guilty or not guilty. He may not decide whether or not the guilty should be punished; the law (and therefore the people) decides that. Certain crimes merit certain retribution and although a little latitude in interpretation may be permitted, the judge may not alter the law, he may only apply it; especially is this so in the case of capital punishment.

The death sentence is not imposed with the idea of educating the individual in social morality by corrective punishment. It may have a salutary and corrective effect upon others in society who may be planning misdemeanours and that is good; it may also act as a deterrent to the spread of similar criminal intent; but be that as it may, capital punishment is not regarded primarily as corrective and certainly not as reformatory to the individual; it is the final word of the people upon certain forms of crime. Capital punishment is the execution of the will of the people, it is insistence upon total exaction, full payment and strict justice without mercy for a crime which has no forgiveness; it is based upon the Mosaic code of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'; fairness and justice are its commendation, and righteousness its foundation. It must therefore be thoroughly understood by us all that the death of Jesus of Nazareth by crucifixion was an exhibition to public justice by God. Jesus was crucified according to the will of God in order to reveal to men the effects of sin upon God and His creatures. The crucifixion was the execution of God's implacable will, God was outraged beyond placation because of sin. Beyond being an exhibition of God's personal wrath against sin, the crucifixion was also the demonstration of His righteousness, it is His just reaction to sin, not a merely emotional one. Further still the crucifixion was not only executed for Himself as expressing His own personal revulsion, but also as expressing the will of all righteous people.

When Jesus came into the world it was an understood thing between Him and His Father that once becoming a man He would have to accept and bear the sentence of death in Himself. He had already accepted that position before being born but He was God only then, He was not the God-man, therefore when He did become a man He had to re-assess the position from a human angle and re-affirm His commitment as a man. This is what took place in the garden of Gethsemane. It cost. He could not shed His blood there — that was reserved for the hill of redemption and the actual cross, but His sweat was as His blood in that garden of consent and commitment. There the sentence was passed and accepted and from thence He bore it as against Himself on behalf of others, right through crucifixion and death and burial.

The high priest sentenced Him to death, Pilate sentenced Him to death, nearly everybody sentenced Him to death, but the death they thought of and imposed upon Him was not that death, it was not the death He accepted in the garden. They, all of them together, though they marshal all their power and combine all their authority, could not pass upon Him the sentence He had already agreed to and accepted on the throne in heaven and on the ground in Gethsemane. How could they? They did not know the grounds upon which to sentence Him. Neither priest nor Pilate, great and

high though they were, knew with whom they were treating, nor did they know why they were sentencing Him, 'Art thou the Christ the Son of the Blessed?' cried the priest, 'Whence art thou?' asked Pilate like an echo. They and all who questioned with them did not know, they were ignorant, it was beyond their ken as confessed out of their own mouths, and it was out of their hands. Their sentences were as nothing to Him: He had already been sentenced. God did it. When Jesus was finally led away to be crucified He went bearing the sentence of death He had accepted from God. He suffered for the crimes of humanity against God and humanity, crimes He Himself had never committed nor ever thought of committing: He was punished as though He was the guilty one of heaven and earth — all who had perpetrated those crimes both directly or indirectly since the foundation of the world: this vital truth of the cross is perhaps too little known.

There is a comprehensiveness about the cross. When God punished His Son He did it not only as from Himself but also as from the considered opinion of a completely convinced people, a people who, if they could have known the whole truth and had been able to adjudicate, would have passed a body of law utterly justifying what He did at Calvary. What He did there He did for us as us, as though we were one with Him in the act, On our behalf He exhibited what would have been our outraged sense of justice had we known and had we been He. This is perhaps one of the greatest of the many reasons why God chose the barbaric cross for His Son. If He had done this to anyone else but Him, for any lesser reasons or with any other purpose than this, it would have been monstrous sin, but in this light it is totally right. This very comprehensiveness of the cross was the greatest reason why the cross was so offensive to the men who were troubling the Galatians. They never understood its fulness, they were offended simply because by it God has accomplished everything which was formerly accomplished only by the ceremonial law; this did not please them at all. They wanted their religion, not the cross.

The great thing at issue among the Galatians was the religious practice of circumcision. It was to them the most fundamental ceremonial of all. By it every male child in Israel was made a child of Abraham, an inheritor of the kingdom and a debtor to keep the whole law. So important was the tradition that, irrespective of the day, circumcision must be performed without fail eight days after the birth of the child, whether it be solemn sabbath or feast day or even the great day of Atonement. Failing this, despite his birth, even though he be a very Isaac, he was cut off from the altar of God, doomed. It can well be imagined what a tender point this was among people; every earnest caring person would have been most concerned to keep the commandment. Imagine then their consternation of heart when people realized, and rightly so, that it struck right at the root of their traditional faith. It destroyed their foundations.

Paul's teaching cut clean across everything; he taught that circumcision was nothing but an outward symbol and quite valueless in the Church; he went so far as to say that under some circumstances it could be definitely harmful to spiritual life. He certainly made it clear that if circumcised people were saved it gave them no spiritual advantage over uncircumcised members of the Church. The cross of Christ rendered the faith and practice of Jewish rites no other than merest superstition. He insisted that all circumcised people were to recognize that circumcision practised for spiritual advantage was quite useless, it provided none; it must be regarded as concision only and its supposed advantages renounced. Paul laid down that circumcision is now

accomplished by the cross of Christ alone, it is of the heart and not of the body, it is in the spirit and not in the flesh and it is done by God and not by man.

So then, whether to Jew or gentile, the cross was an offence — it still is, there is no minimising the power and scope of its meaning, it is unlimited and uncompromising. Because of this it is a very delicate subject now as then, though for different reasons. This is brought out by the figurative meaning of the word translated offence here. We are informed that the word refers to the trigger of a fall trap, a very delicate piece of mechanism included in the setting up of traps to catch birds or animals: by this trigger the poor creature brought about its own captivity, for the slightest touch would move it and cause the trap to spring. This device was always set up well within the trap so that almost always the prey was inescapably caught and held. So it was with the matters of ceremonial circumcision and the cross: both are triggers and they are diametrically opposed to each other. In either case the person who embraced one or the other was 'caught'. The circumcised person was debtor to keep the whole of Moses' law, the crucified person was debtor to keep the whole law of Christ. The cross was a very 'touchy' subject indeed in Paul's day; preached properly it stripped Jewry of all its symbolic religious overtones and outlawed its former ceremonial practices. 'Neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision but a new creature': Paul says we must walk by this rule. Circumcision today is only a show unto men in the flesh, crucifixion shows in the spirit before God.

5. The Cross and the Crucifixion of the Flesh.

The fifth mention of the cross is again with emphasis upon the flesh — what a hindrance to spirituality it is. This time Paul is not speaking with regard to flesh in the bodily physical sense, that is in the same substance in which circumcision was practised. When Paul says 'they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts' he is obviously not saying that it is every man's duty to crucify his own body on an actual cross. Literal self-crucifixion is impossible — crucifixion is one of the few methods of death which cannot be self-applied. In any case Paul is not advocating suicide. Paul is talking about the application of the power of Christ's crucifixion to the evil propensities and powers of self operating in the flesh of a person; if not crucified these will destroy the spiritual life of a Christian. More than this, he is asserting in plainest language that by the Holy Spirit they who are Christ's have already done this thing — they have crucified the flesh', he says: the heart of faith will always do it. Such a strong affirmation leaves no room to doubt that this is conditional to salvation, though at the point of conversion this may not necessarily be understood to be so. At regeneration the spirit of man becomes spiritually alive in Christ; from that moment he is spiritual, that is to say he consciously knows he is alive; he is a man made newly aware of his spirit, for he has new spiritual powers and affections and desires.

Until this happens to him man is a dead creature in spirit; though a natural, normal man, he is cut off from God and totally fleshly in his affections and desires. He may recognize that there is a spirit(ual) side to his make-up, but to do so may only add to the worsening of his state if he develops it wrongly. In company with all around him apart from Christ, a man cannot help living in this world for his own ambitions and fulfilments in the flesh. He loves these things and in common with his fellow men he lives for their expression and satisfaction and enjoyment. These inward affections and lusts develop into habits which, though not identical with the sensual fleshly cravings

of the outward man, are correlated with them; they so closely correspond to these that they are often confused and indistinguishable so that they are thought to be the same. They are not. Those that are Christ's must learn to distinguish between the inward man and the outward man and their respective activities and potential.

The inward man should be thought of as having all the powers and possibilities of its outward counterpart. It should also be recognized as being far more powerful, having greater potential than the outward man — he is only a shell. The inward man is the power of man and that does not differ from person to person or in male or female. This is borne out by Peter; when addressing himself to women in his first epistle he speaks of 'the hidden man of the heart', not the hidden female. The man hidden within is the one to whom God addresses Himself; alas, so does satan. This man has all the potentialities and abilities of the outward man; he is capable of seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting and smelling; he has powers of conception, he can also beget; he can think, speak, work, he can run, walk, sleep, live, die, he is not limited as the body in which he lives is limited — he is far greater than that. He is the one who forms habits and if they are to be broken or changed he is the one who must be changed. He is either good or evil, he is the one who by the grace of God is born from above, and having been born must obey the laws of Christ.

In order to keep spiritual, every regenerate person must know how to maintain the crucified life in all things. This is the secret all must learn, and a special watch must be kept over the affections and lusts. These likes and dislikes and fixations of ours are very strong, they are powers to be reckoned with, for they are not under the control of our conscious mind. They seem to range freely and at times hold sway over the entire spiritual, mental and physical realm of human being and capability. Being so natural and so strong they are perhaps the least controllable of all our appetites and abilities, and can so easily become habits and bondages. We must become very wakeful here and very aware, for often the restrained function of these powers is allowable and correct. Praise God it is precisely here that the cross makes its most powerful effect; unless all these powers, that is the full potential of the inward man, be crucified and raised again, spiritual degeneration will unavoidably take place. By crucifixion some powers will be totally eliminated, others will be made controllable. We must be taught of God in this.

The resurrection of the inward man into spiritual life will manifest itself in every person by many virtues called here the fruit of the Spirit. These are spiritual invariables; unless these be present there is no life, for the new life consists of them. They are listed here as 'love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faith, self-control'. All these are spiritual qualities, they are also the natural characteristics of Jesus Christ, a choice description of His inward life; all these were consistently manifest in Him. Perhaps at this point more than any other it becomes clear why Paul associates the giving of the Spirit with the cross. This fruit is of the Spirit, it was of the Spirit in Christ. Except He had lived this life, except this had been His inward state, He could not have been an offering for sin. He once said that no man could take His life from Him and that He would lay it down, but how could other men have it except someone bring it to them? Hence the need for the Holy Spirit. The Spirit comes to a man in order to reproduce these virtues of Christ in him and will do so when that man agrees to co-operate with Him and crucify his own flesh.

One of the lesser-known of the great wonders of the cross is its availability in the Spirit and one of the Spirit's greatest functions is to bring the cross within reach for our use. No-one unaided can discover the cross; the way of the cross is known only to the Spirit and unless He leads us there we can never find it. When He does so He will impart the secret of its use and the power to use it. Only when the Holy Spirit has procured the whole-hearted consent of a person's mind and sees and believes the voluntary intent of that man's will is He at liberty to release to him the secret of the cross and make known in that man's experience its spiritual power over the flesh.

In a wonderful passage in his letter to the Romans Paul makes this leadership and direction of the Spirit quite unmistakable: 'if ye live after the flesh ye shall die', he says, 'but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live; for as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father'. Here the leading of the Spirit is set forth as being essential to the adoption and is spoken of in connection with sonship, liberty and the inheritance. These are included as being part of the forward drive of the Spirit as He leads the sons on to glorification and ultimate manifestation.

However, none of this is possible to anyone except the backward drive so essential to the correct forward drive of the sons is first known. The Spirit of God always leads to the cross of mortification first and therefrom constantly. The place of mortification is the place of death; mortification is vital death. This death must be sharply distinguished in the mind from vile death; this is a totally different death. Vile death, or the vileness of death, is spoken of here in sharp contrast to this vital death; it is not mortification of the flesh but corruption of the flesh. Paul speaks of this as the bondage of corruption and links it with vanity and pain. Mortification is by the vitality of the death of Christ. One of the reasons why Christ's flesh saw no corruption was because there was no corruption in Him. Because His inward man was without the corruption of sin His outward man was kept free from corruption in the grave. Our inward man can be kept clear of sin and shall be if we allow the Spirit to lead us to the cross so that the constant process of mortification may proceed without hindrance or cessation.

As the literal cross of wood had power over the physical body to bring to death, so does the spiritual power of the crucifixion bring to death the degenerating spiritual power of all God calls flesh. By far the greatest miracles which took place at Calvary were spiritual miracles, all accomplished by Jesus' superhuman power, none of which were seen by human eyes. The real power of the crucifixion was superhuman and supernatural: inhumane and horrible as it is, the death of the cross was not an unnatural death; it was an unwanted death enforced by law, but it was not a physical miracle. When at last the person died and escaped his agony it was only natural that it should happen — that was what was intended and everyone expected it to take place and many came to witness it. But those who witnessed Jesus' death witnessed a miracle.

Jesus did not die as other crucified men died, the thieves crucified beside Him being witness to that; quite naturally they fought to live, but not He: He dismissed His spirit and died long before they did. Even in the macabre final moments He was Lord; He controlled His own death, but the thieves were mere men — they could not die at will. His triumphant exodus must have been a very wonderful miracle; His death on the

cross was an amazing exhibition of power, but even so it was not the greatest of the miracles Christ did on the cross. None of the onlookers saw the great spiritual miracles taking place there. Only spiritual beings could see them and no-one but God understood them fully; O what battles went on in and around the Lord that day. Spiritual Man of righteousness and holiness that He was, offering Himself without spot to God on our behalf, He was at the same time dying as the helpless carnal man of iniquity, laden with sin and also as old Adam, condemned, unforgivable, rejected by God. In one act He combined all, He was as the penitent sinner making his peace with God, and as the mighty protagonist defeating the devil; above all He died to sin. The cross was the scene of His last temptation and His greatest triumph, and as it was with Him so it is with us.

The greatest point of temptation in a man's life is the place where the cross must be applied. It is always to a lesser degree and with different purpose than that for which Jesus died, but it is just as vital to us. We do not have to destroy the devil but we do have to conquer him. Likewise we do not have to bear and put away the totality of sin, but we do have to put away the particular sin. And let every man be sure that if he does not put away the particular sin the totality of his old nature will again assert itself. 'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh'. They are contrary one to the other and if this conflict is going on within the believer he is rendered incapable of doing what he wants to do. This impotence is a most frustrating thing, destructive of true spiritual life, fraying the temper and often causing quarrels between friends and brothers and dear ones. Paul warns of it emphatically, speaking about biting and devouring one another, even consuming one another — spiritual cannibalism! Monstrous! So much for uncrucified flesh, that is what it does; it is a rebellious, lustful, ravenous, destructive beast, and the Spirit is against it. Its affections and desires must not be satisfied under any circumstances or for any excuse — it and they must be crucified together without mercy if we wish to be the kind of spiritual man Christ was. Unless this is done it is not possible to be spiritual and if we are not spiritual we cannot live in the Spirit, and if we do not live in the Spirit we cannot walk in the Spirit and if we do not walk in the Spirit we cannot achieve spiritual objectives but shall constantly fail.

This means that we must not in any way direct our spiritual, mental and physical steps toward the gratification of fleshly desires and affections. All legitimate, simple bodily needs and desires may be attended to and at times satisfied to the glory of God, so indeed may those of the soul and spirit, but only as by the cross; nothing of humanity is acceptable and approved unto God, or can be for His glory except as from the crucified man. Only the crucified man can live in the Spirit, that is live to God as Jesus Christ. The man of the flesh cannot do so; he can live in religion, its traditions and customs, its beliefs about God, its symbols and prayers and songs, but it is a living death, vainglorious and worthless. The flesh does not produce the fruit of the Spirit of God; it only brings forth the fruits of its own spirit and does its own works, none of which are for God's glory or of His kingdom. The man who does his own works thereby declares he is his own king and an enemy of the cross. The power of the cross sets a man free from his own works to do the works of Christ.

But this is not Paul's chief concern here. He is really concerned with the fruit of the living Christ in a life as distinct from works. He is talking about Christ within, bearing fruit unto His Father through the life of that person; Christ considers that His Father must be glorified in all, because He is the Husbandman to whom the fruit belongs.

Fruit is life in entirety; it is an end-product, a complete personality in which all characteristics and habits are changed from mere earthly concepts and standards of good, which are for the satisfying of the flesh, to heavenly standards of virtue and good that satisfy God. Because life and time are progressive, this is a continuously repetitive and progressive experience. The Lord Jesus, using the vine as the basis of His teaching, told us of the expectations of His Father in this respect; annually the vine must produce more and more fruit. His business is to bring forth fruit to His Father through the branches.

6. The Cross and Circumcision

The sixth mention of the cross is really a reinforcement of some of Paul's earlier statements about it. It reveals his utter abhorrence of Judaism and his loathing of the Judaizers from which and from whom Christ had set him free; 'they constrain you to be circumcised only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ', he said. Whoever these people were, their propagation and practice of circumcision was hypocritical cowardice. The apostle's words are very penetrative; he was very angry about these things and quite merciless; 'I would they were even cut off which trouble you', he said. This particular statement is the last of his three citations of the cross with reference to its power and work in the hands of the Spirit.

The first three references to the cross have to do with the redemptive work of Christ: the second three are all to do with the power and purpose of the cross against the flesh. The Galatians needed this emphasis, for it was in this area that they were most gravely at risk. The suggestion being fed to them by misguided Jewish believers was very subtle. Those people did not seek to prevent them from believing the gospel, they wanted them to include something more than that in it. They should preach, so they told them, that beside believing in Christ, everybody should be circumcised; this would make the gospel more palatable to Jewry. The subtlety of the doctrine lay in its appeal to loving-kindness and inoffensiveness. It sowed the idea that by this love and understanding would be promoted in the church and their gospel would be more acceptable to men. But the unmentioned, perhaps unseen sin of it was that if that were so the glory of salvation would not, nor could be, given to Christ alone. The practice of circumcision would unavoidably mean that some of the credit must be given to father Abraham and prophet Moses.

The devil does not mind who is brought in to move people's hearts away from believing in Christ alone for salvation; satan always wants to substitute the good for the best and sadly enough hearts are often only too open and vulnerable to his suggestions. But such error, once allowed into the Church, before long opens the door wide for him to bring in other famous, though perhaps less illustrious, persons of the past also. The tendency toward pantheism is natural to the heart of religiously-minded men. Peter on the mount of transfiguration is sufficient illustration of this: he wanted to include Elijah and Moses with Christ into his pantheon and was willing to build a temple or pitch a tabernacle for each of them alongside Jesus. 'Not for one moment' says God, 'this is my beloved Son'.

It is so sad that believers are such gullible people; it seems we are so very easily bewitched and switched on to erroneous ideas. Even the cross itself can be so wrongly presented and the crucified Christ so easily misrepresented and abusively treated that the gospel is rendered ineffectual. This was Paul's great concern and the reason why

he wrote the epistle. He realized that the cross, together with the reasons for the crucifixion, must be presented to the churches again and again. There are so many high-sounding words and high-flown ideas circulating among believers. 'Good motives' and 'moral reasons' and 'the best of intentions' are often put forward as substitutes for righteousness, but none of them are acceptable to God: 'this is my Son, hear Him', He says. The desire to be under law and to be obedient seems to speak of a submissive spirit wanting to be ruled by God, but this is not so; the Galatians are a typical example of this. In this instance he pressed home freshly upon them that, if they wished to be under law and be obedient, let them keep the law of Christ and obey the truth of the gospel and not seek after Moses' law.

With regard to Abraham, since they were so enamoured of him and circumcision, let them remember that he had two sons and that both of them were circumcised, but only one was the promised seed. Circumcision does not guarantee salvation. Ishmael was the son of Abraham as well as Isaac, but Ishmael was of the bondwoman; he was not born after the promise, his birth was of the flesh and so was his circumcision. The commandment to circumcise was of God and in obedience to Him Abraham circumcised himself and in his zeal to obey the Lord applied the commandment to all the males of his household, one of whom was Ishmael. That day Abraham circumcised very many, not one of whom was born after the Spirit; his own son Ishmael was born after the fleshly desires of his own and Sarah's hearts. Abraham, who saw so much, never foresaw the trouble they would cause. Their impatience was still causing trouble in Paul's day. How irreversible was their zealous, fleshly desire and how regrettable! It was not till years later that he circumcised 'him who was born after the Spirit'. Isaac was born according to the promise and power of God and the affections and desires God wrought in Abraham and Sarah to do His will.

Unfortunately circumcision, by its very nature, having been once done, cannot be undone. Jews still practise circumcision and so also do the Arabs, but it is valueless to them all; the blessing of Abraham is upon none of them. The significance of circumcision in relationship to God's commitments to Israel in the future is obscure. One thing is certain, the cross of Christ has made all sacramental practices and works, formerly made compulsory by the law of Moses and ordained of God as means of salvation for men, superfluous and irrelevant, circumcision included. Sacramentalism has no saving power in the Church of Christ, but the spirit in which they were practised has not died among the churches to this day; that is the tragedy. There is a spirit in man which even now invests the sign with the power and spiritual effectiveness of which it is only the symbol; this is superstition at its worst.

All the symbols of the Church have been degraded by the belief, only too common among us, that they impart grace. Whether baptism or the communion or anointing with oil, all these and others beside them have been made substitutes for the thing for which they stand and have thereby been degraded to tokens of the curse instead of signs of the blessing. Perhaps the most potently dangerous of these is the communion: this ordinance enjoined upon us by Christ, wrongly understood and ignorantly practised, is a deadly habit. The symbols in which it stands, namely bread and wine, wrongly taken are actual media of sickness and death in the midst of the churches, the exact opposite of what God intended. Baptism may be singled out as another ordinance, intended by God for blessing among men. It has been made a substitute for the real truth for which it stands. From time immemorial men have made pictures, symbols, signs, statues their idols and have turned all the practices connected with

them into mere ritual; God's reasons for instituting them have become as nothing and He is grieved. Man can be very religious and in his zeal he sometimes seeks to apply to himself truth which is exclusive to the Church. Whenever this happens the results are disastrous to that individual.

Any people who trespass beyond God's intentions and use the symbols He instituted for His regenerate Church alone preach and minister destruction to those they purport to help and bless thereby. All such practice is satanically inspired and carried out in the zeal of flesh excited by unregenerate spiritual convictions; none of this is of the Spirit of God. Man has always done these things, the habit has not been recently introduced; it all began in Eden, the seeds of all these things were planted then, though not by God. As Adam exceeded God's word, so did Abraham. Although Abraham did not disobey God in the same way as Adam, he certainly exceeded God's will in the promise He made to him and so the mystery of 'the flesh' in spiritual things was typed out. The pattern is clearly defined and easily traceable in scripture. From the time of Abraham's experimentation in concubinage Ishmael has represented the circumcision of the flesh, but Isaac has represented the circumcision made without hands wrought by God in man's spirit — the real circumcision.

The inevitable tragedy of it all (it always works out like this) is that he who was born after the flesh persecuted him who was born after the Spirit. There were so many in Abraham's camp who were born after the flesh, they were not even his seed, yet he zealously applied to them the special sign. He did this with the best of intentions of course (had not God given him the order?). They were his workers and retainers, possibly also there were some camp-followers. He was a good man and he wanted blessing for them all, so although he was not the father of their flesh as he was of Ishmael's, when he received the commandment he circumcised them. Presumably they stayed on with Abraham and by reason of that fact dwelt in the promised land. In some measure they all partook of Abraham's blessings there, but not one of them had direct personal inheritance in it because they were not the spiritual seed. Even Ishmael, the one who through seniority would have had ground for claiming the special double portion of the blessing, was by God's orders cast out; Abraham was not allowed to give the promised land of God to him for an inheritance, the God of the land would not be his God. He watched over him and made provision for him, but He would not be his God. Circumcised though they were, this was the same for every one of them.

To explain these things to the Galatians Paul told an allegory in which Hagar, the mother of Abraham's child of the flesh, represents the law and earthly Jerusalem. Long before Paul's day what in David's kingdom and psalms was the city of God had become the Jews' house of bondage; they were satan's slaves. Because of what she and her children did to Christ, Jerusalem and the Jews' religion had been excommunicated. Judaism and national religious systems remain rejected to this day. Jerusalem is the mother and head(-quarters) of sinister law-works in which the flesh delights, for thereby it can achieve pseudo heights of religion. Any covenant she had with God is now broken, and her fleshly children, together with all their bondages, must be cut right out of the churches. Until Jerusalem which is above mothers us all, Jerusalem which now is on earth is the mother of us all. In the allegory she is 'the flesh'; Sarah, her heavenly counterpart, is 'the Spirit', the 'mother' of all God's children. We must be born from above — Jesus said it.

Paul takes up this idea of circumcision, applying it widely when he says 'I would they were even cut off which trouble you'. His deliberate intention was to destroy the superstitious belief, rampant among the Jews, that circumcision of itself was a great spiritual blessing — it was not. Paul laboured this point much. By these people, whether in Jewry or throughout Christendom, whatever their religious attachment, fake doctrines and religious practices are being substituted for true experience of Christ. Through them all the glory that should go to Christ by the Spirit goes to satan via the flesh. Paul in his day was incensed against them and so should we be in our day, 'Cast them out, cut them off', he says, 'they are bewitching you, you've stopped running the race, you've fallen from grace, you are in bondage'. The churches must run like athletes and walk like champions and to do so they must discard all the trappings of religious flesh. We all must walk with Christ in the Paradise of salvation without any of this pseudo-religious clothing of cast-off practices. Fear of persecution must not prevent us from preaching the cross of Christ; to refrain from doing so is to glory in the flesh. The availability of the cross in the Spirit commits us all to using or applying it in every realm of our being; to fail to do so is to despise it. All spiritual, mental and bodily appetites can be adjusted to God by the cross, so that by the Spirit, on the cross we can offer ourselves without spot to God.

7. The Cross and the Crucifixion of the World

The whole of man's trouble is the result of failure to obey the original truth presented to him — because the Galatians did not do so they did not retain their original blessing. The full power of the cross as presented by the apostle and exemplified in his life was lost on them; they did not enter into it, therefore they did not understand it. The need for the cross beyond its initial blessings and the need for personal crucifixion is always a mystery to those who are uncrucified. The objective cross is seen to be beneficial and is accepted, but we all must know the subjectivity of it. Paul did and finalized his letter with these words, 'God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world'. It just had to be like that with this man — with him there could be no half measures. The world was finished for Paul; all it held for him was opportunity to preach the gospel and suffering and death; he was crucified to the world — it held no attraction to him and he held no attraction for the world; it was mutual. That was how Christ wanted it for him and it is how He wants it for us. Beside revealing the disposition and temperament of Paul, this is also an indication of the man's love and loyalty. It is also an insight into the wisdom and logic of the Lord; salvation could not work out in man's experience in any other way. It would be of no use insisting that the flesh must be crucified if the world is not crucified at the same time. The flesh exists in the world; likewise the world was created by the flesh and for the flesh.

The world as spoken of by Paul here is not to be mistaken for the earth, nor is it to be thought of as the original cosmos God created in the beginning. Sin has entered the world and by it man has created his own conditions of life contrary to God's will within God's creation. It is to this the scripture refers when speaking of the world as Paul is doing here. He is referring to the order or condition or state in which man exists on the earth; it is variously called by him culture or civilization or some other relevant name; according to his spiritual state a man's soul may delight or conversely hate to live in it. Paul saw right from the beginning that in Christ Jesus there lay a whole new world, a spiritual structure and condition of life created for him; he also knew that he had been created into it by the conjoining of God and man in Christ. He

also knew that the former creature he had been was slain and that the old creation into which his parents had given him birth was in a state of death. None of the things which had been gain and valuable to him, in which he had formerly lived so completely and successfully, meant anything much to him any more. What he had counted to be the true life was now death to him. It was a dual operation. He had cast them off and was dead to them, and they and the world in which they existed were dead to him. So powerful was Christ's crucifixion and so effective that it works in every realm of man's existence in this world — it had to or else it could not have served God's purposes. The cross was God's method of the ultimate destruction of the sinner and his sin, of the flesh in which he expressed it, of the self who wanted it and of the world in which he practised it. The cross is almighty, it is the infallible, chosen instrument of the Almighty.

Sympathizers with Jesus Christ after the flesh mourn and shudder when they think of what the cross did to Him, but terrible though it was for Him, they need not try to feel for Him there. He once told the daughters of Jerusalem to weep for themselves and not for Him. It was not that He did not appreciate their concern, He simply did not want them to live in fleshly sentiment. Everyone should weep because one so pure and good as He should have to suffer for their sins. Paul had it right when he said he wanted to know Him and the fellowship of His sufferings by being made conformable unto His death. It is what He accomplished by the cross through His suffering, despite His pains, which is the far more important thing.

Paul gloried in the cross and for this reason: Christ's crucifixion was an abuse of the cross by men, but the glory of the gospel is that while men were putting it to its most dreadful abuse, God was simultaneously putting it to its greatest possible use. God's good news to men is that He overruled the wickedness of men and used the cross for purposes other than men intended, and not only so, He also thereby made it His, not man's and the devil's. He who was being crucified was the Son of man and He who was doing the crucifying was His Father and God. As He said, when He was lifted up from the earth the judgement of the world was taking place, and the prince of the world was cast out also; that was another of the real miracles of the cross. Incredible as it may seem it is true; He engineered the cross, overruling all men's and devils' schemings, using them for His own purposes and making all things work together for men's good and His own glory.

This dual power of the cross is one of the most wonderful of its many features. Behold the wisdom of God as it is revealed in this particular instance: it is plain common sense that if a man is dead and the world is dead there can be no possible collusion between them. O the wonder of truth! In spiritual reality the old world is dead and so is the old man who lived in it. To men of faith the new creation is here, the old spiritual power of the flesh is crucified and so is the person who lived in it; Old things have passed away by the death and resurrection of Christ, the end of the ages has come upon us; Paul says these things in other places. In the physical universe we await its happening, but in the spiritual realm it is already done — all that remains for every man to do is to enter in and live in God's completed spiritual work to the best of his advantage. This unredeemed and un-redeemable world is slowly degenerating into corruption before final extinction as predicted. The revelation Paul is declaring is that by the cross all redeemed men can live clear of the world and shall finally be brought into the future new creation — the death and resurrection of Christ is so complete.

On the other hand, if a man is alive being un-crucified, though the world be dead the man will still cling to it. Even though the world could not cling to the man he would cling to it; he would not be able to let it go. It would be the same also if the positions were reversed. If the world was alive and the man was dead the world would not let the man go, but if both be dead neither can cling to the other — it would be impossible. God forbid then that I should glory save in this cross of Christ; by God's gracious laws it has become established as the basic rule of all life and justice and judgement in the affairs of God and men. We must walk by it and live by it, or we can never know the true peace of God.

29-APR-03

— April 1985 —.
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DISCIPLESHIP

G.W.NORTH

DISCIPLESHIP

The word disciple simply means 'learner' and could be used of many persons in connection with many things. Because of its nature however, its use is generally confined to particular fields of learning rather than to general spheres of subjects of education open to any pupil or scholar. This is readily seen when considering children and school, or students and college; no-one is thought to be or expected to become a disciple of his or her teacher or lecturer just because he or she is imparting knowledge. There is far more involved in discipleship than the mere absorption of knowledge; a disciple must be a copyist, he must learn with the intent of reproduction — the reproduction in his own life of the life of the teacher. He is sore concerned with taking his teacher as an example, someone upon whom he can model his life, than just as a mere teacher, an imparter of knowledge.

There are those to whom the acquisition of knowledge is a lifetime ambition; they seem to have 'itching ears' and are for ever learning without coming to the knowledge of truth. The Athenians were renowned examples of this; they lived entirely for the pursuit of new things. Mars Hill was a famous seat of learning and the Areopagites were considered to be great and learned men, but they rejected the gospel and Christ. Possibly many of them were disciples of contemporary philosophers, certainly they developed many ideas among them and founded famous schools of thought and many of them lived accordingly. It is said of them that they taught the world to think, but that is a gratuitous assumption; if it be true it is nothing but mechanics and 'know-how'. They were undoubtedly teachers, but they have no disciples for they are dead. While they were alive they had disciples, but they do not have any now, for it is not possible to be a disciple of a dead person.

While the Lord. Jesus was on earth He made many disciples; He did so quite deliberately and when He was about to leave the earth He gave His disciples clear instructions to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, 'teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you'. He was very definite: discipling was to continue. If He had left it there we might have concluded that He intended them to think they should disciple men to themselves, but the Lord did not give that commandment until after He was risen from the dead and then went on to say, 'and lo I am with you all the days even unto the end of the age', so it becomes obvious that He meant men to be discipled to Himself; this is possible because He is alive. What He is saying is, 'I am with you every day to make disciples'.

The order of truth revealed here is very simple: make disciples, teach them. These men who heard Him speak that day on Olivet would have understood exactly what He meant, for that is exactly how it had happened with them; first He made them His disciples and then He taught them. The Lord's method of making them His disciples was very simple: He came where they were and called them: 'Follow Me', He said and they followed Him. Not all of them did so immediately; Matthew did, he rose, left all and followed Him and as far as we know he never looked back. Others including Peter only followed Him spasmodically at the beginning; they seemed to find it a struggle to leave all and follow Him and to do it all at once. Eventually however,

many, like Peter, made the final break and followed Him in the same spirit as that apostle, who once declared, 'Lord why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake'. Such was the attachment and devotion of those men to Jesus that they all attested their own personal allegiance to Him; His leadership and example and teaching won them completely.

The words, 'we have left all and followed thee', aptly sum up the human concept of true discipleship. They were uttered by Peter as a direct result of witnessing the coming and going of the rich young ruler. This man suddenly appears on the sacred page, rushing to Jesus and falling on his knees before Him, driven by a sense of need that neither breeding nor position nor wealth nor religion could abate or satisfy. 'Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' It sounded such a noble thing for a ruler to do — a nobleman kneeling before a peasant; all might easily have been deceived by it, so Jesus dealt with it and with him summarily. 'Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven and come take up the cross and follow me'. He answered him in that vein because He loved him; the Greek word used by Mark carries the thought of to esteem, to sum or weigh up. In other words Jesus fully estimated him; He esteemed him for what he was, and also dealt with his esteem for Him and his estimations of eternal life.

Although he did not say so, it seems that this wealthy and highly religious young man wanted eternal life without becoming a disciple. Obviously he did not wish to follow the Lord, at least not on His terms (and it is impossible for anyone to follow the Lord on his own terms) so he left Him. It was tragic; the Lord was as much grieved as the young man and said 'how hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of heaven; it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven'. 'Come take up the cross and follow me'. Eternal life and discipleship and the cross cannot be separated; they are placed together by the Lord because they inhere in each other; whether a man sells all or leaves all, as the case may be, makes no difference — he must follow the Lord at all costs.

It cannot be otherwise, for the Lord Himself did exactly that. He left all to come to earth. He who was the richest young ruler of all was born a comparatively poor man on earth and lived like that all His life. He left all to become a lamb, a follower of His Father's will and wishes, until He was finally led to the slaughter. He never made any demands on man which He Himself had not previously fulfilled. He did not make idle demands on people, but simply told the truth and revealed the facts. He once said 'if any man come to me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me'. Some of the conditions He laid down for discipleship are exacting in the extreme; they may be gleaned from His sayings by anyone who cares to read the Gospels with this intention; here is a selection of the further ideas and truth He openly stated about it:

The disciple must hate and renounce his own life and never again seek it in this world, he must also deny himself and unreservedly hate his blood relatives; before he commences the venture he must sit down and count the cost because the course must be finished. To one man He as good as said, 'You will not have so much as a hole to go to or a nest in which to lie down; a fox or a bird may well expect to be better off than a disciple of mine. I must be first in all things, let the dead bury the dead and let the gospel be your greatest concern. Put your hand to the plough, never look back, keep yourself fit for the kingdom of God'.

With these and other words like them Jesus uncompromisingly set high the standard of discipleship which has never been lowered by Him since. The compensations and rewards for obedience are enormous, far outweighing any loss sustained in this life while achieving them; the demands are not lessened by them, rather are they strengthened thereby.

1. On the Banks of Jordan

Another thing the Lord clearly stated which, although not as yet mentioned here, must also be frankly considered by the would-be disciple, it is baptism in water. He considered that to be baptised by John Baptist was another step toward the fulfilment of all righteousness for Him, so He was publicly immersed in Jordan and for His obedience earned the commendation 'Thou art my beloved son in whom I am well-pleased'. He expected all His disciples to be baptised, and authorised His apostles to apply the rite to all their converts, 'baptising them in to the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost'. All disciples must face up to the implications of baptism — death to and burial away from the world, the flesh, the devil and sin and self. It is a fitting beginning to the life of discipleship, a sign of self-renunciation and utter devotion and of a life swallowed up by God as completely as the grave swallows the dead. Jesus, the anointed Son of God, came through water baptism; it was most important to Him and should be considered of equal importance by every other person who wishes to show by discipleship that he is a son of God.

The word disciple is a general noun implying that the person bearing it has accepted a discipline and by doing so has declared that he no longer wishes to live a life of self-pleasing, but has chosen instead to become a follower and learner of Christ. From that moment he has become a devotee, utterly committed to Him and to His cause. That is how Christ sees it and so did persons like Paul, who suffered the loss of all things and counted them dung and loss so that he may win Christ. He only lived to press toward the mark', forgetting the things that were behind him. This man considered himself to have been bought entirely by God, that he was no longer his own and was in fact a slave, a bond slave of Christ; in other words a true disciple. There came a time in his life when he determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified; from then on he knew himself to be debtor to Christ and to all men for his life and service. He seemed to have understanding of things right from the beginning, for at his first meeting with Christ he acknowledged Him to be the Lord and called Him that.

If ever there was a true disciple of Jesus Christ it was the apostle Paul, yet as far as the records go he never once used the word disciple of himself or of any other. This may be thought more than a little surprising, but to all who have made his acquaintance through his writings it is seen to be typical of the man. His impact on his age and especially on the Church was profound; he was dynamic. Specially raised up of God, his effect upon the apostles themselves was incalculable and his legacy to the churches, particularly those he established, is his epistles, each one of which is absolutely invaluable to us. What influence he had among his peers in the ministry and on the canonical writers — both apostolic and non-apostolic — cannot be fully estimated. Perhaps we may assess some of his power from the fact that, following the Acts of the Apostles, indeed long before it runs its course, the word disciple altogether disappears from the sacred page and presumably from the vocabulary of the early church. This is a remarkable phenomenon indeed, for preceding this it had appeared hundreds of times in the New Testament and once in the Old Testament. It is not an

Old Testament word in that it does not bear the same meaning in Isaiah as in the Gospels. It was introduced first in connection with John Baptist. Men apparently gathered themselves unto him, accepted his ministry of baptism, learned of him and fondly attached themselves to him, thus becoming known as his disciples.

It was not an unusual thing in Jesus' day for men to say they were Moses' disciples, though nowhere in scripture do we find the children of Israel described in that way. It was therefore quite natural that men should be called disciples if they followed a man or adhered to his teachings and practised his commandments. Gamaliel, a man of great reputation in Jesus' day, draws attention of the Jews to two men in Palestine who had risen up about that time and had attracted people to themselves, pointing out that the movements came to nought because the leaders were slain and there was no-one to follow. Discipleship was popular among fanatical people then and Jesus was well aware of that fact. He therefore, upon occasion, took steps to disenchant people from popular ideas and to discourage fanaticism, lest men and women should become self-deceived and bring discredit to the gospel He came to bring. Perhaps it is for this same reason that Paul and all the other contributors to the New Testament following the Acts utterly refrained from using the word disciple.

Peter addresses himself to the strangers, James writes to the tribes, John pens his second letter to the beloved lady and his third to Gaius, while Paul sends his epistles to the churches. It is chiefly in these letters of Paul that we find the new name for Christians which has substituted the word disciple in scripture, namely saints. To men of understanding it is easy to see how and why the substitution was made, for this word came in with the revelation of the Church which is the body of Christ. This is the reason why it is Paul who introduces the name into the New Testament, for it was mainly to him that the truth of the body of Christ was revealed. He saw the fullest implications of this truth. The body of Christ is holy, the most sacred body on earth and reason would that if a person has been baptised into that body, he or she being a member of that body is a holy person, a saint.

Paul was never a follower of Jesus of Nazareth in the flesh and he saw quite clearly the vast difference between being a disciple following a person and a member belonging to that person's body; it is very important that we also see it. Discipleship and sainthood are not the same. They are not to be regarded as two conflicting ideals though, but as two concepts of spiritual life. A person is not expected to cease to be one in order to be the other and it is necessary for each one of us to understand this. As we shall see there were many in Christ's day who only became temporary disciples and followed Him for a while; they did not leave all to follow Him as did others, but went back. These never went on to sainthood; that is to say they did not utterly commit themselves to the Lord and persevere until they were baptised into His body and made holy people. It is an amazing fact that, with the exception of one reference which is to people of the old covenant, the word saint does not appear in the Gospels. It first comes into use in the Acts of the Apostles; from then onwards it occurs frequently in the writings of the New Testament, chiefly those of Paul and John. In fact Paul addresses his Ephesian letter to the saints and faithful ones in Christ Jesus there.

We see then that the Lord Jesus deliberately refrained from calling people saints, choosing instead to call them disciples, while Paul did exactly the opposite, calling them saints and brethren instead of disciples. This is most significant and indicates a

complete change of thought involving new concepts of spiritual life. It would seem that the Lord could not honestly call His followers saints, but named them for what they were, learners only. Experientially they did not then belong to His body. Of the eleven, who for a while followed Him from the supper room en route for Gethsemane and Golgotha, He said they were given Him by His Father. A little earlier He had told them that they were His friends, and in conversation with Mary Magdalene after He rose from the dead He called them His brethren, but never once did He say they were saints. The simple reason for this is that until they were born again they were not holy ones, nor could be until He had died and risen again and had baptised them in the Spirit into His body. Believers they were and disciples, some were even called apostles, but not saints until this great change took place in them.

This was the whole point of His calling and their discipleship. They were called to take up the cross daily and follow Him faithfully all the way. Very few did. In fact in the end only Mary His mother and John His disciple stood by Him on the cross; all the others forsook Him when it came to that. Perhaps none of them knew that the whole point of His calling and leadership was to the cross, and perhaps few today realise that discipleship is to this same end. By the plain implications of scripture discipleship is unto sainthood, and except sainthood (that is a life of holiness) be reached discipleship is in vain. Because of old Jesus called someone, or did something miraculous for someone, or people heard of or saw something wonderful happening to someone, many thousands became followers of Him, at least for a while, but mostly it was because of outward phenomena. Few had anything sufficiently real to keep them going to the end toward which He was moving.

This was the great tragedy of discipleship in His day and He knew it; let it be sufficient warning to us in these days of specious over-indoctrination on the subject of discipleship. The unwarrantable emphasis being laid by modern men on this aspect of truth is dangerous inasmuch as it gives undue importance to organisation, elevating authoritative men and women to positions for which they are not fitted and which Christ never intended. Nevertheless, despite the tendency to overlook fuller truth, there is much for all to learn by the emphasis — we must obey scripture and buy the truth, determined never to sell it at any price for any reason.

All four Gospel writers have much to say about the disciples of Christ. At least three of the authors actually knew Him after the flesh and followed Him and two of them, John and Matthew, were chosen apostles and loved Him dearly. One of John's favourite expressions when speaking of himself in relationship to Jesus was the disciple whom Jesus loved'. Perhaps he was the unnamed one of the first two men who followed the Lord from His first public appearance at Jordan; if so he called Him Rabbi — Master or Teacher from the beginning. If this is indeed true John was a close observer of Him from His earliest ministerial appearance to His last moments on earth. It is perhaps not surprising then that he should be chosen to make such a vast contribution to the New Testament. His input into the scriptures — a Gospel, three epistles and the Revelation — was unequalled by any of his contemporaries; not even Paul equalled him, even though numerically his works exceed those of the Senior apostle. It is therefore probably most significant that, in common with Paul, John should drop the word disciple from all of his writings except his Gospel. But true though that is, his references to discipleship and Jesus' teachings about it are so momentous that to miss or ignore them would be calamitous.

Some of the remarks and teachings he has recorded are so frankly uncomplimentary to the chosen disciples, including himself, that he cannot be thought anything other than a most honest and self-effacing man, most concerned that we should know the truth. He was not new to discipleship when he met Jesus. For some time before that John Baptist had been making disciples and John had been baptised by him in Jordan; he was most probably a disciple of his namesake before he became a disciple of Jesus. He was entrusted by God with the task of recording the beginnings of things in a very individual way. He commenced his Gospel with the words 'In the beginning', and in keeping with that records the glimmerings of the beginnings of discipleship which perhaps lay as yet undiscovered in the hearts of the two who stood listening to John Baptist by Jordan that day when he said 'Behold the lamb of God'. At the time Jesus was walking with purpose near the river in which He had been baptised the previous day. Hearing their master's words, John's two disciples followed Jesus, who, seeing them following, said to them, 'What seek ye? They said unto Him, Master where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt and abode with Him that day'.

They did not then know what lay in His heart for them, or all that true discipleship meant. Their ideas of discipleship were different from His. They thought it was a desultory affair of intermittent comings and goings for longer or shorter periods, for at the beginning they came and went. We cannot be sure, but perhaps that was how they had responded to John Baptist also; they had not left all and gone to him, they had never been expected to do so, but had given him as much time as was consistent with their beliefs and convenient to them. They therefore did not know that the Lord Jesus, being who He was, would demand utmost commitment from them. They were convinced from the beginning that He was the Christ and said so to others, but had no idea that ere long He would be claiming their whole attention. It seems that once they had accepted John Baptist as their teacher and had been baptised by him, their concept of spiritual living had been to go out to him as opportunity presented itself and listen and learn and then retire home again. Peter is an outstanding example of this kind of thinking.

2. By the Galilean Lake.

This man, who was later to become a leading apostle, was first brought to Jesus by his brother Andrew, who asserted to him that he had found the Messiah. That first meeting was momentous and left him speechless, 'Thou art Simon the son of Jona', said Jesus, 'thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation a stone'. What a beginning! Who was this who at the first introduction made so bold as to change a man's name? Why and what was it all about? What effect this had on Peter is difficult to tell; he certainly did not regard it as a call to discipleship, but went back home to his wife and his fishing business — undoubtedly with very mixed feelings and thoughts. However, Jesus had designs on him other than that, so following His temptation in the wilderness Jesus went after him. He found him with his brother, fishing in Galilee, 'follow me and I will make you fishers of men' He said and they straightway left their nets and followed Him. How long they stayed with Him or how far they followed Him then we are not told; we do know though that they did not continue with Him, for later we find Him back at the lake again seeking them; they had gone back. Why they went back is left to the imagination, we only know that this time the call was conclusive, they forsook all and followed Him and never went back.

At last the message had reached them. Until now they had not been prepared to forsake everything. They had responded to His charm and felt the pull of His attraction, but had not been ready to let go of everyone and everything else for His sake; their own business and home ties came first. But at last they realised there was much more to being a disciple of Jesus than just going to visit Him occasionally, or having Him visit them for long or brief spells as the case may be. Beside this, Peter at least had reached a place of desperation because of his sin. How long the conviction of his sinfulness had been growing in him is impossible to tell; maybe it had been growing in him over the days since John Baptist had first pronounced Jesus to be the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Or maybe it was the presence of Jesus with him in the boat — the sheer righteousness and purity of Him. Or it may have been the fact that he had been and still was trying to elude the Lord and His claims on his life — perhaps it was all three, we do not know; all we know is that he felt he was a sinner and told Jesus to go away and leave him alone. They were tense moments of struggle, but Jesus won him and at last Peter and those with him abandoned fishing and home and became lifelong disciples.

John does not record any of this in his Gospel, nor does he mention the details of the successive callings of any of the disciples, neither does he show how the Lord elevated some of them, including himself, to apostleship and commissioned others to a less intimate position and ministry. John leaves that to his fellow-writers; he turns his pen instead to the task of recording other details relating to the development of everyone's spiritual life and calling rather than to original calls. Comparing his Gospel with Matthew's for instance reveals an illuminative detail, namely this: Jesus already had disciples before He specifically called anyone to follow Him. What is more important John also records the vital conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus in Jerusalem at the Passover when the Lord so emphatically stated, 'Ye must be born from above'. It was not until after that and possibly also following His trip to Samaria that the Lord commenced calling men to discipleship. Before that it seems He was content to win men by attraction rather than by direct challenge and call.

Until this time all the people had been attracted to John Baptist and being converted by his gospel had become his disciples, but being pointed by him to Jesus, many of them, if not most of them, had been converted to Jesus. We see then that discipleship was at that time determined by allegiance to a person and acceptance of his leadership and teaching. John Baptist was a great light shining and burning in the wilderness, therefore he attracted multitudes to himself, but Jesus came into the world a far greater and more fiery light than His forerunner and, as we may expect, made and baptised more disciples than John. Significantly enough the Lord Himself did not practise water baptism; His disciples did it for Him, and, presumably in His name, disciple baptised disciple; perhaps that is an indication of the great numbers who turned from John to Jesus wishing to become His followers. This was perfectly acceptable to John and Jesus, but before the Lord went out to call men to Himself He firmly established at least one thing, namely this, that in order to enter the kingdom of God a man must be born of water and of the Spirit.

It is not sufficient that men should be baptised in water only; everyone must be baptised in Spirit as well. Water baptism is an external thing, though it should never be done except upon correct inward convictions; it can only ever be a symbolic act. When a man is baptised in water he is only as it were born into a new life. When John

baptised a person, from that moment onwards he or she was regarded as his disciple; all sins were at that moment forgiven by God and John became his new teacher and scripture-interpreter; from then onwards that person entered into a different kind of life, his baptism was therefore as a new birth to him. But when Jesus baptises a man in the Spirit he is at that moment born from above; he is literally made a new man by a miracle wrought in him by Jesus. This is one of the major reasons why Jesus did not practise water baptism — it is of the earth, earthy. The baptism in Spirit is of the heavens, heavenly. Jesus only baptises from heaven. He is now ascended into heaven and from thence baptises men in the Spirit. Water baptism, as practised by John Baptist or any other person, is nothing more than a picture of new birth. Spirit baptism as practised by Jesus is the actual one and only new birth; John's water baptism but poorly prefigured it. It is very difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Lord approved of what would now by some be called anabaptism, for it is almost impossible not to believe that some, if not all those His disciples baptised in water had previously been baptised by John. Be that as it may, one thing is very clear: water baptism is a figure of new birth and Spirit baptism is that new birth. What God hath joined together let no man put asunder; a man must be born of water and of the Spirit says Jesus.

Having established this truth the Lord went forth to call men to. Himself and to a new kind of discipleship. The kind of discipleship He intends for all men is that same life of discipline which He Himself knew as a human being on this earth. He said of Himself, 'the Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father do', and it is written of Him that He was led of the Spirit into the wilderness. Throughout His life He made remarks utterly consistent with the spirit of these truths, such as, 'as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do, arise let us go', and 'I know that His commandment is life everlasting, whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak'. Jesus of Nazareth was a disciple; He is also our Lord, and as He said, the disciple is not above his Lord; He has given us an example; He is also an ensample of what God means by discipleship and when we respond to Him He never asks or expects us to do or be anything He did not do or Himself become when He became a man. He did not leave it to another to show us what discipleship means, He has shown us Himself.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus he had no idea of what true discipleship meant; he made no secret of the fact that he and others regarded Jesus as a teacher, for he called Him that, 'teacher, we know thou art a teacher come from God'. He was himself the teacher of Israel and he undoubtedly wished to talk to Jesus on that level, but the Lord would have none of it. Like so many of his day (and ours too for that matter) he wanted things to be kept theological without any suggestion of personal commitment, He must have been absolutely astonished when Jesus told him that he must be born — he had no intention of getting on to such intensely personal grounds. He was intellectually stimulated by Jesus' miraculous powers and was naturally inquisitive, but he was not prepared to throw in his lot with the Lord. Many have followed his example, but in doing so have thrown away the best in life. Happily the impression made on Nicodemus by the Lord was so great that he could not stand aside from Him completely; he eventually took a public stand for Him, but by that time he had missed so much. What would he have done if the Lord had specifically called him, as He did the apostles?

3. At Cana of Galilee.

It is a very enlightening experience to trace the training and spiritual progress of the men who did respond to the Lord and follow Him; their regard for Him must have been recognised at a very early stage, for they were invited with Him to the marriage at Cana of Galilee. There they witnessed the very first miracle He ever performed. It was not much more than a simple demonstration of His amazing power. In context of spiritual truth the miracle has much to teach us, but at the time it was perhaps seen only as a neighbourly act. No-one was healed, no devils were cast out, no-one sought and found forgiveness, there was no message preached or prophetic word given, the hungry were not fed and, although it involved water and wine, it cannot be said the thirsty were given drink, for nobody there could possibly have been thirsty. It was a festal occasion and somehow, possibly because Jesus had more disciples than anticipated, the wine ran out. 'They have no wine' said. Mary His mother to Jesus, 'Woman what have I to do with thee?' said Jesus to her, 'mine hour is not yet come', and the incident seemed closed. But as though somehow she was expecting something extraordinary to happen, she said to the servants, 'Whatsoever He saith unto you do it'.

His waiting disciples could never have anticipated what was about to happen, but oh, if they had been listening to the exchange between Jesus and His mother, what a wonderful lesson of discipleship they would have learned from their Master. Earthly father He had none, but He made clear that He had left His mother and His former commitment to her entirely. Any claims she had or had thought she had on her son were decisively broken — until then it had been 'Mother' — now it was 'Woman' — He had put her away — left her for God and the call and His life work and them. 'What have I to do with thee?' She had no more influence over Him. She had borne Him but He was not hers and deep down inside she knew it; He was God's. Whether or not He had talked much with her since the marvellous episode at Jordan is impossible to tell with certainty, but knowing Him and His ways we can well imagine the kind of things that would have been said in the home that day when He returned with two men. From that time forward men continued to gather to Him; that is why they were invited with Him to the wedding, there to hear His words of final severance from His family and His total commitment to God and them. Whatever proper maternal guidance and disciplining Mary had ever exercised over her son till then was now finished; He had nothing more to do with her and should she further seek to interfere in His life it would be nothing more than sheer presumption.

This necessary reproof, firmly delivered to her, was in the nature of a primary lesson for His disciples who all needed to learn it; Jesus was setting an example for all time. This lesson may well be called the cost of discipleship. It could not have been an easy moment for either Jesus or Mary; on her part it was certainly unexpected. Perhaps it raised a few eyebrows among the disciples, but if they had listened to her next words they would have learned another vital primary lesson also: 'Whatsoever He saith unto you do it'. No man could ever hear sounder advice than that; they were greatly privileged to have witnessed the costly exchange. Discipleship demands instant, utter, exact, implicit obedience, right through life from the beginning to the end. Right there before their eyes they saw the result of the servants' unquestioning obedience to the Lord's commands. It amounted to willing and unquestioning co-operation; they co-operated with Jesus to the full. 'Fill the water pots with water' and they filled them — up to the brim. What a lesson; up to the brim — it was full, unstinting obedience — and see the result — 'draw out now'. And they bore it. The ruler of the feast tasted the water that was made wine and thought it was good: it was, and he said so to the

bridegroom. Of course it was good — it was as good as everything Jesus created was good.

No wonder this Gospel commences as it does — 'In the beginning' for this is the beginning of miracles. The Lord deliberately took His disciples along with Him to that wedding that they may learn who it was they were following. In this new beginning Jesus reveals Himself as the Creator who does all things well and makes all He creates good — and this time not by His own but by another's pronouncement. He did not say so, He did not as much as touch the water-pots either; the servants did it all under His direction without supervision. At what precise moment the water became wine is not disclosed, but one thing is certain: it all happened when it was in the obedient servants' hands. What a lesson for disciples. They were observers only, He did not ask them to do anything, He simply showed them 'how it works'. What they thought is private to them, but this we know, they saw His glory 'as of an only begotten with a father'; their Master was full of grace and truth, and they recognised something.

From that moment they knew that the man they were following was truly the Lamb of God. They had taken John Baptist's word for it at first and now by their observation they had proved it to themselves. What they witnessed had amazed them; it would have amazed anybody, for it was scarcely believable. The Lord by whose power and at whose command the miracle had been performed received no praise or thanks from anyone for it at all, or if He did it is not mentioned by the writer; He did not seek any. He stood there silent while the bridegroom was undeservedly congratulated for the quality of the wine he had not provided. The truth came out later of course, hence the story, but the effect of the incident on the disciples was just what Jesus wanted — they believed on Him. Perhaps this is one of the most amazing points in the story — they had been following Him and were known as His disciples but had not been believing in Him. That may be strange to us, for we connote discipleship with faith, yet here it is — unbelieving disciples. Attraction without heart-commitment, following without faith — the condition is no less common today than it was then.

The Lord was constantly fighting this battle with unbelief in His disciples' hearts, it was ingrained in them; they had a kind of faith in Him, otherwise they would not have been His disciples, but it was very limited and faint, and entirely human. This battle continued right through to the end of His life with them on earth — they were constantly disbelieving Him, or else believing insufficiently or mistakenly. Perhaps one of the most arresting exchanges of conversation between Jesus and His disciples recorded in this Gospel is that which occurs at the end of the sixteenth chapter. John reports a situation in which he himself, with the rest of the disciples, was involved. Led by Jesus, the apostolic band was on its way to Gethsemane and the Lord was opening His heart to them about His imminent departure and its effects on them: 'I came forth from the Father and am come into the world: again, I leave the world and go to the Father', He said. His disciples said unto Him, 'now speakest thou plainly now are we sure by this we believe that thou camest forth from God'. Jesus answered them, 'Do you now believe?' At last He had convinced them He was who He was. It had taken Him over three years to bring those men to this place of true faith and it was so real to Him that He turned immediately in exultant prayer to His Father, 'they have believed that thou hast sent me', He said to Him.

It seems an incredible, almost an impossible thing, that up until that latest hour those disciples should still have been unconvinced of the Lord's true identity, yet it is true. So even though at Cana they believed on Him, it was only with the faintest beginnings of faith, which under His leadership and tuition slowly developed to that point of confession prior to His death. They had so much to learn of Him; how patient He was with them, how understanding and gracious and how successful. But it was a long hard labour as we shall see.

4. The Well of Sychar.

The next great lesson the Lord taught them was at Sychar in Samaria where He stopped and sat on Jacob's well while His disciples went into the city to buy meat. In their absence a Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well and Jesus struck up a conversation with her, 'Give me to drink', He said, and so began the famous dialogue between them which has brought untold blessing to many millions of saints ever since. It was a private engagement, for throughout its entire length the disciples were absent and had no idea of the matters which so deeply engrossed the hearts of Jesus and the woman, to the exclusion of everybody else. They may have had some notion of the woman's social standing, or have heard something of her reputation; (it is said that only social outcasts went to draw water at that hour of the day) for upon their return, seeing Jesus talking with the woman, they were amazed to the point of marvelling at Him. Whatever did He want with her? What was He seeking of that kind of Woman? Why was He even talking to her? Even they would not have spoken to her and He was their leader; they were expecting Him to set a different example from that. They did not say a word to the woman; they did not need to; she sensed their attitude and departed.

It is of essential importance that disciples should learn that attitudes, like actions, speak louder than words. The record does not say so, but it is legitimate to ask whether the Lord sent these men into the town to get them out of the way while He dealt with the woman; not just because He did not wish to expose her soul to others, even though they be chosen apostles, but also because He knew they would almost certainly hinder Him if they remained. In their absence the woman opened up to the Lord because she sensed His love and sympathy and understanding; she closed up her conversation and her heart as soon as the disciples appeared; it was a most sad moment. For those of us who are wanting to bare our souls to truth the disciples' behaviour was anything but what may have been expected of them. Right from the commencement of this episode it seems they missed the way. They went into the village to buy bread, but Jesus said He sent them to reap; what a world of difference lies between their attitude to discipleship and that of Jesus. By comparison with the Lord, who had one woman upon whom to work, they had a whole townful of people among whom they could have worked, yet they carried no sheaves and when they did return they succeeded in driving away the lone woman who represented the hundred percent success of the Lord.

Disciples and apostles though these men were, they didn't have a clue of what their calling entailed or of what was going on; they were as dead as dead could be. Behold their conversation and mark the words of the Lord, 'Master eat' ... 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of'. 'Hath any man brought him aught to eat?' 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work'. As He was later to say, He lived in another day than theirs and walked in the light of another world, where values and

standards were all utterly different from theirs; in His world souls were greater than bread. Sin is of no power there and can be reckoned as though it had never been and a moment of faith can blot out a lifetime of sin. In His world, in the final reckoning, ignorance and knowledge are taken into account and opportunities are weighed against possibilities. The woman had existed in ignorance and our precious Lord, though knowing her sin, thought the best of her and imputed to her the highest of motives; 'if thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that saith unto thee give me to drink thou wouldest have asked of him and he would have given thee living water'. He paid her a compliment in advance — the apostles imputed the unworthiest of motives to her and even wondered about the Lord - what shame! But then they were as ignorant as she.

They no more knew what meat was than she knew what water was. He had been feeding all the time He had been dealing with the woman, feeding on the will of God. They had been feeding on this world's bread (legitimately enough of course) but they were no more eating the bread and meat Christ knew of than she was. It would be interesting to know what was passing through the minds of those men, especially Peter's, at that time. 'Follow me', He had said to them at the first, 'and I will make you fishers of men'; now He is saying, 'I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour; were they to be reapers as well as fishers? 'Other men laboured and ye have entered into their labours'. They had to learn the importance of doing their duty; unless the harvest is reaped all the labour of others gone before has been in vain. To bring consummate joy to the sower and crown his work the reaper must labour too. Every disciple must realise what a privileged person he is that he should be chosen to enter into other men's labours. He must realise also that he is a labourer, a worker hired by God who will pay him his wages at the end of the day — and he will get what he has earned; 'he that reapeth receiveth wages'; he also 'gathereth fruit unto life eternal'.

One further vital lesson must be learned from this account of the Lord's encounter with the woman — it may be posed as a question — when does the Lord consider a person to have been properly reaped? Many answers may be attempted to the question, but on the evidence of this chapter it is when that person becomes a worshipper of the Father; that is the immediate objective to which He moving in all His dealings with men and women. Whenever He deals with men it is to this end and He would consider His labour to be in vain except this be accomplished. No soul is properly reaped unless that soul is well and truly cut off from its former root or stock, and when that happens the life springing up within issues in worship of the Father unto all eternity. Worship, to be worship at all, must be in spirit and in truth though and not just in meetings: Father is seeking this and Jesus knew it. A worshipper is a reaped person, his affections have been won and everything within rises and pours forth to God. There are now no special headquarters of worship, 'neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem'; neither is there any other building or spot, whether regarded as specially sanctified or otherwise; there are no places of worship any more; places have been replaced by persons. When persons worship the Father in spirit and in truth every place is a place of worship and so is every time and attitude.

The only way we can possibly arrive at truth and understand Jesus is to remember that all the Lord's sayings must be interpreted in the light of His person; He is THE Light, and He said of Himself, 'I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me'. So when He says we must worship in spirit and in truth He means

we must worship with the entirety of our life; He did, and He has gone to the Father. With all His being as a man He worshipped the Father, calling Him the only true God. All He ever did or said was unto His Father and He was the truth; the life He lived was the way and anyone who exists on earth any other way can never hope to come to the Father. Before recording this incident John had earlier written down one of Christ's testimonies, 'the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life'; let every man ponder that in relation to his own words. If we also take into account John's later words, 'let us not love in word but in deed and in truth' we shall arrive at the truest understanding of what God means by worship. Worship may use words but it is not of them and not in them; there are no set biblical forms or attitudes of worship; deed and truth are what the Lord is seeking; as with words, so with worship, all must be spirit and life and truth or all is vain.

5. On a Mountain Side.

The next specific reference to discipleship made by Jesus is in connection with His great miracle of feeding the five thousand from just five loaves and two small fishes. It was a marvellous occasion, mind-staggering to say the least, and John tells us the Passover was at hand. Jesus had carefully planned the event; He Himself set the scene and timed it to perfection; 'He knew what He would do', John says. Reading the other Gospels we can ascertain how easily the Lord manipulated events; He handled situations masterfully to teach men truth as it became necessary for them and as they could bear it. Truth taught before the time can so easily become destructive instead of beneficial to the pupil; understanding and knowledge are cumulative and to be advantageous lessons must be carefully graded. The Lord was sent to be the teacher of Israel; Nicodemus, the Rabbi or teacher of Israel, recognised that and called Jesus 'Rabbi'. Greater than Nicodemus, Jesus is the teacher of the world, though whether at that time Nicodemus submitted to Him is dubious; he certainly did not become an avowed disciple then. God's command is that all must learn of Him or perish, it is decided all who will are about to learn a lesson from this incident, which, at peril of death, must never be forgotten.

The timing of the lesson is very important. The three synoptists place it following the empowering and authorisation and sending forth of the twelve on their first itinerant ministry and their subsequent return to the Lord. One other thing of note, having bearing upon the miracle and the Lord's teaching, is also mentioned by two of them, namely the execution of John Baptist; a lot of his disciples were adrift in the land and probably were among the multitudes fed by the Lord that day. Almost certainly these would have known the twelve, for some of them had previously been followers of John and had left him for Jesus; being devout persons themselves these men would have been observing the one their master had declared to be the Christ, wondering whether they should throw in their lot with Him or look for someone else (see Matt. 11 v.3). There was a great deal of unrest and uncertainty among the people as to the merits and demerits and claims of John Baptist and Jesus; Herod, who had ordered John's execution, had himself become inquisitive about Jesus and the activities of His apostles too. Herod was wanting to know what was going on in his kingdom, especially as he was answerable for his actions to Pilate, his political overlord.

Something was in the air, crisis-point was being reached, decisions had to be made and directions taken and Jesus knew it; the time had come for followers and disciples to be sorted out and apostles faced with reality. It has to come to all of us. Hazy ideas,

vague beliefs and woolly notions about true discipleship and total commitment will not do for Jesus, they have to be swept away, people must know what they believe in order to be a disciple, so He set about bringing them to a decision. He was no popular teacher, He was the Son of God and the people had to know it. He was not prepared to allow false notions or current opinion or feeble inconclusiveness to rule men's destinies; the dominant factor in discipleship is not an insatiable appetite for learning, it is conviction of spirit. Discipleship is not drifting, neither is it the cultivation of an easy-going spirit which loves comfortable living; discipleship is hard and the time for hard sayings had arrived; a man must be resilient. With typical foresight therefore, and with great care, the Lord, by His almighty power, laid the gracious foundation for the hard sayings He had to speak. He knew they were revolutionary and would offend many and that religionists and die-hard doctrinarians and all the self-opinionated would find His words objectionable and would revolt from Him and fade away; the time of estimation and elimination and election and establishment had come. It was a crisis time deliberately brought on by Christ; He was prepared to face it and so must we be. The Lord performed the astonishing miracle for this purpose; all would-be disciples must face the fact that every miracle the Lord performs on their behalf is not only a display of power and proof of His love, it is also in some degree a test.

The Lord Jesus never did miracles simply to display His power or merely to draw attention to Himself; here we find evidence of that fact. He had compassion on the multitude; they were hungry and He fed them for that reason, but not for that reason only; He fed them because they were as sheep without a shepherd; they had no-one to lead them into the living pastures. Nicodemus had not done so, Pharisees and scribes and lawyers and priests and kings and elders could not do so either, and even John Baptist who had given them direction and motivation for a while had never performed one miracle and now he was dead; where was their leader and shepherd? They could not lead or feed themselves. Jesus therefore commanded them to sit down while He fed them and they ate till they could eat no more and had to leave of His abundance; then, having fed them, He challenged them as to His leadership. Shepherd He was, they could hardly deny that, but could they, would they follow Him? He tested them out completely about this — every single person there, including His chosen apostles, had to face it; none was exempt, no-one was allowed to hide behind election or to plead privilege.

The miracle He performed was perfectly acceptable to them — they all loved and admired Him for it. To many it confirmed their beliefs that He was the most remarkable person in the land if not in the world, and speculation about Him and His identity was rife. Some even thought He was a re-incarnation of an old prophet; they had no doubt about His capabilities and all the multitude were prepared to elevate Him to sovereignty — if necessary take Him by force and make Him king — such was His popularity and power with the people at that time. But, needless to say, Jesus had not performed the miracle primarily for those reasons; He did it as an object lesson and in order to create the right conditions for the challenge He had to bring and the greater things He had to say. The miracle, beside being an object lesson to the participants, was also the text from which He preached the astonishing message that He was the bread of God and of life from heaven which they must eat; it was this message that did the damage. As people heard it they were absolutely shattered; they just could not receive it. He lost the goodwill of multitudes of people by it and their attitude toward Him radically changed.

What Jesus said was revolutionary in the extreme, there could be no doubt about it, He had set out deliberately to do what He did; they were thoroughly disillusioned. He referred back to the history of the nation and talked about Moses and the manna their fathers ate, and they knew that many of the things He said were true, but when He insisted that He was the bread of God sent down from heaven and that they must eat thereof if they wanted never to die, they were not so sure. If He had stopped there all may have been well even though they were shaken, but He went on and many of His disciples were horrified to hear Him say His flesh was meat indeed and they must eat it and His blood was drink indeed and they must drink it. He had gone too far for them, the concept was too much for them, their minds reeled under it and their beings revolted against it; for one thing it was absolutely contradictory to God's word through Moses, for another it was impossible and for another it did not make sense. But He persisted with it and when He said quite deliberately, 'except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood ye have no life in you', it just about finished them; and worse was to come. He actually said, 'I said unto you that no man can come unto me except it were given unto him of my Father'. That did it. Did He really want disciples? 'From that (the word 'time' is not in the Greek) many of His disciples went back and. walked no more with Him'. They went back from that saying and that truth.

This was one of the great testing times of Christ as well as of the disciples; He found no pleasure in causing offence to people, especially disciples; but He just had to do it. Every disciple and every 'would-be' disciple has to face the fact that he can only come to Christ if and when the Father draws him: no-one else can really come and no-one else can draw him. Too many people have come to their own image of Christ and are following an imaginary Jesus; they have never faced reality; they are living in a world of religious fantasy; it was so in Jesus' day as well as our own and He knew it then as He knows it now. He also knew that the Father draws men away from the popular idol Jesus to the real Christ, the Son of Man and of God; because He loved men and women He had to tell them the truth, they had to be faced with spirit and life and blood and flesh, both His and theirs. This is so important to everybody that upon that occasion He turned to the chosen twelve and said, 'will ye also go away?' He gave even them the opportunity to leave Him too, but they couldn't do it: 'Lord to whom else shall we go?' they said, 'Thou hast the words of eternal life'. Peter was the spokesman for the apostles as he so often was, 'we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ the Son of the living God'. They knew who they were following and what they wanted and they were under the drawings of the Father; their discipleship had been tested, they had passed through a critical phase with flying colours, but much greater tests lay ahead.

Three solemn things lie before us; each of them is of equal importance to everyone who wishes to be a disciple; every single person must: (1) be drawn to Christ by the Father; (2) be called and chosen of Christ; (3) voluntarily choose to follow Christ. None but these are disciples. In this tremendous section of teaching by the Lord we are shown the most fundamental factor of and reason for discipleship, namely the imitation of Christ. By this it is not intended that men should think of pretentious imitation, or mimicry, which is nothing but vain hope and self-deception, but of the reproduction of the Christ-life in themselves by the power and grace of God. Christ was not addressing Himself to the carnal appetites or fleshly ambition of men but to their spirits and their life. Everything He said was an issuing of His spirit and a statement of His life, as well as an utterance of His lips; in this instance it was an unfolding of His means of life — why and how He was what He was. Here it is as He

said. it, 'the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father', that is discipleship; He was Himself the Apostle, the Sent One, in other words God's Disciple. Everyone therefore who would be a disciple must imitate that. Again here are His exact words more fully, 'As the living Father hath sent me and I live by the Father so he that eateth me shall live by me'. He looked to, listened to and obeyed His Father; He did what His Father said, copied what His Father did; in other words He followed Him. That is discipleship as Christ revealed it.

The man who seeks Jesus must seek Him as a hungry, thirsting man searching for food and drink in order to live. Until a man realises he can only live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God he will never be a disciple of Jesus Christ, for He was all those words in manifestation, He was the Word, God's ultimate Word to man. There has to come a time when the hard, solid truth has to be faced. Soft gentle truth we all love. We love the idea of being a lost woolly sheep and the Good Shepherd finding us, but He reserved that truth till later, lest sentiment blind us to reality. Green pastures are nice and good for sheep, but His sheep are men and He is God and we must be God's Sons. New birth translates the truth found in human types and figures, where men are grass and their glory the flower of grass, into eternal reality, where Christ is God's bread and His children's meat, and humans are made divine. These are great things, but disciples must learn them or go away. He does not wish any man to draw back from the Father's drawings. His inquiry to the twelve must have been full of pleading, 'please do not go away, O please I want you to come on with me — all the way'. He had called them, they were held by far more than an attraction to Him; a disciple must know in his heart that he is specially wanted and must make his response.

The Lord Jesus was an absolutely honest man. He kept truth always before the people and those who followed Him most closely heard it most often. In different ways, under contrasting figures and with varying emphases, He made men and women count the cost of discipleship carefully. Other writers bring this out according to their insights into the particular themes the Lord pursued in course of His teaching about discipleship and John reports the Lord as saying further, 'if ye continue in my word then are ye my disciples indeed and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free'. It is quite obvious that, having set a course for His disciples, all His successive words about it must be as clear and uncompromising as ever and these are certainly of the same spirit and calibre as any of His former remarks. He is speaking to believers and at that time there were many of them — believers like followers and hangers-on must be shown the truth. Believing must lead to certain results which may be seen and known of all men or it is in vain. Believing is necessary, but it must be the right kind of believing or it avails nothing in God's sight and profits the believer nothing.

6. In His Father's House.

The Lord set the background for His further teaching by a stroke of genius and an act of mercy. It was so typical of Him. The day it happened He was in the temple teaching all who came to Him when bursting in as rudely as ever, the scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman. She had been taken in adultery they said, and they set her in the midst and accused her of her crime before all. It was an unusual ploy even for the Pharisees and, whatever everybody else thought about it, Jesus acted as though He did not want to listen to the accusations. He appeared to wish to totally ignore the whole thing, for He stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger.

What He was doing did not seem to communicate itself to those men; His attitude did not please them at all and they became so incensed against Him that they pressed their accusations further, demanding an answer; what they were wanting was to accuse Him to the authorities for seditious teaching. But the Lord was far too wise for them, He knew their purpose, they were not as clever as they thought; it is foolish of men to try and pit their knowledge and wits against the Lord's. Armed as they were with their knowledge of the law and Roman laws and having a clear-cut case, they thought they had Him cornered, but they were no match for Him.

With one word He fulfilled Moses' law, kept Roman law, perfected the law of human being and revealed the law of God in Christ. Moses' law said she should be stoned, Roman law forbade stoning, the law of human being demands that we love our neighbour as ourselves, and the law of God, that is God's law governing His own being and words and works in Christ, forbade Him condemning anybody. The Lord's word, 'he that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her' was absolutely masterly. It was a word of wisdom, a word of mercy and justice, of love and righteousness; it completely floored them; they were shamed and silenced and totally exposed. Stunned and conscience-smitten, one by one, from the eldest to the youngest, man and woman, everybody (perhaps even including the elect apostles also) except the adulteress and Jesus, went out. God was left alone in His temple with a sinner.

Behold our God! Let us see Him high and lifted up in the temple with nothing but His train filling it, His train of glory. No throne can ever exalt Him higher than this, for His throne is not of ivory or of gold or precious stones; they are all too cheap and mean for Him. His throne is of grace and love and of white righteousness and everlasting mercy; even His chariot was paved with love for this daughter of Jerusalem that day, for a greater than Solomon was there. He did not sit for judgement on the woman, He did not even pass sentence on her shabby accusers, neither did he send them away but, without counter-accusation or condemnation let them all go. As He had once told Mary, His hour had not yet come, it was a time of forgiveness and grace to all. When He pointed His finger it was not at her or them, it was to write on the ground. They had pointed the finger of accusation at her, having already condemned her in their hearts; but not He — His finger was pointed to the earth to write something there. What He wrote we do not know; what we do know is that the word of God through Jeremiah is 'they who depart from the Lord shall be written in the earth' — and they all went out one by one.

Perhaps also He was pointing us to the earth and thereby saying, 'I know your frame, I remember you are but dust, you are of fallen man and cursed earth, I don't condemn you. How can I condemn anyone for sinning or call any man or woman a sinner? Had I not been born from heaven of a virgin mother and the sinless Father I would have been a sinner like everyone else'. In dealing with this woman Jesus was not only being gracious to a guilty sinner, He was being honest and true to Himself. If He had been anything other than loving and gentle He would not have been righteous. A person can only be condemned after refusing to believe on and come to Jesus — 'this is the condemnation that light is come into the world and men love darkness rather than light, neither do they come to the light lest their deeds should be reprov'd' This woman had been brought to the light — almost certainly against her will, but having come she remained when all others had fled; that is her commendation. Her reward was, 'neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more', it was wonderful; she was un-

condemned, free, she was also at crisis point. Jesus' next words were of critical importance to her as they are to everyone who has undergone an experience similar to this woman's. When that happens it is the time to hear His declaration, 'I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life'. The Pharisees said that, because He bore record of Himself His record was not true; but it was true — the preceding episode with the woman proved it to be true. We can afford to ignore perversely ignorant men, but what did His word do to her? Did she follow Christ? With all sincerity we must hope she did, for her own sake — to be brought to the light to meet the Lord and then depart from Him and it is to bring upon ourselves greater condemnation.

She was not called by name to follow the Lord, but the declaration and claim of the Lord was unmistakably and openly made for all to heed; He is still on the subject of discipleship — come out of darkness, follow Me, have the light of life. If she heard it did she heed it? The Pharisees did not do so, but surely she had no desire in her heart to be as they; they had proved themselves to be her enemies, and she knew she could believe and trust Christ, she had every reason to. But what a commandment He had given her — 'go and sin no more', what a promise and what a possibility, and what a prospect for a life. Could she really believe Him? Should she venture all on His word? Was she among those Jews who believed on Him to whom He said, 'if ye continue in my word then are ye my disciples indeed and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free'?

Believing is action, it is an inner commitment of the heart to something — 'I think that is true'. But no-one can be saved except he or she commits self; salvation is by believing in a person. The word or truth or idea must be continued in. Believing in order to be true must bring the life compulsion: believing is continuous action. Believing is the only way to discover truth; by continuous believing comes knowledge of truth to the point of certainty, this is the way of believing. This way of believing, or 'the believing way', is perhaps a better and more expressive phrase than 'the life of faith'. The word faith is a noun: John rarely uses it and never in his Gospel, where he uses the word believe, the word of action; it is simpler. Faith considered as a word can induce speculation and contemplation in a heart struggling for definition, but the word 'believes' is readily understood, even by the most irreligious. Jesus Himself used the word 'believe' in its various forms more than the word faith, preferring rather to reduce everything to the point of active response than to introduce talking-points to men's hearts.

It is certain that the Lord never thought about Himself and His mission and manhood in other than the simplest of terms. A glance back over this chapter with this in mind is most illuminating. Here is a selection of the phrases He used at this time which could be helpful to anyone wanting to know how He lived: 'I am', 'I know', 'the Father sent me', 'I came', 'I go', 'I speak', 'I do'. With the exception of the first one, these phrases are all expressions of some form of action: properly understood they supply much information about our Lord and the simplicity of His life to hearts willing to learn. This basic element of simplicity is one of the hallmarks of true disciples — we all must continue in truth and light into perfect freedom by the way of believing; there is no other way to be free.

The freedom the Lord wants us all to enjoy is His own freedom, namely the freedom of son-ship. Believers must become disciples and sons. This is the message the Lord

is declaring here. It is strange and horrifying to discover as we read on that within a few minutes many who started out by believing on Him took up stones to stone Him. Jesus prevented the murder by hiding Himself from them, but to those who desire to be wholly His, who will believe Him fully and continually follow Him into all truth, His words are spirit and life and utmost liberty. Naturally by contrast we associate the word freedom with bondage, and seeing He uses it when speaking of knowing truth, its meaning is freedom from error and ignorance and lies. What bondage lies in the power of these three contenders for the heart of man and how many are bound by them. Only Jesus can make us free from them and then only as we continue in His word; we cannot be disciples indeed unless we do. One liberating stroke is sufficient to make us free, but it is not sufficient to keep us in liberty if we will not continue in what He says. What He does is insufficient to maintain us in the personal liberty He creates for us, unless from that moment we go on with Him.

At this point the Lord reveals His main objective in calling each one of us to a continual believing walk with Him, it is to free us from the servitude of sin and bring us into 'the house'. He does not specify the house, but just refers to it; we have to read a little further to discover whose house it is. Even then He does not say where it is, but simply tells us to whom it belongs — 'My Father's House'; this can be no other than the place where God lives, His home. The Lord's commission and therefore His main concern was to fulfil the charge God gave Him. This was not merely to go before His people as a leader, He also had to prepare a place for them that finally they may be received by Him into His own eternal position in the presence of the Father to live with Him there. The Son abideth in the house for ever, He said, servants do not. They all understood what He was saying, it was common enough social practice and therefore general knowledge, but whether many fully grasped all He meant is doubtful. The implications of His words are startling: He is talking very directly about committing sin and says he who does so is the slave of sin. There can be no doubt that He intends us all to infer from His words that if we are bond-slaves of sin we shall not abide in His Father's house for ever. We have to be made free by the Son from the bond-slavery of sin if we wish to abide with the Son.

Only if believers of His day continued in His word would they be disciples indeed He said, for only thereby could they know the truth that would make them free from having to commit sin. It was a great time of teaching; truth can only be discovered through following Him. They stood listening to the heavenly Teacher's further words on this theme and learned much about murder and fatherhood; He spoke of the devil and his lies and of seeing death, and then of Himself. There was great contention between the Lord and the Jews about these things. So great was their hatred that Jesus was denounced as a devil-possessed Samaritan, a child of fornication, and they attempted to murder Him. It seems impossible that hearts can so quickly switch from belief to unbelief and hostility and murder, yet here is evidence that they can and did. How is this possible and how so quickly? Jesus had exposed their false position. They actually believed that being Abraham's earthly progeny they were not in bondage to any man, when all the time they were slaves to sin. They had believed in Jesus over the top of personal sin and false beliefs. No man can be a true disciple on these grounds.

The Lord had shown this earlier when speaking about the living bread. Many had left Him then, preferring their own ideas to His, but this did not deter Him from speaking the truth. He did so at the cost of losing followers then and He did so again, and still

does so. To be a disciple a man must forsake all He has; in no other realm is this more true than in the realm of truth. Conversion to Jesus Christ entails rejection of all former beliefs about Him and self, especially on the points introduced in this section of scripture. A man must believe without reserve that: (1) Jesus is the Son of God; (2) he must continue in Christ's word; (3) he himself is from beneath; (4) he must be made free from sin; (5) his father is the devil. This is the truth every man must know in order that knowing it he will do something about it. But they did not hear His word or understand what He was saying, but true to His calling He told them the truth and those who rose superior to fear and followed Him to the end were led to the place He prepared on earth for His people at Golgotha. By the cross He prepared and sanctified them to His own use: He prepares all who have since followed Him there en route to Father's home; all they who go to the cross have learned of Him and have known the truth, no-one else has. This is what He implied when He said, 'take up the cross and follow me'. Only those who have done so are His disciples; He sought to discipline people to this, and being disciplined by Him to this degree and experience, the disciple, by common consent of the Godhead, has been renamed 'saint', for as the disciple makes the cross of Christ his own personal cross he is freed from the bondage of sin.

7. The Pool of Siloam.

In its initial phase discipleship consists in a voluntary change and definite switch of the heart by the power of God from one line of believing to another. This is brought out to us clearly in the account of the miracle wrought on the man who was blind from birth. It is a very precious record of truth, simply told, which in its unfolding brings out the amazing fact that a man can be a disciple of Jesus in his heart before he properly knows who He is and commits himself to following Him. Earlier we learned what is required of a follower of the Lord and the effect on His disciples of the words, 'Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood ye have no life in you'. Outwardly they were visibly and perhaps also professedly following Him, but in mind and heart they were not and the Lord knew it, so with one hard saying He divided between the sheep and the goats — He always will.

It was not so with this man though; when the Lord first met him He was escaping from them and their murderous designs on His life, bypassing a lot of other men in doing so. But when He saw this man, under an impulse from the Spirit Jesus stopped, for He knew He must work a work of power on him. He was walking in the light of life of which He had spoken so He could see. He knew a potential disciple when He saw one, even though the man was blind at the time. The way the miracle was performed is unique in scripture; neither during nor after it was the man called or commanded to follow Jesus; on the contrary he was told to go. He did so and came seeing — the miracle was completed upon his obedience, but that was only a beginning. There followed such a state of fear and pandemonium, with arguments and denunciations and quarrelling on every hand that it may well have been thought by an observer that a terrible crime had been committed. Such is the power of prejudice. It seems the poor man had always posed a problem since the day it was discovered that he was born blind. O the superstition that bound the hearts and minds of God's people in those days. Even the disciples were bound by current religious and doctrinal error, though they had followed the Lord many a month and had watched Him at work and had listened to His teachings. It came out of their mouth by universal consent, 'Master, who did sin, this man or his parents that he was born blind?' They actually thought that the man's blindness was a result of or punishment for his parents' or his

own sin. The Lord quickly dispelled that erroneous idea, 'Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents', He said, 'but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work', and He did, in the broad light of day.

Just what effect this had on the disciples is not told, but it had a mighty effect on the man. Had the disciples eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to understand, the events they witnessed were an illustration of what He had been trying to teach them earlier. The miracle was an instance of a man believing the Lord, continuing in His word and knowing the truth and being made free (from blindness). How many of those disciples who had been following Him for months had a comparable testimony, or even one remotely like it? We cannot help how we were born, we cannot choose our parents, but we can choose whether to obey or disobey the Lord. Although a man is not born physically blind he can still have a real testimony of Christ's miraculous power working in him. All disciples without exception must have a clear basic testimony, every one must be able to say with this man 'I know'.

He made no pretence of knowing the things they thought he ought to know, he simply told the truth and in doing so testified to Jesus. Doing that he gave clear evidence that his heart had become convinced of truth deeper than the miracle, beyond the power that gave him power of sight. Whether or not he recognised it, the Pharisees saw it easily and were convinced that he was now a disciple of Christ; they were right, so he was. Without walking so much as one step to follow Jesus physically he was a true disciple, even though he did not know who He was when he eventually met Him. The man was a disciple in heart as soon as he obeyed the Lord. Whether He says 'Come' or 'Go', obey Him; it is the first step in discipleship. As we have already seen, one who knew Jesus better than any at that time said, 'Whatsoever He saith unto you do it', we could not be better advised, even by the Holy Ghost Himself.

It is hard not to believe that the Lord was thinking of this man when He told His famous story of the Jewish sheepfold and His sheep, for it appears He was talking to the same people when He revealed Himself to the man as the Son of God. This parable is the only one of Jesus' many stories that John records, and it would be more than a little strange if it is not included here without some connection with what the Lord had just done. The parable is in fact an introduction to the greatly loved truth He wanted to tell about the goodness of the Shepherd of Israel. The Lord felt the people should now hear it; the miracle presented Him with the perfect opportunity, for it was an outstandingly suitable example of what He wanted to show them. Therefore He tells His story which everyone should read, for wonderful it is.

What a masterly storyteller Jesus was; He was an absolute genius at gathering up all the elements of truth He wished to illustrate and weaving around them a gem of a story. The parable is all about the voice, in fact the word occurs three times: the voice the sheep hear, the voice the sheep know and the voice they do not know. It is also about the sheep being led and being put forth and following their shepherd and refusing to follow a stranger. It was a simple enough parable, absolutely true to life, but His hearers did not understand a word of what He was saying, even though they had witnessed the perfect demonstration of what He meant. The man was blind; he could not see the one who spoke to him, put clay on his eyes and told him to go and wash in Siloam. Everyone would have agreed that Jesus was a complete stranger to him, but somehow, for some reason beyond natural desire to see, that man obeyed Him. When Jesus later found him excommunicated from the temple and said to him

'dost thou believe on the Son of God?' his attitude is most striking, 'who is he Lord that I might believe on him?' He knew that the one speaking to him was the Lord — he had never seen Him before, but the voice was the same — 'thou hast both seen Him and it is He that speaketh with thee'; 'Lord I believe', he responded and worshipped Him then and there as the Son of God.

That man was a sheep and a disciple and a worshipper all at once, a living testimony, he became a perfect illustration and typical example to all that Jesus was the Shepherd of the sheep. Sheep will not follow strangers; they do not know their voices, but like this man they have to be prepared to pay the price and fulfil the conditions of discipleship — they must be put forth from the sheepfold. The Lord put this man forth: He knew He would and intended to do so when He put clay on his eyes; the authorities had excommunicated Jesus and they excommunicated His sheep also. This is inevitable if the group, religion or national religion is anti-Christ, that is anti the Christ of truth. All Christ's true disciples are put forth and led out of something or somewhere if they follow Jesus, but they are not afraid about it for He calleth them by name and they know His voice and He goeth before them. This too is part of what He meant when He said, 'if any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me'. If a man is a stranger to the cross, Jesus is a stranger to him.

The importance of hearing the voice of the Lord cannot be over-emphasized, the truth of it can be misunderstood but not over-stressed. As long as we understand the difference between the voice that is natural and outward and the voice that is spiritual and inward we shall be safe. It is the same also with discipleship — inward spiritual discipleship is what the Lord is seeking and not primarily that which is outward. It was only to be expected that men would actually follow the Lord when He was manifest in the flesh; He purposely set out to be a visible leader among men and deliberately called them to Himself with this intention. That was all very well and quite proper at that time; by this God made it easier as well as reasonable, so that the idea of discipleship could be sown in hearts by means of that which was visible. John, in his epistle, pays tribute to the benefit he received by the Word being made flesh for this purpose: 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled of the Word of life; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you'.

This is the way he speaks of his own experience; he was first called, then became a disciple and then an apostle. But afterwards, following Calvary and Pentecost, he passed beyond the outward experience into fellowship with God and when that happened he ceased entirely to speak of following the Lord and introduced the word that described his relationship with God, the Father and the Son. He was no longer following in the sense in which he followed as a disciple when Jesus was manifest in flesh on earth, but in a different way — he was walking with Him in fellowship in the Spirit. He said so, 'our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son', and he wrote his epistle so that, like those earliest apostles, we also may have fellowship with the Father and the Son and with each other.

John has sown the seed of this truth in his Gospel, for although Jesus, being a man, was led of the Spirit and was taught of God and in the truest sense was the Disciple and the Apostle, beyond all that men saw He walked in unbroken fellowship with His Father. This is the thing that gripped John about this wonderful Man; he 'beheld His

glory, the glory as of an only-begotten with a father'. This is why the word disciple is never used in scripture of Jesus. Even the suggestion of the idea was obnoxious to John Baptist; that is one of the reasons he at first so strongly refused baptism to the Lord. Everybody he baptised became his disciple and it could never be that Jesus should be his disciple; the very thought of it was almost blasphemous to John. Yet Jesus insisted on being baptised. He knew He had to fulfil all righteousness and baptism is one of the indications of submission to discipleship. In His case though it was not to John Baptist as a man but to His Father and the Holy Ghost and also as confirmation of John's ministry. All righteousness was in the act and all the time Jesus was fulfilling His ministry among men He was a learner, that is a disciple, and because He was Himself a learner He called men to learn of Him in the yoke of discipleship.

His was a spiritual discipleship, He had no visible leader or teacher, only the inward one; in this he was our perfect example, for the whole point of outward discipleship is to lead men to inward discipleship. This is part of the reason why He said to Nicodemus 'ye must be born again'. Nicodemus had said to Him 'we know that thou art a teacher come from God'; he was right, but by His answer Jesus immediately countered the beginnings of an erroneous idea in the man's mind. All men need to be born from above so that the inward teacher who speaks within with an inward voice might come to them — that is why Jesus said it. There is no outward visible leader today, there is no outward audible voice calling, it is the era of the invisible Holy Spirit who speaks within. People must follow Christ within now; discipleship cannot now be practised apart from fellowship with the Lord, but this privilege no-one knew while He was with them in the flesh.

We gather some hint of the superiority of the inward over the outward in this matter of discipleship by making reference to the Bethany home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Nowhere is it recorded or even suggested that those three were disciples of Jesus. It is lawful to suppose that each of them, or all of them together, may at one time or another have followed Him as did others, but we are not told it was so. Yet who can believe other than that they were His devoted disciples, perhaps more than many another who mingled with and made up the crowds who followed Him about? They loved Him devotedly and He loved them just as dearly and more, yet He never called out one of them by name to become His follower, but chose to let them stay in their home. On one occasion when He called on them there Mary sat at His feet to learn of Him and Martha served Him; upon another visit He raised Lazarus, who both died and rose again believing in Him. In the last days of His earthly life He stayed in their home enjoying their love till He went finally to the upper room and Gethsemane and Gabbatha and Golgotha and the garden tomb and glory. Without question Martha, Mary and Lazarus, though not numbered among His public followers, were inward disciples indeed.

Perhaps one of the greatest helps to a fair assessment of John's nature and personality is the fact that he never directly uses the title 'apostle' of himself. Surprisingly enough it does not even occur in his Gospel when he speaks about his fellow-apostles either, though he loved and respected them very much; he carefully and pointedly clung to the word disciple throughout. Perhaps his purpose for this is to indicate, by the Spirit's guidance and inspiration, where in his opinion the proper emphasis should lie; he was a very humble man. His preference for what may be thought by some to be the humbler title and lower calling is quite marked in his description of Jesus washing the

disciples' feet. It seems it was universal with those men that they did not wish to be called apostles. Paul, who was not a member of the original band, says quite firmly he was not fit to be called an apostle and only called himself by that title when necessary. They were not ashamed of the name — it was honourably bestowed upon them by the Lord, but it was not bestowed as denoting titular rank, as though to have it were a thing to be sought for or grasped at. In common with the word disciple the name is descriptive; it means 'sent one', and that is how those men bore it; to them and to the Lord it meant they were sent. It was a new name in sacred writ and also in Israel's spiritual history, though prophets such as Isaiah and other great men of old, such as Moses, certainly knew what it was to be God's sent ones.

8. In the Upper Room.

The Lord raised up men and called them apostles with a view to building His Church, and Paul who was himself an apostle said he thought the Lord had 'set forth us the apostles last', implying that apostles were the final group of men particularly named by God whom the world would see before the second advent. Men may create, indeed have since created, Popes and Ecclesiastics, Gurus and Cardinals and many others, but whatever office they may hold or whatever name they may bear, God did not create it: all such positions and names may be regarded as being contrary to the revealed will of God. It is refreshing to read John's simple heart on the matter; the feet Jesus washed were apostles' feet, including Judas's, but John who found the Lord at his own feet that day called all those men, except Jesus, disciples. With his Lord kneeling at his feet how could he do otherwise? It was by far the better description.

He could have argued that by His action Jesus had exalted them all above apostleship or discipleship to the heights of lordship, but he knew better. At least he and Peter, surely all of them, felt humbled and shamed by it; their Sovereign was their servant, wherever could they put their heads? Their only refuge was His love; He did not do it to shame them but because He loved them. He is altogether lovely and soon John got as close up to Jesus as it was possible for any of them to come and laid his head on His breast. He was the disciple whom Jesus loved, he said; again he could not find it in himself to call himself an apostle; like Paul he felt he was not fit to be one. He called himself a disciple — a learner — because that was what he was; the Apostle had washed his feet and he knew then that he was less than an apostle, if apostle meant anything other, or should be made to mean anything above a slave.

Every one of those men, who that day knew they were disciples, were soon to hear Him say, 'ye are my friends; henceforth I call you not slaves, for the slave knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends'. They knew what their Lord and Master had done, He had washed their feet, He had also added, 'I have given you an example, ye ought to wash one another's feet'. In other words He was saying, 'be slaves, be disciples, learn of me and act to one another as I have done to you, and now He was adding further, 'keep my commandments and be my friends'. In His great love He became as a slave and washed their feet and now as their friend of greatest love He told them He was going to lay down His life for them. O how He loved them and longed for them to be disciples indeed and to give themselves up to learn of Him and His great love and how to express it properly to one another.

This was His great concern for them all before they left that upper room. They must be known in the world as men that loved one another. Whatever men thought of them

when they became His companions and comrades and followed Him on earth, after He left all men must be able to recognise them by their love. 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another', He said. They had power, no-one could doubt they had power, they had preached the gospel, healed the sick, cast out devils, borne the cross; men knew they were His apostles, wouldn't they be known as His disciples for that? They were also men of loyalty and perseverance, they had left all to follow Him, they had put their hand to the plough and had never looked back; surely that was a mark of discipleship. They were also greatly privileged men; no-one could deny that, He had called them and chosen them and commissioned them; why did He not mention these things? They were most important weren't they? Surely men of power and perseverance and privilege as they were would easily be recognised as His disciples by anybody. Jesus did not think so.

Peter, spokesman for them all as usual, was baffled and hurt by the Lord's words. It was he who had said, 'we have left all and followed thee'; now he says 'why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake'. That is what he thought, but Jesus thought differently and told him so in words now famous among us, 'the cock shall not crow till thou hast denied me thrice'. They all would have said they loved Him and loved one another and so saying would have been speaking the truth; He would not have denied it, but that was not good enough for Him. They must love one another with a new love — His love — 'as I have loved you'; in God's sight that is the mark of discipleship. We must love with the love of Jesus, in Jesus' way; His way of love and loving can only be learned personally, His love is individually bestowed and demonstrated — it is not a general kind of feeling which has to be assumed and taken for granted; this positive, personal love is the hallmark of discipleship, nothing else is.

The test of their discipleship was not their love for Him but their love for one another. Perhaps that sounded strange in their ears; they would have wanted to make their love and devotion to Him the test, but He would not allow that. The proof of a man's love for the Lord is his love for all those beside himself whom the Lord has chosen. A disciple must realise the individuality of loving, 'love as I have loved you'. God's love for the world is so vast and the impact on us of the famous statement by John in chapter 3 is so great, that we can miss the individuality of it. Yet we ought not to do so, for this love for the individual underlies all God's commandments and statements about His love. The two-part summary of the ten commandments given to Israel was well-known to the eleven and cannot be less well-known to us, for the Lord repeated it: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God' and 'thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'. The test of a person's love for God was to be assessed by a neighbour, not an angel. A man's neighbour could judge how much his neighbour loved God by how much or how little he loved him, and that is what God intends.

Christ carried over this same intention of God into the new covenant with a difference; He applied it in a different way and how glad we ought to be about that. Every man must stand up to Jesus' test and be prepared for his alleged genuineness to be judged thereby. Each person's love for Jesus turns upon Jesus' love for him or her as an individual. John speaks of loving Him 'because He first loved us', and Paul says of himself and his relationship with God's Son, 'He loved me and gave Himself for me'. It is a wonderful thing if a man says 'I love Him', but it cannot be acceptable to God on any other grounds than a personal recognition and appropriation of His love and work for him as an individual. His first real knowledge of eternal love is not of his own love to God but of God's love toward him; everything turns on that. Disciples

are not instructed to love each other as they love the Lord but as He loves them. Israel were commanded to love their neighbours as themselves, and that is good, though perhaps rare today, but beyond that the Church and saints of God are charged with higher things.

A person may judge how much I know and have experienced of Jesus' love by the amount and kind of love I have toward him or her. I must stand among my fellow-disciples at the judgement-bar of God's word. If I do not love them each one individually, as Jesus has loved and still loves me, I testify that I know little or nothing of His great love, even though I constantly talk about it. John says 'little children let us not love in word but in deed and in truth'. Love is not in words, though they be imagined to be words of love, such as 'I love you', and mouths be full of what may be called endearments. Of course let our love be vocalised — John did not mean to tell us we should not tell one another we love one another; he was drawing our attention to the fact that love is not a word, love is (a) being, life — a person — which must express itself in attitudes and actions, that is in truth, reality and actual fact. It must be seen and felt and known and proved and witnessed to by another, or else it is not love. Love has its tender tones and sweet words, but they are the least part of it; the test of love is always 'as I have loved you'.

Paul's heartfelt confession cannot be bettered, 'the Son of God gave Himself': what a testimony! He had love so He loved — that is John's testimony of Jesus; here it is in John's words: 'having loved His own which were in the world He loved them unto the end'. That is all love knows to do, it cannot do otherwise; to do or even to think differently is to cease to be. Love found it impossible to do other than what He did that night to His disciples and what He did was consistent with all He had ever done. Because of this, because He was the person He was and did these things, John wrote, 'God is Love' ; he discovered it for himself and discovering it made it the transcendent theme of his message. In the end a man's testimony of his friend and brother must be, 'he is love, he loves me as Jesus loves me'. The degree may not be the same but the quality must be identical. Disciples must prove to all men that they have love by loving as Jesus loves.

That is what the Lord wants; paraphrasing His words in an attempt to arrive at what He was really saying we may put it this way: 'I am going away and when I leave you, all of you will seek me because you want me. You will not be able to find me in the flesh, you will only find me in spirit and this only if you yourselves become love personified. Ask yourselves this question, when I am gone who is going to love Matthew as I have loved him? Who will take my place and love Peter as I do? Will you Philip? Will you John? Will you James be to Thaddeus who and what I have been to him? Will you? Will each one of you rise to this, his highest privilege and love as I have loved and shall always love every one of you?' Beloved there is nothing higher or greater than this, nothing in heaven or earth, and there is no true discipleship other than this, it is sainthood. This is a much higher calling than to following — it is a promotion by regeneration to being, and that being — Love.

It is very noticeable that the whole tenor of the Lord's teaching changed from the moment He entered that upper room with His disciples. It is as if He took His last opportunity to say things which must be said, things He had been wanting to say and had delayed until now. We know from Luke that He had 'desired with desire' to eat those last meals with them; He had timed events and words to perfection, so that the

great significance of the occasion and His words should never be lost upon His disciples. They sang a hymn together and then He spoke what were perhaps His very last words to them before their departure, 'Hereafter I will not talk much with you for the prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father and as the Father gave me commandment even so I do. Arise let us go hence'; and away they went. He knew that just beyond Him now lay Gethsemane and betrayal and apprehension and imprisonment and crucifixion; that is why He went; He loved His Father.

And as He went He continued with His unfinished teaching to His disciples, telling them vital things they must know about discipleship — things He had not been able to say to them before. They realised that a great change was taking place, He was doing unusual things, saying new things; He had just spoken to them about His Father's house and about the Comforter the Holy Spirit coming to live in them, and He said that He Himself and the Father would come too. He had never said those things before. These were His last words and they listened distressed and mystified and amazed in the darkness of the night as He poured it into their ears. It was new truth. It was all about being His disciples, and as they listened they realised He was developing and explaining what He had been saying earlier in the guest-chamber at the supper, 'This is my commandment, this is what I meant when I said to you that you love one another as I have loved you', 'I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman; as the Father hath loved me even so have I loved you, continue ye in my love, love each other as I have loved you. Love, this love I am talking about and have shown you, is eternal; I didn't start it, love didn't commence with me, I have only continued it. The Father has loved me eternally; He continued loving me as a man on earth and I have simply continued it to you by continuing it in myself. I love the Father and He gave me commandment what I should do and what I should say and I am now doing what I do because I love Him. By so doing I am not only continuing in His love to me and mine to Him, but at the same time and by the same action am continuing it to you also and this is the only way it can be done. Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends and you disciples are my friends if you do whatsoever I command you, as I have done and am still doing whatsoever my Father has commanded me.'

It all became plain to them after they were born again. John found no difficulty with it then. When he came to write it, the blessed baptism of Jesus had made it all feasible to his mind and workable in his life. He was speaking logical truth to them; spiritual truth is always logical and perfectly understandable, it was all a growth process, a progressive factor of life based upon Himself and His own relationship with His Father; as it was between Jesus and the Father, so must it be between Jesus and His disciples. He was not only talking about the coming death of the cross towards which He was moving all the time He was speaking though. When He said 'greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends', He was talking in retrospect as well as in prospect; He had already laid down a life in heaven before He came to earth to befriend men and love them and make them His friends and God's sons. Laying down His life was not new to Him. He had spoken of it before, 'the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep, the Father knoweth me, I know the Father and I lay down my life for the sheep. No man taketh it from me. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again; therefore doth my Father love me because I lay down my life for the sheep; this commandment have I received of my Father'. Laying down His life was natural and habitual to Him, His Father loved Him

for it. It was not the originating cause of the Father's Love to Him but it was the reason for the continuation of it.

Every disciple must know with understanding that Jesus is speaking here of the very essence of discipleship. Without this discipleship can no more exist than a branch can exist or bring forth fruit without abiding in the vine. This entails recognition of authority and the rendering of obedience and the resolve to lay down One's life. Every disciple must be obviously loved by his Father, as obviously loved as Jesus was; beholding him, people must be able to behold his glory, 'the glory as of an only begotten with a father', as John wrote of Jesus. When the life is manifest it is glory, whether in Jesus or in any other of God's sons. When a man has a son and he is his only son, indeed his only begotten child, that father lavishes his all upon him. John said as much, 'Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands and that He was come from God and went to God'. Jesus was very conscious of it and we see the result of such consciousness — 'He rose from supper, took a towel and girded Himself, poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded'. He took the position and did the work of the most menial slave — He laid down His life yet more.

'Ye call me Master and Lord', He said, 'I am. The slave is not greater than His Lord, neither is He that is sent greater than He that sent Him'. He was speaking of Himself, and His Father was greater than He; He said so, greater than all. He was the disciples' Master and Lord but not His Father's; He was Father's bond-slave, therefore He found it no difficulty to become the disciples' slave, the truth was so real. What He did was a further step in the laying down of His life. 'I do not call you slaves', He said to the disciples, 'I call you friends' my friends; He was their slave. There was no condescension about Him, He never patronised anybody or spoke patronisingly to anybody, He knew He was a slave, and at the end of His life could say 'I have given you an example — do as I have done'. All His life He had been an example to them — the only begotten of the Father in heaven became as an only begotten with a father on earth to be our example, our Master and our Lord.

A man must know his son-ship first though. No man can accept and follow His example until He first knows he is a son of the Father. To the statement 'Rabbi (Master, Teacher) we know that thou art a teacher come from God', comes the reply, direct and meaningful, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born from above he cannot see the kingdom of God'. In the kingdom of God, manifest on earth as a heavenly state, Jesus was a son and a slave, and a Lord and a servant. What happened in the upper room was an example, a demonstration of Jesus' lifelong practice; He did not suddenly become a slave then and there, He was a slave from the moment He left heaven. He laid down His life there first, before angels and archangels and His Father, and it is emblazoned on the sacred page for all who have eyes to see and a mind to read it. Let every man know that it takes all of a man to be a disciple, Jesus' whole life and total example being the proof of it. He did not tell them this immediately He called them, but it was not long before He commenced to teach them all the truth, and as they followed Him they saw it.

9. In the Judgement Hall.

It is said that comparisons are odious and Paul says that they who compare themselves among themselves are unwise. For the greater part and in certain circumstances both

these statements are true, but sometimes comparison is inevitable and can be very profitable. The Spirit of God sets this so very firmly before us toward the end of this Gospel that comparison is almost unavoidably thrust upon us even if we would wish to refrain from it. It concerns John and Peter in the Judgement Hall of the High Priest. They had come there in the wake of Jesus. He had sought and had been granted permission from the captain of the band which came and arrested Him in the garden for His disciples to be allowed to leave in freedom, which they all did. They all forsook Him and fled; how far they ran is not disclosed. Some fled away entirely, but Peter and John only fled to a safe distance from which they could keep everything under surveillance; when captors and captive moved off to the city they followed at a discreet distance. They knew what was afoot, Jesus had said one of the disciples would betray Him and they had heard and seen how He had exposed Judas and despatched him on his treacherous errand. They also recognised the type of men who had come to arrest Jesus; they were not the Roman guard, they were the Pharisees' and chief priest's thugs; Jesus was being taken to the high priest.

By the time the band reached Annas' palace things had been resolved between the two disciples, whatever the content of their conversation they both wanted to be in that palace and witness what went on. John was known to Annas and must have wondered how things would go with him, but he determined that, despite his fears about possible consequences, he was going to use the old acquaintanceship to get in. So by the time Jesus reached the entrance John caught up with Him and went in with Him, noticed but unchallenged; but not Peter. Dear John, what a loyal soul he was. He had heard the Lord say He was going to be crucified, so he could have entertained little doubt about the result of His capture, and his own association with Him was too well-known to deny if he had wished to. But the love that existed between them was so great that, despite possible danger to himself, he approached the door-maid and declared himself to her and requested Peter's admission to the proceedings also, which was granted.

What contact beyond that the two disciples had within the Judgement Hall cannot be established, but it is pretty apparent that Peter, from the moment of his entry, sought to become an anonymous observer only. Unlike John he had no intention of identifying himself for what he was — he wished to see and remain unseen, but it was not to be. Poor Peter, who can tell what he thought and felt? Fears and apprehensions gripped him; fighting with loyalty and a sense of duty to Jesus and John, he could not identify with either of them and tried to hide himself among the soldiers standing round the fire. Failing to identify with the Lord and his faithful fellow-disciple he identified with the enemy — it was inevitable, and so was what followed. The door-maid came to him and said, 'thou art one of His disciples'. Immediately he denied it; once he said, 'I know not the man', and another time he denied Him with an oath; it was categorical and effectual.

The cock crowed. Perhaps it declared the day of crucifixion was at hand; certainly it announced to Christ that He had been denied as well as betrayed by an apostle. Perhaps it also heralded the dawn of Peter's salvation — Jesus turned and looked on Peter and Peter went out and wept bitterly, a broken man, his heart full of sorrow, his mind surging with uncontrollable thoughts; what had he done? Memories of recent events flooded him, breaking through the dam of the frightful fear that had so effectually held back Love's fear — that fear of God which sustained his brother John, keeping him loyal to Christ and free from the fear of man. John had not been afraid to

let everybody know to whom he belonged: he loved Jesus and remained true to Him and His call: love is stronger than death or the threat of it. What he thought when the cock crowed he does not say — he too was a disciple and had been in the upper room. True he had fled with all the others at first when Jesus was apprehended; the whole incident had been such a shock to everybody, but he had speedily recovered; love had won. He knew it was not his to judge his fellow-disciple; Jesus did all that was necessary with a look that only Peter caught.

So much was in that look, far more than could possibly be pressed into words; it revealed Jesus' heart and uncovered Peter's, breaking it open deep and wide till remorse flooded him. Where his attestations of love and devotion now? Where his declarations of loyalty, his martyr spirit, his longings to be washed all over and have part with his Lord and Master? What had he done? Had his discipleship been outward only after all? Perhaps he had spoken the truth when he had denied he was a disciple of Jesus and said 'I know not the man'; truer than he knew or had intended. Did any of them know Him? Jesus did not seem to think so and had said as much to Philip in the upper room. 'Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me?' Who among them really knew this man? No-one seemed to know Him; before long Pilate was to put the question to Him, 'Whence art thou?' But Jesus gave him no answer.

Pilate wrote a title for Him and put it on the cross. It was Pilate's conclusion about Him, 'Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews'. It was a short-sighted assessment of Him, correct as far as he could see. Pilate could not evaluate Him aright, he could not be expected to do so, but he had never been one of His disciples, while Peter had been proud to call himself one. What was he now? He had not caught men, men had caught him. He could recall the words of Jesus, 'Satan hath desired to have thee that he may sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not'. Was Jesus still praying for him? He was at the end; where could he go? What could he do? Nothing! Peter was in the devil's riddle, being tossed and turned and shaken and Jesus was content to leave him there. He was confident, He knew that underneath all Peter was wheat: His Father had given him to Him, he was His, a family gift to Him. Nothing Satan did to the disciple could alter that, he was in His hand; all the devil could do could only rid him of the husk and the chaff and in the end prove him genuine.

The Lord knew that. There is no other way for a disciple whoever he is — to some degree he must be sifted as wheat as Peter was; every principle of righteousness must be fulfilled in him. If Peter had been in a fit state to do so he could have rested in his sore distress, knowing that in one sense in measure the things that were being fulfilled in him were being worked out in his Lord and Master also. Jesus was the great corn of wheat and who could doubt that at the same time as Peter He was in the sieve also? Not for the same reasons as Peter though. The disciple had sin in him — Jesus had none, but they were both in the sieve. What was taking place in Peter was a modified illustration of the judgement Paul later passed upon a believer in Corinth, 'In the name of our Lord Jesus deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus'. There is no comparison between Peter and that unnamed man, and 'the days' were different, but the element of truth is the same: God wanted some things in them dealt with and rid from them, so they both had to go into the riddle.

Dear Peter, chosen of the Lord, gift of the Father, disciple, apostle and friend of Jesus, who had accompanied his Lord into glory and was first promised the keys of the kingdom; he who had preached the gospel, healed the sick, cast out devils and was first named among his companions, oft-times their leader and spokesman, a man with great potential and ability, whose future in the kingdom of God seemed absolutely assured — this mighty man needed to be put in the sieve and stripped. Was not the Lord stripped of everything, cruelly stripped and hanged on a tree? So do we all need stripping. Jesus was stripped and beaten, clothed and mocked, stripped and hanged, clothed and buried; even His body was as a husk — He was as a corn of wheat. When at last He died He had passed through the hands of men and the sieve of satan in the hands of God and had fallen into the ground and died. As with Jesus, so with all His disciples, though to a lesser degree and for different specific reasons under many varieties of circumstances, the end in view is the same — we all must be stripped of the husk.

Because Peter was so great a man and a companion of Jesus he is prominent in scripture, but the record of his life and activities has not been given to us so we may blame him for his mistakes and failures. It is there for us to read and learn from it in all humility. In company with the great apostle we all have to learn Christ, and in order to do so we have to learn ourselves. An old chorus springs to mind: 'Make the Book live to me dear Lord, make the Book live to me, show me myself and show me my Saviour and make the Book live to me'. The man who taught it me said his favourite verse was 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me', and at times adapted Stephen's word about Israel to himself, 'forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness'. When Paul saw himself he said he was a wretched man needing deliverance, others saw him as a dragon breathing out threatenings and slaughter; he said he was a blasphemous murderer. When he discovered Jesus he discovered himself also, so did Peter, so do we all, and like them we must let Him put us in the sieve that everything unlike Him may be shaken off us.

God's dealings with us may at times be very severe and sometimes just as obscure, we may not always understand why things happen the way they do; does He allow satan to have his way with us and sift us as wheat as seemed to happen to Peter? Maybe if a man is destined to become a foundational apostle it will be necessary, but if that is the reason for such drastic measures most of us may expect less harsh treatment. Nevertheless all true disciples must be mentally prepared for some such test, so that when it comes we may not be like the man who replies against God. Peter uses an apt phrase, 'arm yourselves with the same mind' and goes on to say, 'he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin'. That is always the objective when God deals with a man and in the end, if not at first, all His disciple/saints confess how kind He is to deal with them so. Let all who feel themselves to be in the riddle (whether rightly or wrongly) comfort themselves with these words of Jesus to Peter, 'I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not'.

Let us all notice too that Jesus did not say, 'that thy strength fail not'; He wanted Peter's strength to fail, that was the precise reason for the sifting, Peter was a strong personality, too strong altogether; he had to be broken. Lots of things needed sifting away from him, natural things such as self-confidence, egotism, boastfulness, self-opinion, over-hastiness, cowardliness, pride — pride of position and possessions and so much more. When these all are compounded with sin in a disciple they amount to a fearsome image of old Adam and the principle of them is in us all till the Lord deals

with it and them and us, even the very best of us. The transition from mere discipleship to sainthood is very real in a man's life and very radical.

As Peter is an illustration of the vulgar and distasteful things of natural man we all despise, so John the beloved exemplifies much that is admirable and desirable. Whatever he felt like within when his friend Peter was identified as a disciple in the Judgement Hall we cannot certainly know, but we may guess much. His feelings are not disclosed but his actions cannot be misinterpreted. He was known for what he was, a disciple and apostle of Jesus and that is how he wanted it to be; throughout the entire proceedings he remained with his Lord, as near as it was possible to be. Possibly Mary stood with him too, watching and listening while her precious son was so treacherously denied. Betrayal seemed to be natural to these men; Judas had betrayed Him into the hand of sinners and bears the name of Traitor, but is not denial a form of betrayal? Had not Peter also betrayed the Lord's trust? Only John seemed true and loyal. She was grateful to John; he loved her precious Jesus as much as she did, but where were all those others He had chosen who had sworn allegiance to Him and had left all to follow Him? Those He had called His mother and sister and brother, where were they now? Hiding, looking after their own skin. Peter had at least tried and John stood with her; would he stay to the end?

10. A Place Called Calvary.

Who could have blamed Mary if she was bitter? She was hurt, very hurt. She saw her son's helplessness, so did John, and neither of them knew what was going on. They followed with the crowd who followed Jesus to the cross, loyal to the last. They could not forsake Him even in His death throes: bravely they went and stood by the cross, as close to Him as they possibly could, so that Jesus in His agony could see them, and He spoke to them, 'Mother behold thy son' He said, and 'Son behold thy mother'. If Mary had been asked she would not have chosen another, and John felt he could not have been given a greater privilege. His mother: It was such an honour; John felt he was being asked by Jesus to take His place. Was he to be to Mary what Jesus had been to her? He knew he could not possibly be that to her, but from that moment he took her to himself and after the day was through he took her to his home also. But not yet, he would not leave his Lord even when He cried out in His God-forsakenness though all forsook Him he would stay; what a true disciple he was.

John had been in that upper room when Peter had said, to Jesus, 'though all men shall be offended because of thee yet will I never be offended'. Peter was not alone in this, for each one of the disciples had also added his own firm attestations of loyalty to Christ, even unto the death, John with them; perhaps they all had meant it, but when it came to it he was the only one who kept his word. This is probably the reason why he begins his Gospel on this note, 'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God: the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made'. Not that standing by the cross he understood anything much; he was probably numb with grief and too overcome to speak one word of comfort to his new 'mother' when the last indignity was heaped upon their loved one in death. A soldier thrust his spear into Jesus' side 'and forthwith came there out blood and water', and John knew he had witnessed something vital; what it was he wasn't sure.

Later he understood it to be all part of the great revelation of new birth, a secret revealed only to the few. His faithfulness at the cross earned him a vast reward, though at the time he had no thought of the future, only purpose of heart to be true to Jesus at all costs. Jesus was the Word: it was always like that with God: it all begins with the word, it did in creation, it did at the incarnation and it did with John. He said he would be faithful to the death and he was. He went to the Judgement Hall with that intention, he was well-known there as a disciple of Jesus; metaphorically speaking, for Jesus' sake he put his head into the lion's mouth that day. John was a wonderful man, a true disciple of an even more wonderful man, who gave him a most wonderful reward — the ability and authority to write the most wonderful of all Gospels and the account of the end of all time. Such is the reward of faithfulness in a disciple who desires to remain anonymous, or else only to be known as the disciple who Jesus loved.

There are certain sections of scripture that are favourites with us all, they enjoy world-wide popularity among Christians and deservedly so. Everywhere they are memorised or quoted or preached on, to the blessing and salvation of millions of souls. Because this is so it is inevitable that other portions of scripture suffer neglect, and for no other reason than the popularity of the more well-known portions. The Gospel of John has suffered very much by this. Although it is so well-loved among us, there are some chapters which are far more popular than others, consequently their truths and teachings find more frequent exposition from pulpits. By reason of this they become better known than the less-favoured passages, though these are of equal inspiration and truth with them and flow from the same pen. In some instances this neglect has done almost irreparable harm, for the loss sustained by the churches is incalculable and has had tremendous detrimental effect; in no area has it wreaked more havoc than in this area of discipleship.

As we have seen, discipleship is a life, not an affectation. It is something I have to learn from Jesus and it cannot be learned by scholarship; it can only be learned by living. By the Lord's definition discipleship is not only life, it is lifelong, demanding utmost dedication; there may be no reserves and no going back — we must not even consider looking back. In order to follow the Lord each disciple must be prepared to give up everything else, including creature comforts and chosen profession. The call of the Lord must take precedence over all other calls and be the prime cause and concern of the life. These are big demands and the Lord does not attempt to minimise or modify them in one degree. It is these demands that make the soul realise who He is; no mere man has the right to make the claims He makes on a fellow human being. He makes them though, and He expects us to respond wholeheartedly because He is God. But the response is primarily to Him: He said 'I will draw all men unto me', He did not say He would draw them to His teachings — they were, as Peter's words testify, 'Lord to whom else can we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life'. As Jesus said, 'the words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and life'; the way He lived, the life He lived in the flesh openly before men, was exactly the same as He thought within. His public and His private life — His open and His secret life — were the same. The life of true discipleship He Himself lived is the kind of life to which He calls us.

11. Bethesda — the Sheep Market.

Perhaps more clearly than in any other passage of scripture this life is revealed in the fifth chapter of John's Gospel. Generally only the opening section of this chapter is at all well-known; the rest of it is certainly less known, possibly altogether unknown to many. This is nothing less than a tragedy because into it John has incorporated some of the most basic principles of Jesus' life as a man on earth and as a disciple of God. Although He was the Son of God, He lived and walked with His Father as any son should live and walk with his father, and especially a son of God with the Father. By utter obedience and loving subservience to His God, the man Jesus lived and walked in complete harmony with His Father. He was the supreme example of a man given over to a calling; He set the pattern of discipleship for every disciple for all time. We must therefore study Him as He is revealed in scripture and discover the principles upon which He built His life. Not that we should become mere devotees of principles, but because we must make sure we do not build on sand but on the rock.

As already said, the best known part of the chapter is the story of the healing of the impotent man — it is one of the miracles carefully selected by John for inclusion in his Gospel. The Lord performed so many wonderful works that John supposed and said that if every one of them had been recorded the world would not be able to contain the amount of books that would be written. This may seem a tremendous, even an exaggerated statement, and seeing there are so many wonderful works there must be some significant reason for the fact that he only selects and chooses to write about a few. There is! All the Lord's miraculous works recorded by John are signs, they were all done by the Lord with that intention and John records them for this reason, deliberately omitting many thousands of other works and miracles. These signs were given so that serious-minded people seeking truth could observe them and by them discover reality. For instance the sign which most readily points out to the unprejudiced heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is the giving of sight to the man born blind. By it he, if no-one else, was led out of the darkness of uncertainty to the conviction that the Jesus who gave him sight was the Son of God; the miracle was the sign. The man had seen nothing all his life and then, through the miracle, he saw who Jesus was; the physical miracle was the sign to him.

Each sign from the first to the last is intended by John to be a progressive step in a growing understanding of the person of Christ. He gave them one by one and one upon another in progressive self-revelation, which to the unbiased mind presents irrefutable evidence that Jesus is indeed who He claims to be, the Christ of God. Each sign points out a particular and distinctive truth about Him; the miracle involved was specially wrought with that in mind. Whether or not Christ used the miracle as the starting-point for a discourse, these works are really parabolic texts; certainly in the case of the feeding of the multitudes Christ created the sign and then from it proceeded to teach His truth. What a superb teacher He was; no wonder Nicodemus said 'Rabbi we know thou art a teacher come from God'. This complimentary confession was made and paid to Jesus because of the miracles; to Nicodemus they were clear indications that Jesus was come from God. When a man recognises that he makes a good start, but it is insufficient for salvation. Signs are good and acceptance of them only sensible, but much more than those and that are required of God for regeneration.

The company that lay around the pool of Bethesda in the sheep-market that day in Jerusalem are variously described as blind, halt, withered, diseased, infirm; the adjective that John uses to describe them collectively is impotent. However their

particular need or disease was categorised — they were all powerless. Also they were all hopefully looking for divine healing through an angel. Only one of them could expect to be healed though, according to local legend it was the first one into the pool when the water was troubled; none of the others could expect it. John does not comment on this belief; he neither confirms it to be true nor dismisses it as superstition, neither does Jesus say anything about it; only the background situation and the people's belief are sketched in. The main reason for the supply of this detail is in itself part of the sign; everybody gathered there was expecting: (1) a miracle to happen; (2) a visit by a heavenly person; (3) only one person to be healed and no-one else. Into this situation came Jesus that momentous day with the intention of using popular belief, turning it to God's glory and forcing people to face truth and make decisions about Him.

Other outstanding things, too important to miss, though not so vital to the main issue, are worthy of notice: Bethesda was a sheep-market having five porches — the name means 'house of loving-kindness' — and five is the number of grace. The analogy is so obvious that it would be foolish to ignore it: Bethesda was to be God's house that day, in loving-kindness (or grace) the Good Shepherd was going to move among the flock in blessing; He was looking for faith. He paused by one man who for thirty eight years had been stricken with an infirmity which had left him without strength and made him entirely dependent upon other people for help. Year after year he had come to the pool hoping that one day some strong man would take pity on him and put him into the waters before anyone else could steal the blessing — but all to no avail. His cry was, 'I have no man'; he did not know the man who stood and looked at him, but he must have hoped that this stranger was heaven-sent and that at last the helper he needed had come. Jesus said to him. 'Wilt thou be made whole?' He could not say 'yes', his helplessness had bred in him a fatalism built upon thirty eight years of disappointment and disillusionment. But Jesus heard his cry and felt his infirmity. 'Rise, take up thy bed and walk', He said, 'and immediately the man was made whole and took up his bed and walked'. It was the sabbath day; he could hardly have done a worse thing.

Presumably if he had been healed by the angel in the pool it may not have been such a sin to carry his bed home, or perhaps the whole sick company would have been supervised by Pharisees, in which case they would have reminded the fortunate person that he must not carry his bed even though he was healed. But Jesus told him to take up his bed and walk. It was a deliberate move on the Lord's part calculated to stir up the Pharisees to anger and draw attention to Himself and the miracle, and it had the desired effect. It was a sign spoken against, though why men should speak against it is more than any sensible person can fully understand. By it the Lord was showing that the expected heavenly visitation had indeed taken place, that a miracle had happened and a man had been healed — moreover he was made whole and strong and able to walk. He was a sample of His handiwork and an example of discipleship for all to see. He was also the symbol of an assault upon tradition without power and religion without heart; more than that, he was the living proof that when God decides to give a sign He seldom requires man's faith in order to accomplish it.

It is very important for us to grasp this. It may be contrary to man's beliefs and teachings, but it is nevertheless true and this miracle is an instance of it. The man was not required to believe anything; in fact his words to the Lord reveal despair rather than faith. When the Lord said, 'wilt thou be made whole?' he might as well have said,

'No I won't', for he had no expectation of it, and if faith is anything it is a holy expectation grounded upon reality. The best he had was hope and desire and perhaps a genuine looking toward God. The fact that afterwards he went to the temple suggests that he was a God-fearing person and that probably he had gone there to give thanks to God for his healing, but it is certain that at Bethesda he had no faith, nor was he required to have any, nor was he forced to believe that the man who healed him was the Lord — he did not even know who he was or that his name was Jesus. The truth is that God was giving a sign and the only faith involved in it was His alone. Quite often the Lord required people to exercise faith as a condition for healing, but when He gives signs, even though they embrace healing for some person, He just does them by His own power for His own purposes — man's faith is not required. We are required to believe that.

This man's story is included by the Spirit speaking through John so that we may see the expectations of the Lord for His disciples, but good and necessary as it is that by His grace and power we should be made whole and strong and upright, and that we should walk abroad for all to see, it is not enough. The Lord planned a further visit to him to complete the meaning of the sign to the man. So when he went to the temple He also went and found him there. 'Go and sin no more lest a worse thing befall thee', He said to him; that is all. He did not disclose Himself or His name to the man; He just told him not to sin ever again; that was sufficient. The nameless man could then put a name to the person who had healed him and he went away and told the Pharisees that his benefactor was Jesus. It was the sin issue that decided it — the command to cease sinning could only come from Jesus — no-one else said such things. From this sign disciples must learn and believe that sin is not allowed by the Lord; it is banned, outlawed. If we are made whole and able to walk we must stop sinning.

This is a high standard indeed. But what else should we expect from Jesus, of whom it was said that He beareth away the sin of the world, and who said, 'Ye must be born from on high'? The people at Bethesda had expected a visitation from an angel from on high to heal them and they would have expected him to be sinless. Instead they were visited by the very God of heaven, the Man from on high; could we expect Him to be less than sinless in Himself, or that His requirements of men should be less than His own human sinlessness? If He had offered less than that He would have been less than God. By the same token, having freely provided it for us He would not have been honest if He had not required and commanded it of us; every disciple must face up to this. The fact of the matter is that Jesus' expectations of disciples is based upon His own spiritual life. He laid down His life that all the disciples may have it, and it is of this life, His life in us, that He makes all His demands.

He expects nothing but sin and total failure of a man in his first spiritual state, but when by virtue of the indwelling Spirit a man is made a saint, the Lord expects the life of Christ to be manifest; there is not a better section than this in the whole of scripture for revealing what that means. The man Jesus is revealed here in all His glory, largely by His own words, His inward states and the principles from which His life sprang and flowed and found expression in His daily words and works. It all started when the Jews sought to kill Him because He had done His works on the sabbath day; not only that, for the first time He made the claim that God was His Father. When they heard that they said He was claiming to be equal with God. They were right of course. What they did not know was that this man did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped at but on the contrary had humbled Himself to be equal with man. This

amazing Man was just speaking truth. He was unique of course; no other man has ever been able to claim equality with God, but although this is so, every one who becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ must become a son of God or else all attempts at discipleship must fail. Even if Jesus Himself were to become re-incarnate and grow up into manhood and go about on earth again calling men to discipleship, we all, as they of old, would fail Him utterly. This is why He told us we must be born again.

Just as Jesus had to be humanly born in order to become a human being and learn to be the Son of man, so we need to be born of God in order to be a divine being and learn to be a true son of God. His discipleship lay in being the Son of God and yet learning to be and act as a son of man; our discipleship lies in being a son of man learning to be a son of God. He was the Son of God being the Son of Man; each one of us is a son of man being a son of God. Every disciple must be clear about this. The name Christian has largely lost its meaning now, so much goes under that name. These days a man can call himself a Christian while living as he pleases in the world and get away with anything; but let men call themselves the sons of God and immediately everything is changed. A man with that confession cannot live to please himself in this world; self-indulgence is recognised and denounced for the sin it is, and self-denial becomes the normal state of life as Jesus said it should.

The regenerate man never claims equality with God — he has no desire for that; on the contrary he has renounced all pride of position, self-ambition has gone; he knows he must seek nothing for himself, self must be humbled voluntarily. One of the most amazing statements Christ ever made was, 'verily, verily I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of Himself but what he seeth the Father do'. It is a tremendously solemnising realisation that no-one should attempt to do anything except he or she is shown by the Father to do it. Before Jesus attempted to do anything, He waited until He saw the Father do it first; He never initiated anything. This does not mean that He was powerless of Himself to do anything; on the contrary He was all-powerful, so He did not say He could do nothing of Himself. He said He could do nothing of Himself except the Father showed Him, which is different from suggesting that He was useless. It is the word 'except' which makes everything clear. He used it when talking about the vine, 'As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me'. The branch has to bear fruit of itself; it cannot bear the fruit of another branch, but it must bear its own fruit; it must not only bring it forth, it must also bear what it brings forth — as Jesus said, 'Your fruit should remain'. He also said 'If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you, so shall ye bring forth much fruit; herein is my Father glorified that ye bring forth much fruit, so shall all men know ye are my disciples'.

There is no fruit-bearing except by abiding and there is no abiding apart from conscious communion, not only Himself but His words also must abide in us, evoking prayer in us along the line of His words spoken in us. Fruit-bearing is the result of prayer based on this communion which begins from the moment we abide in Him in us. Fruit is the expression of this communion. He instigates it. Jesus once said to His disciples, 'I have many things to say unto you but ye cannot bear them now', He knew it would have been fruitless to have said those things to them then; they could not at that time have borne them out into fruit. What He says must bring forth and bear fruit in us in the same way as what His Father said to Him brought forth and bore and still bears fruit in Him. His fruit remains because He abode in and was one with His Father, but He was quick to disclaim originality for any of the works He did, nor did

He claim authorship for anything He said. He sought no glory for Himself from any of these, He initiated nothing; that is how He did such mighty works and spoke such glorious things.

Disciples ignore this principle of divine life and ministry to their own cost and dreadful loss. He is a brave man who claims God as his Father and then refuses to do anything except his Father shows him; there are very few men of this calibre around in these days. There is much talk of authority abroad in the land — men who would be disciples are being taught to do what pastors and preachers and elders tell them; few are being told to do anything God says, except it first be spoken to them by an apostle or a prophet or a pastor or a teacher or an elder — so greatly is the Holy Spirit being demeaned by many who claim to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Disciples need disciplining from others occasionally, but not by infringement upon their liberties in Christ. Every man of God is free in God and bound by Him to hold the Head directly, not by proxy or through a chain of other men. Men are in bondage to other men only when they forfeit their right to liberty by ceasing to be dependent entirely on God, as Jesus was. Such dependence as this creates interdependence of the correct order among His disciples and usurps no man's independent rights to see and hear from God for himself directly.

This is not uniquely possible with us as it was with Jesus, but that need not prevent us from learning from Him. His marvellous deportment of Himself at Bethesda's pool is a perfect lesson of this dependence, interdependence and independence. It is also the most convincing proof of His humble claim that He could do nothing but what the Father showed Him to do. The question may often have been asked, why did He only heal one man of the many hundreds who gathered that day with hope of healing? There were times when Jesus went to a city and healed all who had need of healing. Why should He withhold healing from multitudes in one place and freely give it to others somewhere else? The short answer is, because that is what His Father showed Him to do. At the sheep-market His Father showed Him to heal only one, therefore He restrained Himself from healing any more. He did not lose compassion for the multitudes, nor did He indulge in favouritism, but walked in obedience to His heavenly vision and opened ear. If He had indulged Himself in a display of power then and sought to establish a reputation for Himself in men's estimation, He would have become proud and disobedient and utterly independent with the wrong kind of independence.

He depended upon His Father's wisdom and knowledge and guidance, He did not look to His own gifts or trust His own heart or seek to fulfil His own desires; therefore His Father knew He could depend upon Him and in this mutual trust of each other interdependence was born. Father depended upon Him, He knew that Father had given everything into His hands and likewise He depended upon His Father. He had given everything into the Father's hands. This is what made Him say, 'My Father is greater than all and no-one is able to pluck them (the sheep — remember Bethesda was the sheep-market) out of my Father's hand; I and my Father are one'. He was in His Father's hand, He had consciously placed Himself there; it was the only place of eternal safety and man on earth as He was He felt secure; He needed to, because He had to act entirely independently of everybody else. This kind of correct, vigorous independence was strongly advocated by Mary to the servants, 'whatsoever He saith unto you do it'. It was tantamount to a recommendation to change lordship. Those servants were neither hers nor Jesus'; they were the servants of the household and of

some other person, but she told them to act independently of other men's orders. Doing so they were instrumental in turning water into wine under Jesus' power and sovereignty. Independence of others enables us to act entirely in dependence upon God and to enjoy the fellowship of independence with all those who do the same.

This kind of independence is not the result of pride, neither is it the arrogance bred of self-opinion; rightly practised it will always bring a sense of lowliness, that healthy kind of nothingness which assures the heart of greater things to come. Here it is in Christ's own words, 'the Father loveth the Son and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth and He will show Him greater works than these'. Jesus knew He was only at the beginning of things, that what He had seen was as nothing to be compared with what He would see. He perfectly understood that growth in stature and development of works go hand in hand and must take place in Him throughout all His human life. That is the way of God for all His children and for this reason He has included these things in scripture that we, reading them, should refuse to accept any other standard of life and conduct than that set by our Lord Jesus. He lived it out perfectly and uniquely for over thirty years and people like John, who knew Him intimately for three or so years, at the end of his life set it down in writing for eager hearts to read and for living souls to assimilate.

Should the objection be raised that three years' observation by a man who was obviously a devotee is ground for laying claim to writing a life of Jesus Christ, the directions Jesus gave John at the cross should be taken into account. From that time onward Mary became his mother and John took her to his own home. This may be because Joseph's children, her other sons, were anti-Christ and hostile to the disciples; Jesus wished His mother to be cared for by loving, loyal John and no longer exposed to harsh, cruel hearts. There may be other reasons too, but whatever they may have been makes no difference now; the point for us to notice is that this being so, who better than John had opportunity to find out all about the Lord from His conception to His death and resurrection? Mary knew Jesus for thirty years before John even attempted to write his Gospel. With such a source and such a researcher, both of whom loved Him and were filled with the Spirit of truth, there surely could not have been a better team found anywhere to compile a life of Christ. The amazing thing about it all is that John did not write any of the intimate details of Jesus' birth. His investigations convinced him that Jesus was the original Word, God's everlasting statement and final instructions to men, and that is where all begins and ends; hence the force and reliability of his Gospel.

John loved to remember and record such words as 'I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear I judge: and my judgement is just because I seek not mine own will but the will of Him that sent me'. Not only did Jesus see what He was shown, He also heard what He was told. He had the Father's complete confidence. He saw and heard men and events and was therefore as able as any to form opinions and give judgements, but above and through all He saw and heard His Father. This of itself might be thought to be sufficient ground for claiming His judgements to be true, but He did not rely upon that. He knew that it requires more than that to guarantee correct human judgements, and He stated what it was: 'I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father'. A disciple is a man who has given up all desire to have his own way and seek his own will. He has a will, but discipleship is not a life of self-discovery by assertion of the will. It is a life of seeking Father's will in all. To be a saint of God requires the

renunciation of self-will; if we do not seek the will of him who sent us we shall not do the works of Him who sent us. In fact unless we do His will he has not sent us.

Perhaps what is more important than this is the fact that unless a man is broken from self-will he cannot but seek it, even though he professes to be seeking God's. This means his judgements are worthless; they cannot be just. If a man bears witness of (from) himself his witness is not true, he must bear witness from God in order to speak truth and he cannot do that unless he hears from God. Judgements made in the affairs of men in relationship to the kingdom of God are not worth the breath by which they are spoken if these basic things are ignored. This was so true of Jesus that Father committed all judgement to Him, and we should honour Him so much that we should take Him as our example; He is the Word of God to us about life, every aspect of it.

Let us learn of Him in the matter of men's testimony. We need to do so, for we do so like people to speak well of us. These days we do not speak of testimony but of testimonials, reports, references or recommendations. All these ideas and meanings are included in what the Lord here says when referring to John Baptist, 'ye sent unto John and he bare witness unto the truth, but I receive not testimony from man'. It is so natural to desire the good opinions of others; nobody wishes to be ill-spoken of by another. All that John ever said about Jesus was good and true, it was not flattery but sincere testimony to His superiority and to deity. The Jews' actions seem to prove that they did not receive it, but whatever their opinions about Himself or John, the Lord did not receive his testimony. Such a strong stand as this may at first seem strange. After all everything John said about Him was true; why should it not be received? Jesus did not say it should not be received by man, He said He did not receive it, which is a totally different thing. It should have been received by men — that is why it was given — but it was not given for Jesus. It was given for the sake of men; He did not need it, neither should any son of God..

Complimentary testimonials or commendations can be destructive of spiritual life; none knew better than Jesus. It is nice to have complimentary things said about you, but if we are not careful these can become the bread of a life that is not the life of God in a man. Jesus refused them, they gender to pride. We may think that compliment is better than criticism and much to be preferred, but better criticism than compliment, for pride cannot feed on it. However, the disciple of Christ must learn to receive neither, though they both be given, and for the same reason that the Lord refused them, namely this: He did not need men's testimonies. He knew in Himself who He was and He lived in unbroken communion with the Father who showed Him all the things He needed to know. There were four that bore witness of Him — the Father, the scriptures of truth, the works He did and the Holy Spirit, whose shape He and John Baptist had seen at Jordan. These were the sources of His confidence; they were all the witness He needed, and in measure every disciple must have them also; without them no man can possibly be a disciple of Christ.

Beside this fourfold testimony and allied to it there is something else we all must be made aware of: the disciple must not receive honour from men. He may not covet this world's honours nor should he receive them if they are offered him, though they be thrust upon him he should reject them. A man should seek the honour that comes from God alone and not attempt to deceive himself and others by calling men's honours God's honours. We must remember that, though Christ was popular for a while, when

His message and claims were finally understood He was despised and rejected of men, cast out and crucified; He is our example, and this is why He said we must take up the cross daily and follow Him. He made the cross on which He finalised His life the symbol of discipleship for all our life; there is nothing contradictory in this because, although in the nature of things He could not hang on the cross until the end, He bore the cross without flinching all His days.

We all ought to be praising God for such straight sayings as these, for they are as the essence of life. We may think this approach to human life most exacting and the standard far too high, but the Lord's very words make it all plain, 'I know that ye have not the love of God in you'. That is a terrible indictment and we cannot fail to see the implication of it: people seek honour from men because they have not the love of God in them. The inference is that the God and Father of Jesus does not love worldly, fleshly honour, so for that reason Jesus never sought it. That love in a man that makes him love this world's honours and favours is not the love of God, neither can a man seek worldly honours in any field and claim thereby he is loving God. He may profess that by it he is showing his love toward God, but as long as this word of Christ stands his profession is in vain. All such things are of self-love, God is brought no honour by them, neither is He seeking any honour from them.

All true disciples need to take these things to heart, for there is much erroneous teaching being propagated these days under the pretext of kingdom truth and related themes which is in flat contradiction to this word of Christ. These errors are presented as sound Biblical truths, but anything not based upon all Christ's words and personal example is not sound. One good test to apply to all such doctrines is whether they are taught in a futurist context or appositely based upon old covenant concepts. We are living in the 'now' of God, Christ is the Word and that Word was made flesh and that manifestation is the law of life. John understood that perfectly: 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us The life was manifested and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us'. Jesus was that life, He is the manifestation, incarnation, demonstration, example and ensample of it; either we confess that Jesus Christ is now come in the flesh or we do not. If we do, then we must demonstrate that fact for all to see and hear and handle; He never sought or received honour from any man, but only from God.

From the very beginning of His ministry to the very end He displayed total disinterest in praise and honour from men for anything. When the governor of the feast in Cana of Galilee praised and congratulated the bridegroom for the superb wine he served last, the Lord let him have the glory for it. He sought no honour or glory that day or any other day. He came to this earth as the servant of God, He only did what He was told; somehow He felt He did not deserve any thanks. On another occasion the multitude wanted to make Him king of the nation and when He refused to be persuaded they even went as far as to try and force Him to take the throne, but He would have none of it. He had no ambitions in that direction whatever; earthly positions and the possessions that went with them He despised and called His disciples away from them for they have no part in the kingdom of God. When the Holy Spirit came He also led the church to give away, sell, leave possessions and

share what they had, and all this in the light of the Lord's return. All other practice contrary to that binds people to this world.

The amount of one person's commitment to another or to a cause is often measurable by the degree of anonymity he is prepared to accept in order that the other person or cause may be exalted or propagated as the case may be. John is an outstanding example of this, calling himself 'the disciple whom Jesus loved', rather than using his own name. He learned and published the secret of the Lord and it is sublime; here it is — 'I am come in my Father's name'. All disciples must learn this heavenly secret, God expects us so to live Christ's life that we should bear His name, that is be and live in it, and only come or go in it. That is how it was with Jesus; He could not be His Father's Son and God's servant in His own name. He bore the name of Jesus, it was given Him and it was His; it was a common enough name for boys in His day. He was Jesus of Nazareth, but there may have been other boys called Jesus in Nazareth as well; there would almost certainly have been a Jesus of Capernaum and a Jesus of Bethany and perhaps a Jesus of every other village and town in Palestine also, just as there would have been plenty of Johns and Jameses and Marys and Marthas.

Nevertheless Jesus of Nazareth was unique, for John was not John of Capernaum, neither was Peter known as Peter of Capernaum; John was of Zebedee and Peter was of Jona, their fathers whom everybody knew; but Jesus was not Jesus of the Joseph everybody knew, He was Jesus of Nazareth. So, although He bore the name in common with many others, it was different; His Father named Him but He could not be called the Son of His Father as others could be called the son of their father, so He was called Jesus of Nazareth. He was the son of an unknown father. He became known to the majority as one of Joseph's children and was popularly thought of as that. There were those who questioned that however, and rather than accept His deity, maliciously taunted Him with such sayings as 'we were not born of fornication', plainly implying that He was. At another time they said, 'say we not well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?' allowing the inference that Mary had committed fornication with an unknown Samaritan and that Jesus was the child of that union. But both Mary and Joseph bore all the misinterpretations and lies and unbelief of Jewry unprotestingly and Jesus lived on in His Father's name unperturbed; He had to fulfil His name because it was His Father's name for Him.

Jehovah, the God and Father of the nation of Israel, was also the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of all people was the Israelite indeed. Jesus once said of Nathaniel that he was an Israelite indeed, but like Peter, his brother apostle, he was of an earthly father; this man became a disciple and followed Jesus of Nazareth for many years because he recognised Him as the Israelite indeed and he actually called Him the king of Israel; He was. This recognition and confession reveals one of the great mistakes Pilate made about Him when he wrote the title he gave Him in the accusation he placed above His head on the cross, 'This is Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews'. Pilate was quite wrong; to have been correct he should have written, 'This is Jesus of Nazareth the king of Israel', but then any title written by a man as a superscription about Jesus would be totally inadequate, revealing more by omission than by inclusion. 'Join all the glorious names of wisdom, love and power that mortals ever knew, that angels ever bore, all are too mean to tell His worth, too mean to set my Saviour forth' Yet the simple name Jesus declares it all, for it was all included in the person of the Man who bore it.

By definition Jesus means 'Jehovah's Saviour'; it is an adaptation of the Hebrew name 'Joshua', more properly Jehoshua, Jehovah's Saviour. The fact that Jehovah was Israel's Saviour had been kept before the minds of Israel since they had been formed a nation. That particular name of God. was introduced to them by Him through Moses when He redeemed them from Egypt and entered into covenant with them at Sinai; Jehovah is the covenant-making, covenant-keeping God. Isaiah was especially strong on the name and in his prophecy wrote much about God's redemption and salvation; so much so that at times, by some, his book is called 'the Gospel according to Isaiah', because it is replete with prophetic references to the birth and life and death of Israel's Servant Saviour, Jehovah. Nobody at that time thought that Jehovah would beget a Son on earth and call Him 'Jehovah's Saviour', or that He would bear His Father's name with reference to and special emphasis upon redemption and salvation, but it was all written in the book. Just before His birth an angel brought this particular name of God from Jehovah the Father to both Mary and Joseph that they should give it to Jehovah the Son in a modified form, 'Thou shalt call His name Jesus'; they did and He became known among men as Jesus of Nazareth.

It was His Father's name, He had inherited it and Jesus knew this; He knew what honour He had received when He received that most excellent name from God. The Father had life in Himself and He had given to the human Son to have life in Himself and the Father did so in order that all men should honour the Son as they honoured the Father. He committed all things into the hands of the Son without reservation and He, knowing the name He bore and the responsibility that was placed upon Him thereby, sought only to live in His Father's name. As He said, He came in His Father's name; by that He meant that He had come and was living among men as Jehovah, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father', He said, 'I and my Father are one'. When He said that men said He blasphemed; He knew He was telling the truth, 'I am the truth', He told them, but they did not believe Him. When men come in their own name their fellow-creatures accept them, but when they come in another's name they have to be accepted for and as that other person. Men would not receive Jesus as Jehovah but despised and rejected Him, therefore He was always a man of sorrows, for by rejecting Him they rejected God.

When a man decides to be a disciple of Christ he has to bear all this in mind, for as surely as no man can live auto himself, neither can any disciple live as of himself. He cannot live in his own name, nor can he promote himself or seek his own glory, but must live in this world in Jesus' name. Whatever the consequences of that may be, he must not think harshly or accuse anyone if his selflessness is abused. The true follower of Christ understands the reason why men reject him and he brings no accusations against them for it; he knows they do not understand him any more than the Jews understood Jesus Christ. A disciple's glory lies in contentment to be like his Lord, to walk as a son with a father as Jesus did. To achieve this is sufficient, for it is discipleship, son-ship and sainthood and perfection indeed.

12. With the King in His Kingdom.

Matthew records that the so-called 'sermon on the mount' was spoken to the disciples. This glorious message might as truly be called 'a set piece', for it was when He was set on the mountain that His disciples came unto Him. He took up His position quite deliberately, knowing that what was to follow would most certainly be compared with what Moses did. and said many centuries before. That was an absolutely unforgettable

occasion, for it lay at the foundation of the race; those two tablets of stone were the rock of righteousness upon which the nation of Israel was built, and now Jesus sat immovable upon a mountain to deliver the law anew. Both differences and similarities abound in this new presentation of the law of God to men. Each of these is very important and none more so than the fact that the disciples were not commanded to await Christ's emergence from cloud and fire like some demigod with two tables of stone in His hands, but were called up into His presence as into the presence of a king in His kingdom. Instead of two tablets of stone in Moses' hands they saw two natures, human and divine, blended in one person who expounded to them the nature of the Rock of righteousness upon which they must be built. They listened to the way He handled the old law and marvelled at its newness flowing out of His mouth — 'Moses said' — 'I say unto you' -- He exceeded Moses by far; He went beyond him altogether and set the standard higher, made the punishment of defectors greater and the rewards of obedience richer. There was no mistaking Him, He commenced with blessing and exhorted them to perfection — 'Blessed are ye — be ye therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect' — nothing less — that is His set position. Praise God they were not worshipping a calf of gold down at the bottom of the mountain, or they might not have heard Him.

Let us particularly notice that He did not say 'be ye perfect as I am perfect', but 'be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect'. That was His own position; right at the beginning He was a disciple Himself and He remained a disciple to the end, learning, following, obeying all the time while walking in fellowship with His Father and God. 'He was led as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so He opened not His mouth'. What an example of discipleship! He is our Master and Lord and His authority lay in that, although He spoke to men as to disciples with plenty of faults, He was the Disciple without fault. Our devotion to Him grows partly from our gratitude to Him for being the example He was. So exceedingly great was He and so penetrating His interpretations and applications of God's laws that for ever after none of those early disciples could speak of Moses' law as being other than comparatively weak; they realised that he, with his law, was unable to give life. They saw that in an amazing way whenever Jesus spoke He put His own life into words; the things He said were literally His Spirit and His life. Therefore, except when the occasion demanded, they never spoke of the law of Moses but of the law of Christ. More than that, they said we are to fulfil it in ourselves, so that the things we say and do should be spirit and life to others also.

Let every man know that it is impossible to be in this world among men without our lives affecting others. Whether we are aware of it or not, every man's spirit and life comes out in words and deeds and attitudes in the everyday. John was very aware of this when he said, 'that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you'; although we may not be as explicit as he, or write a book or make any attempt to communicate what we believe to others, we must realise that it is impossible to live and not declare something by living. The Lord knew this and for this reason made disciples and especially apostles, that in them He may exemplify and emphasise what He meant. Mark puts it this way, 'He goeth up into a mountain and calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him, and He ordained twelve that they should be with Him and that He might send them forth'. These men had to come to Him and be with Him long before He sent them out to minister. If they were to go and preach and work in His name they had first to live like Him and learn from Him, and for that they

had to live with Him. He did not wish their lips to declare one thing and their lives to declare another; consistency is a virtue of God, 'I am the Lord I change not'.

Reading the Gospels we could easily conclude that, despite their many commendable points, if there is one virtue all the disciples lacked it was consistency; led by Judas, they all felt that Mary should not have anointed Jesus with the spikenard and said so; likewise they all vowed they would lay down their lives for the Lord's sake and failed to do so at that time. Disciples should feel that all the world's choicest possessions and riches as well as all their love and powers should be poured upon Jesus, nor begrudge Him anything, but it seems those men at that time really did not think so. By their words in Simon's house they appeared to be most virtuous, but it may be said entirely without criticism or rancour, that by their actions they revealed that they were far from it. By their words in the guest-chamber also they gave the impression, even the assurance, that they would die with their Lord, but events proved otherwise; they lacked inner consistency; perhaps we all should have been the same had it been us instead of them. Outwardly they may have been adjudged true and faithful followers and could make the claim 'we have left all and followed thee', but inwardly they were moving from very mixed motives indeed, as their question reveals, 'what shall we have therefore?' What a sad ending to such a commendable beginning — they had their eye on rewards rather than on Him.

God is faithful and encourages like faithfulness in all His people by offering rewards for loyalty and endurance. Moses, true leader that he was, endured hardship as seeing Him who is invisible and had respect unto the recompense of the reward: Jesus Himself endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him. God does offer certain incentives to all disciples for patient endurance, but these must not be a man's reason for discipleship lest they be thought by some as wages or even bribes. Should this happen the whole purposes of God thereby would be circumvented and nullified. Discipleship must always be envisaged in John's terms — 'as an only begotten with a father', and in accordance with Jesus' teaching, 'I am an unprofitable servant'. The man who walks thus will always be impressed with a sense of privilege and duty befitting the honour conferred upon him.

In one of the frequent clashes which occurred between the Lord Jesus and the Pharisees, He so identified Himself with His disciples that they must have rejoiced in heart at what they heard. They were passing through cornfields and as they went they plucked some of the ears of corn, rubbed them in their hands till the grains fell out and then they ate them. They were hungry, but it was the sabbath day and it was considered by the Pharisees that the disciples had broken the law. They were therefore accused of sin and Jesus was also condemned with them because He condoned their conduct. They must at first have wondered how He would handle the situation, but finally realised that they need not have been over-concerned, for their Champion not only gave the perfect answer to the Pharisees, but also assured their own hearts of His loyalty to them under all circumstances. 'The sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath'. By calling Himself the Son of man He totally identified and allied Himself with His disciples on an issue and at a time when they vitally needed it, and what is more He claimed that the sabbath was made for Him as well as for them and every man. He was Lord of their days and nights as well as of their lives; this Son of man was Lord of everything that was made for man. They who were sons of men were mother and sister and

brother to Him; it was incredible; was this what discipleship meant? It was, and it still means that today.

01-JAN-03

First published June 1984
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ELDERSHIP

PREFACE

This pamphlet makes no pretensions to be an exhaustive study of this subject. Rather is it an attempt to present a scriptural and spiritual ground on which to build a right concept of this truth in relation to present need in the churches. This will be done with four things in mind: (1) Origins, (2) Historical development, (3) Church function, (4) Observations and suggestions.

1 — THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

In course of his invaluable prophecy, Daniel at one point calls God by a most significant name — "the Ancient of Days". It is a name which would have been full of meaning to those who first heard or read the prophecy. The work was written in Chaldee, the language of heathen Babylon. Daniel was held captive and came to fame there. God was unknown. None of the Babylonians knew the wondrous names and titles by which the one True God had in past days revealed Himself to Israel through their patriarchs and saints.

For this reason these people could not be expected to know Him; but ignorant though they were of those things, they did understand the truth and principle of eldership. Therefore when Daniel spoke of 'the Ancient of Days', a fact of life, a concept of truth and a principle of rightness immediately presented itself to their minds. Especially was this so because when using the title the prophet was speaking in terms of judgment; if judgment there is to be, who is better able to judge between, or be fairer to people than one who is THE ANCIENT OF DAYS?

To the heathen mind, the title would have implied death-defying longevity, unchallenged seniority, complete knowledge, highest wisdom, perfect understanding, unparalleled strength, absolute ability. In short, such a person would be regarded by the Babylonians as being fully equipped with ultimate supreme ability to judge aright. What the man of God was doing was more than acquainting his captors with facts; he was informing them of eternal truth in a form understandable to their minds and acceptable to their spirits.

None of God's names can fully describe Him. He is greater than all His names; they are a means of self-revelation, an adaptation implying an application of Himself to human minds and conditions and needs, according to His will. 'Ancient of Days' is a name by which He describes Himself, having special reference to the fact that He is the Original Father and Elder. The origins and roots of eldership are in God.

John, the holy seer of the New Testament, says that upon a certain occasion he was called up through an open door into heaven. He records for the churches what he then saw and heard there, that by the revelation they might shine the better in this dark world. First he saw the throne, and one sat on it, he says: it and He were encircled by a rainbow. Then he proceeds to mention in order twenty four seated elders, seven lamps of fire, a sea of glass and four mysterious beasts in and around the throne.

Whether heaven and God's throne and these things have always been set out in this order no-one knows; what we do know is that the persons seen and mentioned next in order to God in the vision are elders. John's revelation in fullness is fairly comprehensive: Cherubim and Seraphim, six-winged creatures, angels and archangels, the angel of the Lord, and numerous others of higher order and greater power than man are all in it, but these are not yet seen or brought into the picture.

God's reasons for making this specific revelation known are not fully given; what God showed John was the present layout of the seat of imperial majesty in heaven. We have been granted a sight of the centre of universal government in relationship to the eternal covenant of redemption made by God through the Lamb and His blood.

God is pictured seated upon His throne in the centre of the complete rainbow, emerald in colour. By this He is declaring Himself to be unchanging in His being, immovable in His will and eternal in His purpose. Around Him is assembled the council of elders. They are not His counsellors; they are there to receive His counsels. Like their God and Creator and Counsellor, they are seated; they are at rest. They never leave their position,

they have no need; the seven spirits of God wait before the throne, perfectly prepared to move out at His will and word to ensure that His purposes are accomplished exactly as He wishes. Other spirits move, but the elders abide at the throne. Who or what these seven spirits are we are not told. John represents them as lamps of fire; they are spirits of burning light.

Then the vast expanse of the sea of glass is brought into view, stretching crystal-clear before the throne. The inscrutable face of the one like jasper, and the seven fiery spirits look down and out across the sea, which at that time was empty of life. Lastly the four living creatures are shown hovering in and around the throne. These beings are diverse of form and face, but alike in perception, for each is full of eyes before and behind and within. With foresight, hindsight and insight, beholding all that transpires in and around the throne, without ceasing they say 'holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come'. And when for a moment they pause from this, their unending confession, and give honour and thanks to Him whom they behold, the elders in acknowledgment and total agreement fall from their seats, crowns in hand, to cast them before the throne.

There is no crown upon the head of the one like jasper; He who creates and bestows crowns wears none. They are but symbols, tokens of His favour bestowed because they are deserved, but in this context they are a mark of inferiority. He is too honourable and noble to need tokens of royal virtues. He receives neither reward nor award; His is eternal majesty; He is above all. They say 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power', but He created all these things, and themselves also, for His own pleasure. They know that of course and say so, but they also understand that He has no need for crowns; He is The Crown. They cast their crowns upon the crystal sea at His feet before His face, but He gives them back again. Upon their heads and at His feet they are right, but not upon His brow; none can crown Him, but all heaven must worship.

John has given us a glimpse into heaven, revealing how things were with God in the beginning when He commenced His work within the terms of an eternal covenant to bring forth unto Himself a special people for His purposes in the regeneration. In process of accomplishing this, His work would be cosmic; it would affect the whole universe, but His main purpose was to fill the vast area of the mysterious sea with redeemed and regenerate men. It is not therefore surprising that before John's eyes there appears in the midst of the bow-encircled throne a young lamb as it had been slain. Immediately John's ears are filled with cries and songs coming from everywhere rising from the lips of myriads upon myriads of creatures — the whole universe is praising the Lamb. Little is told us of events before this, but everything now moves forward from this point.

By this heavenly vision God has introduced us to the original company of elders. They were created of the Ancient of Days to be part of the heavenly order, and from the beginning have been in direct touch and intimate association with God and the Lamb. We have also been shown: (1) their position — next to the throne; (2) their disposition — around the throne; (3) their exaltation — they are seated and crowned; (4) their preoccupation — worship; (5) their function — to present the prayers of the saints to God; (6) the reason for their being — the purposes of God in redemption, with special reference to regeneration; (7) their subordination — they cast their crowns before the throne.

2 — THE CIVIL AND THE SPIRITUAL

Because the elders were created by God in the beginning, it is inevitable that they should have a fundamental place in the structure of human society. As we have seen from Daniel's prophecy, man's mind naturally associates wisdom and knowledge with age. Length of life enables man to gain true perspective and become emotionally mature and mentally stable. Time proves all things, and for youth it lies yet in the future. Those who have lived longest have seen and endured the most, and are therefore better able to form correct judgments.

It is therefore natural in the affairs of men that experience of life should be highly esteemed and seniority greatly respected. For this reason, from time immemorial, wherever families and tribes and nations have existed, rule by elders has been the accepted form of government, and is to this day. It is the most primitive, simple and uncomplicated form of government known to man, and to it every normal person agrees and willingly submits.

Even among the more civilized nations, youth submits to age. For instance, seldom is the position of national

premiership given to a young man, and our judges, for obvious reasons, are always chosen from men who could be regarded as the elders of our society. We still hear the phrase 'the city fathers', and understand perfectly what it means.

In countries that have royal families at their head, whose sons and daughters accede to sovereignty upon the death of their parents, seniority is of great importance. Normally the eldest son succeeds to the throne. Should he be a minor at the time, a regent is appointed to guide the affairs of state until he comes of age. Even so, whoever he be, he is surrounded by privy counsellors, ministers of state and others who, if they are not themselves aged men, may consult time-honoured works of reference in order to give advice to his majesty.

The importance of this is revealed by the tragic incident which occurred early in the history of Israel's kings. The kingdom which had been so gloriously established by Israel's second and third kings, David and Solomon, was wantonly wrecked by its fourth king, Rehoboam. Despite the fact that he was the son of the wisest and richest man on earth, Rehoboam behaved so stupidly that he caused irreparable harm to the nation. It was over the matter of taxes, and happened because he refused to abide by the counsel of the elders of Israel. Rejecting the word of men who had lived in the reign of his illustrious father, he acted upon the advice of young men of his own generation. This sparked off a revolt led by Jeroboam, a former house-servant, and the outcome was civil war.

The nation was split from that very day, and from then until now has never recovered from it. Rehoboam's folly is written upon the pages of history — it is one of the most tragic examples of the terrible results which may easily occur when a man ignores the natural structure of human society and refuses to acknowledge government by eldership. We may be sure that since God set the pattern of eldership when creating heavenly structures of government, it is impossible to depart from it and prosper.

However, interesting though these things may be, we are more concerned here with the historical development of spiritual rather than civil rule by elders. God revealed His will about this in a very clear way to Israel by anointing seventy men at once to become elders with Moses. He did so when Moses complained that the task of bringing Israel to Canaan was too great a burden for him to bear alone. The privilege of selecting the men for the position was given to Moses, but it was God who made them into elders. He did it by taking of the Spirit that was upon Moses and putting it upon them, and He did so in order that thereby they should henceforth help to bear the burden of the people. Those seventy immediately became prophets also; this gift, apparently, was vital to their ministry.

This act of God was the divine provision for the need which Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had vainly tried to meet months earlier. This man had advised his son-in-law to allocate some of his duties to other men. He saw how greatly overtaxed Moses was, and taking advantage of his relationship, position and seniority, he counselled Moses to select and promote certain men of Israel to office. Jethro counselled Moses with absolute sincerity and complete wisdom according to the world, and the younger man, although he was God's chosen leader, acted upon it in good faith. However, being of man, Jethro's advice did not alleviate the real need; the problem still remained. God did not move until Moses came to the point where he saw his own wretchedness and wished to die.

The lesson we must learn from this is very plain that we should not miss it, lest missing it we should fail. Good and sound as human heathen advice may be, worldly wisdom has no answer to the problems of God's people. Jethro's wise, fatherly advice was full of loving concern for his son-in-law; he seemed in full sympathy with him and the project so dear to Moses' heart. It rose from principles of rule embedded deeply by God in the psychology of the human race; it was therefore most natural and correct that Jethro should give it and Moses obey it; but it did not have the desired effect. Moses still came to the breaking point.

The solution to Moses' problem lay in eldership ordained of God. Jethro's advised specifications for junior leadership were fine, they were all qualities he had for a long time observed in mature Moses. Those he would choose had to be men of ability, God-fearing, men of truth, hating covetousness, and capable of dealing with everyday matters. Moses listened to him, obeyed his voice, did what he said in all detail and let him go, doubtless thanking God for his father-in-law's visit.

This all happened within a few weeks of their leaving Egypt, and before meeting God at Sinai. It proved to be a subtle move of satan. Jethro was priest to a heathen deity; a man who himself worshipped, and trained and

helped others also to worship and serve a false god. It might possibly have been he who had influenced Zipporah, his daughter, to prevent Moses from circumcising his sons, thus adding to the man of God's conflicts, while undergoing decades of endurance in the backside of the desert; we do not know. From the account in Exodus 19, it is certain that Moses tried to dissuade Jethro from returning to his evil ministry, but failed. So we know that, despite the fact that he knew Jehovah to be the one true God, the priest of Midian returned to his idolatry. He was a man who, as the serpent in the garden in the beginning, came with fair words and good advice, but with subtle intentions.

Jethro's counsel as a worldly wise man was to look for and promote men of ability; it seemed just right. He made no stipulation about age — any man with the qualifications specified was eligible. Being an elder himself and very religious, and professing his mental conversion to Jehovah, his sage advice was very self-commending. But by it he revealed that he had forsaken the principles he thought himself to embody. What Moses had to learn, and we have to unequivocally accept and remember, is that God cannot depart from His eternal principles of life and structure of government.

Moses had yet to learn this; but because he had not previously been shown by God, and was therefore not in rebellion against Him, God dealt with him very graciously. Some months later, however, when the Children of Israel had moved but three days' journey from Sinai, the Lord engineered a circumstance in which an opportunity presented itself for Him to deal with the whole situation.

At last, under extreme pressure, the displeased Moses makes his complaint to the Lord. The Lord's response was swift and sure. Moving from eternal principles of righteousness, He speaks to bring Israel into line with the structure of government created by Him for correct administration in the universe of redemption. 'Gather unto Me seventy elders of the men of Israel, elders of the people and officers over them', He said. Moses did so, ranging the men around the Tabernacle in a way reminiscent of the twenty-four elders seated about the throne in heaven. Then the Lord came down and took of the Spirit that was upon Moses and put it upon the elders. In other words He anointed them and ordained them into office, that they, with Moses, should bear the burden of the people of God. The seventy were elected from natural eldership to spiritual eldership, from human office to divine office. They held the first by seniority, which is by accident of birth, plus natural ability; they could only hold the second by another's deliberate choice, and by anointing with the Spirit of God.

We ought also to take note that Moses' ordering of the Children of Israel at Jethro's word took place before Sinai, that is before the Tabernacle and throne and law of God were with them. It was a coolly calculated move on the devil's part. He succeeded in saddling the people, whom God had chosen to be His own kingdom on earth, with a satanically inspired system of government. Satan thought that if he could get the people organized under his plausible system before the Lord could give them His, he would succeed in defeating God yet.

As it was, however, the devil calculated without the people's sin and Moses' breakdown and the Lord's will and wisdom. The Lord is not slow, He worked according to principles of eternal righteousness. He did not install His elders until He had first of all established His kingdom and throne and law and house among men. Systems of government depend for their proper function upon undeviating law and eternal order: before elders, The Elder; above government, The Governor; in the midst of the seats, The Throne.

It is possible of course that some, if not most, of the chosen seventy were of the same company which a few months before had been put to work under Jethro's scheme. If so, theirs was the privilege of learning the difference between men's election and God's, and to sorrow that they had been so misled by their betters. The joy of their present anointing, however, would have more than compensated for their sadness; the gift of prophecy God generously added with it would have comforted their hearts immeasurably. They knew that they were the elect of the elect. Others of their contemporaries were elders too, but now they had been elevated above them to a new place with God.

Before this, through the centuries, in every nation including Israel, natural elders had functioned in family matters and tribal affairs and limited governmental councils. Eldership as a natural position did not commence with these seventy, but eldership as a spiritual office did. There is a word in Hebrews 11 which throws still fuller light on the subject. Speaking of faith, the writer says 'by it the elders obtained a good report'. Then, commencing with Abel, he proceeds to name many of the great national worthies, moving right through

history from the beginning of time to Jesus, the greatest of them all. Each of these was an elder of the faith, although it is to be doubted whether Abel was acknowledged as one during his lifetime. He was only third in seniority in the original Adamic family, being preceded by his father Adam and his brother Cain. At the time of his death he was Abel the younger. He was most definitely not the elder. Adam was that, and rightly so; yet by God Abel is called an elder.

By this we see that the word elder has a variety of meanings: (1) an obvious personal meaning; (2) a simple family recognition; (3) a wider social application; (4) a national governmental function; (5) greatest of all, it is a spiritual office. This last finds its highest fulfillment in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the great Elder of the Church. That is why John so dramatically presents Him standing in the midst of the throne at the centre of the rainbow, encircled by the elders. John makes no attempt to alter the fact of His youth; he uses the word signifying 'young lamb'. He died as a young man. The apostle cannot describe one recognizable feature of the Being he first saw upon the throne — He is just there and perhaps may best be thought of as 'the Ancient of Days'. But immediately the Lamb appears he knows who He is.

Two aspects of eldership are being presented. Both persons are Elders, the one by virtue of His indescribable being and presence, the other by reason of sheer spiritual merit. He is the Son, and would normally be thought of as junior to a father, but in God the first person is spoken of as The Father, not a father as in human relationships. Likewise with Jesus, He is not a son, but The Son, as eternal as The Father and one with Him.

At His appearing the elders fall down and worship, angels sing and myriads of creature-voices ascribe to Him everything a heart could wish. In His hands He holds the book, the secret key of the future; He had acceded to it by His death and resurrection. As it is said of Him, Jesus knew 'that all things were in His hands and that He came from God and went to God'. He said Himself, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit'. Between them, Father and Son had achieved a new position for the prosecution of world government — from this point world procedure would be different. This was statesmanship of the highest order. While still on earth He had said, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature', and now He sets the procedural order in motion.

The Man Christ Jesus is supreme; this is an inaugural occasion; everybody worships. Here the ideas of seniority, longevity and spiritual quality are combined with majesty and power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing. This is the royal occasion and unique setting from which God inaugurates future policy and sets forth the original pattern and example of eldership.

Seeing this New Testament revelation was received following the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, it must have been given for the Church. It had not yet appeared to John; what was shown him was God's preparation for the bringing forth of the Church, and the grounds upon which it must stand. Headship and government in heaven is by eldership; it is not therefore surprising that Christ should ordain it in the Church. In all truth it could not be otherwise, for the Church is His body. Yet nowhere does the New Testament use the word 'eldership'. It speaks of elders, but there is no office or state spoken of as eldership.

The office created for elders to fill is best described by the word bishopric, or, as we would speak of it, 'see'. An elder is a bishop, an overseer or presbyter. These ideas have been taken up and formulated into systems of Church governmental order from which eventually denominations have appeared — Episcopalian, Presbyterian etc. However scriptural and high-sounding such names may be, these are quite contrary to the desires of God, and as surely as these things happen, man-made organisations develop and degenerate into death.

It is therefore of immeasurable importance that we have the right kind of man in office. Exaggeration of the importance of the office above the quality of the man who fills it is a sure way to bring the office into disgrace and disrepute. The most basic definition of an office is an action, something performed by a person in pursuit or practice of a duty. Anyone doing it is an official in that sense. It is only when duties are defined, made exclusive to a person and incorporated into some kind of system that officialdom is magnified. Growth is then abandoned for structure, and development substituted by election.

It is a subtle switch, mostly undetected by men. The world's system of trade unionism is built upon this cruel principle. Man has not mastered the art of synthesizing election with free development based upon employment of innate ability. He has the traces of God's greatness in him, but is entirely devoid of power to

implement his ideas. Being so bankrupt, he lives in a fantasy world of idealism, because he fails to promote ideas to ideals. All his seeds are rotten at the core; they bid fair and boast fullness, but produce evil fruit and death in society. Man's offices are stereotyped representations of an evolutionary system working from an evil power foreign to God. Greed, pride, ambition, cruelty, corruption and all the aftermath of sin fill its offices. This kind of office is unknown in the true Church of Jesus Christ.

3 — THE MARKS AND THE CALLING

[1] Shepherds and Sheep

The very best description of an elder's occupation, and that which is dearest to the heart of God is overseership. This is impressed upon us by the view granted us of the eternal throne and its occupants — full of eyes before and behind and within; a Lamb having seven horns and seven eyes; all-seeing living creatures and seven seeing spirits, the Lamb with perfect sight. This is the great overseership an elder has to represent, and in part fulfill, to the church to which he is appointed.

Peter makes this clear in his first letter — 'feed the flock of God which is among you', he said to the elders, 'taking the oversight not of constraint but willingly of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock'. Here oversight is linked with shepherding — an elder must be a shepherd.

The suggestion that leaders and people are in the sight of God as shepherds and sheep appealed to the heart of Peter greatly. He had come to a precious realisation of this. Like his friend and fellow-apostle, John, he first presents Jesus as the 'lamb without blemish and without spot', and then later also speaks of Him as 'the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls'.

Peter had learned from Jesus a very real lesson about being an under-shepherd. It happened early one morning on the seashore after he had scarcely dried himself by the fire and eaten the breakfast his Lord had prepared. Just previously he had thrown himself into the sea in a bursting desire to get to Jesus, and now he hears Him inviting him to go walking with Him. He did not yet fully know the reasons why the Lord had called him — they lay deep in Jesus' heart soon to be revealed; He was seeking men who would shepherd His sheep. He had been smitten and they had been scattered; now the great Shepherd wanted them to be gathered and fed. 'Lovest thou me more than these?' He said; He was referring to apostleship, boats, seas, fish, friends, livelihood and life itself. 'Lovest thou Me? Feed my sheep' He said.

That day Jesus finally turned Peter away from being a fisherman and made him a shepherd. For some three years he had been a rather rebellious and wayward sheep, but Jesus had gently led him on, and now the role is being changed, Peter is to be a shepherd. He knew well enough that he could only be an under-shepherd; his Lord was Chief, but he was no hireling — 'not for filthy lucre' he said. He had once heard Jesus say, 'the hireling fleeth because he is an hireling and careth not for the sheep the wolf cometh and scattereth the sheep'; he had never forgotten it. He also knew that sheep were a sacred trust from God. The prayer Jesus had prayed to His Father when on His way to betrayal and death was still fresh in his memory; 'the men thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were and thou gavest them me; I have kept them and none of them is lost but the son of perdition.'

Peter could never forget; he knew the duties of shepherding; he had learned so much about it from Jesus. 'What man of you having a hundred sheep, if he lose one of them doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which was lost until he find it? I lay down my life — the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep'. He was also very familiar with Ezekiel's critical statements full of condemnation for false and faithless shepherds, men who fed themselves, fouled the waters, and totally failed God and His sheep. He knew all that was involved in being a shepherd — every one must render account to God. 'Take the oversight', he says to the elders, 'willingly'; do not look for reward, seek only to be worthy of the crown from the Chief Shepherd when He appears. 'He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; all we like sheep had gone astray, we had turned every one to his own way'.

Peter could recall with what unwillingness he had first heard the Lord's appeal to his heart requesting his love and loyalty; his response had been so disappointing to his Lord. It was not that he had not wanted to respond to Jesus' wishes, but he had made such a mess of things. True, Jesus had restored him from his misery. He thought he had meant it when he said, 'I will lay down my life for thy sake', but he had not known his own

heart. Could he ever trust himself again? Still the persistent Shepherd pleaded with him for the sheep: 'Lovest thou Me? Feed my sheep, feed my lambs'. No longer could he resist that loving heart and tender pleading voice; at last he believed in His faith in him. How faithful Jesus was: Peter capitulated right into that shepherd heart: 'Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee'.

He thought he had known better than the Shepherd when He had said to him, 'Where I go thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards'. Memories sweet and bitter filled his mind with problems he could not solve, but Jesus knew; He had understood. That was evident at the time, for He had said, 'Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in Me'. He knew all things; He knew all about his failures, his boasts, his longings, the unforgettable scene in the judgment hall when he had denied and disowned Him. Oh, the bitterness of it all! How could Jesus still want him? How could He ever trust him again? But He who knew all things loved him. This was Peter's greatest discovery that day.

Strange as it may seem, Peter had never ceased to love Him, and Jesus knew it. Bless this dear Shepherd, who at last drew the true confession from his breaking heart, 'Thou knowest that I love thee'. He had been afraid to say so because of his faithlessness. But faithful Jesus knew that he loved Him; He knew Peter better than he knew himself. The greatest revelation Peter ever had was what his friend John later put into writing, 'God is Love'.

The discovery of love itself — what it is, what it will do, the lengths to which it will go, and the ill-treatment it will put up with uncomplaining, the abuse it will take, its strength, its endurance, its consistency, its unbreakable resolve, its patience, its tenderness, its understanding and silence, its healing, its saving, restoring, reconciliatory grace — is greater than to know its purpose. Knowing that God loved him was not the end of Peter's discoveries; it was the beginning. That day Peter found Love as a result of Love finding him. Love is greater than its ends and means. That is why it adapts to itself means and achieves its ends. Calvary was one of those achievements, the greatest, but it was only one of its ends — a demonstration of Love.

By Love's means we at last discover Love itself. What Peter finally discovered was that nothing he had done had altered Jesus' love one jot or tittle. Love revealed to a greater degree, to a greater number, does not increase it. Love says, 'no matter what you have said or done, I understand'. But Lord, I've cursed thee, denied thee, betrayed thee, hurt thee, disregarded thee, helped those who crucified thee, I've misunderstood thee, acted contrary to thee, contradicted thee, refused to believe thee, mocked, starved, stripped and made thee naked; how canst thou love me?' 'I am Love'.

Love at last reached love and love responded to Love. Peter became a lover and was immediately made a shepherd. The only food fit for sheep and lambs is love; people can only feed on love to Jesus. A shepherd must realize that pasture for sheep is nothing other than a product of Jesus' love to him and his personal love to the Lord. In effect Jesus said 'love Me and thereby feed others'. This is the foremost task of elders.

Primarily overseership is of the flock; it is the most spiritual of callings, and can only be properly discharged if the heart is love. A man must never forget that however great his privilege in being made an elder and a shepherd, he is still only a sheep himself. 'Follow thou me', said Jesus. At that time Peter was too concerned about what a fellow apostle was to do. To follow the Lord takes all a man's concentrated powers. He cannot afford to miss one of His words or looks or gestures. Following and listening, Peter heard the Lord. say something which was to set the tone for all his subsequent living and ministry, 'another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not' To hear and receive such a prophecy and live by it requires uttermost devotion, for the Lord was informing him of his death. The Lord was really saying 'love Me, feed my sheep, follow Me and lay down your life for Me; if you will do this you will also lay down your life for the sheep.

A shepherd, of all people, must learn that he is accounted as a sheep for the slaughter, and for His sake 'be killed all the day long' in the hearts and intentions of God's enemies. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, became the greatest of all shepherds because He was God's Lamb. To be really a great shepherd, a man must be a sheep for sacrifice. Jesus did not become the Great Shepherd of the sheep because He was raised from the dead. The resurrection did not make Him great; He was raised because He was great. He did not become the Lamb by being sacrificed, He was sacrificed because He was the Lamb. He so lived that He had to be sacrificed. He had to be killed because of the life He lived.

What Jesus was saying to Peter was 'so live that you too, as I, shall be girded and carried off to your death; but

Peter, unless you love Me, devote yourself to feeding my sheep and lambs, and follow Me yourself, it can never happen. Be a lamb all your life and you will become the lamb at the end'.

It is significant that the Lord was not called the Great Shepherd until He was brought again from the dead. His greatness lay in this — He faithfully led on when the wolves came to scatter the flock, even though it meant certain death to do so. His first concern was not for the flock, although He loved those His Father had given Him. He plainly told them that He loved the Father, He was going to Gethsemane and Golgotha because of it. He gave His Father the first love of His heart; He knew He had the first love of His Father's heart. If it be true, and it is, that Calvary was accomplished by love, it is also as true that it was all done in and because of this love. He was great enough to remain true to original love, that on earth it may be revealed as first love. It was this that gave redemptive value to His blood — all He did was imbued with everything in Him — perfect love.

The flock was scattered. He cared deeply about them and what would happen to them, but He knew His Father was overruling all and would see to that. His greater concern was to do His Father's will and leave the flock in God's hands. Failing that, all He could do would be vain; His duty was to set these men the perfect example of good shepherding. It may only be a secondary reason for so strongly setting His course to do His Father's will, but it was as vital as any reason He knew. His first and greatest reason for going to the cross was Love, original love, first love, perfected with (or by) Him as a man. Therefore every single thing He did was as much an expression of love as were His sufferings and death.

Elders must take special and hearty note of this; nobody is fit to be an overseer of a flock except he is cast in the same mould. An elder must not be dazzled by thoughts of headship, gifts and powers, nor must he be attracted by things that could in any degree puff up the image of self. Behold Him who stands in the midst of the throne, the Shepherd-Lamb; He appears slain, yet He is not lying dead, but standing alive — everything is in His hands. He is releasing powers and authorities into this world; He is reigning and ruling over all; He is the Shepherd-King. Therefore let every shepherd oversee his flock in this spirit; or else let him resign, confessing either his unfitness or inability or unwillingness (or perhaps all three) to do the duties his position demands.

Perhaps Paul, when charging Timothy and Titus with their special responsibilities, did so for these reasons. These young men were deputed by the great apostle to raise men in their districts to the station of elder and deacon. In doing so he laid little stress on gifts or talents, but great emphasis on character. 'What kind of man is he?' not 'what can he do?' That these men were gifted, perhaps some even greatly, may be true, but that was not the criterion of judgment, nor the condition for election. They had to be men of exemplary life and conduct — elders must successfully come through every test the Spirit of God applies, for He is speaking expressly about the office in view of world-wide declension. If ever the churches needed this calibre of man it is now.

We must in no way be deceived, nor argue that as this kind of person is so rare nowadays we are justified in allowing a lower standard. That we are in the latter days, concerning which the Spirit was so powerfully urging Paul to speak with clarity and definition, makes no difference to the truth. Given this quality of life, the Lord is well able to endue and endow men with ministerial gifts if He so pleases.

It cannot be too strongly pointed out that before God anointed His own Son with authority from on high, He had already lived before Him and all men with perfect grace, wisdom, strength and humility for thirty years. With the necessary exceptions due to His higher calling, the Lord fulfilled all the demands He later made upon others to live right. In fact, because of His calling, He lived a life of self-denial greater than He demands of any man. In their measure and order, elders have the onerous duty and great privilege of living in their generation as Jesus lived in His — spotless and without blemish on all the counts outlined by the writers of the New Testament.

[2] The Choice of God.

Before we can understand what the Spirit of God is saying, it is first necessary to discern what spirit is speaking. The fact that sometimes Paul wrote 'the Spirit', and not 'the Holy Spirit' as at other times, holds special meaning in the context of his remarks. Sometimes the intention is to refer to the third person of the Trinity with distinction and definition, giving proper emphasis to His personal being, in which case His name

could only be written out in English in this form: THE The HOLY The SPIRIT. At other times He is mentioned in connection with His less important relationship and functions among men.

So when Paul uses the simple phrase 'the Spirit', he is referring to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of all he is saying. He is the Spirit of the whole body of truth, and the Spirit of the body of Christ; He is also the ruling Spirit in Paul's person and body, and must be that also in the persons and bodies of would-be elders of the Church.

Not only elders, but also every member of every church is included in this; God has not devised a set of graded spiritual standards for members of His Church, as though elders and deacons must be of top quality, but others need not. What Paul is setting out is basic Christian living and he is saying, 'an elder or deacon must be this at very least; therefore, before you can consider a man for office, he must be of this calibre; no-one else is to be considered'. In other words Paul, as befits him, has laid the foundation without which the Church cannot be built. Now if an elder, in common with all saints, is to be a man of this basic quality, what are the other extra features that specially fit him for office?

Perhaps the clearest indication of primary requirements for eldership is to be found in the Old Testament incident already examined. The chosen seventy were outstanding: (1) they were natural elders; that is they were not youngsters; they were already men of standing, leadership and responsibility among the people; they were of proven worth; (2) they were to be burden-bearers — men able to share the burden of the people with Moses. They were to act for God as nursing fathers to their own people; (3) they were divinely and publicly elected; following Moses' selection the Spirit of their head came upon them; (4) they each received the gift of prophecy.

The outstanding things about it all to Israel at that time were these: (1) God decided to elect elders; (2) He did it for a specific reason; (3) He did it in a certain manner; (4) He gave them a gift to mark their election. These men were elders unto God first; they were chosen to assist Him in bringing Israel to Canaan. They were also elders by appointment to all Israel, but this was a secondary thing. The burden of responsibility for the welfare of the people was laid on them by God. This is why He would not have youngsters; eldership is not a novitiate. Already these men were counsellors to whom younger people went with their problems for wisdom and guidance. But now, beyond advice, these men must give sympathetic help, lift the burden, carry the load and speak the prophetic word of God to the people.

The noteworthy thing is that the election was so public that everybody recognized the act of God. This is a most important part of the electoral process, and it must not be overlooked; an elder may only bear office upon public recognition of the work of grace God has wrought in him. This is absolutely necessary, for unless this is so he will not have the respect of the people. A man placed in office without ability to command respect will not be able to furnish to the church satisfactory proofs of his divine election. This he cannot do unless the same Spirit which is upon the Mediator of the covenant in which he serves is upon him also. With the seventy it was the spirit which was upon Moses — today it is the Spirit which is upon Jesus. In other words he must be an anointed man.

The New Testament elder has to know two basic things: (1) of what spirit he is; (2) what anointing he bears. These are indispensable to the office. An elder is simply a man among many brethren; he must fully take to heart the fact that the anointing which is upon him is also upon many others and is given him solely for office and function. He must also realise that this anointing is secondary to, and will only function consistently with, the Baptism common to every member of the Church. The Spirit of anointing is one and the same as the Spirit of Baptism; anointing is extra in dispensation, not different in substance and character. An elder must therefore recognise, confess, deport himself and act at all times in accordance with this truth; the Baptism of the whole body is greater than the individual anointing he has received to bear office in it. The Baptism of the Spirit is general in the Church; it is superior to and therefore must precede permanent anointing. It is fundamental and necessary to all anointings for offices; it creates the body in which the offices exist and are held.

[3] Having a Good Report (a) with Men.

An elder must be a man of good report. He must obtain this in three realms: (1) from the church; (2) from the world; (3) from God. In each case this good report has to be earned. Having dealt with the first of these under a former heading, we will not now return to the point. With regard to the second, it may seem strange that a

member of the Church should receive praise from the world, but in this matter it is nevertheless necessary. Unless a man has already established himself as upright, honest, consistent, true and just among the unsaved, he cannot be an elder in Christ's Church.

It will immediately become apparent why Christ did not straightway appoint into eldership the men whom He selected from the thousands of His disciples to be apostles. We know that, except in His heart, the Church with its many members and different offices did not then exist, so there was no need of elders. But we also know that elders are not the only persons to hold office in the Church; apostles also hold office. It is therefore of some significance that He called those He did select apostles and not elders. The apostles became elders when the Church was formed later, but the Lord carefully avoided calling them elders at the beginning.

Apostle was a new name and office. Israel already had elders, but no apostles. Had Christ elected and set up elders at that time, it would have been confusing indeed, and could have been regarded as a seditious act aimed at establishing a rival national state. These men were chosen to be the foundations of the Church He said He would build, so He chose them to be with Him, called them apostles, used them for evangelism, and later made them elders.

They were totally inexperienced men, so He kept them with Him for a long time before sending them out, and when in process of time He did so, it was to preach and heal and baptise, not to found churches. When He gathered people together, He did so as the Good Shepherd. He never said anything about Head and Body, and only once did He speak of building His Church. People thoroughly understood Him to be a Shepherd and they His sheep; they were a flock; He said so. He never spoke of them as members of His Body or of His Church, but as 'My sheep'. There were no churches gathered and founded while the Lord was on earth; God's plan was to baptise people into His Church from heaven. The Church was born and founded in His bodily absence on the day of Pentecost.

The twelve were apostles only in the etymological sense of the word. Judas was never an apostle of the Church. He was only one of the 'sent ones' of Jesus' earthly period: most certainly he was not an elder. The twelve men were called and chosen to be disciples before all their contemporaries, but they were not apostles of Jesus Christ and His Church in the spiritual sense and meaning of that word; they were very much novices. They could partly function as apostles at that time, but could not fill the role, and in no degree could they fulfill the role of elders — that was totally beyond them. Before the apostles could be elders, they had to obtain a good report of them that were without. Following Pentecost they soon obtained that, and immediately almost automatically became acknowledged leaders and elders in the new community which sprang up at Jerusalem. This was inevitable on man's part as it was intentional on God's.

The Church did not elect its original elders; the apostles stepped into that position. So far as the people were concerned, the twelve became elders as of natural selection or automatic choice, but as far as God was involved in it they were made elders. By this God has given us an example of His methods. To have both God's and man's approval is a most essential qualification for eldership and also a very wise one. Present observation confirms the opinion that although there are those who have been given gifts by God and therefore possess great ministry potential, they are not thereby qualified to be elders. Ministerial ability may be an indication of the Lord's intentions to establish a man in eldership eventually, and should perhaps be regarded in that kindly light, but eldership requires far more of a man than success in the ministry. An elder has to be a pillar, an immovable rock, not a heap of sand or a wandering star.

It is the eternally fixed, unchanging calibre of a man which qualifies him for eldership; he must be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. This is of more importance in the kingdom of God than the gifts he displays in the course of any other calling. The proof of this is Judas. He was equally an apostle with all the other apostles, but he was neither an elder in any church of Christ or in God's kingdom, nor did he ever become one. He could preach, work miracles and baptise in water with the other eleven apostles, but he had neither the Spirit nor the qualities required for eldership. He was a thief and a liar, a traitor and a devil, but he was an apostle. Thank God he was not an elder though. To understand this is to possess the key to the understanding and explanation of much which may otherwise be obscure.

The office of elder was most treasured by the apostles; Peter and John referred to themselves as elders. It was especially dear to John, who wrote his letters as from that office; 'The Elder unto the elect lady', and 'The Elder unto the beloved Gaius'. Peter expressed it more humbly still: he was content to speak of himself as an

elder among many elders. This did not mean that John thought of himself more highly than he ought to think, or as being superior to Peter. It was just that he wanted to be thought of as an elder rather than be known and called by (what seems to be) the more spectacular title of apostle.

There is a greater difference between the two titles than the words themselves may at first convey. Apostle has most to do with personal relationship to Jesus Christ; elder has more to do with the Church. A man chosen to be an apostle of Jesus Christ is elected to function on the earth in the highest degree of likeness to Jesus Christ; he has most to do with the Lord's avowed intention to build His Church in the earth.

When a man is made an elder, he is not spoken of as 'an elder of Jesus Christ'; he is an elder of the Church. His role is governmental and is related more to the Church in its kingdom of God aspect on earth than in its concept as the body of Christ. He is of course a member of that body, and is as devoted to Jesus Christ as any apostle. Indeed he cannot be an elder unless he is, but his office and authority is directed to the rule of God's spiritual estate on earth, viz. the kingdom of heaven.

Peter tells elders to 'feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof'. Paul also tells the Ephesian elders to 'feed the church of God'. In each case the word used is 'feed as a shepherd'; they are being instructed to 'pasture' or pastor the sheep, and the exhortation is spoken in context of the kingdom of God. When the risen Christ dealt with Peter on the shores of Tiberias, it was in order to prepare him for eldership, so the reiterated command to Peter was to feed the sheep and lambs of His flock.

Peter had been an apostle for three years and had ended up by denying his oft-confessed Master; now he must be taught his new calling — the fisherman must become the shepherd. The apostle must be made an elder; boat and net must be exchanged for rod and staff, sea must be forsaken for land, and fish for sheep. Apostle he would remain, but with the departure of Jesus, solid rule and dependable guidance must be provided for the flock which was to be gathered into the Church when the Holy Ghost was outpoured. Apostleship to Jesus must develop into foundation stone in the Church, or he would not be Peter; he must become under-shepherd to his Overlord, and look after the sheep for Him.

When the sheep were gathered and the Church founded and formed, it was soon recognised among them that Peter and his fellow-apostles were of the right calibre to be their shepherd-elders. The seed of it all germinated on the day of Pentecost, bursting forth with the cry, 'Men and brethren what shall we do?' Those people acknowledged and recognised superiority of knowledge and experience, they were attracted by the spiritual life and singularity of purpose they saw in those men; their eldership was assured unto them. Whether or not it was immediately recognised as a spiritual office, elect of God among them, we do not know.

The use of the word elder in connection with the Church is not found in the Bible until Acts 11, verse 30. Apostles are referred to, so also are 'the twelve', and so are the seven servants, now known as deacons, but nowhere does the word elder occur in the opening chapters. It is highly likely that the office, as distinct from apostleship, was created and filled among them somewhere between the events of chapter 6 and chapter 10. Necessity as well as design would have compelled them to do it; the one Church had developed into many churches; growth was the decisive factor. Localisation of government became imperative; little flocks were springing up everywhere; even Samaria was now the seat of a church. The apostle-elders of Jerusalem could not be everywhere at once, something had to be done.

However, necessity was not so overwhelmingly great that emergency or expediency became the ruling element in the Church. By means not directly stated, God elected elders in local churches, creating the office to function distinctly from apostleship. From that point onward the word 'apostle' or 'the twelve' gradually drops out of the book, while the word 'elders' remains and increases. This is not to be made to mean that the apostles were eliminated from the Church, but that the period of rule by exclusive apostle-elders was passing away. De-centralization was taking place; the Church was becoming international in its outreach, and God did not want it to be conformed to Jewish patterns or under the control of Jews only.

Sin and world-conformity excepted, the churches must be allowed to develop according to their national and local setting. As this expansion extended, elders were appointed to supervise in the new churches and serve them in the Spirit of God, teaching them to edify themselves and build up the body of Christ in love. Their business was to see that men and women did not conform to this world or get caught up in the spirit of the

age, or absorbed by the particular kingdom of this world into which they had been originally born.

The government of the kingdom of Christ and of God is upon His shoulder, and those born anew into it must live under His authority and eldership in the churches. Obviously then, men who hold high office must be of good report among the churches, even as the original seven servants of the church at Jerusalem were in their day. 'Men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom' — this was the fundamental qualification for office in the beginning. Can it be less today?

[3] Having a Good Report (b) with God.

In addition to the foregoing, an elder must also obtain a good report from God. In Hebrews 11 we are told that this is only procurable by the faith to which the writer is referring. He has in mind and puts into writing a series of anecdotes about national heroes and heroines whose faith could be seen in their attitudes, actions and works. This kind of faith is not: (1) credal faith — that is a statement or recitation of beliefs; (2) a compilation of dogmatic, theological tenets, or a received doctrine; (3) a confession, or treatise regarded as a complete compendium of truth called 'The Faith'. These all may have a place and perhaps he alludes to them in an earlier chapter when telling us all to hold fast the confession of our faith without wavering, but that is not what is under consideration here.

The concern of God here is example rather than precept, for as we know that is by far the better part of truth. From Abel downwards throughout history these elders of faith are spoken of in connection with specific works. The record does not speak so much of what they believed as of what they did; Abel offered, Noah built, Abraham obeyed and went out, and so on. Each of them believed something of course; that is why their names are in this chapter, but what did they believe? 'Abraham believed God' we are told; there was no received doctrine to believe. And believing God, he obeyed Him and ultimately received the things that proceeded from God through that belief, and so it is with us also. These names are not there because of the creeds they held, but because they pleased God by doing what they did. That is the most important thing; He calls that 'Faith'.

It is most important that we understand this, so God has given His good report of these people; it comprises the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. By faith we understand, by faith we obey, by faith we worship and work and walk. Because God expects this kind of thing from us all equally, it is an absolutely essential qualification for eldership. Beyond ordinary good works which all must do, an elder must be distinguished by special faith and works; 'whose faith follow' the Spirit says. If a man has this faith, it will be noticed and spoken of in the church of which he is a member. This is the modern counterpart of that which is reported in scripture; it is God's good report of a man.

Without this, a man may not be an elder, for in order to fulfill his calling he must be able to pray the prayer of faith for the needs of others. Therefore he must be well reported of, for unless he has this reputation, how shall he be trusted by others when need arises? Beyond personal faithfulness, which has to do with character, he must have productive faith revealed by active fruitful works; added to this he must have procuring faith also, obtaining a good report from God. All this is so because of the principle of life which governs all. It must be true of him, as it was of a great elder before him, that from a man as good as dead an innumerable multitude of faithful seed shall be born. All who spring from this faith will enter into abundance of life in which the promises of God are fulfilled. An elder must not only have a shepherd heart, he must have a father heart also.

Secondly, the man who is elected to any position of responsibility in the Church of Jesus Christ must recognise that the office holds purchasing power. By the phrase 'position of responsibility' is meant an office created in the Church by Christ because it has first been held by Him. Basically all official positions in the Church were first held by Him as head or first in the body. Promotions to office are nothing other than gracious inclusions into His ministries to His Church; eldership is special favour granted with purpose, enabling men to share with Him in the administration of His kingdom. Any person so honoured must hold the position in trust, for it is given in Jesus' name; it is an authorisation from God.

All other positions which may be regarded as official, such as secretary or treasurer, young people's leader, Sunday School superintendent, women's this or men's that or the other are not offices created by God as being necessary to His Church. They may be useful and beneficial, even in the same way as committees or communities or 'boards' have a use, but they are not elect offices in the Church. God does not need a

secretarial staff, nor does He employ a treasurer, and so we could go on. Nevertheless, when on earth the Lord, who Himself was apostle, evangelist, pastor, teacher, prophet, elder, deacon and a member of the body of the whole Godhead, did use a treasurer — Judas.

Properly to use and fill the offices of God set in the body of Christ is to court respect, honour, gratitude and praise from Him as did Jesus when on earth. To be honoured of Jesus' Father is to have attained unto the highest possible position and greatest reward. God's 'well done, good and faithful servant' must mean more than anything else to a child of God. 'Purchasing a good degree', though it is spoken of in connection with the office of a deacon, holds true over the whole field of office-bearing.

Election to eldership is no different from election to the diaconate or to apostleship. There is no order of merit in God's selection. He selects men and gives them pounds or talents or gifts and offices according to their several abilities. The fact that apostles are named first in a list of men holding office is simply that they are foundational in the structure of the Church or churches. In this God is revealing order, not preference.

Every man chosen by the Lord is preferred by Him for the particular office in which he is to function. If he is to be an elder, he is equipped by the Lord to be one; if an apostle or a prophet, he is likewise equipped, and so on throughout the whole range of offices for service in His Church. The degree which is purchased is the qualification required by God for the bestowal of position, office or service in the New Creation. Faithful service in the discharge of office on earth fits a man for power and authority on the new earth. The words 'well done, good and faithful servant' are a reward in themselves for which we all should be glad enough to live and work and serve in this life. However in the parable they only presage other words such as 'enter into the joy of thy Lord', or again, 'be thou over ten cities', (or five or two cities as the case may be).

It is as though this present world of service is 'God's university' in which the saints have to learn and earn and pass their degrees. They must obtain a good report from God, and commendation from Him for having earned their degree. An elder must thoroughly understand this — he must not let anyone take his crown, or rob him of his reward. He must use his office for the glory of God, realising the honour given him and the trust placed in him by the Lord, that he should rightly portray the eldership of God in the Church. He must also bear in mind that all positions in the body of Christ, including that of ordinary members, is by election.

Not only are offices rewardable; membership is rewardable also. That God has not appointed a person to eldership or some recognised office does not mean that he or she is automatically disqualified from reward. Each in his position has equal opportunity of reward and crowning. Christlikeness at all levels, whether apostle, elder, deacon or member, and faithfulness to and in the calling, is what God requires of all. Calling is from God, so are election and appointment. No man chooses himself. The question 'what hast thou that thou hast not first received?' could be answered — 'nothing worth anything in the kingdom of God'.

4 — ASPECTS OF THE ANOINTING

[1] Priesthood

In a measure far superior to that which Moses knew, the Spirit of priesthood, mediation and headship is upon Jesus for ever. This same anointing is placed by God upon every man who is elected to eldership by Him in His Church, and it is essential that an elder understands the ground upon which he holds office, for unless he does so he cannot know and properly fulfill his calling. He must appreciate that the entire company among whom he has been selected to serve is a kingdom of priests. This was so in Israel after the flesh and it is more so in Israel after the Spirit.

In Israel of old elders and priests were of separate tribes, and followed different callings. Priests were not then called to function as elders outside the Tabernacle among the people in general; they had a special and higher ministry altogether than the elders chosen from other tribes. This ministry, by its very nature, constituted every priest an elder in a sense far superior to those others. Even so, greater still, Aaron was the elder-priest over all his sons. By nature he was their father, and by virtue of this was priest and elder of the family, but for their official function among the larger family of Israel, Aaron's family was a company of brethren over whom he was the elder in the priesthood.

Now when Moses, Aaron's brother, originally received the Law for Israel, it was of a twofold nature: (1)

written by God on the tablets of stone, (2) written by Moses in a book. To these were later added the first manuscripts of the whole Bible. The tablets were placed and kept in the Ark out of the reach of everyone. Their privacy was inviolable, the existence of the nation depended upon that. Moses' own writings however were committed into the custody of the priests, and kept in safety in the Tabernacle. Eventually, therefore, the priests, beside being the ministers of the altar, also became the teachers of the people, teaching the laws of which they were the custodians.

From this arose Paul's admonition to the Church that an elder must be apt to teach. So we see that the elders of Israel held a position secondary to the priesthood. In common with all men, they first had to bring their offerings to the priests, who representatively presented them to God. This done, they then had to administer rule to the people according to the Law, the precepts, the judgements and the ordinances kept under the guardianship of the priests. The ordinary elders were a direct link between people and priest in all matters pertaining to correct behaviour and discipline.

Differently from that however, in common with every other member of the New Covenant, Church elder and priest are one. This is not the same as saying that every priest is an elder. It does, however, mean that what an elder says or does in his office must spring from the faithful discharge of the higher calling to which every child of God is elected. Everything he does as an elder must function as from and secondary to and part of the more important general priesthood, and be executed with a view to the promotion of this eternal ministry to which all are called. Sacrifice and offering unto God must be his ultimate objective in making all judgments, for that is everyone's primary duty. Unless his judgments are given in full knowledge of this, expressly for the purpose that the life of sacrifice and offering should continue and increase in the church he serves, he has failed completely.

As an instance of this, let us consider an illustration used by the Lord in course of uttering His Beatitudes and developing His teaching from them. With shrewd insight He propounds a hypothetical situation in which a man brings his gift to the altar and there remembers that his brother has something against him. In that event, says the Lord, the man must forbear to go through with his intended sacrifice; 'leave thy gift by the altar' He says, 'first go and be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift'.

In a later chapter the Lord again uses this same theme of reconciliation and develops His teaching: this time He speaks of winning the brother. The possibility of estrangement consequent upon losing a brother is a very important matter to Jesus — it must not happen in His kingdom. Let us suppose that this situation had arisen in a local church and that the elders had been called on to give judgment on the matter. Would not their judgment have been the same as that of Jesus? Undoubtedly it would; there must be repentance, reconciliation and restoration to brotherly love. But beyond that, and as a result of it, the gift must be finally offered upon the altar — there must be restitution to priestly function.

This is the objective of all judgment; first as proof that the reconciliation between the brethren has been effected, and secondly as the confirmation that reconciliation between each and God has been restored. Unless priesthood is re-established, judgment is unfulfilled. Other things would also surely be involved, but as these were cleared up, all would eventuate in restoration to priesthood.

Brotherhood and priesthood are inseparably joined by God, and their union must be inviolable in practice. In course of giving judgment, the end in view is not just to speak a word of wisdom, nor to apply a biblical rule; the first may be necessary, the second obligatory, but the objective is offering to God. An elder must firmly grasp this word spoken by Paul, 'that the offering up of the Gentiles may be acceptable being sanctified by the Holy Ghost'. Paul was speaking as an elder-apostle-priest. He shared with his great Elder-Apostle-High priest the knowledge that, since Christ is not an earthly priest, 'He must have somewhat to offer', which is not of an earthly order. The Lord Jesus shared with Paul His burning desire to put everyone bodily on the altar as a spiritual sacrifice unto God His Father. Every elder must be consumed with this desire also, or else he cannot hold office. He must first offer his own gift and then encourage his brethren to do likewise.

This is the primary function of the shepherd among the flock of God. He must not feed them for himself or themselves, but for this purpose alone. If he lives solely for the purpose of presenting himself a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, he will be an ensample to the flock. No man may be a shepherd unless, as Jesus the Chief Shepherd, he first is a lamb provided for sacrifice. He is then fit to urge everyone else to be and do the same, leading them to the altar. An elder must move or restore every heart to its own priestly office and

function in the body of Christ after the example of Jesus and the ensample of himself, therefore all rule and judgment must be to that end.

In Hebrews chapter 13 there are some memorable passages in which the writer charges them to be obedient to those who have the rule over them. He is referring of course to elders who are themselves under charge to give an account of their stewardship to God; theirs is an onerous position indeed. However, with the injunction to submit and obey, the Lord characteristically enough takes care to show the sheep the kind of shepherds to whom they are to submit and obey. Very purposely in verses 20 and 21 He includes information about true shepherding: 'God brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus'; God is the Shepherd, Jesus is the Lamb who has been raised in order to become in turn the Great Shepherd of all the sheep.

Therein lies the example to the whole flock, and especially to the elder-shepherds. To the flock the elders must first be ensamples — before they speak a word to teach or command, they must learn and obey this principle of all office. It is they who first of all must obey the general directive 'let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach'. The writer is making free use of his excellent knowledge of ancient and modern Hebrew history. The first seventy elders of Israel were made elders outside the camp. That is where God put the spirit of Moses upon them, and that too is where Jesus suffered — 'without the gate'; there also He died and was buried and rose again.

To be an elder worthy of the name a man must go to Jesus outside the gate, bearing His reproach without the camp. Unless he bear reproach no-one can be an elder; he must prove it by his life. Another thing he must understand and remember all his days is that God expects no-one to follow him unless he be a man of faith; the sheep are told to follow an elder's faith as well as obey his words. An elder must first believe his own words; if he has not faith to walk in his own statements, who can be expected to follow him? The end of his way of life must be 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever', or else he is false.

If he claims that Jesus Christ lives in him, an elder must furnish living evidence of it for the sheep to consider. No man or woman is obliged to follow an elder just because he is an elder, neither is a person expected to follow blindly and unquestioningly. All sheep must consider where they are being led; if the end in view is not the unchanging Jesus, if the net or gross result of the teaching and leading is not unto Him outside the gate without the camp in utter reproach, they must not follow.

[2] Mediation.

The elder's second great function under the Spirit is to be a mediator. This is a high calling indeed. He must understand that his work in jurisdiction is to mediate between God and man, and man and man in that order. He is not called to be a mere social reformer, spending his life adjudicating between man and man, patching up quarrels; his ministry is of a far higher order than that. He must be entirely given up to God, regarding all without partiality or prejudice; if he is not he has no wisdom from on high. Fully developed in his ministry, God will make him all things to all men, serving all, yet the slave of none.

When in judgment, under no conditions may he be for one against another — he must be for God for both, even if one of the parties involved happens to be of his own flesh and blood or a special friend. Jesus prayed 'that they all may be one', and Paul says, 'God is one', thereby revealing that the object of mediation is to bring together and unite in one. Mediation is based upon and governed by the truth of Reconciliation. Reconciliation is complete restoration, utterly without compromise, resulting from total elimination of the cause of offence from the heart.

Compromise on the other hand is based upon agreement to settle for less than the highest, accept the offending thing and somehow get round or bridge over it. Eldership requires wisdom here, lest it mistake the one for the other and accept a state between brethren which Jesus Christ abhors. Both parties must be ministered to in the spirit of reconciliation.

A word of wisdom from James helps us here: 'love covers the multitude of iniquities'. He is speaking with remembrance of God's Old Testament methods. Under that covenant, by a system of atonements, God covered over what could not then be eliminated because the time was not yet come. But when He sent His Son to Calvary He removed sin altogether. Behold then the patience and longsuffering of God; He was prepared to wait for the fullness of time and judge nothing until then; Jesus' death was retroactive. At the time

God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them'.

A very real element of this redemptive attitude and purpose must be in every elder or he cannot mediate truth properly. God in him must deal with the trespasses of the offending parties and resolve and remove them. This may well entail a degree of suffering on the elder's part — he must not shirk it. Perhaps for a period nothing may be done about certain matters because the fullness of time has not come. Love may have to cover the trouble for a while longer yet. Maybe also in some instances Paul's words to Timothy must be an elder's received advice, 'some men's sins go before to judgment and others' follow after'. It is better to leave some things alone until the judgment of that great day. Finality of judgment belongs to God.

When dealing with brethren, a mediating elder is never of one; he must not be partial. Each party in a dispute is brother to him and to the other, and must be treated as such with strict impartiality. God is one, and each of the brethren is His son and God is in him, therefore they must, without delay, become absolutely one by reconciliation. That is the whole point of mediation. In making man one with God, Jesus Christ became each and both — He was God/Man. So also an elder must become each and both; union must be achieved through the judging elder. Therefore an elder is required to be dead to sin and self that he might live unto God only. Failure at this point will render him unfit to rule, for he will be unable to pronounce with power on certain subjects. Only through his own calvary shall life come to others in the matter. That is the spirit of mediation in which an elder must live and function; without it he cannot hold office.

Since this spirit is the Spirit in which we all are baptized, an elder must have a double portion of it. The ancient elders were already sons of Israel; by their anointing they became elder brothers; that is they received the double portion which always went with the inheritance of the firstborn or elder son. With that they functioned as having twice as much as their brothers and sisters. In the New Covenant everyone born of God inherits jointly with Jesus the firstborn, so with the basic inheritance common to all, plus the extra gifts that go with the office, an elder has quite sufficient for effective ministry. Therefore should one or each of the parties refuse to be reconciled, the elder must not give up his aim. He must wait God's time and take any opportunity which presents itself to bring the brethren together.

[3] Headship.

The third great aspect of the anointing for eldership is that of headship. This has more to do with kingly authority and rule than with judgment. Headship has to do with kings' courts and crown and sceptre rather than law courts and scales and sword. Elders are heads over a local church in much the same way as Christ is Head over His Church universal. In common with all offices instituted by Christ, headship is more a required condition than an acquired position. Unless this or the potential for it be found in any man, he is not an elder, nor can he be, and to elect him to such a position is anti-Christ.

An elder directly stands for Christ in sacred trust to discharge His superior authority and absolute Lordship over His Church. Great care must be exercised in this, lest man's counterfeit authoritarianism be mistaken for God's genuine authority; these are contrary one to the other. Remember Peter's word, 'neither as being lords over God's heritage.

Of old, elevation to office was almost always ceremoniously displayed by pouring oil upon the head. Office-bearing is always associated with headship, hence the significance of the ministration; it was as the bestowal of an extra crown upon the crown of the head. It was a sign of approval signifying the gift of authority from on high, a prize from God of rare worth.

The elders of Israel were not elevated to office by outward anointing though; their exaltation was by the direct oncoming of the same spirit which was upon Moses. In their case the symbol was dispensed with (perhaps for the reason that it only signified one aspect of the ministry of the exalted Christ), but when it happened they were recognised immediately for what they were. We have no means of testing their experience, or to what degree of headship they attained, but there is nothing to prevent us from coming to an understanding of all that is meant by headship in New Testament eldership.

The head is the most glorious and impressive member of the body. By its very position it is the most exalted member of all. In it reside all faculties governing knowledge and experience; it is the seat of the central control of intelligent life. No other member shares with it in this — the head is unique. We could dispense with other

body-members, such as legs and feet and toes and arms and hands and fingers, and still live, but we cannot lose our heads and live.

Apropos this, it is a well-attested fact that people who lose limbs by amputation or accident, upon occasions feel as though the limb was still there, though it may have long since been removed. This has to do with brain and nerves; and sometimes temperatures, impressions, memories, feelings also may effect this. The lost member still belongs to the mind of the head, although for some reason it may have ceased to be a part of the body.

In the head reside the organs of sight, hearing, speech, taste, smell; therein also resides the centre and power of thought, imagination, decision and many other associated abilities vital to mobility and proper enjoyment of life. The head interprets to the person what is actually going on in and around (or is thought to be the feelings of) every part of the body. It also bears the face, which openly expresses on its features the underlying character of the individual — what a wonderful member is the head!

We see then all that is implicit in and is meant by headship, and in what eldership consists. It is nothing other than the authority and lordship of Christ vested in a man, that he may rule among his brethren in Christ's name. Authority in this office is granted by the bestowal of all the powers associated with the head. Eldership is majestic, glorious, powerful, wise, firm, clear, balanced, intelligent, tasteful, sensitive, decisive, imaginative, thoughtful. It is the open face of God, the clear outshining of the untroubled deeps of the Lord, the expression of inward consistency. In his order and measure an elder in his headship must be clear-eyed in oversight, open eared to the voices of the flock, authoritative in decision, sensitive to truth. He must feel for others, have the mind of Christ, speak His word, and represent to the Church the many virtues of the Lord.

Headship is demonstrable by exercise of authority and must express itself by just rule administered in grace. As well as being the sceptred hand and the crowned head in the local church, eldership is unlimited grace. What manner of man an elder must be in all lowliness of mind, humility, godliness and power!

The dangerous snare of authoritarianism must be avoided though. The spirit that seeks to dominate is not of God and has no part in His kingdom. Authoritarianism and officiousness are twin evils having their roots in pretence; they are blustering weakness and boastful pride. Uncrucified self operates them as substitutes for the authority and power it does not possess. The objective is unlawful control over the Church of God by brute force. The man who seeks to induce admiration for himself in his office has completely failed to grasp the fact that the head of every man is Christ; he must learn that each member has to hold the head, not the elder. Usurpation of Christ's unique position of direct headship and authority over every member is inexcusable; grasping at Christ's personal ministry is idolatry and has caused many an elder to fall. This is a trespass against the Lord's sovereignty, and must be repented of.

Paul, the Gentiles' first apostle-elder, said he did not have dominion over any man's faith. Except under direct inspiration from God, he never spoke in commandment to anybody, but gave his advice as one who had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. An elder must ever keep humble in heart so that he does not intrude into a man's private life with God; in his office he must be unobtrusive. He must respect and honour each individual's personal relationship with his Lord.

This anointing of threefold power and authority is not a substitute for the Christ; on the contrary it is the anointing of His presence among His people as priest, mediator and head. Moreover, coupled with prophecy, as it was in the original elders, it gives ability to speak words of wisdom and knowledge straight from God; making an elder, God makes a prophet too. By this means people come to rest, assured of receiving mature truth they can trust and upon which they can act. Prophetic ministry is indispensable to the office of eldership — no man ought to be considered for the office unless he possesses the ability.

[4] Counsel.

A man's chiefest claims to eldership lie in recognition of these basic qualities of life and gift, but it does not lie only in these; the position requires of a man that he be able to give counsel also. Elders are counsellors; they must therefore have the confidence of the people. As this cannot be commanded of men, it must be won by the elder himself. No man can appoint himself someone else's confidant; indeed if he is appointed of God he has no need to do so. If the Spirit of Christ rests permanently upon a man he is obviously anointed of the Lord

unto a ministry of some kind, and will speedily commend himself to others' consciences.

This was the case with the Lord and His apostle-elders. John Baptist clearly stated that he had been told by God that the Son of God was He upon whom he should see the Spirit of God descending and remaining, so John kept on with his ministry of water baptism until what God had said happened. He saw the Spirit of God descend in bodily shape like a dove upon Jesus and remain on Him, and God's servant bare record saying, 'this is the Son of God'.

[5] Permanency

God does not install any man into office except by permanent anointing. Temporary moving of the Spirit on a person for occasional operations of gifts is not to be mistaken for anointing to permanent office. The symbol of the Holy Ghost in ministerial anointing is the dove. Alighting without fear upon quiet, undisturbed resting-places, it is most sweet and tender and gentle. Permanence rather than power is the prime feature of anointing, and its surest indication, but even so it is not a fluttering, fluctuating thing.

Quiet, restful, gentle men, full of inner strength, without pride or boastfulness, are God's choice for eldership. These are easily entreated, openly approachable, lowly in spirit, full of understanding and faith, with the stamp of Jesus Christ about them. They must be available at all times, free from themselves, utterly devoted to their calling, without fear, able to minister to the sick and poor and needy, servants of all.

An unmistakable degree of permanence is one of the most important features of anointing to office. It cannot be too strongly stated that without this a man is most certainly not elected of God. Deeper than minor blemishes, there is some major flaw in a man's makeup if he is not permanently anointed of God; its absence indicates that he has been passed over for office by the Lord because of the defect.

One of the more distressing errors extant in these days is the notion that everything lies in the anointing; it does not. Before a man is anointed of God for New Testament ministry he has to be approved of Him. This is easily demonstrated from scripture in no less a person than Jesus Himself. When His anointing was accomplished in Jordan, it was openly attested to by His Father, and accompanied by the descent of the dove. God announced very clearly, 'this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased'. The anointing was the seal of God's good pleasure; not so much the good pleasure He had purposed in Himself from all eternity, though connected with it, but His total pleasure with His Son for His past thirty years of human life. The anointing did not bestow God's good pleasure; it was bestowed because of that good pleasure. Jesus' life fitted Him for the anointing; the anointing did not fit Him for life. It fitted Him for His ministry in the sense of equipment for public service, but His life fitted Him for the office. He had 'arrived' at full stature; now He could function in His well-deserved office in power and authority, with full paternal approval before all men.

[6] Scope.

Thirdly an elder must thoroughly grasp the fact that his call and promotion to office is primarily in the Church of Jesus Christ, not just in the local church. This is very closely linked with the foregoing section and may be illustrated by a further reference to the first seventy elders chosen by the Lord in the Old Covenant. Those men were the elders of the whole Israel of God then present. They were not chosen to serve their families, or just a small company, or even a tribe of their fellows, but all the race. Presumably they would have been given local spheres of service among their brethren, and been made responsible to and for a certain group. They could only have operated in a limited area to a limited number of people at a time, but their election was not just to those people, be they many or few, but to all Israel. They shared a common, simultaneous anointing to the whole body. They were not of an individualistic or party spirit; they were given of one Spirit, that their ministry should be inter-family, inter-tribal and intermediary.

Likewise with present-day elders; they may function in a local setting to a certain number of people, but their office and loyalty are in and unto the whole Church. Although their particular ministry may be quite localized to a few people in a tiny sphere, its effect is in and to the whole body of Christ, and rendered to Christ its head. Their concern must be rightly to represent and serve Him, doing as He would in the Church, ministering and discharging their duties in His name in the local situation. God's gifts and calling are quite without repentance on His part, and unless a man by sin forfeits his office, he is elected for life with a view to eternity.

Therefore, wherever he is, an elder is always an elder.

The idea that a man may be an elder in one place and not in another is entirely without scriptural foundation and quite foreign to spiritual principle. It is altogether the same as saying that a child of God is a child of God in one place and not in another. Unless forfeiture be imposed by God because of persistent failure on the part of the person called, everything in everybody involved in the callings of God is permanent. This is because calling is unto the body and not to a group of members of the body.

A man cannot deny his calling to eldership because he is moved from one location or group to another. Must he cease to purchase his degree and lose his boldness because of God's will to move him to another place? Was the apostle-elder, Paul, any the less an apostle-elder because he was imprisoned, or did John lose his office when placed on Patmos? The Lord does not change His mind; He chooses men according to foreknowledge, and when He installs into office He does so with predestinating intention and power.

However, although this is so, an elder must not think that he may go anywhere he will, or be moved anywhere in God's will, and be immediately accepted in that local situation in the same way and in the identical capacity he enjoyed in his late situation. In his new situation he has to re-create his ground of acceptance among men, so that he may be as well-reported of in that environment as in the former one. That he has a good report from God is not sufficient ground to demand recognition and acceptance among men who do not know him. Indeed, if he should insist upon an immediate position, he will soon lose his good report from God. If he is an elder, the fact will soon become apparent to all, for his qualities will make him outstanding in any company. If he be among his equals, speedy recognition is the more likely, so he has nothing to fear or lose by abiding God's time.

Permanent eldership however does not depend upon human recognition. It can neither be given nor taken away by man. A man is still an elder, even if men refuse to recognize him as such or allow him to be that to their group. If men's blindness and/or rebellion continue to prevent him filling a position among them, a man of God must not think he will thereby fail to fulfill his calling and thus grieve God. He need not fear; he will not lose his reward; men cannot deprive him of the prize, nor rob him of the crown of duty. He must depend entirely upon God's righteousness, and faithfully abide in the knowledge of his call, trusting God's wisdom, power and love.

God does not appoint to office for nought, and if for a time He lays aside His servant, let that man rest in God's sovereign will in the matter. Temporary suspension of activity reveals a man's quality; it will test his character, and prove his calibre. To be ignored or rejected or unrecognized can do nothing but improve a man if he abides patient in love. Let him think nothing of himself, seek nothing for himself, do nothing to rectify the position, nor fret for God's glory; God is content.

During such a period a man must pay no attention to any qualifications he may have or think he has, lest he bemoan their seeming loss to the Church and become embittered through men's folly; quality is better than qualifications. A man's gifts and ministries may only be used of God under His direction; He believes that nothing should be lost. Any attempt to attract men's attention to oneself for the sake of the gift and its proper use in the Church is a sure way to bring the gift into disrepute. This kind of behaviour displeases God, and if continued will bring to impotence and rejection from office. When a man has been placed in office by God, all true members of His Church sufficiently able to discern, and mature enough to observe, will recognize and acknowledge God's election.

It is therefore prudent of a church to move in accord with God's choice, thank Him for His grace and incorporate such a man into its function. If this is not done, by the very law of the Spirit who seeks to unite all, dissension will arise, and schismatic tendencies develop. Finally splits will occur and totally unnecessary harm be done to the body. Inevitably spiritual men will gather themselves unto their natural overseers as sheep to true shepherds, and all the arguments about unity of the faith will not prevent them from doing so, for they are keeping the unity of the Spirit.

Unity of faith can only operate where unity of Spirit is first recognized and promoted. The unity of the Spirit is a unity of spirits created among men by the Spirit of God. God is the Unity into whom regenerate men have been baptized to find and abide in unity. This can only be accomplished among men as they are fully prepared

to cast aside all man-made copies of the original, and live and die for what God has instituted.

It little matters what name a man bears in his office, so long as the ministry or work of the particular office he holds is being fulfilled. Whether a man is called a bishop or an overseer or a presbyter or an elder is inconsequential. He may even be called a deacon when he ought to bear any one of the other four names, but it matters not; for not the name he bears, but the office he fills before God and the ministry he wields among men is the important thing.

Until those seven men of the early Church were elected to what is termed 'the diaconate' the apostles were doing the work themselves. Paul calls himself 'the deacon (Gk.) of Jesus Christ'; every one of the apostles of Jesus Christ was an apostle-elder-deacon. The office of deacon was only created and men elected to it because the apostles needed to be relieved of their overburdensome load, that is all.

Nevertheless there seems little sense in discarding scriptural names in preference for others of man's choice, for God's names are callings; they are also definitions of what He wants and what He gives. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, elders, deacons are precisely what their names indicate. If men call their fellows by these names when they are not what the name declares, they speak falsely. The true Church will soon recognize the error, or if it be worse, unmask the deceit. Elders are elders for the same reason and by the same means and upon the same principle that the Saviour is the Saviour.

This principle of recognition and acknowledgment of God's gifts to men is an important factor in office-bearing in the Church. Therefore it is vital that every member of the Church of Jesus Christ in all the churches should know about them. Firstly it is essential to a proper understanding of the subject that everything to do with the Church is by gift from God. It all begins with the statement that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. Because Jesus Christ Himself is God's gift, everything in His Church must be of gift, for it is His body. Whatever term we may use to describe His works of grace, whether it be salvation, redemption, forgiveness, repentance, faith — what you will — each emphasizes one aspect of gift; all is by divine favour alone.

When praying to His Father about His apostles, the Lord said to Him 'thine they were and thou gavest them me'; His men were a gift to Him from Father and were exceedingly precious to Him for that reason. But we must take into account the fact that He also chose them — 'I have chosen you and ordained you', He said to them. So we have two factors operating here: (1) God's gift and (2) (the) man's choice. God never enforced His gift upon Jesus, and Jesus did not choose any who were not given Him.

Note the emphasis upon this principle of divine life and working in the affairs of the kingdom recorded in John chapter 6 — 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out'. The Father's gifts did not automatically take effect in Jesus' affairs. He had power to refuse if He wished; He could have cast out the Father's gifts, refused to recognize His Father's grace, and chosen otherwise, but He did not. Jesus chose those who had already been chosen for Him.

When the Lord ascended up on high 'He gave gifts unto men' and He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and some teachers. The Lord gives to the Church men already called and equipped by Him for office, but the churches must choose the divine/human gift for themselves. In doing so, churches must not choose according to their own will, but God's obvious will. In such an important matter as this, God's unmistakable will is clearly shown in four ways, each of which is marked out for us in the person of His Son, namely: giving, sending, sanctifying, sealing. These four features are as clearly defined in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ as they are openly stated by Him of Himself. For that reason they must also be true of every man bearing office in His name.

An elder must therefore know that he is called in order to be given and sent. So also must the Church be prepared to receive him as the gift of God, whether it be as one given direct from God, having been raised from the midst, or else having been sent to them from another district bearing the seals of his office. Note that the word 'sent' in this connection is not primarily to be understood in terms of linear measurement, though this may apply in the case of an apostle. 'Sent' refers chiefly to the election and purpose of God which cannot be measured because it cannot be comprehended by the human mind.

An elder is a man raised up in the Church and given to a church; he must never think that a church is given to

him; he must know the position truly. He is also a man 'sent' to that church from the heart of God. Such a man is at once known to all, for he will sanctify himself unto his ministry, knowing that he is already sanctified by God to fulfill an office of Christ.

In this care must be exercised to ensure that divine sanctification is not confused with human dedication. These are often mistaken one for the other, for they must co-exist — each must include the other. Many dedicated persons seriously apply themselves without ceasing to various forms of service chosen by themselves or others, yet know nothing of sanctification. Such zeal, earnest as it may be, is nothing but carnal energy; it must needs be recognized as such and rejected.

Sanctification by God unto office-bearing is appointment to a ministry under the anointing of the Spirit; it is called ordination. However, dedication must follow from and accompany ordination or the election will be in vain. When God sanctifies a man in office, that man inevitably regards his position and ministry as holy unto the Lord. He is set aside in it as a precious office of gift from God to man. An elder then must be a holy man of God, separated from sin and self-ambition, wholly given unto his ministry, an example of holiness, ready to render his account to God at any moment.

Obviously such sanctification will have its seals. Its first seal is the holy dove resting upon his lamb-like spirit; the Holy Spirit Himself is the seal. Paul writes of it as 'anointed and sealed in Christ'. At Jordan God the Father sealed the Son in office with the Spirit, and from thence He went forth as a man with a ministry sent on a mission. That is the most important factor in a man's sealing.

It leads to the second seal, namely this: the man who is sealed for the ministry must inevitably have the ministry sealed unto him. This is quite distinctly brought out for us by the apostle Paul when writing to the Corinthians — 'the seal of my apostleship are ye', he told them. God had sealed him an apostle unto Himself and the Church, and the Corinthian church was, for reasons obvious to him, the seal of his office and ministry. They were the flesh and blood proof of the invisible inward spiritual anointing — the seal of the seal. The first was the seal of God's choice and of his sealing unto office; the second was the seal of the ministry to which he was appointed in the office, and also of his faithfulness.

These things must be found in the life of every man who is called of God and chosen for an office in His Church; without them he may not long be allowed to remain in the position. Except the first two be true of him he ought not to have been recognized as holding office, and should not have been installed into it; without the second two soon becoming apparent he must be put out of office. That he is a good man is not sufficient reason for promotion to office. Every member of the Church ought to be that.

5 — ELDERSHIP AND MARRIAGE

By setting a high standard of qualification for office in the Church, the Lord has shown great wisdom. In its beginning it had almost insuperable difficulties to overcome. Great problems beset the early Church, many of which God eliminated by setting highest standards of life and attainment for elders.

Four major social problems confronted the saints: (1) Slavery, (2) Polygamy, (3) Bigamy, (4) Divorce and remarriage. The Lord dealt with the first on a far wider front than just the issues involved in promotion to office. Nevertheless it is at once obvious that in a Church awakened to spiritual values, it soon became unethical for a slave-owner to be an elder. On the other hand though, there is no reason why a slave could not continue in his slavery. Ever-increasing love of itself eliminated the human malady. But neither Paul nor Peter raised the point when writing on the subject of eldership in their famous epistles. However, they spoke freely and strongly on other issues involved in eldership.

Paul's expression, 'the husband of one wife' is a phrase of genius. It has direct bearing upon the second and third points mentioned above, and was doubtless introduced for that reason. Beyond being a clear command, the phrase also settles the matter of woman's standing in relationship to the highest governmental office in the churches. Paul does not go on to say 'or the wife of one husband as the case may be'. God has not opened the office of elder to the female; it is exclusive to the male. Should it be otherwise, God would be found to be contradicting Himself, for the office carries supreme human authority given by the Lord to the male.

There is altogether too much ignorance in the churches regarding the proper position of the female. Because in

Christ 'there is neither male nor female', but a new creation, does not mean that God has ceased to make difference between the sexes on earth. In Christ a man is not a man and a woman is not a woman. Human bodies, being yet unredeemed, are not in Christ. Spirits in Christ lose their human form and bodily relationships, and become one; we become unmarried and unsexed to anyone and everyone in favour of a new relationship altogether. In the Church which is His body we are all changed into a condition of life and form of existence which is not reproducible by man and woman. In the churches we are all in our human bodies, and still male and female made for the purposes of God; that is unalterable.

As surely as God created Adam the male first, He did it with intention, embracing all future priorities in governmental realms among living persons. We do not know what we shall be in the new creation; we do however know what we are now. God's order and wishes and commandments must be respected and obeyed. He does not change the human order by changing spiritual forms of existence. Paul's commandments are to human beings, and are given to churches of males and females, not the Church of Jesus Christ in its spiritual unity and form as His body.

Examination of the context in which the words 'house' and 'church' are used in 1 Timothy 3, reveals Paul's meaning. He thoroughly understood the difference between the Church and the churches. So also did every member of the Church in every church. He had no need to explain this difference to Timothy, nor to exhort him to explain it to the Ephesians — they all understood what he meant and to which company he referred.

In verse 5 he is plainly speaking of man ruling a family in his own house. To be able to do so is evidently regarded as a necessary qualification for rule in the church (note: church not Church; men do not rule in the Church which is Christ). Here a man's house is paralleled with the local church made up of male and female as is an ordinary family. Paul then proceeds in verse 15 to use the same language and ideas when talking of the saints' corporate behaviour in their gatherings. Again he is speaking of the local church, not the Church.

Each church is God's house over which He rules through elders. In the Church universal He reigns alone, He has not ordained eldership of human beings to rule in that body. Every man in the body of Christ is directly responsible to Him, He is the Elder. No man, whatsoever office he may hold, may interfere with or seek to interfere with or seek to interpose himself between any member and his Head. Failure to see or refusal to receive this truth has wrought much havoc in souls, and brought confusion to the churches. Male elders are ordained to rule over all females and other males only in the churches.

Paul links this with revelation of the great mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. (Note the careful use of the small 'g' for godliness and the capital for God, denoting the translators' proper use of grammar and perfect understanding of truth.) God was manifest in the flesh as a man, not a woman. God is never spoken of in the feminine gender, but always in the masculine. This is the ground of His election; it has been that way from the beginning and is unalterable.

Paul was not speaking of behaviour in the Church, but in the church. That the two are linked is irrefutable, but it is plain that the whole epistle is an instruction in behaviour and procedure in the local churches. The people of the local church are the house in which God dwells in a particular place. Because of His presence and under His rule men are ordained to office in the capacity of elder brethren.

If God permitted females to be made elders, it would be a declaration of total reversal of all natural order. In that event women would be appointed to rule over men with the authority of God. The inference would be that she has been permanently ordained to be his head, whereas Paul says that the man is the head of the woman. If men install women into eldership, they do so contrary to God's clearly expressed will, and her appointment is spurious and her intention wrong; she is openly usurping authority over the male. Paul said by the Spirit, 'I suffer not a woman to teach or usurp authority over the man'.

Usurpation does not lie only in the woman's unlawful grasping of power contrary to God's will — it lies also in the man's abdication of authority and headship. It is a repetition of the tragedy of Eden; God will not have it. The power to decide who shall hold office in a church does not reside with men, but with the Lord. God is not the author of confusion. Care must be taken here that the woman is not treated as though she were Balaam's dumb ass. Elders in a local church may give permission for their female members to use any talent or gift bestowed upon them by the Lord. But a woman may not please herself as to the time or manner of

function. In common with every member, she must work in co-operation with her elders, and at no time may she teach as being 'over' the male, but 'under' his authority.

An elder may not so abdicate his office or connive at circumventing the Lord's plain statements that he virtually hands over his teaching or ruling position to females, be they ever so gifted. He must unostentatiously retain control without authoritarianism while still encouraging the gifts or ministries of his sisters in the Lord. Tacit agreement must not be allowed to slide into permanent abdication of responsibility. An elder must rule, and rule well, or else be removed from office.

Polygamy and bigamy are no longer problems in the churches of the western hemisphere. Civil legislation has prohibited these in our lands. It would be a crime against society, as well as a sin against God, to practise either in the churches. They were rampant in the nations from which the Church was gathered, but we do not find any New Testament author writing against these practices. God met these carnal anti-social practices by simply making the rule that neither a polygamist nor a bigamist could fill any of the top offices in the Church. The phrase 'husband of one wife' safeguarded the offices of elder and deacon from protagonists of sexual excess. By this ruling the Lord long ago successfully purged these two evils from the churches; neither of them is a major problem with us today.

The fourth matter, however, is still a very live issue in the churches of the western world. This ought not to be, for Jesus is very clear in His statements about it. Naming only one reason acceptable to Him for divorce, He plainly pronounced wholeheartedly against it. Divorce and remarriage is wrong according to Him. Many arguments have been put forward to lessen the force of His words, but none have succeeded in satisfactorily altering the meaning of His Spirit. He admitted that Moses suffered divorce in Israel, but said bluntly that he only did so because of their hardness of heart. Divorce was something God allowed, but did not will. The final pronouncement given in Jewry by the great Judge raised up of God to judge all men, was not in favour of it. It is highly unlikely that what He says about it on the great and dreadful day of final judgment will be substantially different from the pronouncements He has already made; His Spirit surely remains unchanged on the subject.

The only other New Testament person who handles the problem is Paul; wisely he does not handle the thorny problem with the directness of the Lord. It appears that without exception all the apostles regarded Jesus' statements as being new age-abiding law. The familiar 'ye have heard that it was said of old time but I say unto you' was perfectly acceptable to them, and regarded as final and binding for the Church. Therefore they did not attempt to add to its spirit, or take away from its power and meaning; not one jot or tittle was altered. Paul clarifies one or two points, but does so without changing his Lord's intentions one degree.

Much has been written and millions more words spoken about these things, but the Lord's perfect will is immutable. His standards cannot change; He gave Adam the first man one wife, that is all, and says of divorce 'in the beginning it was not so'. The distinctive feature about Abraham, the father of the faithful, was that he had one wife only; his defection into concubinage wrought disaster.

The fact that other great names in scripture are associated with polygamous concubinage in no way lessens the import of Jesus' words 'in the beginning it was not so'. God allowed people to defect from His perfect will, but He did not approve of it. The Church ought not to seek to argue about words, but to understand the spirit, principles and meaning in the mind of God. As the Lord, we must go back to God's original intentions. Minds seeking justification for rebellious attitudes and disobedient actions find loopholes everywhere. Jesus does not expect His people to do this, but gladly to receive His intentions and implications as well as His expressions.

The Bible, especially the New Testament, is not a legal document any more than it is a scientific treatise, but the principles of life inscribed therein must be received by us as spiritually, morally and legally binding, even as they are scientifically sound. Paul's attitude to marriage, plainly stated, was that it is better not to marry. By this he meant primarily that a person is freer to serve God if he has no marital and family commitments and obligations. He does say, however, 'it is better to marry than to burn' (with unfulfilled desire), and also declares 'every man has his proper calling of God'. Therefore he does not enforce celibacy; indeed far from it he says, 'I will that the younger women marry'. His challenge to self-denial along these lines is generally directed to men for the gospel's sake.

This man's approach to the whole subject is modelled on the person and example of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus

was the Son of God. He lived a life of celibacy; He stood steadfast in His heart, had no necessity within Himself to marry, and had complete power over His own will. In this issue, as in all others, Jesus our Lord is the highest example of human life. As a man He made Himself a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake; as God He refused to 'marry the daughters of men', that there should be no mixing of the holy seed.

Except for the latter reason Paul could stand with his Lord, and declare his own steadfastness, freedom and power; he also chose celibacy, and made himself a eunuch for the kingdom's sake. He knew that some people could not receive nor walk after this example, as Jesus said, but he nevertheless exhorted all men to it. However, recognizing the true situation, and taking two things into consideration, he made allowance for the secondary position: (1) everyone has his proper gift and true calling of God: (2) there are very few who are not weak in this realm. It was right for him to remain celibate, but it may not be right for others. His proper gift and calling demanded that he should be single in order to devote himself exclusively to the churches for which he laboured more abundantly than they all.

With this understanding he says 'let every man have his own wife and let every woman have her own husband'. He was aware at that time of speaking by permission and not by commandment. Had he been speaking by commandment, he could have ordered nothing but the highest position: God never commands anything but that which is perfect. He does permit that which is of lesser condition though, and by commandment sets out orders for those who live within the married state. As in most other things, in marriage also there are to be found the higher and the lower positions.

Paul does not rhapsodize about the ideal state, but with realism speaks of four eventualities: (1) departure, (2) putting away, (3) bound, (4) loosed. The first presumes a marriage relationship which has broken down, so that the wife leaves her husband; in that case she must either remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. The second concerns separation — a man must not put away his wife he says; if she wishes to go he may let her do so, but she may not be put out by him.

Thirdly, marriage is to be regarded as an unbreakable bond, even though the partners to it do not live together. Any intimate relationship, whether occasional or regular, with any other person, is adulterous. Fourthly to be loosed from the bond is: (1) to be divorced, or (2) to have had the marriage annulled for some reason, or (3) to have suffered the loss through death of the partner. His overall judgment in such cases is that any persons so released should not seek remarriage. He gives his various reasons for this, chiefest of which is that the free person is better advantaged to devote his or her time more fully to the Lord's service. But he is not so much concerned over separation or divorce as about remarriage. Concerning this he does not make the forthright statements about it as does the Lord. In some aspects he is far more detailed, but in none of his commandments or judgments is there to be found one word of contradiction of the Lord's statements.

It may be possible for some to read Jesus' and Paul's words, and in the following manner construct a case for remarriage following divorce, the separated spouse being still alive. Pleading that he could not receive Jesus' word in Matthew 19 v.3-12, he could say 'I am not able to make myself a eunuch'. He could then quote Paul as saying, it is better to marry than to burn', and reason, 'my wife has departed, I am no longer under bondage, the marriage bond is broken by her departure, I am therefore free to marry again'. Paul's words 'art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife; but and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned' could then be brought in to support the position, and the case is made.

This may appear a sound enough argument that God permits remarriage, but it cannot be presented with certainty. Its weakness lies in its total disregard of the known attitude of God and the Lord's uncompromising statements. He shows that God wants marriage to be as it was in the beginning; He set the pattern 'by making one woman for one man, apparently for all time. The argument does not take into account the fact that the basis of 'the gospel is eternal love, its message is permanent reconciliation, its purpose total elimination of the great divorce; its strength lies in patience, its fame in longsuffering, and its success in endurance.

God, who allows divorce among His people for specified reasons, did not write out a bill of divorcement because of Israel's adultery against Himself, and only unwillingly permitted it for them on the grounds of hard-heartedness. Separation He allows within the bond of marriage; He allowed it within the bond of His marriage to Israel, but it is not permanent, so it is not divorce, else there could be no salvation.

God's method is to set the highest standard for Himself and man, make Himself the example of it, exhort

people to attain unto it, and give the greatest rewards to those who do so. This is what He did when He said through Paul, 'the husband of one wife'. He did not go on to say 'at a time', for this would presuppose the ratification of divorce and remarriage as the norm for the Church. This is why Paul saw separation and divorce as a reason for a person to become a eunuch and remain unmarried.

Seeing that Paul was legislating for all the saints with a view to the highest positions in the churches, to have said or implied or allowed people to think he meant 'one wife at a time' would have laid the offices open to all sorts of abuse. The present permissive state of society facilitates easy divorce; it does not recognize sacred vows. The world has legalized the breaking of marriage on grounds contrary to the mind and word of God. A man may therefore have as many wives as he desires, providing he has only one at a time. In respect of marriage, an elder must live an exemplary life; Paul's cautionary word must not be misconstrued. He was not saying that the highest positions in the churches are to set forth this kind of legalized polygamy.

Marriage was instituted by God to set forth true unity, love, faithfulness, loyalty, patience, longsuffering, compassion, trust and mutual understanding. Elders are to be chosen with this in mind; they may not, by the simple contrivance of divorce and remarriage, have as many wives as they choose, one at a time. If the spirit of God's word is misunderstood and misinterpreted or ignored, all sorts of irregularities could be substituted for His original intentions. 'The husband of one wife' could even be made to mean that a single or celibate man could not be an elder, which idea is an absolute absurdity. Yet upon the face of it, this is how the phrase could be misinterpreted and rigorously applied to the exclusion of men like the very apostle who wrote the instructions.

Paul was both an elder and a self-made eunuch for the kingdom, and without question this is the highest state of life from which to administer eldership. Jesus, the Head of the Church, was Himself that, but celibacy was not enforced on the Church. It is high, who can attain unto it? But in opening the office to men of lesser calling and attainments, the Lord did not intend it should be filled with those who have lived contrary to the Spirit of the Covenant.

Churches wishing to maintain the highest standards of the Church must understand that, however gifted or godly, or otherwise talented or suited a person may be, he has disqualified himself from this office if he openly breaks the spirit of marriage or reconciliation. If according to civil law he is divorced against his wishes, he is blameless; he had no power to prevent it; let him hold office. But if he remarries while his wife is still alive, he must forfeit his position. He has not by the marriage suddenly lost his ability to rule the church well, but from his position of headship he has projected a wrong picture of the Lord. He has considered it well and made his choice; he has not sinned so much as shown and fulfilled desires and intentions contrary to the Head he represents. By remarriage he has openly confessed that he has regard more to his own physical needs than to the church's spiritual welfare, and if allowed to remain in office, testifies thereby that the Lord promotes and rewards that spirit.

By the phrase 'the husband of one wife' the Lord has declared His own faithfulness and eternal intention to remain faithful. In order rightly to display Him and describe His attitude to the Church it could be written with this addition 'for ever', for this is His Spirit and how it was in the beginning. Neither Paul nor Jesus was legislating for the world but for God's people and His Church. Except that we must not add to scripture and that marriage is only for this life, Paul might easily have written 'the husband of one wife for ever', for undoubtedly that is the Spirit of God in this matter.

If this should be considered a harsh judgment from God, let His dealings with Moses be an ensample to us. Upon one occasion, under great duress, Moses smote a rock in Horeb with the result that life-giving water gushed out. It was a miracle. The needs of the people were satisfied; they were saved from death; their strivings ceased; that was exactly what God wanted apparently; the operation was a complete success, but because of it Moses was deprived of leadership and forfeited the promised land to which he had been marching for forty years.

It seems unfair that so gracious a man, deserving mention in Hebrews 11 as a man of faith, should be so rejected by God, but he was. The reason for this is as stated above: he had given to the people a totally wrong concept of the Lord. He disobeyed the word of God, and broke in principle a fundamental truth regarding the cross of Christ and the supply of the Spirit. Moses held a most responsible position in which he was entrusted to reveal the Lord to the people; the situation was grave; God did not hesitate. Moses did not forfeit heaven for

his folly; he did not lose his eternal salvation; he did forfeit his temporal office in Israel, God's 'church in the wilderness' though.

The beneficial result of his action was seemingly all that mattered to carnal Israel; it fully met their pressing bodily need, nevertheless he was out of God's order, for it denied eternal spiritual truth. Moses did not break the law he had given, nor fall into open sin, neither did he fail of his ability to rule or teach the people or perform miracles; he completely and irrevocably acted contrary to the principles of God and eternal life. Therefore he was deprived of his office; that was that.

It is precisely for this same reason that a man who remarries while his spouse is living ought to be debarred from any office he holds in the Church and certainly deposed from eldership. Although there is a very great dissimilarity between Moses' defection and divorce and remarriage, (especially divorce for the purpose of remarriage) there is none between the reasons for God's rulings on both. It does not matter how fruitful or full of success a man's ministry may have been, or how blessed his remarriage may appear to be, or that he can still perform miracles, or that living water seems to flow from him still. These are not God's criteria for judgment; if a man irrevocably defects from basic principles governing the aspect of the eternal life his office and ministry is given him to display, he must suffer the consequences. Forgiveness for any sin or errors of judgment involved in it there surely is, but honour from God for it there surely is not. The example is wrong.

The whole subject of divorce and remarriage must be viewed through the eyes of Christ. In the last analysis Jesus' words on this or any subject are the final pronouncement on the matter. They are unambiguous and not uttered without taking into consideration the effect they would have on the Church. Not only has the Church been searched by His statements, the whole of Christendom has been affected by them. At the time He was commenting on Jewish practices supposedly grounded on Mosaic law, but He showed that instead of this, they were based on misinterpretations of it. He said that except for the cause of fornication, divorce was not allowed, and that remarriage while the divorced former partner was alive was adultery.

Moses allowed divorce in Israel. The bill of divorcement was regarded as annulment of the marriage and responsibility for the divorced wife thereby ceased; so also did cohabitation. But Jesus said this was only because of their stony hearts, and nowhere does He or the scriptures say marriage is thereby dissolved. According to Jesus it is not: the implications of what He said are that the marriage still exists in God's sight. This is the only ground on which He could say remarriage is adultery. Putting away a spouse by divorce does not annul a marriage; it must only be regarded as permanent separation.

In God's eyes marriage is not by union in flesh, but by vow. How can divorce annul a vow? Couples may cease to live together and discontinue all relationships, but they cannot annul their vows taken before God. Therefore the expressions 'my former wife', 'my former husband' are anomalous; wives and husbands are not made by flesh union, but by exchange of heartfelt promises freely given to each other as unto God.

The record of the unique conception of Jesus Christ illustrates this perfectly. Joseph, a just man, 'not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her (Mary) away privily'. But the angel said to him 'fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife', when as yet she was only espoused to him. The vow they had made to each other or which had been accepted in each other's behalf by some relative on either side, was regarded as binding. The virgin Mary was not yet Joseph's wife in flesh, but was regarded both by God and man as being so, though not actually married to him.

Jesus was correcting the decadent attitude toward marriage which had crept into Israel. Throughout their history they had suffered many national defeats and had been carried away captive to other lands; even then, though living in their own land, they were under bondage to the Romans. From their successive captors and oppressors they had learned and adopted many things abhorred by God. Practices obnoxious in His sight had become acceptable in their eyes, not the least of these being marriage customs. Herod their king had been rebuked by John Baptist because he had his brother Philip's wife living with him as though she were his. The Romans had forbidden the Jews to apply capital punishment to anyone, so those who practised pre-marital fornication could not be stoned, neither could anyone who was taken in adultery.

By reason of Israel's sin, God's law had been brought into disrepute; in many points it was openly flouted and disobeyed. When Jesus spoke His word on the matter, He had in mind eternal realities. He was not only pronouncing on the present conditions, but also declaring His uncompromising attitude toward original truth,

and legislating for the future Church. He does not expect us to seek to find a way around His words — the New Covenant is not in word but in Spirit. What Babylon or Rome thought or legislated on the matter made no difference to Him — He spoke God's mind.

Similarly what modern governments legislate about marriage is immaterial to eternal truth; what do they know about that? When Jesus said 'as it was in the beginning', He was revealing the perfect will of God. He who is the Beginning and the Ending has spoken the first and last word on the subject, 'it was not so'. That should be sufficient for the churches, and elders above all men should accept it. If they wish to act contrary to it they should admit to breaking the spirit of the words, and breaking with the Spirit of truth on the point. To do so is tantamount to, and should be regarded as, serving notice of resignation upon grounds of unfitness.

The early Church understood Jesus' attitude perfectly. When Paul wrote a letter to the church at Rome, the seat of world dominion and authority, he included in it a short section using the figure of marriage to illustrate deep and important spiritual truth. He was very wise. He did not inveigh against the authority invested by God in 'the powers that be'. He knew that in many cases they abused their office and accepted and practised abominable things against God and His laws, but he also knew the principle of power greater than these powers that be, viz. 'the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus'. He said it had made him free from the law of sin and death that he should not walk after the flesh but after the Spirit. Therefore, skilfully avoiding an open declaration against Roman law, he revealed the truth for every believing eye to see.

He opens his seventh chapter with as wholehearted a statement upon the subject as it is possible to find; 'I speak to them that know law', he says, and commences with an assertion that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives. Saying so, he has already made his point; the marriage figure which follows is only the illustration of it. His reasoning is clear; everything is governed and controlled by law; the law of the land binds a woman to the law of the husband. As long as the husband lives she is bound by him to the law of the land governing the union contracted between them. In turn this binds her to her husband, so that 'if while her husband liveth she become (Gk.) to another man she shall be called an adulteress'.

This citation is not concerning a bigamous marriage — she is not to be called a bigamist as would happen if she remarried while still married to her husband. If the husband had died she would have been loosed from the law of her husband, which would have loosed her from the law of the land governing remarriage. The spiritual law of husband is binding over the entire period of his life — it cannot be broken by divorce, so going to live with another man could not be called marriage; it could only be adultery. The one thing that could prevent her from being an adulteress is the death of the husband.

The importance of this is sharply emphasized when Paul draws a spiritual parallel between it and Christ and His bride, the Church. The husband role is fulfilled by Christ. In the first instance he is to be regarded as the old (man) husband to whom the soul is married. In the second instance He is the new (man) husband to whom the soul is wed. The only way a person can be released from marriage to the old man is by his death. She cannot be divorced from him in order to marry the new man; that would be adultery; such a state just does not exist; God has not created it; it is an impossibility. She cannot still be married to the old and marry the new at the same time, that would be spiritual bigamy and presumes the existence of spiritual polygamy.

The only way is through death. When Christ died by substitution He embodied the old or first husband in that act. When that happened, she was no longer bound by law to her husband, she became dead to it when he became dead to her. She could then marry the new husband-man and come under the law of her (new) husband who binds her to the law of God. She is then his legal wife and cannot be called a bigamist or an adulteress.

By this means God has made His attitude to divorce and remarriage in flesh quite clear; it cannot be, because it has no existence in spiritual law — it is an impossibility. The only thing that can break spiritual law is death. God cannot approve of divorce; how then can He countenance remarriage? As long as a man lives, the law has dominion over him; he cannot be divorced from the law. As long as both partners to the marriage vow live, they are bound by the law of marriage (law of husband, or wife as the case may be). This law has been in existence from the beginning, and is unchanged to this day. Moses suffered divorce but never sanctioned remarriage, and Jesus outlaws it altogether. Paul declares its illegality and reveals its spiritual impossibility to the Romans, discourages it to the Corinthians and legislates against it in his letters to Timothy.

The phrase 'husband of one wife' is straight out of God's heart; it refers to the law of marriage. In Bible times it was always thought of in masculine terms, 'the law of husband', because everything turned around and moved as from the responsibility of the male. In these days when women have equal standing with men in marriage status, it may be thought of in terms of male or female. Paul who was far from being 'avant garde' in his attitude to human institutions, advanced the idea of parity when he said that the man has not power over his own body, nor has the woman power over hers.

Nevertheless, avoiding the ancient abuse of masculine superiority and rejecting the implications of modern 'women's liberation' movements, it is best to use Bible terminology when thinking on this subject, and speak of 'the law of husband'. The reason for this is the fact that all is based on God; He is the great husband. Marriage is an outworking and demonstration of the truth of God in human relationships.

The flesh union is primarily a demonstration of spiritual union. Marriage, because it is in the flesh, is not a uniting of two people in the same way as God is a unity, for God is Spirit, and flesh cannot unite and become one as God is one. Nevertheless the vows exchanged between two people for the purpose of marriage are utterances from their spirits, which unite in this one thing: 'I will'. That is regarded by God as being the unifying factor, and the flesh union which follows is the demonstration of it. The result or fruit of that is children, which are the outworking and proof of the union. They are the unity of life; in them the two seeds become one, the two bloods become one, the two bodies of flesh become one, the two natures become one; they are the indissoluble blending of two persons into one; two lives make one. To destroy that union the life must be slain; all the time the person is alive the union cannot be broken — husband and wife are united in the child; the marriage cannot be dissolved. This is why divorce is impossible in God's law; separation of two people so that flesh union can no longer take place is regrettably allowable, but by the science of being, divorce cannot be.

God wove the law of His own being into humanity. To break it there would be to break it in His mind and will, which is impossible. It therefore follows that remarriage following divorce is entirely mythical. Among men it is common, but it is only another name for adultery, for it is a form of bigamy, and is incipient polygamy. Christ said it was adultery, and Paul called it that and said it should be called that. This that is called remarriage is only a fantasy — it has no basis in spiritual truth. By their laws of convenience, men have created a state which in reality cannot be; and men are existing in it. Therefore any human state or civilization which has legalized divorce and remarriage has inworked the seeds of destruction into its system, and must die of the disease. But it is not in God's being, nor is it in His system, the Church.

The holy three live together in holy wedlock. Not only are they one in being, they are one by common consent; their wills and minds and love are one. There neither is nor shall be nor ever can be divorce between them — they are eternally one. At Calvary they came as near to divorce as could ever possibly be; the testimony to the awfulness of that moment was wrung from the lips of the young husband of the cross, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'

He hung forsaken because there could be no divorce. God would not divorce His ancient people — He would not cast off His people 'whom He foreknew'. He 'forsook them for a small moment', that with great mercies He might gather them up, but He did not divorce or cast them off, nor has He forgotten them. Listen to the cry of His heart in Hosea, 'how shall I give thee up?' 'Return unto Me for I have loved thee'. The fact that His Son was born of Mary the virgin of Israel proved that God still was married to His wife.

Hard, cruel, murderous adulteress that Israel was, and still is, to God, He has not cast her off. The episode of forsakenness at the cross revealed the heart of God to perfection on this matter. Because of the sin He bore, and the embodiment of sin that He became, and the man of sin He was made, Jesus was forsaken there, but only for a small moment. Soon He was saying with all His former confidence, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit'.

There had been no divorce, just a necessary separation, a period of forsakenness — remarriage had not been necessary. Divorce is a breaking of a union, a dissolution of a bond, a cutting off of a member, a casting away from a person's presence, an excommunication from life, a death, an end. There was no breakage to the union of God at the cross, no dissolution of the bond between the holy three, Jesus was not cut off from membership in the Godhead, nor was He cast away from Father's presence. He was not excommunicated, only temporarily excluded as was the leper until cleansed; His spirit did not die, nor was the grave His end. His body slept

awhile, then He rose rested, to seek a wife, espousing her to Himself with vows and promises, by blood and spirit and undying love — a holy and eternal covenant never to be broken — saying, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee'.

The work of the cross is eternal, working as in retrospect in relationship to Jehovah's wife, Israel, and as in prospect in connection with the bride, the Lamb's wife, and is the revealed principle of everlasting love and righteousness. Spiritual union of persons of one nature by will is indissoluble — there is no divorce in God, and there is none in the Church.

It follows then that divorce and remarriage cannot be tolerated in elders. They above all are given the position in trust from the Lord to teach spiritual truth as it is in Jesus, and seek out pasture for the flocks. They must not attempt to feed lambs and sheep on anything else but eternal love. Therefore their own bond of law must be beyond rupture, dissolution or death. Whatever the test to them, marriage must be a finality.

6 — ELDERSHIP AND AUTHORITY

A further point ought to be made here. It is regretfully true that in many quarters a totally wrong concept of power is in evidence, and authoritarianism has taken the place of true authority. When this is so, it is often common to find misapplication of Bible truth concerning installation of elders and deacons. Reading the Word on this subject, we find that power to elect to office is broad-based in the Church. There are apparently three sources of choice: (1) God, (2) the apostles, (3) the people.

As we have seen, God chose the first elders; this election is idealistic and follows the pattern of things in heaven. As is shown in the case of the original apostle-elders of the Church, elders are given by God. Jesus said of His twelve apostles that His Father gave them to Him, and as far as the Church is concerned that settles the matter. God's choice is first, final and binding.

The next method is election by an apostle or his deputy. Paul either ordained elders in the new churches which sprang up under his ministry or directed others, such as Timothy, to do so. Except for the great wisdom granted him, Paul would have been placing these infant churches at great risk, for in such short time how could it possibly have been known of what calibre the men were? The apostle was commissioned to do what he should do, and to discharge his duty faithfully as unto the Lord; this he did. Unfortunately his action has been wrongly interpreted by some and promoted to a position of precedence above his intentions.

God did not intend His servant's action to be regarded as a precedent; it is not an example of the only correct way to appoint men into office in the churches for the rest of time. What Paul did is an instance of a way, not an example of the way. Expediency played a part in Paul's actions. Men had to be ordained into office so soon after their regeneration because he himself was a man moving about speedily in his own office and commission. He was also under persecution from the Jewish authorities, so he did not usually stay for any great length of time in one place. Wherever he went he preached under pressure, with much labour, until a company was gathered out and a church came into being. By that time he had often outstayed his welcome, and found it prudent to depart in haste, leaving behind an infant church to fend for itself entirely without official leaders. Whenever this happened, he would later return to that church and ordain elders there; this he did as much of necessity as of policy. Another of his methods was to appoint men such as Timothy or Titus to be his deputies and act with his authority to ordain elders or deacons as necessity arose.

It is sometimes thought that Paul made these appointments entirely by apostolic authority, by means of spiritual gifts, without consultation with anyone. Of course this is quite possible, and under the circumstances may even appear very probable; nevertheless it is most unlikely that he did so, for it is absolutely contrary to the spirit of the body. This method is one which generally appeals to persons with strong authoritarian tendencies, and is propounded upon the premise that the Church, being a theocracy, should not function by democratic principles. To such persons the idea of a greatly gifted man stepping in and selecting and installing men into office as he will is most appealing, but it finds very little support in scripture.

By the time Paul was added to the Church and put in office, the church at Jerusalem was already well established, and being strongly administered by the apostle-elders. Since the day of Pentecost, there had been no additions to this select band of men. At that time there was no talk among them of governmental authority; everything was bound up in the law of growth or natural development as it should be. Right from its natal day

the growth of the Church was phenomenal — the Lord had been daily adding saved ones to it. He was its Head; except in the natural course of ministry no-one else sought to assert authority lest they usurp His.

Before Pentecost the apostles had made an excursion into the realm of election and ordination. their motives had been pure enough at the time, and the method they adopted was one familiar to all Jews — they cast lots. Perhaps they thought that they could adapt God's ancient order to fulfill their own wishes; it is to be hoped they were not merely following the common practice of gambling, as when the soldiers cast lots for Jesus' coat, but it is doubtful whether the choice came out of the bosom of the High Priest Melchisedec. Jesus had not selected them by casting lots, and the result of their lottery was not outstandingly noteworthy to say the least.

The fact that this method was not used again indicates that God did not approve of it. In any case it was pre-Pentecost, that is before the Church of Jesus Christ on earth was born. The coming of the Spirit with newness of life taught the apostles differently. Until then they were only apostles. When they became elders as well, they acted spiritually, as men ought to act in the Church. From that time onward they accepted their new responsibility, and therefore when the need arose they moved in an entirely new way.

As may be expected, the growth of the Church in those days so greatly increased the workload on the apostles that it became well-nigh intolerable. It is not surprising then, that with all the praying, preaching and ministering which continuously absorbed their attention, some of the more menial tasks were neglected. Because of this, sadly enough, though perhaps justifiably, murmurings arose among the people, especially as the oversight seemed to some to be not without a degree of partiality.

These murmurings were not necessarily sinful, for by the inadvertent neglect which caused them, some folk were going hungry. This was neither God's intention, nor the will of the apostle-elders, but it revealed that the task was too great to be borne solely by twelve pairs of human shoulders. Therefore the necessity arose to correct the trouble. They met this difficulty by deciding to appoint seven men who should take charge of that particular branch of the church's daily ministrations, thereby releasing themselves for the most important spiritual duties.

When putting their decisions into practice, the apostles suggested to the church that they should choose the men they wanted for the task. The apostles refrained from selecting whom they thought were worthy; instead they allowed, even encouraged — perhaps commanded — the people to have whom they wished. The apostles were not yet called elders, though they may by that time have been recognized as such. But whatever their public recognition then, with wisdom and maturity and humility which marks true elders, they gave guidance to the people about their choice, and having set the standard, left the selection to the whole church.

Benefitting from the advice, the church made their selection and brought the chosen seven to the elders, who in turn showed their approval of the people's wishes by ordaining the men into office. The apostles saw two things very clearly, and firmly insisted upon them: (1) selecting was the prerogative of the people as representing the mind of God; (2) ordination was exclusively the work of the apostle-elders as representing the will of God and the people.

Here two other points emerge which may not have been given sufficient consideration in time past: (1) properly led and taught, a church is every bit as capable as apostles of making right choices, and in doing so also makes the apostles', and God's choice: (2) the people chose men to be to them as the apostle-elders — that is as God's representatives. It was as though the apostles had said 'who would you choose to take our places in this particular field of service?' Fully considered, this rather limits the range of choice, but God had produced them and the church had selected them, so the apostles ordained them. Here is wisdom indeed.

The Church is the grave of all authoritarianism and officiousness. Usurpation of powers from the body of Christ under pretext of office-bearing is a cowardly action. It is by no means a chronic condition though, and can easily be remedied by the churches, and should be, lest wrongly submitting to false authority, the body weaken itself. 'Recognition', a much-used word in these days, must be two-way as instanced here. By appointing those men, the apostles took a certain amount of responsibility for the deacons — they were their representatives.

All of this reveals that with regard to office bearing it is people who finally make calling and election sure, for

who can doubt that the men were already God's elect? Those seven are regarded as the first to hold the privileged office of deacon in the Church. On them first was laid the duty of exalting the word 'deacons' of common usage into a high and holy calling. We should also note how large a part expediency played in what is now called by some 'Church Order'. No wonder Paul said he 'took pleasure in necessities'. Far from 'as it was in the beginning', so much of the order in modern churches is an attempt by slavish minds to copy scriptural patterns for the sake of them rather than because of necessity. It is a feature of God's methods that His election always becomes apparent at the right moment and at the point of expediency.

This is nowhere more clearly shown than at the time when it became necessary for Paul to ordain and install elders into the churches of Asia Minor. The situations which arose there absolutely compelled him to put men in charge of the flocks; they needed proper oversight and permanent pastoral leadership and he could not give it. But, although expediency played a large part in his actions on these occasions, it would be utter folly to assume that circumstances alone governed his decisions. There is no record that he consulted God or any person about his actions at that time, yet it can hardly be doubted that he did what he did under divine instruction. Certain it is that he had God's approval, for later, in separate letters to Timothy and Titus, he charged them both to do as he had done.

If he had been wrong in his actions or methods, the Spirit of the Lord would surely have corrected him so that he should not repeat and perpetuate error by commandment. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness with a view to perfection. Therefore we can be confident that the instructions given by Paul about eldership are one hundred per cent correct.

It is certain that in doing what he did he followed apostolic example, for, as we have seen, before ever the need for elders arose in Asia Minor, the church at Jerusalem had also found itself in need. The apostles had reacted to their problem then in much the same way as did Paul later. The procedure in each case was perhaps not identical, but the result was the same, namely that men were ordained into official positions in the Church.

It is just possible that until these ordinations took place at Jerusalem, the offices of elder and deacon were not recognized in the Church. Apostles, prophets and teachers they certainly had from the beginning, but there is no evidence of evangelist, pastor, elder or deacon until much later. Even then they do not appear together, as when the Lord chose and named the apostles. The likelihood is that all the offices later to be bestowed upon individual members of the body of Christ were already concentrated in the apostolic band from which all sprang. In fact it could hardly be otherwise, for to those men the Lord committed Himself and all the abilities and offices He held on earth. Between them the original apostles were prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, elders and deacons.

Without question the twelve acted as deacons during the Lord's lifetime on earth. This is very obvious, for it was they who waited upon the multitudes when the Lord miraculously provided them with food. However, the word used by the Lord in John 15 is not the usual one used for deacon in the New Testament, but the one meaning bond-slave. Until then apparently He had referred to them as slaves — now He shows them that they are His friends also. Shortly after this, at Pentecost, Jesus' friends were put in trust with the gospel, fully equipped with all the gifts and ministries of the Spirit relevant to their new commission.

At that time these men became the nucleus of the Church, the founder members of His Body. Their duty was to commit to others what the Lord had first committed to them. It is thus obvious why the Lord did not found the Church complete with all the offices filled by separate people. At first the apostles were filling all the various offices themselves, but when circumstances demanded and needs justified a change of method they unhesitatingly delegated some of their duties to others. They dared not lay aside their apostleship; instead they ordained specially elected men to the more menial tasks they had been doing, and granted them official recognition.

Should it be held that there is a difference between the methods used by the apostles for ordination of deacons in Jerusalem and those used by Paul to install elders in Asia Minor, this should not be made to mean that ordination into the two offices is to be approached in different ways. Any difference of method, if it exists at all, has not been made in order to mark the superiority of the one above the other. It is not to be supposed that an elder is in any degree greater than a deacon, and that he must therefore be elected by an apostle, while a deacon may be chosen by the church. If this notion be held, a careful reading of the appropriate scriptures will

at once reveal its absurdity, for the qualifications required of men chosen to fill either office are practically the same.

At this point it may be of some help to discuss the reason for the different methods of installation which may be involved here. If there is such a difference, it may be because of the fact that the churches involved were so entirely different. Perhaps this difference was partly the result of geography and nationality, as well as of spirituality, to say nothing of the time factor involved. When the deacons were chosen, the church at Jerusalem was already well established. At least twelve apostles ministered among them with great spiritual gift; blessings abounded and numbers increased daily. It is recorded of these that they continued daily in the apostles' doctrine and prayers and communion; the Spirit of God was working among them mightily.

This church was just about the most blessed and privileged and well-taught company of people that has ever been on the earth. Therefore when complaints arose about neglect of widows among them, they were well able to take part in the electoral processes to which they were invited. The excellency and expediency of it were manifest to all; the selection was made to the apostles' approval and the ordination of men for the office effected to everybody's satisfaction; the election was manifestly of God. The church at Jerusalem was made up of a people sufficiently established and taught of God for the task.

This was not so with their Asian brethren. They lived far from Jerusalem and, except by report, knew nothing of the initial outpouring there. When finally the good news reached Asia Minor, the first church at Jerusalem had been established for well over a decade. The Gentiles had not been so blessed as the Jews; they had had no Jesus, no scriptures, no apostles; they were hopeless, helpless and without God. Moreover God had waited a long time before raising up Paul and sending him to them, and when he came, he only visited; he did not stay long. He was in full pursuit of a mission which embraced the world, of which Asia Minor was only one small part. With such handicaps they were neither able nor expected to make choices for themselves in the same way as was the church at Jerusalem.

This could be advanced as a reason why the Gentile churches were not allowed to select or nominate their own candidates for office, but we do not know whether or not Paul sought the co-operation of the churches in Asia Minor on the matter. We do know however that he ordained elders among them, and perhaps it is better to believe that he did so in much the same manner as his brother apostles had done when installing the deacons at Jerusalem.

Following his new birth and before departure from Antioch upon his mission, Paul had visited Jerusalem. Whilst there, he would have had ample opportunity to find out all he may have felt he ought to know about church order. Being the man he was, it is almost certain that he had learned all about the offices in the church and the way they had been filled, so that when he finally set out upon his missionary journey he was therefore well-equipped with the knowledge of original and alternative methods of election, selection and ordination in the Church. They were already displayed in the principles and practices of the churches at Jerusalem and Antioch.

Paul was no mere innovator, nor was he a dictator; he was a man of God, and through him the Lord established and ordered churches according to His eternal purpose. Nevertheless, although this is true, Paul adopted the same policy of expediency which is observable in the Church from the beginning. The conclusive evidence that God's time has come is unavoidable need. When something must be done, the Spirit of God is at work; it is His elect time and will. The person of His election is somewhere to be found, and should be installed into office.

We see then that before Paul's advent, the original elders had already established methods of procedure for the churches. It is refreshing to note that these men of sacred calling did not give rein to their own spirits with a great display of gifts, or act in an authoritarian manner. They did not do it all themselves — as clearly as we do they saw that election is of God. They apparently also believed that ordination must be by their will and ministry. But they insisted that selection must be by the people.

In the absence of any direct word upon the matter, from such practice we may not be mistaken in concluding that theocracy works upon democratic principles in the Church. One of the words used by the Holy Ghost in the Acts of the Apostles, when referring to indication of choice or show of approval, means 'to signify by raising the hand'. This word is perhaps only used idiomatically, but it deliberately introduces the idea of

corporate action and is a far cry from casting lots or prophesying a person into position. It is the most healthy of states, showing that equality of spiritual perception is possible to all men in the Church.

The original apostles did not attempt to usurp the office and prerogatives of the Holy Spirit working in the whole body of believers. These men realized that they were setting a precedent. They knew that they, of all men, were witnesses specially chosen by Christ to be fellow foundation-stones with Him of the Church. They and He knew that as they interpreted and applied truth, so it would remain for all time. Imagine then with what care they chose their words and took action upon this occasion — they knew they were setting an example and creating a precedent which in time could hardly escape being taken as a law of procedure for the whole Church.

An unmistakable conclusion emerges, namely that to hold a position in Christ's body, officers must be seen to be worthy of it. They must be chosen of God willing His will through the entire company of people. This is not to say that the voice of the people is the voice of God, but in the Church, 'thus saith the Lord' should be 'thus saith the people' too. Unity is more easily kept where the policy of unanimity is practised; entire sanctity of the whole body is a basic principle in the Church. Full understanding of this fact with all its implications in this matter, as well as in any other, must be grasped by all, especially by its officers. Reading Paul's letters it becomes obvious that he of all men knew this; it is hardly likely therefore that, when installing elders, he would have departed from time-honoured methods associated with ordination.

All things being equal, it may be taken for granted that if a man is chosen of God, at least all spiritual people, if not everybody, will recognize it, and if asked would say so. This point cannot be over-stressed in the churches, for the man appointed to eldership is a man ordained to rule among his brethren. People will gladly submit to, and be guided by and obey those in whom they recognize the qualities required for this kind of leadership. An authoritarian attitude is unacceptable in the Church. Where people gather together they are drawn by God, and submission cannot be forced; if it is, it will be subversion, and will result in submersion. Obedience will be gladly rendered when in all elders men and women plainly see 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever'. The unchanging Christ must be visible, available, accessible to all. The Church must be able to hear, see, handle Jesus in every elder, then they will be able to trust the one to whom they are commanded to submit.

As has been pointed out, rule in the Church has nothing to do with the administration of civil law, but must co-exist with and be subservient to it. Nevertheless, beneficent as it may be on the whole, there may be exceptional periods in the life of a nation when the Church of Jesus Christ may need to act contrary to national policy. Should such a situation ever arise, laws concerning an individual's behaviour may not be made about it, either by a local church or by some central ruling body. Instead every man must be urged to obey the principles, practices and plainest statements of the New Testament and keep his conscience clear before God. This is proper procedure, perfectly in accord with the apostles' doctrine and behaviour.

In these things an elder bears great responsibility. His qualification to continue to hold office and bear rule in a church will be greatly tested by such circumstances. He will be asked his opinion and be expected to give judgment in the matter, and must do so honestly without regard to the cost to himself or to others. The elder must take full cognizance of the results to be expected should the brother or sister accept his advice, and must not shrink from instructing everyone to put personal allegiance to Christ before and above every other claim. Under all circumstances an elder must show that his own and everybody else's responsibilities are to: (1) the Lord Jesus Christ, (2) the Church universal, (3) the local church. Therefore before he takes office, an elder, though apt to teach, must be aware that in all things example is better than precept.

The thirteenth chapter of Hebrews twice uses the word 'rule'. Although no direct mention is made of eldership, the writer undoubtedly has this office in mind. He is obviously not speaking of civil rulers, for they do not watch 'for your souls'; they are too busy attending to their business. Saints are exhorted to 'obey them that have the rule over you' — a very strong word indeed. But this must not be construed to mean that saints are to render blind obedience to anyone, whether it be elder or nation. That kind of obedience is not obligatory, and certainly must not be enforced under pain of excommunication from the body.

Officiousness, authoritarianism and imperious bearing are not to be confused with Christlikeness. They are the complete opposite of that wonderful nature. The current notion that eldership confers authority from Christ to make decisions for individual church members is erroneous to a degree. It is false to deduce that because

eldership involves rule in a church, it also takes away people's personal responsibility to Christ. Personal responsibility to make decisions before God is both a basic freedom and a basic necessity in the churches. To rob a man of that in the name of eldership is abuse of office. An elder must not only know where his duties commence but also where they end. Eldership does not involve organization of people's private lives, disposal of their properties, direction of families and control of individuals' finances.

Paul told Timothy to study to be quiet and mind his own business, and Peter says, 'not a busybody in other men's matters'. Any man or group of men aspiring to eldership must behave according to these scriptures. It must be thoroughly understood and taught that guidance and rule within the Church is given from Christ the Head directly to every member. Therefore all ministry given to a man, whether counsel or advice or direction or command, must be subject to and in accordance with that. If it be found contrary to the voice which speaks within, it is either satanic or carnal.

Election to office does not automatically confer the mind and wisdom of the Head upon any man. Before he is elected the man must reveal in his life that he either has these, or is of such calibre that he can humble himself to receive them. An elder has no authority to order a man to do anything in his own home, with his own family, or with his own goods. He has no right to order him where to go, where to live, or what to do. An elder's authority is to do with the assembly; every man must be encouraged and taught by example to be the elder in his own home. Usurpation of that position by a church elder is scandalous. Advice, counsel, assistance may be given upon request, but must never be enforced over an individual's conscience. An elder may be a wonderful counsellor and a prince of peace, but he must not dare to attempt to be the mighty God.

It is not without intent, as well as being a logical conclusion to the whole, that at the end of the chapter we are commended to 'that great Shepherd of the sheep who was brought again from the dead', and 'the blood of the everlasting covenant'. With these words we are reminded that the Lord Jesus Himself taught far more by example than by precept.

What Christ is and was and did is of far more importance and of greater value than all His words. In fact it was only who and what Jesus was in Himself, plus His deeds, that made His words of any eternal worth; all the sheep, including the elders, are to follow His example. This is why the members of the flock are exhorted to follow the faith of their elders, for it is assured and to be expected that these are already following the faith of Jesus Christ.

An elder must realize that the flock is especially watching him in times of national crisis. Responsibility lies heavily upon him. He cannot then retire behind the facade of 'every man for himself', for a man's faith is his life. How he lives is important at all times, but more so during times when great crises and disasters engulf a nation. His responsibility is very great then, for unless he sets the perfect example at that time, he will lead men and women into error and sin. At times of national and international upheaval he must understand and see vividly that his calling and ordination is to the whole Church international and universal, as well as to the local church. Even though he be unpopular and may suffer in consequence, he must place personal allegiance to Jesus Christ first; he has been chosen by the Lord precisely for that reason. If a man breaks down at this point he has no right to be an elder.

Peter's attitude when on trial before the council is so clear that we are left in no doubt about what he thought. Under threat of punishment and with the possibility of ultimate death hanging over him, he said 'whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God judge ye, for we cannot but speak', and again, 'we ought to obey God rather than men'. He was then an elder as well as an apostle, and absolutely fearless. By this example he led the Church in a sure, unmistakable path. Therefore the apostolic advice he gives in his first epistle is invaluable — 'submit yourselves to every ordinance of men for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers and for the praise of them that do well if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully, this is thankworthy Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps, who did no sin'.

All submission to men, even though they represent the 'powers that be' ordained of God, must be secondary, not primary. Their duty is to make laws under God; they must not legislate against His Church or His will, and should they do so, incur His wrath. With this knowledge, an elder must so live and work and speak that his life is at all times an example of faith. He must live a life which is a light for his fellow men, and set forth

the Christ for men to follow and the Church to obey.

Occasionally throughout the New Testament the phrase 'tradition of the elders' occurs. It draws attention to a solemn fact, namely that elders set traditions in churches. Churches become what their elders are. That is the intention of God; it is also a completely unavoidable result. As earlier pointed out, elders should be seated around the throne of God with the Lamb and the eternal covenant and the book in full view. Of all people they should have understanding of heavenly, spiritual events and be able also to lead the praise and worship of the saints. Their spirits, if not their bodies, should be prostrate before Him that sits upon the throne, and this should be evident to the gathered saints. Therefore if a man be severely inhibited or bound up within himself, if he never or seldom takes part in open worship, or does not minister in spiritual gifts, he may not be an elder; his attitude is helping to set a tradition — his presence and demeanour are vital.

Money, social standing, business acumen or executive ability must never be considered as being of such consequence in the churches that men are elected to positions because of them. Elders do not obtain a good report by such things. A careerist automatically excludes himself from possibility of office in the Church — he is far too busy and involved to properly care for the flock of God. An elder must believe that his eldership is his first and highest duty and privilege. If he does not, God has not called him. He must also have a shepherd-heart to take on pastoral care; for this he will (if married) need a wife who fully supports his ministry, and runs the home for this purpose.

7 — PILLARS IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

There is a further important matter concerning eldership which ought to be fully considered and understood before we conclude. Its importance cannot be over-emphasized, for it covers the whole sphere of church growth. It is observable from scripture that in the beginning when the Church made such rapid growth, its missionary programme was carried out chiefly by elders. The two men who were chiefly engaged in this outgoing ministry were Peter and Paul. That these two were apostles emphasizes the point still further, for as we know the title means 'sent one'. It appears that when the Lord chose these men to become the first elders of the Church, He did so fully intending that they should not remain stationary in a settled place. It has been generally considered that James remained at Jerusalem, but of the others little is known, save that they were moved out by the Lord. The church was added to by Him as the original elders set out to obey His command to go into all the world.

It has been a fault common to the modern churches that they have kept their elders and sent out their youngsters. The older, maturer and more experienced men have stayed at home while young, inexperienced men have sought obediently to fulfill God's commission to evangelize the world. So ignorant have we been of God's methods, that seldom, if ever, has a protesting voice been raised against such practice.

Time and tradition have honoured this plain reversal of tactics, conferring upon it lives, labours and money in the vain belief that it is God's will. Societies have been set up and young people have been recruited and trained for the so-called 'mission field', and sent out with the best of intentions. Good people have laboured and sacrificed with zeal and self-denial to fulfill a half-forgotten commission in the hope that the gospel may be proclaimed in some 'far corner of the world'. Their motive is highly commendable, and their achievements great, but parallel with their successes runs the story of their failure also. The fault does not lie with them — they have shown great devotion to the Lord and shall have their reward in that day. The cause of failure lies rooted deeper down than that, in the uncomprehension of the entire Church; we have not properly grasped the ways of God.

Taking God Himself as our example, we see immediately that His approach to, and involvement in, world redemption was from an entirely different angle from ours. He did not send a novice, a beginner; He sent the Beginning. He did not send a youngster, but the Elder, the Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher, Jesus, whose goings forth had been from eternity. When at last on earth, the Lord, at twelve years of age, was highly qualified and full of zeal to be about His Father's business. His desire and will and call to do so were all plainly evident then. What need had He to wait?

Many reasons could be advanced for the delay, which withheld Him from His greater ministries while He laboured for a further eighteen years at a carpenter's bench. Among the chiefest of these is the fact that He had come to build His Church; for this He had to be an elder. That He was still a young man when He laid down

His life as the great foundation stone in no way invalidated His claim to eldership; He was, and still is, the mature elder. As has already been stated, quality is of more importance in this matter than time.

Of Jesus' quality there is no doubt; He was what He was at twelve, but the Lord waited another twenty years or more before He attempted to build His Church. Surely this must be accepted as the pattern; there cannot be a substitute better than this. Why then has the Church on earth devised some other scheme?

The answer to this lies chiefly in the Church's failure to grasp the fundamental principle of the cross. But more than this, also for centuries it has never fully understood God's methods. A great deal of this is due to our littleness of faith and lack of insight. We wrongly speak of 'the foreign field', and do so because that is how we think of the world. According to the country in which we live we speak of 'the home field' and 'the foreign field'.

The Bible has no such classifications as these. Instead the Lord said 'the field is the world'. He called no part of it 'foreign'; it is one. By inference He alluded to other 'folds', but not to other fields. We ought therefore to re-align our thinking with the Lord's, for unless we do so, we cannot help but continue in error. We must see the whole world as a mission field, including our own particular locality, and proceed to preach the gospel in it.

The general approach to this on the part of many has been either to ignore the injunction, or else to present the challenge to the young people of the church. This mentality has developed partly because of the unwillingness of the various societies to accept the risk of sending out people of advanced years. This is quite an understandable situation, certainly justifiable and highly commendable as a sensible alternative to the first intention of God. But it is not what He initiated at the beginning. His method is far better, namely wholesale acceptance of the fact that it is the work of the whole Church to evangelize the whole world.

Side by side with this there must come about a totally new approach to 'missionary' preaching. At present this is all too frequently aimed at youth, and geared to accepted concepts based upon texts emphasizing a 'missionary call'. There are plenty of these in scripture, and their proper use is valid in the whole context of church growth, but to over-emphasize them is to court disaster and foster the error. There must also be a return to the pattern revealed in the New Testament.

It is an amazing thing that the original elder-apostles were both foundation and head of the local church. Of the universal Church on earth and in heaven Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone, and also the headstone of the corner. Foundation and Head, He reproduces His faculties and functions in others that He calls to office according to His will. So it is that elders in their office and measure are called upon to be both foundation and head in the churches they serve.

What they must not do in regard to expansion is to develop the mentality which may be expressed something like this: 'I am an elder here; I have been called by God to become a pillar in this church. therefore I cannot, must not move from this position. I will remain here; you go, I will pray for you, support you etc. etc.' Instead an elder must present himself wholly to God, undergo a complete transformation by mental renewal, and be prepared to move on. He is at the head, but if in obedience to God he goes out to others as he should, he will become a foundation. God will build something upon him. He will then progress from being 'a pillar of the local church', to being 'a pillar in the House of God.'

God's intention, as first revealed in His own Son, is that the move out for expansion and growth in the Church should be from the top. This is obviously the right way, and if the qualifications formerly reviewed be found in a man, he is perfectly fitted for the work. But beyond this, it also follows that if elders were to move off from headship of the local church and go out from the local church, younger men within the church would find more room to develop into full stature. These in turn would become elders, and following the example set them by their elders, would themselves go out into the world with the gospel.

This is a vast topic, needing further expansion, but may only be treated here in relationship to our theme. But in so far as eldership is related to missionary vision and drive, the whole subject needed to be touched upon. The Church is a missionary Church during this age. It is the body of its missionary Head, the Lord Jesus: eldership and headship are one. The head must be the first to go. Let us return to the Lord's plan. We shall

find it as workable today as in the day of its inception.

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03-JAN-05

FAITH

G. W. North

FAITH

(Hebrews Chapter Eleven)

FAITH — THE SUBSTANCE

Chapter 10 verse 38 to chapter 11 verse 6.

The eleventh chapter of the Hebrews epistle is without doubt the greatest chapter on faith and its accomplishments in the whole Bible. Its contribution to the subject is as invaluable as it is unequalled, but its greatest value to us will be lost unless it is understood to be part of a section only and not the whole statement on the matter. The whole section commences at the thirty-eighth verse of chapter ten and ends with the second verse of chapter twelve. These forty-four verses add a new dimension to the subject, setting it in context and thereby in proper perspective. The writer's purpose is not so much to show us what can be accomplished by faith as to bring us to an understanding that men must live by faith. Realisation of this cannot fail to convince the reader of the writer's great concern for any who, having been illuminated by the gospel, draw back from true gospel living through lack of faith. There can be only one end to that he says — perdition: 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of ... God': it is a frightening warning.

The terse submission with which the section commences in chapter ten is, 'the just shall live by faith', from which faith and life no man must draw back. The most important of all the many reasons for faith is that by it a man must first be made just, that is, justified by God; secondly he must thereafter, and by the same faith, live justly before God and man. Justification is an act of sheer grace on God's part, and because this is so it can only be appropriated by faith. When God justifies a man from sin He does so because a man believes Him, and with a view to the salvation of that man's soul. Salvation, once granted, is a continuous experience which can only be accomplished as that man continues in the faith, that is, lives by faith. The first act of faith is an act of appropriation. Thereby forgiveness of sins and justification, both from God, are granted to a man through the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ; this must lead to a life of faith or else it is not valid. The writer's contention is that unless the fruit of faith develops in a man and works of faith are manifest in his life, that person is not living by faith. If a man is not living by faith he is not alive: scripture makes plain that faith without fruit and works is dead. The whole of the eleventh chapter is given up to the substantiation of this. In it the writer points out that this is so, first in the lives and works of the progenitors and elders of the human race, and then also in the lives of the acknowledged fathers of Israel.

He commences with the fact of faith. He does not argue for faith, or try to make people accept the fact that faith exists — faith simply is. As every intelligent person knows, faith is a fact of life; without it life could not possibly be. Every person on earth, whether he is a professed atheist or cynic or whatever, believes in something: it is in the nature of man to do so; we are made that way. Existence is impossible

without believing in something or someone, even if it is only in our own deluded, disillusioned selves.

Having drawn attention to the fact of faith so that we cannot do otherwise than honestly acknowledge it, the writer proceeds to the next point, namely, everyone must recognise and acknowledge that, because men can do no other than believe, there must also be something or someone in which to believe. This must be so, for if there is nothing to believe and no one to believe in, what is the use of being able to believe? Our very humanity teaches this: we are all able to breathe, that is how we are made, but what would be the use or the sense of being able to breathe if there was nothing to breathe? It is the same with every one of our faculties and abilities; sight presupposes, even postulates, that there is something to see; hearing, that there is sound to hear, and so on. Further than this, it must also be true that the things which the eye sees, the ear hears and faith believes must have been before these various faculties were. If there is thirst there must have been water, if there is hunger there must have been food, if there is brain there must be and have been thought, and so we could go on. The very fact that faith "is" postulates that there is — must be — something and someone in which to believe. To say or think otherwise is either foolishness or perverseness, perhaps both.

It is not possible to believe nothing and no one; we all believe in someone and something; the only issue to be resolved is in whom and in what do we choose to believe? Faith in a man is a saving virtue; the ungodliest of men believes that he must eat and drink and breathe in order to live, so he does, and is thereby saved from dying. Faith is the law of life modified and adapted to man's estate and needs by God, in whom life and law are eternally one; for man faith has been modified and adapted to various ends and functions, many of which operate in him quite unconsciously. In his ignorance of truth and limited knowledge of these facts man calls these functions by other names because he can only name them according to his experience and recognition of them.

Belief in eating is translated into an urge to eat; man calls it appetite or hunger; it is a law. Unknown to the flesh which does not know God and has no mind of its own, hunger is an adaptation of the law of faith; it is the same with thirst and all other basic urges in human beings. Even in the body man is compelled to live by this law according to all its variety of adaptations to conscious or unconscious need. He may not think about these things and may not be prepared to admit it if he is made aware of them, for he does not know this to be true, and as often as not prefers to believe otherwise. God says, 'man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God'. That is as absolutely true as the verse which says, 'by grace are ye saved through faith ... it is the gift of God'. Whether or not a man is prepared to believe it, everything in the physical universe is a form of God's word. Bread for instance: God spoke wheat into existence before man made it into bread; the same with water, God made it. Every basic thing from which man may manufacture anything, whether for good or for evil, all was spoken into being by God.

Because of the fall in Eden and the sin into which man entered there, sin also entered into the world, wherefore, in the realm of knowledge man became dead to God and to the knowledge of himself; he is completely darkened in understanding. Every man is a 'by faith' person of some sort; the great difference between sinners and saints lies in this following kind of situation: when the voice and call of God came to Abraham in

Ur of the Chaldees he listened to and obeyed it; that is how he became the saint he was. Because of this Abraham entered into a new place of faith in God — this is of the essence of truth; living faith will only rise in man when he responds to God in a similar way. Paul describes this as the faith which comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. In his natural state man hears neither the voice nor the call of God; few men ever do. The world is in this sad state because men do not use their natural faith about things they see and hear, but refuse even to believe that there is a God, or better put, that God is. By this attitude they abide in unbelief, and when God does speak to them they do not hear either His voice or His word, they are quite dead.

Proceeding from the ground that men accept the fact of faith, the writer, pursuing the truth, makes a further important point, namely this: by the acceptance of the original premise, a man reaches a plane of understanding as sensible to his mind as it is vital to his soul's salvation. This being so, it is not difficult for him to believe that things which are seen are not made of things which appear to the senses. Although he is not speaking here of things that man has made, what the writer says is as true in the realm of human accomplishments as it is in God's. Man has made many things by apparent means from apparent things, (furniture from wood and cloth from cotton or wool for example) but even so the mind that discovered these things and the skill which made them are quite invisible; the results are apparent, but not the human factors and abilities which produced them. The writer is here speaking of things visible and invisible — the earth — the universe — the real world — life itself — the aeons in which we live and move and have our being, man himself. God made them all.

God expects us to enter into understanding and by the knowledge gained from the common sense acceptance of the first truth enter into yet fuller understanding of the whole truth of which it is a part. In this case he speaks concerning creation — the unseen, unapparent, unheard word of God was the means whereby the apparent worlds were framed, he says. When He did so there were no human ears to hear, no eyes to see; God spoke and thereby created. He did it all from Himself: there was nothing to respond and obey. Moses has made clear that when God did these things there was no man in existence, either to hear the word God spoke or to observe its results. Quite simply then, all men must acknowledge that this universe and everything in it was not made by man; we are living in a miracle world wherein minor natural 'miracles' occur regularly. Even time itself, as we know it, was put in being as a framework for the order and succession of creative events. Time itself is a manifestation of God's word: the ages have been fitted together by Him that in them He should fulfil His will. If we accept the first proposition, namely that faith is, it is not difficult to accept this second one, namely that faith must lead to intelligent understanding. Outside of Christ it is not common to accept this, but he who is in Christ easily does so. Although revealing the logic of faith, the writer is not seeking to convince the atheist against his will, but seeking to demonstrate to the believer the life of faith and its results.

All the material things of the original creation now so obvious to the senses, and a vaster number of things not so obvious to the senses, God made by His word; for the fullest apprehension and appreciation of both that which is visible and that which is invisible, faith is necessary. When faith comes (as it logically should) to the heart of the child of God, it is wonderful and revelatory, but far more wonderful than that, when understanding dawns upon him and faith becomes understanding faith, it is glorious beyond words. By this understanding faith, (that is, faith which understands)

the elders obtained a good report from God — they believed and understood, and thereby obtained. We must beware of the unbelief masquerading as faith which changes the order of truth revealed here. If we do this we shall hardly believe anything and never shall obtain the good report from God which is so essential to our eternal well-being.

One of the most unsubtle of all errors common among men is, 'I will only believe what I understand', whereas the truth is quite the reverse to this thinly-veiled scepticism, namely 'I shall only understand what I first believe with my heart'. Understanding follows faith, it does not precede it. It is true that if faith first be there, understanding will lead to greater faith because understanding thus acquired will become light to the mind. The enlightened soul thereby equipped will be the more fully disposed to press on eagerly to greater truth and fuller appropriation of what it now sees and understands. Appropriating faith, that is faith which appropriates the truth revealed to the heart, is normal faith. True faith is power of appropriation and reception; believing without receiving is not faith, it is a substitute for it.

Before continuing with our theme, we should pause here awhile to note a distinction which could be quite vital to our hearts, and perhaps very illuminating also. The elders spoken of in this chapter are of two different categories: the first four, Abel, Enoch, Noah and Abraham, are very special men — unlike the others mentioned here they are elders of the entire human race. To miss this fact is to lose some of the blessing which God intends us to have. Adding to understanding, to these four should be added the names of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph; these seven men lived before Moses and were therefore pre-law, and pre-Israel, though not exclusively so. For the purposes of God in His creation these men became the elders of the entire human race. Every man on earth can claim Abraham as his elder, but not everyone can claim Moses to be so; God never intended that everyone should; He had other intentions by him. Moses brought the law of God on to the earth because God purposed to establish Israel, His chosen nation, in spiritual truth. Abraham was their father according to flesh, and their elder according to the spirit, but not their lawgiver. By Abraham God showed that grace and faith preceded codes of law and it is he who is the elder of us all, that is, of all who live the life of faith.

In verse six it is apparent that the writer makes the assumption that, having discovered that everything exists by unseen power, the believing heart will come to the same conclusion to which he himself had arrived, namely, that God is. Proceeding further he also assures that having made the unavoidable discovery that I am, therefore I have power, a man will believe also that, because great power is displayed in this astounding universe, there must also be a great and amazing person who is the source of that power. To believe anything other than this is illogical; how else could it be? Every man, by the very logic of his own being and power(s), must at last come to God; he can only refuse to do so by refusing to accept the testimony of his own senses and denying his own self — to be sensible man must reason thus: I am, so God is. Every man is held responsible by God for this kind of basic reasoning. Paul also is very clear about this, saying to the Romans that God will hold every responsible person capable of reason accountable to Him on two counts: (1) His eternal power; (2) His Godhead. In other words man's simple conclusion upon observing this universe should be, 'these things cannot be except by unimaginable power, therefore the one who has such power must be God'. God is, His eternal power proves that He is.

Without faith, that is without the ability and capacity to believe, man cannot be; such a man does not exist. Faith and the ability to develop that faith, as well as the basic means whereby the simplest of people may exercise it, are constitutional in man. It is also true, (and to men this is most important of all), that without the definite exercise of faith it is impossible to come to God for eternal life. The verse which declares this also contains another statement of almost equal importance, namely this, that if a man will not come to God, it will not please Him — and that is putting it very mildly. The writer phrases it this way because he is not issuing a warning or making threats, he is speaking to God's people, not atheists. When a man comes to God he is only following the law of both his own being and of God's to its logical conclusion. Faith is the law governing conscious and profitable relationship between God and man, and to deliberately stay away from God in heart and keep Him at a distance throughout life is to declare publicly that by so doing the person intends to deny both man and God. There can be no greater folly.

Drawing the whole of this great section on faith to a close, the writer says in chapter twelve that we must lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run the race (of life) with patience. That exhortation is most vital for all men, for the sin most common to all, and which so easily besets everyone, is unbelief: this folly of refusing to act upon the law of our very being is self-imposed death. What liberation it is to a man's being when he simply believes God's word and the things that are, and moves towards God; so doing he is fulfilling his own nature, thereby he is blessed. We all must believe that God is and that what He says will — indeed must — come to pass, or, better still, come into being. Whenever the promissory side of God's word comes into being, or fruition or fulfilment as the case may be, it may be said that it has come to pass. It has not come to pass away, it cannot, it has become permanent in experience, in time, and in history. It has not become fact, it was always fact because God said it; it has become recognisable fact; it has not become true thereby, but manifestly true to man, that is all. To not believe is to be a disbeliever, and classified as an unbeliever; to be an unbeliever is to be an atheist, for unbelief denies that God is; that person has therefore done nothing but continue in that offensive state before God. To believe that God is and not to come to Him by choice is self-death, and by implication to constitute oneself an attempted destroyer of God — a very serious matter indeed. The result of coming to Him is wonderfully rewarding, and very joyous; perhaps the greatest of these joys is the delight of proving to oneself that God is. What a seal of faith this is.

When the search for God and reality has ended in complete success, the immediate outcome of it is relief and joy and the most important goal has been reached. The grateful heart will then make some offering to God — a thank-offering — a love-offering as excellent as may be possible within the scope of man's power. To do so is natural — it is the obvious thing to do. Besides this it is the only righteous thing to do, because it is the discharging of the debt of gratitude owed to God; to do so is the righteousness of faith attempting repayment for that which cannot be purchased. It is not possible to have faith and not to make such an offering; it is the perfect outworking of the fact that faith is, and God wants that faith to be made known. Paul says that the gospel is being preached to all nations for the obedience of faith. Because I am, faith is; because faith is, I am; because faith is, God is (this is man's discovery); because God is, faith is (this is God's faithfulness); because faith is, I can discover God: because God is, and I have found Him, I must make a voluntary, free-will offering to Him. If I do not respond in this manner I am ungrateful and am acting

neither logically nor righteously; logic and righteousness are immortal moral twins; they act in conjunction, often in unison, and are the basis of all sanity and spirituality. It is not possible to believe and do nothing; faith is the beginning of correct attitude and correct action towards God.

Taking as an example the elder of the race who pioneered the way for all men the writer says, 'Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts ... he being dead yet speaketh'. Being the son of Adam, Abel had a fallen nature, but in spite of the fact that sin was already in the world Abel revealed his faith by doing something. This 'voice' from the dawn of history witnesses to the fact, the truth, the logic and the work of faith. Abel's work lights up to us the way of that natural righteousness which is itself the outworking of the innate principles of the nature of man. Both Paul, in Romans chapter two, and Peter, in Acts chapter ten, support this position; it is a very important one, so we will turn aside for a few moments to examine it.

In Romans three Paul says, 'We have before proved ... that ... there is none righteous, no, not one'. He was speaking the truth; he does not say however that no one has ever been righteous — note the tense. In chapter two he speaks equally clearly of those who 'do by nature the things contained in the law, these ... are a law unto themselves: which show (they have) the work of the law written in their hearts': they prove this by their works (and by patient continuance in well-doing), he adds. Faith in Christ is nowhere mentioned in connection with these people. Surprising as this may be to some, there were people like this living on earth in Paul's day, and there are people of this description living on earth still. They know nothing of Moses' law, or of the Gospel, but live by the outworking of natural faith according to conscience. As we have before seen, all men without exception are held responsible by God for this, He exempts no-one, nor does He accept excuses on this count from anyone, not even from the most primitive or the most underprivileged, or from the evangelised.

Neither nationality, culture, social conditions, lack of education, loss of privilege, heathendom nor the fact of sin affect this, and neither does the present state of spiritual death nor the deprivation of the gospel. None of these things alter the fact that originally the work of the law was written by God in Adam's and Eve's hearts, and has been passed on by heredity to every human being born since. Nothing has affected that — though there may be total depravity, there is no such thing as total ignorance. Subconsciously every man 'knows'; man is a 'knowing' person. The gospel takes this into account and is directed to men with this in mind. The Holy Spirit is sent into the world for this purpose. He comes to a person to awaken and quicken that 'knowing' faculty to consciousness of true spiritual realities. The best news of the gospel is that from the primitive state of ignorance and the original innate knowledge of the God of whom he is ignorant, sinful man may be resurrected to a far higher position than that which he formerly had, and can know all things (I John 2 v.20 & 27).

At an earlier date Peter took this same position when addressing Cornelius and his friends at Caesarea, 'I perceive that God is no respecter of persons', he said. By a vision and certain specific commands God had shown him something which revolutionised his outlook upon the world of men; it came to him as a complete surprise. As a result of this, when the apostle went to the Gentiles at God's command, his perception of truth was profoundly changed. By the vision and the commandment

he had now gained understanding of men and of God's will, and the power and extent of the work and purpose of Christ's death on the cross. As far as it is allowable for us to assume, Cornelius and his friends were originally a heathen company who had converted from idolatry to a belief in the one true and living God. Consistent with that and his human nature Cornelius was doing works according to the light and measure and kind of faith he had. As far as they had gone these people had let their 'natural' faith dominate their thinking and actions, and were, before God, as righteous as that faith could make them in His sight. This was what Peter realised and said, 'In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him'.

God had shown Peter this by the vision, and this was also the basis of truth upon which the angel of the Lord had spoken to Cornelius on the day he visited him in his home. The parabolic implication of the vision God gave to Peter upon the housetop (when the vessel filled with every imaginable beast was lowered to him from heaven) was exactly as Peter said; that is why God commanded Peter to kill and eat. Peter was astounded at the words. Perhaps the thing that astonished him most was that these unclean creatures were not thrust up at him from the pit but lowered to him from heaven. 'Slay ... eat', said the voice — it was repugnant to him, but O what a privilege! Peter refused point blank, but God persisted and insisted that he should do as commanded. After three attempts, God made Peter see the truth and understand what He was meaning. People whom Peter called common or unclean (certainly he would not have called them righteous) actually found acceptance with God. Peter knew that God would only accept men upon the ground of righteousness, so he just had to accept what God was showing him. What else could he do? By the vision Peter learned that Cornelius and his friends were righteous. Their personal righteousness was neither the righteousness of Moses nor yet the righteousness of Christ, it was the righteousness of their proper response to the law inwrought in the heart of man by God at the beginning. The works which Cornelius had wrought in righteousness by this natural faith and with a clear conscience in the sight of God revealed it.

Cornelius was a righteous man according to his light, but he was not yet regenerate. He was not chosen by God to be a saint because of the natural faith he had, but was chosen to be the gentile upon and through whom God would pour out His Spirit that the door of faith should be opened to the whole world of gentiles. It could be thought that, being God, the Lord could have chosen to do this through the veriest sinner, but such thinking is wildest assumption, and against the whole revelation of scripture. By being faithful to God as far as he knew Him and true to himself, and by acting according to natural (God-given) faith, Cornelius had become acceptable to God, so God selected him for honour. The man who acts according to this faith naturally receives the gospel and the Christ of the gospel.

It has ever been like this since the commencement of the human era. Abel and those early elders of faith were not alone in their righteousness. Scripture makes clear that centuries after this, in Abraham's day, king Abimelech claimed before God that he and his people were a righteous nation, and neither God nor Abraham denied it. Amazingly enough in the two separate incidents in which Abimelech encountered first Abraham and then his son Isaac, Abimelech showed himself to be more righteous than either of them, and they were patriarchs of Israel the chosen race, while he was a Philistine. Abimelech was not one of the chosen race, nor was he the called of the Lord, neither was he God's friend. Was he more righteous than Abraham? In the incident, and as the incident showed, yes. It was exactly the same with Isaac when,

years later, he followed his father's unrighteous example; both he and his father brought the threat of punishment upon a guiltless people. It must have been most humiliating to both Abraham and Isaac to be reproved by this 'heathen' king for their sin. In those days righteousness consisted in living and acting rightly according to the inbred law common to all men, instead of living and acting according to inbred sin.

The account of Abel and his offering commences the list of the earliest elders of the faith-life: his faithfulness is in sharp contrast with his father Adam's faithlessness, who for that reason is not referred to in this chapter. Adam's sin lay in the threefold fact that he acted contrary to: (1) the explicit word of God; (2) the obvious attestation to its genuineness and power displayed in all nature around him; (3) the implicit word and work of the Lord written within him: therefore Adam died. Physically he remained unchanged, but because he denied God instant spiritual death took place within him; he had acted contrary to the law of his own life. Quite different to this, years later and apparently without any instruction, Abel offered to God a sacrifice more excellent than Cain and God witnessed to those who witnessed it then and to all who observe it now that he was righteous. It is not said that by virtue of his offering he became righteous, rather it appears that Abel acted as he did because he was already righteous, and that the righteous God testified to his gifts because they were the testimony that this young man was righteous. The thing that appeared and was therefore seen was the offering, but what did not appear, and was therefore not seen by Adam and Eve and Cain, was Abel's faith and righteousness. These were apparent to God though, and He witnessed to these to Cain, and presumably to his father and mother (if they were still alive).

So it was that Abel spoke to his relatives and is still speaking to us today. Abel is the only one of whom this is said, and since he speaks from the dawn of time his voice is authentic and what he says is most important. God draws attention to Abel's gifts (to Him) because they were brought by a man who knew no gospel but the testimony of his own conscience responding to the work of the law written in his own heart. This caused him to think aright and act aright, even though no legal code of sacrifices and offerings had as yet been given to men. To this day Abel is saying that where the gospel is not preached and is therefore unknown, God looks upon and deals with men according to natural faith and natural righteousness. This could only be then (and can only be now, as it was also in both Abimelech's day and Cornelius' day), because, in foreknowledge of the fall and in anticipation of it, the Lamb of God was slain from the foundation of the world. Upon this ground of truth all those worthies whose names have been mentioned in this chapter, as well as millions more whose names and the works they have done have not been mentioned, were and are accepted by God. It is a significant fact, fundamental to salvation, that the Lamb of God Himself was slain upon the ground of His own natural faith and innate righteousness; only thereby could the redemptive will of God reign in righteousness over all and be efficacious for all.

By the devil's cunning and Adam's folly, sin had entered into the world and death by sin, but sin was not imputed to Cain by God because there was no outward form of law. At that time God had neither formulated nor given it to mankind; the words, 'Thou shalt not kill', had not been written. In that era everything turned on the work of the law written on the fleshy tables of the heart and the thoughts of their own hearts reacting to God's work therein. As conscience exercised men they either accused or excused themselves or each other before God and man; of a corporate body of law and a functional legal society the human family knew nothing. When, at a much later

date, God did give the law, He formed it to cover and condemn the sins which men had already committed or were in danger of committing. The natural source of law in man, and the sole arbiter of it, had been flawed and had ceased to function correctly because man had changed; he had altered the relationship between himself and God and fellow-man. Man had become a different person from the one God had made; his spiritual nature had changed because of sin; he could not be justified in what he was doing.

Recognising this, and knowing that man could not change back to his original state, God, having raised up Moses, prohibited sin by itemising it in a plainly stated legal code and engraving it on tablets of stone and giving it to His people. To that legal code He also appended a detailed system of blood-offerings that men should make to Him; compliance with the requirements listed in this code brought men back into favour with God. Thereupon God entirely exonerated him, and justified him from his sin. The sacrifices themselves did not blot out sins; they had no power to do that, neither did they earn God's forgiveness; man was forgiven by God simply because he obeyed Him. In whatever age he lives man is only ever forgiven when he complies with God's word and the work of the law operative in that age; this compliance is called the obedience of faith. Man can never be forgiven by anything he does just by the act of doing it; he is forgiven because of the obedience of faith displayed by and inherent in that act — never by the ritual of it. Let a man's deeds, of whatever kind and calibre they may be and under whichever covenant they may be done, but become merely legal or mechanically religious, and there can be no approval of them by God; they will not be accepted by Him, and neither will forgiveness be granted by Him to that person. The natural faith of the heart of a man must be renewed and revived in that man so that he co-operates with God by believing Him for personal salvation.

This renewal and revival is effected in man by the grace of God through the word spoken unto him by God for that purpose. When God speaks to a man with that word, He also imparts the ability to hear it so that every man is without excuse. By His word God quickens and revives natural faith, and He does so because it is the faith He infused into Adam in the beginning, without which he would have been an incomplete man. Jesus had this faith; it was of a higher quality and of greater degree than in any other man: it was of this that He spoke in the temple when He exhorted men to have the faith of God. That faith which had been originally generated in man needed to be regenerated, else how could man become regenerate? This faith was in man in the beginning, but it had died, that is, the vital spiritual content of it had departed, leaving the empty shell. The gospel is preached to man for the obedience of faith; from the moment he hears the gospel everything depends upon a man's decision to obey or disobey it, doing so he either obeys or disobeys God. Exactly as in that which took place between God and Adam in the beginning, with the advent of sin man became an empty shell, a mere capacity; life had departed. Death was self-inflicted by man when he chose not to believe God. We see therefore that what is generally taken to be unbelief was really a preference for the devil's word as against God's.

Whenever the gospel is preached in the power of the Spirit man chooses life or he chooses death. Originally death came by hearing — that is, by listening to the devil; similarly, in this gospel era, life comes by listening to God with intent to believe and obey Him. Satan did not slay man, he only supplied man with the opportunity to destroy himself by that which was good, which man did. That the devil intended to destroy Adam through Eve, and thus destroy them both together, is beyond question,

therefore he is guilty of murder by intention; satan was both the initiator of the act and an accessory to it. It is sad to think that man, knowing what he was doing, deliberately slew himself, though not knowing all that death meant — man chose to die. To Adam it was a novel experience and terribly tragic; for him the act was irremediable — 'thou shalt surely die', God had said, and he did. That was the first death, it was (and still is) a spiritual one. Adam changed; from being a living man he became a dead man; his body still lived, but not his spirit; man is not a body — he has one. Choosing to believe satan man changed his behaviour, his nature and his person and his character; he had died a death as God said he would. There are other deaths further to the first one, all of them resulting from the first one, one of which is the physical death which terminates man's existence on earth. For all the sons of men this is an inevitability — there is no avoiding it; as rivers flow to the sea so is man born to die.

Among those great elders of the race there was one exception to this — Enoch. It was not God's will for him to die; instead, in him God intended to reveal further truth: Enoch pleased God; this was God's testimony to the man. Enoch had this testimony in his heart before God and man — he was righteous and he knew it, for it was God's testimony to him. Just as God bore testimony to Abel's gifts, So He bore testimony to Enoch's life. On account of his offering to God Abel had to die; he was just as faithful as Enoch and pleased God just as much, but he was allowed of God to be slain: not so with Enoch though. He was not superior to Abel; what happened to each of them was by faith, but for righteousness' sake and for God's purposes by Enoch he did not have to die. Here then we have two extremes: by faith Abel saw death; by faith Enoch did not see death. By this we see that faith operates in and covers the two manners of departure from physical life in this world — bodily death and bodily translation. The greatness of true men of faith lies in this, they are men of understanding and do not care whether, in the will of God, they are destined to see death in this world, or not to see it. In Christ both methods of departure are exhibited: He died and departed, he also departed forty days after His resurrection without dying. Either departure is as acceptable to men of faith as it is to God. The spirit that questions God's ways, demanding from Him an answer to everything He does, is not of God. Whatever happens through grace, faith must develop in every man to that point of implicit trust in Him which complete obedience brings.

There are men whose lives and gifts are altogether pleasing to God, they somehow understand, and by the mystery of their simple faith God is free to do exactly as He likes with them. God could force His will on anybody, but it is not His purpose to do so; His desire is that men should co-operate with Him by faith so that His truth should be revealed in them. With such men God can do as He wants, use them as illustrations of truth, make them examples of His power, or through them say or do something which is vital to all mankind just as He wills; that is the kind of faith they have. It is original faith — faith as it should be, that is, faith as it is in God and was in the Lord Christ on earth. At the beginning man was made in that same likeness after the same image, but it was effaced by sin and was never displayed on earth again in all its perfections until Christ came. A hint of this is to be found in the combined lives of Abel and Enoch; the Lord Jesus, when finally made flesh, was made the fulfilment of all that Abel and Enoch exemplified. The Christ offered unto God both His life by that most excellent sacrifice and, following that, was translated to heaven: He had this testimony — He pleased God. To His own He showed Himself alive on numerous occasions following His decease by many infallible proofs. Many times during the period between His resurrection and His final ascension to His Father He moved

between heaven and earth, appearing for a while here and there for certain purposes until finally He returned bodily to home and Father, never to return again until the trumpet of the herald shall sound.

BY FAITH — NOAH

Verse Seven

Noah is the person next selected by the Spirit for honourable mention, together with his famous forebears of faith. This man did not lay down his life in a moment of time through a brother's murderous hate, neither was he whisked away from earth by God and translated into eternal bliss so that he should not see death. Noah had to live on through a dying age filled with violence and corruption, and fight daily to keep his family pure while watching others being engulfed in sin and forever ruined. He was destined to announce and testify to men of God's intention to make an end of all flesh; his message was unimaginable. Would God do that? The destruction of an entire civilisation and a whole world of creatures? No one would believe him. Compared with Noah's task Abel's and Enoch's tasks were far far easier. They did not have to toil away ceaselessly from dawn to dusk for a seemingly never-ending succession of days as did this man. He was on his own, day after day, week after week, month after month, year

after year, decade after decade for a hundred years of his life, building an ark that no one else but he and his family wanted. It may be correct to assume that his family helped him; it is certainly charitable to believe that, but there is no textual evidence to support the view. Indeed the circumstantial evidence seems rather to point the other way, for in other instances when men of faith became involved in works of faith and others joined with them their names are mentioned — Sarah with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob for instance. It may therefore be safest to assume that Noah's family did not assist him in the mammoth task of building the ark; perhaps that was the reason why it took him a hundred years to build it. We cannot be sure, but if Noah's sons did help him we are not told so and their names are not mentioned until they went in with Noah into the ark. They partook of the benefits of his labours, but that does not prove that they believed in and approved of them or of their father's works while they were in process.

When God warned Noah of the impending disaster Noah was moved by fear. Why? Was it because God spoke 'of things not seen as yet' — an ark for instance and a flood — or was it the result of his reaction to the thought of the wholesale slaughter of lives which the flood must inflict? Or was it just the fact that God had spoken to him that caused him such great fear? Of what was there to be afraid — death? Was he afraid of being drowned? Surely not; he could not have been afraid of that, for he was building an ark for his own safety. Probably what moved him most was a mixture of many things, including fear for his own family. Would they believe him at last and go with him into the ark, or would they refuse? Who knows? He was not a man of the same calibre as Paul, who, upon receiving a word from God that he was going to be caught and bound and carried away to Rome and to ultimate death, said, 'none of these things move me (Acts 20.24 — to the elders of Ephesus) I am ready to die for the name of the Lord Jesus (21 v.13. — after the prophecy of Agabus)'; and in the end did just that: but Paul was a single man. The enormity of Noah's task was beyond comprehension. Without God's help he could never have accomplished it. Beyond building the ark he had to fill it with pairs of animals and birds (and reptiles it seems); stocking in stores of food for an unstated period of time; contemplate catching them,

living with them, tending them. Sanitation would have been an insoluble problem, surely insurmountable, and keeping natural enemies apart! However was he going to do that? Poor man, without God's help he surely could never have done it. God must have done unrecorded miracles upon miracles for months on end for him.

Poor Noah! Yet so blessed. What an exciting and far more exacting task was this man's than either Abel's or Enoch's. Neither of those two men were forewarned by God of what was going to happen to them; Abel was suddenly struck down and Enoch would have been translated in the twinkling of an eye; neither had any warning; theirs was instantaneous bliss. Not so with poor Noah though; he had to live with his fears as well as his faith, his mind filled with foreknowledge of all that impending doom. Noah was one lonely man living in a world of hostility and mockery and unbelief. Just about everybody else in the world would have held him in derision. He was the one man who appeared to be against everybody, yet he was building for everybody. He must at times have wondered whether he was the only man on earth who believed God. This man condemned the world, says the writer, who perhaps himself felt a bit like him at times, for he himself had some stern warnings to administer to men. Right at the beginning of this section he had censured those who draw back to perdition rather than believe to the saving of the soul. All men chosen by God to be His witnesses to an age under condemnation have this consolation, although they must condemn the world by their testimony, it is not they but God who has passed judgement upon it. Noah built in love as well as in faith; the ark proclaimed mercy and grace, but unbelief would have none of it; the ark, although a promise to Noah, was a threat to unbelievers and in the end the waters that eventually bore up the ark destroyed them. Could Noah's thankfulness and joy have been unmixed with sadness when at last he floated out of the darkness and the downpour into sunshine? Because the window of the ark was set in the roof he had not been able to view the disastrous end which overtook his fellow-creatures, but he knew it had happened. O how beautiful must the sun have appeared after months of rain and gloom that had blotted out sun and moon and stars in a seemingly endless blur of cascading water. And when it was all over! What joy and awe to step out into a newly-washed Earth.

Like the Lord Jesus Himself, who centuries afterwards had to bear the contradiction of sinners against Himself, Noah, by his obedience and patient continuance in well-doing, appeared to his generation to be condemning them to annihilation. By patience and perseverance, and in single-minded devotion to God against all odds, Noah applied himself to do the work of God, and like Christ became heir of the righteousness which is by faith; each in his own way saved his house. Although it is not written of him as it was of his more illustrious descendant, Abraham, that he obeyed God, he did so none the less. Noah's was a work of patient endurance and single-minded obedience, and in somewhat similar words to those used of Abraham, it could have been written of him that he obeyed God, for without knowing whither it would all lead or how or where it would all end, Noah set out to build an ark. It was a unique work, begun and ended in faith — Noah had his reward on earth, but he shall receive a greater reward in heaven.

With the introduction of Abraham the writer brought in the name which, to every Hebrew was above all other names, whether of angels or men. Abraham was the most revered of all names for he was the founding father of the race. Through this man the writer brought to the Hebrews the basic emphasis of the message he was bringing to them from God. In the life of Abraham — how he responded to the call of God, what

he became, and what he did — the real reason for the letter to the Hebrews is brought out with purpose; it is this: by faith the people of God are strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Although not emphasised so clearly, this is what comes through in the seven preceding verses of the chapter. Abel was certainly a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth — a pioneer of the lonely way of righteousness. How old he was when he was martyred for his faith we do not know, but in terms of the near millennium of years men lived then he was a mere beginner. Of Enoch it could be said that he just did not belong on the earth at all, he simply disappeared from it — what an example of pilgrimage — God took him away and home, he was a stranger here. Noah lived a stranger on the earth too; he was not a martyr, he did not die early, neither was he translated to heaven, but what a path of pilgrimage he trod. He was the man who deliberately went against the trend of society; everyone would have thought that he was anti-social, singular, eccentric, and most probably would have considered him to be mentally unbalanced. Bearing the contradiction of sinners against himself until the final day set by God he both contradicted and condemned the whole generation of men in which he was born. When at last he walked with his wife and family into the ark and into salvation from the earth, his labours for men were ended and his witness to men finished.

As is shown in these selected incidents, these three elders of faith exemplified the truth of the writer's words, 'here we have no continuing city'; doing so they prepared the way for Abraham whose life showed this the more plainly. True men of faith do not achieve fame because they intend to do so or because they desire it, but simply because they are faithful men. God sovereignly chooses men who will do what He wants done at the time He wants it done. He chooses the 'when' and 'why' and 'how' of everything in His kingdom of grace and faith. Reflecting on the order of this revelation of faith being unfolded in this chapter, we cannot fail to notice that: (1) before any particular man's name is mentioned the person of God is introduced; (2) then the fact of His word is declared; (3) following that the ages are mentioned; (4) then man is introduced. To the writer this is the natural and therefore the proper order he says. This he states for faith's understanding so that we should approach the truth in the right attitude of mind and heart. If we do this we shall have no favourites among the select company of people he introduces in the chapter. We must not fall into the trap into which many have fallen and exalt one name in this chapter above another. God chooses both the time-period in which He will do certain things and the one through whom He will do them.

Considering this in closer detail let us observe that, although reference has been made to Noah and his hundred years of lonely labour, it would be folly to believe that he was, in any degree, greater than either of the two men who preceded him or any that followed him in the line of faith. God could not be constantly flooding out His creation; indeed He has promised never to do it again. Abel could not have built an ark for the salvation of the righteous family; there wasn't one. There is no ground or reason for comparing or contrasting Abel with Noah and Enoch with Abraham; these men lived in different times and were chosen to do different works. The commendation of any man is that he does God's will perfectly according to God's instructions and desires, and pleases Him: that is all that matters. To place Abraham first in the honours list is utterly wrong; all he did was to obey God — so did Abel and Enoch and Noah and Moses. It should be assumed that, had he been asked, each

one of these would have done exactly the same as Abraham. As far as we know, Abel did not have a son; quite possibly — almost certainly — he did not even marry, so how could he have offered an Isaac on Moriah? Let each one of us see to it that we are as true to our understanding of God's mind as they, and obey God in our age as they did in theirs: they did as God said, whatever it was, and so must we. Ages can be made to fit together by the word of God in our lifetime if He will; what He is looking for is a man to stand in the gap which may be created as our age passes into another. Each of these four men in their day did exactly that, finding grace from God to do so in a most wonderful way worthy of recording in scripture.

BY FAITH ABRAHAM — Verses eight to twenty-two

'By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went'. When God calls a man He always calls him to a new place. When that place is finally reached, and only then, that man shall live as he should live: his inheritance is there and therein he shall serve God. The place to which God calls is the place of faith. To be of any proper use to God or to himself on the earth a man has to reach that place. The man who does so inherits all God has for him; not until then though. There is no mystery about this: man only inherits all things then because that is where and when God inherits all there is of him, as He so rightfully should: the inheritance of the saints is among those who are sanctified. Earlier we noted that faith is natural in man; it is quite impossible to be a man and not have it to some degree: (Paul's word to the Thessalonians is 'all men have not the faith: faith and the faith must not be confused); in order not to exercise faith man has to act contrary to his nature. Not so with Abraham though: he heard, he listened, he obeyed and his faith eventually led him to a new land (or place) of faith altogether. Natural faith, though fundamental to a man's make-up, knows nothing of this, unless God speaks to him. Saving faith cannot rise in a man as of nature because of sin; it can pass from the 'natural' to the spiritual if the heart will obey God.

With the rise of faith in Abraham's heart hope rose also. O what a place (plateau, position) is faith! God was going to give Abraham a place and an inheritance on the earth, that is on the natural plane. The spiritual position God had in mind for him was not mentioned — he must attain to the natural plane first, and then only if he would go all out for it. Abraham did just that. For God's earthly plans it was important that Abraham should first inherit the land, everything else would follow from that. This was not the most important thing though, the all-important thing was Abraham's inward heart position. To God's great joy Abraham had ascended to the position of faith even on the natural plane. At first God made no mention of the spiritual place and position He had in mind for Abraham, he was not yet ready for it, he would not have been able to receive it even if God had been ready to reveal it. Man only rises to all the greatness God has planned for him by degrees, or short steps of faith; not all at once does God give all His fullness; He always fills to capacity, but man is such a tiny being, one who knew wrote, 'of His fullness have all we received'. For Abraham God had planned a unique position in His kingdom and glory, but beyond the first command He never divulged any of that to him in the beginning.

Everything God had in mind for Abraham was in the original statement of intention He made to him: to whomsoever God speaks this is always so. He does not say

everything all at once, if He did so man would be overwhelmed; He might even engender unbelief also, because of man's incredulity. God, in His wisdom, first set out to bring Abraham into the place of faith, that having arrived and proved God therein he should go on into all God had prepared for him; God's purpose in bringing Abraham into the promised land was to prepare him for all that was to follow. Abraham did not know exactly where his earthly inheritance was; he did not greatly care; in heart he had found the place of faith from which he could proceed and he went out from where he was with determination and in high hopes. God had not spoken to him of the things he hoped for but he had heart-faith, and according to the truth of the faith in his heart he found substantial ground for all the hopes building up there too. 'After', that was the key word, both to him and to God; first the word, then faith, then obedience, then afterwards the inheritance; therein all the hopes of God and his own hopes would be fulfilled; it would be wonderful. It was, but fulfilment was gradual; it had to be, it was so vast.

Many of his hopes, those that could be, were immediately fulfilled as soon as Abraham arrived — he had come into the promised land — what anticipation. He traversed it, north, south, east, west, viewing it, enjoying it; it was his. 'All this is mine', he must have thought, 'but where is it? Where is that for which I am looking?' He could not find what he wanted, in hope of which he had left his roots; faith he had, but not yet did he realise his hopes; he was restless in the land of promise, he could not settle anywhere. If he had thought that the days of his pilgrimage would end once he reached Canaan and that he would find all he was looking for he was wrong; in various places he pitched his tent and searched around for a while, but not for long — he could not stay; hope drove him on. Where was the city of his desire and his dreams? And where was the child he felt he must have and both he and Sarah so much wanted? He had responded to the call, he now had the land, he was living in it, it was his, he had the land rights, but he felt a stranger there; he was always moving on, looking, searching, waiting, wanting. When O when would his hopes be fulfilled? Time came when the dearest of all his natural hopes was fulfilled and Isaac was born; it took another visitation and another promise from God to bring it to pass though. Abraham and Sarah rejoiced in their son when he came, he was their chiefest delight, but still no city for him to live in. Where was the city? Time went by. Jacob was born to Isaac, but Abraham was still living in a tent, so were his son and grandson; the search was fruitless. Disappointment!

Abraham never did find the city. He expected to find it, but he never did, it was not there. The expectation of faith did not turn to bitterness in him though, instead it came to fruition; a hope kept his spirit buoyant and sweet. Faith and hope took him to the land and kept him residing there in a tent, always ready to move on. Faith and hope are constant companions wedded together by God, and as surely as faith is the substance of hope, so hope, if it be firmly grounded thereon, is the spur of faith. Hope is not fanciful, it is living; hopes that are of God are faith's goals as well as its goads; faith is the evidence that, although as yet unrealised; informed hopes, firmly rooted in faith, are of faith's substance and shall one day be fulfilled. Faith causes a man to become a pilgrim, hope keeps a man a pilgrim, it ensures that he remains a traveller, always living as a stranger, even in the land of promise God gives him for his inheritance. The hope that beckoned ahead, as well as the faith that drove him on, made Abraham great; he purposed to settle down and live in a city that had foundations, but not unless its builder and maker was God. From the splendour of his

hopes, already perhaps in heart he built the city; he had the substance of it in him. He knew it was there somewhere — it just had to be.

It is impossible for a man of faith to desire a city of righteousness where all is peace and joy and love and it not be in existence; it is, and its architect and artificer is God. It is not possible for man to have high moral standards for daily living and there be no God who made a man to hold such standards. It is not possible for there to be a sun in the heavens if there be no heavens for the sun. Abraham was a pilgrim by both the law and the logic of faith; he was a stranger to the philosophies of men content to live in cities

defiled by the iniquity and injustices of a degenerate culture. Abraham approached and appraised many such cities; he abominated them and abandoned them: they were cities of sin. Abraham had vision as well as taste, ideals as well as ideas; above all he had fixity of purpose. So had Abel, so had Enoch and so had Noah. There was no city for Abel to seek, no garden of Eden given to him either; his father had forfeited it. Abel sought God and found Him, and he died finding out his brother man.

Enoch's and Noah's and Abraham's spiritual heredity derived from Abel's; though he had no children of the flesh he was their 'father'. He heard no voice speaking in Eden, no man set him an example or instructed him in the ways of righteousness. From whence then came his desires for it, and who suggested to him the need of sacrifice and the way of offering to God? No one; not any man. He would almost certainly have been instructed in the words and works and ways of God by his father and mother, but always with shame and in self-reproach. The fall had not obliterated Eden from the minds of Adam and Eve, but all Abel heard from them about God was drawn from memories of former days, now long gone. God walked and talked with them in the garden then: now He never came; He had departed from them and was gone. Because of their sin against Him God had expelled Abel's parents from their paradise; they had lost Him and he had 'lost' them; they had forfeited their 'promised land', consequently Abel was born outside of paradise. What his hopes were we cannot be sure. Whether Abel believed that it was possible that he, and perhaps his father and mother and brother, would be restored to Eden's earthly paradise no one knows; we can be sure of little else than that he sought God. The fall, be it noted, and what he had inherited from his parents thereby, had not destroyed either his natural faith or the hope which was sister to it. Perhaps also he hoped for reconciliation, if not of restitution and rehabilitation with God. Who knows? Surely these hopes could not have been destroyed. Longings to know God had not been obliterated from the human heart, nor shall they ever be — sin could never do that. Knowing this, whenever God speaks to the human heart He does so with this in mind and therefore directs His word to it; He knows that man is able to believe, and this being so is able to believe God if he will. Other factors are involved in this and have bearing on the soul, affecting vital decisions; but none is as basic and as important as this.

Abel chose right, so did Enoch, and in course of time so did Noah: God brought him from the old (antediluvian) world through the flood into the new age. Generations were born and passed away between Noah's death and Abraham's birth, but it was because of Noah's faith and labours that life on earth was sustained and eventually Abraham was born and in his day became such a great man. Insofar as it is possible to be hesitantly sure, it is almost certain that, had the righteous line not been kept intact during and throughout the corruption and violence of the pre-flood society, there might never have been an Abraham. Not knowing the mind and ways of God and

what He might have done in His sovereignty, it is not possible to surmise or even assume what would have happened, but humanly speaking, except there had been an Abraham, the true faith by which men's souls are saved would not have become known. It was spoken of Abraham by the Lord Jesus that he saw His day: Abraham never had a more harrowing or more important experience than that. Wonderfully enough men of faith and understanding can see Abraham's day, and by that faith rejoice with that faithful man. He never found the city he was looking for, but he saw Christ's day and was glad; both for him and for God that was all-sufficient. Although Christ never said this of the three great men who were elders of the race before Abraham, these also saw something of the Lord's day, which is to say that to a degree they each exhibited something of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and the work He accomplished during the 'day' of His earthly life. Whether they recognised what they saw and rightly assessed it and rejoiced in it as did Abraham in his day we have no certain knowledge, but each had a part in the unfolding of the pre-incarnate revelation of the Christ.

Abel 'saw' the substitutionary death and sacrifice of the lamb and the laid-down life, wholly acceptable to and totally accepted by God: Enoch 'saw' the eternally approved, completely acceptable and translatable life of Christ: Noah 'saw' the day of grace which commenced with the coming of the Holy Spirit and shall extend throughout the day of salvation to the end of the age. In Christ all these things find fulfilment, but unto those men who never knew Him because they lived at the beginning of things so many thousands of years ago, this was the privilege given them. Although unknown to each other, between them they individually and collectively served God and His as yet undisclosed purposes in Christ. In and through them God set forth a mystic preview of Christ's great day of salvation: how necessary then is faith. Who in any age knows what great things God has laid up in store for each individual believing and obedient heart?

Perhaps one of the greatest, if not the very greatest, of all the things revealed in Abraham's life is that it is essential to live in a place where all God's purposes for a man can be fulfilled in his life. God was not prepared, nor was He able to do with Abraham what He wanted to do in the place where he was when He first spoke to him. For many reasons, which God did not disclose to Abraham while he was in his native land, he had to go to another place, a foreign land, yet he, unquestioningly, went there. Being wise after the event and having the scriptures to assist us, we may be able to set down a variety of reasons why God insisted upon Abraham leaving the place he was in and journeying to Canaan. Abraham did not have that advantage though: 'he went out, not knowing whither he went'. If anyone other than his immediate relatives knew what he was doing they might have considered him to be foolish, if not downright stupid: 'You say you do not know where you are going? You are a misguided man!' may have been the least uncomplimentary remark made to him. But although we may discover all the reasons for his departure from Chaldea, we should find nothing as important for the implementation of them as the faith which made him go: 'By faith Abraham, when he was called ...' obeyed. Everyone must realise that the call of God which reaches the heart is far more than an invitation; it is authoritative, an imperative command to be obeyed immediately. The call of God is always to a calling; Abraham was being called to a life and a lifetime work, which life and work is the calling. The calling of God is greater than the actual call, that is, the occasion and the act of calling; it is intended by God to be the introduction to the calling, a person's first awakening to it.

God's call is both an election and a selection; it is a directive as well as an attraction. According to the sovereignty of His will God calls men, but lest singularity should destroy hope in a man's heart it is essential to remember that it is not so much who is called but who is calling and to what a man is called. Definition is important here. Abram was called to a place, that was to where he was called. Abram made his calling and election sure as he fulfilled his calling when he got there. When he had been there a while he was called Abraham, 'high father of a multitude', but not until he was also called God's friend, and a prophet; that is to what he was called. See what this man would have missed if he had ignored the call! It is fatal to ignore God's call; if it is obeyed all begins there: if it is ignored all ends there. The man who ignores God's call ignores God: at best this will mean the loss of a whole lifetime on earth: at worst it could mean the loss of heaven itself — what folly! The moment God calls a man he is at crisis point, therefore at all costs he must become most serious. Paul wrote regarding his call, 'God ... called me by (or in) His grace': that God should call any man is sheerest grace, no man is worthy of calling, even the greatest of men have never deserved such favour. Paul clearly revealed his own sense of unworthiness of the favour and said he was not worthy to be called an apostle; only grace made him what he became in this world and he knew it. But when he heard it he knew that the voice which called him was the voice of authority, and his response to it was 'Lord' — the call was imperative: he obeyed and so did Abraham when he heard it.

Writing to the Romans Paul makes the call very definite by speaking of those who are 'the called', and then adding, 'according to purpose'. There are many callings and many purposes, but there are not many calls; God did not constantly call Abraham or Paul, He did not have to. By the call they were introduced to the calling into which the call led, and from that point onwards they stayed in the calling with which they were called; their calling and their life were one. Realising this, each in his day made his calling and election sure. At one point, because of what he deemed to be necessary, Abraham did depart from the place to which he was called and went down to Egypt. God allowed him to do it; He neither prevented him from following his own heart, nor did He call him back from the place to which he descended. It appeared that he had forsaken or lost his calling, but God did not call him again, nor did He recall him to the land; it was not necessary. What Abraham had done did not negate his calling; he was the called of God (perhaps the only one on the earth at that time) and that was that.

It may be that recognition and understanding of this provides a key to the understanding also of one of the mysterious passages so hard to understand in the Hebrews letter. The writer says of certain people and a certain condition that it is impossible to renew them again to repentance; the inference drawn from this (perhaps too readily) by many is that as God does not attempt to do so, neither should we, and that therefore such persons have no hope of salvation. Pursuing this thought and reading the relevant scriptures in Genesis, it appears that in process of time Abraham, without a word from God, returned to the place he had forsaken. It seems that he was forced by pressure of circumstances and an inward knowledge, to depart from Egypt in certainty of heart that needed no instruction. Under pressure from without and by conviction within he knew he must get back to the place from which he began to go wrong. Abraham was only at the beginning of his spiritual life then, a learner, but O how quickly he learned — he never did that again. The point this man made for us is that, having been called of God to go out into a place and inherit it and all God has for us there, we must not under any circumstances leave it. If we should do so He will not

recall us; instead, through pressure of circumstances and sundry miracles, as well as the inward voice, He will work towards the rekindling of desire to be where we once were in hope that we will return.

In the incomparable parabolic illustration written for all to read if they wish, the Lord Jesus reveals the truth. The parable of the prodigal son is an apt illustration of this truth and no better Illustrator of it could possibly be found. In the story the son went into the far country quite voluntarily; the father did not want him to go, nor did he attempt to dissuade him from it, and what is more to the point, neither did he disown him because he went. That he went against his father's wishes cannot be doubted, but wherever he went and wherever he was he was still his son. Strange as it may seem, and contrary to many ideas, at no point in the story do we read that the father went after his son; he did not even send anyone to find him and remonstrate with him either. In his wisdom the father left his son in the far country to taste the bitterness of his folly and to drink of his own misery until he came to himself and realised who and where he was. He was the father's son, and yet and yet: his own state spoke to him and an inward voice spoke to him. His father spared him nothing whether of goodness or of remorse, until at last he was brought to nothingness, folly, poverty, desolation and squalor. At last he could bear it no longer and he rose and, as voluntarily as he left, went back to his father and home. The amazing thing is that he repented himself; no one tried to renew him to repentance; certainly his father did not, neither did his own brother; the prodigal in the story, like Abraham in real life, came back of his own free will. When no one else can renew us to repentance we can of our own selves arise and go back and find a welcome from our Father.

There are two men mentioned in scripture whose lives stand out as memorials of the path we must shun: one is Judas Iscariot and the other is Esau. The stories of these two men are so well known to us that we need not linger long on the details of the particular incidents in which they were involved. Judas sold his Lord and Esau sold his birthright. When at last Judas saw what he had done he repented himself and went out and committed suicide. What a tragedy, and what a pity; had he gone out and found his Lord — if repentance had led him to Jesus — it might have been a different story. Esau, though not so tragic a figure, similarly realised eventually what he had done, and tried to gain that primary blessing which went with the birthright, but he utterly failed, for, like Judas, he did not find the place of repentance either. He sought the inheritance of blessing carefully with tears, he may also have sought the place of repentance, but if so he did not find it; perhaps the reason for this is not hard to find: his heart was full of bitterness and revenge and murder. No heart that harbours anything evil will come to repentance or ever find forgiveness from God. When dealing with souls we must beware of trying to apply to men's needs the policies of men, however finely they may be framed and expertly applied. When counselling individuals biblical principles must be applied and righteous paths followed, but all mechanistic application of policies must be avoided; there are no party lines to follow. Broad lines of procedure may be discovered in scripture, and as we have seen with Abraham, when seeking to help men and women into or back into fellowship with God, we do ill if we ignore these.

The simple thing spoken of Abraham in the beginning is profoundly true, and is of such great importance that we must not fail to notice its significance: Abraham 'was called to go out into a place'. The 'place' of faith must be reached by everyone; with us though 'the place' is not a geographical location as in Abraham's case. Strange though

it may seem, though it was bound up with another land, it was not primarily so with Abraham either. The place of faith is a heart condition and to reach it a man has to go out into it — that is, he must respond to what God says and launch out on it without reservation. When a man does that, he and the word God has spoken become one; the man then becomes an epitome of that word and the rest of his life becomes a fulfilment of it; in other words he inherits the place. This is that place of faith which Abraham reached; he found it was the place where all God's unspoken intentions, as well as His stated promises, were abundantly fulfilled. Until he reached it and obeyed God completely, what God said lay dormant in his heart. It is said of Abraham's descendants, 'These all died in faith'; it is a remarkable assertion, unique in scripture, and who can rightly say how much credit for that is due to their father Abraham? What a pioneer he was, this one man's act of obedience affected them all; far beyond Israel it has affected every one of us also. It is said of him that 'he is the father of us all', and before God so he is. God's demand of all these children is that each should have the same kind of personal faith as father Abraham.

As we have already seen there are different kinds of faith: natural and spiritual. For our purposes here it has been necessary to point out this difference, but there is a sense in which all faith is spiritual, in that it is of spirit in whichever of those two realms it operates. This is not to say that because a man exercises natural faith he is a spiritual man in the sense in which the word spiritual is used in scripture. When a man operates natural faith he is a natural man; when he operates spiritual faith he is a spiritual man. The difference between these two states lies in this: spiritual or saving faith comes to a man when God speaks to him and he believes Him; faith of whichever order operates spontaneously. Before that he operates by natural faith and lives by it, for instance as when he eats food and drinks water, believing them to be wholesome and good. Because this latter order of faith is possible to every man he is expected by both God and man to eat and drink and live, therefore every man is held responsible to do so. Somewhat similarly the same is expected when God speaks to a man: he should (because he can) believe Him without question, as did Abraham.

Behold then the wonder of God's love that He should send Him who is The Word of God into the world that in the closing days the marvellous age of grace should be brought in and Christ be preached in all the earth for all mankind to hear and believe. The wonder lies in the simplicity of it all; God in grace has simplified His ways with mankind. Not now do we depend upon a special word to Abraham, or a special word to Moses, or an Isaiah, or a Samuel, or a David. There is no man who, above another, has the special word for this day; that has already been spoken. This Word is everything God has to say to mankind; it is extra special because it was clothed in flesh and was born a man to live out in this world the true life of faith before all. This word was from the beginning, it was, and is now, and is yet to come; only once incarnated, that word was naturally entirely spiritual both before and following the incarnation. Because of this it is more important than any other word ever spoken in this world; it is the divine, direct and eternal word of God to every man. This word was borne forth from God to Mary by an angel, that through her the Word should be born to mankind as the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Word, that Word which was ever with God and was God, which, says John, 'we have heard ... have seen ... have looked upon, and ... have handled, of the Word of life' it is the word which was lived and thereby spoken.

Therefore the writer tells the Hebrews that the days in which God spoke by the prophets are past; quite noticeably he does not mention judges or kings, though both often spoke God's word. This is not to say that what they spoke was not prophetic, it often was, but to show that by far the most important office is that of the prophet. In this connection it should be noted that when Peter quotes David on the day of Pentecost he quotes him as patriarch and prophet, and not as king. The fathers to whom God spoke are passed away, and so has 'that which was in part', (to borrow and adapt Paul's words); all that has been done away. God ended all of it simply because it was only in part, and very limited in its effect. The partial light which broke into the darkness of the world through many lights has gone, it has been eclipsed by the true Light which is now come. The darkness is past, so has partial light; God has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. To use two biblical words very much in vogue throughout Christendom in these days, in Christ the Logos and the Rhema are one; God's personal thought, as well as His life, has been fully expressed by Him, manifested in flesh and blood.

The purposes for which God has done this are phenomenal in contemplation. 'Beloved', says John, the great apostle and prophet of the new creation, 'now are we the sons of God'; no prophet of the Old Testament ever said that of himself or of anyone. Only the prophets of the superior New Covenant spoke like this. Simply because men of the world do not know these things, they do not know us. When Christ was here the world did not know and would not recognise Him as the Son of God; they could not know it because they would not believe it. Similarly, (though by a different kind of miracle, and to a lesser degree than He), we are the sons of God now. This is so certain that we are called the sons of God by God Himself. So close is the likeness of our birth to His that we are known in heaven, (and should be known on earth also) as the sons of God. As He is known as the Son of God because of His miraculous incarnation and life and death and resurrection, so do we become known as the sons of God by an actual miraculous spiritual and individual birth; by no other means could God make us His sons. It is He, not we, who has to say we are His sons, and He has to say so in our hearts; He would not say that we are if we are not.

Taking this truth even further John says, 'as He is, so are we in this world'; John was not speaking this prophetically or hopefully or presumptuously, he knew that he was a son of God. Though not equal with Him, here and now in our flesh and blood state we are the sons of Jesus' Father just as He. Upon this solid foundation we take our stand by faith, this is our place, and hopes arise in our hearts that when at last the Lord Jesus appears we shall be like Him. Nothing in scripture could be put more plainly than this. Our wondering hearts shall be the more convinced of it when we do see Him, for then we shall be as completely like Him as it is possible and suitable that we should be. Then, although to a lesser degree, we shall undeniably be seen and known as manifestations of God's word by His Son and by His Spirit, even as He in His day was the original manifestation of The Word by the Spirit.

Understanding of this may be slow to dawn upon us, and when it does, faith's grasp may be so weak that it may take a lifetime to reach fullness in us. When through grace it does, by comparison with our Lord Jesus, knowing ourselves to be utterly unworthy of it and seeing so little likeness to Him in ourselves, we cry out for more grace. The fact of it is made no less true by that though; faith is to no degree lessened because of our own or other people's opinions of ourselves. As He is The Word spoken by God

for all time and peoples, so are we the word spoken by God in our time for people of our day. Paul even went so far as to say that he and his fellow-labourers were also epistles. The Lord Jesus who was and is the 'Logos' and the 'Rhema', is the Alpha and the Omega too; in fact He is both the whole alphabet of God and all the words constructed from it by God also. Well does Paul say, 'in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily', and tell us that in Him we are complete. As surely as Paul says this, so does John tell us to abide in Him and sin not, and adds an injunction to abide in Him and obey the unction which is within ourselves. This unction being an implantation from God, when obeyed develops every regenerate person's new spiritual nature in conformity to His will and in His likeness.

We have an unction from the Holy One. Given by our Father, it is a kind of second nature within us. It must not be confused with the conscience which is part of the nature of every human being's spirit, dead though he may be. Conscience is one of the many involuntary functional powers of the human being; it is one of several proofs that man is basically (a) spirit, quite distinct from the unction from the Holy One. The unction is one of the many involuntary powers of the divine nature of which Peter speaks, that is, the nature imparted to us by new birth which alone constitutes us sons of God. Man's conscience was designed by God to be the natural functional ability through which the unction should operate in him: by new birth it is adapted to become the functional vehicle of the unction. As with the human body itself, everything of human nature was designed and made by God for God Himself. Therefore, having fashioned the conscience for the unction, He made the Holy Spirit the unction unto us. The unction is the means whereby the voice and word of God is inscribed into our new nature, and is intended by Him to impart to us certainty of knowledge about all things vital to eternal life. God uses it as the instrument of His thought, that thereby the rhema, if obeyed, should become the logos within us; thus we are enabled to co-operate with Him unto the development of the full stature of Christ in us. Because of this the sons of God can live at rest and not be forever straining to know God's will, and to catch His voice, or to hear His word, or understand His meaning, as the case and needs may be. Then, as of nature, men may become the manifestation of God's word and the demonstration of His will before all men and, as of nature, effortlessly do what He says and means.

The 'land of promise', that place of faith which we all must enter (attain to), is where we must live as pilgrims and strangers on the earth. In this place all the promises of God will be fulfilled to His obedient children, that they should enjoy the inheritance which was and is in Christ for us all. The obvious sure mark of these children is that, as He Himself does, they also should live the eternal life naturally, without struggle and inward conflict; this is what God and the writer intended by the statement, 'the just shall live by faith'. The life of faith should be steady, calm, progressive and inwardly peaceful; most of the time it should be unremarkable too.

Very little is said about any of the men so far named in this chapter. From what is recorded we cannot form any kind of picture of their day to day living. We ponder with amazement the major events of their lives, the great crises, their wonderful achievements and extraordinary heroism, but, except in the case of Noah, these achievements with their attendant trials were of short duration; the rest of their days lie in the obscurity of history, unmentioned. For every extraordinary day or event there were hundreds of ordinary days when nothing remarkable happened, humdrum, repetitive, perhaps by some people's estimation even boring. The emphasis being

made is that they were living by faith rather than on what they were achieving by faith, (which is not to suggest that living by faith is one whit less ignoble than working by faith). All we know about Abel is that he made an offering to God in process of time, or 'at the end of days' — just one event in a lifetime. Of Enoch we know little more than that he was a prophet and had a good testimony, but he achieved nothing which may be considered great or spectacular; it was God who did the spectacular thing, and no one but angels (and perhaps devils) observed the spectacle.

Noah built the ark; though fearful he enjoyed doing that no doubt, and it was a great and noble work worthy of unstinted praise, but think of thirty six thousand and five hundred days of monotonous toil! None of us have lived that long! How would we like to live every day of our life in total application to just one thing? Some might have called it slavery! And how about Abraham? The endless search for what was not there. He trekked, he pitched his tent, he struck his tent, he tramped to the four points of the compass, he marched to the borders of his land, he went everywhere. Day after day of disappointment; save the same old repetitive things of life nothing changed, it went on for years. Abraham was always looking for something he could not find — it did not exist — not on this earth. It was not as though he went alone either, because his heart was fixed on this and could not be diverted from it: his whole family, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, plus his entire entourage of some hundreds of persons, had to go with him. Whatever they thought and however they felt about it they just had to go; there was no restraining him; he was relentless. The search never ceased; they stayed nowhere for long, there was no final settling down. Abraham believed, therefore he hoped, and therefore he searched, believing that his hope justified all he did; to him that kind of life was the natural outcome of faith.

The strange thing about the city that Abraham was looking for was that it had no name, which, to say the least, seems fairly unusual. For a man to be looking for a city and not to be able to name it to anyone must have seemed strange to everyone of whom he may have inquired, but that is how it was with Abraham. He knew who it was that created it, of that he was sure, it was God, and because he knew that, he knew that the city would have foundations, it must have, but where it was he had no idea. He felt pretty positive he would find it in the land of promise — the land of promise — what vast possibility for faith to explore and hope to flourish. Abraham felt sure that, once in the city, he would enjoy many things of which the Lord had not yet spoken and had not specifically promised him. That they were included and intended in the promise he had no doubt; they must be, though not specified they were implied by what God said and he could expect them; the fact that he had the land assured him of that. He realised that there must be many cities there and he was determined to have a good look at every one of them. What would he find? Would it be the one? He only wanted that one, the city built by God and in which He lived. Abraham wanted to come to it at last, find out its name and live there himself and perhaps see God; he felt he belonged there. Never would he move from it again, nevermore would he pitch and strike camp; his pilgrimage would be over, finding God he would get to know Him; that was all he wanted.

He was the man to whom God had spoken; how blessed he was, it was wonderful. Imagine! A city full of people to whom God's word was law and His every wish a command. The first time God spoke to him he was thrilled; because of that he was willing to leave all, go anywhere. That was only a beginning, though; God spoke to

him again and again; He had to if He wanted His will done. Abraham also knew that by reason of His original promise God must speak again, He simply had to. God had committed Himself to things which necessitated much further clarification. Abraham waited in patience looking for the word to be spoken again, and the years went by. Then one day God's priest came and spoke to him, and Abraham realised how much more there was to know. The priest of the most high God? It was astounding! Abraham realised he was only at the beginning. Here on earth Melchizedek had come to find him to speak and minister to him! Where had he come from? Where did he live? What was his name? Melchizedek? He was a king. God's priest a king? Then whatever was God like? If His priest was king of righteousness and king of peace how wonderful must God Himself be? Glorious, unimaginably so: he must be King of kings. God's city must be the ultimate perfection unto which all men should seek and find that they should enter it as their final home. In lowly reverence Abraham bowed to receive the royal blessing bestowed upon him by the heavenly priest in the name of the King of kings. Rising to watch Melchizedek depart Abraham knew in his heart that he had been made rich beyond all earthly riches. Of the spoils of battle he wanted none; plunder taken at the point of a sword meant nothing to him. The blessings of the city had been brought to him before he had reached it, he could want no more. But where did Melchizedek live and what was the name of the city he came from? Was it Salem? Would he please direct him? He wanted to come there. But Melchizedek had gone.

If the desire to search for the city sprang up in Abraham's heart the day God first spoke to him, the appearing of Melchizedek strengthened it more, and till the day he died he went after it with all his heart. The God of the city had called him, the priest of God had visited him to give him bread and wine, to commune with him; it fed his soul. Surely the purpose of the visit was to strengthen his resolve: he was on track — now for the city. Praise God for such a husband Sarah; praise God for such a father Isaac; praise God for such a grandfather Jacob; praise God for such a master Eliezer; let all men praise God for such a leader. Blessed be God for such a man. The secret of the Lord was with him, the mystery of God and of His city was revealed to him, the knowledge of the gospel was being imparted to him, he was walking in the vision and light of a new day and another world. Later, when he was able to bear it, the mount of the Lord and the death and resurrection of Christ would be disclosed to him also. Sarah and Isaac and Jacob and Eliezer and the host of men who served him were safe with the patriarch; he brought them into the covenant and led them in the lifelong search. It was not to be wondered at if they all wondered at him. Who of all those who knew him could have failed to be influenced by him and who would not have followed him? Only they who do not love righteousness and who hate peace, who want cities of their own or of other men's design and building, men who wish to abandon their pilgrimage and settle down and make their home in this world.

What a distinguished person Abraham was; the Father intended him to be distinct from everyone else mentioned in the chapter. When God called him to go out into an earthly place He also set him apart in a spiritual place of honour above everyone else and quite unique in scripture. Abraham was predestined to represent God the Father unto men, pointing forward to the manifestation of His Fatherhood planned by Him centuries ahead. Paul was very aware of this and says of Abraham that 'before God he is the father of us all'. Abraham is not the heavenly Father of us all, but before God he is our human father in that, by two promises to him, God said that on the human side both the earthly and the heavenly host of sons, should proceed from him; Abraham

believed God and what He said, so Abraham became the father of the faithful. But the excellence of Abraham is greater than that: he not only believed God for multitudes; he believed Him also for one, which is often a far more difficult thing. He believed against hope, against himself and against the combined sterility of himself and his wife, and particularly against her unbelief. Abraham believed for her when she would not believe, and because he believed, through his faith God was able to reveal His own faithfulness. How immeasurably great Abraham was; he believed for heavenly things and earthly things, for multitudes and for one, for life, for death and for resurrection: herein lay his election to his own fatherhood, and to be the sign of God's Fatherhood. Others before him had believed God and had achieved great things; many also would come after him and believe God for great things, but not in such fullness — almost completeness — or for such consummate things.

Whether, or in what form, God may have manifested Himself to Adam and Eve in the garden we do not know; what we do know is that He planned to appear later to Abraham in triune form when He came to him to announce the promised seed, for that is precisely what He did. Abraham and Sarah saw three men, entertained three men, fed three men — God was determined to reveal or to manifest Himself as a trinity. This may have surprised Abraham greatly. It certainly would have done, unless knowledge that God was triune had been preserved from the beginning of time, handed down by men of faith like Noah. Certainly Moses believed it, for it was he who wrote of this incident; but because he also wrote to Israel that 'the Lord our God is one Lord', the Jews in Christ's day did not believe that He was the Son of the Father and that God is triune. How can God beget a son? they ask, it is not possible. That is exactly what Abraham thought about himself — impossible! To such an one God came as a trinity and told him that he could and would — and he did — have a son. It was all very simple for God, but it was a mighty step for Abraham — hence his greatness. But great as it was, he was to discover it was as nothing compared with what it led to, and to what he was heading through the years ahead.

The most outstanding thing of all in which Abraham most clearly represented God the Father and became most nearly like Him happened in the hour of his greatest trial. So severe was the test that no man would have blamed him if he had failed to go through with it. God's test was so extreme and inhumane that it is almost impossible that He would make such demands — nothing could have been harder. Yet God had planned it from the very beginning and made everything work together to its accomplishment. From the very first moment he responded to the call God had led up to this; it was the prize of his high calling: everything before this had been preparation for this moment. The Lord had never told Abraham that He had chosen him to be the great father-figure of all history and to such a degree. Abraham knew he would have a son because God told him so; indeed during this period he had two sons, but the first was not the son promised by God; he was born as the tragic result of Abraham's collusion with Sarah in her faithless scheming to have a son. But Isaac was conceived by a miracle wrought by God in both Abraham and Sarah, and when he was born they knew he was the promised seed. On his birthday they rejoiced, not knowing that they were beginning to see Christ's day, nor how much more of that day they were destined to see later. Abraham begat the son by his faith and by God's power, and through grace the word of the promise became flesh; at the same time by the same power Abraham became the father.

It was a wonderful prophetic occasion, but it was only a beginning; as the years went by the day drew nearer and nearer when Abraham must fulfil his representative fatherhood to a far greater degree. Had he known it, God had changed His friend's name for this very reason. When God first called him his name was Abram; Terah his father had given him that name when he was born and who can say what was in that father's mind when he chose that name for his son? It means, 'father of a multitude'. Possibly his father had visions of Abraham begetting many sons and daughters who in turn would beget or bear many more. Certainly the name is full of hopefulness and desire, if not faith, and how unexpectedly prophetic it was! But God had other ideas for Abraham, better and higher ideas altogether, so He called him out into the place where He would bring those ideas into being. Strange as it must have seemed to Abraham at the time, this involved the changing of his name.

As far as we can tell this had not been done to anyone before; it was most unusual and of great significance. However, God did not do this until Abraham had first met Melchizedek the king, the 'priest of the most high God', who brought to Abram bread and wine and ministered it to him. 'The Most High God' had plans to bring Abram's name into line with His own, and more suited to all He had in mind for him to be and do. He did not do so upon that occasion though, but reserved it for a later time when He would bring Abraham into covenant with Himself. When this covenant of circumcision was established in the flesh of Abraham and his family, God announced to him that he was altering his name: no more would he be called Abram, 'father of a multitude', but Abraham, 'high father of a multitude'. The Most High God called His friend 'high father' because already in His heart He had made him that; it was His calling; God literalised His calling into a name. Among men Abraham became known as 'the high father of a multitude'; he was not the highest father — God was that: God is the High Father of the multitude of heaven. He called Abram and changed his name to Abraham that he might represent Him by being that to men on earth.

The Lord Jesus said to the Jews of His day, 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day'; He would have spoken just as truly if He had said, your father Abraham rejoiced to see my Father's day', and what a day that was. It was because God had planned the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus that He first called and then renamed the man Abram. When Abraham first looked upon his son Isaac, although he did not know it, he began to see Jesus' day; more than that, he also caught a glimpse of the Father's day, though he would have recognised that even less. Thousands of years later Jesus said, 'he that hath seen me hath seen the Father', but they who heard it did not understand; they saw, but they did not see. Understanding comes so slowly, and to some when it comes it stays long in the state of dawning.

On a night that must have seemed endless to Abraham the most high God and Father of heaven came to the highest of all earth's fathers and in the darkness demanded of him his son: the supreme test had begun. Before the day dawned he had responded to it exactly as God knew he would. Abraham's answer was, 'Yes', Isaac was God's. How well God had chosen His man. He had watched over him and trained him for this moment. To be a true father he must beget a son; to be true to the Father he must offer up his son; to be truly like the Most High FATHER of multitudes and be the high father of a multitude he must receive his son back from the dead. Whether or not Abraham understood all those things who can tell? He was God's friend — He might have told him. Abraham certainly fulfilled the conditions; he even believed he would welcome his son back from ashes, and in the figure of resurrection he did so. He did

not know it was all only to be a figure, or that he would rise to heights of obedience and faith unknown before or since, except on Calvary. Moriah was the most marvellous of places; it was the highest place of his life. Speaking of all that happened there he said 'in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen'. He saw and — O, who can tell what emotions filled his heart? From start to finish it was the father's day. The son was involved too, he had to be. Counting ten years for a day perhaps the three days' journey to the place represented the human life span of the Lamb of God. They had a little further to go together to 'the place' where his father, acting as a god, built the altar for him. With all its human limitations what that father and son enacted during those days was prophetic to a degree, an almost wordless parable of unspeakable love, utterly godlike. Between them Abraham and Isaac went through and worked out the heart-rending of God at 'the place of a skull' centuries later. No human eye saw into the secret sacrifice there, and only God's saw into all the wonder of Abraham's great sacrifice on Moriah. Did He say, 'O man great is thy faith'?

God saw it, Abraham saw it, both fathers saw it; the One saw comprehensively without limitations, the other saw only partly; Abraham had all the limitations of our common humanity, but O how phenomenally he saw. Moriah was the mount of God; God had shown it to him, He had shown him Himself too; he had to climb the mountain to catch the vision though. What he witnessed was wonderful, and what he saw through the obedience of his own faithful heart was more wonderful still. What he entered into must have been most wonderful of all though, for through his own agony he entered into fellowship with the Father and the Son. Abraham knew the faith and the fatherhood and the feelings of God. He was the high father, he must have been, for he was one of the most humble men that ever lived. When he left the mount with his son his elation must have been impossible to express in words. Yet thoughts and promises born of conviction inwrought by experience were running through his mind: the future was wonderful. Had he been an ordinary person, or a general kind of prophet, or a normal man of faith the experience might have ruined him; pride might have said, 'I have seen it in the mount of God', or 'I went up the mount of God and saw it', but he was not a proud man. He was the greatest man on earth and surely the humblest. It was a very singular and absolutely exclusive experience and he could have boasted of it, leaving no one else the slightest hope of ever seeing it or of finding faith to attain unto it, but he was earth's high father — he said, 'In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen', and left the hope and faith of a humble man as a heritage for us all. How a man's language reveals him.

Abraham did not ascend Moriah to see anything; there was nothing to see, and if anyone afterwards climbed the mountain to see what Abraham saw they would have seen nothing. The remains of an altar perhaps, blood-stains perhaps, but it was unlikely — a few ashes left by the wind, but that was doubtful, a thicket with some strands of wool twisted on its branches maybe, or a twig or two scattered around, nothing else though. Traces, indications that something had taken place there sometime, that is all, but what could they have made of the things they saw? They would only have been scraps of fast-disappearing evidences of things not seen; they would not have seen the trial of Abraham's faith, nor have experienced the test of his love. Abraham went up the mountain to do something, there was nothing to see until he did it. True he expected a miracle, and what a miracle it would have been if it had happened; his Isaac would have come back to him from the smoke and the flames and the ashes, a living sacrifice. But it was not to be; his son did not die; it only happened in a figure, not in reality. Had it happened it would have been the greatest miracle of

all time, greater than the death and resurrection of Christ, for He was God's Son, but Isaac was not; he was a mere man. Knowing the Lord, we are not surprised that he rose from the dead; it was not possible for the grave to hold Him, but Isaac was not God in the flesh. Had he come back from ashes it would have been the miracle of all miracles, but it was not.

When Abraham had carried through his intention as far as he was allowed to go, God intervened: He called to him again and said, 'now I know'. At the same moment Abraham's eyes were opened and he saw. The high father of a multitude was not permitted to slay his son — only the most high God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ did that. Abraham saw into something of the invisible thing that was accomplished at Golgotha, and understood at least in part what no one else, not even those who stood closest to the cross saw or understood, namely the sacrifice which both the Father and the Son made. Everybody else saw the crucifixion, but they did not understand even that. As far as humanly possible in all but the final step Abraham had been allowed to enter in to the Father's feelings; to a measure he understood the involvement of God's heart in the mysteries of the crucifixion. The sufferings of the Son are much talked about; they should be: all may be made conformable unto His death and enter into the fellowship of His sufferings, but not much is said about the sufferings of the Father. This may be because there have been very few who have climbed their Moriah; just a few sightseers perhaps, or some servants who stay afar off 'with the ass', watching father and son dwindling away into the distance and up the mountain arid out of sight. Only a percentage of men reach even the foothills of the mountain of mystery and suffering which rise from the plains of rest and lead on to the heights, and then mount to the peak of fellowship with the Father and the Son. The challenge of Abraham is a challenge to every man's faith. His last message is both a spur and an encouragement, holding promise without definition in a world of understanding without bounds. Every man who ascends to that summit will realise why he was born, and why he is called and what life is all about. He will not see what Abraham saw though; he will certainly see anew the land of far distances and all that God wants him to see after he has done the will of God. This is the object of the call — that place within the place which only the faithful see.

Surely it is a strange thing that so little is made of Isaac's part in all this. He is referred to, and the question he asked, together with Abraham's answer to it, is recorded, but beyond this he seems to have filled a minor, even a passive role. Throughout his entire life from his birth to his death, as well as through this particular period, the son was completely overshadowed by the father: Abraham towers over everything and everyone, and justly so. It is obvious that the writer intended that the father, not the son, should be seen. This may be because, although both of them occupied focal positions of great typical significance, Abraham more nearly represented the Father than Isaac did the Son, for, although he was the seed promised to Abraham through Sarah, he was not 'the seed of the woman' promised by God in the beginning. After all, great though he was, Abraham was only a man, and miraculous as Isaac's birth was, his mother was not a virgin; neither was Moriah Golgotha, nor the altar the cross; Isaac did not die, neither did he rise again. Though the Bible episode was traumatic and dramatic, it was only figurative. But figurative of who and of what? The accepted answer to that question is, 'of Christ and of His death and resurrection'; but perhaps this may not be so, or perhaps not in quite the same way as may be thought. Consideration of a few scriptural comparisons may serve to give us clearer view and help us to fuller understanding of these things.

New Testament writers assure us there was nothing figurative about the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He was so dead that He was hastily embalmed and buried and, without ceremony, sealed in a borrowed tomb (although the owner of the tomb did not loan it — he gave it — afterwards he realised that he had in actual fact only loaned it for the Lord's temporary burial). Quite contrary to this, and as already pointed out, Isaac the son did not die; there was no resurrection on Moriah; he was not buried, there was no tomb; only in a figure did the father receive him from the dead. Considering this the inquiring mind may ask, 'if Isaac did not truly represent Christ, who did he typify, and where does he fit into the New Covenant?'

Isaac does have his counterpart in the New Testament, but it is not one man, it is a company of people. Of these it may be as truly said as it was of Isaac, that in a figure the Father received them from the dead: this company is called the Church. This is a great mystery and wonderfully true, that on the day the Father received His Son from the dead He also received the whole Church, every member of it bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. All that was accomplished by the resurrection is matched by what was involved in it. The actuality of it, namely that Christ rose from the dead bodily, is equalled by the fact that, figuratively, with Him, the Church which is His body also rose. This unity, this oneness, this togetherness with Christ was taught by Paul and revealed most plainly in his Ephesian epistle. When Christ was crucified, at the same time and on the same cross, every member of the Church was crucified, and when He rose all rose with Him.

Paul wrote, 'I am (was) crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live', and completed the truth in another place, 'If ye then be risen with Christ ...'. It would have been of no more use to God to have actually slain every member of the Church on crosses and raised them up again from the dead than it would have been to Abraham if he had slain and raised up Isaac (had it been possible for him to do this latter). Had Abraham attempted it, it would have been his folly: that he was willing to have done so was his virtue. Everything which took place on Moriah, historical and actual though it was on Abraham's part, was figurative and prophetic on God's part, even to the provision of the ram caught by its horns in the bush, provided for the ultimate burnt offering. In itself the ram was no more than an animal, yet at that time it died in Isaac's place, a substitute for him even as Christ was a substitute for us. Surely this is the truest interpretation and deepest meaning of that word of Abraham to Isaac as they approached the mount, 'God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering'; the son must have pondered that most deeply. All that Abraham 'saw' by faith that day is not easy, perhaps not possible, to define. Was that word to his son a promise of life by substitution? Was it a prophecy? Was it the word of a seer? Or was it all three? He used the future tense, 'will' — had he used the past tense, 'has provided' it could be thought he had already 'seen' the ram caught in the thicket awaiting their arrival — but then the whole enactment would have been a charade.

When together father and son left the ass and the men that day Abraham was prepared in heart to slay his son, but he did not lie to his servants when he said that he and his son would 'go yonder' and worship and come again, he knew that they would. Nothing could be a clearer declaration of faith; he was absolutely certain that God would provide. Abraham offered up his son to God; it was the supreme test and God took him to the extreme point — he stood, knife in hand, over his son, poised to deliver the death-blow when God stopped him.

He had passed the test, he had proved that all his faith and his hope and his love were in the God who gave him his son, not in the son God gave him. Abraham had been given every reason by God to believe that in his son lay all his future hopes of being the father of nations and the progenitor of kings, and he had centred all his love in him. It was because of this that God put him through the test, making special emphasis on love, 'Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest', it was his faith and hope and love that was being so severely tested.

How could it be? Isaac was the fruit of all his faith, the ground of all his hopes, the object and purpose of his love, the answer to his prayers, the embodiment of God's promise, the reward of his labours, the end of his long weary pilgrimage, a compensation for the great disappointment that he never found the city of God. Why Isaac? Was it just to make him a type of Christ? Did God do such things just for that? No, He did not, He did it partly for that. He did it: (1) to know whether Abraham loved Him more than anyone or anything else; (2) that Abraham may prove himself to be 'the high father of a multitude' indeed; (3) that Abraham should enter into some knowledge of God's own Fatherhood and its cost. Abraham only received his son back from the dead in a figure, but it was counted to him as though it had all been actual; only God prevented him from slaying his son. Abraham was intent to receive Isaac as a double gift, both of them miraculous, given from barrenness and given from death. Isaac was the miracle child given to him by God, but the faith that received him was greater than the gift. We all have so much yet to learn about this faith, chiefly perhaps that the faith by which we are given life and by which we maintain it, that is, the faith by which we live, works by love. Had Abraham not loved God supremely he could never have done what he did for Him that day — namely give Him back His son. Abraham knew that Isaac his son was God's son; that is why he could not withhold him. Abraham loved God supremely. We say, and rightly so, that Abraham did it by faith, but only because he loved God so much. It was love that demanded he slay his son and his faith rose equal to it, and in the sight, as well as in the reckoning of God, he did so. Thereby he doubled the gift and multiplied the blessings he first received, for he received his son back again from God. By faith Abraham was overwhelmed with God's love and by the gift of God was filled with it: 'The greatest of these is love'.

Had Abraham in reality slain his son and burned him to ashes, and Isaac had come back from that nothingness, a completely new relationship would have commenced between them — life would have changed totally. Nothing could have been quite the same again between them. Such an extreme and unthinkable experience would have changed everything utterly and permanently. Only the Father and the Son could have gone through such an unimaginable experience and retained sanity and not have been rent in two. Only that degree of unimpartable love which has bound them together from all eternity could have outlived that — and it has. Hallelujah!

But perhaps after all the verse should not be interpreted to mean or even to imply such things, for there is yet another way of looking at it all, namely this, that God was the one who received Isaac that day. Verse seventeen makes plain that in the reality of unseen things, by faith Abraham did offer up his only begotten son: there can be no questioning that. Although he did not finally slay Isaac, in heart Abraham did offer him up to God, and God did receive him from Abraham. God never asks anything of anyone without intending to receive from that person whatever it is for which He asks. In full assurance of this, may it not be true that the pronoun 'he' used in verse

nineteen refers primarily to God and only secondarily to Abraham? By all the laws of grammar that is what the writer must be understood to be saying. Here is the verse, 'Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure'. The pronoun 'him' which occurs twice obviously refers to Isaac: the only name to appear is 'God': the third pronoun, 'he', can only therefore refer to God. The word 'accounting' is used of Abraham, who, though unnamed, by that word is introduced into the verse, which thus continues the statement made in verse seventeen: 'Abraham ... offered up his only begotten son ... accounting that God was able to raise him up ... from the dead; from whence also he (He) received him in a figure'. The first word could therefore be rightly changed to 'Abraham was accounting', and the pronoun 'he' be read as referring to either Abraham or God or to both. Whichever it is may not matter greatly, for each received him. Abraham as physically, God as spiritually and representatively.

The whole episode is highly typical, and the fact that Isaac is referred to as Abraham's only begotten son immediately reveals that the writer has chosen to place it in this category, for, as scripture makes clear, Abraham had many sons, the first of whom was Ishmael, borne to him by Hagar, Sarah's maid. Isaac, whom Sarah bore to him, was his second son. Later, following Sarah's death and his marriage to Keturah, Abraham had many sons by her also. Isaac was Sarah's first and only son, not Abraham's; he was also Abraham's first and only begotten son by Sarah, that is by promise according to God's will; he was not the first begotten of all his sons. The first son was according to Sarah's and (eventually) Abraham's will. All of this reference to the only begotten is for no other reason than to point to Christ; Isaac was not his father's only begotten, but Jesus was and is the Father's only begotten. Unlike Sarah's Isaac, Mary's Jesus was not her only begotten, He was both her firstborn and the only son she ever begat from His Father, but she also bore many sons and daughters unto Joseph after she had borne God His only begotten Son on to the earth. Until then she was a virgin, which Sarah most certainly was not when she bore Isaac to Abraham.

This surprising and extraordinary statement about Isaac which does not appear to have foundation in fact is perhaps made in accordance with a principle of truth not plainly declared and not always apparent in scripture; nevertheless it governs all God's dealings with men. This principle may be stated thus; when a man in receipt of promise and under command from God steps out of line with God's will revealed by the promise and the command, whatever he does while in that condition of disobedience is counted as having not been done, and in God's mercy is blotted out. An instance of this is to be found in the dealings of God with Israel while still in the wilderness, yet drawing near to the promised land. Baalam had been hired to curse them, but he found himself unable to do so. Instead he found himself taken over by the Spirit of God, who turned his demonic intentions into a marvellous statement of intention to bless God's people. During the course of the prophecy God said He could see neither iniquity nor perversity in Jacob, which must have sounded unbelievable in the ears of everyone who heard it — including the prophet himself. Israel were in the wilderness because of those very sins, yet God could only say He saw no such thing among them. The only conclusion to be drawn from this is that, although scripture records many of the nation's sins, God in mercy had blotted out all of them and in His sight they existed no longer.

This is the ground upon which the statement about Abraham is made by the Hebrews writer. Abraham's reluctance to beget a son through Hagar is plainly shown in

Genesis. He only did so under pressure from Sarah; it brought sorrow to many hearts, and both he and Sarah must have wished indeed that they had never contrived such a thing. In His grace God forgave them this wrong and did not count it against them; He allowed Abraham and Sarah to start afresh, removed Hagar and Ishmael from the scene, and true to His ways with all men, blotted out entirely Abraham's departure from the way of faith and looked upon it as though it had never existed. Isaac then became Abraham's firstborn, for according to God's intention and the promise He made to Abraham and the way He dealt with Sarah, Isaac was the firstborn. As Paul says, Ishmael was born after the flesh and Isaac was born after the Spirit, and 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called ... this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son

Sarah, who was entirely barren all through her life until she conceived Isaac, relapsed into her barrenness after he was born, but not so with Abraham; he retained the renewal of the powers God bestowed upon him for the birth of Isaac right into his old age. Why this difference should have been made is not revealed, but perhaps it may be explained by the fact that Sarah was next to Eve in the line of the promise made in Eden that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Indeed Sarah is more illustrative of that woman than either Eve or even Mary, who was the vessel chosen by the Father to bear His Son. Both Eve and Mary had other children but not Sarah; she bore and brought up one only son and then died as barren as she had been before the miracle. It cannot be without some significance that we are told that Isaac lived with his wife in Sarah's tent after her decease, although it is a connection of ideas rather than of vital truth which stimulates thought about it. There is no faith principle involved in this, but it gives all Bible lovers an opportunity to marvel afresh and wonder at the skill of God. He causes well nigh invisible shades of meaning to come to light, that blended together they may enhance the marvellous pattern and contribute to the beauty of the finished work. Blessed indeed are they who see somewhat of the wondrous patterns of the divine plan, and by faith follow on through the affinities of truth to love Him and adore the perfection of His mind.

The names of Isaac and Jacob are linked in scripture with the name of Abraham, but the vision and the spirit and the drive of Abraham was not in them. God associates His name with theirs though, and says He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, coupling the names together almost as one, which is blessing enough. What a God of grace He is. Dwelling a little on this numerical idea we may also here find a Bible example of 'second and third generationism'. The phrase is quite modern, denoting spiritual degeneration; it is not found in scripture; there it is comprehended in the word 'backsliding'. 'Second and third generationism' refers to the marked spiritual loss and the resultant spiritual decline observable between one generation of God's people and the next, and the one which follows that as next in order to that. The phrase generally means that these successive generations have retained the outward forms and possibly the beliefs also of what their forebears had, and probably believe in and hold to them tenaciously, but that the truth of which those forms and tenets speak has been neglected and therefore the power of them has long since departed. 'Something' so hard to define has vanished. Here in this chapter we can see this decline extending into the fourth generation, for the writer includes Joseph, Jacob's son, in the list of the great men he chooses to mention.

Isaac, Jacob and Joseph were all outstanding men in their day; God was with each of them and we all can and should learn much from the record of their lives. The

comparison offered here though is not between ourselves and them but between them and Abraham. There is a most significant lack of either information or eulogistic commendation provided about them in this chapter; they were 'by faith' men, but although they were not completely overshadowed by the towering stature of Abraham they appear as dwarfs beside him; and who would not? This was not the intention of the writer but it is nonetheless so; the contrast between them is so great and so obvious. In a figure Isaac was both offered up to God and received back from the dead, that was wonderful, but all was accomplished by Abraham's faith, not Isaac's. He was born miraculously, was circumcised traditionally, was married eventually, dwelt in tents with his father and Jacob normally, farmed successfully and, before his death, blessed Jacob and Esau customarily. Sad to say though, he did this mistakenly because his wife and son acted deceitfully towards him. How different he was from his father who, in full knowledge of what he was doing, deliberately went to Moriah intending to slay his son in order to give him to God and receive him back from Him from the dead.

Jacob, at the end of his life, complained that his days were few and evil, (whose and what evil he did not say). He went down into Egypt and for the purposes of the Hebrews writer the one noteworthy thing about him was that before he died he blessed both the sons of Joseph and, leaning on his staff, worshipped the God before whose eyes, in co-operation with his mother, he had acted as a deceiver and a thief. So much for the second and third generation. Joseph, the great-great-grandson of Abraham, prophesied about the Exodus and gave commandment concerning his bones when it should come to pass. He appears to have been a greater man than his father, but who will say that he was as great as Abraham? That completes the list of their contributions to the 'by faith' statements made here by the writer, who includes them in order to point to their eldership to the Hebrews. Each of these men and the things he did by faith hold a place of importance; in their day they were all-important, but not one of them and his works is to be compared with Abraham and his accomplishments. In course of time God was to open His heart to Moses, making promises to him and giving him instructions with reference to the future of Israel in the promised land. These reveal the course of action He had decided upon, and included a statement of intent based upon a principle already shown to be operative in the human race, but not yet defined. This principle clearly emerges in the statement made by God with regard to punishment: 'visiting the iniquities of the father upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me ... showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments'.

For some reason best known to Him, but not explained, God incorporated into His dealings with men a numerical system. Undoubtedly in eternity we shall find out why He did this, and doing so discover that it is based upon a law in Himself not yet disclosed to mankind. In this numerical system each number has a specific spiritual significance also. As stated by God, hereditary punishment meted out by Him extends unto the third or fourth generation, and then only upon those who hate Him, and certainly not upon those who love Him — these find mercy. We see then that, though by law punishment can extend through four generations, it does not extend to the fifth, and herein lies the spiritual principle — five is the number of grace. So it is that the writer sets out his chapter on faith as a revelation of grace rather than of law, because the principle of grace runs through, and in the end supercedes law as God's basis of dealing with mankind. We may further observe this by casting back a reflective eye to the beginning of the chapter. Although not mentioned here, Adam, as we know, was

the first man; he was the first sinner also, and through him, sin, death and judgement passed upon all mankind and the earth on which we dwell. Next to him and in order of appearance in the chapter comes Abel, followed in succession by Enoch, and then Noah — three (a trinity) of just men: together with Adam they are four men, then the flood — the judgement. Following the flood comes the fifth man, Abraham, and a new beginning in grace. With his entrance the count begins again — Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph — four men, then judgement, punishment, darkness and death, this time, by God's mercy, not universal but confined to one nation, Egypt. What a lesson to Jacob's children and to all who observe. Following this, the fifth man emerges, Moses, and by him grace. Though this may be a little surprising, it is true: God began anew with grace. It was quite a while before the law was introduced, and unexpected though it may seem it was grace that moved God to introduce it, and grace runs throughout it, bringing merciful forgiveness of all sin through the shed blood.

Contradistinctively from the bare mention of the names of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph and but a spare reference to some work or word of faith each did or spoke, as soon as Moses' name appears the writer becomes more expansive again. This is done in order to enhance grace, for both Abraham and Moses were the leading men in the great eras of grace then commencing. Seeing that he is repeating what he did previously with regard to Abraham and his predecessors, it also appears that the writer's purpose at this point was to point his readers to the most highly esteemed of their national heroes as being demonstrators of faith. Closer examination however also reveals that he may also have wished to show them that, great though these men were, and wonderful their faith, they died disappointed, not having received all the promises, nor having all their hopes fulfilled. As already pointed out, Abraham never found the city, and Moses did not enter the promised land, though each of them respectively had lived in hope and expectation that his dear desire would be fulfilled. Nevertheless each receives from the writer the honour due to him, and he now speaks with admiration of Moses; but first he mentions his parents.

BY FAITH MOSES — **Verses twenty-three to twenty-nine.**

'By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents'. How blessed Moses was to have been born to such parents: what a heritage. Obviously a man's natural heredity is not by his own faith; the seeds of their son's greatness lay in the hearts of Moses' parents, Amram and Jochabed; they saw that Moses was a 'proper' child. Whether or not his parents lived to see the eventual greatness and glory of their famous son is not told, but this we are told that we may see that faith in their hearts enabled them to see that he was proper material for God. If he finds that in a man, God does great things with him. For love's sake and for what they saw in their son that couple risked their lives; ingrained faith in a man's heart is always coupled with great courage. Faith can never be great without great courage; fear cripples faith. Faith must either overcome fear or be overcome by it, they cannot exist together in the same heart. In the hearts of this couple, especially in the heart of Moses' mother, faith overcoming fear also overcame the world, and they defied the king and his genocidal law. This spirit was inbred in their son when he was born; he needed such parents because he was born to be the deliverer of his people. This is all the more remarkable when we realise that Moses was not the firstborn son of his parents: Aaron was the firstborn. Miriam also was Moses' senior; she was also his nursemaid from afar while he floated in the ark among the reeds on the banks of the Nile.

For all that Moses was looked upon in Egypt as a prince of the realm, when he came to young manhood he was an Israelite. How soon in his young life he realised who he was and from whence he came — whether his princess foster-mother told him, or some other person gossiped it to him — we do not know. It might have been a member of his own family or a relative or someone else of his own tribe; that is not important for us to know. The important thing is that, when Moses did become aware of his nationality, who he was and to whom he really belonged, he became a changed person. Scripture says of him, 'by faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter'. It was a bold stand to make, a risky one; some would have thought it a foolish one too, for he was in line for the throne. Moses, full of courage made his choice, it was a step of loyalty and of faith: he was identifying himself with God's people and his own. The spirit of his family was in him, he was now commencing to live by faith. How much Moses owed to the faith of his parents who can say? He may not then have realised it was the faith of Abraham too. What incalculable wealth is bred into children of men and women of character and courage and moral uprightness, whose spirits refuse to bow down to tyrants or to give in to satan's agents. Perhaps when his spirit began to rise in him and his heart began to grapple with the problems of his nationality and identity Moses realised these things and determined before God that his future should lie with the children of Abraham.

One of the amazing things about the life of faith is the variety of ways by which a man may enter into it. We must all beware of rigidity of thought and narrow viewpoint. God has more than one way of getting hold of a person. Faith can develop from a number of sources and through many circumstances and events; ways for men to enter into the blessed life are abundant and varied. A little comparative thinking will help us here. We know nothing of Abraham's parentage or of what went on in him before God called him; his father was called Terah, his brother Haran, his nephew Lot; another relative was named Laban. All those had their respective wives and children, and it seems they believed in and practised intermarriage and perhaps either polygamy or concubinage. This was certainly not the background from which Moses came. What Abraham's spiritual heredity or manner of life was in Chaldea we cannot tell; we do know however that, whatever it was, God called him out and away from it altogether. That is how it began with him, but not so with Moses.

One of the surprising things arising from a comparison between Abraham and Moses is the great contrast between them. Moses' life of faith did not commence with some kind of call as did Abraham's; Moses did not receive an actual call from God until he was out in the backside of the desert. For him the life of faith began in Egypt, and he received this call from God precisely because he had already taken a stand of faith. The decisions he took one day in the land of the Pharaohs were absolutely fundamental to the call he later received in the wilderness. The writer to the Hebrews reveals that, upon that occasion, God did not call Moses: he heard no voice, he was not asked or advised or commanded to do anything or to go anywhere; his was a calculated decision, not a response to a call. There came a day when he sat down and marshalled some facts: (1) he could be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter: that was what she wanted; (2) he could have the pleasures of sin: that was what the devil wanted; (3) he could have the treasures of Egypt: that is what all ordinary men would have wanted. On the other hand he could: (1) be a commoner and a slave instead of a prince; (2) suffer affliction with the people of God; (3) take upon himself the reproach of the as yet unknown Christ. After mature consideration of these three alternatives to

his present position, he made his decision, then by faith he: (1) chose affliction instead of pleasure; (2) refused to be called the princess's son; (3) respected the reward of such a decision and the recompense it would bring to him and to God's people. Faith's refusal, faith's choice and faith's respect of reward are as vital to spiritual life as is faith's obedience to a special call.

Comparisons are odious, it is said, but only if they are intended to be offensive, or received in the wrong spirit; they are sometimes useful for clarification, that by them we may learn. Abraham's greatness lay in his initial response to God's call, but not so Moses; he was called, but not until later. His initial greatness lay in the moral courage which made him face the facts, make a calculated choice, and take a decision; he was a brave man. Although he could not claim a distinctive call, he did know he had been miraculously preserved from death; what he did not know was that he was specially chosen, and that he was marked out for greatness. Afterwards, when he was out in the desert where the call came he knew, but not at first. How men achieve greatness or become famous by doing outstanding or unique things for God varies very greatly; that distinction is affected by many things, and is therefore difficult to assess. Primarily of course it is by the will of God, but not the least factor in it is the kind of person involved, and the conditions and times in which he lives and the purposes of God for that time and for the future.

Abraham, as already noted, did not have believing parents as did Moses; nobody had defied the wrath of a king on his behalf, and there were no people of God in Ur of the Chaldees. On the other hand Moses, though born in Egypt, had a godly heritage second to none; his position was quite different from Abraham's. This is why comparisons are oftentimes made quite mistakenly and judgements passed foolishly and unwarrantably. Under no circumstances may the greatness of anybody be measured by things he or she achieves. The will of God must first be taken into consideration, for that is paramount; then the faith with which he or she sets out to accomplish it. Everyone of whom we have read so far, whether he or she achieved much or little, had a good report from God, and each one obtained it by faith. All man's spiritual life, its growth, its development, its stature and its progress is governed by faith; there is grace for all, but eternal life is the life of faith and cannot be had or lived apart from it. This is why, in the beginning, God made faith natural to us; upon hearing the gospel anyone who will exercise his will can move in faith and have salvation.

Because Paul once said, 'all men have not the faith', it must not be thought that he was saying, 'no one has faith', or 'only a few have faith'. God made Adam and then Eve by faith, and insofar as faith is part of the law of His own being He made them of faith too. This whole creation is a faith creation — everything in it that God created and made is a 'by faith' creation; this is why Jesus said that it is possible to tell a tree to be plucked up by the root and planted in the sea. Provided that it is the will of God to have it removed the tree would obey, He said. Unlike human beings the tree has no power to operate in faith, but neither has it power to resist faith. Faith was not incorporated into the makeup of a tree but faith was incorporated into the makeup of a human being. To remove a tree or a mountain requires faith only in the individual doing it. When the Lord cursed the fig tree so that it died, He commented on the faith by which He accomplished it — 'have the faith of God', He said. Such things cannot be accomplished by human faith.

Any person who has so lived that his faith has been destroyed or he has lost it, can receive faith back again if he hears the word of God from a person speaking the word of faith. For this reason Paul asked that men should pray for him that the word of God should run through him freely and be glorified. He wanted to preach the word of faith, and once said quite boldly that this was precisely what he did. He also wrote about mutual faith, making plain that they, as well as he, must have faith in order that he could impart unto them some spiritual gift. Obviously if they were without faith they could receive nothing from him, and would please neither God nor him. In order to be entirely faithless a man must quench his own natural faith and refuse to listen to God's word. Sometimes men block the way to faith in their own selves, clogging up their hearts and minds with wrong beliefs, false religious ideas, belief in material things, political notions, secular philosophies, which things all prove that they have faith, but in false things. Substitutes for the gospel abound everywhere and are held so tenaciously that souls cannot believe the truth when they do hear it.

Not so Moses though. He heard all the vain and worldly things of his day, the gossip of royal courts and popular political beliefs and the social scandals, he was trained in all the arts of the Egyptians, but he let none of this replace his faith; that remained in him indestructible. He evaluated everything, made up his own mind weighed up the 'fors and againsts', pros and cons, and arrived at the correct conclusion — he knew that whatever loss he sustained by his choice would be more than recompensed unto him by God. What he desired most of all was that he should so live that he would receive the good report from God. Whatever anyone else said about him and his beliefs mattered little to him, he wanted to please God and have His commendation, and that requires faith as much as building an ark or sacrificing a son. Moses was an ordinary man; it is faith that makes men extraordinary.

Between verses twenty-six and twenty-seven a period of forty years had elapsed, during which time Moses lived in isolation from the people of God. He was neither in his own land, that is, in the land of Egypt where he was born, nor in the promised land where he felt he and his people ought to be. He was living in the land of Midian, working as a shepherd somewhere in the back side of the desert, feeding his father-in-law's sheep. He had married the priest of Midian's daughter, who had borne him two sons, and there he had settled down to live and work and raise a family. What he believed or what communion with God and the state of his spiritual life was during this period none but he and God knew. How lonely he must have been; the culture shock must have been tremendous beyond words. Courtier to commoner, art to vulgarity, from being waited upon to waiting upon sheep! How he survived out there, learning to shepherd the sheep, having to resist the pressures put upon him to embrace the idolatry of the people among whom he lived, is not revealed. 'He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible'; to his praise he kept faith with his God of whom there can be no effigy. His only fault was that he let go of the covenant of circumcision which God had made with Abraham about living in the promised land. Had he lost the vision? Did he no longer believe in this sign that he bore in his flesh that he believed in the covenant of God? Had he lost hope that either he or his family, especially his boys, would ever see the land? Perhaps so. Who knows? But whatever it was God never forsook him, and so he endured. If he had let go of the covenant sign and would not force it upon his wife by forcing it upon her children he had not thereby forfeited his faith; he still 'saw' God, and the vision sustained him; he would endure all for His sake.

Moses bore the reproach of Christ: that to him was riches; he had wealth untold, and he treasured it. Just when he 'forsook Egypt' is not textually clear; he himself wrote that he fled the country following the death of an Egyptian with whom he had a fight. Fear gripped him, he expected retribution, he was a born, an avowed Israelite — he fled. The Hebrews writer says that he forsook Egypt not fearing the wrath of the king, he could not therefore have meant that occasion. He must have been thinking of another time. Was it out there in the loneliness of the desert when he 'saw' Him who cannot be seen and received the great commission that all his fears left him? Was that the moment he forsook Egypt in heart for ever? There are so many possibilities as to when the great forsaking took place; it might have been then that he took the step, knowing that doing so he would almost certainly incur the wrath of the king. On the other hand the writer may have been referring to the time when, overcoming all, he rallied Israel to do the will of God and led them out of Egypt in triumph on that great night of redemption. What a forsaking that was; it was nothing other than a total evacuation of the whole land of Goshen. We cannot tell the moment when all fear left him, and he lived fearless before God and all men for evermore. Most probably it was during the meeting with I AM at the bush: there he saw the fire and heard His voice and felt His anger at the excuses he made about himself. Was it there that the fear of God took the place of the fear of man?

From that time onwards Moses' faith was all-powerful, its comprehensiveness cannot be exaggerated. In a way that could not have happened in Abraham's day Moses became the great mediator for all Israel; to a degree he became all Israel to God. It is said of Abraham that by faith before God he became the father of us all, and though not so literally, before God it was rather like that with Moses. Rather unexpectedly we read that, 'Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them'. It was all Israel that kept the passover and the sprinkling of blood, yet here it is said that it was Moses who did it: such is the power and the reward of true faith. What an insight this affords us into the heart of God and into the way the good report is earned by man. O how much credit God gives to the heart of faith in whomsoever it is found; Moses was given credit for what the whole multitude of people did. Not all the credit though; each man would have been credited for responding to God's command and doing what he was told to do, but every other man did what he did because he responded to Moses' command. They all had faith to a degree, otherwise they would not have done it, and that was noted by God and credited to them, but before God Moses believed for them all! What faith he had; all fear had gone, he could believe God for everything. The king's wrath meant nothing to Moses: he had met and believed and obeyed God. The man was beyond the power of devils or men; in his heart he had the testimony that he pleased God — that is faith's strength: faith knows that everything is fitted together by the word of God. There is difference between doing this involuntarily and doing it voluntarily; God takes note of this, and on the basis of this knowledge deals with souls with understanding and wisdom in grace. Much of God's dealing with souls turns on how each one's natural faith has been used and to what ends the natural abilities have functioned. The soul of man, being informed by the ceaseless function of these senses, forms a conscious mind giving rise to opinions, decisions, expressions, and the host of other things by which we are manifest to ourselves and to others. These things are fundamental to life, nor can they be changed at deepest levels except we become spiritually regenerate. From the moment that happens we have ability to use these powers properly, that is for God's purposes; being adaptations of original faith they

are quickened and enhanced by the faith which comes by the hearing of God's word and the oncoming of God's spirit. It is by the development of these powers, which now reconnect him to God, that the measure of a man's faith is determined. Moses was a man of great faith, and so was each of his predecessors mentioned in the chapter. Moses had faith for all Israel and to him God made known His ways. By this great favour bestowed on him Moses discovered that each one of these ways was the way because it was the faith way; walking in it he went on and on, becoming greater still with every step.

The contents of this chapter furnish evidence that there are vast differences between men of faith. The author and finisher of the faith of men is the man Jesus who Moses met there at the bush. In Him faith is complete. He manifested faith fully and to the furthest degree possible to mankind; thereby He was perfected. His faith — that quality of faith — is the faith which God incorporated into man's spiritual nature when He made him; man was designed for this. Faith was adapted and fashioned to function in the form of the five sensory powers which all men have — sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell; these are man's acquisitive powers. Hence man has eyes, ears, palate, nose and the whole body area of touch and feeling (especially the finger tips). God made us like this primarily so that we should see Him, hear Him, touch Him, taste Him, smell Him. By incorporating these senses into us, the soul of man, putting them to their primary use, may attain to full stature in the sight of God; except he does this a man will not grow spiritually, but will remain a babe. All is well when a man does use these 'by faith' powers as God intended: when he uses them incorrectly, that is puts them to carnal or anti-Christ use, his spirit, if regenerate, will degenerate and lose all power to please God and gain a good report. Until a man is regenerate in spirit he can do no other than live in the flesh, function in the world, and prostitute his powers unto the devil.

All the rest of the people followed in Moses' train, and it is said of them that 'By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land'. Once the way was opened up and made clear to them every one of them passed over. It was easy to do so then; the path was nice and clean and dry, and they saw that God had made it for them. Besides this they were being chased by Pharaoh and his army, and to have stayed where they were would have meant either death or recapture, so they went over: they were very wise. The faith road was the safe road and they took it; to do so was just plain common sense. There was nothing difficult about what they did; though it was an act of faith it was by no means a great act; they did not need to exercise great faith to make that crossing, it was Moses who did the great thing, not they. God led them to the Red Sea, He saw the path through it plainly: His way for them was in that sea, hidden from their eyes as yet. 'Stretch out thine hand over the sea', He said to Moses; Moses did so and there was the way. It was Moses who had the faith though; neither he nor they saw the way; Moses saw God though — that was the way for him and Israel — God is man's way. Men of great faith are pioneers; by their ministry they show the way, opening it up for all to see; it then becomes easy for others to believe and use their faith too — it is only common sense. Faith is the implicit trust of a man's heart in God by reason of the quickening of his inbred powers through God's grace in speaking to him.

This is the purpose for which the epistle was written; on God's behalf the writer was wanting every Hebrew of his day to exercise his or her faith. He had realised something which may not be recognised at the first reading of his work, and it is of

this that he is writing. Reading this particular chapter it could easily be supposed that he was intent upon impressing his readers with the exploits of a handful of very special individuals, mostly men, who accomplished marvellous things by faith. If this was so, then he has succeeded, for their names are in the chapter for all to see, and, besides this, so many sermons have been preached about them among Bible-loving people that their names are household words, and so they should be. These individuals deserve all the fame they have; they have won it, and even though their day has closed and we are in the new Christian era they are counted giants among us still. We thank God for them and are pleased to have them as our elders. However, to present these persons to us was not the main reason for including their names in the book. Closer reading of the chapter reveals that what God wanted was a people living by faith, not just a few persons whose faith was of gargantuan proportions. He did not just want one individual person to live and work by faith, or even two or three or twenty or a hundred times that number of persons sprinkled throughout history; He wanted millions, everybody, to be living by faith.

God revealed His heart to Abraham about this right at the beginning, telling him that his seed would be as uncountable as the dust of the ground and the stars of heaven for multitude; God raised Abraham up unto this end. So down through Isaac and Jacob God pursued His purpose, multiplying the seed-faith of Abraham into a son and a family and a tribe and twelve tribes until, by Moses' day, it was a nation. That is what He wanted; it was what He promised to Abraham, and for this reason He raised up Moses to go down to Egypt and bring out His nation for Him: 'Israel is my firstborn', He said. He had Moses, and what a great man of faith he was, but He wanted a nation of faith, a great company which could not be numbered for multitude. He did not want them numbered by man either. He wanted the number of the elect to be known only to Himself. David got himself and the nation into serious trouble when he desired to know how many there were in the land. Censuses may be deemed necessary by men who claim nations of fellow-creatures as theirs, but they have no place in God's nation. 'The Lord knoweth them that are his', says Paul, 'And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity'.

God never expected great faith or marvellous works of the multitude of people, but He did insist that every one of them should, indeed must, be a man or woman of faith. It is wonderful to be so loved and wanted of God, and what a wonder it is when He brings a man to faith. It has to happen of course; He still wants a people of faith; that is why He sent His Son into the world. In times past an Abraham and a Moses would do, but now it is His only Son Jesus, not they, who is the wonder man. There came a day when Abraham died; his sons came and buried him: he did not rise again. It was the same with Moses also: he died and God Himself came and buried him. Like Abraham, Moses did not rise again. Unlike Abraham, Moses' body did not even lie in the land of promise. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca and Jacob and Leah were buried there, but not Moses and his wife. God purposely took his body and buried it outside the land of Canaan to ensure that it was not laid there with those three great predecessors from whom Israel sprang. God granted this man this special honour above all others because of what he accomplished, and by conferring upon him this great privilege pointed a truth we all need to understand.

Moses was a distinguished man whose faith was equal to that of Abraham, and probably greater than that of Isaac and Jacob, but he was not one of the three founders of the nation; he was their deliverer and lawgiver. The three 'fathers' of Israel were

pre-law; they were under grace and it was this that, above all, God wanted Israel to understand. The law for righteousness was holy and good — it was given by God to the people that they should live under it in the land. Canaan was not given to them by law and by Moses, it was given by promise through Abraham; Israel did not earn the land, it was theirs by gift. When Israel thought of the land they must think of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, not of Moses. Law-keeping requires very little faith, only sufficient to be obedient, and that often is a matter of common sense. God intended law-keeping to be a way of life; He gave the law for that reason — it was a most gracious act. Having been born with the work of the law already written in their hearts, the Israelites should have found no difficulty in keeping the written law when God gave it to them. That law was both an authority and a meticulously detailed summary of the way the inner law of being should be expressed in life; it should have been recognised by Israel as such: the Mosaic law is an expression of nature and of grace. The law is not opposed to grace, law and grace being both given by God are one. It is the works of the law — chiefly the personal obligation to provide sacrifices for sin, the obligatory keeping of fasts and feasts and such things — these are the things which are now so contrary to grace, but this is only because they are insults to God and His greater grace. He gave His Son to be sacrificed for sin — that is sufficient. Salvation is God's work, not man's.

The response to grace requires a greater more living faith than doing law-works: what the Lord said to Thomas eight days after His resurrection puts it perfectly, 'because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed'. Faith in the invisible Christ will bring us to God and keep us obedient in His love. It should be thoroughly understood by every man that faith is a work, believing is something a man has to do himself: it is the inward work of the soul. It is not an outward work, but it does result, indeed it is demonstrated, in outward works, as the writer is revealing in this chapter. We are saved by grace through the law of faith, certainly not by law-works lest any man should boast; grace works through faith and faith works by love. Being love God loves, and because He loves grace works on our behalf so that faith can work in us unto our salvation by that grace.

Dear Moses never got into the promised land during his lifetime, nor did he reach it in his death. Joseph's bones entered the land, but not Moses'. He died at God's wish in the wilderness and was buried there in an unmarked grave. He had so much wished to go into the land, he must have died a greatly disappointed man. God was not unmindful of that, and had actually provided some better thing for him, of which He had not yet spoken; God's will and ways are always best. To Moses was granted the great privilege of standing with the transfigured Lord on earth, and in the sight and hearing of three apostles discussing with Him another exodus. It was wonderful beyond words; it was joy. Disappointment greater than his own former disappointment must have filled him as he talked with Christ, for the promised land for which he had lived and striven those forty years of pilgrimage had itself become Egypt and there had to be another exodus. God had been saving up His Lamb for it; Moses was standing with Him. It was all so wonderfully tragic. Great as was Moses' faith, he only came out of Egypt into the wilderness; his 'home' he never reached. Neither Abraham nor he settled down in the promised land, for neither found what they sought, though they indeed had great faith. What did the Hebrews think as they read their letter? A phrase used in this chapter embraces them all — 'These all died in faith, not having received ...'. The message to the Hebrews surely was, 'and so may you'.

OF WHOM THE WORLD WAS NOT WORTHY — Verses 30-40

Commencing this section the writer ceases recounting the stories of great individuals and making points from their exploits. Names of well-known men appear in these verses and we can read about them, but their particular works, though recorded in the Old Testament, are not recorded here. The focus now noticeably shifts from the particular to the general, and with this shift there is also an equally noticeable change of the strict chronological order previously observed. Names are set down as they occur to the writer instead of in the order they appear in history: David for instance is mentioned before Samuel and the prophets. For what the writer has in mind this makes no difference, either to him or to the truth, and is a clear indication of his intentions. Having shown that the birth and constitution of the nation was by faith, the writer is now wanting to speak about the people as a whole and not just about particular persons. This immediately becomes clear when we find that Joshua, Moses' successor, great man that he was, is not even mentioned; neither he nor the people appear in the one single text referring to happenings in Canaan; here it is: 'by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days'. Amazingly, except for Rahab, no names are mentioned; the emphasis is on faith alone; neither Joshua's nor the people's faith finds notice, but just faith.

So now the writer has brought us back to the essential message — faith, not men of faith. 'Live by faith', he is saying. He is not exhorting them to try and do great things, or to strive to become great men or women, but simply to live by faith. From a superficial reading of the chapter the impression could be gained that he is challenging people to attempt great things for God, but really he is not. Instead he raises the question, 'How, do you think, did Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Moses and all the rest I have mentioned accomplish these wonderful things?' The answer immediately rises to our lips, 'by faith', which is manifestly true; but if he had answered his own question he would have said, 'they lived by faith'; each one of them proved God in daily living. Not one of them attempted to do great things and God never asked them to; what He wanted of them was that by faith each should prove His faithfulness in the humdrum things of daily life. Let every one of us learn this same lesson and attempt nothing until God tells us to do so, and when He does speak let us obey Him wholeheartedly. We may say, 'I will try', perhaps half believing we cannot do it or that we shall fail — not if God says so — no one has ever obeyed Him and failed.

Amram and Jochebed, Moses' parents, hid their son for three months before putting him in the bulrushes where he was discovered by the princess; they did it by faith says the writer. It was a work of faith, but God never told them to do it; He did not need to, they were living by faith. They saw something in their child Moses (which is not at all a surprising thing) so they decided to act in the manner now so famous; it was perfectly natural and they were not afraid of the king. How important it was that they should do that; we eulogise Moses, and rightly so, but had his parents not been living by faith it is almost certain that Moses might never have survived. What would have happened then? We need not speculate, God was overruling everything and watching over the babe to bring His purposes to pass. Who then could imagine failure? But how true it is also that, except He find faith on the earth, how shall He do His great works among the sons of men?

Unremarkable faith, that is, faith which does nothing spectacular or sensational, but patiently continues in well doing is great faith well-pleasing to God. He can raise up an Abraham or a Moses, or His great kings and prophets, to do remarkable and spectacular things if He will, but such men and events are rare; what God wants and needs is a whole nation of ordinary people living as He wants. His delight is with the sons of men, ordinary folk with no special qualifications or commendations, natural or spiritual, either in the world or in the church. It is said of the Jews in Christ's day, 'The common people heard Him gladly'. It is of great significance, perhaps of greater significance than we at first realise, that the final person whose name and particular act of faith is recorded in this section is Rahab the harlot. What a surprise! She was a bad woman and not even an Israelite! She did nothing spectacular, why should she be singled out when Joshua was entirely passed over? The answer to this question which may seem so puzzling is found in the writer's threefold purpose: (1) to emphasise the life of faith above particular acts of faith; (2) to show that this simplicity of faith is available to anybody, even the unlikeliest of persons; (3) to point to a miracle of major proportions lying in scripture mostly undiscovered but highlighted in Rahab.

The first two points need no further emphasis beyond what has already been said, but the third needs some elaboration. The phrasing of the verse preceding the one in which Rahab is mentioned is most remarkable, every bit as remarkable as that in which her name occurs; they should be read together: 'By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace'. The miracle lies as open before our eyes today as it did before the eyes of Israel on the day it happened, when the people shouted at God's command and the walls fell down. But what happened to Rahab's house? It was built on the wall. However was she saved? It was not possible — the walls fell down. She was saved by a miracle, a miracle within a miracle. There is no miracle but that there is also one or many more within it. The first major miracle was the total collapse of the walls; the second major miracle, twinned with the first, was Rahab's total preservation. How she was saved from perishing with the rest only the Lord knows. Did He demolish the rest of the walls and leave the tiny part on which her house was perched standing intact? Did He hold her up, or was she and all she had, and her father's household also, borne up on angels' wings and deposited gently down on earth well out of the battle-zone away from harm? Certainly she was not rescued by men, for all Israel were standing right back, away from the walls, (a bowshot at least) when the miracle happened. All Israel would have been on the lookout for her house on the wall, trying to discern the scarlet line in the window and believing she was going to be rescued, and wondering what would happen when the wall fell down. How was she to be preserved? They were as ignorant as she. No less than now they saw, but only through a glass darkly, and through the dust that rose over all and blotted out the whole miracle.

God had not told anybody what was going to happen about Rahab, not even Joshua apparently. Their instructions were to march in silence around the city once a day for six days, then on the seventh day they must march round it seven times; six times in silence, finalising it all the seventh time by shouting and blowing trumpets. At that the wall crumpled, falling down flat outwards; all that every man had to do was to go straight up over the rubble, sword in hand, into the city. Rahab with her family and goods were the only ones saved; no-one and nothing else was preserved from the destruction. The walls fell down by faith, but not Joshua's nor anyone else's outstanding faith; they fell as a result of corporate faith; that is, because of their

obedience. Rahab was included in the miracle because she obeyed God too. Although she did not know it, in the mind of God she had made her preservation sure when she received the spies in peace, and placed the scarlet cord in the window. The miraculous preservation was only the manifestation of it. The miracle of Jericho was outstanding: God did it all, but only because everyone involved in it, and for whom it was done, did exactly as He said. God chose to do it that way.

Something else has been made increasingly clear by the writer in course of this chapter also, and we must not miss it, namely the shift from direct communication to indirect communication. At the beginning of the chapter the writer is at pains to tell us that God spoke to people directly, Noah for instance, and Abraham, but not now; God spoke to the leaders, in this case Moses and Joshua, and they relayed His word to the people. This departure from former practice was quite deliberate on God's part; it was part of the policy He was pursuing in His dealings with men. It is instructive also to note that there is no indication in the first part of the chapter that God ever spoke to either of the men of faith who lived prior to Noah. There is no record that God instructed Abel to offer the acceptable sacrifice to Him, or that He told Enoch or anyone that He was going to translate him; God just took him. It is said of Enoch that he 'walked with God and was not', so it is difficult to believe that he walked with God and that God never spoke to him, but whether or not God told him He was going to take him away from the earth we cannot know. It is the lack of positive statement about these things on the part of the Hebrews writer which draws attention to the idea that God may well prefer to use a different method than governing a multitude through one man.

With the advent of Noah into the list comes the information that God spoke to him, giving him the warning about the approaching judgement. We know from the Genesis account that the Lord also gave him instructions for the building of the ark. All this was by direct communication, there was no intermediary, it was just between Noah and God; no third party was involved. It was the same also with Abraham and with Moses, God spoke directly to them and also to Isaac and Jacob before Moses, but with the advent of Moses and the emergence of the Israel nation the pattern changes. God still continued to speak to Moses personally, and so the era of speaking to a nation through one man commenced. This began in Egypt, there the Lord spoke indirectly to the people through Moses, and after He had brought them out of Egypt He continued to do so at their request. At Sinai they begged God not to speak directly to them and asked for Moses to be their intermediary in all matters appertaining to God. The Lord accepted the position and their request, after all it was the natural and most practicable thing to do.

From that original position of one prophet and one voice to the nation the Lord later moved to the new position of many prophets and many voices speaking in Israel, and so it continued. As the years progressed, the judges came and added their voices, and later still the kings. Some of these were good spiritual men, but not all: voices and gift multiplied, but there was very little of the word of God in the land. So bad did this situation become that Isaiah, in his day, had to cry out, 'To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them'. Anticipating such a day and to offset the damage of it, the Lord, instructed Moses to place the law and the testimony in the ark to be kept inviolable by the priests. By inscribing His own testimony into the law, writing it ineradicably into stone He ensured that to that degree it should not fade away but be everlasting. This

was to be the foundation of the nation's righteousness and the ultimate test of every word that purported to be spoken in His name thereafter. But the people ignored God's law, insisting upon choosing their own kings, and ordering their own kingdoms and listening to the prophets they preferred. So the Lord took away His testimony and His law from them and ceased to raise up His own prophets and sent the people into captivity and unto dispersion, where they remain to this day.

Throughout all this time faith was scarcely to be found on earth; it still burned low in some hearts, but only a few, so to complete the chapter the writer gathers up the men and women of faith and encompasses all these in a few short verses of glorious testimony. The named and the nameless, the famous and the unknown, all are placed together and praised equally because they all obtained the good report through faith. Whoever they were they share the honours and have received the rewards of the faithful, and how well they deserve them. The world was not worthy of such people, yet the Lord continued to raise them up, each in their day, knowing that they would be hated, hounded, hurt, tried, tortured, tormented, poverty stricken outcasts, despised, rejected, and in the end many of them murdered. And what for? For a promise that was never fulfilled to them. Such is faith, and what it can accomplish in the hearts and lives of the faceless and the anonymous, as well as the famous ones.

What an ending to a chapter about faith; but that is how it started. Abel acted in faith and was killed for his pains. Of all the people mentioned in the chapter Enoch alone is the one whose life ended in what is considered to be the ultimate glory; he entered into what to the Hebrews was the promise: he was translated. All the others lived by faith, worked by faith, walked by faith, witnessed by faith, worshipped by faith; some of them obtained promises through faith, but not one of them received the promise. We are told of those who lived in the land of promise and obtained promises in that land, and of others who saw the promises afar off and were persuaded of them and embraced them, and thereby became pilgrims and strangers on the earth. But of all the promises that had ever been made to any one of them, not one received the fulfilment of the promise, though it had been made by God from the very beginning.

Quite possibly Abraham, when he received the promise from God about the seed, thought of it as the promise; we can imagine him speaking of it to Sarah as the promise of all the promises God had made him. Undoubtedly to him and eventually to Sarah it was the greatest of them all, but it was not the promise that God counted to be the promise. Promises made by God to individuals for individual blessings to be fulfilled in that person's experience only, though they are wonderful in fulfilment, and perhaps affect others also, do not and can never warrant the description 'the promise'. The promise, though in the first instance it may be made to a person, is not made to that individual only, it is made to the whole of mankind for universal acceptance. God made this kind of promise to Noah after the flood, and set His bow as a token of it in the clouds.

When, in the presence of the couple in Eden, He made the promise 'the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head', it was the same also. The promise made in Eden was for universal acceptance, but Adam and Eve misinterpreted God's meaning. They had no idea of His intentions, consequently they thought that Cain was the seed; how wrong they were. They were not to be blamed though, for beyond the bare promise God never went on to explain Himself to them. Neither Cain in the beginning, nor Isaac in his day, was the promised seed; the promise God gave, though

possible of local application, was made about the coming of His Son. There is no suggestion in scripture anywhere that Abraham thought the seed promised to him was the promised seed; it was not, and he did not think it was. Possibly, if they had been asked, both he and Sarah would have said that it was the greatest promise made to them, and its fulfilment was joy unspeakable.

Although Adam and Eve made a mistake about the original promise, properly considered it was really far too clear to have been misunderstood. God spoke in such specific language; He said it was to be the seed of the woman; the man was not mentioned. It is quite understandable that Adam and Eve should have thought that God meant them to interpret the promise as they did, it was so natural, but they were wrong. Abraham's understanding would have been much clearer when God made promise to him concerning the seed: there was no ambiguity about it; 'thy seed', He said to Abraham, and Abraham knew that the seed was to be his very own. If he knew about what happened in Eden (and it is uncertain that he did), Abraham knew that, although given to him by a miracle from God, the seed would not be the seed promised in the beginning, for it would not be exclusively the seed of the woman. So then, although many of God's promises were fulfilled to Abraham, not all of them were.

From a reading of the whole epistle there can be little doubt why the writer commenced this chapter as he did, telling the Hebrews that faith is the substance of things hoped for, and then passing on almost immediately to say that by faith we understand that the ages were fitted together by the word of God. What he is saying is that by faith a man can only live in hope of some promises being fulfilled in his lifetime, because they are not all scheduled by God for fulfilment in the age in which he is living. Some promises should be, and ought to be, fulfilled in the lifetime of every man living by faith, for they are given for man's appropriation; but, however much faith he may have, others will not be fulfilled to him. Some of these may be entertained as hopes by faith, but to attempt to do anything other than believe in them as hopes, and to live by faith in the light of that hope, is to lay oneself open to bitter disappointment and sad failure, perhaps even disillusionment. Thousands of Old Testament saints lived by faith in the land of promise without receiving the promises or the fulfilment of them; this did not prevent them from accepting those promises as their inheritance though, seeing them afar off they embraced them. The man of faith takes to himself promises made in the past, and embraces the anticipated fulfilment of promises yet to be made in the future, though none of them were, or may not be made to him personally. By this men of old confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth and God is not ashamed to be called their God. Man is saved by audacious hope, as well as by courageous faith.

As pointed out earlier, this section on faith which commenced with the words, 'Now the just shall live by faith', is preceded by these words, 'ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry'. 'The promise'. Not one of those of whom the author speaks in the eleventh chapter received this promise; they received many promises, but not this one, as he so outspokenly says in the last verse. The age when it should be fulfilled had not yet been reached, so the writer tells the Hebrews that in this respect they were not being treated differently from their forebears; they just had to accept that and get on with life. To them, as to everyone else in this age, what was promise, even the promise to so many, had been fulfilled.

What was promise in Eden and the promise within the promise given to Abraham, was fulfilled at Bethlehem. Similarly what was promise in the upper room was fulfilled at Pentecost. Each in its day was the promise; but, as the ages fitted together by God ran their course, what was the promise in one age ceased to be the promise in the next; God fulfilled it and another took its place. The fulfilment of a promise ends an age of hope, faith then appropriates it. God then makes another age-abiding promise, and thereby lays the foundation of another age-abiding of faith for the saints to lay hold of in their hearts. This in turn becomes the foundation of life, that they should live in that hope and never let it go — certainly not draw back from it. They and we must hold fast the confession of our faith without wavering because He who promised is faithful, and in its time He will fulfil every promise He has made.

When God makes promises of this class they are fixed in time; they are not eternal but are appointments of God for a certain period of time. Every one of these is made for the time or age which is ushered in with the promise, and each is the respective promise for that age. When an age is concluded, the promise is no more promise because it is fulfilled: this being so, hope is fulfilled with it, and by it passes into consummation. Before Christ left the earth He made two major promises which were to be fulfilled by Him at either end of the oncoming age, and would embrace it. The first was the promise of the coming of the Spirit; the second was the promise of His own coming again to earth. Each in its order and importance was the promise: (1) 'behold I send the promise of the Father upon you'; (2) 'I will come again'. The first was for the spiritual birth and life of His Church, the second was for the sequential progression of God's plan for the ages: these promises are still as important for men today as they were on the day they were made.

It is vitally necessary that everyone ensures that the first of these promises passes into his or her experience and becomes personal history; until that time the fulfilment of the promise must be that person's hope, and should be sought wholeheartedly. The second promise can ever be only a hope until the consummation of the age. Its fulfilment will effectively close this present age and open another. God has already stated His promise for that new age, 'Behold I make all things new'; John says, 'I saw a new heaven and a new earth' (Rev. 21 v.1). Like the second of the above promises this is still future and awaits fulfilment. No person, while still on earth, expects this promise to be fulfilled to him or her as an individual; like the children of faith spoken of by the writer we embrace it and live in the light of it, pressing forward as true pilgrims and strangers should in full expectation of hope.

This life-giving hope and the determination which springs from it had apparently vanished from the Hebrews to whom the letter was written. They were second or third generation Christians and were in a very dangerous condition, which danger the writer was very concerned to make clear to them. He asks them this question, 'if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression ... received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him ...?' The Lord was the first generation, those that heard Him became the second, and those who received the letter were the third. Within so short a time the vision had faded and become lost because of neglect; the great salvation had become inconsequential to them, the concentration of their lives was on other things. Therefore they had dropped out of the race and had ceased to be pilgrims; no longer

were they strangers on the earth; they belonged here. Faith had either vanished or well-nigh vanished from their hearts.

One of the major causes of this spiritual declension was disappointment; men were disillusioned, asking questions to which no answer was forthcoming. They had been fed on false hopes, misinterpretations arising from misunderstandings of promises and of prophecy, all of which give rise to wishful thinking. Peter put one of the current questions which mocking unbelievers raised in these words, 'Where is the promise of His coming?' These and others like them were rampant in their day: tragically enough the believers had most probably stumbled over the same thing also. They had become victims of the falsely engendered belief that the Lord would return within their lifetime. The kind of questions they were asking, though not in the same spirit, is, 'Why has He not come back as He promised?' Although in their minds they had not set specific dates, they did have set expectations, and expectations ungrounded in fact are dangerous. Mistakes enthusiastically propagated among the unsuspecting and the untaught become destructive fantasies: they had brought fearful damage among the saints. The Lord once said to His people that He would give them an expected end, they were therefore right to have expectations and on them to build their hopes. The important thing for us all is that we have the correct expectations, for, rightly or wrongly, expectations engender faith; people tend to believe in what they expect, and vice versa. Expectations therefore must be rightly founded; but if that which ought only to be hope is mistakenly thought to be faith, then hope becomes expectation falsely called hope, which, in process of thought, becomes 'faith', when it is no such thing. The end of this kind of misconstruction can be disastrous, almost fatal, as in the case of many of these Hebrews; hence the many stern warnings in the epistle. The scripture makes plain that faith is the substance of hope; let us all beware of trying to make hope the substance of faith.

Faith in God's long term promises should be strongly held by every faithful heart; but, unless God commits Himself in plainest language to fulfil these promises within a certain period of time, they may only be held in hope, which must never be called faith. The promise of Christ's future advent made by both Himself and the angels of the ascension carried no time element. 'I will come again', He said; 'He shall come', the angels said. The promise was real, but the time factor never entered into it. 'Yet a little while', says the writer here, but in what time scale he was thinking he does not say; he does disclose, though, that faith understands that ages are fitted together, or framed, by the word of God. This knowledge should have been sufficient to prevent the Hebrews from becoming unbalanced in their thinking. By their own experience and by the writer's words, as well as by the whole of Hebrew heredity and history, they should have concluded that the 'little while' ought to be understood to be an unspecified time of uncertain length, most probably of quite considerable duration. Certainly they had no grounds for thinking that the Lord would return in their own lifetime. He had not said so, neither had the apostles; yet, because the Lord had not come for them according to their interpretation of the promise, they gave up and, to God's grief, ceased from their pilgrimage. The consequences were sad and grave.

What if, after fifty years of toil, Noah had given up? What if Moses at seventy five years of age had given in? What if Abraham? But we are exhorted to take our eyes off all these; they are all there; they are witnesses to true faith and patience and endurance, and their united testimony is invaluable, but we must resolutely look away from them unto Jesus. He did not come and live on the earth in order to be whisked

away in something akin to a secret rapture as was Enoch. He came 'to do the will of God', as He said. To Him and to this, the writer points the Hebrews, 'after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise', he says. Enoch was translated out of the world, Methuselah (and of course thousands of others doubtless) was taken away from all the trouble by death, but not so Noah; he had to patiently go through and endure everything to the end.

Conclusion:

HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON

Possibly the Hebrews may have thought that because the Lord was coming for 'those that look for Him', as the writer said, they were perfectly right to expect Him in their lifetime for they had been looking for Him so long and were now tired of looking. So, having referred them to Jesus and His repetition of David's prophetic words, 'Lo, I come to do thy will O God', the writer says to them, 'after ye have done the will of God ye might receive (the fulfilment of) the promise'. He is both honest and wise, he does not say, 'ye will certainly receive the promise', but holds out hope, 'ye might receive the promises. He was writing by the Spirit, he was not making false promises. The promise was given to hope; the hope of the faithful heart is that though it see death it should die in faith, for 'he that shall come will come, and will not tarry'. When He comes it will be for all those to whom and for whom the promise was made, the majority of whom have died in faith since the day the promise was made. When the time of the promise comes, (and that is calculated to the very moment of time) He will not tarry another second, but will come.

There is not the slightest evidence or reason to believe that because a man is looking for the Lord to come He will come. His coming will not depend upon the watchfulness of His people, but upon the decision made by His Father, and will fit in with God's great plan of the ages. When He comes He will certainly catch up all those who do look for Him, and all those who have looked for Him: both those who have lived and are living by faith in glorious hope, and those who have both lived and died in faith without realising that hope. Although it is true that God makes and keeps His promises, we all must learn to live by faith in Him and not by faith in a promise, lest we mistake His promise or miscalculate the time of its fulfilment, or misappropriate something never intended for us. Faith in Him, whatever happens, however much may be understood and whatever may be the calculations or miscalculations, will keep saints walking on in the pilgrim way and running the race unhindered. We are directed to the fact that men must live by hope as well as by faith, because that is how Christ lived.

Drawing upon the words of David and applying them to Jesus, Peter, speaking on the day of Pentecost, made this plain, 'My flesh shall rest in hope'. The Lord died in hope by faith. He neither believed nor hoped that He would not see death; His hope lay beyond the grave. Part of the fulfilment of the plan of salvation lay in what He would do during those days of physical death. His plan for those days included a personal visit to hades, wherein a great unnumbered multitude of persons were held in captivity. Who these were, when they had lived, what they had done and how long they had stayed in hades we are not told, nor for our purposes here does it matter. Though unnamed and undescribed, it would appear that most, if not all, of these persons were human, for they had to await the coming of a human being to release them. Had they been spirits only, that is, not ever having had a human body, nor been

a human soul, it seems most logical to think that they would not have needed the great Human Being to come and minister to them. David once said that if he made his bed in hell God's Spirit would be there, so obviously Jesus did not have to descend into the place of the dead persons because God could not get in there; there is no place of hiding away from Him.

Little enough information is given about what went on when Christ went down to these persons, but perhaps it may be rightly assumed that one of the prime purposes of this visit was to show Himself to them and preach the gospel among them. Certain it is that a multitude responded to Him, for when He ascended up on high He led them out and away up with Him to heaven. It must have been glorious! 'In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye' He was changed and caught up to the throne, and then He came back again for people to touch Him, handle Him, see Him. This is why we are all told to look unto Jesus; this is as important as looking for Him; quite possibly it is more, perhaps even very much more important to do this than to look for Him. This is the emphasis made in the twelfth chapter where the writer continues his theme by making a very striking contrast, pointing out the great difference between all those worthies of the Old Covenant and the one incomparable Lord Jesus Christ of the new.

Great though all those famous elders of the race were, they and all the people are referred to as a 'great cloud of witnesses', an unusual description to be sure, by contrast Jesus stands out alone so unique that it would be remiss not to refer to Him. The inference to be drawn from this is that we must not, under any circumstances, for any reason or for one minute of time allow them to become the great concentration of our lives. These Old Testament worthies, great though they were and worthy of praise, must not fill our thoughts or becloud our vision of Jesus; beside Him, significant though they are, all pale into insignificance. They, their lives and their exploits only have meaning as they are related to His life and exploits. The point being made is, seeing that the Lord Jesus was not caught up to heaven and home until He had endured the cross, none of God's children ought to think that they should not also stay here and endure the cross and all that it implies as well. The inference from the statements in chapter ten is that the Hebrews were drawing back from the persecutions that they were undergoing. 'The patient waiting for Christ', as Paul puts it, had given way to intolerance; endurance had worn thin. They were giving up the fight; joy and confidence and assurance had deserted them and they had well nigh lost their faith. There were many pressures upon them; some had suffered greatly, but so had thousands before them: at bottom it was not this: because the promise of the Lord's return had not been fulfilled, false expectation had turned sour on them. What a pity that they should have made such a mistake; by doing so they stood to lose so much, if not everything. How timely then is this letter with its massive faith content and great emphasis upon suffering. It was written in the hope that its message would strike home to hearts before it was too late for them to recover themselves.

Moving from chapter eleven to chapter twelve we must pause to take note that the end God had in view for His ancient people, whether famous or ordinary, was perfection. When He gave calls or uttered commands or made promises, all were issued for this purpose — that those to whom He spoke should be made perfect. We see then that perfection is by faith — an aspect of the purpose of faith not usually emphasised, perhaps not even noticed. No one who wishes to fulfil all God's desires and attain to the highest can afford to overlook this, it must not be neglected. The word in James' epistle, 'faith without works is dead ... by works was (is) faith made perfects, is most

important. Reviewing the chapter and reading once more of the persons and all that is said about them — their greatness, their achievements, their endurance, their persecutions and sufferings, and being assured that they all obtained a good report through faith, it is both heartening and sobering to read also that not one of them received the promise. They 'obtained promises', indeed it is said of Abraham that he 'had received the promises', but great as he was (and still is, for he is not dead — God is not the God of the dead but of the living) Abraham did not receive the promise, neither did anyone else mentioned in the chapter. None of them lived in the age in which God intended to give it, and certainly not in the age He was going to fulfil it. They received the promises relevant to the age into which they were born, and the good report they received is an assurance that in heart by faith they lived in the fulfilment of these promises.

We are now living in the age of the 'better thing'. What they of the former ages had was good; the people were very blessed by what God provided for them, but great as this provision was, it was not as great as that provided for us now; this is a sobering thought. If men and women could be so great under a lesser covenant founded upon lesser promises, how great ought we to be who live in this age of privilege? God has now brought in a new and greater covenant established upon better promises into which we all may enter with Him and live. This is that covenant within which, by God's grace, all may attain unto a perfection denied those Old Testament heroes and heroines. Their lives are testimonies to the fact that, through faith, it is possible to be all that God wants a man to be when he responds to His call under the terms of the covenant he has made and is then in being. We are compassed about with them, the writer says, they are 'a great cloud of witnesses' to this truth. To the best of his ability he has taken good care to ensure that we should never forget them. We are exceedingly indebted to him for this, but more so for the exhortation with which he concludes this section of his epistle. Being a Hebrew himself he, as much as any man, loved to think of the great elders of faith of whom he had written; he had benefitted so much from the knowledge and example of their lives. But just to have done that would have been almost to commit an act of betrayal against his beloved Hebrews, and what is worse against his most beloved Jesus. The writer's intention and commission was not to extol those Old Testament saints above any other, but having pointed to them to: (1) turn the eyes of Christians away from them on to modern saints and from that survey to (2) fix their eyes permanently on Christ.

'We ... are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses' — he was certain of it; he actually spoke of 'seeing them, they were all around, but he was no mystic. Everywhere he looked he could see them; surely his fellow Hebrews could also see them — if not they must be closing their eyes. For everyone who was drawing back and thereby placing himself in danger of perdition there was another who was pressing on to perfection; they were as well aware of that as he. They needed not to look back in history to find traces or testimonies of true men and women of faith, they all knew this kind of person; probably some were living next door to them — neighbours, friends, loved ones, relatives, they were compassed about with them. By going right back to God and creation and the earliest believers, the writer was establishing the truth that there had always been those who lived by faith, and that the very earliest of them had died in faith because he was righteous. It might have surprised his readers to realise that one out of earth's four earliest inhabitants had done just that and that just before the dreadful flood only one family (one of which was the great hero of his age) out of a whole generation, lived by faith. It was the same with

Abraham also, he was the only man of his day and of his family to respond to God and start to live by faith. Those men were alone, yet they did not break under persecution, nor did they retreat under pressure, neither did they draw back and go with their contemporaries to perdition; they lived by faith and overcame all. The tale of history is the tale of the persecution of men and women of faith who in their chosen singularity lived for God. While the epistle was being written history was unfolding in much the same way as it always had.

Many of their contemporaries, the present saints, were being persecuted; all who were living by faith were strangers and pilgrims on the earth; all around them countless numbers were proving daily that faith was the vital factor of life. Faith had not vanished from the earth, only from the hearts of defectors, people such as Judas for instance, and others like him, who either could not or would not be renewed unto repentance — sons of perdition.

Considerations of people such as these greatly troubled the writer, so did thoughts of those who, like modern Esau, (whose follies he was intending to record later) would end up weeping over golden opportunities for ever lost, having to live ever after in secondary blessings when they ought to be living in the fullness of God's blessing which goes with the birthright. To people of this sort God's promises mean little or nothing; they ignore His commandments and minimise His provisions, many of them tragically. These people are dangerous stumbling-blocks because by misunderstanding and misinterpreting the promises to themselves they do the same to others. What so many do not seem to understand is that faith is given unto men for many reasons, (not all of them very spectacular such as fathering a nation or building an ark) all of which are to enable them to run the race that is set before them. This is by far the most important thing and it is the reason why those unnamed multitudes of people are included in the roll of the faithful: of these nothing much more is said than, 'these all died in faith', or, 'these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise'. It is very important that men and women commence to live by faith; it is still more important that we continue to live through faith, but it is most important of all to die in faith.

The main thing the writer is trying to make everybody understand is that everyone of whom he has spoken in chapter eleven had run the race set before them and had done so with patience: that is all. Those who had done great things had done them simply because the course they had run had been set by God to embrace those things. Each individual was persuaded in his or her heart that those things were the will and choice of God for him or her, and got on with it whatever it was. None of them made the selection — whether to make sacrifice, or build something, or start off on pilgrimage, or lead an exodus and cross a sea, or possess a land — God made the choice and they did it. They took every step as it came and thought no more of it — they were led, they obeyed, they lived by faith, they ran their race. Those of them who are considered by men to be great were not told they were great before they started, they achieved greatness. But who in the end is able to measure greatness? Who can pronounce greatness as against insignificance among men? Who? What is greatness but the achievement of God's will, and except he or she runs the race set for each to run who shall achieve that? Hence the great admonition with which the twelfth chapter commences.

Turning from all other witnesses, whether in his day he was either ancient or modern, the writer now directs our gaze to the greatest of all witnesses who have lived on this earth the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His own testimony to John, He is 'the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God'. Before beginning creation, God began with Him. The writer's charge to look off unto Jesus is given to us in context of 'the race', the assumption being that they to whom the epistle is written had already started running. Having brought those Old Testament worthies into view, the writer, as of necessity, now puts them into perspective. They had run their race according to the will of God; not all of them had finished triumphantly though. Dear Noah of the righteous family, who by God's grace had lived and worked so faithfully for so long, dropped out of the race at last it seems. Present runners should not get the impression that they had for ever to be looking backwards. They were witnesses but are not held out as our examples. To run looking backwards would be disastrous, and to run looking around would be equally disastrous. A runner must look forwards not backwards, for he cannot hope to reach the end of the course, leave alone earn the prize, any other way. A glance over the shoulder is sometimes a necessity if the race is a sprint, as in some cases it is, but it must be a quick one. This race is a lifelong one though, a marathon; to look around occasionally therefore is not prejudicial to finishing the race.

So here we have it, a look back at the saints of old, but not too often, and an occasional look around at the present day saints also. Both of these can be helpful, but let it not become habitual lest we are stumbled by them: the instruction is definite, we are to run looking forwards all the time, away from everybody on earth unto Jesus. We may find types of Him in the Old Testament saints, and likenesses of Him in the saints of the New Testament, but these must not fill our eyes and hearts; we are to see Him.

The Greek word rendered 'looking' is more directive than that — 'looking off' more truly conveys the writer's thought — 'looking away from, off from, all others — unto Jesus. If we pause here awhile and ask, 'why should we do this?' the simple answer is 'because He may be seen'. None of those writers of the Old Testament can be seen, neither can any of our contemporaries. 'We see Jesus', said the writer. He is not talking of visions, or of dreams, nor is he speaking of reading about them. Most probably not one of his readers had ever set eyes on a Gospel; this very epistle may have been the only writing of the New Testament canon they had seen in their lives. This sight of which he speaks is heart-sight, and that does not mean imaginary sight, it is real 'sight' — the only real sight. Having human sight we say, 'we see', when we do not see at all. Moses was as a man who saw the invisible. He ran his race with eye undimmed to the end — what a good report. No one knows what has happened to all those great ones of former days; beyond some very general statements made about their present whereabouts we know nothing in particular about them and their position in the beyond at this moment. Not so with Jesus though, we know just what happened to Him after He died; we know where He is, where He is seated, what He is doing, what He is saying, both in general and in particular: we know so much about Him. In fact, although we have record of Him so full of details about His earthly life, we know far more of what He did by His death and what he has been doing since His death than all that has been amassed for our reading in the Gospels. Wonderful and necessary as these are, so much of their contents are repetition; it is vital corroboration of course, and absolutely indispensable for us that we should see and know how He ran His race. But all of this was preparation for His death and what lay beyond — resurrection,

ascension, enthronement, anointing, priesthood, mediation, intercession. Oh how wonderful! We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, the first great runner to run the race perfectly unto utter perfection. We must look off everybody else unto Him because we may and can and should look unto Him alone.

We see then that to look unto Jesus is the only possible thing to do, for there is no one else to whom to look. Besides this, for many reasons, all of them vital, it is the only sensible thing to do. In the context of what the writer is speaking about, namely faith, Jesus is the obvious one to whom to look, for He is its 'author and finisher'. Why look back to Abraham or Moses in order to see faith in operation when we can look to Jesus and see it in perfection? Why look at elders when we can look to and at the Head? Why look at or hunt for and try to read an edition, whether it be the first or second, when we can read the original Word? Why listen to an interpretation when we can hear and understand the language? Why look at a copy when we can see and have Him of whom every other person, great as he may be, must indeed be only but a flawed copy? Jesus' faith is perfect, it is the faith; Paul said he lived by it, 'I live by the faith of the Son of God'; at the end of his life he said, 'I have finished my course'. Like the writer and most, if not all, of that first generation of New Testament saints, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily besets us and run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus the whole time.

Pressing the point still further, the writer says, 'Consider him': to consider is to dwell upon with fixity of purpose; a glance will not do for this. A glance may serve to attract our attention, but being attracted we must then become attentive; heart and mind must settle upon Him and stay set for ever. Doing so we will discover what now is being told us, namely that viewed without faith the prize Jesus was heading for did not appear to be worth having — He ended up on a cross. Was that the reward of the life of faith? Yes. Jesus is the only one of whom it could be written, He was born by faith and He died by faith— both His birth and His death (as well as His life) were accomplished by acts of faith on His part; He chose and then willed to be born and He chose and then willed to die. Others died in faith, He died by faith; it is to this we owe our salvation. Everything of Jesus was 'by faith'; by His humanity He proved that He is its author and its finisher, because in His humanity He lived out faith effortlessly before all men. Thereby He showed that He was perfect and it is to this perfection that we are called.

In His sufferings our great Exemplar endured far greater things than any before Him, and it was therein that His faith was most greatly displayed, for it is by persecution and suffering that faith most speedily develops and is enhanced. It is outstandingly noticeable that the Lord Jesus nowhere claims that any of the works He did on earth were accomplished by faith. He gave teachings and instructions about faith; He sometimes commented about other individuals' faith or lack of it; here and there He complimented some for their faith, but never spoke about His own. He could quite easily have done, and we might properly think that He ought to have done so, but He did not think so, for if He had thought so He would have done it. Apparently to Him it would not have been proper to do that, for by so doing He would have been drawing attention to faith works instead of to the faith life. Thereby He would have blurred the real issue; the purpose for His coming was not to do miracles, but to give His life. Although He did perform wonderful works, it was because He was such a wonderful person, but He also did carpentry for the same reason. Our glorious Lord is our life, and, as the writer says at the beginning of this section, 'the just shall live by faith'.

One of the most remarkable things to emerge from this great section on faith is the amazing way in which New Testament truth is revealed in the Old Testament. Surveying once more the opening verses of chapter eleven, it is possible to trace an outline of some things basic to salvation in every age, things which are fulfilled in the New Testament by Christ and more particularly expounded by its authors. This is probably the reason why the writer commences on the note of understanding — 'Through faith we understand'. The fundamental power which enables us to understand the things of God is faith; it enables us to grasp facts in relationship to eternal truth and, by other vital graces, build them together into sure knowledge, verifiable by every spiritual man. However, God is not only concerned to inform us of this means of understanding, He is keen also to instruct us as to what He wants us to understand, namely 'that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear'.

The apparent things are the result of non-apparent things, and in most cases are of far less importance. In some instances they are of equal importance, and in others the non-apparent both precedes the apparent and also issues from it: this is always so in every case involving spiritual and moral factors. This is easily demonstrable with reference to the death of our Lord Jesus on the cross. The cross and He who hung on it, as well as His suffering and the blood He shed there, were apparent to all, but that which was not apparent, namely the love (to name but one of the spiritual graces manifest there) which both preceded it and issues from and through it, is of far greater importance than the event itself. The fact and the enactment of the cross was, and still is, indispensable for redemption and our salvation, but without the love and grace and mercy and righteousness, and all the other virtues in God's heart which preceded and engineered it, all would have been as valueless as the wood and the thorns and the nails employed by man to bring it about, apparent as they were.

Following these words about the substance (may we say reality? For without substance nothing is real) and the understanding of faith, the world's first and righteous sacrifice is introduced and the death of him that offered it. No attention is paid to creation at all; the purpose of the writer is to draw attention to invisible things, not to that which is visible. He makes as few references as possible to that which is material; in every case the un-apparent is more important than the apparent. From that sacrifice and death the writer passes on to draw our attention to the translation of a man in order that he should not see death, the reason for the miracle being that he pleased God. Then, before mentioning the next great wonder, we are informed that, when seeking God, we must come to Him in true faith and with diligence, believing that if we do so we shall be amply rewarded; and so our attention is drawn to Noah and his great work. Of all that this man accomplished, the one thing emphasised is this: he 'prepared an ark for the saving of his house', and so three major historic factors foreshadowing the person and work of Christ lie before our eyes: (1) His sacrifice, offering and death; (2) His ascension (assuming His resurrection) — He will not see death again; (3) His preparation of the ark of salvation for His family. It is but the barest of outlines, but it touches upon the three most vital points of the gospel which open up doors of access to information for every enquiring soul. Perhaps we may safely call it 'The Antediluvian Gospel'.

The reward of faith to every diligent seeker who comes to God upon the basis of the offering and death of Christ is inclusion into His house of salvation. Speaking of the ark, Peter says, 'wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved'. So it was that the

righteous family abode in safety, thankfulness and joy, while the cries of the doomed died away, drowned in the relentless downpour from above and the unstoppable upsurgings from beneath. It seems that creation itself rebelled against the wickedness of men and women, heaven and earth joining with God to mete out judgement. With that flood of judgement God ended an age, and with its passing commenced another.

From these three episodes, which together present a picture of the work and experiences of the Son, our attention is turned to that one great man of scripture who represents to us the person of the Father — Abraham. This is a logical unfolding of truth which links the foregoing with all the rest and sets the whole in perspective. The emphasis so far has been upon the person and work of the son, now it is to be upon the person and work of the father. When he approaches the climax of the story of Moriah Moses uses a crucial phrase, 'so they went, both of them together', carrying all the necessities for the death of the son; the sacrifice was to be carried out by common consent — in unison. The house is the son's, He prepared it, but the family is the Father's; He begets them.

It is in this spirit that the writer exhorts us to look away from all the worthies of chapter eleven, and lift our eyes unto Jesus. He is the author and the finisher of our faith. He perfected faith in the flesh and perfected it in the Spirit also. As He was the end of the law for righteousness, so He was the end of faith for righteousness; He has fulfilled everything. He was the seed of Abraham, the seed of David, the seed of the woman and the seed of God; He was the seed of faith. Receiving Him from the dead, His Father received us in a figure also; let us then, as those who are alive from the dead, run this race with patience; it is set before us, we may move from it but we cannot move it. In the day when rewards are given, we must receive the good report. Meanwhile let us

also be among the number of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises and enter into our inheritance on earth. We must live by faith and not draw back to perdition; rather let us go on to perfection, ready to make the offering, build an ark, plunge the knife, or, in God's will, be translated out and away from it all. Our sole aim must be to please Him and if without faith that is impossible, then let this so great faith be the substance of our lives, our very nature that effortlessly we shall believe, obey and endure to the end.

Fruit unto God

Fruitfulness

God is wanting fruit. In the beginning, 'He created the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind whose seed is in itself . . . and the earth brought forth . . . the tree yielding fruit whose seed was in itself after his kind and God saw that it was good, and the evening and the morning were the third day.'

Immediately upon opening the Bible we find that God has incorporated into creation the act and truth of fruit-bearing. He had done this that it should become a principle of life throughout the whole earth. To pursue this theme would provide us with a most fascinating study as we noted all its out-workings and applications and culminations throughout all nature. But forbearing to attempt this, we will come directly to our more immediate purpose, fruit unto God.

Re-reading the above quotation from Genesis chapter 1 and noting the time factor, we learn that 'the evening and the morning were the third day.' To the keen Bible student this statement speaks volumes, opening up many avenues of thought, but speaking chiefly of two main things, viz., the Trinity and Resurrection. Noting that the whole idea of fruit-bearing, as well as the use of the word 'fruit', is first introduced to us here in Genesis 1, we see that both plainly and suggestively the Lord sets forth His heart's desire in the dual context of resurrection and His as yet unknown triune being.

Right from the beginning God has made no secret of the fact that He wants fruit. It is not surprising, therefore, that in turning to the New Testament we discover it is in the gospel which commences 'In the beginning' that we find the record of the marvellous revelation given by the Lord Jesus of Himself as the Vine. In process of unfolding' the truth He obviously bases all His fruit-bearing upon oneness and wholeness. A vine is practically all branches. He is absolutely everything — the whole. The branches can only be thought of as branches by themselves if they be disconnected from the vine. Take away the branches and there is no vine, for apart from an unproductive basic stock it consists of nothing else. Together joined to the main stem, the branches form the Vine, which is Jesus. Moreover, we know that the sole purpose for which the vine exists is to bear fruit; apart from this it has no other usefulness at all. The Husbandman rears it for one reason only — as much fruit as it can possibly bear. Its glory is in its fruit, the evidence and abundance of its life and the reason for its existence.

Again, the vine in fruit-bearing is a perfect figure of resurrection, and as such is fully in keeping with the original idea revealed by God in Genesis 1. In growth it has no power to support itself or its fruit: It can not grow straight up from its own roots as can other sturdy fruit trees. It has to be raised and borne up by something other than itself. All branches as it is, it has to find support to which to cling while bringing forth its own life in bunches of tender, juicy flesh. So in a figure, as supported by the cross, does the true Vine grow. In resurrection life He spreads His many branches, bearing fruit by them to the eternal delight of His Husbandman Father.

There is little question that in the entire realm of fruit-bearing the vine, both factually and parabolically, is the greatest possible demonstration of the statement made by the Lord in Genesis 1:12-13.

But lower down in this same chapter a completely new aspect of fruitfulness is introduced by God, and this also He ordained into life. Although in itself it is a very different form of fruit-bearing from that which we have already been considering, it carries forward God's original desire and design for fruit-bearing and establishes it in a much more vital and important field, viz., that of human relationships (verses 26-28). In this as in the former field we find that all follows the same basic pattern. God never departs from it. Indeed He cannot, for behind all His design when establishing the principle of fruitfulness in the Earth there lay a deep desire in His heart much greater than just a concern to make providential provision for man. At the time God created vegetation man as yet had no being on Earth. The creation of man was reserved by God for the sixth day and this was but the third.

All that the Lord God did by the Spirit through the creative Word prior to the creation of man was specifically for him, and was all done in preparation for his appearing. All was an introduction to the greatest thing to which God was moving — reproduction; not only fruit, but also seed. In whatever realm it is or in whatsoever direction it may be applied, the law of life must always express or manifest itself in the same order. Here it is, as found in these verses — 'Be fruitful, multiply, replenish, subdue, have dominion.' In man, God headed up all the desires He had expressed and illustrated in the lower orders of creation.

For our purposes we need only attend to the first two words of this fivefold expression of God's intention for man, viz., 'Be fruitful, multiply.' We notice that this is almost the same idea, though uttered in different words, as the Lord Jesus incorporated in the statement concerning His own fruit-bearing through the branches of the Vine, viz., fruit, more fruit, much fruit (John 15:1-8). God wants fruit; much fruit: how much He does not say. If we were to ask, 'How much?' the answer we should receive is, 'More.' Or, if we apply this principle to the matter of reproduction by childbearing, 'Be fruitful; multiply,' and have children, more children; how many more He does not say.

It is concerning this latter application of the principle of fruit-bearing that this paper is written. We should be taken up with God's desire to have children.

Barrenness is fruitlessness

In Romans chapter 7 verses 1-4 Paul uses the figure of marriage to point many truths relating to our union with Christ, not the least of which is stated thus, 'that we should bring forth fruit unto God.' There is no doubt in Paul's mind that God is looking for what He has ordained as the normal result of marriage between Him who is risen from the dead and those who are 'dead to the law through the body of Christ,' viz., born-again ones. We may note also that Paul makes the thought of resurrection a very important one: 'married to Him who is raised from the dead.' Resurrection, marriage, fruit, is the order. No resurrection and marriage, no bringing forth of fruit.

Marriage in spirit by the Spirit to the risen Lord Jesus Christ is here set forth as the privilege of all the regenerate saints. It is taken as a foregone conclusion to being buried with Him by baptism into His death. For this is in order that we may be raised from the dead with Him, be of His resurrection and really live unto God by bringing

forth fruit unto Him. The Church's great function in this context is to be so united to her Lord and His desires that as a result God's children may come forth.

In ancient Jewry a childless marriage was reckoned to be a thing of reproach. So much so indeed, that Elisabeth the mother of John Baptist, in her joy at the knowledge of impending motherhood, bursts forth, 'Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein He looked on me, to take away my reproach among men' (Luke 1: 25). So natural is the expectation of children within the marriage bond, that it was felt something was wrong with the marriage if children did not follow as the normal fruit of the union. In the beginning God, creating man in His own image, made them male and female; together they were man. Following this He blessed them, telling them to be fruitful and multiply; and He concluded His activities that day by saying, 'It was very good.' Therefore, from the time that Moses by inspiration of God wrote the history of creation, fruitful marriages were considered blessed of the Lord.

To be married and childless then was to be either unblessed or disobedient, or perhaps both; and very little difference would be adjudged between the two. Therefore, reproach lay upon any married woman who had no children. It was felt that somehow Elisabeth had incurred God's displeasure — hence her statement. Childless couples were an enigma or a stigma.

Other women in scripture beside Elisabeth had felt the reproach of barrenness. In searching the Old Testament records, four outstanding examples of tragic barrenness and broken-heartedness are to be found in the persons of Sarah, Rachel, Hannah and the great woman of Shunem. By these women the Holy Spirit has given us an insight into the sorrow and heartache which lay behind childlessness of old, and also reveals what lies in His own heart regarding the matter.

Sarah we know was chosen of God to become the 'mother' of Israel, even as Abraham was the 'father'. Although these two knew nothing of the story of creation, yet the desires of God written deep in their nature set Sarah's heart longing for the ultimate consummation of marriage — a child of her own. She had never read those beatific, commanding words concerning fruit in Genesis 1, for they had not then been written. The world awaited the coming and calling, the commissioning and commanding of Moses ere the history of creation should be committed to men. When it came, the writing but confirmed the works of God; for Sarah, all natural, found within her as a law of her very being the human counterpart of divine longings.

The story of the great unsatisfied desire of both Abraham and Sarah is conveyed to us in chapters 15 and 16 of Genesis. In the former chapter we find the Lord comforting faithful Abraham's heart with the certainty of His promise that he should indeed have a son of his own. But such news seemed only to mock all the maternal longings of Sarah for, despite the promise, she still as yet bore him no child. It was this unfulfilled longing that led her finally to suggest to Abraham that he take Hagar to be his wife. If only she could obtain children by her handmaid. The suggestion was distasteful enough, but to Sarah who knew nothing of the saving power of Christ, the end justified the means; she wanted children.

That it was a reproach even in those days to be a childless wife is fully revealed in Hagar's attitude to her mistress, for when the Egyptian maid discovered that she was to be a mother she absolutely despised Sarah, with dire results. The bitterness of the reproach that she had not borne children so rose in her heart, that in her jealousy

Sarah persecuted Hagar until she could stand it no longer and fled into the wilderness to escape the undeserved punishment. The story of God's gracious dealings with each of those erring souls is fully told in the subsequent verses, but in the midst of all this one thing stands out clearly: Sarah's natural longing and disappointment found no consolation in anything or anyone until one day God gave her the child she desired.

As it was in the beginning, with Sarah the 'mother' of God's chosen race, so also was it the same later with Rachel and Hannah and the Shunamite, her 'daughters'. In each of them the identical aching heart-cry was there. Expressed in different ways according to the differing temperaments of each of the women, it is written into the sacred history as a lasting testimony to the misery of unfulfilled desire. It was not only the frustration of mother instinct that made Rachel cry out, 'Give me children or else I die' (Genesis 30:1), but also the sense of reproach (v. 23). The same may be said of Hannah as well, for it is recorded of her in 1 Samuel 1 that she wept much and went off her food, and 'was in bitterness of soul.'

Both these women were greatly loved by their husbands. Jacob had spent fourteen long years serving Laban, Rachel's father, as a dowry for her. But great as Jacob's love for Rachel was, her grief at her inability to bear children and her constant cry to her husband caused him at last to be very angry with her. It was not his fault she was childless, and his reply to Rachel reveals very clearly that he regarded her barrenness as something that only God could rectify.

It was the same with Elkanah, Hannah's husband, in his day. He tried by every means he knew to comfort his wife in her disappointment. He gave her special gifts connected with the yearly sacrifice, and pointed out that he was better to her than ten sons, but all to no avail; she wanted a son and nothing else would satisfy her. How plainly this is brought out in the record. Nothing brought alleviation to Hannah. The annual feast and sacrifice and worship and gifts, even though the latter were the adoring double portions of her husband's bounty, were turned in her to bitterness of soul. It seemed to her that all was in vain unless the basic reason for her union with her loving Elkanah should be fulfilled. Her yearly trip to Shiloh to worship in the temple of the Lord was sheer misery. Her enemy only took advantage of it to torment and provoke and afflict her. What was wrong with the marriage? Just one thing, she had no child. Apparently that was failure and loss without compensation.

Again, reading later in scripture in 2 Kings 4, it seems that Gehazi, Elisha's servant, rightly interprets the heart of the great woman of Shunem. In answer to the prophet's question, 'What is to be done for her?' Gehazi said, 'Verily she hath no child.' So far as we are able to see, this woman had never once mentioned her childlessness to either Elisha or Gehazi. Moreover, she did not at the time entertain any hope of ever having a child, nor did she believe it possible. In fact, she openly accused Elisha of lying to her when he promised her a son. But despite all the improbabilities and impossibilities, her heart still wanted the dear fruit of marriage.

She was a great woman, having great powers of perception with open-hearted generosity and strength of character. Doubtless had she lived within the days of the ingathering of the bridal church of Christ she would have been classed with those who could truly be called Christ-like, a living branch of the vine really bearing the fruit of the Spirit. But bearing such fruit had never satisfied her, and underneath everything Gehazi recognised it: virtues do not make up for barrenness. We see also that she was

as humble as she was great, for she sought nothing as a reward for her generosity. To be mentioned by the prophet to the king or to the captain of the host would have meant recognition and reward, riches and fame, but her answer to his suggestion of such repayment for her loving-kindness was, 'I dwell among mine own people.' She wanted nothing; she did all she did for love. But not all she was or had, nor all she did, made up for the greatest disappointment of her life — she had never embraced a son.

So in these four women we have seen that great privilege and great love, and great gifts and great character, did not make up for their obvious lack of children. They each were greatly blessed and fruitful in many things, but fruitfulness along the lines of personal gifts, or graces, or possessions, is not offered nor was it accepted as a substitute for the other greater and fundamental fruit. None of these could replace the sense of grievous and reproachful loss in the essential field of reproduction. All these women were either pitifully barren or, for some reason not disclosed, could not enjoy the blessedness of fruitfulness within the marriage union as they ought, and for which it existed. Surely divine election and surpassing love, and worthy endowments related to the commemorative sacrifice, and acknowledged greatness, considered separately or conjoined in one, wonderful as all these things are, in themselves fall woefully short of their real purpose if in any person they do not result in that kind of embodied fulfilment which is the fruit God seeks.

If we may borrow a phrase taken directly from the lips of the Lord Jesus Himself in the story recorded in Luke 13: 6-9, we shall know the authentic description of the desires of His Father's heart in this matter, 'Behold . . . I come seeking fruit . . .' Although it was spoken of other fruit and in an entirely different context, God's attitude to life is always the same, fruitfulness. There is no mistaking the plain implications and statements of the Lord; only fruitfulness justifies life. Apart from fruit-bearing, 'Why cumbereth it the ground? Cut it down.' The answer given again points the purpose for existence, 'If it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.' Both Husbandman and vine-dresser agree, and grace and time are afforded that God's purposes should be achieved. So if the purpose for which life is granted be unfulfilled, only destruction remains.

All this seems to be borne out very distinctly in the person of our blessed Lord Jesus Himself. It appears He expected and found that the result of union with His Father through death and resurrection was children, and in this He is the perfect example to His people. In Hebrews 2: 13 we find Him quoted as saying, 'I will put my trust in Him . . . behold I and the children which God hath given Me.' Thus it may not be so incongruous to consider the cry of Rachel of old as though it were found in the lips of the Lord Jesus Himself, 'Give me children or else I die,' for it is most certain that this is the true desire of the Godhead. Jesus was to be and is the captain of salvation leading many sons unto glory. Father's heart was and is wanting many, many more sons in His eternal home, each one like unto his captain Jesus, and there can be no doubt that it is for this that the Holy Ghost came. It is He alone who creates, ratifies and cements men in union with the risen Christ. This He does in order that the cry of His heart may be found upon their lips also, 'Give me children or I die.'

All those spiritual qualities (of character) that form the dispositional characteristics of life called 'the fruit of the Spirit' were to be found in the person of the Lord Jesus from His childhood upward. But this fruit, precious and vital though it is. was not sufficient

for Him and His Father. God must have children as well as progressive and maturing personal perfection in any individual.

Reproduction is fruitfulness

Throughout the whole idea of fruit-bearing in the scriptures there runs a developing line of teaching. As we have seen, this is very plain in the Lord's words concerning Himself in and through the branches under the figure of the Vine. What is true in John 15 is also true within the whole realm of fruit-bearing, whether it be in one particular instance, or in any combination of them.

As an illustration of the threefold progression already quoted in connection with the Vine (a particular instance), we may notice the Lord's teaching concerning fruit in the parable of the Sower. As given in Matthew 13 it is thirty-, sixty- and a hundred-fold. In this there is an easily recognisable equation of ideas with the parabolic teaching already referred to in John 15: fruit, more fruit, much fruit. And when we consider that Luke in dealing with the same parable only speaks of a hundredfold, it is at once clear that the Lord, while stating God's knowledgeable expectation in Matthew 13, is nevertheless revealing His dearest wish in Luke 8. There are different grades of fruit-bearing in this case because of different degrees of acceptance of the seed, but the seed is the same in every case. Given a good and honest, true and patient heart, the seed will always produce a hundredfold ; that is what God really wants. His desire is that all the seed be allowed and given the correct conditions in which to grow and perfect and reproduce its innate capacity to the uttermost.

This is especially true in the region of mixed or interrelated areas or departments of fruit-bearing. We will take the person of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ as an example of this, thus: the fruitfulness of the Vine is the fruit of the Spirit referred to in Galatians 5 : 22-24. In that chapter it is set forth in contrast to the works of the flesh, and is simply the reproduction of Christ by the Spirit in all His people as branch-members of the Vine. As already pointed out, these qualities of life were already in Jesus of Nazareth long before either His bodily baptism in Jordan or His spiritual baptism into death. But God wanted more, that is, other fruit than this. He desired fruit of a different order than that of the beautiful, righteous, holy manhood that was in His Son alone. He wanted more of that same type of man ; reproduction. Not only more fruit in the sense of greater love and joy and peace in Jesus' own personal life and habit, not just one better and greater Son, but many more sons. That is, 'more fruit' not only in the sense of improvement and enhancement of the personal perfections of His Son, but in the sense of multiplication and duplication of that original Son.

It is said of the Lord Jesus that He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. From this we conclude that His long-suffering and patience, indeed every virtue, must have been immeasurably enhanced in Him as He lay perspiring in Gethsemane and hung later, bleeding, from the cross. These last and greatest of the many atrocities that had been heaped upon Him during all His public life were turned by Him into channels of blessing for others, and means of personal growth. Thus those qualities inborn in the babe of Bethlehem and in which He grew all His youthful days up to manhood found increasing opportunity and occasion for development. All these virtues achieved their fullest and most beautiful expression in the trials and persecutions He encountered without intermission from Jordan to Calvary, where, under extreme pressure. they finally shone forth unto complete perfection. Parallel

with this development of all the personal perfections of His life runs the great, though seldom referred to desire to bring forth children, that other fruit of His union with the Father — 'the men Thou hast given Me,' as He expressed it. Finally and unashamedly He calls these His brethren.

So we find in the life of Him in whom We expect to see all righteous and eternal things perfectly expressed, the vital and precious example of the truth of interrelated fruit-bearing. This is a great and important principle of divine life, and therefore of all life. The fruit of the Spirit in our lives is the basic condition of holiness from which all reproductive living flows. God is expecting from the same union that gives rise to this personal life, that His children should come forth in abundance and multiplication.

The happenings on the day of Pentecost leave us in no doubt of this. God showed His heart to us most clearly then. Not content with baptising in the Spirit the one hundred and twenty disciples from His past period of Earth life, the Lord that day also baptised another three thousand in the same Spirit into His spiritual Body. Fruitfulness, multiplication — the first two words of the blessing originally pronounced in Genesis 1 find absolutely accurate fulfilment here, as in the same Spirit of creation He commences the creation/ genesis of the New Testament. The Lord Jesus had originally chosen twelve disciples. but by the commencement of the day of Pentecost there were one hundred and twenty, a multiplication of that number by ten. This was the result of over three years' work, but by the end of that same day there was a further multiplication of both the original number and also of the one hundred and twenty. For by then the original twelve had multiplied itself two hundred and fifty times, and the one hundred and twenty had multiplied twenty-five times. In such powerful, characteristic and unmistakable manner God made His intention quite plain. This demonstration remains for ever before our eyes in sacred writ.

We are to be married unto Him who is raised from the dead that we should bring forth this kind of fruit unto God. Our God has not changed one little bit since that day when at first in Genesis He plainly stated His purpose for instituting marriage. Later when He poured forth His Spirit at the beginning of this era of grace, He did it to carry out and perfect this word in the relationship between Christ and the Church. It was for this great spiritual fulfilment that all was instituted and ordained; 'Of **Him** and through **Him** and to **Him** are all things.'

It is significant that of the four Gospels it is the Gospel that speaks of being 'born again' that also speaks most of love and of eternal life, as well as of the Vine. It is in this background also that the glorious theme of Bride and Bridegroom is introduced. In fact, it is interesting to note in reading John's gospel that we find all the teaching therein is entirely based on and derived from relationships: the Word and God, the Bride and Bridegroom, Disciples and Lord, Branch and Vine, Sheep and Shepherd, and so on.

In the first verse and chorus of a lovely hymn Joy Palmer wrote many years ago, she expressed beautifully the Bride and Bridegroom relationship between the Church and the Lord Jesus Christ in these words:

Thou dost seek a bride all pure and holy,
Those who now belong to Thee alone,
Those who give Thee all their heart's affections,
Of Thyself a part, bone of Thy bone.

Chorus:

Lord we answer to Thy heart's deep longing,
'Even so come quickly, Lord,' we say;
In our hearts we have Thy blessed answer,
'Rise my love, my fair one, come away.'

Pursuing this theme, so sweetly captured for us in these lines, it is not surprising that as we read John's selective account of the miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ, we come first upon a wedding. We also notice, perhaps with less surprise, that it is here the Lord severs Himself from His mother. Already He has commenced to gather the nucleus of the company that should form His Bride, so a wedding was a singularly appropriate place for that which He knew He had to do. For there, in elaborate ceremony before their eyes, a man and a woman had enacted one of the dearest, deepest, sweetest spiritual secrets of His heart. The Bridegroom had taken a Bride. He had left all for her and she had left all for him. So, with the beginnings of all His ideals emerging into reality around **Him** and being dimly pictured before **Him**, the Lord makes plain His mission of love among men. Turning to Mary, He says, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' He leaves her for His Bride.

Amid the pleasantries of this marriage He performs His first miracle sign. At first sight it seems so insignificant: if it was a sign, what was it a sign of? Was it done just out of neighbourly love? — for surely enough He loved His neighbour as Himself. Or was it done out of sheer good nature? Why did He perform such a miracle, and why record such a seemingly unimportant thing? There are, no doubt, more answers than one to our questions, but the one great overwhelming reason which may not at first be apparent is simply this: love: pure, eternal love. Complete Self-giving unto utter fulfilment, by living in another as the beloved treasure and only one of the heart. But this can only be seen as the miracle is understood in its scriptural setting. Although it is set right at the beginning of the Gospel, it nevertheless tells its deepest, truest message as though coming at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles. For in spiritual meaning and experience that is where it truly belongs.

In writing his Gospel of the Son of God, John sets out with the heart of a lover, under the hand of the Spirit, to select those incidents that best set forth the story of the real romance of Heaven. Rather than give us a full account of His many miracles and journeys and encounters with friends and enemies as he could have done, and as others did, John presents us with a picture of Heaven's great Lover coming down to seek a lover from Earth.

In common with the other Gospels, this Gospel introduces us almost immediately to the Lord's baptism in Jordan. John Baptist was 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness' so he said, and people went out to listen to him. 'What is he really saying?' they inquired of one another. They were musing in their hearts whether or not he was trying to tell them he was the Christ. Certainly he was a great prophet and a burning, shining light; what he said and did was new: was he really the Messiah? But John was not doing or saying any such thing as they thought: he was just a voice, that was all.

Then one day when all men were gathered round him, the Voice spoke the Word everyone was listening for. John looked up and saw Jesus coming to him and immediately he said, 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.' This is **He**... this is the son of God... He will baptise you with the Holy Ghost

and fire. So it was that with many other similar and additional phrases John spoke forth that Word which was in the beginning with God, and was God, and was manifest in the flesh for all to know **Him**. On that day the Word went to the Voice and he baptised Him in Jordan.

The Voice had to speak the word of God properly, according to the eternal plan of heaven and the deepest desires of His heart. So pictorially, before the eyes of all, Heaven's Lover, God's great love-gift to men, went down into death and rose again from the waters to show He was the Resurrection and the Life.

Now it is of particular importance that we note here the time factor given for the wedding in Cana of Galilee — the third day. The day of Resurrection, the number of the Trinity. In a flash our minds move back to the statement in Genesis 1, and then forward to the Easter day as yet lying historically ahead; and to God; the third day is Resurrection. Here then we have the setting for the miracle.

Jesus went to the wedding that day with one real purpose underlying all others. He would show forth His glory in the proper setting. It is as though freshly risen from the death wherein He had made His Bride's death His, and His death hers, He went to Cana seeking a Bride, there to reveal as He could something of His heart's great love as He sought her.

Much of the detail passes unnoted by the writer until an emergency brings **Him** into the scene. Mary comes to **Him** saying, 'They have no wine,' and the moment has arrived. In His heart He knew what He would do, but He could not do it at her suggestion. Had not the scripture said upon one occasion, 'Thy mother is like a vine in thy blood'? But He would not allow it to be so now with **Him**. He had told her eighteen years earlier that He must be about His Father's business, not hers; He had also come to this marriage and this moment to do God's will, not Mary's. Though the occasion was vital and a minor crisis had arisen for that festal company, and though also He knew what He would do, He dared not act at Mary's word; she could be no vine in His blood from whence the act that would supply wine for the wedding should flow. So He cut her off. He had nothing to do with her; He was not her child, but God's. By flesh He was Mary's; but by life, will, nature, character, mind, soul and total embodiment He was His Father's.

She had known this right from the beginning, of course. When she consented to the word of the angel at the first she was plainly told by him that 'the holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' She had agreed that He should not be called the son of Mary; Jesus was only carrying the original word through to its logical conclusion and applying it at this vital moment. He knew He had nothing to do with Mary in this, and she also knew she could have nothing to do with **Him**. His hour had not yet come; He could show forth His glory at Cana, but not yet His love fully as He wanted; that must await Calvary and Pentecost. But He could make His glory serve His love for this occasion. He could make the miracle speak of things greater than the witnesses or beneficiaries then knew. So, as though His life had been lived, and the grapes of His abundance grown and plucked and pressed, and the wine caught and stored and matured and outpoured, He presents the best wine to the governor of the feast.

He watches as the Bridegroom is congratulated and drinks wine with His **Bride**, and He is satisfied. That He was not praised and thanked did not in the least matter to

Him. The proper use of gifts and powers should always apply the death of the cross to the user, and the blessings of it to those upon whom the benefits are bestowed. The Bridegroom was thanked and praised; that was the whole point. His turn would come. It was fixed in Heaven. Three years would soon pass. It would seem like three days so great was His love for His Bride. Was it not the **third** day for which He looked?

For those who have eyes to see what He did at Cana, all is a parable, an allegory. He has set forth the best wine He could possibly give to His beloved Bride, He has given her His own life. It was the truest anticipation of the great Pentecostal festivity when His Bride would drink the real wine new with **Him** in His Kingdom of love. How truly He made that marriage feast serve His purposes. The setting was perfect, the occasion unique, the vital elements absolutely correct. The water signified the Spirit; the wine His life by the Spirit, His Soul. The Spirit and His Life. His Life was God the Spirit; the Spirit in human being, by a body, living out all possible virtue in perfect love under the most extreme conditions a human soul could endure.

So it was on the day of Pentecost; He poured out the pure water of the Holy Spirit; they drank it, and lo, it was the wine of His Life, best new wine. More, they were also baptised in it and became bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh, His very body. Twain had become one; Bridegroom and Bride were Lamb and Wife in Spirit. It was done.

Thus He accomplished His purpose at Cana. The first great physical miracle of the Gospels had been performed. The inaugural sign of the New Covenant had been given and the whole new order had been anticipated and figuratively established.

Reproduction is the fruit of union

All the time He was on Earth, Jesus was looking forward to 'that day' of which He spoke in John 14: 18, 20. His people would know then that He was in the Father and they in Him and He in them. It was perfect. He would sit on the throne and pour out the Spirit and Himself by the Spirit, and His people would become one flesh with **Him** — His Bride; the Spirit and the Wine would be but one, and she, His lovely Bride, would drink of His life, His soul, **Himself**, just **Him** — the new Wine. What He had now set forth as a wondrous miracle of personal power would then be love, absolute love; bliss, joy, ecstasy, the eternal life as planned for all His lovers. Quite properly what took place at Cana was a sign, for it was not only absolutely consistent with the need of the hour, but also with His true state of life, and with His future intentions as well as with the eternal order of things. Amen. It could be, for at thirty He was as perfect in spiritual life, moral quality and human character as He was at thirty-three.

The Bride loves **Him**, drinks **Him**, shares **Him**, they drink one Wine together; Jesus after the Spirit. That human life once lived in the flesh, interpreted and brought into the Bride by the Spirit to become her flesh — perfect. But whereas at Cana the best came last, this best is given first in God's order. The Governor of God's feast sets forth the best wine first, last, and all the time, viz., the inner spiritual perfections and glories of the Man Christ Jesus as He lived among men privately and publicly, and died sacrificially upon the cross.

This then is that which is first — the pure new Wine for the Bride; utter and eternal love; Jesus. So drinking and uniting with **Him** she becomes with **Him** a kind of firstfruits.

But the inward marriage secure, she now must realise with **Him** what is the hope of her calling and of her union with such a husband as Christ. Married to **Him** she must bring forth fruit unto God. Her Lord is wanting children.

The earliest known members of the Bride of His heart were in no doubt of it. By the end of that historic day of Pentecost three thousand souls were also with them baptised into His body. Right there and then in the opening phase of 'the last days,' and later as it developed in full power, men and women were born of God, borne of the Church as He said. They indeed brought forth fruit unto God: the Acts of the Apostles is the revelation of it. The Church continued as it commenced — the Bride of Christ. These people were married to their glorious Lord, fresh risen from the dead.

On the day Rachel cried out in her wretchedness to Jacob, 'Give me children or else I die,' she was an utterly convinced woman. She had reached the point of extremity. That it was her Jacob's will to have children she could not doubt. All around, laughing, crying, eating, standing, sitting, crawling, walking, growing, working, Jacob's desire lived before her in the flesh. But they were torment to her soul, a knife in her bosom and condemnation to her life. Other people's sons mocked her desire, emphasised her barrenness, and challenged her womanhood. They could not satisfy her own emptiness nor compensate her own unproductiveness. They were all of them his children, but not hers.

How could she bear it? If her anguished cry meant anything at all, it meant that to her now life only lay in bearing children. Once it had lain in Jacob's surpassing love for her, in his choice of her above all women. For long enough she had reposed there, secure in his adoring devotion. But gradually the years of love had become more and more tinged with sorrow, until now she did not want to continue to live in his love any longer unless he could give her children. Death seemed more desirable. So also perhaps it could be said of Sarah and Hannah and the Shunamite and Elisabeth. They never said so, but does such a thing ever require words? Such grievous longing lies so deep that seldom can it find expression. The mute testimony is so obvious to all. Silence, shame and sorrow often — only too often — cover heartbreak with a smile.

When we meet them upon the sacred page we find that in all these five women disappointment and frustration had long since soured sweet hope into bitterness and despair. Yet nature itself had refused to allow them to sink into black abandonment to ultimate barrenness. With God nothing is impossible. If Abraham's name means 'High, or great father of a multitude,' then princess Sarah will beg him to give her children and fulfil himself by Hagar; Rachel will cry out in her desire; Hannah will pray in her bitterness; the Shunammite's inner control will finally break to reveal her bleeding soul secret; while Elisabeth's modest incredulity will reveal her joy that the disappointment has ended in blessed hope.

Each of them in time clasped her son to her bosom; her own, her very own. Sarah her laughing Isaac, Rachel her fruitful Joseph, Hannah her dedicated prophet Samuel, the Shunammite her dear dying and living son, and Elisabeth her spirit-filled John, the man sent from God. Their glad hearts saw long-deferred hope realised at last in children and their sickness passed away.

So ought it to be with her who is married unto Him who is raised from the dead. Deep longings for His children, true fruit of the sacred union, should lie in every heart so spiritually united with its Lord ; that they do in Him, there can be no doubt.

Our blessed Lord's prayer to the Father on the great day of sorrow as He moved toward Gethsemane leaves little to the imagination on this point. First praying that His apostles may be granted life in the union of Himself and His Father, He next proceeds to pray for those who should believe on Him through their word. Thinking ahead, His heart ranged over the entire future to include us all who should believe unto that same life. Strong desire possessed **Him** then as **He** faced Calvary. Nothing mattered now save the paternal longings of His Father's heart and His own Husbandly desires to beget sons. Anything, yea everything in God's will, whatever the personal cost may be. It is almost as though one could hear a cry strongly akin to Rachel's upon His lips, 'Give me children and I will die.' He died and rose again that God might have children; children who must be born — but who will bear them?

Fruit unto God

Since that far off day when God spoke the memorable words over His creation, fruitfulness and multiplication have become laws of life. Whether in the animal kingdom, or the world of vegetation; in the physical realm or in the spiritual; whether it be sea or land or air or in heaven itself, everywhere the truth stands fast, 'Be fruitful and multiply.' Certainly it is law for the Church; it is inescapable.

The apostle Paul in his unparalleled ministry to God and man was swept along by the same burning desire that was in his Lord. From the beginning of this man's ministry to the end, his desires remained invariable, his childbearing constant. Speaking of himself as 'one born out of due time', he feels as His Lord and Husband does about all men. He uses the thought of self-death for others' birth and life, just as Rachel and the Lord Himself did, though in a different way. 'Death worketh in us but life in you,' he says to the Corinthians; while to the Romans he wrote, 'I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.' What use a kinship by a first birth without a kinship by a second? Thus is eternal truth and his heart laid bare as one. Earlier he had written to the Galatians (4:19), 'My little children, of whom I travail in birth again.' And to the Thessalonians, 'What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?' (1 Thessalonians 2:19). Also to the Corinthians, 'I have begotten you through the gospel,' (1 Corinthians 4:15). While at the end of his life, awaiting execution, he wrote to his friend Philemon concerning Onesimus (his son, he called him) whom I have begotten in my bonds.'

John, too, delights in the fruitfulness of his union with his Lord. His letters are studded with loving references to 'My children', and 'little children', 'my little children', and others' children too. Peter also speaks of 'new-born babes' and 'dear children', as he takes up his pen to minister to those who by a second birth have become strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

These men did not cry for converts; they did not count heads nor ask for shows of hands; they longed, and laboured, and travailed for children, God's children. They were married to Jesus Christ. They could not rest until by their own love-labour many were brought forth in His nature, to develop into the image of their Husband and be perfected in His likeness. The Church of the first-born loved Him unto total abandonment to His desires. Not for them a resting in an initial comfort of salvation from hell, or in perfecting their own holiness, though this is a very fruitful hill indeed. Beyond all this, urged on by His Spirit, they desired complete absorption in their Jesus unto utter involvement in His inwardness of longing. They entered into His

eternal reasons for coming to Earth and Calvary, to cursing, and ripping, and near disembowelment, and heartbreak, and love for men as men could feel and understand it. Love, profound, crying, caring, desiring, hoping, conceiving, begetting. All-comprehensive love.

They married **Him** and love; they caught the sweet pain of His heart, and joined with the powerful longing that **He** was, and became one with **Him** to the begetting of His children. The pure, holy fire of **Him** devoured them; they loved and lived and longed with **Him**, and the children came forth as the natural fruit of the union. They did not die childless, nor have they left their name for a reproach among men.

They served **Him**, but they were not content with service. Servants serve and can accomplish much in their service, but the wife brings forth the children, Powers, gifts, ministries, talents, pounds, all have a place in a great house, but servants cannot forever abide in it. Serve in it they may with all trustworthiness and with great acceptance and brilliance, and possess great abilities for management and administration. Their Lord and Master may be much pleased with them, but who bears the children? None but she who is married to her Lord, whose cry is 'Give me children or else I die.' Her relationship to **Him** is beyond that of slave to Master; He must be her Lord, but she is His Wife. So are the children brought forth.

For ever virgin, she is yet not barren for she retains her first-love for Jesus and never departs from or loses it, yet being married thus to **Him** she bears the children of that love and is both Bride and Wife at once. Virgin in heart-purity, she abides self-giving in love to **Him**, separate from sinners and wholly sanctified unto the Master's use. Wife in life-union, she serves **Him** in selfless devotion, utterly yielded, totally involved until Love's children stand around her regenerate. This is the normal spiritual order. To be saved is important but insufficient; to be entirely sanctified is more important but not enough; to serve is commendable and reasonable; but to be the Bride is to be the Lord's wife — consummation.

Bridal exclusiveness must consummate in wifely, motherly usefulness. Heart-pure love must become body-yielding service, and both must be held in their primal, complementary states and order (Romans 12: 1-3), neither of them changing or destroying the other. The Bride must become the Wife, she must be given children or she will die. Fruit, more fruit, much fruit — 'I and the children God hath given me.' The cry must be answered and the statement justified; the longing must be fulfilled. God must have fruit.

A
GLORIOUS
CHURCH

G.W. North

A GLORIOUS CHURCH

The Church of Jesus Christ as revealed by Him in the New Testament

Chapter 1 — LAYING A SURE FOUNDATION

The first direct references to the Church in the New Testament were made by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. There are two of these and both of them occur in a section of Matthew's Gospel commencing at 16:13 and concluding at 18:35. This section records statements made by the Lord in certain parts of Palestine (now called Israel) which either by name or by association were connected with gentiles. In the first case the connection is obvious — Caesarea Philippi — the name of a foreign king; in the second case it is by association — Galilee: locally it was known as 'Galilee of the gentiles' (4:15). The Lord's remarks were well-considered and pointedly made. He was speaking in a country named after a Roman king and associated with gentile people.

Whenever He spoke, the Lord's statements were always carefully calculated and precisely worded; invariably throughout His life He planned and moved toward the time and place when and where He would release His information. His remarks were always perfectly timed and, although in Jewish territory and speaking to a Jewish audience, He purposely broached the idea of the Church there, so that it should be received and understood in a gentile context. This was quite deliberately done and, of itself, was a firm introduction to the truth later stated clearly by Paul and expounded with such great ability in 1 Corinthians 10:32.

Whom Say Ye that I am?

Beside this territorial suggestiveness, there were other reasons why Jesus did not reveal His intentions about the Church until then; chief among them was His relationship to His Father and His subjection to His will. Before disclosing His purpose the Lord awaited a prior move from His Father, viz. the revelation of His Sonship. According to divine plan it was agreed that Jesus would not begin to speak of His Church until God first released to men the secret of Jesus. He knew that, in the nature of things, before men could be built into the Church they must believe and declare Him to be the Christ. Because of its importance the occasion for the first declaration of this was chosen very carefully; it was to be in connection with the great miracle of feeding the multitudes.

That day, under the apostles' direction, the grateful thousands sat down to their meal on the shores of Galilee and Jesus fed them with God's abundance from five loaves and two fishes. As may be expected they ate and speculated about the wonderful person who fed them: 'He is Elijah' said one; 'Jeremiah' said another; 'I think it's John Baptist' someone said; 'well one of the prophets' guessed someone else. They were all wrong of course; not one of them knew. But, mistaken though they all were, their opinions mattered very much to the Lord, and a little later He asked the apostles what

they had overheard about Him. He listened with care to their answers and went on to ask what they themselves thought about Him; 'whom say ye that I am?' He said. Peter answered, 'Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God.'

That was the sign Jesus was waiting for: He knew then that the time had come for Him to make His first public statement concerning the Church. Peter had received the vital revelation from the Father and had declared it; now He could disclose His purpose, it was the heaven-sent opportunity to open to His apostles the secret of His intentions. 'Blessed art thou Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee but my Father which is in heaven; and I say also unto thee that thou art Peter. And upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven'. In the ears of the twelve, accustomed as they were to hearing marvellous sayings, it must have been an astonishing conversation. These men were Jews, members of the nation of Israel, who already believed themselves to be Jehovah's Church; they had most certainly not anticipated this. They had never expected to hear Jesus say He would build a Church of His own; was He really Jehovah come in flesh to build His Church as from earth? They did not know and could not guess how soon they were to be acquainted with all the facts now so well-known to everyone, and when later He revealed them they found them unacceptable and distasteful indeed.

In this incident one of the simple secrets of Jesus' great success in the ministry is laid bare. Authority to bequeath to a man the keys of the kingdom of heaven is a great privilege; it is also a great responsibility which none of us would wish to bear. Jesus had it laid on Him though, and we may well ask how He could sustain such tremendous burdens and at the same time discharge His duties with such unfailing strength and unerring accuracy. A clue to the answer lies before us here; this conversation perfectly illustrates the way He did it. He had referred to it previously in the temple when He said, 'the Son can do nothing of Himself but what He seeth the Father do, for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise'. The Lord saw that the Father had given Peter the key to new birth and inclusion into the Church, namely the revelation that Jesus is 'the Christ the Son of the living God', therefore, without hesitation, He followed His Father's example.

Jesus' reasoning was simple; if His Father could give Peter the most important of all keys, the man could certainly be entrusted with the keys of the kingdom of heaven also. The keys Jesus gave are, by comparison, of far less importance than the key revelation given to Peter by the Father, so without hesitation He immediately promised Peter the keys. At the same time He incorporated into the promise a principle He had stated earlier, viz. 'to him that hath more shall be given'. Peter had been given the revelation, he should now be given the keys. He was absolutely certain the time had come for the promise to be made; His Father had clearly shown Him His will and had opened the way.

By stating His intention to give the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter the Lord revealed His authority in the Church. He also administered a rebuke to the spirit of pharisaism affecting the scribes and lawyers of Israel, and attempted to correct their attitude toward Him and His kingdom and people. The spiritual and religious leaders of the people had conspired to obstruct the purposes of God among men. From the very beginning these men had consistently refused to enter the kingdom of heaven;

what was worse, they had taken from others the key of knowledge; both by example and teaching they had hindered and prevented others from entering the kingdom.

Against all the evidence, these men refused to believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, and had conspired to withhold from others the means of obtaining this knowledge, viz. the correct interpretation of the scriptures. They did not mind if people believed Jesus to be one of the old-time prophets come back again; they may even have fostered the idea, for it suited their purpose. One of the things they sneeringly said was 'these people that know not the law are cursed'; such was their callousness and hypocrisy. They preferred the multitudes to believe Jesus was some kind of great man sent by God, possibly a reincarnation of some prophet or leader from the past; it was safer that way, but it was and is completely untrue. The danger lies in the subtlety of the error; it is an implied lie and to hold such views precludes the possibility of inclusion in the Church. Jesus is not a reincarnation of anybody. He is original and unique God Almighty, the only rock on which the Church can be built.

Thou Art the Christ

To his everlasting credit this revelation and grace given to Peter was openly declared by him with all his heart. He probably did not know then that in confessing that Jesus is the Christ he was fulfilling another of God's conditions for salvation, but he was. How graciously the Lord drew His disciple on to make the vital confession so necessary to his salvation. So fundamental is this principle that Paul puts it plainly to the Romans: 'if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead thou shalt be saved'. Just when Peter had first received the revelation we are not told; it may have been during Jesus' amazing discourse upon the bread of God and eternal life following the miracle. Whenever it was, Peter's words must have had a profound effect upon everybody who heard them then: 'Lord thou hast the words of eternal life and we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God'. He said it without hesitation; it was breathtakingly bold.

This was Peter's excellence above all his companions; John discloses that they all believed it, but only Peter said so. Apparently they had all discussed it between themselves and had come to the correct conclusion, but only Peter had the courage to confess it to Jesus — that was very important. They all had to learn that Jesus never commits Himself upon general conclusions but only upon personal convictions and direct revelation. All worthwhile opinions are the fruit of deep and prolonged thought. Mature conclusions carefully reached, based on firsthand observations, may be very correct, but correct though these may be, they are not good enough for God. Nothing in man which is of man can ever be the ground on which the Church of Jesus Christ is built, it is not the rock; God can only build on Himself and His own word. Peter was so blessed because he made everything so personal; he had God's word in him revealing the Christ to him personally. He had progressively believed the successive signs and sayings of Jesus to the point of inward conviction and confession that was open to everybody. There was nothing exclusive about it, and now God had revealed to him the secret he needed to know. It was indeed a most wonderful thing.

We who are now so familiar with the story can scarcely comprehend the almost unimaginable immensity of Peter's confession. It was an entirely new revelation;

throughout the world's history no-one else had ever said it of another. Patriarchs, prophets, priests, kings, judges, all of them saviours to some degree, had been recognized, believed in, accepted and proclaimed, but not one had been confessed to be 'Christ the Son of God'. Conclusions, observations, opinions, convictions, attestations had been made to, or stated about, thousands of eminent people, but to none had it been said, 'Thou art the Son of God'. When Peter said it to Jesus it was the first time it had ever been confessed to any man, and it was true.

In translation Simon Peter's own name could be correctly rendered 'little listening stone'; it was certainly true of him then. He had heard something from God and by virtue of it he knew Jesus was the Christ the Son of God. Shortly he was to have this confirmed to him in a totally unexpected way, but he did not yet know that; he was to see this Jesus transfigured in glory on a mountain-top of further revelation. His conclusions were confirmed to him by the revelation, and the confession of that revelation was confirmed by the vision; what he received on the plain by the sea was sealed to him on the mountain-top by a glimpse into eternity. These are the right ways of the Lord. Man is a very little thing. He must believe what God vouchsafes every man to see and hear, or he will never receive revelation from Him. Like Peter every man must become a little listening-stone.

The name Peter is a translation of 'petros', which is the masculine gender of its companion feminine Greek word 'petra' — rock. When the Lord said, 'thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church', it was as if He was marrying together two distinct revelations: the one confessed by Peter was as the petros — a small stone — counterpart to the one Jesus Himself was — petra — the Rock. Masculine and feminine are the two forms of Man and as Paul says 'neither is one without the other'; nevertheless they must not be confused. Jesus is the great eternal Rock of ages and upon Himself alone He builds His Church and on no other — the Church is His. The revelation Christ had was of the Church as John reveals, and every man must see that, by His grace, the Church becomes solid rock with Him when built upon Him. Until then everybody is like Peter, a little stone who should listen to Him. Christ then, and not Peter, is the Rock. Christ is not only the foundation of the Church, He is the Founder and Builder of it as well. He builds on to Himself all those who, like Peter, receive the vital revelation of Him as the Christ; only thus can He 'marry' that heart to Himself to become one with Him in His Church.

He is the revealed Son of God and although we do not all have the identical experience as Peter, every man's heart becomes a small stone or diminutive rock and can be built on the Rock into His Church. The necessity of this is so very important to each one of us that we must all firmly grasp and understand the truth. The revelation stated by Peter was not given to him alone — they all received it. Likewise Jesus' response to the confession was not spoken to Peter in secret; they all heard it. By his confession Peter won the distinction of first mention, but the honour of being a key man was not given to him exclusively, it was later given to each of the others also. Perhaps Thomas was the last of them to receive it, but it had to be: 'My Lord and my God', he at last gasped out in utter contrition and shame. Everyone wishing to be a member of Christ's Church must, as Peter, be a humble listener, not an incredulous Thomas, a proud doubter. It must not only come to the heart from God alone that Jesus is the Son of God, it must come from the heart.

In close context with His statement about the Church to Peter and them all, Jesus also commanded His disciples not to tell anyone He was the Christ. At first glance this may seem most surprising, but it was very necessary. Be they ever so sincere, Jesus Christ cannot build anyone into His Church just because he or she repeats knowledge gained from another. Convincement of mind and conviction of spirit sufficient for salvation are not gained from man. 'Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Christ is born of God', he says. Confession can only be of certain knowledge, not received information, though that may be necessary at some point. The Father must draw, the Son must call and the Spirit must convince; then, and only then, can men confess Christ with certainty. Equally with Peter, all men must become diminutive rocks or stones; only this kind of person is acceptable to God and suitable material for Christ to build into His Church.

Upon THIS Rock

It is a great pity that for the better part of a millennium the Church has been divided on an issue arising from this truth, especially as it may perhaps have a simpler explanation than is generally thought. Recently, while travelling in a car with a friend and listening to a cassette, I became a little mystified at the congregation's reactions to the speaker's remarks. The preacher was a highly respected, greatly loved, elderly man of God, who had been used over the years to the salvation of many souls. During the course of his ministry on this occasion the preacher recounted an anecdote; it was about a conversation he had with a man who was explaining how he had been successful in business. The words of the rich man went something like this: 'I did well on this line, then I got on to that line and made good, then I got on another line and did well, now I'm on this line'. The preacher paused slightly and went on to give us his response to his friend's success story. 'I'm on this line', he said. At this point, to my astonishment, it seemed the whole congregation burst out into hearty laughter. Seeing no reason for this, I said to my companion 'why did they laugh?' With a smile he explained, 'when he (the preacher) said 'I'm on this line' he raised his arm and pointed skyward'. At once all was clear, the gesture, unseen by me, explained it all. The simplicity of it was striking, to those who observed it.

Perhaps something like this happened also those years ago when Jesus spoke to Peter in the presence of His disciples. If we allow the possibility that Jesus pointed to Himself when saying, 'and upon this Rock I will build my Church', all difficulties concerning His words immediately disappear. Be that as it may, whatever the controversy over the interpretation of Jesus' words and sad as it is that such has arisen, there can be no doubt that all the elaborate claims of Peter's supremacy made by certain people over the centuries are textually unfounded. Beside that, it is also sure he never made any such claims or sought that kind of spurious elevation above his fellow-apostles himself. Further still, very noticeably not one of his peers ever spoke of him as their superior, so perhaps it ought to be assumed by all that they did not do so because they knew it was not true.

Paul says of him that together with James and John, Peter seemed to be a pillar of the church at Jerusalem. Far from calling him the rock, he does not even say he was the pillar. Surely to be a pillar among many more is high enough commendation for any man; why should men wish to promote Peter above his fellows against his will? It may be of some significance that Paul did not feel obligated to place him first among the three eminent men he visited at Jerusalem. Apparently Peter neither personally

sought, nor was he openly or tacitly given, prior recognition of any sort by any of his contemporaries. Evidently he was just one among many brethren — no greater and no less than any of the others. Seeing that, beyond dispute, this scripture correctly read and interpreted allows no excuse for unwarrantable elevation of Peter above his fellows in the Church, we must look elsewhere for the cause of the error.

The Keys of the Kingdom

It may be that the misunderstanding has arisen because Jesus promised and ultimately gave to Peter, and to no-one else, the keys of the kingdom of heaven. This was indeed a great privilege of a special nature. For reasons undisclosed, except those already discussed, Peter was first selected and later used by the Lord to unlock the kingdom of heaven to men. Commencing with Pentecost, Luke records that upon every occasion when God poured out the Spirit Peter was present, filling an important role in the operation. He was the key-man in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and Caesarea, though the part he played in the Judean outpouring is not clearly defined. Possibly no special mention is made of him in this connection because Jerusalem is in Judea and the original outpouring which took place there continued and spread unbrokenly over the whole area, as was to be expected.

The keys of the kingdom of heaven were specially given to unlock the doors of that kingdom to the various ethnic groups comprehended in the Lord's statement in Acts 1:8 — Jews, Samaritans, gentiles. There are no other ethnic groups recognized by God in relation to His kingdom on earth. God has a worldwide plan for His Church. In it He intends to include people from all nations upon earth: 'the uttermost part of earth', is a comprehensive phrase embracing all the different nations of the gentile world. Paul's testimony to this is sufficient evidence of Peter's faithfulness to the commission he received: 'God hath opened the door of faith to the gentiles'; what a compliment to his fellow-apostle. Having been the earthly instrument through whom God poured out the Spirit to these peoples Peter's main task was completed, and by the will of God he was almost immediately removed from scriptural view. God raised up another to take the leading role under Christ in the spread of the Church throughout the world and Peter's name and activities were superseded by Paul's upon the pages of the Acts of the Apostles. He was not the original key-man — Peter was chosen for that — but Paul was a key-man also, as his ministry proved, and he was instrumental in founding many churches throughout the gentile world — far more than Peter.

Whatever of spiritual meaning and intent was in Christ's gift, it is certain Peter was not the foundation rock of the Church. Prior to the outpouring and gift of the Holy Ghost to the one hundred and twenty, he was as devoid of life as all men; nothing of eternal worth could have been built upon him; he was a complete failure. Only when and after he was built into Christ could he function solidly in the kingdom. This is all the more emphasized by the fact that the original outpouring and gift was not through him; the Lord, not he, was the key-man to that. The distribution of the keys was not done without forethought and discrimination on the Lord's part. He did not give to Peter, or to any man, the keys of hell and death; He kept those: no mere man is able to handle or use those. The Lord had to die and rise again and ascend to the throne (or to retain the figure He had to use His keys) before any could be given to Peter.

The Lord's was the primary and unique role; Peter's position and function was quite secondary to and dependent upon it; he could only assume his role as key-man in the kingdom following the baptism in the Spirit, which grace founded him on the spiritual Rock. Perhaps it is Peter's own words that put the matter beyond controversy though: first he says, 'the Lord is gracious, to whom coming as unto a living stone ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house', and then he goes on to quote God as saying 'I lay in Sion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious'. Peter is saying that Jesus Christ is the chief stone, not himself. He is speaking of Him and us, not himself and us; Jesus is the chief cornerstone, not the apostle. Some may disallow this (unfortunately those that do so are not all Jews) as Peter says, but Peter did not; he not only allowed it, but proclaimed it and was built upon it in precisely the same way as everybody else.

I Will Build My Church

Jesus left none of His apostles in any doubt as to who was going to build His Church — 'I will build my Church', He said. So saying, He made clear once and for all that it is quite impossible to join the Church. No man can make himself, or any other, a member of Christ's Church; the Lord alone can do that. God has elected no man, framed no laws, instituted no ordinances, formulated no doctrines, made no promises or authorized any person or persons at any time to make a fellow human being a Church member. Jesus says, 'I build my Church', it is His and He is the builder; everything to do with the Church is His personal concern and ministry; it is a sovereign creation of God. As is said in another connection, 'we are His workmanship'. It is strikingly noticeable that Jesus did not say He was already building the Church; He was not. His statement was as much a promise of future activity as an avowal of intention; Church-building was to be His future work following His conquest of death and hell. Jesus did not attempt to build one person into His Church while He was yet on the earth; knowing the impossibility of it, He did not attempt to do so. The Lord did not make one incorrect statement or idle promise to anyone about anything, certainly not about the Church. For this reason, to His promise that day He added the words, 'and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'.

It may have seemed strange that He linked Church-building with death and hell, but He did and by so doing gave His first followers and us the clue to His plan — IT WAS TO BE A RESURRECTION CHURCH. Christ Jesus did not suddenly become rock by becoming a man, He is and always has been the Rock of Ages. In nature and desire, from all eternity, He had been ready for the work of Church-building, but at the time of speaking He knew that no-one else was ready to be built into it; even His specially selected and dearly-loved apostles were unfit as yet. No-one could be joined to Him and, with others, be formed into the Church except He Himself first died and rose again; not till then would He be able to do it. The Church could not be built at that time for two reasons: (1) no person was the right material; (2) He was not yet perfected.

If Jesus wanted to join men to Himself as rock upon Rock, He had to do something all-powerful to change men's substance and nature. He could call men to Himself, teach them, lead them on, empower them to serve Him, but He could not thereby build them onto Himself. Something much more radical than that must be accomplished before He could commence building. He also knew that something radical must happen to Himself as well; He Himself was not yet either in the finished

condition or the correct position to commence building. It was understood between Him and His Father from all eternity that both He Himself and all persons to be included in the Church must die and rise again. The Church is entirely spiritual; it is not built of the flesh and blood of men but of their spirits. Also it was decided that He should build it from heaven and in heaven: 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it', He said. They could never prevail against Him personally, nor could they thwart His immediate purposes in dying, and He would ensure that they would not prevail against His Church either.

Christ uncrucified, God though He be, could not build His Church, neither could men uncrucified be built into it — that is why within moments of making His pronouncement He announced His own forthcoming crucifixion. He knew that until the virtues of His Godhead and manhood could be made available to men, no man could ever be found worthy to be built on Him. He did not at that time tell them they must be crucified too, for they were not able to bear it. If He had told them they would not have understood Him and would have completely misinterpreted His saying — all too frequently in the past they had misunderstood Him. This was too important a matter to put at risk, so He withheld the vital information for the time being; He had plans to raise up Paul at a later date to explain the truth He dared not speak at that time. It is not sufficient that men be graciously forgiven, fully pardoned and legally justified in the sight of God; they must be fully reconciled, totally regenerate and utterly sanctified also. The nature of man's life, the disposition of his spirit and the character of his soul must be radically changed. To be in the Church every person must be made entirely new. So to the cross and death He eventually went that He might become the crucified, resurrected Rock on which He would build His Church.

Christ Crucified

It requires little imagination to see that if this must be so for Him, it must needs be so for every other member of the Church as well. Being Himself 'quarried' from death, He would not dare use any other stone than that which is likewise hewn from that same quarry. Each one who would be a stone in Christ's Church must be a crucified, resurrected person as He. This is the central demand as well as the basic provision of the gospel — we all must undergo spiritually what Jesus underwent physically. The carnal mind finds this very difficult to accept and for ever cries out with Nicodemus, 'how can these things be?' The answer could be stated in a word — 'By my Spirit' saith the Lord. In order to become living stones both Peter and Paul and every other member of the early Church had to experience the power of Christ's death and resurrection — and so must we. We cannot, with the apostles, be fellow-members of Christ's Church unless we can cry out with Paul, 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, Christ liveth in me'. The necessity of this is in nothing more plainly exhibited than in Peter himself. He had no sooner heard Jesus speaking of His expected suffering and death and resurrection than he reacted against it, openly rebuking Him for the suggestion; 'be it far from thee Lord, this shall not be unto thee'.

Although he had been so greatly privileged, Peter reacted strongly against the idea of Jesus' crucifixion; it was obnoxious to him, wholly improper. He revolted against it utterly and would not accept it; moreover he did not believe Jesus ought to be thinking such things either. Who would want to kill such a lovely person as Jesus? Surely it was wrong to think that the elders and chief priests and scribes of the nation would want to kill Him. But Peter was utterly mistaken. His whole spiritual, mental

and emotional attitude was wrong; he was being entirely human and was totally deceived.

Jesus' counter-reaction to His apostle's statement was swift and drastic, 'Get thee behind me satan; thou art an offence unto me; thou savourest not the things that be of God but those that be of men'. He was tasting of Peter's spirit and nature and He did not like it; it must have been very bitter to His palate. Only a minute or so before He had promised this man the keys of the kingdom of heaven, blessing him and commending him above others because of his confession; now He is administering a rebuke in harshest terms as though he was His bitterest enemy.

It really was an amazing revelation of the Lord; it was so unexpected and unprecedented. To no-one else did He ever use such language; never in all His dealings with men did Jesus call another soul satan; Peter must have been shattered. He thought he was saying the right thing; he certainly had not done anything sinful that he knew of; he had only shown concern for the Lord he loved, why then this angry retort from Jesus? What justification was there for that? To be blessed in one breath and cursed in the next must have shaken the very foundations of his being; to be called satan! Not even his worst enemies had ever called him that. He knew he was a sinner; he confessed that to Jesus in the boat on the lake the day he had made his final decision to follow Him. But satan? Was he really satan? He had never pretended to be a saint, but this!

In common with all men Peter had to learn the difference between sinfulness and evil. Peter was the representation of evil to the Lord that day. As a person Peter was delightful enough no doubt, but like us all, by nature he was evil — how evil he did not know. The work the devil did by the serpent that tragic day in Eden was full of cunning and dreadfully thorough. So terrible was the immediate result and so swift its outworkings that soon every imagination of the thoughts of men's hearts was only evil continually. Adam's first act of sin by disobedience in Eden developed directly into evil nature, and sin thereafter had become natural to every man. It is an evil state and Jesus had faced it long before leaving heaven. He later voiced it on earth, 'there is none good save one, that is God'. Peter's seemingly good sentiments arose from an evil heart; knowing not God he did not know eternal truth either. Consequently he was ignorant of what sin really is and from whence it came and how it could be remedied; hence his attitude and remarks to Jesus.

The Lord's disclosure to the apostles that He was going to Jerusalem to die and rise again completely mystified them. He had expected it would; any one of them was capable of speaking to Him as Peter had done; they did not understand His mission even though they knew who He was. That was forgivable, but what Peter had said could have been a cause of stumbling to the Lord; it appealed so strongly to His humanity and the instinct of self-preservation. Beside that, it cut clean across all He had come to do. Humanly Jesus no more wanted the cross than Peter did, and far beyond the human suffering involved in the terrible death and what Peter thought or envisaged, Jesus shrank from all He would have to embrace and become there as God. Peter did not know how strongly he had tempted the Lord; by his attitude and words the apostle had unwittingly assumed the role of the tempter. As surely as though He was in the wilderness Jesus heard satan speaking to Him again, for this is exactly the line the devil had adopted. At the beginning the devil had subtly appealed to His humanity and so had His apostle.

When finally Jesus went to Calvary He went there as God who became a man in order to take His manhood to the cross. Deity had to take Humanity to death and through it into resurrection before men could be built on Himself. His humanity must be shown to be the right kind of humanity before a Church could be built of it. Paul puts it nicely — 'Jesus Christ was made of the seed of David according to the flesh and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead'. Things that originate in men are unacceptable to God. Not one of man's ideas, contributions, sacrifices, gifts or talents are of any use; nothing of eternal life and everlasting durability can be built on the flesh; it is far too unstable. To speak about Christ and the cross from mere human feelings is to be an enemy of God and humanity and to side with satan; hence the Lord's sharp rebuke to Peter. It was delivered with such shattering force because he had been selected by God for such high honours.

The Spiritual Key

It is most important that we note the significance of the Lord's statement when promising Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, 'and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven'. This was a stupendous honour; at that time it squarely placed privilege, responsibility and power exclusively in Peter's hands. No-one else had openly confessed the revelation of Jesus' divine Sonship and to no-one else had the keys of the kingdom of heaven been promised. Peter's response to that election was utterly incompatible with the revelation and reward he had received. It may be that pride had risen in him; perhaps he thought that the honour given him bestowed upon him the right to be the Lord's counsellor also; we do not know, but if this was indeed so he was speedily rebuked for his presumption.

For any man to be in possession of such divine revelation and yet to speak merely humanly in the face of Jesus' testimony of death and resurrection must be satanic. It is an illuminating commentary on the extent to which the devil has penetrated human nature and permeated all our thinking. Though all unknown to Peter, his suggestion was born of the devil's hope to frustrate God's eternal purposes. It was a deliberate attempt by satan to bring Jesus' incarnation and the whole plan of redemption to naught. The devil wanted to outwit Jesus, stop Him from storming the gates of hell — anything to prevent Him from building His Church. To make the attempt, the devil only needed man's inherent evil nature, perplexed mind and ready tongue. Despite his revelation, Peter neither had, nor could he then have had, any real knowledge of spiritual truth, for whatever his blessing, the mind of the man was still at enmity with God.

There was no apparent sin in Peter's remark; the evil lay hidden deep in that nature and disposition, inherent in us all, to which Jesus' words and attitude are foreign; its natural response was to refute God's word and administer rebuke to the Christ of God. Is there anything in the whole Bible which more plainly reveals the need for the cross than this very incident? If anything was needed to convince all unbiased men of Peter's total unsuitability and complete inadequacy to be the foundation rock of the Church it is this. All unknown to him he was evil. He was not totally depraved or secretly rebellious or openly sinful — he was just evil, a man in possession of words of truth, trying to interpret them according to his own ideas, being manipulated by satan. Christ cannot build on satan, nor on his satanic disposition and evil nature in anyone else. In order to be in His Church all men must be born again.

We might have thought Peter's behaviour to be inexcusable and his words unpardonable, warranting some kind of strong disciplinary action, such as loss of position or suspension of privilege. If the Lord had been merely human it might have happened too. He might have said, 'Peter, you've already proved totally unworthy of the honour; I rescind the promise; give those keys back to me at once; I've lost confidence in you'. But, praise His name, the Lord was not merely human. He was and is God, beside which, save in His own heart, He had not yet given the keys to Peter; they were only under promise. He had not made a mistake; He was under no illusions about His disciple; He knew the man and had chosen him with care.

Jesus had no intention that Peter should have and use the keys at that time for the following reasons: (1) they were too great for him to handle until he was made fit to use them; (2) he did not know which locks they would fit or where to look for them; (3) the Church to which they granted entrance and membership was not yet being built; (4) the gates of death and hell had not yet been opened; (5) the key to those gates was not included among those promised to Peter, but was retained by Jesus; (6) he was as yet short of another key, without which those he had already been promised were incomplete; (7) the Church could not be built until the Holy Ghost was outpoured by Christ.

The Lord deliberately withheld the keys from Peter until His own most vital and more important moves were made, and at that time all these lay in the future. Peter's key function also lay in the future, beyond his Lord's death and resurrection and the commencement of His heavenly ministry, but this was largely unknown to Peter. Jesus had made but little reference to it up until this time. He had spoken of it once to Nathaniel right at the beginning, but only vaguely, 'angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man', but they all found that rather obscure. He had also said, 'what and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?' But again they did not know what He meant. He was referring to the plan (known only to Him) of overall salvation which necessitated His return to heaven to present Himself to the Father that the Holy Ghost should come. Nothing He had said could be quickened into life in them except by the Spirit, so from all eternity it had been arranged that the Son should ascend up to His Father, leaving the field clear for the Holy Spirit to come and operate. Not until then could the promise to Peter about the keys be quickened into life and power and be put into operation, for the keys are spiritual.

Eyewitnesses of His Majesty

Following these things and while still in the district of Galilee, in keeping with God's will, the Lord planned to give Peter, with James and John, an altogether new and vital revelation of Himself. This was to take the form of a vision of Himself transfigured in glory. In keeping with all He had taught them about His Church it was important they should see Him transformed before their eyes into a person more — so much more — than man. They had never seen and known Him as He truly was in all His glory in the kingdom of heaven; the flesh veiled so much of Him from their eyes. All the while He was on earth He lived spiritually in the heavenly state natural to Him and they needed to see Him as He was in that state. Now the time having come for this revelation, within a very few days He took the chosen three up to a nearby height where they should see Him transfigured. It was a wonderful sight and for a while these earth-men passed into another world. It seemed as though heaven descended upon that mountain and Jesus was the centre of it, blazing with glory before their eyes. They were with

Him in another kingdom. The Jesus they knew was a transfigured man; His face was the sun and His garments the light and the sun was brighter than they had ever seen and the light whiter than they had ever known; it was heavenly.

When Peter had said, 'Thou art the Son of God', he had not expected anything like this; what rich gain his confession had brought him; they watched transfixed. But it had only just begun: to their astonishment two other figures appeared in the glory and approaching Jesus engaged in conversation with Him; they were discussing the exodus. It was Moses and Elijah, but they were not referring to the exodus with which the apostles were familiar, but to the exodus which Jesus should shortly accomplish at Jerusalem. For the first time they began to glimpse the dawning of another world, another kingdom, another day, and knew how really He spoke and what He meant when He talked about His kingdom. Right there before their eyes Jesus, the Son of man, was revealed in a heavenly element in His true state, and miraculously enough, though themselves not transfigured, His three earthly men were in it with Him. Often He had talked about the kingdom of heaven being at hand and now they were in it, but they knew they were foreigners there; they were only on the fringes of it looking in.

Ordinarily, in common with all men, they could not see into the kingdom or sense its overpowering glory and hear its normal conversation, but that day they knew the kingdom of heaven was indeed at hand. But it no more abode on a mountain-top than on a plain, for it is not material but spiritual and although locally it can be recognisable and identifiable, it is never merely geographical. Wherever the spiritual life and power and authority of Christ are, there is the kingdom, and within its bounds all the blessings and powers of the King of heaven are available and may be freely had. But this is just one of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. The three apostles almost certainly did not recognize all this then, but it was an amazing revelation to them nonetheless, of an entirely different nature than Peter's previous one, and extra to it. What a sight! What a conversation! What a Man this Son of God was.

This was heaven on earth; what a kingdom! Peter stood with awe among his companions, as full of fear as of wonder; was it for this the keys had been promised him? Had he to open doors for men to enter into this? He was overwhelmed. Finding his tongue at last, he blurted out, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here, and if thou wilt let us make three tabernacles, one for Thee and one for Moses and one for Elijah'. He did not anticipate what effect his words would have. He did not know the full implications of what he had said, but once again it was wrong. In him, as in every unregenerate man, evil nature and spiritual ignorance can do nothing but degrade Jesus while seeming to honour Him; they are the springs of the carnal mind and Peter's well-intentioned words rose from them; alas for him, his expression produced predictable results.

Immediately a dark cloud overshadowed them and a voice said, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear Him'. Once again a dreaded rebuke fell on his ears. This time though it came from the lips of Him who spoke from heaven, and terrible fear spread through their hearts. Stricken with terror they dropped on their faces and lay there, too frightened to move, waiting; was it death? A hand touched them, 'arise and be not afraid'; it was the familiar voice of Jesus; they were spared. Opening their eyes they rose from the ground and peered about them, but except Jesus all had vanished. The light had gone, the glory had faded, the voice was silent, the

men had disappeared, heaven had left earth, only Jesus remained; once more everything was normal.

Peter had done it again; he had repeated his former blunders; he understood nothing as he ought to have done, neither did his two companions nor any of the other disciples. Although none but Peter said the offensive thing, or voiced an opinion, they were all as ignorant of the truth of the kingdom of heaven as he and if they had spoken they would have said nothing better. When Matthew later recorded Peter's vow to Jesus that he would never be offended because of Him, all the disciples said likewise. But none of them kept their vow; although Peter spoke for himself he was also the voice of all the apostles; he put into words what the spirits of the select band were saying. He represents what unregenerate man really is, even when privileged to be in closest proximity to God; that same spirit pervades the whole. Elementally Peter represents us all.

Dear Peter at that time was fallen Adam, man full of revelations, visions, doctrines, ideas, evil of nature, satanic of disposition, as ignorant of himself as he was of his Lord; but God gave Peter to Jesus and He loved him. How patient with men is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He had purposely revealed to Peter the secret of Jesus' Sonship that he should confess it before men and he bravely did so; that was commendable and earned Peter an award. By promise he was made a future steward of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, but when he was led by Jesus to the mountain-top for a view into that kingdom, instead of discerning the connection between the two revelations, he wanted to build tabernacles. What shortsightedness! The conversation about the exodus should have given him the clue; instead it only muddled him further. Jesus did not scold him, Peter was absolutely earthbound; he had no idea of spiritual things.

A Kingdom not of this World

In common with his fellow-disciples Peter saw, or thought he saw, things about Israel and the kingdom of heaven, but he did not see the kingdom and the Church of God — he couldn't of course for he had not yet been born from above. He did not know the central idea or see the focal point of God's kingdom, nor did he know that the greatest wonder and chiefest glory of the new creation is the Church, or he would not have talked of building tabernacles. How slowly the mind of man converts to God. But Peter was not entirely to be blamed, for like us all he was influenced by his national religious tradition and culture and history. During the vision he had seen and heard the Christ discussing with Moses and Elijah about an exodus He was to accomplish at Jerusalem. It was an entirely new theme of conversation to him; never before had the subject been discussed in his presence by three such giants of Israel. He knew that hundreds of years earlier Moses had led the children of Israel out of Egypt by a mighty exodus; he also knew it was commonly taught in rabbinical schools that Elijah would come back to usher in the long-promised Messianic kingdom, and he himself knew by revelation that Jesus was the Christ. Also he remembered that on a mountain-top in Arabia God had shown Moses the pattern of the tabernacle He wished him to make for Him, that He might dwell among His people in the promised land, where every livelong day was to be like heaven on earth.

Who then could blame Peter for wanting to build tabernacles for all three men? Who can tell exactly how his mind was working when he made his suggestion and asked

the Lord for permission to build? On a commonsense human level the idea he put forward was commendable and sincere, if somewhat impractical, but it was utterly mistaken; he was simply making misguided suggestions from an evil-affected heart. What he said was just as satanic as the protest which had earned him the Lord's rebuke previously.

It was all very upsetting for Peter, but O how necessary, and what a suitable time it was for the Lord to further emphasize and expand His teachings about the cross and state His reasons and purposes for going there. Descending the mountain He told them not to tell the vision to any man until He was risen from the dead. Peter knew then that his theory had been totally wrong; the kingdom of heaven the Lord had been talking about all along was not the earthly one he had been expecting to appear immediately. Jesus had not been building His Church all this time; why — the foundation of it had not yet been laid, the Church was not going to appear until Jesus was risen from His grave, and that could not be yet, for He had not yet been crucified.

It was all very confusing to Peter — the Lord's revelations and gifts to him conflicted with his theology and Church doctrine. As mentioned previously he and his contemporaries thought the Church was Israel after the flesh, but apparently it was not. When the keys of the kingdom of heaven were promised him with power of binding and loosing in heaven and earth it may have seemed to him that something of a parallel nature to that which happened to Jacob at Peniel had been granted him. When the Lord met the patriarch there and changed his name to Israel he had been given power with God and man and elevated to princely rank among men. Something like that had been done to him also; wasn't he now a prince with God, a patriarch of the Church? His name had been changed; he had the promise of the keys, and power with God and man in heaven and earth, but the carnal mind is enmity with God — he just did not understand. Though unwillingly, somehow he was in conflict with the Lord Jesus; lying deeper down in him than he knew, something just could not go along with the king at all; Jesus and His kingdom were mysteries to him.

The Kingdom of Heaven

None of the apostles at that time knew the spiritual nature of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus had chosen them out from all other men to be with Him and from this place of vantage they had witnessed many manifestations of His power but they had seen little of the inward glory of His majesty. John, writing later with hindsight, said of Jesus' first miracle at Cana of Galilee, 'He manifested forth His glory and His disciples believed on Him', but what they all thought at the time remains unsaid. Similarly Peter records what to him had been the peak of heavenly manifestation — 'we were eyewitnesses of His Majesty'. Matthew also, reporting Jesus' mountain-top exposition of the laws of the kingdom, follows it up with His sevenfold parabolic discourse on its rise, nature and development in this world unto the shores of eternity. But at the time they saw and heard these things it is certain they had very little understanding of them. That there was a mysterious spiritual aspect to the kingdom of heaven they could have had no doubt, but they could not define it, even though the Lord Himself had been their teacher.

Right at the beginning of their discipleship He had taught them a wonderful prayer in which, if they had known what to look for, they could have discovered the key to the kingdom. 'Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come'

He said. The very opening words contained the clue, but they found neither key nor clue in any of it. Jesus knew they had missed the point, so during His later discourses He called out, 'Who hath ears to hear let him hear'. But, as Isaiah said, their hearts were gross; privileged as they were to see and hear what had been denied others, they neither saw nor heard anything with their hearts; their understandings were almost entirely devoid of knowledge. At that stage of discipleship they thought that Jesus was only a prophet — everybody did. Their greatest teacher, Nicodemus, beholding the miracles Jesus did, thought and said He was a teacher come from God; nobody knew.

Strait is the Gate

Not until later did Jesus even release the fact that John Baptist was more than a prophet, so no-one could be blamed at that stage for not believing that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. He had not deliberately withheld truth from them though, neither had John. His forerunner had laid a straight enough path for feet to walk in; that was part of the ministry to which both John and Jesus had been commissioned and of which Isaiah had prophesied. John's voice cried out to the people in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight', and he baptised those who responded to his word. It was only the baptism of repentance, but he preached and practised the one baptism he knew and thereby made a straight path to the Lord. It was also a straight path for Jesus, for He came by that same way to the people and into His ministry as a king in the kingdom of heaven on earth.

John's was not the even straighter path of the Baptism in the Spirit into eternal life in the kingdom of God; he could not minister that, and in any case Jesus did not need it. Neither could He Himself minister it then; He could not baptise into the kingdom of God until He had first revealed the narrow way and established the straight gate. Jesus did not need John's baptism for any of the reasons other men needed it. He was baptised only in order to fulfil all righteousness before the eyes of men. He validated water baptism because it was the medium in which best to reveal His worldwide ministry to all men: (1) as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world; (2) as the Son of God who baptises with the Holy Ghost. All was anticipatory for Him at Jordan; the coming of the dove symbolized to everybody what then was not, but yet should be, viz. that the gate was open, straight and narrow, into the kingdom of God. Within four years all was made plain. God commenced the new era with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit through Him at Pentecost. All is now narrowed down to this one man, who and what He is, and what He has done.

As the dove descended upon Jesus in Jordan that day, the voice of God the Father said 'This is my beloved Son', and before all present Jesus was anointed for ministry and marked out as the Christ now publicly revealed to be preferred above everyone. But beyond and above all that, it was also a pictorial anticipation of the new era which should commence at Pentecost, when, having received the promise of the Spirit from the Father, Christ should shed Him forth for the building of His Church. The straight path for every man's feet is the baptism then being prefigured in water and later accomplished in the Spirit by Jesus; all must find and enter this straight gate into life in the kingdom of God. Jesus said that few find it because the gate which leadeth to destruction is wide and the way is broad; many there be that enter and walk therein, He said. By His experience at Jordan Jesus set forth the truth that Calvary and Pentecost are one — the baptism, the gate, the way. He is the Resurrection and the

Life; the resurrection is the proof that the gate is open, and the life He lived is the clear way.

Of Keys and Kingdoms

At the beginning of His ministry Jesus spoke little of this though. He did tell Nicodemus he must be born from above; He also spoke about Father's kingdom to His disciples and indicated to them the straight path. As far as they were able they left all and followed Him along that way, though often in spirit and mind they were quite baffled about spiritual things. He knew that things were difficult for them and that some things were impossible, for His Father's kingdom consists only in and of spirits; but His Father had given these men to Him so He led them on. God is the Father of spirits; His word is entirely of a spiritual nature and is wrought exclusively for the eternal kingdom of God. However, because they could not yet live in that kingdom He did not mean they could not live in the kingdom of heaven.

The two kingdoms are akin, and so alike in some aspects that sometimes they are mistaken for each other, consequently it is mistakenly taught that they are the same. This is a grave error because it leads to much misunderstanding among the children of God. To come to a correct understanding of the two kingdoms it may be best to think of their kinship as that of twins; identical twins. Even further than that, Siamese twins (that is joined together which at times they are). In fact, so closely are they joined in scripture that at times it is almost impossible to distinguish the difference between them. But so important is it for us to discern the differences between them that we must do so or endanger our spiritual life.

The kingdom of heaven had also a physical and material side, which was at everybody's hand in John's and Jesus' day — it still is. As with any earthly kingdom, some of its blessings may be had just by being present when they are being dispensed. Kingdom of heaven blessings are of a higher order than providential blessings but may be likened to them. Providential blessings are those blessings which God has provided for all without distinction, and in their order are quite miraculous; just to be born a human being is any man's entitlement to them. Likewise in grace there are blessings available to all who fulfil the very simple conditions upon which God gives them. To ordinary uncomplicated souls, just to be in the Lord's presence was a benediction, bestowing untold wealth, but wonderful as that was, He had more than that to give people and this He quite frequently did.

The King loves to bestow undeserved favours on people; unthought-of blessings were freely given by Him for no other reason than that He distributed His bounty with princely grace for all. This is that higher kind of providence in the kingdom of heaven; everything there is of grace, and is as free to all as are sunshine and rain in the realm of nature. The Lord wonderfully demonstrated this on the occasions when He fed the multitudes. The people were not asked to exercise faith, they were not asked to do anything at all but sit in an orderly manner on the ground, and this they did. He only did this so that His disciples could pass to and fro among them to distribute His grace to them. This is all He asked of them and then, without request of any kind, and quite apart from desert, He broke the bread and fish and they ate from His hand.

Another provision of like order was the creation of wine for the wedding feast; on that occasion none of the beneficiaries said 'please' or 'thank you' even. The Lord did not

require it of them, nor did they give it; they did not even need to exercise faith for the miracle. His heart simply flowed toward them in human pity and heavenly power and grace; such is His bountiful goodness toward everyone. On these occasions all that was necessary was either that Jesus should be there when the time was ripe or when the need arose, or that people should be there when He was dispensing His undreamt-of blessings. The provision was sheerly providential; people did not need to be members of His family or subjects in the kingdom of God in order to obtain them. They were given as being part of God's bounty free for all, good or bad, in the kingdom of heaven.

This can happen as well for an individual as for crowds. The man Jesus healed at the pool of Bethesda was the beneficiary of one of the Lord's more individual miracles. He was not asked to believe anything. There is no record that he exercised any faith; the Lord just healed him. It was the same with the man born blind; he was not asked or ordered to believe anything before the Lord commenced His ministrations. He anointed those sightless eyes with clay and told him to go and wash. There the man believed and obeyed and could see — it was all providential, given without asking as Jesus passed by. There were times when, according to His eternal wisdom He deemed it best for some people to exercise faith; whether the reason for this lay in the nature of the gift or of the person concerned is not clear. At such times the Lord might say 'believest thou that I am able to do this?', or 'according to your faith be it unto you'. By this method the Lord led hearts on and up from the ground of general blessings which with very little effort all may enjoy, to those greater blessings which can only be procured by the exercise of faith.

Comparatively few receive this latter class of favour; when they do so they usually become the topic of discussion for a while. This kind of blessing which is open to faith alone is designedly of far greater worth and of longer duration than the former type. Wine or bread and fish only satisfy temporarily, for thirst and hunger are recurring natural needs.

Many aspects of the kingdom of heaven are revealed in scripture beside those we have already considered. The Lord referred to one when He said there were some standing there which should not taste of death until they saw the Son of man coming in His kingdom. A foretaste of that was afforded the three on the mount, but it was by no means a complete fulfilment of His promise. The dying thief saw into the fulfilment of that on the cross; 'Lord remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom' he pleaded. He may not have realized the fullest implications of his request, but he was pleading with the Crucified. He surely never knew the vast treasures that would be unlocked and released by those dear wounds and that cross and the grave, nor did he realize the greater possibilities and blessings waiting to be revealed when the Lord procured the kingdom for men. Though the penitent thief certainly knew nothing of this then, at Calvary the right to have and live and reign in the kingdom was bought outright by the Son of man for us men. The gracious Lord rewarded the word of faith from a thief's cross and gave him a place alongside Himself in paradise that day.

Days of Heaven on Earth

Fifty or so days later the waiting disciples, gathered together for the purpose, heard the joyful sound from heaven which ushered in the kingdom with power. O the mighty rushings as of winds of breath, and the cloven tongues like as of all-

consuming fire burning on every head; torrents of praise as of mighty waters rose and gathered and flowed unabating to God like rivers running to the ultimate sea. They lived to see and experience it, yet neither they nor anyone since has witnessed the still greater fulfilment of which Christ spoke saying 'the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels'. That day is still future and it will usher all the Lord's subjects into even greater things, when the heavenly kingdom shall come on earth in all fulness in the new creation. The kingdom of heaven will not then be functioning among men living in hellish conditions under satan's power, it will be universal. Rather than being available, the providential blessings of God the King will belong to everybody as a matter of course in that paradisiac state. Truly then it will be heaven on earth, the kingdom of God and heaven.

In its present aspect the kingdom of heaven reached its height during the days of the Son of man on earth. Those days were so full of blessings and wonderful works that Jesus said the time would come when His disciples would long for one of the days of the Son of man. There is no doubt that John Baptist's and Jesus' annunciation that the kingdom of heaven was at hand led the Jews to believe that the kingdom would be restored to Israel as it was in former times. But the Lord was clear enough about it; 'My kingdom is not of this world', He told Pilate. The kingdom then was and still is spiritual with material and physical manifestation; it was not then, nor is it now, political or terrestrial. The Lord's intention was and still is to break the grip of satanic power over human lives and to free the devil's prisoners from his grip so that He can entirely save them and establish them in conditions of heavenly blessing. Today this is the responsibility of the Church, hence its need of His presence in the midst. Given that with His power and authority the Church is irresistible, He will do His own works in the sane way as before.

The Kingdom of God

The kingdom of God, being the kingdom of the Father and His children, was not at hand in John's day, neither was it immediately at hand during Jesus' lifetime. As He said, His hour was not yet come, and until it did come new birth was not available to anybody. That is why Jesus did not give Peter the keys to that kingdom; nobody else but the Lord Himself can handle those — they are the keys of hell and death and therefore could not be used until He had died; He is the key-man who unlocked the straight gate through death into the kingdom of God which is the exclusive kingdom of Fatherhood and sonship.

In the same way as heaven is God's abode, created by Himself for Himself to live in, and may be thought of as His 'country', so also is the kingdom of God central to the kingdom of heaven. As God and heaven are not to be confused, and except by metonymy, never interchanged, so also in thought and exposition must those two kingdoms be kept distinct. Metonymy is a grammatical device, used occasionally by writers and orators, whereby words of distinct meaning are used to imply something other than, though not entirely different from or unconnected with them, such as crown or throne for king. This is a wholly acceptable idea, thoroughly understood by poets and authors and not infrequently used in scripture. George Fox once wrote to Oliver Cromwell 'see thou touch not the crown Oliver' meaning 'do not aspire to kingship', and he never did, although he may often have placed his hand on the literal crown. Again we know the phrase, 'the lion and the unicorn were fighting for the

crown', and by the crown we mean supremacy, kingship, rule, not a golden diadem: the crown is but a symbol.

As miracles are the expression and result of power, and soul is the expression and result of spirit indwelling a human body, so also is the kingdom of heaven the expression and result of the Kingship of God in His kingdom. The union and likeness may be so close as to be indistinguishable to some men, but the distinction is very real and most important in scripture, and indispensable to proper interpretation of spiritual truth. Since Jesus Himself made the distinction it ought to be accepted without reservation without any need to labour the point unduly. The vast difference between the two kingdoms is made outstandingly clear in His teachings: He said of the kingdom of God that except a man be born from above he can neither see nor enter it. On the other hand He said the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force. To the thoughtful heart nothing could be plainer.

The death and resurrection of the Lord is the key to the difference between these two kingdoms. People had no need to undergo death and resurrection in order to receive His gracious ministrations, but to be in the kingdom of God every person must know and experience the power of the resurrection. When He was on earth, operating as from His Jordan anointing, He brought to men the natural conditions in which He lived; to them this was the kingdom of heaven. Those three days of crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection are the most crucially important days of earth's history. What took place then is not our present concern, but it must be our ever-present preoccupation; it was certainly the Lord's.

Until His revelations at Caesarea Philippi, the Lord had not mentioned the cross, but from that time onwards He began to show the disciples the terminal goal toward which He was heading. Being faithful as well as truthful, having declared His own unswerving life-purpose, He then said, 'if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me'. There must be no compromise; He never softened the blow — if He must go to and through death and resurrection, so must they. His determination to build His Church could only find fulfilment in life through death, whether it be for Himself or His people; it could be done in no other way than by death, nor could it stand in any other state than resurrection; He knew that.

To attempt to save self or soul from the cross, or to keep one's own life in order to gain the world, and also to be a member of the Church of Jesus Christ at the same time, is impossible. There was no way Jesus could lay the foundation of His Church, leave alone build it, unless He denied Himself, lost His life for our sakes and gave up all ideas of gaining the world, and there is no way we can be built on that foundation unless we similarly give up all hopes, ambitions and claims in this world. Jesus' word to Pilate is clear and conclusive, 'my kingdom is not of this world'.

Son of the Living God

The Lord was seeking to open up the disciples' understanding to perceive the spiritual nature of the Church. From the moment He asked His question and gained the answer He required, Jesus determinedly moved their thinking from the natural to the spiritual plane. He referred to Himself in the question as 'I the Son of man', and Peter's answer was, 'Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God'. At once to the understanding heart the purpose of the exchange is revealed — of the flesh He was Jesus of

Nazareth, son of Mary; of the Spirit He is Christ the Son of God. The perfect way to describe this union between Spirit and flesh is Son of man. The question was vital, a key to the unfolding of God's plans; so was the answer. The time had come to reveal the world of spirit in a new way, and Jesus moved forward into it with purpose: 'I will build my Church', He said, 'and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'. The word 'hell' used by Jesus here is 'hades' the place of departed spirits, and His reference to it lays bare the fact that His intentions and operations regarding the building of His Church were related primarily to the spirits of men.

This is why, when Peter made his objections to Jesus' death and resurrection, the Lord heard satan talking to Him. Satan is against Him and His Church, but neither he nor the gates of hades could deter Him from His purpose. In keeping with this, when He was transfigured on the mount and appeared as He is in His kingdom, ablaze with glory, Moses and Elijah, two departed spirits came to talk with Him about His exodus. Moses had not seen death in quite the way other men see it; he had been liberated from the body by the Lord, who then secretly buried his body in the wilderness of Moab. Elijah never knew death at all — he had been translated bodily to heaven from a spot in the wilderness somewhere beyond Jordan.

They knew that Jesus was going to accomplish the exodus in Jerusalem. Both would be there with the multitudes of their nation still being held in hades; theirs was a more favoured condition perhaps, but as Jesus they had concern for their less-favoured brethren. Each of them knew spiritual release and translation; their state in glory was infinitely to be preferred above what Israel knew in the Mosaic exodus from Egypt or while they were journeying to Canaan. Far better than release of soul and spirit from the body into hades, they were free in glory with Christ, whose Spirit had been in them for prophecy during the days of their earthly ministry, and they contemplated with joy the spiritual release and translation of their fellows.

As may be expected, this was far beyond the comprehension of the three apostles. They had been called by the Christ to work with Him on earth in the kingdom of heaven and confessed Him to be the Son of God, but now they saw Him revealed in a completely new light and setting. Confused and astounded as they were, they knew then that the gates of hell He had mentioned earlier could never withstand Him. Nobody had ever buried either Moses or Elijah, and here they were standing and talking with Jesus, apparently as alive and definitely embodied as Jesus was. Where they fitted into the Church of which He had spoken, or what their relationship was to the Church He was going to build the apostles did not know. Perhaps we may have a clue to Elijah's position in Jesus' statement that John Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah. John Baptist himself confessed he did not have the Bride but that he was the friend of the Bridegroom and Jesus said he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John.

We cannot be certain of John's position now, but the presence of Moses and Elijah holds very real significance, for by the manner of their departure from earth these two men set forth the death and ascension of the Son of man in a special way. Moses died and was buried, as was Jesus; Elijah, on the other hand, did not die but was caught up bodily to heaven as also was Jesus. Their appearance was as a dual sign: (1) of the close of their dispensation so near at hand and (2) an ensample and sign of the end of this present church age, when the dead in Christ shall rise first and then we which are

alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air'.

The whole scene on that mountain-top, though so full of precious truth for those present, was full of both historic and future meaning also. Christ, the Creator, was there with face shining like the sun, glowing with light; so was Moses, who wrote the account of the first creation's sun and light. Peter, James and John were there also, and John was to write of the Church of the new creation, New Jerusalem, which needs no created sun or light to shine in it because the glory of God shining from the Lamb lights it. Elijah, the fiery baptist of the old covenant was there also; he called down the fire from heaven which consumed both altar and sacrifice on Carmel and destroyed those who would fight against God.

Moses points us to Redemption through blood, Elijah points to the birth of the Church through baptism of the Spirit at Pentecost. He represents the fiery baptism which fuses spirits into life in God and communion with each other, consuming all sin and salting with fire, transforming the whole into a living sacrifice. Moses and Elijah, who in their respective ministries point to Christ, combine in their persons to present Him central to the whole Bible scheme of creation, redemption and regeneration. No others than these two joined with the Lord could have made quite the same contribution and present this same effect — it was a perfect trinity.

When descending the mountain later, the mystified disciples said to the Lord, 'why do the scribes say that Elijah must first come?' To this the Lord virtually said 'he has', and they were more mystified still. Only slowly, very very slowly, were they beginning to grasp at spiritual truth. They came down from that height convinced they had just seen the kingdom of heaven come on earth in a way unknown before, but to their mystified understanding things seemed all wrong. All the teaching they had imbibed from their infancy had been reversed; it seemed to them that Christ had come first, not Elijah. They had met Jesus first, indeed had known Him over many months, but had not met Elijah until that very day. What was the explanation? The explanation was John Baptist; they had met him before they met Jesus and accepted the fact that he had been Christ's forerunner. The spirit and power of Elijah had created a personality in him similar to Elijah; he did not call down fire from heaven, but he was a burning and a shining light and he did warn of unquenchable fire and eternal burnings and declared that Christ would baptise with the Holy Ghost and fire.

The merging messages and ministries of God's men all relate; whether they belong to old or new testament they originate and terminate in and point to Christ. There is a spiritual affinity between all God's ministers. In some it is more marked than in others, but whether obvious or not, it is there. There is spiritual continuity and linkage too, binding and uniting the spirits of men to one Father and one another in one kingdom or another. This is why Jesus came. He knew that the souls and personalities of men were being developed according to their spiritual fatherhood, heredity and destiny, and that we all live in one or the other of two invisible kingdoms over which either God or satan rules. Both of these kingdoms are at present with us on earth, and it is impossible for men to live in both of them at the same time. It is possible to exist in satan's kingdom of hell on earth and at the same time be affected by the kingdom of heaven and receive many of its blessings. Similarly it is possible to live in God's kingdom of heaven on earth and be affected by the kingdom of hell and live in the kingdom of God at one and the same time.

Thy Will be Done on Earth

There is of course a third kingdom in which all people live, namely one of the kingdoms of this world. It is to our relationship and responsibilities in this realm that the Lord was alluding when He made such remarks as 'render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's'. The particular incident which gave rise to Christ's comment on the subject was the matter of paying tribute money. Among the Jews this was a hated tax, and if at all possible many avoided paying it. Shortly after the events considered earlier, Peter was approached at Capernaum by a tax official who asked, 'Doth not your master pay tribute?' Peter answered, 'Yes', and went off to report the conversation to Jesus. When he did so he found that the Lord had clearly foreseen and anticipated the situation. Forestalling any request Peter might have made for money, Jesus turned the challenge into an opportunity to highlight a well-known truth, namely that the children of the reigning monarch never pay taxes. In any case they are the children of the one to whom the taxes are paid and ordinarily children do not have to contribute to their father's upkeep; on the contrary he supports them.

Neither Jesus nor His disciples were children of any reigning earthly monarch, however, so they paid the tax as they ought; Jesus makes everything daylight clear. To outward observation it seemed an ordinary enough occasion, but Jesus turned it into a most extraordinary affair. He sent Peter down to the sea to catch a fish with a coin in its mouth with which he was to pay the tax for Himself and Peter exclusively. There is no evidence to show that the band were without sufficient money to pay the tax for the Master and Peter, and that financial straits necessitated the miracle. There were no pressing circumstances or outward reasons why the Lord should have done what He did. Then why did He do it and only select Peter for the favour? Why did it have to be him and not one of the others, or all of them?

When Jesus turned water into wine there was a reason for it. When He fed the multitudes it was absolutely necessary for them to eat, but why this miracle? He did it for sheer love; there was a deep inward reason for what He did, and if no-one else knew why He did it Peter and He knew. In His heart He did not relish the rebuke He had earlier needed to administer to His erring apostle, and He had awaited the opportunity to compensate His sore disciple. He knew the pain in Peter's breast; all the man's successes seemed to be doomed to failure; it was heartbreaking to be called satan by his Lord and He knew Peter was inwardly grieving; it was unbearable and unforgettable. So on the day they were halted at the seat of custom to pay their taxes He seized the opportunity and turned it into an occasion to reassure Peter — magnificent Jesus.

The Lord's gesture must have been sweet balm to Peter's grieving heart, healing his wounded spirit; but to the rest of the faithful band it was in the nature of the last straw that broke the camel's back. They were all very upset and aggrieved by it. It appeared to them to be nothing but sheer favouritism. Even John and James, the other two members of the select band chosen to accompany Jesus up the mountain seemed to think so too; a storm of inward passions was brewing and ready to break. Had they eyes to see it, the Lord had only delayed payment for those extra moments so that He could use the opportunity for everybody's good.

Despite their unwarrantable attitude He overlooked their pettiness and pressed home the lesson. He was free and He had come to make them free. He wanted them to realise they could move anywhere in the heavenly Father's realm without restraint or fear and enjoy all its privileges and provisions to the full. By the miracle He showed all with eyes to see that all the fish in the sea and all the money in the world were His; He produced fish and coin together. He was the real King, the Son of the King, but He was not the son of a Caesar or a Herod. Those money-dependent monarchs of earth needed to tax their subjects so they could run their kingdoms and live a life of luxury and comfort in kingly style, but not so the Son of God. Though He was Lord of all, He was living humbly in an earthly kingdom and for the time being was 'subject to the powers that be', therefore He paid taxes as every true son of God should.

It was a most singular miracle and must have been astonishing to all who witnessed it. There can be no doubt that it astounded as well as satisfied the tax gatherers, but what great heart-searchings it caused among the chosen band. Why was Peter so favoured? Why did Jesus pay tax for Peter and not for everybody? Why did it always have to be Peter who was preferred above the rest of them? Why hadn't Jesus sent them all a-fishing for money? Weren't they all His apostles? Hadn't they all the same needs? Oughtn't they all to be treated alike? Why this favouritism? It wasn't fair, it was always Peter. Peter had the revelation, Peter was promised the keys of the kingdom of heaven with power to bind and loose in heaven and earth, and now Peter alone had his tax money paid; it was all Peter. Why was none of the rest of them so privileged? Was Jesus, without directly saying so, showing them who was greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

That band of apostolic men was seething with a sense of injustice, and decided that something had to be done about it, so they made up their minds to test Jesus out. 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' they asked Him. The question arose from very mixed thoughts and emotions. Was it the Father who had given Peter the revelation? Was it Jesus, about whom the revelation was given? Was it Peter, to whom the revelation was given? Confusion reigned; they wanted to know once and for all.

Except Ye Become

Jesus rose to the occasion and went straight to the heart of the matter; calling a little child unto Him, He set him in the midst of them and said, 'Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven'. The Lord's reply was plain and stern and most illuminating, His language severe. Their hearts were wrong; it was necessary to administer a rebuke to them all; every one of them was thinking of having privilege and holding positions, but what He was concerned about was their condition. They thought their citizenship in the kingdom was assured and had been so for a long time past, but they were in presumption — according to their Lord not one of them was in it.

The apostles must have been shattered. They were thinking and asking about promotion, exaltation, preferment, but He was speaking about entrance. There was no mistaking the implication of His actions and remarks — they were plain for all to see and hear. They had all been so sure that if anyone on earth was in the kingdom of

heaven they were. Surely they couldn't be hearing Him aright; they had been following Him now for so long and serving in the kingdom of heaven — didn't that indicate anything? They had believed so, indeed had taken it for granted that they were well in, but from His remarks it could be inferred that at best they might not be, and at worst were certainly not. They had wanted to know who was greatest in the kingdom; He seemed to be implying they weren't even in it, in fact that they weren't even converted. But they had left all and followed Him — surely that proved they were converted didn't it? Whatever did He mean? If they still needed converting, then Jesus was speaking of a different conversion than they knew — He was. Without exception they all needed a new deep radical inward work wrought in them which would convert them into little children.

Every one of them had responded to His call and had undergone some degree of conversion from their different occupations and walks of life, but none had been born again, nor could they be until they knew death and resurrection. They were disciples under a teacher, sheep following a shepherd, servants in His kingdom, but not yet children of His Father and living stones in His Church. Their conversion had not dealt with the inbred sins of pride, jealousy and envy; their nature had not been changed; they were outwardly converted but not inwardly regenerate; it only needed the incident of the fish and the coin to reveal that. They all needed a new birth, a birth that would free them from themselves and all desire for personal greatness. Their natural lust for position and power was totally unacceptable in the kingdom, they must become humble and childlike; conversion couldn't do it, or else they would have been like that. Regeneration creates trust of Christ; He had such visions of blessing and glory for His Church, and was planning shortly to reveal His further purposes for them. If only they had waited, all would have been made plain and the unpleasant scene avoided.

Nature will out however; jealous hearts and proud spirits hastened hotly to contest the Lord's actions, and if we had been of their number we should all have done the same. Superficial conversion, however real it may be, is insufficient to regenerate the spirit of man — only the deep internal work of the cross and the power of the resurrection within can change a man's nature. Conversion as a result of convictions is a good and necessary step toward total regeneration, but 'ye must be born again' is the unchanging and indispensable way to life in the kingdom of God. The apostles at that time had only undergone conversion from the teachings and practice of Judaism to the teachings and works of Jesus, but as the Lord indicated, not one of them had yet experienced the kind of conversion required for inclusion in His Church. He knew to whom He was talking and also what He was saying — 'Except ye be converted and become as little children'; He was talking to His apostles. In so far as inclusion in His Church was concerned, despite the revelation granted them, they were all unconverted; each one, including Peter, was still spiritually blind and ignorant of the truth.

Conversion by the power of God unto regeneration is the only conversion that brings a man on to the Rock; attraction, conviction, tuition, decision are good and necessary and must have their place in a man's experience, but cannot of themselves bring him into the Church. Christ Himself must build His Church and 'Christ crucified is the power of God', says Paul, pointing the fact that the uncrucified Jesus could not do it. This is one of the reasons why the Lord, while He was on earth, suppressed publication of the knowledge that He was the Christ; He knew His claim to be the

Christ was the whole point of the controversy between Himself and the authorities. The whole nation had been long in expectation of the Christ, and at His birth the angel of the Lord announced to the shepherds that Mary's child was He. Few if any believed it though, and throughout the latter part of His ministry the question was constantly raised and the point argued.

It was not until He stood before the Sanhedrin in the presence of the High Priest that the Lord made known His identity publicly; there He confessed under oath that He was the Christ: 'I AM', He said, and so saying claimed to be God. To His hearers it was conclusive proof of His guilt; they condemned Him to death and approached Pilate with demands for His crucifixion, and so the time of Church-building drew nigh. The living crucified Christ is the Church-builder; He is the power of God unlimited, and the Church is His masterpiece.

.... as We are One

So it was that, although as yet the Church was not established on earth and men were unready for it and unworthy of it, the Lord revealed further truth about it to His disciples. This He did in course of some instruction concerning personal relationships among themselves. His intention in doing so was corrective as well as instructive, and was delivered with an eye on the immediate past as well as toward the not-too-distant future: 'if thy brother shall trespass against thee go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone, if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother'. They were all aware of the incidents to which He was alluding, especially Peter; they had all trespassed against that man and even more against the Lord.

It had been a most harrowing time for everybody, and knowing Jesus, they must have been prepared for the Lord's corrections about their bad behaviour, but they almost certainly did not anticipate what followed: 'If he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican'. The Lord was laying down rules of conduct for His Church of the future. There was now no doubt in their minds as to His former statements about His Church. He certainly intended to build it and to their joy they were all going to be members of it; more, they were to be a family of brethren. Coming as it did after the incident at Capernaum and the searching statements about their conversion, this was most reassuring.

He spoke so naturally about it, yet with such assurance that there was no doubting Him, and they listened with amazement to His words: 'Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven'. There was no mistaking His meaning. Despite their ill-deserts they were all going to be in His Church and would all share the power He had previously promised to Peter alone — astonishingly He was now giving it to the Church as a whole. Following His departure, the Church, not just one privileged apostle, nor yet a group of apostles, was to be the highest authority and have the greatest power on earth; it would be available to all. They must have felt humbled and very ashamed; it was needless and wrong to have been so jealous of Peter. The Lord had been intending to tell them the truth all along, He had only withheld it because He could not reveal it until He had first exposed their pride and warned them of the consequences of it.

The Lord's remarks to them were made in context of the kingdom of heaven, because it is the privilege of the Church to display its heavenly calling on earth. Church members must live and relate and act together on earth as the children of God, a heavenly company creating a heavenly state amidst hellish conditions. God's children are far outnumbered on earth by the children of the devil, their satanic counterparts and opponents; but although they are so few by comparison, the power, authority and influence conferred upon them far exceeds anything at the disposal of satan's children. The Lord is most encouraging to His inbuilt ones, 'where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them'. In this connection numbers are not His chief concern, nor are they necessary; two or three are sufficient for the Lord's purposes. He is concerned here that His Church should recognize, appropriate and use the authority and power of their Lord, the 'I AM' in the midst.

He was in the midst when He spoke; they had no doubt of His authority and power; He stood there among them at that time purposely to impress upon them that the same authority and power would be theirs when He built His Church. As well as building it upon Himself, He would build it around Himself and although He would then be invisible to them, He would not be absent from them. This is how and why He would vest such authority and power in the Church; whether few or many, they must do the work; He would authorize and empower it. At the same time He made something else very clear also, namely that His Church is neither an autocracy nor a bureaucracy; it is not governed by one human being, nor by a group of persons. In these days this is a most important point for every child of God to grasp.

God does not intend any person or group of persons, be they called a hierarchy or an apostolate or a bishopric or any other name, to rule over men's spirits and souls. Neither does He intend the Church to be a democracy, and lest any should think this He went on to show that, however small a company it may be, even though it be but two or three, to be a church it must gather in His name, or more correctly into His name. Into the midst of such a company He will come, He said — the Church is a theocracy. He governs it Himself directly, not by proxy; He stands in the midst for that purpose.

Only on these grounds could the Lord give the Church such power. He never conceived the idea or gave anyone ground or permission to think that, apart from Himself, the Church had power to do anything; certainly it cannot govern itself, even if it be composed of apostles entirely. Plainly He is implying that it is really He who is going to do all the work; and of course this is the truth, for the Church is all Him. His disclosures about the Church so far are very great, though very simple: (1) it is His; (2) He is building it; (3) it is built upon Himself; (4) it gathers in or into His name; (5) it gathers around Him; (6) it is the highest authority on earth; (7) He grants it supreme power on earth; (8) it consists only in resurrection life. His basic plea is for simplicity and harmony. If the Church is to exercise such great power, all the members must be one — the irreducible minimum. It cannot be maximised beyond that — one must be all, and Himself that One.

Throughout the whole of this section the Lord purposely speaks of twos and threes, not multitudes: 'if thy brother shall trespass against thee' He said — a man and his brother, that is all. And again, 'if he will not hear thee then take one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three'; hereby the Lord is revealing the secret of heavenly life and power. It has always been like that right from the very beginning; He makes this

plain by such statements as 'I and my Father are one — Jesus and Father — just two; or if it be three, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The three persons of the blessed trinity are gathered together into one, and are one, having one name — God. Upon this truth the whole Church is built. the Lord of the Church wants the Church to be one as He and His Father are one — it cannot exist otherwise. He later put it into prayer in these words, 'that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they may be one in us.

Yet another phrase from His wonderful prayer reveals how truly His desires for His Church spring from His own enjoyment and understanding of triune life: 'I in them and thou in me that they may be made perfect in one'. So simply He unfolds the amazing truth; Jesus, the Father and the Church perfect in one; what an unexpected tri-unity! Always it is the trinity. His concept of eternal life for Himself was unbroken union with His Father, two in one and no less than this is His concept for the Church also. His determination for the Church is that we all shall be brought into that union, for He knows no other eternal life; this accomplished, it will be at one within itself; there is no other way. By the eternal Spirit the Church is born into the union of the Father and the Son to form a trinity with them in that unity. This is a marvellous revelation, far exceeding that which Peter received in Caesarea Philippi; the Lord was opening up wonderful truth to them for the whole Church, and we all must come to a proper understanding of it.

This is the thinking underlying all the Lord's statements about His Church; because of it brothers must be gained, not lost. The Lord insists that if a brother has trespassed against you, go and win him; do not allow separation between you, it is loss; go and gain him for yourself and God. Beyond gaining him, you must also come to thorough agreement with him, wholehearted and true, for this is but a beginning; it is but a basic repair. Beyond this necessary reconciliation, prayer has to be made; the restored position must be incorporated into the main body, for there is even further work to be done in the name of Jesus. All the brethren must witness the loving agreement and join with you in it. Beside being one with each other, unity must be established with the Church and with Christ.

This agreement must be so real that Jesus is in the midst unaggrieved, forming a trinity, otherwise prayer cannot be made by the church in His name. And if prayer is not in His name the full power He is so willing to give cannot operate properly. The power is the power of the trinity and will only operate as it should in a church when the pattern of the perfect trinity is formed in it. A church must meet in perfect unity, even if it be only as two or three gathered around Him. It must be a demonstration and an expression of the blessed Trinity, making request in the harmony of perfect agreement, or else it will become impotent.

The power which works to bind or loose in earth or heaven is the power of the Christ of God; access to this power is granted only to those who fulfil the conditions of the Christ. These are very simple: the Lord carefully couched His statements in words which wholly embrace the truth. He speaks of a mystery, but does not use mystical language; there is nothing difficult about what He says, yet His words are all too frequently neglected or misunderstood and therefore are misinterpreted. This may be due in part to the way the Church came into being at Pentecost: it was phenomenal, first a hundred and twenty, then within a few hours another three thousand, all in one day.

From that time onward, over the space of a few decades, it grew equally phenomenally, turning the world upside down. Ousting devil-worship, spiritism and idolatry, driving out Judaism and heathendom, it grew by the million and became the established religion of the middle east. It was all very thrilling, but therein lay its chief danger: Jesus had spoken of twos and threes, now it was thousands and tens of thousands. Among many other things of major importance the whole concept of the simple trinitarian basis of the Church was in danger of being lost also, hence the epistles.

The basic teachings of Jesus about principles of church gathering have been so long obscured that they are now almost non-functional. We ordinarily think of Jesus in the not-too-distinct midst of a company of people, somewhere central to the whole. This is partly true, but not wholly so, which is a great pity, for thereby we lose the full meaning of what He intended by the remark. It is noticeable that although the Lord knew how greatly the Church would grow from its natal day onward, He deliberately refrained from all reference to spectacular numbers. If when talking of a local church He ever spoke of larger groups than two or three it is not recorded. This was not because He wished us to descend into the awful pit of despair, sometimes apparent when, to excuse their failure or to make apologies for small numbers, men say 'numbers are not important'. There is a very real sense in which this saying is true, but there is also a very real sense in which it is not true; God does care about the masses very much.

Two or Three in My Name

What the Lord was saying by His modest statement is that two or three with Him in the midst is a sufficient number for a local church. Beyond that He is also saying that just two of us can exercise mighty power and move in great authority, and more important than that even, He is stating the trinitarian principle of gathering. In application this could mean that when we gather we should not think of Jesus standing in some imagined spot central to the whole company, but rather that He is in the midst of all the multiplied twos and threes that form the gathering. If this was clearly understood, the sense of His presence would be so greatly heightened among that company that it would be completely transformed. Think of a church of a hundred people; if these were broken down into twos there would be fifty couples; now if each of these couples recognized and knew Jesus in the midst of them what possibilities of worship and blessing would open up. Understood and practised properly this kind of meeting would revolutionise church gatherings; relationships would become more personal, coldness would melt away and warmth of brotherly love would kindle among us till the fire reached unto heaven and spread over all the earth.

See then the need for brother to gain brother, if only that this sense of the Lord's presence may increase and multiply in the churches. With what power and zeal also would the churches increase in effectiveness; souls long bound by the devil would be liberated, things long loose among the saints could be bound. Earth and heaven would meet, God and man would combine, angelic and demonic hosts would engage in conflict, powers and authorities would clash and works of darkness would be destroyed. Let every redeemed soul recognize its privileges and move into God's revealed will, for these matters are not the exclusive rights of a select few. The Lord did not say it shall be done only and if two apostles or elders shall agree together; any two on the Rock gathered together in agreement in His name will do, for not they but

He who is in the midst of them will do it. The whole church is responsible before God. It is a sad thing indeed for any church if two people cannot be found so in agreement that they can harmoniously ask favours of the Lord and receive answers. None must seek to lay blame on another. Each must resolutely shoulder his or her own share of the blame for the prevailing powerlessness of the churches and groan under it till we all rise up and rectify the situation with vigour.

Offences Shall Come

There can be little doubt that disregard of these plainest teachings is one of the main factors in the churches' present powerlessness. This is not the Lord's fault, for He sought diligently to impress us with the importance of these basic matters so vital to the Church's life. It is noticeable for instance that throughout the entire period covered in this section of scripture He kept drawing attention to the sin of offending people. An offended person is not likely to want to be one with the person or persons with whom he is offended. The person who constantly gives or causes offence can seldom be in a position to effectively wield the power of God. He pointed this out to Peter almost immediately after He had promised him the keys; Peter was an offence to Jesus and He told him so. That is serious; a man who offends Jesus can never walk with Him; he may follow Him, but not walk with Him: the Lord relegated Peter to His back, 'get thee behind me satan, thou art an offence unto me'. Rather than be stumbled at the offence the Lord chose to lose the companionship of even the very elect. He is resolute; He will not allow anything said or done by anybody to stop Him from fulfilling God's purposes.

He will neither be stumbled by others nor cause others to stumble, nor will He countenance the wanton stumbling of others by any of His Church. This is brought out in the incident over the tribute money. The whole episode involving the miracle was engineered so that the authorities should not be unnecessarily offended and to draw attention to truth. Giving needless offence is not a mark of spirituality but of carnality. The fact that we are children and free is no reason why we should avoid paying taxes; we must do all in our power to obey 'the powers that be' and to 'render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's'. Continuing this emphasis, He said we must be particularly careful not to offend children who believe in Him. Rather than that should happen, He said a millstone should be hanged around the neck of any person who did it and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea. The implication is that he should be dead and gone out of sight and mind for ever.

The whole world is full of woe because of offences; they will surely come, He said, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh. So many souls are being needlessly stumbled by people who claim to be Christ's disciples; offences abound everywhere; people are being hindered from coming to Jesus and He is righteously indignant about it; it must stop. His judgements of offenders are scathing. A man is to act ruthlessly in self-judgement to the point of self-mutilation rather than offend others. He is surprisingly unrelenting about it; His stern criterion, oft repeated, is that rather than cause others to stumble a person should prefer to enter into life maimed rather than go physically whole to hell. Whatever it is that causes anyone to stumble must be cut off or plucked out as the case may be — excised from the body without hesitation or mercy if necessary. Reading the Lord's words is very solemnizing; we can have little if any doubt that He offers no hope to anyone who constantly causes others to stumble; if they do so they cannot continue in that spirit and state of forgiveness

which is so vital to eternal life. Self-judgement is an indispensable exercise for those who claim church membership. Paul says 'if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged.'

Because mutilation of the body does not purge sin from the soul, some may be surprised at the Lord's unwonted vehemence. His words were most pointed and He meant every word He said. He never used idle threats; the drastic sentence arises from His concern for others. Even though He had called Peter with intention of making him one of the chief apostles, if he had continued in his offensive attitude to the Lord He would have cut him off. To continue excusing oneself for giving personal offence reveals a hard and heedless heart, condoning its own sin and holding others in contempt. This degenerate heart attitude exalts self and despises others and is most reprehensible and inexcusable before God; it is the clearest indication of pride. Souls must be loved and won despite their defects and we can never win anyone by constantly offending them.

Pressing His teaching further the Lord reintroduces one of His favourite themes — the shepherd and his sheep. Commencing with the question 'how think ye?' to alert them to their responsibilities, He then proceeds to outline a situation familiar to them all. A man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray; he immediately leaves the ninety and nine and goes in search of the one that is lost, and if he finds it he rejoices more over that one sheep than over the ninety and nine which went not astray. There was nothing unusual about that, it was happening constantly; 'don't you think that is how it should be?' He is asking. He did not wait for an answer. They all knew what He was saying and that He was right. Contrary to giving offence to people and being content to lose them, we all ought to be out seeking and finding the lost. It may be surprising, even shocking to some, that Jesus should speak of leaving the majority and going after one, but every shepherd does so and isn't that the natural course to take?

His words are generally interpreted in context of His own good shepherd heart, but He was not speaking then in that context. He is really saying we all ought to have a shepherd heart concerned for others. 'See that none is missing', He is saying, 'Go after the lost. If necessary leave those that are safe; seek the strays'. This should alert us to the danger of current notions now spreading erroneous ideas in some churches, suggesting that the Lord's present concern is only with perfecting the bride for His coming. By the parable He corrects the selfish notion; He has always been concerned about that, but no more now than ever and certainly not more exclusively now. There is nothing better or given more priority or considered more important to Christ than seeking and finding the lost.

How Much More Should You

The Lord's final teaching in Galilee about the Church is once more precipitated by Peter: 'Lord how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him, seven times?' The question is reflexive and self-justifying. What great changes God must work in the human heart ere it can function properly in Christ's Church. There is little doubt Peter was very sincere but he phrased his question to imply that he was wanting to be, if not actually being, very generous and gracious; he felt that all his fellow-apostles, and his brother particularly, had sinned and trespassed against him quite unjustly. He had perceived that, in common with his fellow-apostles, there had been jealousy in his brother Andrew's heart against him over the Lord's gratuitous promise

of the keys of the kingdom to him. Then the incident of the tribute money had highlighted how offended they had been over imagined ideas of greatness in the kingdom of heaven.

Andrew had indeed needed Peter's forgiveness on those issues and presumably he had received it; what Peter was now seeking was some clarification; he was seeking some direct teaching concerning the whole matter of repentance and forgiveness among them: are there any limits to forgiveness? The Lord's earlier teaching had made clear that the only sin which can prevent a brother from being forgiven is refusal to receive the word in a spirit of penitence. Though love abound and grace be shown, without repentance no-one can be forgiven personal offences, even by the most gracious heart, for, unless repentance prepares the heart for the gift, it cannot be imparted. The great offence is to refuse to repent, for then love and grace are rejected and forgiveness can never be found.

Jesus' words had provoked many thoughts in Peter's mind; is it possible that a brother can sin against a brother too often to be forgiven? The Lord's answer to the suggestion in that question is 'no', ('I say not unto thee until seven times but until seventy times seven') and He tells a story which illustrates the point and shows His heart on the matter. The parable is about a king and his servants (not about Himself or themselves — He does not treat His servants in the manner described); He is seeking to illustrate a principle of divine truth by drawing upon an imaginary incident based upon facts well-known to them all. In His day earthly lords did the kind of thing He describes so skilfully, so they easily understood what He was saying. It is a story about relationships — first between the lord and his servants and then between the servants themselves. Jesus is really saying that no man ought to think he can be so sinned against by his brother that he finds it impossible to forgive him. Every man has so greatly sinned against the Lord and has received such great forgiveness from Him, that immediately upon request he should be able to forgive anybody anything; the Lord can. An unforgiving spirit is, by the act and attitude described in the parable, declared to be an unrelenting spirit.

Breakdown in churches often occurs because of failure to appreciate that each member is labouring for the king in the kingdom of heaven on earth. Every member of a local church is a subject and servant of the king, and at His coming shall render to Him an account of his stewardship. What the Lord is dealing with is indebtedness, that which we owe to each other. One of the hallmarks of a forgiven soul is a great sense of indebtedness and generosity. There is no servant of the Lord on this earth but that he owes his fellow-servants far more than he can ever repay. The basic debt is not a financial one, though the Lord uses monetary terminology. He is referring to greater debts than can be reckoned in cash. This is plainly brought out by the way He interchanged His words earlier when teaching them to pray. First He taught them to say, 'forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors'; commenting later on the request He substituted trespasses for debts, 'for if you forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you'.

Paul saw this clearly and said to the Romans, 'Ye are debtors', and 'I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and the unwise'. He knew that if he did not discharge his debt he would be trespassing against them, but like his Lord he was not talking of money. Finance could be involved in it of course, but indebtedness to each other lies in areas far greater than and very different from that. The Lord had

previously asked them, 'what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' This unanswerable question had taught them the incalculable worth of one human soul. He implied that there is no exchange value for a soul and said that for a man to gain the world and lose his own soul would be the utmost folly. So valuable is the soul of man to God that all the riches of the world are not to be compared with it; a man's soul is the most precious thing he has.

So it is that when He wishes to make His Peters and Andrews understand the abnormality of unforgiveness in His kingdom, and its abomination in His sight, the Lord introduces the horrible idea of selling a man and his wife and his children and all he has so that repayment may be made. The king in His parable is purely imaginary of course: as mentioned before, this king and lord is not Himself, but Jesus the prince of teachers is drawing upon His knowledge of the age in which He lived. In those days wealthy men bought and sold slaves; heathen lords had, and in some parts still do have, ultimate power over fellow human beings, acquiring and disposing of them at will, even unto death. The Lord sketches the background of His teachings with skill, highlighting the great difference between the attitude and actions of the imaginary king and those of his slaves; the king, though a despot, could be compassionate and merciful, but the slave was the exact opposite.

The point Jesus was making was that because He had forgiven Peter (and indeed every one of them) all his sins, he ought, upon request, to freely forgive his fellow-servant without reservation and for the same reasons. Forgiveness among us must flow from being forgiven; receiving compassion, we must be compassionate. The Lord, by the parable, seeks to generate in us a holy fear of being possessed of a hard, bitter, unforgiving spirit. To be unforgiving and without compassion toward one another is to be regarded by us as being unforgivable. He was not so much giving doctrinal teaching about judgement and eternal punishment as giving an illustrated answer to Peter's question. Doing so, He also gave an unmistakable definition of His own attitude toward men, namely instant forgiveness upon request, not on the grounds of people's deserts, but of His own compassion. At the same time He also revealed to Peter, and to all, that He is expecting every one of His servants to behave in like manner among themselves. We must all remember that we have to render our personal account to Him, not only about our indebtedness to Him, but our indebtedness to each other as well.

Beside this, by the parable the Lord also gives insight into the importance of repentance. The servant who was finally punished knew no repentance. He knew his lord's forgiving spirit and besought his mercy and grace, but he never repented; if he had done so he would have had mercy on others. Instead he received mercy and forgiveness from his lord without any intention of forgiving his equals. He illustrates evil developed to the unforgivable degree; he gave offence to all, his lord, his fellow-servants, his victim and to all sense of decency. The Lord taught us to pray 'forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us', and this parable is told to illustrate the reverse working of that principle. Not in vain was John Baptist sent to Israel before Jesus, preaching repentance; 'bring forth fruits meet for repentance' he said. One of these fruits is mercy, another is compassion, producing correct attitudes toward brethren and fellow-servants and little ones and above all the Lord. Repentance for the remission of sins is not just a wish for forgiveness. It is a total change of mental attitude about self and toward God and fellow-men.

We must all beware of the spirit of unforgiveness which justifies itself from forgiving someone and feeds on texts of scripture which seem to support the attitude. But it is all a pretence. Forgiveness is nothing if not bestowed spontaneously from the heart. Rising above all personal hurt, ignoring all affronts to dignity, we all must forgive one another freely and fully upon request. Paul asserts that goodness leads to repentance; we must beware of thinking that repentance leads to (invites or deserves) goodness, for that altogether contradicts the plain statement of scripture. The Lord in the parable told by the Lord forgives upon profession without demanding repentance. The Lord often did it, though not always (see Luke 5:18-26 and 7:36-50).

Repentance demanded of another is nothing other than a demand for recognition of sinnership and right and superiority if not lordship. Preparedness to forgive without demand to first see immediate or permanent change is the essence of love; few there be that attain to it. Spurious Christ-likeness based upon wrongly interpreted texts is one of the present scourges of the churches. On the day of crucifixion Jesus pleaded with His Father to forgive His tormentors and murderers without repentance — wonder of wonders — 'Go and do thou likewise'.

An earthly king may be deceived about attitudes and misguided in his judgement, but the Lord is not, neither must Peter or anyone else be. The fullness of love and wealth of grace which delights to forgive is godlike — it is a nature and attitude quite unmistakable in whomsoever it is found. A word of forgiveness to a needy heart dispels a lifetime of sins, but salvation from the nature of sin that caused it may only be granted to the truly penitent. 'I will pay thee all', brings absolution from all debt, with no re-imposition of sentence if we truly repent. The Lord, by the parable, has said more than the actual words and by doing so has laid bare the spirits of men.

Let us love everlastingly and forgive eternally; Jesus is the Christ building His Church. Straying sheep must be found lest they perish, the offended must be apologised to ere they fall, brethren must be gained despite their trespasses; prisoners must be freed and all libertines bound; the despised must be loved and children valued aright and all sins against one another must be forgiven. The Church must be built, souls must be gathered into that name, Jesus must be in the midst and Father over all. What a concept for the Church Jesus Christ is building!

Chapter 2 — A RESURRECTION CHURCH

The great difficulty facing New Testament authors when writing about the Church was the total lack of direct reference to it in their Old Testament scriptures. They did not have the same difficulty when writing their Gospels, for their subject matter, though not directly stated, was referred to copiously in Moses and the Prophets. When it came to the Church, however, they found it almost impossible to discover anything like the comparable amount of statements about it. Paul, for instance, found he could quite easily show from the Jewish scriptures that Jesus was indeed God's Christ, but could not so easily prove from them that the Church is similarly God's. This difficulty arose because nowhere in the Old Testament is the Church directly referred to as such. Instead it would have been surprising indeed if it had, for as he said, the Church is the mystery hidden from ages and generations; it was the unrevealed secret of God not released to the writers of the Old Testament. The New Testament was given by God partly to reveal that secret.

If They Reject Me They Will Reject You

While it is true that the Jews were expecting their long-promised Messiah, it is just as true that they were not expecting the Church. It is now common knowledge that they quite unwarrantably rejected both Christ and His Church and still do so to this day. They had no scriptural ground or commonsense reason for doing either but reason would that if the former were done, then the latter was inevitable, indeed only logical. They could not accept the Church and continue to reject Jesus Christ, for it is His and if the Church be built there is no plainer proof that He is alive, for He alone is the builder of it.

One of the sights of London is St. Paul's Cathedral; it is one of the greatest tourist attractions in the city and the acknowledged masterpiece of Christopher Wren's art. No-one who sees it would ever think of denying that Christopher Wren had been born and lived to become the great architect who designed, even if he did not build, the cathedral, (especially as there are so many other lesser buildings in the city which also testify to his skill). If the design of the great cathedral be accepted as Wren's work, so also must Wren himself be accepted; he cannot possibly be denied if his work be accepted. So it is with the Church; Christ cannot be denied if His workmanship be recognized — they stand or fall together.

The Jews knew this, and the book of the Acts of the Apostles furnishes proof that they refused to admit that the Church is Christ's building, and in so doing they provided themselves with all the excuse they needed to deny Christ also. From their point of view there was no certain proof that the Jesus they had crucified was alive. None of them had seen Him and to them this was tantamount to proof of the exact opposite of the apostles' claims. Certain of their compatriots testified to having met Him since His death; some claimed to have handled Him and to have held conversations with Him, and even said that He had eaten in their presence. But no-one except those who had been His followers said these things, and to the Jews their testimony was unreliable. If He was indeed alive, why hadn't He appeared to others as well as to His admirers? Why hadn't any of His enemies seen Him?

The authorities utterly rejected the idea — to them all the evidence was circumstantial; only the Church seemed to know the Church; to the authorities it was all too coincidental and highly suspicious. In any case, to the Jews there was no need for any other chosen company beside Israel on the earth; according to their theology they alone were the people of God. The Messiah was theirs, He was coming to them and would set up His kingdom for them and no-one else. According to their interpretation of scripture in the light of prevailing conditions when He came there would be a period of restoration. They were prepared for a certain amount of necessary revision, but mainly the Messiah would redeem them from all the evil of Roman occupation and oppression. Their Messianic hope was that He would establish an earthly kingdom for them rather like paradise in which they would dwell under His benign rule as the premier nation on earth.

When this Jesus of Nazareth had first begun His preaching and teaching among them it seemed for a while that He could possibly be the Messiah they envisaged, but it soon transpired that He was not. They had been mistaken in Him and disappointed. The common people heard Him gladly — they were carried away by His miracles but they did not know the law so how could they judge? It was His spiritual emphasis that had worried them. He seemed to find fault with everything they said and did, criticising their leadership, challenging their judgements and generally making the

people dissatisfied with them. On one occasion Nicodemus, their top religious teacher and foremost interpreter of scripture, visited Him to investigate His claims and was told by Him that he must be born again; ridiculous! What did He mean? And in any case why did Nicodemus of all men need to be born again? He was a Jew wasn't he? Why did a man born a Jew and as good and learned as he need a second birth? He was already ideally suited, as well as absolutely right to have a place in the Messianic kingdom, wasn't he? The whole idea was preposterous. But Jesus was the Christ, and as He later told Pilate His kingdom was not of this world at all; sadly enough by then He was already rejected, betrayed by His own.

Since He who was so scripturally authenticated was so unwarrantably rejected, it was inevitable that His Church would be rejected too. They more than He, for there is no direct statement in the Old Testament which can be proved to be written of the Church. Therefore when we read about it in the New Testament we find a great scarcity of references to the Old Testament; the writers could not find many scriptures of the same unmistakable order they discovered when writing or speaking of the Lord Jesus. There are many which have been applied to the Church, but unless this had been done by the authors we should not have known their meaning. Of course, since the Church is the new creation of Christ, this is to be expected, but it left the New Testament writers without power of verification of their statements in the eyes of the Jews.

An Everlasting Kingdom

This is why all the apostles, without exception, sought to establish three things: (1) the authenticity of Jesus Christ; (2) the authenticity of the resurrection; (3) the authenticity of the outpouring of the Spirit. This they did in two ways, first by referring to the scriptures and secondly by reference to themselves; the scriptures witnessed to Him and these things, and so did they. However, they did hark back to the Hebrew scriptures when speaking of the Church, and rightly so, for although there is no verse which speaks of it directly, there are many which refer to it indirectly and may be used for that purpose. As an instance of this we may cite the verse in Psalm 22 which says, 'I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee'. The latter part of this verse is both translated and interpreted by the writer to the Hebrews as, 'in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto thee'. Here the word Church is substituted for congregation and the word sing is inserted before praise.

Beside the fact that the writer was inspired to do so, this is a most natural, as well as a perfectly legitimate interpretation. Beyond challenge the psalm is Messianic: it is an inspired preview of the cross and the Lord's inner conflicts there. Given this fact, it is a matter of logic that the congregation next mentioned, following Christ's death and resurrection, is the Church. This is clear, since He describes this company as His brethren, for neither Israel nor the innumerable company of angels are ever accorded that privilege. Without making it his chief aim, the writer to the Hebrews, in course of his epistle, makes abundantly clear that the holy brethren of Christ are His Church. Certain it is that as far as His contemporaries in His own nation were concerned, they did not want to be known as His brethren, their action showed it to be the last thing they wanted; they crucified Him.

To the writers of the New Testament, the Church was revealed in the Old Testament entirely by apostolic hindsight. As the testimony of Jesus' disciples was clarified and later written down, it became obvious that the Lord had quite deliberately fostered the idea of brotherhood among the disciples. This is specially discernible in John's Gospel, where the words of Jesus to the apostles in the upper room and to Mary at the mouth of the open tomb are recorded. Matthew also reveals how Jesus earlier introduced the idea of this new relationship to a house-gathering in the words, 'Behold my mother and my brethren', at the same time stretching forth His hand toward His disciples. As we have already seen, it was in context of Church teaching that He spoke of 'gaining thy brother'. In light of this, Jesus' clear statement to Nicodemus becomes very relevant to all, 'ye must be born again'.

So it was that in the beginning the disciples entered the new era with expectations along the lines of brotherhood in a new family. When He rose from the dead and onward for the next forty days, the Lord continued His instructions to them in relationship to His intentions for the future. There is no record that during this period He ever mentioned the Church as such. He did give infallible proofs of His identity, commanded the apostles not to depart from Jerusalem, spoke of things pertaining to the kingdom of God and told them to go into all the world and preach the gospel, making disciples of all men. He also promised to be with them always, even unto the end of the age, and instructed them to baptise in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, but He never used the word Church. He fully intended to build it as He had said earlier, but did not specifically say so then.

He spoke of the kingdom of God, of baptism into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, of enduement with power, of preaching to every creature, of going into all the world. His words, though not the same, were quite as definite; His aim was to give them a different concept of the Church, a larger vision of God, a higher motive for living than they had hitherto held; they were to be witnesses unto Him to a greater degree. They who were to baptise others were themselves to be baptised in the Holy Ghost He said; apparently the new era could not commence until that happened. Jesus knew all along that He could not build His Church except in the Holy Ghost. The Church of Christ is the Church of God and can only exist in the kingdom of God; He had as good as said so to Nicodemus.

From the beginning He had instructed His disciples to pray for Father's kingdom to come, and when telling them His parables about the kingdom of heaven had slipped in the truth about the righteous shining forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father: 'who hath ears to hear let him hear', He said: what He had said was important. Later He had sought to impress on them the necessity of asking Father for the Holy Ghost, 'He will give the Holy Ghost to everyone that asks Him', He assured them. Finalizing His teaching about Him, He said, 'Ye shall be baptised in the Holy Ghost', adding, 'Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you'. God had not planned a Church outside the Holy Ghost, it was impossible anyway; the Church is God's and can only have being in His kingdom; it cannot exist anywhere else at all.

As long as this age shall last the Church shall have partial existence on this earth. By far the greater number of its members, including the Head Himself, have been here and have already departed. We only sojourn here for a temporary period. During its time here it should enjoy kingdom of heaven blessings as befits it, for beside living and moving and having being in Him, in common with all other creatures, the Church

is also in benefit of all the extra providence of being in the Spirit on earth. It was therefore inevitable that at the dawning of the new day of earth's history, the disciples should be thinking of the Church in terms of a kingdom. Jesus had taught them to pray, 'Thy kingdom come', therefore before they were baptised into being as the Church they asked Him, 'Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'

It was a perfectly natural question only to be expected, so without rebuking them He corrected and redirected their thinking: 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which God hath put in His own power but ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me ... unto the uttermost part of the earth'. The Church is comprised of many witnesses; each one of them is filled with the eternal spirit and life of Christ; both individually and corporately they are Christ's living, eternal witness in the earth. Yes, the apostles should live in God's kingdom, but not in the way they thought; Christ's Church was not going to be Israel's kingdom but God's.

God had given the kingdom to Israel once, intending that they should 'be above and not beneath', 'the head and not the tail', but they had disappointed Him. With powerful hand and an outstretched arm He took them to Canaan, that they should turn Canaan into Israel, but instead Israel became Canaan. Throughout most of their history Israel proved powerless to do what God wanted. Why then should the disciples think they would turn Rome into Israel, especially now they knew their King was not going to remain on the earth with them? No, the kingdom they envisaged was not the one Jesus spoke of — theirs was small, territorial and national; His was great, spiritual and international. They had at first visualized a Messiah with a sword like David's, having the wisdom of Solomon, administering the law of Moses in the power of Elijah under the anointing of an Isaiah. What they envisaged for their Messiah and His kingdom forty days after the resurrection who can tell? Whatever it was it was wrong, for they had no idea of what the Baptism in the Spirit would do to them, and when it did happen they could not immediately interpret it aright.

God — Outpoured and Given

Everything turned on the planned advent of the Holy Spirit. Of all the things that happened on the day of Pentecost, the outpouring of the Spirit was of far greater importance than the baptism in the Spirit they experienced. The outpouring of the Spirit was nothing other than the gifting of the third person of the Trinity to men; the most important thing was not that He was given to anyone, but that He was gifted by God. It could be written of Him, as it is written of Jesus, 'God so loved the world that He gave the one and only Holy Ghost'. What is true of the Holy Ghost is as true of Jesus also. The epochal event we celebrate at Christmas is not that Mary brought forth her firstborn son, but that God gave His Son. The virgin was necessary to the event and by it she became unique in history, but immeasurably greater than that, by His birth God created a new epoch in eternity; He had given His Son. Similarly, when the one hundred and twenty were baptised in the Spirit and the Church was born, the event was unique, but in importance it was not to be compared with the fact that at that time the Holy Ghost was outpoured.

On the day of Pentecost God moved on into yet another era of time and another phase of activity according to His eternal plans. Whatever else began on that day, the establishment of the Church, the inauguration of the kingdom of God on earth, the

commencement of God's family, call it what you will, none was so great as the gifting and coming of God the Holy Ghost. 'God so loved that He gave' is probably one of the most wonderful statements in all literature. Without over-simplification the whole of the Old Testament revelation could be contracted into its opening phrase, 'In the beginning God made', and the entire New Testament compressed into 'God so loved that He gave'. Combined, the two declare, 'God is'; the message of the Book is — 'God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost'. Failure to grasp this has caused many to make great and grievous mistakes.

Over-emphasis of the birth of Christ has led to the heretical elevation of the virgin above God's Son in many quarters; she was very blessed but she was only the vessel in which Jesus' body was formed; similarly and equally lamentably also, in many parts the Baptism of the Spirit has become more important than the Spirit in Whom the Baptism takes place. There is a complete reversal of roles here though; in the former that which is being formed is regarded as being less than the person in which it is being created. In either case, the birth or the baptism is of far less importance and significance than the persons of the Godhead involved in the event. Both events were epochal: the first because it was the birth of Godhead into humanity, the second because it was the baptism of humanity into God. All other things that surround or are associated with these amazing events are only significant because of these glorious facts. Though they are related to them and have an importance, they are quite subordinate to them and must therefore never in any way be promoted beyond their relevance.

Perhaps one of the major faults of modern church teaching is failure to present the death of Jesus Christ as it ought to be taught. We must realise and preach afresh the fact that Jesus died to remove all the reasons why God could not justly give the Holy Spirit to men. Just as it required the miracle of virgin conception and birth in order that God may give His Son, so it needed the miracle of the death and resurrection and the return of that Son to Him in order that He could give the Holy Spirit. All these miracles had to be accomplished before the Church could be built, for apart from them it could not exist. The Church is the Church of God, that is of the whole Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; it belongs to and exists only as a result of the persons and work of all three members of the blessed Trinity: the Father begets each member of it, the Son builds each one into it, the Holy Spirit is He in whom it is built. At once it becomes apparent that individual reception of the gift of the person of the Holy Ghost is of far greater importance to anyone than any other related experience he or she may know.

Among the Old Testament prophets, both Isaiah and Joel speak of this outpouring of the Spirit, though in different ways. Peter familiarised the Church with Joel's prophecy immediately the Church was born. His famous phrase 'this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel' has become the term of reference and identification for almost every Pentecostal church in the world. It is the most easily identifiable, and perhaps the most quoted of all Old Testament and New Testament scriptures relating to the Baptism in the Spirit; it is very important for that reason, but even so it has no more importance than any other. Isaiah's great words on the subject are of equal importance with those of his lesser-known compatriot and were written some three centuries before Joel's more renowned words. They are connected with Joel's prophecy concerning the epochal gifting of the Spirit by the word 'pour' — 'I will pour water on him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground', 'I will pour my Spirit

upon thy seed'. Later Isaiah changes his first figurative reference to the Spirit from 'water' to 'wine and milk without money and without price'; this is an expansion of the original idea, for by different biological processes both wine and milk are derivations from water. Both speak of the same event and cover the same period of time, but though Joel's prophecy is more detailed than Isaiah's, Isaiah's prophecies are far more basic and comprehensive than Joel's.

What we are observing here is a common feature of Bible prophecy. Generally in scripture the earlier in time a prophecy is given the more brief, basic and fundamental it is, while those made later in time and nearer to the event spoken of are fuller in content and more expansive in detail. As an example of this we may take the prophecies made concerning the person of the Lord Jesus Himself. The first was spoken by God Himself directly to Adam, 'the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head'. Nothing could be more basic and brief than that; it is absolutely fundamental and utterly comprehensive. Compared with Isaiah's prophecies given thousands of years afterwards about the virgin conceiving and bearing a son and the further complementary detail later given of Christ's crucifixion, the Genesis statement is insignificant for size and content, but who will say which is the more important?

Discounting for the moment Jesus' and John Baptist's prophecies about the Holy Spirit recorded in the New Testament, Joel's was the most recent of the Old Testament statements about His gifting and the results of His coming. It is not therefore surprising that Peter should refer to it, for not only was it the most recent, it was also the most detailed. The most marked difference between the two prophecies is that Isaiah's have to do with life while Joel's deal with ministry and service. Isaiah speaks of sons and daughters springing up like willows by the watercourses, and later links invitations to come thirsty to the waters and poverty-stricken to the wine vats and milk churns with questions about 'labouring for life'. On the other hand Joel's word is frankly to do with exhibitions and demonstrations of the miraculous — prophecies, dreams, visions, wonders and signs in earth and heaven.

Isaiah's writings have great affinity with John's, whose Gospel has to do with life, and who records Jesus' statements about the Holy Ghost and living waters; Joel's find their affinity with the synoptic Gospels and John Baptist's heraldic declarations of a baptism with fire. In keeping with this, John says comparatively little about Jesus' works, while each of the other Gospel writers make much of them. Whether presented prophetically by Old Testament writers or reported historically by New Testament biographers, both aspects of the Holy Spirit's function and works are vital to the Church, the one for its life and the other for its ministry. Both have to do equally with the kingdom of God: Isaiah treats of it in earthly figures as the sphere of God's rule, while Joel emphasizes more the sovereignty of God as He moves with power in the whole universe. Both deal with the outpouring of the Spirit and its results, placing emphasis more on the outpouring than on its effects.

Second in importance to that epochal event is the initial gift of that same divine person to a human person. This is by far the most important event in any individual's life and is spoken of by Paul as the sealing of the Spirit. This gifting of the Holy Spirit to a person seals that soul as being totally redeemed, properly converted, thoroughly justified, utterly saved, completely regenerate, entirely sanctified and instantly baptised into Christ and His Church. The Holy Spirit is Himself the Seal of all this and being given to us, assures it all unto us.

There could be no gifting of the Spirit by God apart from His being given to persons. Analytically we may think of Him as being given, apart from being received, but in the beginning it could not be so. That is why Jesus was so insistent that His disciples tarry in Jerusalem — He must be received. The reason for such powerful insistence is this: in the eternal being of God each person of the Trinity is as dependent upon the other two for life as they upon Him; none of them have personal life except by unity in one being. Each must have distinct personal existence and at the same time share common being. Because the Holy Ghost by nature cannot exist apart from having being in another as well as in Himself, it was quite anti-God that He should be given and not given to someone. This is not to imply that He depends upon human beings for His existence — He does not — it is to show that when imparting eternal life God acts according to eternal laws in all He does. He always moves in harmony with unchanging principles of life, and can do no other. The only things impossible for God to do are things inconsistent with His being and nature; for instance He cannot sin or deny Himself or He would cease to be God. Therefore when dealing with men He acts absolutely in conformity with the laws and principles of His own being.

That is why on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit, being outpoured, was also given to men. Maintaining His being in the Father and the Son, He also takes up residence in every person being saved, thereby uniting them with God and establishing in them the communion without which eternal life is impossible. The Church is God's new creation; the three persons achieved it between them; it took the presence, activity and energies of all. This new creation was no more the work of one person of the Godhead than was the first creation. When we sing 'The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord', we sing absolutely truly, but when we sing 'She is His new creation by water and the word', we are only expressing a part of the truth, for He is only one of the Trinity engaged in the work.

The Promise of the Spirit

Too readily we do God disservice by elevating one person of the blessed Trinity above another when we ought to give full credit to each. Giving Christ the glory for our salvation is right and proper, but in doing so, let us remember that He Himself said He was sent by His Father to accomplish the work for Him. He constantly gave the glory and credit for all things to Him, saying His glory was given Him by His Father and crying out, 'Father glorify thy name', or 'glorify thou me with the glory I had with thee before the world was. John says of Him, 'we beheld His glory, the glory as of an only begotten with a father, full of grace and truth'. Jesus' glory was to glorify the Father and the Spirit's glory is to glorify the Son, that He in turn may glorify the Father.

Peter makes very clear that the risen and ascended Jesus 'shed forth this which ye now see and hear' as a result of 'having received of the Father the promise of the Spirit'. Peter had also heard what John had heard and later records — 'If you love me keep my commandments and I will pray the Father and He shall give you another comforter, even the Spirit of Truth that proceedeth from the Father that He may abide with you for ever'. Pentecost was the fulfilment of that promise. God had prompted Isaiah and Joel to write of it and its results, but the promise was made for the Church before a single member of it was born and before it was written down for Israel to read.

Again we are on the same ground of eternal truth; what is of prime importance is that the promise was made. It is not so much the fact that the promise was made to the Church, but that it was made as part of God's plan and commitment. God made the promise to Himself. In giving the Holy Ghost God was being true to Himself. Beyond being true to His word, God was true to a promise made in heaven before there was an Isaiah or a Joel to write it, leave alone a Peter to draw attention to what the prophet wrote. The most important factor about the day of Pentecost was that it proved the integrity of God; it showed the Godhead of Father, Son and Holy Spirit was at that time inviolably whole and wholesome, and that God's probity was utterly dependable then as it ever was and still is today.

God is as true and upright in unrecorded eternity as in history. God promised Himself He would do something and He did it — He is utterly dependable and trustworthy. When no other ear heard or eye saw, when there was no other to know what He did or said, and therefore no-one to judge or to prove or disprove anything, God made promises and commitments about man to Himself. Setting things in motion He made worlds, started stars on courses, fixed circuits, set times, agreed participations and activities for each person of the Godhead, and worked out the whole scheme of men's salvation. The original promise of the Spirit was made in course of those counsels — it was made by the Father to the Son with the consent of the Holy Spirit. The Son was Messiah designate before He was known on earth as Christ Jesus; it was agreed prehistorically in heaven and unto the fulfilment of it He was born on earth. He lived and died and rose again here and ascended to the throne again to receive of the Father the promise of the Spirit on behalf of the sons of men.

He had taken back to His Father a perfect manhood and had no need to ask for the Spirit on His own behalf, but knowing that His human life and perfection had only been possible because of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, He knew that it was completely impossible for ordinary men to live eternal life on earth except they too had the Holy Spirit. As a man Jesus knew the Spirit of God in many ways, some of which could be listed as follows: He was born of the Spirit, anointed of the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, led of the Spirit, empowered by the Spirit, did miracles by the Spirit, spoke by the Spirit, offered Himself to God by the Spirit and was raised from the dead by the Spirit. At different times He exhorted His disciples to ask for and receive the Spirit, said He would send the Spirit, told them to baptise in the name of the Spirit and also promised He would baptise them in the Holy Spirit, 'Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you' He said, 'And ye shall be witnesses unto Me' — presumably He meant that we should experience what He experienced, that is, that we should be made like unto Him. Surely there is no other way men can prove Jesus' words both to themselves and angels and devils and men.

A Miraculous People

God wants a Church comprised of people who are all witnesses unto Jesus, God's representative man, and each pointing to Him, directing people's thinking, ideas and convictions unto Him, God's ideal man. This cannot be done by just anyone or with lip and finger; only those whose lives are explicable and understandable because of Jesus, those who have been created of God by Him and are obviously His workmanship, can do it. These are a people for whom there is no other reasonable explanation than Jesus Christ the power of God. God is a miracle to human minds and so must His people be. If there is a natural human explanation for the Church, then

there has never been a true Church; the Church is a company of supernatural people. Physically they are as normal as any of their fellow human beings, but spiritually the Church is not normal except by heavenly standards. Each member formerly existed on the earth by the same means and in the same manner as any other person, but through spiritual conversion leading to regeneration, their old manner of life finished and a new one began. Beside their generation by human parents, each one of them has been generated by spiritual parents also, namely the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Every Church member is generated from above on to the earth, a new spiritual being. To belong to the Church this is absolutely necessary, because no-one's regeneration coincides with his or her natural birth. The Lord says, 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit'. By this He means us to understand that every human being has a dual birth into this world — one part visible and the other invisible. That which is visible is of the flesh and that which is invisible is of the spirit — these two combine in every human birth. It is impossible to have human generation without spiritual generation; flesh cannot exist in this world apart from spirit indwelling it. It is the presence of the spirit within that gives life to the body. The human father of the child is generally known by all aware of the birth, but the spiritual father is not.

It is generally believed that when the Lord made the above statement He was referring to what is known as first birth and second birth; the text is almost invariably preached that way and indeed that interpretation is correct. But it is also limited; the Lord was saying far more than that, He was both propounding the fact of human birth in two elements, and at the same time stating the ground of need for new birth. When we were born of flesh we were born of fallen flesh, therefore and at the same time we were born of the fallen spirit, satan, also. As a human body cannot come into this world apart from a human father, neither can a human spirit enter this world without a spiritual father. Jesus Himself identified the spiritual father of mankind in these words 'Ye are of your father the devil', and in another place, 'ye are from beneath, I am from above, ye are of this world, I am not of this world'. When He was born into the world He was an absolutely unique child; absolutely unique from all eternity, He was and is God the Son uncreated, co-equal with the unique Father and the unique Spirit; He was and is and shall ever be one unique God with them.

Doubtless we shall forever be unable to comprehend the mystery of God. It is equally certain we shall be unable to fathom the depths of the mystery of the incarnation; what questions crowd the mind. For instance how was it possible for the great and eternal Son to lay aside His infinite greatness in order to become a human being? How did He succeed in doing that? That is the greatest miracle of the incarnation — how was it possible for God to become man? To come to a man already in being, take him over and indwell him is a more feasible proposition; to appear on earth as an already grown man is equally feasible. To come in the vicarious form of an angel of the Lord is a far more credible thing to the human mind, but to be born of a woman — a virgin! How could God possibly become so infinitesimally small as to be almost non-existent, fuse and identify with a woman's seed and pass through all the processes of human birth into life?

Wonder of wonders, truly not the birth but the conception of the babe was the unique miracle. How did that happen? How did God generate the flesh of that babe? He was incomprehensibly made man. God was the originator of the flesh as well as the father

of the spirit of Jesus. He was absolutely unique, God the original Spirit manifest in the flesh; God the Son became the human Son of God and Son of Man; the Christ became Jesus. By His own testimony He was the Life, the Resurrection and the Life. 'I am the living bread which came down from heaven', He said, 'he that eateth me shall live for ever'. So utterly pure and wholesome is He that when referring to our spiritual diet He actually included His flesh; we must eat His flesh and drink His blood. Almost the entire company that heard Him say that rebelled against it and left Him. It was strong meat, too strong for them, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' they strove among themselves. 'The flesh profiteth nothing', He said, 'the words I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life'. That was more understandable, and then 'the bread which I will give unto you is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world'. They were confounded. The life He lived in flesh was exactly the same as the life He lived in spirit — ethically and morally there was no difference, none at all; He and Father were one; before their eyes He was as perfect in the flesh as God was in the Spirit.

To have life we must accept the fact that His God-life and His human life are one and the same and eat Him whole by faith. He, all of Him, is our food — His nature, His personality, His disposition, His attitudes, His words, His works, His ways, His habits; He is the feast provided by God for us. His flesh is as genuinely God as His spirit, because God was the father of it, and seeing He was not speaking of the physical flesh when saying we must eat His flesh and drink His blood, we should be most grateful for the Gospels which provide accounts of His life and times in the body. We are not now confronted with the same kind of dilemma those people of old were confronted with. The spirit and life with which and in which He spoke are now given unto us; we should not need to struggle over His sayings as they did.

Paul provides us with the perfect revelation of truth about it all — 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me'. This is the only way a man may be said to be eating Christ's flesh; it can only be done by letting Him crucify our flesh to death so that He can live in it as His own. This He does, not by destroying our physical body, but by annulling the power and subduing the effects of its sin — negating its propensities and living out His life in and through us. By doing this He makes our flesh as acceptable to God as His own. We must eat His flesh, imbibe His Spirit, learn of Him, until He is revealed in us as truly and as fully as He was in His own flesh and blood body two thousand years ago. Following our regeneration we must hunger and thirst for that life He lived in the flesh, eat and drink Him and make His life our mental aesthetic and emotional sustenance.

Father of the Lie

The children of God are a new race of people on the earth — they are born of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. They have not gone back again into their mother's womb and been born again physically, but have been born spiritually from above, and can say with Jesus, 'I am from above'. They were from beneath, their father was the devil, they did the lusts of their father, liars in substance as he from the beginning because they were fathered into the world a lie from him. This may not be easily understood at first, and therefore may be unacceptable to some, because even when unsaved lying was not a habit of theirs. These all must understand that when speaking thus, God is not referring to a particular person's habits, but to all human

nature. Because Jesus was begotten entirely of God, He only was entire truth, and could say He was that. It does not matter who he is or what breeding a man may claim after the flesh, or to what degree of honesty he may have attained in speech or conduct — because he is not a son of God he is a lie in this world. Spiritually he was begotten of the liar the devil, physically he was born of fallen flesh, ethically he was begotten and conceived of the lie spoken in the garden, 'ye shall be as gods'.

All humanism has that lie as its root and heathendom has the liar himself as its god; in fact satan is the god of this whole world. Confident in this knowledge, the devil brazenly presented to Jesus the suggestion that He should fall down and worship him. The devil is both the original lie and the liar. He is the father of it all and is the god and father of every human being other than Christ born into this world. The lie simply stated is, 'it is possible to live independently of God'. That is a lie. Being begotten of the liar, man is born a lie, he exists in a lie; and as a lie, and apart from regeneration by God dies a lie to continue a lie for ever. He has been a liar by life, for by the very act of unregenerate living he has propounded the myth that God is not, and has lived on God's earth in the kingdom of hell under king satan. This is that terrible state in which all men are conceived and born and are existing, against which John cries out, 'We know that the whole world lieth (asleep) in wickedness (the wicked one)'. Into this darkness, deception and death Jesus speaks, 'Ye must be born again', and it makes complete sense. Long centuries have rolled over the minds of men, erasing from them the facts of life, but not the effects of the lie, and except the God of truth had given us His Book and sent His Son, we should not have known we were existing in the devil's kingdom, dead to God. Except a man be born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God' comes the word, 'Ye must be born again', 'except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God'.

Now it is one thing to tell a man that, but quite another to make it possible to him. That is why none of the Old Testament worthies from Abraham onward, or before Abraham for that matter, ever spoke of it. New birth was not possible unto men before Christ, whether born under grace or law. Until Christ came the new second man had never been seen on the earth, nor His language heard. When He came He brought in a whole set of new ideas and a new vocabulary, backed home by a new life. He was a new force in the earth, commanding everybody's attention and demanding everybody's response, provoking action for or against Him. 'I was born who and what I am, I did not attain unto it, nor was I trained into it, I am the Son of God, I was born; so also must you be if you would become the children of God'. His body was so full of God, His praises, His worship, His life, that He called it a temple — 'Destroy this temple' He said, 'and in three days I will raise it again'.

If a man's body be anything other than a temple of God it is a synagogue of satan, a temple of idols, a tomb filled with effigies, masks, artifacts of eloquent death made worse for religious practices. Until He gives us life we all are dead, bound up in trespasses and sins for grave-clothes and entombed within our own bodies; therefore we must be born again. In order that this may be accomplished, God poured out the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. If He was going to bring in His kingdom and Christ Jesus was going to build His Church, He just had to do it, for neither can exist outside the Holy Spirit. The kingdom of God is not territorial, neither is it in or of material things. It consists of a quality of spiritual life and soul-states in God the Holy Ghost. For this the spirit of man needs to be regenerated and his soul saved.

There is no way this can be done other than through the work Jesus accomplished on Calvary. Man cannot commence to live an entirely new life until his old life has been ended — they can neither be mixed nor divided within him. New life is only possible after death has taken place; it can only be resurrection life. Life cannot be imputed, it must be imparted. It cannot be superimposed upon an existing life as an addition to what a man already has; it is given to be a substitutionary life. It does not fuse with the old, it takes its place. Many blessings, each of them praiseworthy, may be given to a man as by imputation from and because of the work of Christ at Calvary, but new life can only be imparted to a man by death and resurrection; these ultimate elements, more powerful than all Christ's works, must take place in every one. By this alone can any man be regenerated and enter into new life in the kingdom of God — there only the new-born children of God can live.

Each person so born of God the Father is built into the Church by Jesus Christ; He builds His Church of God's children only. That is why Jesus made clear to Nicodemus that except a man be born of water and the Spirit he can neither see nor enter the kingdom of God; 'Ye must be born from above', He said. So saying He gave notice of God's intention to outpour the Holy Spirit. For God the Father can no more beget children apart from the person and work of the Holy Spirit than He can beget them apart from the person and work of the Son. Later John records Jesus Christ as saying that they who believe on Him should receive the Holy Spirit who would pour forth from them like rivers. This accords with what the Lord said before His ascension, 'ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit', which itself was a confirmation of God's promise to Israel through John Baptist. This was an absolutely necessary procedure, for no-one is either alive or of the right quality to belong to that Church until he has received the Spirit.

Pentecost and the Spirit of the New Creation

God's plans for the Church are very different from anything He had prepared for any other people — they required and included the giving of the Spirit in an entirely new way. As Genesis 1 reveals, the Holy Spirit had been moving on the earth since the dawn of creation and He is still here in the same providential role and capacity toward all men to this day. It can as truly be said of Him as it is written of Jesus, that 'without Him was not anything made that was made'. David saw this quite clearly and said, 'whither can I flee from thy Spirit?' No man can evade His omnipresent workings. Jesus made this plain by the prodigal's words upon his return from 'the far country' in the parable: 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight'. If a man fly to the uttermost part of the universe or make his bed in hell the Spirit of God is there; from the commencement of time He is and has been everywhere present. Unrecognized by men and unspecified to them by God, He has always been the medium of life and breath and all providential blessings for all mankind.

When God created air-breathing animate bodies, He did so by the Spirit. When He inspirited Adam and Eve, He did so by the Holy Spirit, causing moulded dust to turn to bone and flesh and commence to breathe and become living souls. The Holy Spirit is indispensable to God and the universe and all that lives therein. 'He is with you', said Jesus to His unregenerate followers, but was not satisfied by that. He knew that the Spirit's unknown presence and power is not a sufficient condition for Church-building. He must be specified, recognized, received and known and honoured, and come fully into His own. He is an eternal and necessary member of the Godhead,

equal with Father and Son and works in combination and co-operation with them for salvation and Church-building.

So important is the Holy Spirit that the Lord Jesus could not build His Church until He had died, risen again and left the earth clear for the Spirit to come. It was all a logical procedure, God had to create the right conditions for His purposes to be fulfilled; 'if I do not go the Comforter will not come', Jesus said, and in a few days quit the earth. All the Man Christ Jesus did on this earth He did as God for God in God and unto God; Calvary's fullest accomplishment and greatest work was wrought in the Spirit. What Christ wrought in and through the flesh of Jesus of Nazareth, great and necessary though it was, in nothing outclassed or overshadowed that which He wrought in His spirit in the Holy Spirit. The physical sacrifice and bloodshed took but little time and filled only a tiny space, but its place and power in God and His redemptive plan is immeasurable. The spirit and power in Jesus were those of the eternal Christ of God. All He accomplished in time as the Logos of the cross, though accomplished on earth was more importantly wrought in God. This is preserved in the Spirit and remains in power for God's use today and for all eternity. That is probably one of the chief reasons, if not the very chief reason, why the Holy Ghost needed to be poured out in a special way on all flesh. Without this no flesh could be regenerate; God knew it was impossible so He did not attempt it. Flesh and blood must have access to the Spirit for that which was wrought by the spirit of Jesus through His flesh and blood. What Christ accomplished is only available unto man today in the Holy Spirit.

Behold then the generosity of God; let us marvel at His wisdom and glory in His power. He who withheld not His only begotten Son from death, upon receiving Him back gave also the Holy Spirit. Let us worship Him, the Father of glory, whose love spared not His pain to beget children. Suffering Son, who in Thy body bore the agony of the whole being of God, of the Father heart and groaning Spirit, yearning for children, help us to understand. O Eternal Word, spoken most clearly at Golgotha, Son of God and man, teach us by Thy Spirit where and wherein Calvary's power really lies; Son of Man, open our understanding to that death and resurrection that as Son of God Thou shouldst baptise sons of men into sons of God in Thy Church, in the Holy Spirit.

So it is that the Holy Ghost is come anew and spoken of in all His glory; as once He brooded over the deep that the word of the Father may be formed into this material universe, so now He broods over the great deeps of Christ's Golgotha that men may be born and live in the kingdom of God. The Holy Ghost knows the profound intensity of desire lying in the heart of the Father and the unbearable travail of the Son's sacrifice equally well. He feels the fulness of all, and through the Son's offering brings forth from Father's heart the seed of God. For this reason He consented to come from God to men on a new mission, proceeding forth first from the Father to and through the Son in great heavenly outpouring. In one concerted act the Father, who promised and gave Him to His Son for this purpose, sent Him to men in Jesus' name and the Son who received Him from the Father continued the act in one unbroken procession, sending Him on from the Father to His waiting people. For the building of men into the Church of God the Holy Spirit was channelled from the Father through the glorified Man Christ Jesus in one grand co-ordinated process.

Pentecost was a carefully directed operation; the outpouring was very limited indeed. It was not a universal breathing and moving as when in the beginning the Spirit hovered over the deep in darkness, waiting to bring forth cosmic light and create and envelop the earth with air for every living creature to breathe. Contrary to that, it was very contained and highly concentrated; it was as local and specific as creation's was broad and general; it needed to be. If we think of it as the counterpart of God's careful inbreathing into Adam of dust we shall be correct. This is why the Lord spoke of the Holy Ghost coming upon them; until then He had been here universally, doing His providential work around the whole earth; the very breath men breathe, by which we all are inspirited at birth, is connected with Him.

Although introducing a different theme and speaking with more meaningful emphasis, this is virtually what Jesus said to the apostles in the communion chamber, 'He is with you and shall be in you'. With this in mind, God poured out the Holy Ghost very narrowly through Jesus in the beginning. True it is that Peter at that time quoted Joel as saying, 'It shall come to pass in the last days that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh', saith the Lord; Amen, so He will, but He did not do so all at once. Although the Spirit is wholly given, He is not poured out and given to the whole of mankind simultaneously. Doubtless He will be one day, that the earth may be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, but it is by no means possible to say when that shall be.

Without directly saying so, the Lord gave notice of His intentions with regard to the outpouring of the Spirit when He promised His apostles they would be witnesses to Him 'in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth'. Undoubtedly He was making promise according to a preconceived plan of operation, for that is exactly the procedure He followed when outpouring the Spirit. He did not outpour in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria all at once. There was a series of outpourings, each of them directly or indirectly connected with the first, but consecutive to it and less than it. The first outpouring spread abroad a little until all Jewry was included, then came the Samaritan baptism, followed afterwards by the outpouring at Caesarea. Each was as sovereign and direct as it was limited and purposeful.

This method reveals a planned programme to which God is working. All flesh is scheduled for an outpouring from on high. We are now living in the days the Lord was thinking of when He spoke of 'the uttermost part of the earth', perhaps we may all agree that we are needing another visitation of the Lord. It is certain that the Church of God cannot be built at a speedy rate apart from that. Only those upon whom the Spirit falls and into whom He enters and in whom He remains can be (indeed are from that moment and by that reason) members of Christ's Church.

The Conclusions of Gamaliel

It is quite impossible to join the Church. Many attempted something of this nature in the beginning but failed; it is just as impossible today. Gamaliel, who was one of Jewry's most respected teachers at that time, seemed to have had some understanding of this. It is impossible to judge whether or not he fully grasped all that was going on, but there is no doubt he had some enlightenment on the inner workings of the Church. At that time the rapidly increasing spread of the Church in Judea was causing great alarm in Jerusalem. The authorities were quite unable to contain it; they tried

propaganda, threats, imprisonment and beatings, but everything failed and they were afraid. Despite all these preventive measures, the apostles were filling Jerusalem with the gospel; the Church was flourishing on persecution. Wise Gamaliel observed all this very closely and after much thought came to some very sane conclusions. He compared what was happening with a couple of previous religious movements he had either personally observed or had made it his business to investigate. Both these had occurred fairly recently and both of them had come to nothing. Speaking of the leader of one of them he said, 'About four hundred joined themselves to him, but he was slain and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered and brought to nought'. The other also foundered in a similar way; the leader was killed and the people dispersed.

Gamaliel, though a man of the world and a non-Christian, was very shrewd. He noted that there were certain similarities between these earlier movements and Christianity, for both the leaders of these former movements had been slain, and that is what had happened to Jesus. He also knew that the one great insistence of the apostles was that Jesus was not dead but alive. Gamaliel never mentioned the resurrection though — it would have been imprudent to have done so, but following his process of reasoning allows the assumption that he may have believed more than he was prepared to say. Theudas and Judas, the respective leaders of the two earlier movements, died and were still dead. While they were alive the people had joined themselves to them, but when the leaders died the movements died also; it is impossible to join a dead man. Quite contrary to this, the Church had only sprung up since Jesus' death. When Jesus hung on the tree, all except one of His disciples and His mother forsook Him and at first it looked very much as though history was about to repeat itself, for the Nazarene's followers had been dispersed also, but now things looked different. For every disciple that forsook Him at the Passover, there were now probably as many thousands, none of whom had formerly owned His name.

This Church was so different from those other groups, for it had formed since Pentecost — it was most unusual to say the least. Gamaliel, the famous doctor of law, was ready to believe that perhaps God was in it after all; if so he was right. If he had known it, not one of those multitudes had joined the Church, not only because they couldn't, but also because they wouldn't have dared to attempt it, they were too afraid. Gamaliel may not have penetrated this far into the phenomenon, but he was aware of it just the same, and advised caution in handling the leaders of the present movement. The man had observed something inexplicable to him; it did not fit into his ideas or follow the usual pattern, nor could it, for Jesus was building His Church.

Two scriptures inform us of the method the Lord adopted when forming His Church. The first states that He 'added to the Church daily such as were being saved'; the second says that 'believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women'. To arrive at the correct order of saving truth we must reverse the order of the texts: no-one can be joined to the Lord. These two things happen simultaneously, but although one is impossible without the other, the former can only take place when the latter happens, for it is entirely contingent upon it. To be added to the Church is a great privilege, but to be added to the Lord is a much more marvellous miracle; to whomsoever this is granted it is the miracle of all miracles. Every person added to the Church is a miracle and has been added by a miracle; indeed that person is only in that miraculous position as a result of a series of miracles of exceeding great magnitude. To understand this we could not do better than follow Peter's singularly powerful prophetic ministry when challenged at Pentecost.

As it was in the Beginning

Commencing with a brief testimony to his own experience, he goes on speedily to quote Joel at some length and, pausing only to speak briefly of Jesus, passes on to David's great prophecies concerning the Lord. Having done so and leaving David in the tomb, he points to Jesus alive on the throne shedding 'forth this which ye now see and hear; Jesus whom ye crucified is both Lord and Christ', he cries. Pricked to the heart by such preaching, thousands of his hearers, feeling their guilt, begged to know what to do. They must save themselves without delay, disassociate themselves from their guilty generation, repent and be baptised in Jesus' name for the remission of their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit. With wholehearted belief and total commitment these men abandoned themselves to the word they heard, obeyed Peter's instructions and were thereby added to the Lord and by Him to the Church.

This is the only way for mankind — the way of the Christ, the Church, the apostles and the scriptures; since the newly-risen Lord Christ added to the Church this way in the beginning we may be sure there is no other way now. The true Church has continued like this without change from the beginning. Anything on earth purporting to be part of the Church and existing other than this and by this means is not a scriptural church.

Reading of the amazingly rapid growth and spread of the Church, we become aware of two things: (1) its inclusiveness and (2) its exclusiveness. From its very natal day onward people of all nationalities were included into it; all those who were born again at Pentecost had previously been devout Jews by religion, if not by birth. Many strangers of gentile extraction from far off lands were gathered in Jerusalem on that first great birthday at Pentecost. The reaping from then on was very wide and extensive, and also very exclusive; the gospel terms, though published freely everywhere, were very selective. Only those who obeyed without demur were included; there was room for no-one else. Once in the Church they were soon taught that nearly all former religious practices must be deliberately abandoned. If the converts were from heathen backgrounds they were expected to forsake all former practices immediately and totally. Bible reading and prayer could remain, so could special fasting and alms-giving. Some things, such as circumcision, could not be erased from the flesh and so must remain, but it carried no privileges and must no longer be regarded as having any significance and certainly no importance. The Church is the new Israel of God; Jews are not a chosen class above gentiles now — all are equal here.

They did not know all these things immediately, so they had to learn them, but everybody had a great zeal for God and an equal desire for fellowship. With total simplicity 'they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers'. It was the invariable result of being added to the Lord. It is perhaps a great pity that the translators interpolated the words, 'unto them' into the text, for they are not in the Greek, nor are they necessary to the verse. They may give some degree of fluency to the reading, and be thought to be beneficial because of that, but they are a sure indication of failure to understand the truest meaning and work of the Spirit inspiring Luke the historian. If any words were to be inserted at all, it would have been better to have made the text read, 'the same day were added to the Lord', and thus draw attention to the Lord rather than the Church.

The primary insistence is that when souls are added to Him they continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and breaking of bread and prayers.

There is a fundamental principle governing all Church truth, namely this: the Church is Christ's. The Spirit was given to Him for the special reason that He should build His Church; He is the God-chosen head of it and He alone baptizes into it. Therefore every single person who becomes a member of it must first of all be added to Him; it is a love operation as well as a life and power operation. Added to Him first, we all in that act are added to the Church also, for the Church consists of no-one other than the company who specially belong to Him. As an instance of this we may cite the apostles, who we know are ensamples to the Church: these are always referred to as being Christ's apostles, not the Church's. They did belong to the Church, but only in a secondary sense. Primarily they were His, not theirs.

This was so for all of the Church; miraculously added to the Lord they also found themselves added to one another in such a new way that the only word by which the relationship could be described was 'fellowship' or 'communion'. Beyond what was formerly possible to them by the bonds of mutually shared religion, in a new and unprecedented way 'all that believed were together and had all things common'. Suitable to their relative states of being, they were on earth what God was, and still is, in heaven. God is a fellowship or communion of three persons living together in one, having all things common — they share everything, including the Church. Into this blessed estate men are called and baptised to enjoy God's eternal life in holy communion or fellowship with one another equally; the Church, like God, is a communion.

This word communion is defined as 'the act of making common'; it describes an act rather than the state into which we are brought by that act. Paul tells us that God has called us into the fellowship of His Son; it is a most marvellous statement and may be put thus — we have been called by God into the Son's act of making us common with Him. This is such a wondrous thing, so breathtaking in suggestiveness that only with veiled eyes may we read it. So far as Christ was concerned it cost Him, Calvary. So far as we are concerned it requires the baptism in the Spirit. Before and far above all other, each person's communion must be with God. No-one can possibly have eternal life except by communion with God, and He can only give a person eternal life by the act of making His Son the Son of man by the virgin; God incarnate was a fellowship, the highest example of union of God and man; O the wonder of it! Having accomplished His purposes thereby, God received His Son back again to heaven, and poured forth the Holy Ghost that Christ may baptise us into this eternal life. We men of earth are then made children of our heavenly Father.

The Eternal Fellowship

The apostle John clearly understood it this way; to him God was an eternal fellowship of life; he saw that there never had been any eternal life apart from eternal fellowship, so he had no difficulty in understanding the basis of life for the Church. He sums up everything in this way — we have fellowship with the Father and the Son and thereby have fellowship one with another. He never uses the word Church in any of his writings. All he sees is a family of sons in fellowship of love with their Father and each other in a lost and hostile world. Except to emphasise the need for new birth he does not speak of the kingdom of God. He does however report Jesus' statement, 'my

kingdom is not of this world', which saying was at the time a great relief to Pilate and a bitter disappointment to some of His disciples. But whether kingdoms be terrestrial or spiritual, John is more occupied with the being of God and the miracle of new birth than the lesser miracles with which his fellow Gospel-writers fill their pages. This is by divine selection and inspiration of course; it was ordained of God to show us the source and life and authority of the kingdom rather than the course and works and power of it.

The synoptists emphasise the throne and the kingdom. John reveals king Jesus the Son of God in person. His testimony is 'I and my Father are one', and His prayer to the Father on behalf of His disciples is, 'that they may be one in us, I in them and thou in me'. So great is the communion He has in mind for the Church that His prayers for it can only be couched in terms similar to those in which He thinks of His own relationship to His Father; 'that they may be one as we are, that they all may be one as thou Father art in me and I in thee, one even as we are — one'. One, only one, just one, no more; many persons in one being, perfect in ONE, and that one Jesus — 'that the world may know that thou hast sent me'. That is John's presentation of the Church as it lay in the heart of Jesus and was prayed out in his hearing en route to Gethsemane.

Not for John the revelation of the body given later to Paul, or the concept of building which imbued Peter. In obedience, according to their callings and ministry, his fellow-apostles spoke of being baptised into Christ's body, or being built into God's house respectively, but he was called to speak about being born into God's family. They all three approached the same subject in their differently appointed ways, but all agreed in one united testimony; their writings complement each other perfectly to reveal the Church in fullest light. Of the three neither Peter nor John specifically wrote to the churches in the same way as did Paul; their epistles are more general in scope and pastoral in character.

John's output was more copious than Peter's, for in addition to epistles, he wrote a Gospel and the book of the Revelation, all of which are about eternal life. The theme gripped him, flooding his mind so full that it suffused all the literature he wrote. He saw that the coming of the promised Holy Spirit was primarily for this purpose. To him Pentecost was not so much the fulfilment of Joel's ancient prophecy, as the fulfilment of Jesus' more recent promise: 'at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in me and I in you'. That saying became the root of all John's thinking and speaking. From it sprang all reason and desire for eternal life. He was not going to be left an orphan by this wonderful Jesus whom he had followed these three years: 'I will come to you', it was sweetest music to John: 'because I live ye shall live also', He said: John could contemplate nothing more wonderful. Jesus was going to comfort them all with another Comforter; they would then be positive that He was alive; more, that He was Life itself. He had claimed all along that He and His Father were one, that He was actually in the Father and the Father was in Him. Indeed, so great were His claims to this union that they amounted to assertions of absolute identity — 'he that hath seen me hath seen the Father'. It was not possible for even Him to satisfactorily state the baffling truth He and His Father enjoyed — a visible, an invisible and an indivisible presence and one eternal being.

For a matter of three years now they had lived with Him, but they did not know that seeing Him they had seen the Father also. Father was visible in the Son, so also was

the Holy Spirit; in Jesus God, all of Him, was manifest. But it was the invisible Christ who was both in the bosom of the Father and manifest through the flesh of Jesus that was the real Saviour. God — the whole being and three persons of God — is our Saviour. The allocations of work and the agreement about functions necessary to salvation were decided among the persons of God according to their respective relationships to each other, but whatsoever any one of them did or does or shall ever do, was and is and shall be done by all.

The literal body of Jesus of Nazareth seen and handled of men, was of no more value for spiritual life than His actual flesh and blood were valuable for spiritual food and drink. He said, 'except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood ye have no life in you, my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me and I in him'. Yet He also said, 'it is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you are spirit and they are life'. He could only say that because in His bodily habits, functions and exercises He maintained heavenly standards of life; His behavioural patterns were absolutely perfect, true spiritual life lived out to the full in the flesh.

What He was meaning was this: in Him all the nature, virtues, characteristics, power, intelligence, wisdom and knowledge of God was in being on earth. Paul put it summarily in these words, 'In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead (that is Father, Son and Holy Ghost) bodily', it could not have been better expressed. In His physical body on earth Jesus manifested a kind of life which could not justifiably be accorded any thing other than eternal existence in perfection. Whatsoever Jesus did, Father and Spirit were in and with Him to do; the one exception to this was when they forsook Him on the cross. Therefore the cross was the greatest proof of Jesus' claims, for His death was the greatest test of them; the resurrection was the greatest demonstration that both the proof and the test certified Him to be the genuine Son of God.

When the Holy Father and the Holy Spirit forsook Jesus and left Him all alone on the cross, they did Him the greatest service and paid Him the sublimest compliment possible. If they had remained it could never have been finally proved that He was God the Son. But taking their leave of Jesus there, they showed the world that in His own personal Self Jesus was God in His own right and that, being so, He did not need their personal presence and assistance to die. They did not forsake Him as cowards forsake their post and duty in the hour of danger, and their friends in greatest need, but as loyal friends, desiring nothing for Him but His highest good and greatest glory. They wanted the honours of redemption to be heaped upon Him, not themselves.

The Lamb in the Midst of the Throne

John reported the success of it all as he saw it later when the Lamb as it had been slain stood in the midst of the throne. He was surrounded by beasts and elders and myriads of angels, all of whom were saying with loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing'; it was overpoweringly wonderful. In response to this demonstration of heavenly praise, every creature in the universe lifted up its voice as one in psalmody, singing to the Lamb and Him that sitteth upon the throne. The whole universe was ringing with praise, led by that celebrated and honoured representative company of the Church, 'the four beasts and the four and twenty elders'. Their song was full of

thankfulness and praise for redemption and they have come to God out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation to bear their part. John was listening to the song of the new royal priesthood. They brought no sacrifices of earth to God; these are priests to no nation, people, tongue or kind on earth: they are priests of God alone. They make no sacrifice, God has provided the Lamb and made the sacrifice and now it stands alive in the midst of the throne; the living sacrifice is enthroned forever slain; the mystery lay bare before their eyes.

Every lamb slain by man for sacrifice is laid dead upon some altar, to be warmed by its fires and consumed by its heat in fervent hope that it may be accepted by an unknown god. But this Lamb is not lying dead. He is standing upon the throne; He is alive, risen, standing. The Greek word for resurrection means 'to stand up from' or 'to stand up out of' — the slain Lamb is the resurrected Lamb. Living creatures, elders, angels encircle and throng the throne of His glory to praise Him, and every creature in all places of His dominion adds its voice to bless and honour and glorify God and the Lamb. 'So be it', say the four beasts, 'and the four and twenty elders fall down and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever.

For God to be glorified by the Church and the angels and all creation, Jesus had to be strong enough to die alone, and willing also. This was the great test into which He entered in Gethsemane and from which at the third attempt He rose from His face victorious. He had entered into time by a miraculous birth to live out His day among creatures of time. Thirty long years ran out their course before He revealed Himself to men; His day was nearly expired when He stood at last in Jordan. He had then but a short three years, about one eleventh of His life to live. He did not live on the earth long; He had not come for that purpose but for an entirely different reason, and from His anointing He moved onward to accomplish it.

As He approached nearer to the end, He told His disciples about the cross; He must go to Jerusalem and be rejected by the nation's elders and scribes and chief priests there and suffer and die and rise again. It was a grievous thing to them, but He had not told them half of it; the worst of it He kept to Himself. They would not have understood if He had told them anyway; beside, it was too painful for Him to talk about it. But it underlay His thinking all the time. He knew His day was running out fast and that soon His hour would come. It struck for Him when two of His disciples Philip and Andrew, came to Him with the news that some Greeks among the crowd wanted to see Him. 'The hour is come', He said, 'the Son of man should be glorified; now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour, Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again'.

The timing was perfect. The Greeks were up for the Passover, this was the hour and Jesus knew it. He moved on steadily through the last activities of earth's little day to Gethsemane and Golgotha with the words on His lips, 'Father the hour is come: glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify thee'. He allowed nothing and no-one to stop Him or hinder Him; He made no excuse though the pain in His heart was almost unbearable and the thought unendurable. Still He kept the secret to Himself. Isaiah had prophesied that He should be stricken, smitten of God and afflicted, but could not write this; none of the prophets could, for God had not allowed it. The spirit of Christ which was in them for their ministry could not tell Israel this, it was so awful. The secret price of redemption was known only to God, and Jesus was the one designated

to pay it. He wanted a Church built on Himself, built by Himself, for Himself, so He must pay for the privilege. He did not share even with His chosen disciples the cost, and left all but three behind when He went beforehand to finally agree the terms with His Father.

The weight of His grief and agony hung heavily upon them all. His soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death and as He wrestled with His problem His sweat rolled off Him like blood, but still He never told them the horrors He endured, nothing tore it from His lips. All His life He had been a man of sorrows. It is never recorded that He laughed, He was too acquainted with grief. His joy was set before Him beyond the cross; to reach it He must endure the agony. So as a sheep dumb before its shearer He never opened His mouth to speak or His heart to reveal the cause of His unspeakable pain, until finally on the cross the last dread moment of His awful hour came.

'Eloi, Eloi lama sabachthani'. In a moment the secret was out, and the burden of His heart broke Him. Forsaken, utterly forsaken, in the dark. He could not see a soul nor feel His God; He was alone, bearing sin. He knew sin now. He had never known it before. It was division, loneliness, the blackness of darkness for ever. 'For a small moment have I forsaken thee': His spirit in Isaiah had prophesied it. He had known of it then, Calvary had coloured all He had ever thought or said. How could He give Israel up? From eternity He had anticipated forsakenness; love could not let His people go. So He came down from heaven and died, the forsaken one, that the name of the Father may be glorified, and it was. And because He glorified that name, His Father glorified Him. He glorified Him in Himself.

He did it by forsaking Him. He left Him hanging on a tree, trusting Him, knowing that Jesus, just Jesus alone, was sufficient and more than sufficient to deal with sin. God wanted us to 'see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man'. The glorious crowning took place on the cross; by the grace of God He alone of the blessed Three was honoured to taste death for us all.

Neither Father nor Holy Spirit was crowned there; they left Jesus alone that the cross should be the throne of His glory, a throne exclusively His. How wonderfully God used that cross — it was at once a gibbet where the old Adam died, an altar where the new man was offered to God, a battlefield where the devil and his hosts were defeated, a destination where sin terminated, a quarry whence the rock was hewn, the place where Jesus was proved to be God and a throne where Christ was crowned to build His Church.

Chapter 3 — THE HOUSE OF GOD

There is no evidence to show that Peter and the unknown writer to the Hebrews knew each other, but comparing their epistles it is evident they had much in common. They shared a common view of the Church, and in their different ways faithfully presented it in their epistles. As may be expected, the apostle Peter was greatly influenced by the statement the Lord Jesus had made to him in the presence of all the apostles at Caesarea Philippi, 'upon this rock I will build my Church'. His first epistle bears marked evidence of this, for in it he refers to the Lord as 'a living stone', adding, 'it is contained in scripture, Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious, and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded'. Upon Him, according to plan,

throughout the age God intends to build every person who is truly born of His Spirit. He has completed His heavenly abode ready for the new creation. Therefore every new-born babe must regard itself as a living stone, elect and precious as the chief cornerstone, already prepared for the building. In fact we are a generation chosen by the Lord specially for this. We are not to stumble at this word, says Peter, for we are appointed by God to be living stones in His house. This seems clear enough testimony to the fact that, contrary to the opinions of some, Peter did not regard himself as being the foundation stone of the Church.

As has already been discussed in chapter 1, there are those who have unnecessarily made Peter 'a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence', for against his will they have sought to give him a position he does not and never did want. He never claimed to be the chief cornerstone, and had he done so he would have been self-evidently false, for by his own statement it was laid in Sion, not on earth. Like its Lord, everyone in it is from above; the gospel of the kingdom is preached in all the world therefrom. The Church has earthly manifestation, but it is not of this earth, neither is it from beneath nor yet of this world, it is of God. This is why, before speaking of living stones, Peter labours so effectively to establish the truth of new birth; each stone in God's house is a living person, born from above of God's incorruptible seed. Every new-born babe must approach Christ sincerely, as coming unto a living stone, with the object of becoming part of His spiritual house. He or she must desire to grow and become a member of an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Of itself this resolve will strengthen the character and give purpose to life, and continued in will make us rock-like as He.

John also found this truth most appealing to his heart and in his own way writes of the Father's house. He does not use Peter's idiom, nor dwell on it as largely as he, nevertheless he as surely refers to the subject by quoting Jesus' own words, 'In my Father's house are many mansions'. Now mansions are palatial houses and Jesus says that Father's house is composed of many of them; so we learn that God's house is built up of many of these houses; what a mansion that must be! Peter tells us that living people are stones, John says that living people are God's houses, more — they are God's homes, and he makes this clearer by further quoting Jesus as saying, 'We will come unto him and make our abode with him'.

The Lord was announcing God's intention of making individuals fit to be mansion houses for His permanent residence. John adds further to this in the book of Revelation where he records Jesus' vision of God's eternal home; this time He speaks of a city — it is the final revelation. John's contribution to the theme of God's eternal dwelling-place now becomes clear. A city is a dwelling-place, a house complex full of dwelling-places. The city of New Jerusalem is the whole company of regenerate sons, filled with the Spirit, indwelt by God — gathered together into one they form God's composite house. By living in each He lives in all as being His own body, the Church which is His home in the new creation.

The Church of the Firstborn

This truth is similar to that which the writer to the Hebrews expresses in more expansive style. His language and approach are rather different from Peter's and John's, but although he treats it more fully, the theme is the same: 'Ye are come unto mount Sion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an

innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all and to the spirits of just men made perfect and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel'. This Church in Sion is here designated as 'of the firstborn', and is being contrasted with the children of Israel at Sinai en route to Canaan from Egypt centuries before. They were assembled there then as a new-born nation to receive the law of God governing being and behaviour in the promised land; these twin tablets of law were the most precious double portion the firstborn nation ever had.

These first-born males who were redeemed from death in Egypt were only few in number compared with the whole nation of people God saved from Pharaoh's vengeance at the Red Sea. Right from the commencement of His dealings with Israel God had intended to save the whole nation. He insisted that the lamb should be slain and its blood sprinkled on houses in Egypt for the preservation of the first-born because He intended to show the world that salvation is only possible because of redemption. The two events combine to point the whole truth; God was not showing special favour to a select few — the whole nation were regarded by Him as His firstborn. The entire episode was only typical though, none of them was individually regenerate; even so, when they came to Sinai they stood before God as being born of water and blood.

Before giving them the Law, God told them that in so doing His design was to make the house of Israel a kingdom of priests unto Him. Nevertheless, in view of the impracticability of this, and having made plans for a central home among them, God selected a family of priests to be His house servants. Their duty and privilege was to offer up physical sacrifices to God on behalf of the whole nation, and from that moment they were committed to do so. Their service was exclusive in that area. Only priests and Levites were allowed to handle the physical sacrifices, but long before those animals came into the hands of the priests they had been constantly handled by those who brought them. They bred them, fed them on what God provided, over-watched all their lives and finally offered them to their God; the priests were only their hands. All Israel were expected to offer up the spiritual sacrifices; that was a personal matter for which God held each man responsible. On Israel's altar the blood constantly testified of redemption for possession, atonement for justification and sanctification for identification. That blood needed to be copiously shed and continuously offered, for it could never take away sin, but we of the new covenant have need of neither shed blood nor of sacrificing priest on earth. The physical side of it is now past and there are no such duties left for man to perform.

Peter is careful to distinguish this in his epistle; he carefully separates the blood sacrifice of the Lamb from the spiritual sacrifices made by the priests of the new order. He refers to them in correct order, placing the physical sacrifice in the first chapter and the spiritual sacrifices in the second. The blood of Jesus is not now being offered from the altar of the cross; it is speaking in New Jerusalem. The physical sacrifice was made by Him once for all outside earthly Jerusalem and it brought to an end the age of physical sacrifice for sin because it expiated it. Jesus not only took away sin, His blood also brought in the reconciliation which has replaced the atonement based upon animal blood. He is now appearing in the presence of God for us, where His blood speaks out the terms, benefits and blessings of the new covenant on high. There is therefore now no possibility that any kind of physical sacrifice for

sin or blood of atonement could be accepted or even considered by God. His Son did it all perfectly and for that reason is now reigning on high, seated at His right hand. Nothing can be added to or taken from the sacrifice He made — it is perfect and can neither be improved upon nor interfered with; it is treasured up in heaven far beyond the reach of men or devils.

A Spiritual Priesthood

In relationship to this, Jesus is made a high priest for ever. His sacrifice is a living power and His service is eternal. He lives and as He lives He tirelessly offers Himself spiritually to God on our behalf. This is His priesthood. He functions in it ceaselessly and thereby we are saved to the uttermost. Into this priesthood we are called, and are formed into a house of priests for this purpose. Jesus is the high priest over the house and we who are His house are the lesser or ordinary priests. Each of us is built into this house by God, to be His spiritual dwelling place, and He has placed His Son as Lord over it.

Of old God's people were called the house of Israel which simply means that God dwelt in Israel among His people and not with any other nation. In order to do this He first had a tabernacle made for Himself in which He dwelt for centuries, and following that He commissioned Solomon to build Him a temple: these were His only earthly homes. They were both constructed to His specifications on a basic threefold plan which embraced an outer court for the congregation, a house of ministry for the priests and an inner sanctuary for Himself. The first was publicly the people's, the second was privately the priests', the third was exclusively God's; there He dwelt right at the centre of the nation. Though far removed from ordinary men, He wanted it to be understood by all that He was there, even though He had no direct contact with them. Far different from that, God now lives in His people personally, in the good heart of faith of all His sons, every one of whom is a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

From the high priest downward this order of priesthood is entirely different from the Aaronic order, mainly in that it does not handle any kind of physical sacrifices. It does not slay animals or birds, or sprinkle their blood on houses or altars or people, its priests only handle the memorials of a past sacrifice. All their offerings are of a spiritual nature and their sacrifices are identical with those Jesus made to God all the time He was on earth. No-one ever received the impression He was making these sacrifices; He certainly never told anyone what He was doing, He just offered Himself to God continually; it was a law of His nature. He was not constantly being slain physically, nor was His blood shed for sin daily, but He lived a totally sacrificial life.

From His birth He could say 'for Thy sake I am killed all the day long, I am counted as a sheep for the slaughter', but this spiritual ministry was natural to Him in the ages before His human birth. Unless He had been willing to make vast spiritual sacrifices He could not even have been born a man. He offered Himself in painless sacrifice to God before He was born. His offering was a love-gift to Love. When He vacated His throne in heaven for a womb and a manger on earth He resigned all the praise and power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing which were so naturally and rightfully His there. That is an unimaginable sacrifice to us, but so great is Love, and having done this throughout unspecified ages, He continued to do it for thirty-three years more as a man on earth.

While on earth He lived a life of complete self-denial and self-abnegation. He consistently refused to accept any power or riches or wisdom or strength or honour or glory or blessing which men would have given or accorded Him for anything He did among them, but gave His Father and God all the credit for everything He did. Such sayings as 'my Father doeth the works — I know nothing of myself — I can do nothing of myself — my Father sent me — I did not come of myself' were constantly in His mouth. He was on a mission and lived in deep humility. He sought no glory of men, He was Lord of angels and though they ministered to Him as a man among men, He never received their praises until He was risen and enthroned; He had to be slain before He would receive them. His life was a life of perpetual spiritual sacrifice, and one of the great tasks in which He is currently engaged is teaching all who are of His household to live in the same way.

Peter describes this life as 'showing forth His virtues', (things worthy of praise) and says we are a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, a generation chosen for this purpose. All the spiritual sacrifices we can ever make during the course of life are nothing other than a showing forth of His virtues; it is entirely impossible to show forth His virtues properly unless we do make spiritual sacrifices. These may or may not be related to material things, but whether this is so or not, these are the only offerings acceptable to God. In the language of priesthood this is exactly the same as saying we are witnesses unto Him. Whatever else may be regarded as necessary to being His witnesses, this life of priesthood is fundamental to all. When His praiseworthy virtues are manifested by us, it is the living proof that we have been baptised by Him in the Spirit into the priesthood of the Church.

Paul takes up this same theme to Timothy and emphasises that the Church is the house of the living God. Laying down instructions concerning standards of behaviour for officers in the Church, he says, 'thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God'. If this is properly done, the mystery of godliness Jesus revealed will again be revealed in this age. God will continuously be 'manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory'. This is His desire for all His people throughout the entire length of the Church age, which in another world will be extended unto all eternity. In this present age of time it is precisely what Jesus meant when He prayed 'I in them and thou in me that they may be made perfect in one and that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them as thou hast loved me'. When all His virtues are fully developed in us and shown to the world without variation, it is indisputable proof to all that Jesus is alive and is the Christ; godliness is being manifest in the flesh again.

The Whole Family in Heaven and Earth

The concept of the Church dearest to the apostle John is as the family of God. John does not actually use the word 'family'; it is Paul who introduces it when writing his epistle to the Ephesians. It is part of his second prayer on their behalf, 'I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named' His great desire for this family was that they all should be filled with (into) all the fulness of God. There can surely be no more stupendous height of desire for mortal man than this; the prospect is breathtakingly wonderful. Right from the beginning God purposed in Himself to get glory for Himself in this way. The end to which He is moving is marvellous in the extreme. His revealed purpose is to fill both the Church and Himself. He fills the Church that the Church may fill Him — that

is to say fulfil Him. Not until all His purposes and desires are fulfilled in Himself in His own way and by His own means can the Church know all the fulness He has planned for it, for only in that lies hope for all His family.

When that fulness is known by the Church, then shall the Church fill the ages with glory world without end. God has planned a world of glory for Himself and His Church, a new everlasting creation continuing in bliss throughout the ages of the ages. The dispensation of the fulness of times mentioned earlier in the epistle is but the opening age of the ages to come. In it God is going to sum up under one head all things in Christ, whether they be in heaven or in earth. How long that period of summation will endure or all that will be accomplished in it no man knows, but fulness beyond our present comprehension and capacity lies in it, and to it we are predestined. We do know that our eternity is bound up with Jesus' future in the mystery of the Godhead, and that God being His Father is also our Father, and there we rest, for being His body we are identified with Him in all things. What at first sight may appear duality of purpose is really singularity of purpose — the eternal purpose He purposed in Himself. Amen.

How naturally all the various similes of the Church fit together. When speaking of His flock and of Himself, the Good Shepherd, Jesus, said 'He calleth His own sheep by name', and Paul writing to the Ephesians and praying for the whole family, says it is a named family. It is exceedingly doubtful that every earthly shepherd names each of his sheep individually; they all recognize the shepherd's voice, but do not answer to a name. But the Good Shepherd's flock is made up of named sheep only. Maybe shepherds look upon their flocks as their 'families' and have a very real relationship with them — empathy it is called — but none would want the relationship to be literal; the family is not named as is a human family. On the contrary the Lord's flock and the Father's family are one and the same; it is named — it is the family of God. Each member of it has been individually born of God.

Paul is outstandingly emphatic about this, 'one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all', and that is a matter of great wonder to all who know it. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Father of us all; no-one is in the family except God has fathered him into it. He accomplishes this at the same time as Christ baptises individuals into His body; it is a joint action. We become a member of the body of Christ and a child in the family of God simultaneously. By the former operation we are made alive in the person and body of Christ and by the latter Christ enters all alive into the person and body of each of us. Being members of one body, we all live in and by and express one life. Being members of one family, the Christ lives in and expresses Himself through many lives; all are one and one is all. It is with this latter part of the truth Paul is concerned here. His whole approach to God for us is coloured and conditioned by it.

One of the notable features of this epistle is the way the author succeeds in keeping references to himself down to an absolute minimum. At times when writing other epistles he had to make mention of himself more often in order to substantiate his claims or to authenticate his calling, but not so to his beloved Ephesians. To them he but places his name at the beginnings of chapters 1 and 3 and then, except for the occasional use of the first person singular pronoun, includes himself with them in the collective pronouns 'we' and 'us'. His prayers in this epistle are perhaps the greatest petitions ever penned in the New Testament for the Church by any member of it.

Speaking of himself he says, 'I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, bow my knees ... I the prisoner of the Lord'. He bowed to the eternal majesty. He was totally unbowed in spirit to Rome.

That he bowed at last before the headsman's block made no matter to him — he was not the head, only a member. He minimised his captivity to Rome by magnifying his captivity to Jesus Christ, 'I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord' he said. He was always in the place of worship and thanksgiving and prayer. Jesus had captured him wholly; held there he had the eternal purpose of God in view and the everlasting people of God at heart. His concern was that the Spirit which sealed them God's should accomplish greater things yet, that they may be filled with all the fulness of God. The blessed Spirit who assured them that they belonged fully to God is now being petitioned in their behalf to strengthen them for the full indwelling of Christ. He knew that all God's children needed strengthening in the inner man or they would not be able to contain everything that is possible to faith. We must be rooted and grounded in love in a far greater way so that we may comprehend the love of Christ. The breadth and length and depth and height of it are equally immeasurable, but apparently not beyond us.

The love of Christ is indescribable rest; in all its fulness it is incomprehensible to the human mind; it passes knowledge. It is knowable but uncontainable; it has no dimensions, only directions vaguely discernible to the intellect; the love of Christ is limitless. View it how we will from whatever standpoint we take, it has no horizons. It has no centre from which we may commence. Travel in which direction we may, we are always at the centre and starting point of His Love — HIM. That is why He must dwell in our hearts and why also we must love all the saints in whom He also dwells — we need both Him and them. Christ is so vast that it is not possible for one saint alone to comprehend Him and His love; the rest of the whole family multitude is necessary to each of us. Let us beware of falling into the trap of knowing Biblical revelations about that love without personal knowledge of it gained by living a loving life. Our Father is not satisfied by being a lover Himself and neither must we be; because He is a lover He must make us lovers, we must be His children in this or we shall not be true sons of our Father. Jesus Himself says 'by this shall all men know ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another'.

It is absolutely certain that Paul, having discovered the highest secrets of eternal life, is seeking to imbue us with the need to discover them too. Because everything the Lord does is so good, it is easy to become satisfied with less than the best. If it were possible to ask any person who knew and perhaps followed and benefitted from Christ after the flesh whether Jesus was a loving man, there is no doubt the answer would be an unqualified 'yes'. But it is equally without doubt that when Paul spoke of the breadth and length and depth and height of love, he was thinking in terms far exceeding anything any person saw or benefitted from while following Jesus on earth. He was meaning this when he said the love of Christ 'passeth knowledge'. He was talking of the as yet undiscovered fulness of the vast love of God. He alludes to it when he says, 'God, who is rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us ...', but can find no words in which to describe it; how is it possible to describe what is beyond description? Acts of mercy and grace unendingly lavished upon us may persuade us of that love, so that we join with the apostles to say, 'God is Love', and speak of 'the love wherewith He loved us', and also enter into some understanding of its vastness, but O to be actually living in it as God is!

A Chosen Generation

Perfection in one is Christ's ideal for us. It can only be achieved when one and only one person's nature, life and character is displayed simultaneously in a whole generation, nation and people. When that absolute identity is shown in a people over a couple of thousand years, involving successive generations and spread throughout many nations, it is conclusive evidence of the genuineness of Christ's claims. With us men it is inevitable that a generation is born and dies and ceases to be; scientific researchers allocate a certain number of years to it. A man may leave his stamp upon that generation, affecting it drastically and ineradicably, but usually only his contemporaries in his own nation are influenced by him. Seldom has any man impressed succeeding generations sufficiently to affect and alter their lives; if he has managed to do so they are usually only his own countrymen. Generally a man's influence is interred with him.

Christ's generation is not confined to a thirty or forty years time-period, it extends over thousands of years to include a selected portion of all mankind. The phrase 'chosen generation' is used of a certain company of people and it does not refer to the life span of a particular group happening to have existence on the earth between certain dates; the time factor is not involved here, it is unimportant. Primarily it refers to God's selective decision and choice and is intended to direct our thought backward in time to the generation of the nation of Israel at the first Passover. Israel went down into Egypt as a tribe of seventy souls, Jacob, his sons and their children; between them they were the second and third generation. Isaac, Jacob's father, had been the first generation of Abraham's promised seed, Jacob / Israel was the second, and the fathers of the twelve tribes were the third.

However, although He loved them all, the Lord did not choose to work the great redemption and bring about deliverance in any of these generations; they had no need of it. He had made Himself very clear to Abraham when He gave him His word and made a covenant with him. He said He would bring Abraham's seed into the promised land in the fourth generation. The third generation (which included Joseph) died in Egypt, and the chosen fourth generation had succeeded them when God moved to deliver Israel according to His word. Doing so He made Israel a holy nation of peculiar people by generating them into a royal priesthood who should offer up spiritual sacrifices to Him. This took place during a set period of time and only to a limited number of people, strictly a generation.

Peter does not use the phrase in its primary sense however. He is drawing attention to God's methods with men; he has no time element in his mind at all. It is significant that he addresses his epistle to strangers begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them. He says they are children redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, who love Jesus and call on the Father who begat them of His own incorruptible seed by the gospel. This was the method of generation chosen by God. The Lord elected to give all His spiritual children birth by the same means and of the same seed by which He begat Jesus physically through Mary. This is the chosen method of generation, and all those begotten by this means belong to that chosen generation. There is no other way of guaranteeing men and women will be living stones of the right quality to be included in His house-structure. Men and women of

this natural substance could be built upon the chief corner stone laid in Sion, for they are of the same substance as He.

Precious Living Stones

To justify Himself in doing this, God had to ensure that each stone should be living as Christ is living, and precious as He is precious. This preciousness must not be mere sentimental preciousness based upon personal appreciation or affectionate associations or historic connections or memorable events. Too often this bestows value upon worthless objects according to individual tastes and preferences, quite regardless of ethics or morals or proper values. To be precious each stone must be most valuable and rare, of incalculable price and worth more than all the combined treasures of earth. So it came about that God devised and carried through a scheme of purchase and production that would satisfy His requirements. He bought and begat a people who in process of purchase and production would be made precious with the preciousness of Christ.

First He begat a Son in flesh who was God in spirit, Jesus the Christ in person, sinless in nature and perfect in soul. Into His human nature all the concentrated characteristics and qualities of essential Godhead, with all the preciousness of the eternal virtues which constitute God to be God, were instilled. He was unique, infinitely and unspeakably precious, the only-begotten Son of the Father of glory. Then all this inestimable preciousness was poured out in purple blood on the cross in a redemption unparalleled in history and unrepeatable throughout the length of future time to purchase a people unique among men and before angels. By the very preciousness which made His blood precious God begat sons of the same precious quality as He.

When God brought out His people from Egypt of old they dwelt in tents in the wilderness; Israel were His people and He wanted to dwell among them and be their God. He therefore called Moses up to a mountain-top and informed him of His wishes and asked him to speak to the children of Israel about it on His behalf. He wanted a special tabernacle, not like any of theirs but quite unique among the tribes — it was to be the best. His specifications were most exacting and the materials very costly and rare. Above all everything must be new, nothing old could be used, nothing could be adapted or merely converted. The quality of workmanship too must be absolutely exceptional, so for this He filled two men with His Spirit that they should do the work as of God. The tabernacle of God was exceedingly precious. Standing central in the encampment it spoke of Christ Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God. The standards set by God for His house were high.

It also indicates to us the standards set by God for His other sons. They too must be new — mere adaptation or conversion cannot meet His specifications. He demands nothing less than an entire new spiritual birth for man; His requirements could not be met by any other means. Redemption and reconstitution of the entire human nature could not be achieved by anything less than an entire new birth — this and only this could make it possible. It is not within the bounds of credibility to believe that humans can have the preciousness of Jesus apart from this, but new birth guarantees it. Jesus is neither naive nor impractical when He says we must be born again; there is no other way He can make us precious. We must be born of His Father's seed so that we can be incorruptible of spirit, pure of heart and holy of life. God's children must be

loving of nature, obedient of mind, joyous of disposition and glorious of countenance, each one a precious living stone quarried out of the earth, solidly righteous that all may be built together on the foundation stone laid in heaven in mount Sion into a spiritual house for God for all eternity.

We are not able to decide just where in Jerusalem on earth the Holy Spirit fell at Pentecost. It may be that Sion, the city of David the great king, was the place, but we do not know. It would certainly be in keeping with many of the ways of God and appear most fitting if it were so, but we are not told, and speculation is vain. We do know that it was at Jerusalem that the Church first became visibly manifest on earth. If it had been built there it may have been reasonable to assume that Peter was indeed its foundation, but it speedily became evident that the church at Jerusalem was in reality only a church, not the Church. The Church of Jesus Christ had its first manifestation on earth there, and for a short while had no visible manifestation other than that. Because of this, the souls that were saved in Jerusalem were added to the company of those already saved there. It could not be otherwise at that time; in reality though, basically and primarily, they were added to the Church in mount Sion.

The Lord in the Midst

Soon the company known as the church in Jerusalem grew and multiplied and spread till it became 'the churches of Judea'; by adding to the Church in heaven Christ increased the number of churches on earth, and soon the phrase 'the church at Jerusalem' is matched by the phrase 'the church which was at Antioch'. By the time Paul the apostle began his ministry it was already well recognised and fully established that the Church subsisted on earth as many churches. These all existed autonomously and conducted their own affairs under the oversight of their elders; ministry was indigenous and administration local; apparently no particular apostle was regarded as being chief of all. Paul, a latecomer to the apostolic band, was specially called of God and given much revelation about the Church and the churches; he perfectly understood the distinction between them and wrote much for our enlightenment.

To the Galatians he said he formerly persecuted the Church of God beyond measure and wasted it. This was a great sorrow to him, for he saw that when he had attacked men and women of God in the past he had attacked Jesus. When the Lord told him that at the beginning, it was a revelation of unparalleled magnitude to him, but it was also of untold blessing to him, for by it he was prepared for the further revelations to follow. From the very first day of his conversion he saw the truth of identity upon which so much of his later ministry was based; he became positive that companies of saints in any location were a replica of the Church in heaven and were entitled to be called churches. He became equally certain that just as the whole Church was founded on Jesus Christ, so too every local church needs to be founded on Him.

For this reason whenever Paul went on his journeyings preaching the gospel he preached Christ Jesus. He realised and said that God had called him by His grace to reveal His Son in him, that he should preach Him among the heathen. Therefore he preached Him; not about Him, nor yet primarily about His works, but Him; he loved to say of himself and his companions, 'we preach Christ Jesus'. If he took the scriptures in hand in local synagogues, he did so to prove that Jesus is the Son of God. If he stood amid heathen altars it was to point to Him whom they ignorantly

worshipped. Wherever he was, his basic theme was Christ. He neither preached Peter nor himself, nor any other man as the foundation of the Church or the churches; always it was the Lord Jesus. In fact he went so far as to say that on one occasion he openly rebuked Peter at Antioch for his vacillation, and showed that it was commonly understood in Jerusalem that Cephas was only a pillar of the church there like James and John.

At the time Paul administered the rebuke Peter was living in fear of James who was evidently the recognized leader among the saints at Jerusalem. So affected was Peter by James' austere power that he was not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel or standing firm and upright. But he was a pillar and it is a bad thing for pillars to shake and be moved about by winds of doctrine. It is also bad for a building when pillars lean toward one another instead of straight up. Most likely and quite acceptably to all informed people, Peter, despite his variableness, is an important cornerstone of the Church and is very vital to it for that reason. He shares the distinction with many others of his contemporaries, including Paul himself. They were each necessary to the Church but not one of them is the chief cornerstone.

Peter is most certainly one of the foundation stones, for Paul says the Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, which includes Peter. Confirmatory to this, in vision John saw that the wall of New Jerusalem has twelve foundations, and in them were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. If the record is to be trusted he did not see anything specially or distinctively Peter's there. It must therefore be concluded that Cephas shares equal honours and position with the rest of his fellows and no more. With that he is doubtless well content. In one place Paul brackets him with himself and Apollos, asking who they were, and answering 'ministers by whom ye believed; ye are God's building'. He also claims, 'as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, for other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Jesus Christ'.

If Peter had been vital to every man, Paul would have been grossly in error, if not maliciously misleading not to have said so. He would have been guilty in God's eyes of withholding from people truth necessary for their salvation. If God had laid Peter as the foundation, or even intended him to be an indispensable necessity to everybody's experience, He would have said so. Instead we find passages of scripture such as these indicating that although he was vital to the Church as a minister in his day, and has since influenced it by his writings, his personal ministry was far less widespread than Paul's. His appearance at Antioch was disastrous. Far from being necessary there he was a nuisance, undoing the work of the Spirit, causing division among the saints, and even evil-affecting his fellow apostle Barnabas. Paul's rebuke was well deserved and unhesitatingly delivered; Peter, a pillar of the church at Jerusalem, was found to be quite dispensable at Antioch. Paul's attitude was not schismatic; Peter was not dispensable to the Church as a whole or to the church at Jerusalem; nevertheless because of his behaviour upon that occasion he needed correction. His example was counter-productive to the gospel Paul was preaching — souls were being hindered.

However, when speaking to the church at Antioch earlier, Paul had paid tribute to Peter's work, saying that God had opened the door of faith to the gentiles. This is a reference to Peter's visit to Cornelius' household at Caesarea and the initial outpouring of the Spirit there. In certain respects, as we have already seen, Peter was the key man

in God's plan for the advancement of the gospel in his day. The door of faith was not opened to the gentiles until Peter went to Caesarea to the Roman garrison there; God started with the army, sending in His shock troops under Peter's command. The Baptism in the Spirit opens the door wide into any situation, and Paul was indebted and most grateful to Peter, for at that time his was a follow-up ministry and he knew it. However, once through the door he went far and wide, ever reaching out into the regions beyond, preaching Christ and His gospel, with the result that all over the gentile world churches sprang up as the Church of Christ grew. It was Paul and not his fellow-apostle who laid the foundations of those churches, and he did so by preaching Christ, not Peter, to them.

Paul laid the foundation in a threefold way; he laid down the fact that Christ is the foundation of: (1) the Church universal; (2) the church local; (3) the life of every member of it. He also made clear that he was only responsible to lay the foundation; 'others build thereon', he said. Others following after him, whether they be apostles or prophets or pastors or teachers, could only build up churches which had been raised up by his ministry on the one foundation he had laid — they could not lay another foundation. So strong was he on this point that he said any thing other than what he preached was a perverted gospel, 'another gospel, which is not another' really. There is no such thing as another gospel; to preach anything except Christ crucified as all sufficient for all need for all eternity is not good news but evil tidings and falsehood. More terrible still, he asserted that in order to believe and promote such things, people would have to 'remove from Him who had called them into the grace of Christ'; in other words they would move off the foundation altogether.

The issue which called forth such powerful remarks from the apostle was circumcision. It was over behaviour associated with this that he and Peter disagreed and took sides at Antioch: for many years it was an all-absorbing topic among the churches. So vital did it become that finally the leading brethren met together at Jerusalem to discuss it. This conference resolved the issue and their findings were published over James' signature, not Peter's. The united decision of the apostles and elders was a denial of the necessity of circumcision for the gentiles' or anybody's salvation. They were not commanded to cease practising it, neither were the Jews — they were told it was not necessary to salvation; Paul put it succinctly when he said, 'in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature'; this dictum became the rule of the Church.

Circumcision has not ceased to be practised among Jewish nationals, whether they be of the Church or not, but it has entirely lost its spiritual significance for the Church. To this day, if people wish to practise it as part of their culture, or because it is thought to be medically advisable, then they may; spiritually it is neither right nor wrong to do so. When God incorporated it into His Old Covenant with Israel it became the sign of inclusion therein; it then symbolised the cutting off of the sins of the flesh, but now that Christ has died and risen again the symbol has given way to the real. Circumcision typified one particular aspect of the work accomplished by Christ on the cross where all was fulfilled. Circumcision is now of the heart; it is real in the spirit and not symbolic in the flesh; that old circumcision is now called 'the concision'; we are 'the circumcision'. Therefore if a child of God is circumcised in the flesh he must not think there is any virtue in it; he cannot build that upon Christ, it is of no spiritual value whatsoever.

According to the Pattern

Once the foundation has been laid in our lives we must all build upon it, and we must take great care in doing so. Men, whether they be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, or whatever position or office they hold, are not allowed to build any other form of church or doctrine upon it than has already been laid down in scripture. Similarly no church member must attempt to build anything other than a Christ-like character upon it. We must pay attention to three things: (1) that we are on the foundation; (2) how we build upon the foundation; (3) what we build upon the foundation. Unless our attitude toward building is correct we shall not even begin to build. It is a lifetime occupation and we must be very concerned about the materials God requires. It also ought to be remembered that no builder, building for eternity, builds without a plan; it is recorded that God commanded Moses to build according to the pattern he was shown on the mount and he did so. Important as the Tabernacle was, it was only God's temporary dwelling-place — there was nothing permanent about the actual structure. Yet the Lord was most exact about it, giving instructions down to the smallest details; nothing was left to guesswork or personal whim, and most certainly nothing was done at haphazard.

Paul's approach to church-building was no less painstaking than Moses' approach to making the Tabernacle. His description of himself is very suggestive — 'a wise master builder'. First he laid the foundation by declaring the testimony of God in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit: Christ Jesus is God's Son: by His sacrifice and blood He redeemed us: in sheer grace He imparts Himself and all to us by a succession of gifts. In the language of Paul, and appropriate to the figure by which he is teaching the truth, the gold, silver and precious stones refer to those things. They are the materials supplied by God for building, and all of them are hardly come by in the natural, very seldom are they found on the surface. It is a rare thing to find gold, silver and precious stones lying around above ground, they are to be found generally in mines and veins and lodes, and as it is with the natural, so it is with the spiritual. In another place Paul calls these things 'the deep things of God', saying 'eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him'.

Paul makes clear that God's house is people — they are the living stones of His temple. First he says to the Corinthian church, 'ye are the temple of God', and later individualises the concept of the temple by adding 'your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost'. By this we see first that the local church is a temple, and secondly that each individual saint is a temple also. The whole body of saints is a temple comprised of individual temples. Writing still later to the Ephesians he welds together all the major ideas of spiritual revelation and carries the temple-house imagery still further. In a concise passage of remarkable insight he speaks of fellow-citizens in the household of God 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit'. In this inspired passage he combines all the concepts of truth concerning building, city, household, temple, habitation. And doing so he reveals that the individual temple which is included in the local temple shall in the end be fitly framed and builded together with every other local temple into the ultimate temple-city-household of God. It is an amazing revelation and a thrilling prospect.

These are the unseen, unheard things which lay deep in the man Jesus of Nazareth. They never entered into the hearts of men in His day; although they saw and heard Him they did not know that His nature was pure gold, that redemption was in His blood and that rarest jewels were treasured up in His mind. They neither mined down and through His humanity into His Godhead, nor tunnelled through His manhood to trace the veins of redeeming love; neither did they find the ocean of understanding where His pearls of wisdom were hidden, nor stumble upon the reef where the diamonds of knowledge were stored; they never discovered the lodestone of faith or the vast pocket of ruby-red Love in Him. They saw and heard in Him the love of a man of God, but it never entered into their minds and hearts that He was the God of redeeming Love, the immeasurable ocean of pearls, the diamond's eternal reef, the everlasting rock of faith, the inexhaustible pocket of rubies and the green emerald's everlasting seam. They did not know His preciousness, He was the stone the builders rejected.

To His contemporaries He was a stone of stumbling; they found Him to be a rock of offence, and being disobedient, they stumbled at His word and were confounded. They set Him at nought; the princes of this world have been made foolish: their wisdom has come to nothing, for they crucified the Lord of glory. They have set aside the foundation for eternal life and built up their hope of living with wood, hay and stubble, things of no eternal substance, which shall perish in unquenchable fire. Yet by that rejection, the Lord, the wise Master Builder, prepared for us the things He has provided for building.

Those who entered into His open tomb unwittingly entered into the heavenly mine shaft. The tunnel was invitingly lighted up for them by shining spirits sitting one at the head and the other at the feet in the place where the body of Jesus had lain; Peter was confused, John was convinced, Mary was challenged and comforted. None of them then knew the scripture that He must rise again from the dead; in common with their fellow-disciples they had heard Him say repeatedly that He was going to rise from the dead, but had never really believed it. It seems they were good orthodox believers who were not prepared to believe anything unless it could be satisfactorily proved to them from scripture.

Unfortunately this attitude was not confined to them only, it is also a very modern affectation. Sadly enough the majority of people who adopt this position really mean that they will only accept the interpretation they themselves put upon scripture, and only believe what they think it means. When risen from the dead Jesus had to take His disciples through the scriptures, showing them the things concerning Himself and also open their understandings that they might understand it all. They had never understood until then that to believe what Jesus said was to understand the scriptures; later John was to write 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'.

How much John saw that resurrection day, or into what dimension of understanding he penetrated we do not know, but as surely as the removed stone allowed entrance into the tomb and revealed the resurrection, so that resurrection is the revelation and the open way into all the precious things of God. It revealed Christ to be the foundation stone, elect, precious, 'cut out without hands' from out the tomb to be laid as the foundation of the Church in Sion and the churches in every nation. Striking with power upon the feet and legs of every image, it will destroy them all, so that the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our God and of His Christ. Yet

when here among men as man no-one knew Him. His contemporaries recognized Him as a true man, but not one of them understood He was the Christ, so they refused to accept Him as God.

Only the Spirit of God knows the things of God and the Spirit of God was not in them, so their position was hopeless — they could not possibly recognize Him. It was therefore essential that the Spirit of God be given unto men or we could never know the precious things of Christ, or that they have been freely given by God. So it was that just as Christ was given to be the foundation stone of the Church, so the Holy Spirit was given for the building of it. He has been given purposely by God that He might bring to us gold, silver and precious stones from Christ, those heavenly treasures that God considers to be the only materials acceptable for building. He does this primarily by joining each one individually to the Lord. We must first of all be well-founded on Him in a most personal way. The Spirit can then ensure to us a constant, free supply of these essential building materials, all drawn from the personal eternal life of the Lord Jesus.

Gold, Silver and Precious Stones

The qualities of Godhead in Him made Jesus' human life what it was; they were hewn out or cut down or harvested and built up with patience into a wondrous personality in the experiences of the everyday. He was born the Son of God; His nature was pure solid gold, but on that foundation He had to build up and display a character of gold equally pure and solid. He knew that all the while He was on earth the redemptive purposes of God must flow throughout His whole person like His life-blood did through His body or there could be no redemption for men. Like silver arteries and veins they supplied the rich motives for living, without which life would have been in vain. From this vast store of loving intentions His imperishable words and works issued like a mighty river flowing freely to all classes and conditions of men. Throughout the centuries since, those treasures have been mined and cut and polished and set in their native gold and silver by hosts of preachers and writers. Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers all have borrowed them to reveal the Christ of God in their lives and preach Him to men and make us see that the life-work of every son of man born anew a child of God is likewise to build up that same character in themselves. We all must be pure gold, solid silver and precious stones like our Lord. The wood, hay, stubble which come more easily to hand must be spurned. No man has to dig or mine or tunnel for them — they all grow on the surface within reach.

Too easily men in their folly mistake means for either sources or ends and reach out for that which comes most readily to hand. They mistake and misplace the wood of the cross for the word (Logos) of the cross; they substitute the flesh of man for his spirit, and falsely promote stubble into glory. The cross of Calvary was only a wooden means to a spiritual end. God put it to use, and having accomplished His purposes thereby, has discarded it. He does not wish it to be venerated by us, but put to spiritual use. When Paul said, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ', he went on to explain the spiritual reason why: 'whereby the world was crucified unto me and I unto the world'. Always he speaks of the cross as the instrument or place of Christ's supreme spiritual contest and accomplishment. He preached it as the power of God which destroys the contrary power of sin, satan, self, the world, the wisdom of the world, the flesh and all other things contrary to God's

will. The wooden cross never accomplished that, it only had the power He conceded it over the body of His flesh for His purposes. The spiritual cross does it for us though — on no account must we build with the wood.

Peter says 'all flesh is as grass', echoing the words of Isaiah, who added, 'surely the people is grass, the grass withereth'; hay is poor stuff for building — it is even worse than wood. If a man builds his own and other people's flesh on to the foundation of Christ; it will surely perish in the fire. There are those who, like Israel in Egypt, gather straw stubble to make bricks, but compressed dirt laced with stubble and baked in the fire is no substitute for precious stones; they too shall burn. Beams of wood, bales of hay, bricks of stubble could be made somewhat presentable, even decorative perhaps, but all would be pretentious. Who would think that a building made of these materials could be anything but temporary? And how vulnerable to fire!

When God desired Israel to construct and furnish a tabernacle for Him to dwell among them, His first directive to Moses was about the ark. It was to represent Christ, so He ordered it to be made of two materials, wood and gold. The wood was to represent His humanity, the gold His deity. We are commanded to build with gold — we already have sufficient wood of humanity. If we use His gold our humanity will become as His. Should we use wood, we should be building only a structure of our own human ideas and humanitarian ideals. In the last analysis this kind of structure can be nothing other than deified self constructed in place of the pure gold nature of the love of Jesus. This can only happen by the abuse of the cross, and propounds a scriptural idea grossly distorted — 'I am crucified', leaving out the words 'with Christ'. The cross is 'the cross of Jesus Christ our Lord', or else it is mere wood; Jesus is the gold of the cross; He is the God of the cross.

Silver as well as gold had a place in tabernacle structure. It was used to make books and fillets and chapiters for the posts which held the hanging or screens which formed the outer perimeter of the courts of the Lord; also for the sockets for the pillars of the sanctuary or tabernacle proper, and the pillars which held the vail at the entrance. As gold stands for the nature of God, so silver represents the redemptive purpose of God; the tabernacle stood and the screen hung upon redemption. The outer hanging spoke of the flesh of the Lord Jesus from which the redeeming blood flowed. Jesus' basic purpose in assuming flesh and coming into the world was to redeem. So must every true son of God build upon this foundation — the silver purpose of redemption. Our attitude to people and use of time and circumstances must be redemptive.

The days in which we live are evil, not good. Time itself is against us and will pass unredeemed unless we purchase opportunities to live and work for God and His gospel. When born from above, sons of God are born anew into this world to redeem. Our blood will never be spilt for the redemption of men, or as the purchasing price for their souls — it is not of the right quality, nor is it necessary. We must lay down our lives for the purposes of God in spreading the gospel and have being in this world primarily for that purpose. Divine nature and human nature must unite in us to live entirely for God; everything must combine to that end, otherwise our flesh is as grass, and harvested it is nothing but hay. The hot wind of fire passes over it and it is gone.

The Shoulder and the Breast

Precious stones found place in the tabernacle scheme of redemption on the shoulders and breast of the high priest. They were permanently set in ouches of gold upon the

ephod, which was the outer garment of his ministerial regalia. Apart from the two tables of the law in the ark and the Urim and Thummim of judgement in the breastplate there were no other articles of stone within the tabernacle. Together with the gold and silver they comprised the major part of the treasures of darkness heaped upon the Children of Israel on the great night of redemption, that 'night to be much observed of all the Children of Israel in their generations'.

On the two onyx stones set in gold, one upon each of Aaron's shoulders, the names of the Children of Israel were engraven in their order according to their tribes. On the breastplate fastened to the ephod were twelve different stones upon which again the names of the twelve tribes were engraven; these were set in four rows of threes. Fixed upon his shoulders, the place of strength, and upon his breast, the place of love, the high priest bore the tribal names of the house of Israel in all their preciousness before the Lord for a memorial continually — they were a redeemed people. So to the golden nature of love and the silver purpose of redemption was added the priestly ministry of precious stones; without this ministry all else would have been in vain.

Meaningful as the gold and silver of the tabernacle proper were, and precious though the stones were, all would have been death without the priesthood, for all these things were inanimate. Though He had the tabernacle made for His habitation, God really lived in His people, His house was Israel; He said they were a kingdom of priests, chosen to offer themselves up as spiritual sacrifices to God; what a privileged people, what precious stones! The whole of Israel were represented as precious living stones on ephod and breastplate, animated by Aaron's life, ever kept in memory before God.

We have a ministry related to this also; we are chosen to be the Lord's remembrancers. What is stubble to precious stones? Who but the stubbornly perverse would build with stubble when precious jewels are readily available? With eyes wide open to the consequences, we must avoid the terrible traps into which some of the early churches fell. Without the love nature of God, our gathering and gifts and giving and gainings are brassy substitutes for pure gold. Let us beware lest quicksilver be mistaken for real silver; what flows through the veins of the churches must not be the mercurial passion of an unconverted Apollos. The ritualism of John's baptism, though it may not be called that, is no substitute for redemption and Jesus' baptism, and gifts of the Spirit are clanging brass in operation if the love of God be missing.

Paul says these same things under another figure in one of his other epistles. First laying the great foundation to all eternal life and character-building, he instructs us to 'build up one another in love'; everything is to be in love. He then follows on to wake up the sleeping and the dead to walk circumspectly in the light, redeem the time and be constantly filled with the Spirit. This is the task we are to work at, buying up every opportunity to build up a personal, family, church and social life worthy of Christ.

The truth is in Jesus; if we have heard Christ and been taught by Him we shall apply ourselves to this constantly. But this is not an end in itself, He cannot leave it there; we must also put on the whole armour of God, get into the heavenly wrestling, fight the holy war in the heavenlies and pray. We have to wrestle through to where the precious stones lie — they are hardly gained. Precious stones are people; pray for all the saints. Be specific; 'pray for me', he requests, 'I pray for you and what prayers he prays. Two superb examples of these are included in the letter; the first is for light about power, the second is for love unto all fulness; the power is to bring us unto love.

It may be safe to suppose that amongst all the ordinary people of the civilised nations, the most valuable of all natural mineral substances is precious stone. We sometimes speak of someone being worth his or her weight in gold, but valuable as that may be, an equal weight of diamonds would be of far greater value. The Lord showed this in the day He ordered the precious stones bearing the tribal names of Israel to be inset in gold and fixed on the shoulders and breast of the High Priest. The gold was the setting for the stones, the stones were the setting for the people. The Lord is undeviating in all He does and says; what He ordered in the Old Testament is advised in the new; what was on the shoulder is now in power, what was upon the breast is now in the heart; precious, precious people, peculiarly precious.

Aaron's full regalia for office was wholly for glory and beauty; standing among his brethren before the Lord he was gloriously and beautifully holy. Holiness is gloriously beautiful in God's sight, unsurpassed in all the heavenly realm. Aaron was the highest, chiefest and greatest of all the priests. His official garments were six-fold, namely a breastplate, an ephod, a robe (of the ephod), a brodered coat, a mitre and a girdle. To these, as extra to them, were added the precious stones that finally he should stand complete and walk and minister and supervise all in heavenly perfection. All those garments of splendour, so full of spiritual meaning, were only foundational to the precious stones. By colour and materials and craftsmanship the robes were very precious, but altogether they were only made to carry the names of God's people in constant remembrance before Him.

It is significant that Aaron should wear a breastplate, for the robes were more suited to royal courts than battlefields. True it was made of gold and not steel, but it was all the more suggestive for that. Beside this, both the ephod and the robe, to which the golden breastplate was bound by golden chains, were fashioned at the neck like a coat of mail. The whole regalia, though to be worn in the Lord's house, implied battledress. How aptly then do Paul's words describe the thoughts of God — the only way into effective prayer for mansoul is via the wrestling in heavenly places. Souls were not won without battle or redeemed without blood; satan fought to keep his captives. There is a hint of battle in Christ's intercession, and His saints are called to join Him in the continuous war.

Aaron's garments are enumerated in almost reverse order to that in which they would be donned in the day of his robing. Even that was done to emphasize that, uppermost, outermost and foremost upon his body, the precious engraved stones should stand out. Symbolically Aaron was a great pray-er, moving in love and power, always bearing the people with him, upholding every one of God's children in light amidst the incense of Christ the pray-er and intercessor in the home of God.

The Lord God Himself is very definite about what the precious stones stand for, saying in one place of those who love Him, 'they shall be mine when I make up my jewels'. So also is Peter, who tells us that every one born of God into life in His spiritual Israel is a precious stone specially chosen to be a member of this royal priesthood. John's vision of New Jerusalem brings to us a clear revelation of apostles garnished with precious stones. In fact in his eyes the entire city glows with light and glory like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. John's book is really the revelation which God gave to His Son Jesus Christ, who signified it to His servant John. Father and Son saw the New Jerusalem of pure gold and precious stones as the end product; Christ regards the Church as His one great pearl.

Ever Living to make Intercession

In the eyes and estimate of every member of the Church, everyone must be regarded and valued as a possible Christian. Regardless of our knowledge of election and estimate of prophecy, true availing prayer must be made for all men. Nations, tribes, families and individuals must have place in our prayers; intercession must be made for them in breadths and lengths and depths and heights of love. This unrivalled privilege is set scripturally in context of such phrases as sons of men, Jews and gentiles, all men, principalities and powers, the whole or every family, your hearts, all saints, the Church. We must be rooted and grounded in this so great love, not for selfish indulgence, but for others, and ultimately for travailing prayer that God's children may be borne to Him.

All men of whatsoever kindred, tribe or nation or tongue or culture, must be sought. Whatever their family they must be made to see, understand, know, comprehend. Urgency must be upon us, the precious stones must be sought out, found and added to the Church. Only His love will be sufficient to make us as concerned as He about others. Souls are precious to Him; He must dwell in our hearts so that we become rooted and grounded in Love; He is Love and loving toward all, wanting to add them to His Church. Men must become as precious to us as to Him or we shall not pray for them; except we value them aright we shall not spend time and strength or give of our substance and love for their salvation. They must be embedded and engraved upon breasts of pure gold or we will not put our shoulder to the task or open our heart to receive them into the beauty and glory and joy of the Lord.

Wherever we look in the New Testament we find this same emphasis upon prayer. It is one of the four basic things upon which the original church at Jerusalem was built up under the apostles' supervision from the day of Pentecost onwards. Indeed, as the precious stones were the seventh thing which brought the high priest's royal regalia to perfection, so prayer is the seventh privilege to which the saints were called at the beginning. Prayer crowned the churches' experience then, and it is no less a crown now. First men repented, then they were baptized in water, then they received the Holy Spirit; after that they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and prayers.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was itself the result of prayer, both on the part of the Lord and of the one hundred and twenty. He said He would pray the Father that He would give them 'another Comforter', and they engaged in ten days of unbroken prayer; upon that the Holy Ghost was poured out. Seeing this is so, there can be little doubt about the importance with which prayer was regarded among men on earth and by God in heaven. Every man built up his own life with prayer, therefore the Church was built up also. Prayer for souls adds precious stones to a man's personal life achievement. It also unites him with the Lord Christ, who is even now interceding at God's right hand, seeking precious stones to build into His Church. Whether Christ in heaven or we on earth, all are engaged in building. He is building gold, silver, precious stones. What are we building? Each stone in Christ's building is a sacrificing priest; he must be, because the High Priest is. A man must make real sacrifices in order to attain to his heavenly calling, even as his Lord did; without definite spiritual sacrifice it is not possible to attain to this ministry.

The men who were the Lord's intimates on earth followed His example well. Being later possessed of His Spirit, they walked in His ways and soon developed His habits; in turn they showed to the newly-converted what they themselves had heard and seen. 'That which we have seen and heard', says John, 'declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us', so they laid it down as fundamental to the Church that they should pray. Consistent with this, note their statement of intention to their brethren when ordaining deacons: 'it is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word'. To them the word of God was all-important and they realized that apart from prayer they could neither receive it nor speak it.

They taught the Church this from its natal day. Following a season of prayer they were baptized in the Spirit and following that Peter stood up with the eleven and spoke the word. Directly after this the spectacular miracle soon followed at the hour of prayer, and again Peter spoke forth the word; for his pains he was thrown into prison. Upon release he was again found preaching the word to his accusers, seeking thereby to lay the foundation stone in hearts, forcing men either to accept the word or to reject it. With his companions he afterwards returned to their own company, where, by one Spirit they all engaged in one prayer. Their united request was that with all boldness they may speak God's word. The result was precisely as they prayed, 'they spake the word of God with boldness'.

Under no condition could the preaching of the word be left; they were put under so much pressure that the apostles unavoidably left other things, but not this. For the sake of the word they even had to neglect dependent widows; this was most distasteful to them. It was done entirely without malicious intention, and to rectify the anomaly they ordained seven deacons of the people's choice, but they refused to leave the word of God. The word of the Lord was paramount to them. To that very day it rang in their ears, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature'. The force and urgency of the command was unforgettable. To preach the gospel was their foremost intention, for it was the primary reason for their calling, so in order to minister the word, they gave themselves to prayer.

The twelve kept priorities right for the churches; by giving themselves so completely to prayer and the ministry of the word they set an example for all time and their singleness of purpose laid a sure foundation. Before long the centre of apostolic influence moved from Jerusalem to Antioch, where the tradition of the original elders had already been received to good effect. There, prophets and teachers and apostles-to-be spent time fasting and praying, waiting upon the Lord, ministering to Him. Not surprisingly from such a company God raised up and sent forth the word into the whole gentile world. So it goes on; right through the history of the early Church — prayer and preaching. It was well and truly built because it was properly founded in every heart successively added to the Lord.

So far we have observed three aspects of building and three builders: (1) Christ building His Church; (2) Paul, the wise master builder laying Christ the foundation of every local church; (3) every man building on that foundation. In its own realm each is important and absolutely indispensable to the fulfilment of God's eternal plans. To this we must add yet another aspect of building equal in importance to the other three, namely edification, or the building up of each other. But this will be considered later, for it belongs to another order of Church truth, and must have its rightful place there.

Chapter 4 — THE BODY OF CHRIST

Paul's revelation of 'the Church which is His body' is one of the most absorbing preoccupations of the people of God at this present time, far exceeding in popularity any of the other equally important aspects of the Church. There is much talk of body ministry among us, and the subject of edification is more often than not thought of as body-building; it seems to have greater airing in these days than the Lord adding to the Church such as are being saved. If this is really so, it is a disproportionate emphasis and most regrettable, but even so body truth must be given its proper place in our thinking, or full understanding of the doctrine of the Church is not to be gained. Every facet of the precious revelation of Christ's Church must have its proper place and receive due emphasis, for each is necessary to the fullest development and proper function of the others and together with them contributes to the whole.

I Am Jesus

One of the reasons God raised up Paul the apostle was that He should give him the revelation that the Church is the body of Christ. This revelation is for the most part immortalised in his Ephesian and Corinthian letters, and, if we may judge with accuracy, this revelation was very dear to his heart. This is not at all surprising, for this truth was implicit in the words which first wakened his soul to reality on the Damascus road, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' and the answer left him trembling with astonishment and fear — 'I am Jesus whom thou persecutest'; Paul did not know that he had been persecuting Jesus.

There is no record in the Gospels that this arch-enemy of the Church had ever met Jesus or been near Him even. How then could he have persecuted Him? It was a strange introduction. Without doubt if Saul had been asked he would have said he had never once raised a finger against His person, yet at that first critical meeting Jesus names him as His persecutor. It must have been a most baffling thing to Saul, for he believed Jesus to be dead, and it is totally impossible to persecute a dead person — he does not exist. He had openly persecuted the Lord's disciples, he had done it relentlessly and boasted of it; everyone knew he was the avowed opponent of the Church and waged war against it with zeal. He frankly detested the name of Jesus of Nazareth, but he had never said anything to or against Him personally. How then could he possibly be accused of persecuting Him? He was confounded, but now he could no longer refuse to believe what formerly he had denied — that Jesus was alive. Three whole days of blindness and prayer and fasting gave him opportunity to search his soul as he saw it in the light of Christ. Not only was Jesus alive and all His claims true, but in some mysterious way he did not understand, He was also identified with His followers in the present. It was almost unbelievable, but to the logical Paul there was only one rational explanation to that: Jesus must be living in the bodies of His people. There was no other reasonable explanation for Jesus' statement that by persecuting them he was actually persecuting Him; the realization of it was awful.

If this or something like it was the process of Paul's reasoning that day it was absolutely correct, and God's gracious dealings with him at the end of his prayer vigil absolutely confirmed it to him. At the hands of merciful Ananias Jesus baptized him in the Spirit and came to live in him; at the same time he was given back his sight and instantly entered into life and was then and there commissioned to service. How soon after that he received the divine revelation that the Church is Christ's body we do not

know, but whenever it was he understood it perfectly, for he had already been introduced to the idea of it at his conversion. If Christ lived in the persons and therefore in the bodies of church members, then obviously the Church must be His body; upon reflection it would have been no surprise. From this spectacular beginning Paul never looked back. He had been chosen for this, separated unto the gospel and from this sure start he moved on to yet greater heights of revelation. All this mass of truth he faithfully passed on to others and how indebted we are to him for his faithfulness. Following his calling, with unremitting energy he spent his life travelling, preaching, teaching, writing until the end.

Perhaps at times unforgettable memories haunted him — the sound and sight of stones thudding into the body of Stephen, or the cries of some other tortured soul, making him shudder and cry out. His letter to Timothy is a revelation of the self-condemnation with which he viewed himself: his behaviour was unforgettable — 'I was a murderer and blasphemer' he cried. He now loved the Church he once persecuted because it was the body of Christ. So total was his repentance and so deep his sorrow, that his desire was to live only to serve it, for serving the Church he was serving Him. He bitterly regretted that he had so hurt the Lord; what lessons of eternal love and life he learned on the Damascus road, and what a foundation was laid there for his later doctrine. For ever after the most wondrous aspect of the Church, exceeding all others to him, was that it is the body of Christ, and that is how he chiefly presented it. The theme so greatly coloured his thinking that in one memorable passage he said his one desire was to 'fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake which is the Church, whereof I am made a minister'

'My flesh for His body', what a concept, but that is the man; his devotion to Christ and His Church is an inspiration to us all. There could scarcely be a more positive means of fixing anyone's identity than by seeing or handling that living person's body, it is normally accepted that to be able to do so is proof that the person is alive. This is the degree of identity and proof Paul meant to convey when he spoke of the Church being Christ's body. His initial encounter gave him much enlightenment which was steadily augmented by what he learned through many ongoing personal experiences, plus the tutorial revelations of Jesus Christ; to these were added also the unspeakable words he heard and things he saw when he was caught up to the third heaven. By all these things he was systematically equipped to speak and write with unrivalled authority on the subject so dear to his heart.

There is no doubt about the importance to us of this revelation concerning the Church of Christ; so vital is it in Paul's estimation that he writes of it in his epistles in a very special way. Of all these it is generally considered that his epistle to the Ephesians is the finest example of his expository powers on this theme. It must surely be considered the greatest revelation on the subject and must therefore figure largely in our present considerations. In course of the revelation, moving through chapters one to four, Paul uses seven related phrases — His body, one body, increase of the body. Later he includes the phrase 'He is the saviour of the body' and fully discharges to the Church the burden of his apostolic revelation. Gathering these phrases together we see that the Church is the body of Christ alone, that it is one, it is whole, it is an indivisible and ever-increasing company of people; the repeated assertion is that it is one body.

Maintaining the Unity of the Spirit

Paul, always careful to maintain the unity of the Spirit, fought desperately to prevent schism among the early churches. In his capacity as apostle to the gentiles he felt it of utmost importance to do this and it was due largely to his skill and success that the visible Church emerged in unity from the first century A.D. He was very aware of the two major disputes raging among believers in his day and saw clearly how, through men's misplaced convictions, the devil works to destroy the eternal purpose of God. He therefore sought to expose the devil's lies, preaching the truth widely and teaching the saints consistently to combat the devil's contrary purposes. Beside this, whenever necessary he laboured much by letter also, writing three epistles, namely Galatians, first Corinthians and Ephesians, with the specific purpose of destroying these vicious intentions of satan, and to instruct and build up the saints in love.

In the epistle to the Galatians he first declares the source of his gospel — 'by revelation of Jesus Christ'. He then openly shows that although there had been an unpleasant incident between Peter and himself at Antioch, there was no rupture between them. When he had rebuked Cephas it was for temporary vacillation, that was all; there was no enmity between them, he only reproved his fellow-apostle for a bad lapse in behaviour — there was no difference between them in doctrine. In fact when he was at Jerusalem later there was perfect agreement and fellowship among all the apostles, he says. As a result of this meeting, with the consent and agreement of all the apostles, he went to the gentiles and Peter to the circumcision, each feeling he was sent with the blessing of God and men and they sealed it all by giving each other the right hand of fellowship. Parting with each other's blessing they went about their God-given duties in separate ways; there was no division between them at all, only utter commitment to do the will of God and fulfil their calling.

By his speedy action the great danger of racialism was averted; what a schism it would have been if it had been allowed. There is no such thing as a national church; racialism and nationalism have no place or recognition in Christ's Church; they are utterly destructive of the spirit and understanding as well as the enjoyment of true Church fellowship. There are not two bodies, one Jewish and the other gentile; there is only one body. This is the great truth for which Paul laboured all his apostolic life, 'endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace'. This endeavour lay behind all his writings and preachings against the alleged importance and necessity for circumcision. There is not and never can be any such thing as a national church such as Church of England or Church of Rome or Church of America, etc. As surely as the Church becomes nominally national it will become nominally Christian and that nation will force it to become its servant.

Paul saw this clearly; he also saw that if the Judaisers were allowed to impose their circumcision on the gentiles, enforcing the practice and teaching it as an accepted doctrine and rite of the Church, all the churches would be in serious heresy. Man, with his inherent tendency to ritualism, loves ordinances and outward show, substituting these for the spiritual reality they represent. To have accepted the tradition of circumcision would have ensured the destruction of the Church, making it just another form of Jewry under another name. Paul also saw that if Jewish believers were given a concession and allowed to practise it, whatever anyone said about it, it would be considered a spiritual virtue and become a recognized Christian ordinance and would sectionalise and divide the Church. He therefore made, and doubtless often repeated,

the classic statement that 'in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision but a new creation' — this he said is a rule which must govern all our walk.

It is a fundamental dictum, first written by Paul and preserved unto us, that being baptised into Christ, we are 'neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female' among us, 'we are all one in Christ Jesus'. As stated by the apostle, from God's point of view, for the purposes of His kingdom there are three and only three ethnic divisions among men — Jew, gentile and the Church. By first birth man is in one of the first two groups, by second birth he is in the Church; he cannot be in any two of them at the same time. There is no such person as a Christian Jew or a Christian gentile; if a person is a Christian he is a member of a new race. With this kind of trenchant thinking and fearless preaching Paul dealt with one of the errors: we could do with some of that kind of men and preaching today; we would greatly benefit by them.

The second danger was that of internal schism in the local church. Paul wrote against this to the Corinthians, strongly attacking their partiality, carnality and lovelessness. He had heard that Communion meetings at Corinth had become occasions of callous gluttony on the part of some and that uncontrolled use of a particular gift had resulted in complete disorder and confusion in the meetings. Added to this, visiting ministers were treated as heralds of new truth; against their wishes and God's intentions His ministers had been received in the wrong spirit altogether. The import of their teachings had been grievously misinterpreted, as a consequence of which unity of belief and practice no longer existed in the church. It was not the ministers' fault, it was because of the pitiable childishness of the Corinthians. As to the social realm, if anything things were worse: behaviour was terrible, marriage relationships had broken down, lawsuits were in progress between church members, authority was being flaunted [?"flouted"?], true communion was unknown.

Schism cannot possibly exist in the body of Christ, but it had ruined the body of believers at Corinth and news of it broke the apostle's heart; his response was this epistle. The effect of it upon the church was little short of dynamic, bringing people to repentance and restoration, cleansing and re-establishing the position there. It appears from the second epistle he wrote that, as a result of his first epistle, the schismatic practices and tendencies were stamped out completely, the saints were reconciled to God and each other and all the old things passed away.

His Great Love Wherewith He Loved Us

Of the three epistles, the Ephesian is the most frankly doctrinal. Its lofty instruction in the knowledge of God and the mystery of Christ is without parallel in scripture. In common with all his teachings, it was a personal revelation from God to Paul. He received all his great understanding of the mysteries of God by the same means. To the Galatians he says he received the gospel he preached by direct revelation from Jesus Christ; to the Corinthians he makes clear that by revelation he also received the ordinances he established in the churches; to the Ephesians he declares that his knowledge of the Church was equally an original revelation. He saw and presented the Church as a new creation of God in its eternal position, the place it had always held in the plan and purpose of God and the person of Christ. He does not attempt to

write as though he knew all the counsels of God, for he did not, but he writes as one under commandment, having been made privy to secrets hitherto unrevealed to men.

His vision incorporates all ages and extends throughout all time, commencing and finishing in eternal being. We were chosen in Christ by His God and Father before the foundation of the world, says Paul, and are awaiting a future time of gathering together into one and then passing on into ages of ages of glory. He puts the Church into perspective with God's eternal purposes; it is a predestined company chosen in Christ to be His body and He their Head. The presentation of this truth is made in such an astounding way that the mind can scarcely adjust to it. The Church which is His body is such an important company, that in order for His Christ to be head of it God actually had to do a new creative work in His Son. This was an astounding thing, for until then God had not created anything from the beginning of the world. In order for this, His Son had to be born and live and die on the earth and be raised from the dead, for the miracle He planned was so stupendous it could only be accomplished during the resurrection. Everything before that only led up to it. Now resurrected, exalted to the throne and sitting at God's right hand, Christ holds the highest possible position of power and authority under His Father's headship. Subject to that, everything is under His feet and He has been given to the Church as being head over all things to that body.

So great is Paul's effort to show the Church's exalted position, it is almost as though he understresses the importance of the Head, and at first the heart bristles that in order to magnify the importance of the body he should appear to minimize the glorious Christ, but of course it is not so. The impression gained, if not purposely given, is that God, having a body of wondrous worth to Him was concerned to produce a head worthy of it. The wording is that God gave the head to the body, not the body to the head, and that is a most amazing suggestion — it is marvellous in our eyes. We poor humans are so frail, and born so fallen, and so far removed from God and truth, that we scarcely understand the ways of eternal love; we have no way of measuring its magnitude. Unaided we just cannot comprehend it all and even by God's Spirit we seem to grasp so little. How grateful we ought to be for Paul's prayers that he felt he must pray for us as well as teach us; surely love is the greatest of all abiding reality. God and Love are so completely one that when He set Himself to create a Church, He could not act in anything other than love.

On account of His great love, God is rich in mercy toward us and has done everything in the exceeding riches of His grace. The very first information given us is that God hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. 'Hath chosen', what an unusual phrase — the very language he uses is in the living present. We do not normally speak like that when speaking of a past act. We would say God chose us in the past, thinking in the past tense. But Paul speaks of the choice as though God has chosen now; Paul is thinking in the eternal present, and the exciting truth is that this is only a sample of what is to come — the whole of this epistle is written in this vein. It is the work of a man of profound understanding, whose life was the demonstration of his faith and the expression of all he taught. He spoke of the breadth and length and depth and height of love, and prayed that we, as he, should comprehend and know its immeasurable vastness. Likewise when exhorting us to understand what the will of the Lord is, he says 'be being filled with the Spirit'; according to him everything is a present progressive experience. It was always like that with Paul.

He had a marvellous understanding of the 'now' of eternity and once told the Corinthians that the ends of the ages have come upon us. His teachings unite past, present and future into one whole. He brings all things into perspective and applies them to present salvation in the most masterly fashion; the revelations are amazing. Possibly the greatest value of his teachings to the Church is his unparalleled gift of showing all things as they were and are eternally, and shall ever be, in the heart and love of God. When he says God exalted Jesus to headship over all things and gave Him in that capacity to the Church he reveals that heart; how exalted the Church is in the eyes of God! It seems He regards us exactly as He regards His Son; this is more than wonderful, it surely is nothing other than the genius of love, the nature and habit of God.

The persons of the Godhead think and behave towards one another as though each thinks the other better and greater than Himself. Each delights to do the will of the other, to seek His pleasure, perform His works, be His servant, treat Him as God, exalt and honour Him above Himself. Each of them honours and builds up the other in love, and such is our privilege that into this unique personal virtue and practice God has brought the Church. O the wonder of being given Jesus Christ as our Head. What a privilege for the Church; we are His body of people, no-one else's. Paul writes this epistle in such vein that we wish to do nothing but, with him, worship our exalted Head; so honoured, so unimaginably exalted, so privileged are we that the wonder of it humbles us to the dust.

Eternally Chosen in Him

The formation of the body of Christ is one of the greatest mysteries revealed for our understanding in scripture. God wants us to have a thorough grasp of this mystery. The apostle had written a short letter to the Ephesians about it earlier, but regrettably this is lost. In it he explained how he received the revelation, and if we had this letter in possession perhaps much that we do not now know would be clear. Its loss leaves a great gap in our knowledge of the mystery of Christ and the Church. Thank God that, despite the loss, we can still know Him, and that is greatest of all; but undoubtedly the possibility of knowing the mystery to the greatest degree is impaired. For instance we have no direct statement about the method God employed or the process He followed in creating the Church to be the body of Christ, but then we have very little information of the creation of Adam's body either. Likewise David's statement about being curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth is most mysterious and does not help very much; it is information and no more. It may not be unwarrantable presumption to believe that some of the information supplied in the missing manuscript is hinted at in this present letter though, so let us be content. To have an enquiring mind is good, but to be possessed of a spirit of inquisitiveness is evil; we will not therefore mourn our loss but rejoice in what we have; as it has been said, knowledge puffeth up, love edifieth. So much has been granted us, more than we shall ever fully comprehend here, so let us with grateful hearts gather as much truth as possible from the text graciously preserved for us. We may be sure that as we do so, in answer to His servant's prayers the Lord will enlighten our hearts and open the eyes of our understanding and we may with a degree of certainty humbly expect Him to guide us into all truth.

Here is mystery: (1) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ chose us in Him before the foundation of the world; (2) we are the workmanship of God; (3) He

created us in Christ Jesus. This information is marvellous, but no specific time period for any of these wonderful activities is mentioned; 'before the foundation of the world' was before time, as we know it, began. We are told 'who' was chosen, 'where' we were chosen, and also 'what' He chose for us, but not 'when' we were chosen or 'how' God created us; and except Paul had included his prayer in the epistle we might never have known in this world just how and when it was. That prayer interjected between these two striking pieces of information supplies the key we need to unlock the mystery. A passage from this breathtaking supplication runs, 'what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead'. The clues we need to help us unravel, at least in part, the 'how' and 'when' of the Church are at hand.

Originally at some point in eternity past it was decided in God that there was to be a Church. Father chose it in Christ, and because in Him it was possible to do so in utter perfection, He chose the kind of Church He wanted. It was kept a closely guarded secret; nobody even heard of it until the day Jesus declared His intentions to His disciples at Caesarea Philippi. Even so God did not commence His new creation then; He did not do so at any time throughout the length of time covered by the whole of the Old Testament, nor yet at any time while His Son was on earth. He created the Church in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies; that is 'when' He did it. This being so, the miracle of the resurrection is far greater than we have ever realized. He did it by the working of His exceeding great and mighty power; that is 'how' He did it. It commenced from the deepest depths to which He had descended and finished at the right hand of the throne in the heavenlies.

At that time the unique and singular Jesus became the multiple Church; it was one of the mightiest of all miracles He wrought on the cross, indeed it is its complement. Jesus Christ and the Church were then made as one together as head and body belong to one another and are part of one another. As in natural procreation a complete body is first formed as a whole and then born altogether at once as one unit, so also in new creation God, by His mighty power, brought forth head and body as one.

This is exactly what Jesus prayed for following the institution of the communion between Himself and His disciples in the upper room before going to the cross. Above all else His concern then was that we all should be one as He and His Holy Father are one; unless this should be so it did not seem worth dying. He expressed the oneness He sought in a twofold way: (1) 'As thou, Father art in me, and I in thee', that is by personal, singular indwelling — one in one. Only one Father dwelt in one Son and one Son in one Father; every individual person in the Church must know this blessed relationship; (2) 'that they may be one as we are, one; I in them and thou in me that they may be made perfect in one'. The oneness of this Father/Son relationship is a head/body unity. Paul had earlier put it to the Corinthians quite clearly, 'the head of Christ is God'. God was the head of the man Jesus Christ who was the Son of (the) Father. The revelation that Christ is the head of the Church is perhaps no greater than the revelation that God is the head of Christ.

When Paul opens his epistle he refers to God by His full title in relation to the Church — 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'; then later, in course of his prayers, without explanation he touches on a mystery in connection with His being and person and function. The first prayer he addresses to 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the

Father of glory', the second to 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'. The change of form of address is significant. Both prayers are to the same person of course; the form of address is changed quite deliberately because it is proper to the particular emphasis he wished to make, and he is praying with the understanding.

In the first prayer Paul draws attention to the power of God which worked exclusively in the man Christ Jesus at the resurrection. In the second he points out Father's love for every member of His family who was wrought in Christ during that exclusive operation. In the first, Christ is seated in heaven, the head of the body into which we have been inwrought as members of Him. It was a creative work of God, greater than when in the beginning He made Adam. In the second Christ is dwelling in hearts that He may be inwrought into the life of every member of the family begotten by the Father. The power at work in both cases is stupendous; the former is only possible by the power of God and the second is only possible by the mighty strength of the Holy Spirit. In both cases our attention is being drawn to faith. We are in the heart of our Head and our Head is in our heart. Here is mystery: we are in Him; He is in us.

To understand this properly at this point we need to borrow from Paul's letter to the Philippians. He says there that before coming to earth and being found in fashion as a man, Christ Jesus 'emptied Himself', (in his famous hymn Wesley says, 'emptied Himself of all but love', beautiful thought). Although we know He did not empty Himself of sonship or of Godhead, we have no means of knowing all that took place in that mighty act, but surely the Church-body must have been included in that self-emptying, for the Church was not born at Bethlehem. God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, but when He came into the world He came alone. We had to be inwrought into Him again and this was the miracle that took place in the resurrection.

When God elected us to eternal life and being in Christ it was only a beginning — having exercised His good pleasure He had to lay plans to fulfil it. His was a costly choice and a dreadful decision; it cost Him everything to make it good; we needed redeeming. Adam's later crime added to Lucifer's former sin was so immeasurable, sin so great, that in order to fulfil His Father's desires Christ had to die. He could not die with us in Him though, He had to empty Himself of us first. He could die for us and as us, He could substitute us, but not take us with Him to His redeeming death; to be effective it must be first of all substitutionary. We were not His body on the cross. He died alone. He was self-emptied at birth and God-forsaken at death; one lonely man, humbled and obedient; He had made His choice, vowed His vow. Precious Jesus.

The Wondrous Cross

How wonderful is our Lord! In the very beginning what but uttermost love possessed Him to volunteer to be the Christ? One of the persons of the blessed three had had to consent to be the Christ; we needed to be chosen in Someone — He volunteered and so the great cycle of activity commenced. He was elected to be the Christ in whom we should be chosen, the Lamb in whom all fulness dwelt, slain before the foundation of the world, who emptied Himself to be made in the likeness of man by God. At birth He was found in fashion as a man, named Jesus and took upon Himself the form of a servant. It was on the cross though that He discovered to the full the dread implications of such nobility. Not until then was He fully made in the likeness of man. In the manger He was made in our bodily form and physical likeness, but on the cross

He was made sin, conformed to our true inward spiritual likeness. We were not His body then. The Church did not die for its own sin, we had to be excluded entirely from the expiatory act or we should have been our own saviour. Yet here is the miracle (and who else but God could have done it?): we were included in that crucifixion in order to live; we had to be crucified with Christ.

How wonderful in mystery is the Lord of the cross, what compensations were His there; everything was to be gained. Despising the shame, He endured it for the joy that was set before Him, for He knew that when finally He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high all would be accomplished; His Church would sit down with Him. He was laid in the tomb whole, ruptured but unbroken; there was no schism in Him there. His heart was broken, but not a bone of His body. His flesh was torn and bruised and pierced and broken. His wounds gaped pitilessly, each a mouth to His deep humiliation. His torturers were experts — the flesh hung from His bones and great areas of it were missing, but He was whole; thank God He was whole. Pain wracked Him, His disjointed bones stared at Him, He could count them all, strong bulls of Bashan roared at Him ceaselessly and raging unicorns tossed Him about mercilessly, but His spirit was undaunted and His soul remained untainted. Everything was so undeserved, yet He hung uncomplaining between the living God and the dead people till all things predetermined by God were accomplished. His natural strength drained away, His blood ran from Him in a hundred places, His mouth dried out like a potter's shard, not a drop of moisture remained in Him. He entered into darkness, death was on Him, the grave was a haven of rest inviting Him, soon He could lay down His burden and lie there in peace. He was determined to take His body whole to the grave.

The offering had to be complete. He could not go to death as His cousin John before Him, his head on a platter and his body in the grave or in the fires of Tophet; His head must be buried with His body, He must be whole and one. God's plans required it, His Father wanted it, the scriptures foretold it, righteousness demanded it, the Church needed it, He had determined it and He did it; by the Holy Ghost He accomplished it. Nothing deterred Him from fulfilling all the requirements of that eternal purpose. In Himself He made one new man; by His cross He reconciled sworn enemies to God and to each other in one body. He did it with streaming blood and heartrending cries while Jew and gentile joined with satan to crucify and break Him and tear Him apart; they failed. There God crucified the old man. 'Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father'.

The Fulness of Him that Filleth All in All

The triumph of Jesus on the cross and in death enabled God the Father to fulfil His own wishes and accomplish His own works also. Into that man who had emptied Himself to the extremity of barren, pain-filled loneliness, God poured all fulness. Raising Him from the dead, He wrought into Him in the act every single member of the Church, creating the body of the Christ according to the eternal plan. The resurrection is the proof of it and the body which walked out of the grave is the symbol of it. The unseen miracles of the death and resurrection of Christ though are far greater than those which were then seen or perhaps at present thought of. Rejoice O ye heavens, make a joyful noise unto Him all ye ends of the earth, for the Lord has

been raised to headship over all principality and power and might and dominion and names both in this age and in that which is to come.

Everything is under His feet, and He is utterly given to the Church; it is His body, so this is not surprising. More than that, it is His fulness, His precious treasure. The Church is the fulness He resigned in heaven and regained as He left death and the earth and cleft the skies to the throne. O He was alive; He felt so full of life, He thrilled with exultation and love, it was wonderful. He was blessed beyond measure, His body was filled with it. He was whole, healed, one, complete, all His parts and members were together, not one was missing, hallelujah! Every one of His joints and all His faculties were working perfectly, normally; this was glory. He rose from the dead filled, and ascended up on high intending to fill all things with His fulness. He reigns in the heights, and from those heights His purpose is to fill all with His fulness, even hell: He will fill it with His wrath in great fire.

For His Church He purposes to fill everything in two ways: first He intends to fill all His members personally, and having done so, to fill everything with that fulness. Seeing this is the purpose of God, and the latter depends upon the former, it is therefore of great importance that every member of the body secures this fulness of Christ unto himself or herself this very instant. Whatever his or her experience to date, every member of the body of Christ must know the sealing of the Spirit; if this be wanting it is insufficient for God. This sealing is nothing other or less than the gift of God the Holy Spirit from God the Father to take up eternal residence in His children. It is: (1) the only valid seal of sonship; (2) the absolute proof of being in the body of Christ; (3) the unqualified guarantee of the inheritance bequeathed to each member; (4) the personal certification of being included in the final ingathering and summation of all things in Christ scheduled to take place in the dispensation of the fulness of time.

Membership in Christ's body is in itself such a privilege that any man might at first be excused if he felt need of nothing more, and was fully content to rest in that knowledge for ever. But what a selfish view this would be. Lest this carnal thought should grip and hold us, before even telling us of the privilege granted us, the Lord enlightens us as to His purpose for us, and tells of His own good pleasure and His will to perform it. Poor, small things that we are, we all too readily and selfishly refuse to seek for anything not primarily and directly related to our own benefit. But we have to be filled with His fulness, not our own; that is the plan, and Christ is filled with determination to please His Father and do His will, not ours. It was His Father who raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies, and Jesus feels He owes Him everything. Having once commenced on the course of redemption He could not draw back and committed Himself to it utterly. From that epochal moment He became totally dependent upon His Father for everything. Being so faithfully and fully provided for, He feels Himself eternally indebted to Him.

Beyond, far beyond anything we can know in this world, the eternal ages roll out into the unknown future filled with God's hopes. Equally they are filled with possibilities yet unrevealed to the whole Church. Coming ages are stored with promises and blessings for us; with these are bound up the realisation of the vast inheritance laid up in heaven for us all. In view of this, God is expecting each one of us whom He has chosen in Christ to show our gratitude to Him by receiving and being filled with the Holy Spirit. This is absolutely necessary; everything depends on it, for only by Him

can Christ our Head fill all in all. All possibilities — breadth, length, depth and height; all potential — powers, might, strength and dominion; the whole personality — mind, heart and spirit. He who knew that if He saved His life He would lose it, says to us also 'he that will save his life shall lose it, but he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it'. He knew — He did so Himself.

The Fellowship of the Mystery

Paul was very desirous that we should know the mystery of Christ. He was equally determined that we should also know the fellowship of the mystery. He saw it to be his calling. We are all fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the same body, and fellow-partakers of God's promise in Christ, he says. The first has to do with the inheritance; we all share it. The last has to do with our sealing by the Spirit; we all partake of it. The central statement has to do with our birth and family; we are all in it; these three are of one. The first and last have been dealt with fairly expansively earlier, but the central one, though alluded to before, is now being newly introduced and accorded a special section on its own. Being concerned with birth, it is of very great importance. Like Peter and John, who when dealing with the Church lay stress on regeneration, Paul finds it equally necessary to do so. The fellowship of the mystery above-mentioned and classified in this threefold way subsists in this form only as family truth. The inheritance can only be shared by the family of God; to be true children the members of that family must be of one body begotten only; proof of that birth and the one sign of membership of the race is the seal — it is the entitlement to inheritance.

God inworked both the roots and the pattern of this in His ancient people Israel. He laid the roots of it in Abraham the father of the race, and inlaid the pattern of it in his family, the succeeding race. When Abraham complained to God that he had no heir whereby he should know he would inherit the land, he was told by the Lord, 'he that shall proceed from thine own bowels shall be thine heir'. Paul says that by that time Abraham's body was dead and so was his wife Sarah's. Yet God said Abraham's seed must come forth from his own bowels. It was not humanly possible, yet Abraham never even staggered at the promise; he believed God and was accounted righteous in doing so. Whereupon God gave him the sign of circumcision, 'a seal of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised', and without delay Abraham circumcised himself and all the males of his household. Soon after that, Sarah herself received strength from God to conceive seed, and in process of time Isaac was born of Abraham's own body, begotten according to the promise.

Isaac was born into a family already circumcised, and he himself received the seal which proclaimed him heir both of his father and of God. Thereafter every man of the untold millions of Israel, Abraham's seed, had to receive the seal; he was not counted a member of the race unless he bore the sign; it was the seal of sonship. Without it he did not belong to God's people and was not a member of His family; far from that, he was cut off from the family and the inheritance.

Paul not only had great insight into the mystery and its fellowship, he also had great knowledge of Israel's history. He knew that what happened to Abraham was only a figure of the truth that had been revealed to him. Circumcision was only a prefiguration; it was an aspect of the work Christ accomplished on the cross. The apostle was not adapting Church doctrine to Abrahamic lore; on the contrary he saw that what happened to the patriarch was a kind of predestinating adaptation of what

Christ later did on the cross. Circumcision was to Abraham and the family of Israel a predestinating factor; it was a predestination to all the fulness of the blessings of God in the promised land. The Greek word translated predestination means 'to mark out beforehand', and that is precisely what circumcision was; it was a mark cut into the flesh. Similarly all God's children must carry this mark of spiritual circumcision — it is inward, of the heart, in the spirit — it is applied by the Holy Spirit by the cross.

With Jesus, Paul knew that Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day. What happened with Abraham and his family in the dawn of Israel's history was something like the enactment of a vision seen in a glass darkly, a shadowy reflection, later revealed to Paul much more clearly, though not fully. It was related in principle to part of the mystery of Christ and of the fellowship of that mystery which is the Church. It was in the midst of the great message of love in his letter to the Corinthians concerning the Church that Paul said 'now we see through a glass darkly'; how truly he spoke. Nevertheless he had great understanding in the mysteries of God. He saw that Christ is the Son of the Father who chose the great body of seed in Him before the world was. He also saw that we must be of that body begotten and to that body belong. The method and the frankly admitted difficulty of accomplishing this was worked out among the members of the Godhead, each of whom is God co-equal with the others. All is bound up in the mystery of God and of the Father and the Son.

Light is cast on it dimly however by God's dealings with the patriarchal trio — Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Though not in clearest light or fullest perfection, in these three to a remarkable degree we may trace the relationship of the Father, the Son and the Church. Abraham was told, 'in Isaac shall thy seed be called', and he saw that not only was Isaac his only begotten son, but that all the seed according to the promise was in him as well. Through Isaac, Abraham was the father of all Israel, the new race which sprang from the twelve sons of Jacob, and so it is with Christ; through Him, God His Father is the God and Father of us all.

There is a parallelism between the Church and Israel. They are different of course, belonging to God under two different covenants. Like the nation of old, the present spiritual Israel of God has, in the twelve apostles of the Lamb, twelve patriarchal heads or fathers of the churches; from these the new race has sprung. They are foundational, and upon these, as being next in order and time to Christ, the Church is founded. So great is their importance and so necessary their work that to them a whole book of the New Testament is dedicated. This obviously implies that the unfinished work of the Lord on earth was being continued through His apostles and Church. Those apostles were indispensable to God's plan and through them we trace our ancestry back to Christ and God.

With each of Israel's three earliest patriarchs a famous woman is associated, namely Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel, without whom Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — that trio of famous patriarchal husbands — the race could not have been begotten. In their combined continuing motherhood these three wives suggest the idea of God the Holy Spirit, apart from whom God's Church could neither have been born nor could it continue to exist. In an eternal union stronger than marriage Father, Son and Holy Ghost lived in complete unity, one Spirit-Being to bring forth the Church, and the part borne by the Holy Ghost is to bear every son whom the Father begets into the body of the Son. To Sarah is accorded a statement worthy of the Holy Spirit, 'she judged Him faithful who had promised'; so it was that by faith Abraham begat Isaac by Sarah. The

Holy Spirit judges God the Father to be faithful to His promise. Indeed He is now come as a result of promise and is the Spirit of promise by whom the Father presently begets the seed He originally chose and then created in the Son.

As it was the Holy Spirit who in the beginning came upon Mary and overshadowed her that Jesus may be born, He also comes upon us that we may be born; the fellowship of the Church is a family fellowship. We are begotten of the same Father as Jesus by the same seed and of the same Holy Spirit that we might share with Christ the vast family riches. They are unsearchable, says Paul, and his prayer for the family is that the Spirit who seals us may also strengthen us, that Christ the Son should dwell in every one of us that each should have equal rights and an equal share in the family wealth. There must be no doubt in any heart about this, for all is by faith. God does nothing automatically; it is essential that we believe or we shall not receive, even though all is bequeathed. Everything has been done perfectly by God; there is no difficulty on His side and no doubting His will; the same Spirit who seals us God's sons and strengthens us for Christ's indwelling is the one and same Spirit by whom every one of us has access to the Father.

There is no need for any of God's children to live in spiritual poverty, and there is no excuse for shortcoming or failure because access is freely granted to all of God's wealth. Since we are God's children and walk in His will there is no limit to what we can have — all the unspeakable wealth of the nature, character, personality and powers of Jesus are willed us. All the fulness of God is entirely open to our desires. We must not stagger at the prospect through unbelief; it is not greedy to want all, for in having all none can rob another; those riches are infinite.

The Boldness of Faith

The height of every person's ambition should be perfect manhood in the body of Christ. Peak of achievement is to arrive at the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Selfishness is utterly impossible, for the purpose of this is edification of the body of Christ till everyone in Christ arrives at the same fulness. God's method of distributing this wealth is absolutely fair; the presence of Christ in us is the basic factor governing all right to inheritance, and the stature of Christ in us governs the amount of the riches we actually possess. This is the eternal, unchanging principle of absolute righteousness and equality with which God our Father treats all the family; He has made all His wealth equally available to us all. The decisive factor determining the amount of this wealth possessed by every member of the family is faith. He did not choose with partiality — there is no preference in this realm; favouritism is utterly unknown to God. He is Love to every one of His children and too wise to be partial.

All shortcomings and limitations are on our side; we must determine not to remain babes in arms or we shall remain in impoverishment, for how shall babes handle vast riches? We must grow up and learn to walk and think and come to understanding. Babies cannot think; they do not desire or seek after true wealth but are satisfied with common things. To them these seem treasures, for them they cry and to them they cling and with them play, while adult treasures lie unwanted within reach. If we persist in refusing to walk, and insist on being carried, we shall find ourselves being carried away by men. Let us be warned, there are those, filled with cunning craftiness,

who have infiltrated the churches and are working deceitfully to destroy them; all these must be recognised and cast out.

We must be spiritually strengthened, powerfully indwelt, firmly rooted, properly grounded, constantly built up, steadily walking, united in faith, fully comprehending, knowing the Son of God. We shall not then be empty, tossed about by winds of doctrine, moved off our ground, without understanding, constantly collapsing, 'the odd one out', ignorant of the truth and of the Son of God. When God has performed all the basic things in us, since He has established the way and granted us all free access to this vast treasury, we must have boldness to enter in. He bids us welcome; timidity is not modesty, it is cowardice. Though all this unlimited wealth be willed by God and given by the Father; though perfect love and absolute impartiality be shown to every child equally, only those who believe these things and boldly approach their Father with intent to possess them shall have the riches to which they are heirs.

It would be impossible to list or even categorise all this super-abundance of love and gift. Indications of its vast fulness are scattered liberally throughout the New Testament though, many of them in this epistle. To name but a few of these: — exceeding greatness of power, comprehension of immeasurable love, all the fulness of God, the panoply of God. All this and so much more is prepared and laid up in heaven for God's bold and confident children. Paul's prayer must be answered in us — he prayed it for that reason. Every child of God ought to be able to testify in these terms: 'I am a member of God's family, I am strong with the Spirit's strength, Christ lives in me, I am rooted and grounded in love, I comprehend and know the love of Christ, I am filled with all the fulness of God'. All this is available to us 'by faith of Him', which simply means that we have faith in His faithfulness and ability to ask and think and receive all for us.

Indwelling us in fulness, He will fill and engage all our powers, fusing them with His, using them as His to ask and think and believe far beyond our own human capacity. With His power working in us, new dimensions of faith and love and power will unfold to our understanding, and the greatness of Christ will fill us. Breadths, lengths, depths and heights of love will open to us, comprehension will dawn upon us and develop into eternal knowledge of Christ and God; nothing will seem impossible. This is the mystery in which Father and Son had fellowship for our redemption both in eternity before the world was and also in time. The dispensation of grace is a dispensation of glory too, glory to God in every member of the Church through Jesus Christ now and throughout the endless ages of ages to come. The prospect is exceedingly wonderful, passing knowledge. Let us all attain to it for His glory.

The Obedience of Faith

Having taken us away out into the endless future, the apostle brings us back again to earth and the needs of the present time. Returning to his opening theme he commences another section of instruction about the body. His dominant insistence is oneness, unity, togetherness, wholeness; as members of the body we all must minister to it as one. Every member of it is a minister of Christ to His body; we all are workers together. No-one is saved by his works but by God's grace and as a result of His works, He created us in Christ and ordained a path of good works for each individual to walk in. Progress can be made by the Church unto full operational power only as we develop unto full stature and are able to do these works. The works themselves,

good though they be, have no power to make us Christ-like; it is always only the obedience of faith which accomplishes that. Doing the work manifests the fact that a person is obedient, which proves he is humble and in turn shows he is faithful and is there in power with God.

Of all works done by the saints, the ministry to the body is one of the most vital. This blessed privilege called edification or up-building is purely a labour of love and a work of faith and except Christ dwells in the heart of the inner man is entirely impossible. Before any person can help build up the Body of Christ, Christ must dwell within the body of that person. If he does not know how to live in his own body, how shall a man know how to upbuild Christ's? For this reason, when writing to the Corinthians, before dealing with their place and function in the body of Christ, Paul was careful to tell them that their bodies were temples of the Spirit. Whether it be the Corinthians or the Ephesians, men have to learn that this body into which they have been baptised is a body of selfless Love.

Love Stronger than Death.

The correct mental attitude and approach to this theme is surely that in which the apostle himself introduces it, 'the Church which is His body'. How this should influence our whole attitude to the Church. The man was very greatly affected by this knowledge, 'the Church is the body of my Lord', he thought, how wonderful that is; His body. How precious it is to Him; how precious also it was to Paul. He perfectly understood Mary Magdalene; he knew how she must have felt that resurrection morning, weeping over the loss of His body; 'Sir, if thou hast borne Him hence tell me where thou hast laid Him and I will take Him away', she said. She loved Him, loved Him. To her even His body was precious. She couldn't bear to think His body had been lost, perhaps brutalized more still; O how He had loved her; how He had loved everybody.

Poor mistaken Mary, she did not know He was alive. To her at that moment He was dead, but she loved Him still; death could not break that. Stronger than death, her love yearned to hold His body, to bear it away somewhere, it did not matter where; she would tend it, honour it, re-inter it somewhere, somehow. It was His body, that was all that mattered. It did not matter that she would surely be put to death herself if she was found with it; she loved Him and made her desperate appeal to the gardener: 'Mary' He said, and she knew He was alive — 'because I live ye shall live also'. To Mary loving Jesus and loving His body was the same thing.

So it was with Paul. To him the Church and Christ are one, the Head on the throne in heaven, and the body on mission on earth. This is why his epistles are so full of exhortations and admonitions to give ourselves over utterly to the Lord and His service. He considered it to be a man's reasonable service to present his body wholly to the Lord. He wanted us all to be living sacrifices, for that is what the Lord was. A man should account himself to be a sheep for slaughter, nothing less, he says. He reasoned that because by the blood of His cross the Lord reconciled us to Himself 'in the body of His flesh, through death' he and everybody else should give his own flesh for His body's sake, for that body is the Church. That body can have no flesh on earth now, except men give themselves bodily to Him for that purpose.

The Indwelling Christ

Men must commence to reason by the Spirit with understanding. Not only is each of us a member of Christ in our inner man, our bodies also must be surrendered to Him and function for the common good of the Church, for they are members of Christ. Conformity to the world will surely result from wrong thinking in this area, for it will lead to incorrect behaviour. Mental renewal will work great transformation in the behaviour of any man who presents his whole self to the Lord. His body of flesh must be given over so completely to God that He believes it to be sacrificed to Him and accepts it for His body's sake. We must live and serve the Church and give ourselves for it as Christ did — 'no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it; we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones'. Flesh and blood and bones, we are to consider ourselves part of His body. We must give ourselves physically to it and for it without delay and without reserve. Redemption is total; we are not our own; we must glorify God in our bodies as well as our spirits.

The Lord loved the Church as a whole and gave Himself for every member of it as though each was His very own flesh. As any normal person washes his body with water for the sake of cleanliness and health, so He wants His body washed and sanctified — it must be clean and spotless, without a wrinkle or even a blemish anywhere. He gave Himself for that and we must give ourselves to it. We must love His body, make it glorious, prepare it for future presentation. Beyond a woman's tears in the house of a hypocrite, we all must wash it with the word as by the tears of the Head; the Church must be perfect. Perfection is an individual matter; it is achieved by attention to detail. To accomplish it the Head indwells each member as his or her personal head; His design thereby is to make each one perfect, that by that member's perfecting He may perfect His whole body. This is the reason we must all be filled with the Spirit. We must wake up to what it is all about and go singing to the work. Fulness of the Spirit is not for personal enjoyment only; it is to fit us for service also. Singing in tune with the melody of the heart is not a terminus; there is more to singing than tunefulness. We must sing in time as well as in tune and in harmony as well as in part. A harmonious being is a person prepared for a ministry. Beauty for the body of Christ must be our aim — we must love it and give ourselves for it.

But health before beauty; a body cannot be beautiful if it is not healthy. Paul talks about beauty almost last of all; almost but not quite; finally he talks about the battle. We are made beautiful for the battle. This may seem strange, for battle fields are not usually the places where beauty is either promoted or protected. We think of theatres of war as places of ugliness, wounds, cries, tears, anger, hostility. Savagery abounds there, bestiality, death and disease are abroad, anything but beauty of form or face. But this is only because we all too easily think of cosmetic beauty acquired in scented parlours. When God speaks of beauty He has in mind the loveliness revealed in scriptures like: 'He has no form or comeliness'; He is like 'a root out of a dry ground; His visage is so marred, more than the sons of men ... when we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him'. He won the battle though, and He will only 'divide the spoil with the strong'.

Beauty in God's sight is purity of nature, sweetness of disposition, strength of character, equability of temperament, faithfulness to take up the battle and willingness to suffer for His name's sake. He has provided every protection for that; His own armour in fact. Clad with this, all His warriors on the battlefield will find full salvation. If we gird ourselves entirely with truth and are righteous in heart, if thoughts of salvation helmet our head, if we are prepared to go on the march with the

gospel army, advancing into enemy country with God's word, covering all with faith, our beauty will remain unspoiled. Contrary to all human expectations it will be enhanced. The most beautiful person in heaven returned home from the war covered with scars from head to foot. He is the Head; how then can His body be unmarked? Some scars are the marks of victory; His body must be covered with these or it will not be like its Head. But before beauty and the battlefield must come health and strength. Paul applies himself to this with the words 'ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ'. Every saint must be perfected for this work, he says. With this in view, every one is given grace by the Lord. The gifting for this ministry is from Christ, and according to the purpose for which the gift is given; this is an individual matter and takes place when we are baptised into His body; He does everything with purpose and care.

Giftings for Ministries

He is very concerned about this, so in order that these gifts should function properly the Lord gives further gifts also; these are men with special offices. He names five: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers. Seeing that pastors and teachers are spoken of together it has been thought that perhaps Paul meant that the pastoral and teaching office is one, and therefore the gifts may be combined in one person. Though they often are, this is not necessarily so; the offices are quite distinct as the scriptures show. Luke says that in the church at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers, and Paul says of himself that he was an apostle and teacher. In both cases the grammatical structure is the same as in the Ephesian text. It is therefore to be assumed that as there are prophets and teachers, there are also evangelists and teachers, and just teachers. But whoever he may be, it is the business of each of these men so to fulfil the purpose for which he is called that he fully discharges his duties to the saints. Each one must be perfected in the use of the particular gift given him or her by Christ, for everyone must work without ceasing. Everyone must be made to feel needed and see that he or she is a minister; the body needs every available ministry. Each one is as important to the body as any of the special men and their ministries, and must be taught the sevenfold doctrine Paul is so careful to include in the letter.

The ultimate measure and power of the gift in function is governed by the stature of the man and his devotion to the Lord and his ministry. A man's position in the body is governed by God's love and grace and choice, and his gifting to the body may be gauged by his usefulness. Function is designed and granted according to the member's capacity, and usefulness in the body is governed by his faithfulness in the ministry. Full development of the body according to God's will is to a great degree, though not entirely, dependent upon the contribution of every member, not the brilliance of a select few. Therefore it is the duty as well as the privilege of each one of us 'to grow up into Him in all things', and as He is 'Head over all things to the body' there is opportunity of continuous and almost limitless growth in all things. The Lord is expecting each one of us to apply ourselves to this zealously, without ceasing. No chance is to be missed, we must buy up the opportunities. Our attitude to life and time must be redemptive; every passing day is crammed full of 'things', bringing ample opportunity to build up self and the body in a proper manner; we dare not let them go without using them for the Lord.

Time is for this; of themselves 'days are evil', men full of hate are filling them up with evil practices, some of them too shameful to speak about; more zealous than they, we

must fill the days with good. God, who has made us good and ordained good works for us to do, insists that we walk in them, for only thus may we become perfect. The power that worked in Christ when He was raised from the dead will work effectually in us and we shall be effectual in His hands according to the measure of our gift. How we live and work is important. Together we must fitly join in for the common good, compacting our lives into one. This is the aim and delight of love. The whole of this section is conceived and constructed with these words: grace, gift, fulness, perfection, unity, growth, compactness, edification, love. Vain thinking, darkened understanding, ignorance, blindness and callousness marked our walk and work before; now we must be kind, tender-hearted, forgiving, loving, Christ-like, His body in all truth. There is nothing in this passage to encourage individualism — individuals are to excel at compacting into one body.

It is quite impossible to properly grasp all this except it be fully understood that before the world was God chose the Church in Christ to be one body. Before any individual was chosen to be a member of the body God decided that we should be members of one another in a whole body. That is election. God made up His mind, purposed something in Himself, decided upon a course of action and fixed His will to achieve it — that is sovereignty. Election works out in the area of personal being in Christ and that election is final. When God calls people He calls into this. How we respond to His call determines our salvation — that is selection.

Called and Chosen in Him

The grace of salvation is one of the most precious jewels of Bible doctrine in both testaments. It has many aspects, each of which catches and reflects the light of God like one of the many facets of a well-cut and polished diamond. Not the least of these aspects of truth is this call of God, 'ye are called, ye are called'; the apostle reiterates it. To the Galatians he states it more fully — 'God separated me from my mother's womb and called me by His grace'. It is an intervention in the life and a vocational calling; God is expecting us to commit ourselves to a lifetime of work also. The call demands response. God chooses to call us, we choose to answer the call. Since the coming of Christ and the publishing of the gospel and the scriptures men may call on God before He calls them; God is not a despot and never issues a despotic summons. In earnest souls desire responds to desire, faith answers to faith and the transaction has taken place. we have been selected to become a member of the elect body. When we responded we did not know all that had gone before, nor what was intended by the call and involved in the calling — we sought salvation. We learned of Calvary but knew nothing of God's decision that reconciliation to Him by Christ should only be made 'in one body by the cross' and could not be received outside of it. We were not reconciled to God individually to remain exclusively individualistic; everyone was reconciled at once by that one act as members of one complete body. The reconciling act was not only inclusive, it was comprehensive.

True it is that each of us needs to be personally saved — there has to be a point in time when we are born of God, but on God's part our birth was the end of a long process which commenced way back in Him in eternity. He chose to do it this way, despite the enormous cost to Himself, and He accomplished it without contravening His own laws of eternal life or in the least degree sacrificing or compromising His own position as God. First He made us nigh by the blood, then He reconciled us to Himself in one body by the cross, then He inwrought us in Christ at the resurrection.

It could only be done by God in the Son and only this way. It is as logical as it is miraculous; the body is one; we cannot make or create it one, it is one; our charge is to keep the unity of the Spirit in mind and practice. God is the Unity of the Spirit, three persons — that is three centres of conscious existence expressed as three distinct personalities in one being which is Spirit. Now it is quite impossible for us to preserve that unity in its unique original form; we cannot keep God, on the contrary He keeps us. But we have to keep that unity in the form it has been adapted by God for the creation of the Church. But what a wonderful way to describe the Church; — 'The unity of the Spirit'; no-one but a Paul would have coined a phrase like that; it is superb.

The Church is a unity of spirits in one Spirit; each of those spirits is a human spirit regenerated into one body in that Spirit to become one spirit with other human spirits. We have 'all been made to drink into One Spirit', Paul tells the Corinthians as a church body, and tells the Galatians 'I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live' (as an individual). He had drunk into One Spirit, Christ's, and had become a member of His body, yet he still retained his own conscious personality. He had and has eternal being, the astonishing gift of God; but sheer grace and astounding though it is, it is nevertheless exactly true. God has adapted His eternal life and being to His own desires and requirements for us all. He deliberately purposed to do according to His own good pleasure; and who shall doubt His wisdom and deny His power or disbelieve His love?

O great and high and noble God who hast dwelt in splendid and unapproachable glory from all eternity, how wonderful Thou art. Far above and distinct from all other beings Thou art God, there is none like Thee, Thou hast not made another like Thyself, none is equal with Thee or can share Thy glory. Of all that Thou hast created there is none to be compared with Thee. Yet Thou didst make man in Thine own image to bear Thy likeness and have fellowship with Thee. O Lord, great in mystery and perfect in holiness, long before Adam fell Thou didst choose to share Thy life with the sons of men. We worship Thee who didst purpose to bring men into Thine own life. Thou wast angry and hurt by sin, but turned not back from Thy purpose, nor altered Thy choice; what Thou hast promised Thou hast done, and we praise Thee. Thou hast formed Thy body O Christ; of many spirits hast Thou formed it. Multitudes have drunk into one Spirit and share Thy life to dwell in one body as one being for Thee through all eternity.

God's whole aim in grace is to bring us into His own eternal state of life. Expressed in trinitarian form, the Holy Three live one life, God is a unity, a body of three persons in fellowship in one being. The Church's form of eternal life is based on the same principle — it is a multiplicity in unity — millions upon millions in fellowship in one life in one body. In keeping with this, the great event to which the centuries are moving is the summing up of all things in Christ under one Head. The unity will be openly seen then; as Paul says to the Romans, all the sons of God are going to be manifest and the secret now revealed to the churches will be manifest to all. To the Corinthians he unfolds the future eternal kingdom wherein even Christ Himself will yield up everything to the Father so that God shall be all in all. The great One and His one-ness will then be openly revealed. How precious it is now to all those who live in it in sacred predestiny.

Male and Female Created He Them

In all three epistles he writes of the Church as His body; to the Romans but little; to the Corinthians at greater length and in more detail, under the figure of a human body; to the Ephesians most comprehensively and in variety under changing figures suited to his theme. In the Corinthian epistle he most surprisingly reveals the head / body relationship in God, and propounds it as the basis and pattern for the relationship between Christ and the Church, and man and woman. The head of Christ is God. Christ, it appears, is God's 'body' and man's head, and the man is Christ's body and woman's head. What the apostle is trying to teach us is the vital union and necessity of the one to the other. As far as humanity is concerned it is as impossible for the man to be without the woman or the woman without the man in the Lord, as it is impossible for the Father to be without the Son and the Son without the Father in the Spirit.

Although the Lord created the man first, in His thinking and indeed in His creating both are one, for she was in Adam when the Lord created him: it is a stunning thought that God created the man because He wanted the woman. All God did was to bring forth from him what was in the man; Eve was made first in Adam and secondly from him; she had as it were a second birth. She was 'chosen' in Adam first, created in him next, made from him third and joined to him fourth. Somehow this is all vitally connected with God's eternity of being and His headship. Man is head of woman because he actually existed in form and life before woman, yet when he was created she also was made. God obviously followed a prearranged plan in this, for He did not take her from Adam while he was still a dust-heap on the ground. First He breathed into him the breath or spirit of life and Adam became a living soul. Then, after a period of life as a monad, God put him to sleep and from him, the living one, God made another like him. This 'new creation' was made from the 'new creation' to live with him in the 'new creation'. So like him was she that they were called man and woman (Heb: ish and isha) she only differed from him slightly in figure, but in image and likeness and form she was almost identical. It may actually be true that they were so alike they looked like male / female twins.

Now all this is symbolic; man and woman were created according to the pattern first revealed in God on mount Sion in the heavenly Jerusalem and to this mountain we have come. On its heights we are able to discern the same pattern which Moses transcribed into Tabernacle / People, Ezekiel into the frame of a City / House, and Paul into a body / Church and John into New Earth / New Jerusalem. From it too we see the first creation, the first birth, the death and resurrection of Christ and the new creation/generation of the Church/body.

Adam was both a creation and a generation. By creation he was formed. God was his Artificer and Maker, he was 'fearfully and wonderfully' made: then God breathed into him the breath of life; He inspirited him and by inspiration he was generated. It was the same also with Eve, although made from a different substance; she was first formed and then inspirited by God. It is of real significance that the word used for 'made' in connection with Eve is 'builded'; God 'builded' the woman from man. When the Lord stated His intention concerning the Church He expressed Himself in almost the exact terminology, certainly in the same ideology: 'I will build My Church'. Building, creating and begetting or generating, when thought of in connection with the Church, must be understood as different aspects of the same thing. Though they are not cognate words, they are one cognate truth and combine in God's mouth to present one revelation only.

How carefully the Spirit has compiled the scriptures. Although given over the centuries, everything is a transcription of the principles of eternal truth as it lay originally in the heart of God. It was worked out therefrom into history by a succession of acts, all designed to exhibit the oft-repeated testimony of His unchanging and unchangeable being — 'I AM THE LORD, I change not'. All historic events and God's methods of working in them at that time have been expressions of His will and skill according to His eternal purpose, and the patterns and principles of the various operations have invariably been the same throughout. As Adam and Eve were one, so is Christ and His Church. Adam was Eve's head on two counts: he was not her literal head as being created upon the shoulders of the woman as is a head upon a human body, but as: (1) preceding her in order of actual creation, and (2) being the one from whom she was created. That is how Christ is our head.

In the Image of God

Although Paul uses the figure of an actual body when teaching the truth of unity, we must not apply this too literally either to the Church or to God. Because the physical form is designed upon the principles of God's being, it is a most suitable mode from which to teach the greater divine truth, but we must not attribute human form to God. Moses was most clear and very strong on this point to the Children of Israel before they passed over Jordan, 'ye saw no manner of similitude' whatever, he said. He went on to command them under penalties not to make any kind of image or likeness, male or female, whether human, animal, bird, insect, vermin, reptile, fish, or any kind of body, real or imaginary, earthly or celestial. God is not like any of them, nor is any of them like God.

It is most natural that human beings should think God is like them because they are, so it is thought, 'likest to the form divine'. But God is SPIRIT; He has no set form. He has power to appear in any form and has manifested Himself in various ways throughout time, chiefly as a human being, the Man Christ Jesus. However we must avoid the error of thinking that God was born at Bethlehem. He was not. A man was born there and God was thereby manifest in the flesh. We must think of God's being only in terms of the sum total of highest moral virtues, the greatest spiritual values, the most excellent personal characteristics and the sweetest imperishable graces in their united perfection and glory; these are His 'shape', 'bulk' or 'mass'. He has no body of flesh and blood and bone, although He could and did manifest Himself on earth as such when made in the likeness of sinful flesh. Found in fashion as a man physically, Jesus was still in the form of God spiritually. He did not empty Himself of Godhead. Indeed all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily, which is to say that within that human body the complete God fully dwelt. He was not part of God, He was all God; He was also all Man — Jesus was both combined; this is why and how we are both complete and one in Him.

Jesus' real form was moral. The hidden man of His heart was Adam unfallen, virtuous, upright, perfect, sinless, holy. He was really the first Adam. He virtually said so — 'I am the first and the last'. When Adam was made he was fashioned spiritually on Christ. He was not bodily fashioned on Him, for He had no physical form then. When He was formed a man He chose to be fashioned as a man — by choosing this He became known as the second man, or Adam. He is now the Man as well as the God. The Spirit of God and spirit of man combined and fused in Him; physically He was man, bodily He was God. Within the visible body of Jesus of Nazareth was the

invisible body of God, the sum total of perfections in which He lives and which constitute Him God, by which also He is manifest to the spiritual senses. The soul is the manifestation of the spirit; it is the 'body' of man's spirit within his physical body in his inner man. The human form was only vital to this manifestation of God because He loved man and wanted to save him. It is to be presumed that if God had wished to create man in a form other than what we now know to be and call human He would have done so. But to make him thus as being best suited to display His own being was His good pleasure.

The God / man relationship is not to be thought of as God in man's image, but man in God's image. This being so, the idea of a literal head / body relationship between Christ and the Church ought not to be made fundamental to body teaching. Nevertheless with this understanding we should approach the subject with gratitude that our very make-up and constitution the better fits us to grasp Paul's spiritual meaning. With the wisdom and understanding to be expected of a man taught and inspired of God, Paul leads up to his subject in a masterly way.

The Bread which we Break

His approach to the presentation of this truth is by way of the Communion — 'the bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of Christ?' That is his first reference to it, to be followed shortly by, 'the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed took bread and when He had given thanks He said, take, eat, this is My body which is broken for you, this do in remembrance of me'. Without entering too deeply into the controversy which has for centuries schismatically divided theologians and churches on this matter, it seems the key to understanding the issue lies in these verses. Mystery is here, but we need not allow religious mysticism to bemuse us or sectarian dogma to confuse us.

In one of the statements bread is likened to Christ's spiritual body, the Church; in the other it is likened to Jesus' literal body. In the first instance it is we who break it, in the second it is broken by the Lord; in both cases we eat it. In the first case the bread is likened to a mystical body — the local church; in the second it represents the actual body of Jesus Christ. Except the heart be bound by religious dogma, in neither case does anyone believe he is actually eating human beings. We no more believe we are eating church members than we believe we are eating Christ when we break and eat bread, even though it be called 'the bread'.

The bread only represents the body in both cases; it is not the body, whether of the Church or of Christ. The closing phrase of the latter passage proves it beyond doubt or controversy for ordinary people: 'this do in remembrance of me'. The Lord did not say, 'do this to me', yet if the view be taken that the bread is actually His body, He should have said 'to me', for it would have been the logical thing to say. If it had been His actual body, He would have been commanding us to crucify Him afresh, which surely would be the most dastardly deed of all time. The action would have perpetuated His murder, thereby constituting every one of us a murderer; worse His words would have been incitement to murder, so He did not say it. We do it in remembrance of a past act of breaking, He broke it to symbolise His self-breaking, (see pamphlet on 'Communion'). If the bread is ever only bread, to invite us to an act of remembrance is the logical thing to do and that is precisely what He did.

It seems therefore that transubstantiation is not proven from the text. Neither the actual words of the Lord nor the logic of the Holy Spirit, nor the teaching of the apostle support the dogma. On the contrary they destroy the ground of the error and dispel the mysticism of the priestly rites associated with it. These extend the error into the blasphemy of a spurious sacrifice, more harmful and obnoxious in practice and effect than the dogma itself. It would be possible to sacrifice the actual body of Christ again only by crucifying Him afresh. This is not only a horrible thought, it would also be a terrible crime, the like of which has never been dreamt up by anyone in history; thankfully it is impossible. On the other hand we act correctly if, when we break the bread, we do so with understanding that we typify the breaking of ourselves for communion with each other. He broke Himself, that He might commune with us and we with Him, and following His example we must do the same. At once we demonstrate both the basic act of present communion and show forth the Lord's past death till He come. The first lays emphasis on our communion, the result; the second lays emphasis on His death, the cause; we do the obligatory former, He did the necessary latter.

Much of the error which is being taught about the Communion arises from assumption. It is assumed that Jesus' words 'eat my flesh and drink my blood' were spoken of the Communion; they were not. The meal at which He spoke was an ordinary one. It was not the communion of the Church but the feeding of the five thousand. Eating and drinking His flesh and blood has no more to do with the Communion than with any other meal. It is not something done once a week; it is a continuous feast. Whether the Romish or the Protestant dogma be accepted it is erroneous to assume that the eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood only takes place at a service of the church. If it be thought that the elements are the actual body and blood the error is confused and the participants worse confounded.

Understanding all this aright, we are prepared for the apostle's following teaching about the body. He no more expects us to think that he is talking about a literal head / body relationship between Christ and His Church than we should believe that the bread is the literal body of Christ. As bread is the most suitable medium by which to express both His body and the Church body, so also is the human body the most suitable medium by which to teach unity and one-ness. This is the note on which he finishes the section of instruction on the communion — 'discerning the Lord's body'. With this phrase he brings together both parts of the figure, we must discern the bread as being symbolical of the Lord's own physical body and also the company of people who partake of it, or the local church, which represents the universal Church.

The local church is the body of people in which the Lord dwells and through whom He expresses Himself most fully in any area. By His Spirit the Lord works worldwide in and through individual members of His Church as well as in the local body. He also works universally in various ways on those not yet in the Church in order to bring them into it. But though this is so, the local church will always be the body in and through whom the Lord most fully dwells and works. This is the kind of thinking the apostle seeks to stimulate in each member of the body.

One Body — Many Members

It is probable that if asked questions about the gifts of the Spirit most knowledgeable people would correctly enough turn to 1 Corinthians 12. However, the chapter is

really more a treatise on the body of Christ than on the gifts of the Spirit. With this in mind the apostle is at pains to tell us that although there are diversities and differences of gifts and administrations and operations within the body, the body itself is one. Differences and diversities there must be in any local body, but not divergence or division, and he takes up the figure of the human body to illustrate it. His major reason for doing so is to show the necessity and the indispensability of each member to the body as a whole, and to each other individually.

Paul is particularly careful to point out the necessity of the feet to the head. He does so because these are of diverse size, shape and service, and are set at furthest extremes in the body and therefore are the least likely to be thought of as being one; nevertheless they are. They are not exactly or identically one; they are different in fact, but that does not prevent them from being one. They are flesh and blood, they have one life and are units in one system; with their fellow-members they constitute one body and will endure and exist together for life. Each member is ideally suited to the function it fulfils, and although certain members are capable of adaptation to a function other than that for which they were made, this can only be accomplished with extreme difficulty. Imagine for instance trying to walk everywhere on our heads! The thought is ridiculous, but with much practice some expert may manage to walk on his hands; even if this were achieved however, in this position no-one could feed himself properly with his feet. Life is possible of course even though some members of the body be missing but not without some degree of handicap to the body.

The apostle therefore bases his teaching on a normal body fully functional with all its members present in place and whole. He had already dealt with all the causes of diseases and distemper among them when taking up matters of contention and disorder at the Lord's table. Therefore he embarks upon his teaching about the Lord's body with the expectation that there should be no spiritual weakness, sickliness and sleepiness among the members — each one must be strong, healthy and wide awake. In Christ's body every one is vital and absolutely necessary; each has been purposely set in position; all are carefully tempered together, individually honourable and equally important. This is the picture he paints of the body, striving to bring home to our hearts that, as the human body is a unit, so is a local church. We stand or fall together, succeed or fail together, are honoured or suffer together; we all share one life, have the same Spirit and live in one body under one head. Because this is so, we 'should have the same care one for another', he says; this will greatly help prevent schism. Every company of God's children should believe of themselves, 'ye are the body of Christ and members in particular'; think of yourselves in that place as being Christ's body. It is a marvellous concept — do not shrink from it; be it. The most excellent way to achieve this is to have love — God's own love — for one another.

The Greatest of These

The body will be one body of love when we all love as He loves. Love is the only thing that can prevent abject failure on the part of the Church in God's sight. It is His good pleasure to give us miraculous gifts and wonderful powers, but even though all these operate effectively and successfully, none of them count for anything if love be missing. Love is greater than all else. Faith appears to be all-powerful, removing mountains; coupled with prophecy and embracing understanding of mysteries and all knowledge, it is just about the most effective and spectacular of all gifts, but without love, whoever has it is exactly nothing. The generous heart and noble mind, willing to

give to the point of self-impoverishment is rare, and most highly regarded everywhere: the martyr spirit is prized above all, but however lofty and altruistic the reasons and motives inspiring the acts, apart from love they all are entirely worthless. Without love all speech is jangling noise, all gifts in operation are a misuse of power, all works are banal, life is useless and self-sacrifice is the last act of a misguided zealot. All is absolutely nothing, entirely valueless and profitless except love be the substance of it. There will be times, cases and situations when everything fails and only love will succeed; to be found without it then is calamitous. Faith is indispensable, hope is vital, but apart from love nothing is of eternal worth.

Paul is not propounding two contrary positions here, but is referring to himself as an illustration of a dreadful possibility should the schism disturbing the church continue unchecked. The churches need faith and hope as well as love; without these and the gifts of the Spirit and the generous heart of the self-sacrificing martyr spirit, love would be valueless too. What Paul is doing is showing that love is more important than anything; it must be basic to all we do. He is also teaching us that all schism dividing churches commences with the failure of love in the heart. As we well know, probably the worst of the killer diseases presently afflicting civilized societies are heart troubles of one sort or another. No less with the Church than with society, failure of heart love, whether to Christ or the Church, or church members, or the truth for the truth's sake, or neighbours, or friends, or enemies, is the root cause of all division.

First of all the heart becomes devoid of God's love and therefore ceases to love the Lord first and wholly as it ought. All the disaffections rising from that source then follow in train, bringing their predictable results. Unification lies as much in love as in Spirit; that is why Paul dealt with the secularizing of the Lord's supper before he turned to the operation of spiritual gifts. There can be no unity of the body without communion, and communion can exist on no other basis than universal love and particular care.

The gifts, of whatever sort, must operate from that same source. The motive for using them must be utterly selfless, namely the edification of the body in love; the use of any gift must be with the aim of making contribution to the common good and be made in personal love to build up the aggregate of love in the church. The criterion of every local church must be ever-increasing love for an ever-growing body. To become ever-increasing lovers, using ever-developing gifts for an ever-precious Lord in an ever-growing church should be every member's desire. Less than this is ethical shabbiness. So, in full communion and true love let all members of a local body, as one, covet earnestly the best gifts that it may grow thereby.

It is not sufficient to desire the sincere milk of the word only; we must strongly desire these gifts for ministry to the body as well. Paul lists the gifts and then gives directions for their controlled use in the church gatherings, but not before he has made sure that people are secure in love. As branches form the vine and sheep the flock, so do the members of any body comprise that body; they are of far more importance than their gifts. The redeemed of the Lord are not just sheep or branches or members, they are persons greatly loved, each one dearly bought and baptised into the body of love.

Thoroughly Furnished

With His body Christ wants to serve His Father, and purposes to make all His members useful to this end. As may be expected, He wishes each one to function to utmost capacity, so with loving care He selects gifts for individual members according to His knowledge of their ability. He does not scatter them about indiscriminately for the more industrious or widely awake among us to snap up to their own advantage and other people's loss. Of His bountiful grace He gives in love to everybody; but when speaking of this kind of giving He uses the word riches — 'riches of grace', 'riches of wisdom', 'riches of glory' — not gifts. The gifts of the Spirit are for service; they are working powers bestowed extra to those riches for specific ends.

Two things Paul wrote to Timothy are helpful here, 'I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who hath enabled me for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry' and 'the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works'. The Lord also gives everyone assurance on these issues by revealing a more fundamental principle of gifting, 'He gave to every man according to his several ability'. How reassuring all this is. The Lord wants to perfect us and will therefore thoroughly equip us to do His works, but He will not overburden us with talents or gifts we are unable to handle. He will completely equip or furnish a man to function fully according to: (1) the several ability he already has naturally, and (2) the degree of faithfulness He counts him to have by grace. Gifts in the body of Christ are distributed for present purpose according to the known past and the unknown future, and they are given without repentance.

The two factors governing the distribution of gifts are God's knowledge of our abilities and our faithfulness. There is also another factor governing the giving of gifts, namely grace; 'to everyone is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ'. When gifts are bestowed, whether singly or in plurality, grace is also given with them that they may be administered and operated properly. According to the kind of gift, the Lord also gives grace so that the manifestation of the Spirit is not hindered. The Lord will only bestow gifts upon those He knows will be faithful to use them. An unfaithful servant will bury his gift, not realising, as he ought, that with the talent he was given grace, that is power and authority to use it. It is his Lord's gift and must be accounted for, 'dug up' and presented at his Lord's coming. In the parable the servant was called 'the unprofitable servant', and was cast out into outer darkness — he refused grace. 'There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth', the Lord concludes. Dreadful! A faithful man is profitable to the Lord.

We all, without exception, should be most desirous of giving the Lord pleasure and bringing Him profit, and should view with pleasure the words 'covet earnestly the best gifts'. This word does not imply that some gifts are better in quality than others; they are all of highest quality. Paul is speaking comparatively, as when he compares love with faith and hope, and places it highest of the three; when doing so he was not examining quality but stating importance. Because he gives leave to classify some as being of less importance than others, he does not thereby encourage anyone to refuse or despise any of the gifts of God. He is really saying 'seek for the highest, go for the greatest, keep reaching out, do not be content with anything less than the highest in any realm'. We are not to despise the lesser gifts or minimise their importance as some do, nor pretend to seek some while rejecting others. It must be remembered that when writing to the Corinthians Paul was aware they already had the lesser. What he

was urging upon them as a whole was that having tongues and interpretation they should seek the higher gifts also.

In his usual manner, and as he himself set the example, the apostle is emphasising a principle of gospel grace; if the subject is fruit, bring forth more fruit; if it is fulness, be filled with all the fulness of God; if it is labours, labour more abundantly; if it is love, then know breadths and lengths and depths and heights; if it is tongues, speak in tongues more — he did, he said. Always it is the same, this man's appetite for the uttermost and the perfect is insatiable.

The Holy Ghost Sent Down from Heaven

It seems an unavoidable conclusion that if in any church the greater gifts are not functioning in love in the greatest 'way', something is fundamentally wrong and must be put right. Seeing that these are the gifts of the Spirit, it is highly likely that the deficiency may be with regard to relationships with Him, for it is He who works the gifts and is manifest whenever they operate properly. His purpose thereby is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ on the earth through the Church. He does not wish to do this alone, but would enlist men's genuine powers also to assist Him. He came forth from the Father with the specific intention of filling men and women with Christ. Given as a gift to men Himself, His commission is to fill them as individuals and as a company with life and virtue and love and power and gifts and works. More than that, His purpose is to fill the world with the gospel.

Following Pentecost, the Church filled Jerusalem with their doctrine as a direct result of being filled with the Spirit. Peter says they preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. From the accounts of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, the major works of power with which they are filled did not take place within the Church, but among the world of men. The Church did not exist on the earth in Jesus' day and being formed on earth following His ascension, it quickly spread throughout the whole civilized world. No-one was called a missionary in those days — it was the Holy Spirit's commission to evangelize the world, and He fulfilled it through the whole Church. Being baptised into Him, men were simultaneously imbued with an urge to go into all the world and preach; the martyr-spirit of Christ possessed them, they left all to follow Him and to continue as He; the zeal of God's house ate them up. In them was fulfilled the words John expressed for them all — 'as He is so are we in this world'. So Christ in heaven employed them to build His Church on earth, and they gave themselves willingly to the task, risking death, suffering the loss of all things.

Paul, typical of many, says he was made all things to all men if by any means he may win some. Those people owned nothing, built nothing, achieved nothing but the will of God in this world. Therefore Father, Son and Holy Spirit were pleased with them and gave them the greatest gifts and ministries that people may be redeemed and the Church built according to plan. When the churches regain compassion for them that are out of the way, become concerned for the lost masses, preach the gospel of the 'whosoever', and are the true body of Christ on the earth, they will again be filled with the best gifts, for they are given for these purposes.

There has been a resurgence of emphasis in these days on the so-called five ministry gifts of the ascended Lord. This is a needed emphasis in any day, but the assumption that they are given to the Church is incorrect. The scripture plainly says they are given

unto men. This is a far wider emphasis than the more selective word 'Church'. It is surely more correct to say they are given as from the Church by the risen Lord. The very context in which Paul speaks shows this most clearly. He says 'every one of us is given grace according to the gift of Christ', who 'when He ascended up on high led a multitude of captives and gave gifts unto men'. Christ Himself is the example of His giving. He was given to the world of men to save them from perishing. The direct result of that gift quoted here was a multitude of captives released and led up on high.

Christ was given from His Father in heaven to men first, not the Church; in order of time He was given to the Church second; this is the order revealed in the Church also from the day of Pentecost onward. Immediately the Church was inaugurated and formed, the apostles were given to men as from the Church without reserve; the result was the same — multitudes were saved and/or healed and added to Christ and His Church. It was the same also with Paul; he was first saved into the Church, after which he was soon given by Christ and sent by the Holy Spirit as from the Church to the world of men; the particular company from which he went out was the church at Antioch. This was all part of the outworking of God's plan to fill all things with Christ. The Church is included in this; it holds a unique place in God's overall plan for His Kingdom, and plays a special part in the establishment of that plan, therefore it must be built. This is why the five ministries are presently given by the ascended Lord as from the Church to men.

In the final analysis all men are given grace according to the measure of God's gift of Christ to them, rather than Christ's subsequent gift of a gift or ministry to them. In the end everyone must realize the gift of grace is given to them in order that they themselves should be given. The five named ministries are no more given to the Church than are the ministries of all the other members of it. That they do have a place in and ministry to the Church is plain, but unless the degree of exclusivism underlying the above statement be eliminated from our thinking, the true intentions of Christ by these gifts will remain unfulfilled.

'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel', He said 'and lo I am with you always' (presumably to build His Church); this was His parting request, according to Mark. Perhaps His very last words before leaving the earth were, 'ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me ... unto the uttermost part of the earth'. To witness to Jesus properly we must go under His command and preach the gospel as He did. He was not given to the Church, an exclusive company of men, for it did not then exist, but to men at large to call out a people from among them and build His Church. To be true witnesses to Christ we must do as He. Men have to be saved before churches can be built.

Labourers into the Harvest

That the five gifted men with the enumerated ministries should be given to the Church is inevitable, for Christ is building it. It is His body, and everyone born again is born into it and therefore added to Him and it; that is unavoidable. But when these men are first added to the Body / Church, save in the mind and will of God, they are not ministers in or to it, but ordinary members like every other member. Becoming normal members of no more importance than any other, they are then equipped by the Lord according to His will and sent out on their special ministry. They may then be

regarded as being given by Christ, and they have a function in and to the Church that it may fulfil its ministry among men.

However, their greatest ministry is to Christ Himself, and they function for Him for His purpose of Church-building. It may truly then be said of them that they are gifts for the Church and are given as from the Church to the world of men for the Church. Unless this be clearly understood and firmly believed and acted upon, present day apostles will behave as though Christ is an introverted person, only concerned about Himself and His own body. Instead of occupying themselves with already established churches, let the apostles go out to the unchurched and minister among them until churches are established. Most of the world is heathen; civilization is not Christianity but a self-worshipping society of humanists or agnostics or downright atheists; there is plenty of scope.

It is probable that the nearest present-day approach to New Testament apostles is to be found among our missionaries. These are men and women who still have the same pioneer spirit and urge to go to those who have never heard the gospel. Sadly it is true that some, perhaps many of them, do not have the same spiritual equipment as those men and therefore would not have qualified for apostolic status in the early church; nevertheless their zeal is commendable. Whether or not their labours are fruitful in terms of living churches is very doubtful; this being so in most cases, perhaps in all, despite eulogistic or adulatory praise, they would repudiate any attempts to name themselves apostles. 'Labourers sent into the harvest' they may be, or perhaps they wish to become 'ministers by whom ye believed', perhaps even 'workers together with God' or 'your servants for Christ's sake', but to be called apostles, no.

Every born again child of God resists flattery, however sincerely meant; apostolic equipment is given with apostolic calling and brings apostolic results. Churches are the seals of apostolic calling and ministry. They must be springing up everywhere and remaining in life and power as testimony to true apostleship, or names and claims are invalid. To have care of churches already established is part of apostolic calling, and revisitation of them is also part of the ministry, but to mistake care for charge is fatal to an apostle's ministry.

Paul was too wise to fall into this kind of error lest he be entrapped, lured from his ministry and sidetracked from his calling. His dealings with his well-beloved Timothy, whom he regarded as his own son, are the living testimony to this. He loved the young man dearly, and seeing him as profitable to the ministry took him with him on his apostolic journeyings, in course of which they eventually came to Ephesus. As a result great blessing abounded there, which was undoubtedly of incalculable benefit to the young man, as well as to Paul. However, when Paul felt he should leave Ephesus, there still remained much to be done, so he left Timothy behind to finish the work. It was no easy task, but it needed to be done, so he put Timothy in charge and departed. Later, because of his great concern, he wrote to Timothy and gave him a personal charge.

Paul still had the care of the church at Ephesus, but he did not stay in charge of it; Timothy took charge under Paul's commandment according to prophecies formerly given, with gifts already received. The apostle did not stay; local need did not deter him from his world-wide calling — he abode faithful. Therefore he could at the last write a letter to Timothy with joy and much affection, saying 'I have finished my

course . It may be that, as with Jesus the great apostle of our calling, though to a lesser degree, he functioned in all the ministries, for they are bound up in the apostolic office and calling. Therefore Paul could quite successfully have continued at Ephesus in the capacity of pastor. If he had done so, it would have been at great personal risk, but he saw beyond the alluring prospect and departed after two years, amidst great uproar, to Macedonia — he kept on course.

Like Jesus' love, the calling has breadth and length and depth and height beyond measure; it is one of the unsearchable riches of Christ. The whole family of the body is included in the calling. Whether as individuals we are called saint, believer, child, member, apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher, elder, deacon, or collectively the church, the building, the priesthood, the family, the body, the company, the bride; whatever be the name or title, we all are 'the called'. Every one has a calling to fulfil, a work to do, a ministry from God; individually we are members of the body and collectively we are that body. Paul makes this clear to the Romans, 'we being many are one body in Christ and every one members one of another'.

The apostle can never get away from the central theme of his message, 'present your bodies', he cries. God wants your bodies presented to Him 'a living sacrifice'. He is speaking to the whole Church, 'ye are the called of Jesus Christ', every one of you 'present your bodies' right now. God must have us completely — all we are is inside our bodies, if He does not get those He does not get us. Your body for His body, you owe it to every member as well as to Him, it is only reasonable service to all concerned. To withhold is to become conformed to this world; that is inevitable. Live sacrificially or you will not live holily and acceptably unto God. To be spiritually baptised into one vast spiritual body is vital for spiritual life; to present your physical body is necessary for service in that body for the salvation of men. The head did so without reserve, so also must the body. To have His life and rob Him of our service is ethically wrong; we must present our bodies and yield our members or we shall live in total spiritual contradiction. His body is the most important body in the universe.

Chapter 5 — THE BRIDE

Perhaps to the heart of the people of God the dearest of all scriptural concepts of the Church is that she is the Bride of Christ. Every concept is necessary and has been carefully chosen and is presented by the Lord because of its importance, and each brings its own special message to our hearts. None of them must be neglected because each one emphasises a particular aspect of the whole truth, highlighting certain things we need to know and could only learn under that figure. Yet wonderful as they are, all the others would fail of God's highest purpose for the Church if this one were missing, for although we appreciate them all, none of them appeals to the heart with quite the same power as the Bride.

The very way the Bible is compiled seems to allow the suggestion that its original editors felt much the same way about the Bride as do many of its modern readers, for they placed the book which reveals her at the conclusion of the Book, and called it the Revelation, which it undoubtedly is. Apparently they thought that this revelation satisfactorily sums up the entire Gospel of God to men and that her appearance completes and crowns all His works throughout both old and new testaments. This is unavoidable of course; it is a demonstration of divine planning — John unfolds the vision of her at the latest point of the book of Revelation, and those who decided the

order of the books placed his prophecy last in the sacred writings. It was a perfectly logical and absolutely correct thing to do, for no other book could more fittingly have been placed at the end of the Bible. It is right in every way and perfectly natural, for it concludes the message of the whole Book; God ended the Bible in the same vein in which He commenced it.

A Virgin Bride

Almost as soon as the book of Genesis opens we read of the creation of the man and the woman and that God planted a garden in which they should dwell in ideal conditions. The book of the Revelation closes with the vision of another entirely new creation of God in which John sees New Jerusalem coming down on to a new earth from God out of heaven; it is the garden city wherein God and man dwell together in perfect righteousness. So right at the beginning and also at the very ending of the Book, God presents the ideal of perfect love which lies forever in His heart. God wants us to understand that He is primarily a lover — The Lover. He is Love and cannot refrain from revealing that love in every way possible to Him. The whole concept is idyllic; it is the ideal of true marriage as it is in God's Spirit, and is a revelation of the sacred bond of the Trinity — they are not only organically one, they are wedded one.

Paul reveals God's great love to be the primary motive for all creation; he declares it to be the fundamental reason why He first chose and later generated us in His Son that we should be formed into the body of Christ. The apostle loved that particular truth; he knew he was raised up to present it to men as a revelation and a demonstration of love. Wonderful as that is, this great love of God is revealed in yet another figure — one of exquisite beauty — Christ and His Church joined as one in marriage union. By direct revelation, in every detail as true as that of the body; the Church which is His body is also His bride and wife. This is an amazing fact, scarcely tenable to the human mind, for although by marriage male and female may become one flesh, they cannot become one body. Beside that, everyone knows it is entirely impossible to marry one's own body, yet undoubtedly this is what the apostles teach: the immensity of the truth is that the body and the bride are one, not one flesh but One Spirit. What is impossible to man is possible to God. Amen.

This prospect is wonderfully appealing and positively true; the Bridegroom / Bride relationship, though, is not such an intimate and indissoluble union on human levels as the union of body and head. God Himself even allowed Moses to include a divorce clause in the laws of conduct he gave to Israel: He knew He had to grant permission to divorce. By the very laws of nature, head and body can only be one unit; they can never be two; they are the outward, recognizable form of one complete person, but bridegroom and bride are two separate persons who have always been known as two distinct entities, and they only become one flesh by marriage. Although they then and thereby become a union, within that union they remain for ever two; they are truly united in one by vow, but they never become one as head and body are one. Their union is not, and never can be, organic — as it were inevitable and involuntary — it is a created union, a covenant arranged by desire and made by promise because of love, and sealed by vow before God. The distinct difference between these comparative unions is very great, but although they differ to this degree, their comparative likeness is powerfully emphasized by Paul when writing to the Corinthians. He is first concerned to show them their organic relationship with Christ, and having succeeded

in that, he proceeds to mention the other less obvious head / body relationship implicit in the true marriage union between man and woman.

Ideally the unitary head / body relationship of each person to Christ should become fully developed in unison within the voluntary bond of marriage between those two persons. The physical head / body unit is exclusively by birth. Being born, each individual's life and form are exclusive to him or her self; this life is neither produced nor developed by union of two different persons by promise and vow, however great their loving endeavour. This being so, in order to achieve union, two people engaging in marriage and wishing to develop a common life together should from that moment regard their wedding as a new birth. At first this may be an altogether new concept of marriage, but strange though it may appear it is the only one fitted to the wonderful truth and purpose of God in joining men and women in the bond of indissoluble wedding. Indeed it is, and can be, no other, for it is the only truth; there were no human birth(s) of fellow human beings until marriage union had taken place. Before the voluntary head / body union could be established the unitary head / body union was manifest in truth. Because of this, when marrying both persons should regard themselves as partners joined together by God to achieve His purpose. This is the proper concept of marriage and each should help the other to a clear understanding.

From the moment of marriage man and woman ought to regard themselves as being dead to their former manner of life and begin to build one new life together, he being the head and she the body. Each other's individual identities and personalities must be recognised, revered and carefully maintained, but all individualistic tendencies must be put to death for they are separatist and divisive; if this is accomplished a new united common life will emerge. Marital love desires what marriage law demands, viz. that each partner sacrifices his or her virginity to the sacred union; this is the immediate, natural, vital and expected result of the wedding. This being fulfilled, a new, inviolable virginity, special to them, is created and at all costs must be preserved, never to be adulterously broken; the marriage must be kept virgin pure. Love is not only the uniting bond, but also the guardian of the mutual trust invested in each other.

An Everlasting Love

The Lord God knew that by His mysterious power He could create us anew in Christ and this He did. Long before He created the world He set His unbreakable will in sheer determination to choose us in Him. He did so because it was His good pleasure to do so, knowing that in the end His action shall be proved to have been absolute wisdom and in time all, whether good or evil, shall confess it to be so. But although acknowledgement is unavoidable, He did none of these things in order to gain praise. He did all for love's sake. Worshipped by the unnumbered hosts of heaven, all three persons of the ever-blessed Trinity dwell forever together in one. They are as one body, a unit, the unique, original ONE over which Father's headship is gladly acknowledged. From his knowledge of this eternal life Paul naturally develops the whole idea of the Church and Christ as one body; it is marvellous in our eyes. Beside this, Paul saw that quite naturally Father, Son and Holy Spirit also live together as a group of lovers. The secret was plain to him, the uniting bond of the union of God is love — perfect love — they love one another. If this were not so they could not have been or be or remain one. Although God's eternal being is guaranteed by

righteousness, the form and unity of the three persons is secured by the voluntary marriage of their hearts, minds and wills in love. It is righteous to love.

We mostly conceive of marriage in terms of two humans, male and female, wedding each other; we do not at first normally think of marriage in God, or that He can be in any way connected with it. But if we broaden our thinking beyond the human species and cease to think of different sexes, we should not have any great difficulty in embracing the truth of marriage in its far wider sense and greater meanings. God reveals some of these when He cried out to Israel, 'return unto me for I am married to thee', and again, 'thy maker is thine husband'. Once, of a particularly decadent generation, He asked the question, 'where is the bill of thy mother's divorcement, and to which of my creditors have I sold thee?' By these and other similar words He declared His marriage to Israel. On His part it was an unbreakable union; He loved them. One of His assurances of love to them has been the ground of hope to thousands of hearts throughout the centuries, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love', and His following words have brought unimagined sweetness to many a fearful, doubting breast, 'therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee'.

This is the God who loves us. He has chosen to include us in the vastness of love that binds those three persons together in unbreakable union, one wonderful, eternal being, incomprehensible to the human mind and adorable above all. Human design, embracing the concept of male and female, with the glorious idea of human marriage, was born in Him. It was He who thought of and created the original bride and bridegroom; His delightful ideas and creations kindle and inspire all hearts but the dead.

God lost no time introducing His designs for the human race, but brought them in right at the beginning of creation. To crown His work, on the sixth day of creation He made man and with him entered into rest, but He had not thereby completed His intentions. Recognising Adam's need for fellowship and love from his own kind, as He with His, the Lord one day put His man to sleep and from him made his woman. Waking from the operation at God's call, the man opened his eyes to see the one his loving God had given him; she was beautiful, as lovely as he had imagined and hoped. He had expected someone beautiful but could not quite have imagined what she would be; when he saw her she was an almost identical reproduction of himself. Of all he had seen in the whole of creation this latest workmanship of God was most like him. Naturally and expectantly he took her to him; she was his, his obvious counterpart.

So it came to pass that Adam was first created by God from the dust of the ground and then given life by the breath of His nostrils on the earth. He was the first human being and he was alone; if he had not fallen to the earth and slept he would have remained alone. There was no human equal or likeness to him anywhere, but when he slept God made Eve from him, and when he awoke and rose she was there by his side. So also was it with Christ and the Church. He was the new creation of God and lived on the earth one lone heavenly man until the day He lay on the earth and slept in death. He did so in order that in resurrection His Church / Bride should be formed from Him.

Pleased with Adam's good pleasure at His handiwork, the Lord planted a garden for the man and his bride in Eden, and there they lived together in a paradise of love and beauty. They were not called bridegroom and bride then; the phrase has been coined

since, but they are the original human pair created by God's hand directly from His heart. We know little about them, but by creating them to live together in paradise God revealed His purposes for mankind that they should represent His ideals for Christ and His Church. Although we are not told so, it is to be assumed that Adam and Eve loved one another. Much we would like to know and may have expected to be told is missing from the account. There is nothing of romance in the record, no word of love or tenderness, no affectionate endearments; we know nothing at all of their conversation or of their habits.. God, it seems, did not think fit to have it recorded. It may reasonably be taken for granted that they loved one another for there was no sin there, but love is no more the absence of hate than righteousness is the absence of sin or peace the absence of war. Adam and Eve typify certain aspects of the ideal relationship of bridegroom and bride, but by no means all. True and lovely though the story is, in their original perfection they are too classically remote from our world, and sorrowfully were all too tragically shattered by the fall. But we are grateful to God for this insight granted us into the original marriage as created by Him.

A Resurrection Bride

The bridegroom and bride we of the new creation look for are two persons mutually attracted to one another, full of warm affection, marrying in bliss and living together in a perfection of marital love, maturing steadily from that day forward throughout life and going on for all eternity. This is the ideal and so satisfying to our hearts, but it is not to be found anywhere in all secular literature, and only in the Bible at the very end when the Lord reveals His bride to His readers. God all the time wanted it like this, and although sin destroyed the original creation of it, He never departed from the ideal. It is evident from His remarks about Israel that He had kept it in His heart, for He wanted nothing less than a husband / wife relationship with them; He said and felt He could never give them up or let them go. He told Jeremiah that when He brought Israel out of Egypt He was a husband to them, and when He spoke to Hosea about the covenant He made with them at Sinai He described it as 'husbandly'.

He could never forget; Israel were holiness unto Him then, He said. At one time, recalling it all with pleasure, He said, 'I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness in a land not sown'. 'Go and cry this in the ears of Jerusalem', He said to His servant. He wanted them to know with what sweetness He recalled those days. How tenderly He remembered them: they lived on in His memory long after Israel had forgotten them. Days and weeks of love crowded His memory still, filling His heart with joy and sustaining Him in His sorrow. Though they had broken their wifely covenant and forgotten the promises made to Him at Sinai, He remained a faithful husband. They meant their vows at the time doubtless, but so soon forgot and broke their word to Him. Not so with Him though; His vows are everlasting and His love is eternal. 'How can I give thee up?' He cried; He was heartbroken. Moses had been a witness of God's love there when He came down to the people at Sinai, and reflecting on all that happened there He said 'yea He loved the people'. He had borne them to Himself to give them His law for righteousness that He and they should be able to live together in the land of promise.

He loved the people dearly in Egypt when He went to espouse them to Himself by mighty signs and wonders; He loved them at Sinai and all the way to the land. He

provided for them so that, once there, they should enjoy His love to the full. Bringing them in to Canaan He gave them of His bounty in such unprecedented ways that Israel became renowned among the nations for her beauty. The nation came into being through love; it was woven into the very fabric of the nation, an undeserved inheritance, a gift from God passed on as through founding fathers. Through them God's love was worked into the nation from the very beginning; they were a people specially chosen of God and brought into being to be the medium through which He could display that love. Firstly through Abraham and Isaac He unmistakably showed the love of Father and Son to perfection, and then with Isaac with Rebekah, and later Jacob and Rachel He displayed two complementary aspects of Jesus' love for the Church. Both these have to do with a Bridegroom and Bride and bring out most beautifully the love story of the Son of God and His Church. The accounts of the marriages of Abraham's son and grandson are included in scripture to display two different aspects of the marriage of Jesus.

In each case this is most clearly seen in the way the bride of each man was found: in the first instance the father sends his servant to his own country to choose a bride from his own people. In the second instance the bridegroom went Himself to win his bride. When Eliezer was sent by Abraham to Chaldea he was put on oath that: (1) under no circumstances must he take a bride for Isaac from among the Canaanites, and (2) when he found her he must not take Isaac to Chaldea to marry her, she must be brought to him. The father insisted that the bride-to-be must be willing to forsake all and be brought out of her own land and be married to Isaac in the land of promise. The story of the servant's journey and his return with the bride-to-be is familiar to Bible lovers and is full of the remarkable providences of God and of answers to prayer. These were so miraculous that with such powerful indications of God's will Rebekah was fully persuaded and responded to the father's invitation without demur; accepting his conditions she immediately left everyone and everything for Isaac and returned with Eliezer to the promised land to meet Isaac. He knew neither the day nor the hour he would see his bride and was resting content in his father's choice for his future when he went out one evening to meditate in the fields under the eye of 'Him that liveth and seeth me'. Imagine his surprise when, lifting up his eyes that day he sees her coming and with what anticipation goes to meet her. Learning from Eliezer of her ready response and willingness to come without hesitation, he takes her at once to himself. She was his father's provision for him; he had been waiting for this moment; he saw her and loved her, she was beautiful. They married.

Until he wrote this story Moses had been very sparing with his use of the word love. It only appears once before when God used it to Abraham one night years previously. On that occasion He commanded the father to offer up his son to Him on an undisclosed mountain in Moriah, 'Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac whom thou lovest'. God introduced love into the story of man at the point of the sacrifice which best displays His own great love. Until this, power, creation, light, judgement, war, seem to dominate the book, but now love. The love story He wished to emphasise above all is being introduced. In a figure the only begotten son of the father, his well-beloved, was offered up in a sacrifice of greater love to God the heavenly Father and was given back to him from the dead, that later he might be married in love to Rebekah the bride who was herself chosen from his native land and given to him by his father. In the picture too we see that Isaac, the beloved son himself, like his father, became a great lover, so that when Rebekah came to him she came home to love.

Jacob, the son of Isaac and Rebekah, became a great lover too. As Isaac his father he too was forbidden to marry a local woman, so following family tradition, back to the original stock of Abraham he went seeking a wife. In this he differed from Isaac, for, unlike his mother, Jacob's bride was not brought to him, he had to go to her. The story of his journey to Syria, the night he spent en route at Bethel with his head on a stone for a pillow (was it one of the stones of Abraham's original altar there?) and the vision of the ladder reaching to heaven, is known to us all. His determination to find a bride over-rode all other considerations; personal discomfort and bodily hardship he despised and drove himself on to his desired end; Jacob's amazing love for Rachel is without rival among men. Twenty-one long years he laboured for her. So grateful was he to have her that times and labours were as nought. In his eyes nothing and no-one could be compared with her; she was his exceeding great reward; what was life without Rachel? He wanted no wages, sought no reward; she could not be valued; he wanted her only as a gift because she was beyond price. He bought her with himself, nor complained at the cost; he loved her, she was so beautiful and well-favoured he had heart and eyes for no-one else. When at last he took her to himself did she know how blessed she was to have such a husband?

Between them these two men and their brides set forth two aspects of Christ and the Church His bride. Isaac, the only begotten of Abraham by Sarah, reveals Christ the only begotten of God the Father by the Spirit, crucified, risen, ascended and glorified, waiting for His bride, On the other hand, complementarily, Jacob shows the humble Jesus labouring for His bride in the far country, laying down His life for her. In the first instance the bride was chosen by the father and sought by the servant-spirit, by whom she is brought forth to the son. In the second the bride was chosen by the son himself, who went and laboured for her in selfless devotion of unspeakable love.

The Heavenly Bridegroom

At first glance the order of these two marriages seems to be the reverse of the true order in which it happened in Christ, but this is not really so. The first lays emphasis on the eventual outworking of the plan decided upon in a past eternity by the Father and the Son and this is the most important aspect of it. Although not precise in detail, Isaac's life foreshadowed the virgin birth and death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, His ascension to His Father and the sending forth of the Holy Spirit to bring His bridal Church home to Him. More, it links the past with what John in vision on Patmos saw of the future — New Jerusalem appeared to him descending from God out of heaven, for fair Rebekah was Abraham's choicest gift to his son. All this was planned before creation — the choice was made then, the bride was known then, the Lamb was slain then, and it was also decided then to send forth the Holy Spirit to seek her.

It is interesting to note that Rebekah, the bride-to-be is first referred to by name in the chapter which records the 'death and resurrection' of the bridegroom-to-be She was the daughter of Bethuel, the eighth son and last child of Nahor; that is significant, for in Bible numerology eight represents resurrection and newness of life. Rebekah then was the child of resurrection, begotten by the 'dweller in God' — for that is the meaning of her father's name. She was born to be the bride of the lamb, the man who had lain utterly yielded to God on his father's altar. He was the only begotten son of his father by the special mother, the first and last and all he had begotten of her; it seems also that Rebekah was the only daughter of her father, that there was not another like her either. Although not the only begotten child, she was the only

begotten daughter of her father, first and last and all he had. How fitting then that these two 'only begotten children' of their respective yet related fathers should be destined to become bridegroom and bride.

In the second instance, as we have already seen, it is the son himself who does the seeking and finding. Again this is absolutely right in relationship to the revealed truth of the Man Christ Jesus — it is also in order. Having settled all before the foundation of the world, time came when Jesus had to set out to seek His bride. Time and again in one form or another He expressed the fact that He had come seeking sinners, sheep, children, men and women, pearls, treasure, a bride. In many ways Jacob was a suitable person through whom to reveal yet more than could be shown by his father. Indeed in some things he was the only man who could be so used. Naturally he was the second born of a twin pair of boys, sharing one birth with Esau, and he was destined to represent the spiritual man while Esau became the man of the flesh. Jacob was the one who gained both the birthright and the blessing because God loved him.

The methods by which Jacob gained these are reprehensible, but they are not our concern here; they reveal Jacob the man, as unfit as any of us would be to typify the Lord. Jacob was chosen by God, not because he was better than Esau but because he would later in life become the type of the heavenly bridegroom. The important thing is that he received the father's treasures and blessings which Esau despised. In order to portray the Lord he had to be in possession of both, yet although he must have them in order to fulfil this part of the type, he must also be the second born. Isaac fulfilled the role of the only begotten and the firstborn. Jacob's part was to carry the truth further and show Jesus as the second man and the firstborn from the dead. At the resurrection His Father said to Him 'Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee'; further to this, Paul speaks of Him as 'the first-begotten from the dead'. Jacob's part was to display this great truth.

Since then, with birthright incomprehensible to men and blessing immeasurable from His Father He comes as a bridegroom to seek His bride. Directed to do so by His Father He comes personally to seek the bride He desires and the Father has chosen, wanting a people of love who will leave all to marry Him. He had hardly begun His ministry among men following His first coming when John Baptist said he could hear the bridegroom's voice and in relationship to that felt compelled to refer to himself in a most unusual way — 'the friend of the bridegroom'. 'This my joy therefore is fulfilled', he said — the herald was right on course and fulfilling his mission, 'He must increase, I must decrease'. The heavenly romance had now been announced as planned and he knew he must get out of the way; the Bridegroom had come and He must fill every vision; love for Him must fill every heart. Someone said to John, 'all men come to Him', perhaps expecting John to react to it with jealousy, but if they did they did not know John. John immediately thought he could recognise the nucleus of the bride. 'All come to Him? That's it. That's what it's all about, He is the heavenly Lover, that's the attraction!'

John knew his mission was fulfilled. He had formerly announced Him as 'the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world', the heavenly Isaac, God's human Lamb. Within a few hours John's declaration was confirmed by the voice of God Himself, 'this is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased', and as the words echoed from the waters and died away in the distance, John's heart was assured within him. This indeed was the only begotten Son of God. On both counts Jesus fully met the

requirements for the fulfilment of the Son / Lamb type revealed on Moriah. One more announcement yet remained to be made, and with blessed anticipation the herald awaited the opportunity to make it. This came one day at Aenon near to Salim where he was baptising: without hesitation he declared to his informants, 'He that hath the bride is the bridegroom'. So saying the herald indicated his own departure; the Son of the Father had emerged into full view, He was the heavenly Jacob seeking His bride. John had reached his goal.

Aenon was just the right spot for that departure to take place; the occasion could not have been better staged — Aenon means fountains and Salim means completeness. What a wonderful place for John to finish his course. Not so very far away in Judea Jesus was baptising in this same Jordan and all men were going to Him; that to John was completeness. Though he did not recognize it, like some Eleazer he had, as it were, brought men to his Lord, Isaac, who like Jacob had come seeking a bride. The baptist could not finish his ministry to Jesus and God with an announcement about Calvary, and by his baptism signify a death, burial and resurrection and leave it there. He had also to declare Jesus to be the bridegroom who baptises people with the Holy Ghost and fire. Fire is warm, devouring, purging, transforming — it would fuse men to Him in a way water could not; fire is the element of sacrifice, the all-consuming flame of love.

Everybody baptised with fire by Jesus would belong to Him completely in a way they had never belonged to John by baptism in water. They had belonged to John by discipleship only, but as he well knew, beyond discipleship (whether to himself or to Jesus) lay a new and better relationship — marriage. John saw it all so clearly, discipleship by water, fusion by fire; by discipleship attachment, by marriage union by fusion. What a world of difference; yet the one ought properly to lead to the other; 'He must increase, I must decrease 'He that cometh from above is above all'. He was destined to become greater in people's eyes than John; He was to be preferred before him. He was before him; He was above him in every way and to every degree, not the least in that He had the bride. The marriage relationship by promise and vow and affection and love must take precedence over every other relationship, whether it be contracted between man and woman or man and God. According to God, although all other relationships may be broken, this one must be kept inviolate.

A Chaste Virgin

The bride is a most remarkable and privileged body of people indeed. She is a far more privileged person than either Rebekah or Rachel and has a much more wonderful role to fill. Rebekah, Isaac's wife, was at first barren like his mother had been, but when he entreated the Lord for her she conceived twins who struggled within her for priority of birth, fulness of blessing and supremacy. Upon enquiry she was told by the Lord 'two nations are in thy womb two manner of people'. How remarkably she prefigures the Church in this, for that is exactly what happened in the early days. Within her Jew and gentile struggled for priority and for the birthright, with the blessings this brought. The saying 'to the Jew first and also to the Greek' was often heard in the early days of the Church, hence the constant dialogue and constant contention about circumcision between men like Paul and zealous patriotic Judaisers.

It was being taught by the Jews that, except the Church embraced circumcision, the blessings of Abraham could not come upon gentiles. This was so obviously wrong

that ultimately the Church, with Paul in the vanguard, rejected it; God disapproved of it completely. Unlike Rebekah, the Church, though it includes both Jew and gentile, brings forth neither. The Church is not of the flesh, it is entirely spiritual; it is not composed of Jew or gentile, bond or free, male or female. The Church is an entirely new creation. She embraces all into one new undivided whole; every person in the bride company is compulsorily a new person belonging to a new nation; the bride has to forsake all.

Rachel, Jacob's wife, strangely enough like her mother and paternal grandmother, was also barren. The discovery was very grievous to her, a great swelling sorrow she could not contain, and one day in her bitterness she cried out to Jacob, 'give me children or I die', but he couldn't — he wasn't God — and she didn't die. Rachel was purposely restrained by God from bearing until, as a result of direct intervention by God, she should bring forth Joseph and Benjamin, the two special sons of Jacob. In achieving this she departed this life, calling her last-born Ben-oni, 'son of my sorrow', but Jacob renamed him Benjamin, 'son of the right hand'. Rebekah sets forth the bride as the Church in which Jew and gentile are one. Rachel with her motherly cry sets her forth as the Church of the 'whosoever' and the Lord adding to the Church daily such as were being saved. Bridegroom Isaac entreated God for Rebekah and lo two nations are involved and included in one birth; bride Rachel entreats Jacob and God, and lo the sons of God are born.

So between them these two bridegrooms and brides set forth two different aspects of Christ and the Church in bridegroom and bride in present relationship. Through them also the note of love is introduced into scripture, for not until their marriages do we read of the love element in marriage. As commented earlier, it may be presumed that Adam loved Eve, and that all the other contracted marriages of those days were love matches, especially Abram's and Sarai's, but we are not directly told so. It is, however, plainly stated that the father (Abraham) loved the son, and that the son loved the bride, and that is most significant and suggestive.

Writing to the Corinthians of things concerning the body of Christ, Paul was inspired to make the greatest declaration about love in the Bible. The sublime words lead us to believe that the body of Christ is a body of love — it ought to have been an obvious conclusion anyway. A loveless church is nothing, has nothing and can do nothing; it certainly does not belong to the true Church of Jesus Christ. Writing to them again he strikes the note of love in a different way, 'I have espoused you to one husband', he says. His desire was to present the church 'as a chaste virgin to Christ'. His first epistle had been a chastening rod to them; he had applied it because they needed correction. But when he visited them again he did not wish to apply the rod to anybody — that was not his attitude — he wanted to go entirely in love and in the spirit of meekness.

When he first visited them he had certainly been in that frame, and they should think of him as a wise master-builder laying for them the foundation of eternal life. He was a father who begat children, a steward of mysteries, a minister by whom they believed, a planter of churches. Beside all that, he was also a special servant sent to them from God (as though he also was some Eliezer sent by the father), come specially about the business of His Son's matrimony: he was looking for a virgin, a spiritual virgin for Him. There were none in Corinth but that made no difference. He had not found one anywhere; he did not expect to find one. The question was, did they want to belong to Him who was crucified and raised from the dead for them? If so, the

blood his Lord had shed would cleanse them, the grace of God would forgive them, and in Jesus' name they could be washed, sanctified, justified, made new creatures. More, they could be baptized in Holy Spirit, made to drink into one Spirit and receive another spirit in process; in short they could all be made absolutely new and virgin unto Jesus.

This is the loveliest and simplest thing about Christ. He is virgin toward us; He had never married or wants to marry another; He is absolutely pure unto us, and has remained so from all eternity. While on earth He kept Himself as virgin as He was in heaven; spirit, soul and body He was true and faithful unto His Father whom He loved for the sake of those who were His as yet uncalled bride. She did not know that; she was ignorant of Him and of her own identity, neither did she know she should have a virgin husband, a bridegroom of purity and eternal love from heaven. Paul's great commission to apostleship was very strong and clear in him, though — he knew that Jesus was not only the heavenly Isaac and Jacob, he knew that He was the heavenly Adam also. His business was to call to men and women and invite them to become the second Eve. His emphasis was always on the simplicity of the love-union between Jesus and His chosen bride. He had been caught up to heaven to see and hear wonderful things, and although he could not speak them out fully, he does make clear that the spirit we are to receive is the Spirit of love. He sought without ceasing to espouse men and women to Christ in virgin condition of purest righteousness and perfect love. He also knew the serpent was at work still, though, and was as active to beguile Eve in Corinth as in Eden, and he bade them keep true and faithful; stay in love, he said, deeply in love with Jesus.

Whatever else we talk of and aspire to, we must never forget that the greatest of all is love; there is nothing in heaven or earth greater than this, nothing at all. But was it not failure to do this that brought about the downfall of Adam and the fall of man? Did not Eve move away from her loving devotion to Adam and seek knowledge of banned subjects instead? Love cannot exist of itself, it must be given, love must have an object, it must move toward someone with The purpose of inducing reciprocal love in that person. The object of our loving devotion is Christ Jesus, the heavenly Adam; we must seek nothing and no-one other than Him and His love.

The Spirit of Love

Wherever he went Paul pressed Christ's suit on everyone; his letter to the Romans is a prime example of this. He had always wanted to go to Rome to preach the gospel, and being prevented for so long he wrote a letter full of precious doctrine and practical instruction to the saints there. Among the many things he said to them he included an outstanding exhortation to marriage with Christ: 'ye should be married to Him who is risen from the dead'. He had previously outlined the glorious gospel of justification by faith, making clear that it is accomplished by baptism into Christ's death — we must be buried with Him and planted together with Him in His death, that we may be also of His resurrection life. To the apostle's mind the next logical step to this is marriage to the one who did all this for us. God wants us freed from sin completely, utterly dead to it, that each one of us personally may bring forth fruit unto holiness; this alone is proof of God's gift of eternal life to us. It is by love originally, by gift initially, by righteousness fundamentally, by fruit continuously and through Jesus Christ wholly. He is the one man alone through whom everlasting life could be given to us.

It is no wonder then that we should be expected to love Him and choose Him for our husband. Paul cannot see why anyone could do any other than wish to unite with Him for ever in matrimony. But no-one can love Christ upon demand, no-one marries just because it is expected of him or her to do so. Love, to be love, must be voluntary and spontaneous, it is something a person discovers within, a dawning consciousness of attraction to someone, an inner awareness of kindling desire for a person, a wish to bestow affection upon and devote all to him or her and to be with that one for ever; unless it is freely bestowed with all the powers of the being it is not love. If under some sense of obligation we attempted to love Him with all the love of which we are capable, and succeeded in doing so, it would be quite inadequate and not the love He wants.

Human love in its highest forms is very wonderful and has been commended by writers and poets throughout time, but even though it rise from the best of motives and be bestowed for the best of reasons, human love of itself is not capable of all God demands and is an insufficient basis for marriage with Christ. The eternal union between God and man, planned and proposed by God, is only possible upon the basis of divine love, and to make it all possible God Himself had to enter into humanity. The gospel story proclaims that He accomplished this by coming to earth as a bridegroom to contract marriage with human beings in perfect love, but that is only part of the story. The gospel also proclaims that, in order to consummate His desires, God also entered humanity so that He could produce a suitable bride for His Son; He could only accept a people who were a perfect match for Him.

This is the specific reason God gives the Holy Spirit to men. It is His privilege to prepare the Bride of Christ for her Lord by shedding abroad God's love in hearts. Everyone who receives this priceless gift lives rejoicing in hope, for he or she can then love the Lord with all the heart with a love worthy of Him. Love of the same quality as His own, expressed to Him by humanity, is what God requires; less or other than this is not acceptable to Him. This is why Jesus so much wanted us all to receive and be filled with the Holy Spirit. He pointedly prayed for this on His way to the cross. Out of all the dozens of things He might have prayed for, He prayed this: 'Father ... Thou lovest Me before the foundation of the world', and requested 'that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in them'. Jesus wants to abide for ever in eternal love in human hearts; all who want to belong to Jesus for ever must receive the Holy Ghost for this purpose.

Jesus has always dwelt in love, and when in grace He visits and ministers to people who have no love for Him, He does so in order that ultimately perfect love may be shed abroad in their hearts, for He can only stay with those who love Him. This is why, whenever possible, He stayed in the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus in Bethany; they loved Him and He loved them. The last few nights He spent on earth preceding the last supper He spent with the twelve and His three dear friends in their home. During those days He travelled to and from Jerusalem, the temple city, teaching, making His last declarations to men — what did they all talk about in that Bethany home of love at night?

The Temple City

Many years later the Lord revealed the marriage He visualised and the events leading up to it to the apostle John in a series of visions on the Isle of Patmos. John wrote a

book there as he was commanded, and of all the things revealed in it the most wonderful is surely this — the Bride, the Lamb's wife, is a city. To the uninitiated this must be the most surprising thing of all, and Nicodemus' question may not seem at all out of place in this context: 'how can these things be?' How can a city be a bride? A city is so impersonal, it cannot under any circumstances be confused with a bride — it is not a woman. It is a place of business, of commerce, of industry, the seat of government or majesty, or of the arts and sciences, but not a bride surely? It is a place of dwelling, full of buildings, palaces, houses, offices, factories, streets, parks, prisons: a place where people live and work. It has no life or personality of its own; if people were removed from it, it would be an empty shell. How then can it be called a bride? It seems a misnomer; yet John is emphatic; moreover by his own confession he is not passing on his own ideas but recording the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him.

It is not only a revelation to us, it was also a revelation to John, and more surprisingly, to Jesus who gave it to him. We may only surmise that it was a revelation also to the angel whose business it was to impart it to the apostle. Though deep in tribulation, John was in the Spirit and recorded it for us all, as being the scribe of God in the priestly kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ.

At the commencement, by a remarkable combination of symbols related to the universe and the temple, he reveals the high priest, King Melchizedek Himself, standing in the midst of the seven golden lampstands. In vain we look for a temple; there is no temple in view here, or city or heaven or earth either, just Jesus all in all; He appears and fills the vision and from that moment is central to all which follows. He is the new universe; this present one and all things therein has faded away and we are in the kingdom of God, the sphere of the new creation of God. Later John goes on to unfold events which were at that time still future, many of them yet to take place in this present material universe before it is finally removed to make way for the new universe.

God's revealed programme for this age is not fully completed, but before dealing with all that, He introduces an entirely different creation in which Jesus Christ is the first and the last. He appears like unto the Son of man that liveth and was dead; 'behold I am alive for evermore', He says, 'Amen, and have the keys of hell and death'; He is speaking from the real world beyond death and the grave. To receive the revelation the apostle himself had not only to be in the Spirit but become as one dead and alive again also. It was the Lord's day and under His power he passed that crisis into the all-embracing kingdom of God and lived and saw into the spiritual world of the Church.

While giving this revelation of Jesus, John does not introduce body truth; the theme so beloved by Paul is not even being considered; John's concern is with the bride only. In keeping with this, it is noticeable that in his vision of Christ the body is obviously there but it is unseen, it is completely covered. The glorious High Priest's garment reaches from shoulders to feet, hiding His body from John's eyes and ours; his business is to present for our benefit an entirely different view of the Church. The churches are a group of lampstands shining in a dark world to light it through the succession of tragic events shortly to break upon it. According to the Lord's interpretation the lampstands are placed here and there in the world; they are certainly not within the fabric of any temple or tabernacle but right out in the darkness. Borrowing truth suggested by a statement John made when he at last saw the city — 'I

saw no temple' — it is almost certain that the apostle would have been surprised at the discovery that candlesticks should stand out in the open.

The vision probably either anticipated the historic destruction of the temple at Jerusalem or was given as a sequel to it — and now John hears that the churches are separated by great distances geographically and yet sees that the lampstands are grouped together around the Lord as one ensemble and therefore give one light. If they had been shown to him in their own location he would have seen seven patches of light, but in this concentrated setting he sees that their function is to give one perfect light only. Christ, the Light of the world, gives them light that they may show the way into the holiest of all, where Christ the Lord God of the universe stands revealed. Right at the beginning of the revelation the seer of Patmos has passed far beyond any national concept of the Church; at Christ's bidding he has become His amanuensis of greater things. His love is vaster than the universe and His dealings with mankind are universal.

Church election is based on redemption through God's love by blood poured out beyond degree, and the universe is the scene of operation. The theme of John's revelation is not entirely new; he has been brought into the same visionary understanding of God's workings as the prophets David, Isaiah and Ezekiel. King David was the man raised up of God to receive the plans and to prepare the materials with which his son should build the temple, but long before that happened David had a greater revelation from God. By the Spirit the royal prophet saw the whole heavens and the starry firmament as a tabernacle created by God's hands for the sun. To him every day was a poem of love: the sun was as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber rejoicing as a strong man to run a race, traversing the heavens on a fixed circuit, warming everything with his presence, and all nature was as a bride waking at dawn to respond to His love.

Isaiah, the great prophet of redemption, speaking to a people of limited vision, declared forthrightly 'thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; where is the house that ye build unto me and where is the place of my rest?' Israel could only see that earthly temple built by Solomon. They thought the earth and a house built here by their hands and they themselves specially were the centre of the universe; they were utterly deceived. Their prophet was saying, 'do you really know how great your God is? Have you realized who it is you are dealing with?' It is time we all wakened up to His greatness and majesty. Although Israel's scriptures recorded Solomon's own almost incredulous awe when he built the holy and beautiful house, they had either completely forgotten or willfully ignored it; they had lost touch with reality.

The temple was a singularly beautiful building, erected specially for God, but Solomon who is credited with building it was almost overcome at the incongruity of it all, 'will God indeed dwell on the earth?' he said, 'behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house that I have builded'. Solomon was the great king of peace, wealthier and wiser than all men; he was also privileged above all others to have had a father like David; even more, he had been chosen to build the temple. In common with all his people Solomon had heard and read his father's psalms, but it is doubtful whether Israel grasped their meaning, even if he himself did so fully. Both these great kings had a proper grasp of the incomprehensible greatness of God.

Ezekiel was raised up years later to revive captive Israel with a fresh vision of the throne and the temple city. Caught up and carried away in the Spirit, he saw its position and frame and where and how at last it should be built. As he wrote, throne, city and house seemed to merge into one; he did not see it as the bride though, all was incomplete without John's revelation. The Jerusalem of Old Testament fame was a wonderful city: David spoke of it rapturously as the city of the great king, which it was. But whether prophet or seer wrote of it, it was always earthly, though with spiritual implications and overtones. The New Jerusalem revealed to John of the New Testament is the city of God; it is eternal, heavenly and spiritual, with earthly connotations; from its basic patterns God drew up and adapted plans for His former residence on earth. Like the Lord who lives there, New Jerusalem is the original city of God, the first and the last which finally comes down from God out of heaven on to a new earth. It is the capital city of the universal kingdom of God. John was caught up to heaven to see its splendour of love and glory; with patience we await its coming. Meanwhile we are to see the revelation through the eyes of the Lord and learn the truth of it all from the Spirit who gave it through John.

Our Great High Priest

The first appearance of the Lord to John is as the King and High Priest of the new order, pure and holy. Fire and flame seem to be His substance. He stands at the centre of the churches of light. He is bent on prosecuting God's plan for the ultimate reconstruction of the universe: whether past, present or future, all things must be reconciled and ordered to that. No matter whether they be good or evil, material or spiritual, of God or of satan, all things must be brought into conformity with the overall plan; what will not conform must be eliminated. Characteristically enough He commences with the present manifestation of the new creation, the churches on earth: He must first have the churches in order, otherwise He will remove the lampstands; in other words He will spue the apostate churches out of His mouth.

Being High Priest He has come to attend to the light; He is very concerned about that — it must be absolutely of the right quality. According to the practice set by God for Aaron, His duty is to attend to each lampstand and see that all seven lamps are properly trimmed, fully supplied with oil and set in proper position for continual light-bearing during His absence. The priests under His charge must be able to see to conduct their business in the sanctuary. Each church of the new creation is as a lampstand intended by God to bear light to men and women of this creation, and every one of them is of identical shape, size and composition. Each of them holds seven lamps, all exactly the same, that without exception they may shed an unvarying sevenfold unity of perfectly balanced light. Every church must be a reservoir of the Holy Spirit which is poured into it by the High Priest, for the light is derived only from Him. The Lord makes this abundantly clear, for without fail in each message to the churches He draws attention to the Spirit, His presence, His voice, His word, for these are absolutely essential to them all. Churches can no more exist apart from Him than they can without Jesus; so very forcefully the Lord constantly draws attention to Him.

There is no escaping His intention that between them the Son of Man and the Holy Spirit purpose to keep the light of the sevenfold doctrine shining clearly throughout the entire age. There is 'one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above

all and through all and in you all', and only one. This is the light that should be given out from all the churches and not any other; the seven lamps give one light on one lampstand and it is Christ's intention to keep it so. He insists that purity and unity of doctrine is as essential in days of darkness as are pure lives, therefore He comes to each church to order the lamps; He overlooks none — each one is necessary to the clear testimony and must bear its own particular light.

Doctrine is a very important and decisive matter for the churches, but though it is a decisive factor, it must not become or be thought of as a divisive factor in the Church; on the contrary it should be a unifying and binding force among the members. Doctrine proceeds from the mouth; it is the word of God. John emphasizes the fact that it is a two-edged sword. He commences the revelation with the information that the Lord who walks in the midst of the churches does so with the sword proceeding from His mouth and it is unsheathed. This sword is an instrument of many uses: in this connection it may be thought of as the sharp, cutting implement with which He lovingly trims the wick, but however good that may be, no-one can disguise the fact that it also a weapon of war. The Lord does not hold the rod of chastening; it is the sword of justice and of warfare. He knows that in the end it is impossible to preserve unity in the Church on experience alone.

In common with the Lord, every honest person of true spiritual experience knows that on the vital matters mentioned above, common belief about fundamental truth is as essential to fellowship as is common experience. It is utterly impossible for people to continue together in the worship and service of Christ unless they discuss the truths they believe. It is the consensus of scriptural teaching that two cannot walk together except they be agreed. Jesus Himself knew and taught that; although He loved unity and taught it to His apostles, He often found it necessary to divide the people on the point of doctrine and belief. These were they who had followed Him and had enjoyed common experience under His blessed ministry, yet they were suddenly confronted with as dogmatic a statement from Christ as can possibly be imagined: 'except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood ye have no life in you' He said. It would be hard to think of a more controversial issue than this; throughout the centuries it has probably involved and embroiled more souls in doctrinal conflict and schismatic division than any other, but Christ did not therefore suppress it. The common experience of eating the miraculous meal was no excuse for suppression of truth.

Because He deliberately raised the point and forced the issue the Lord lost many followers that day. He even forced His chosen apostles to face it — they could leave Him if they wished. The light must shine clearly, the truth that unites also divides — to be saved people must come to the light. Jesus did not keep His tongue quiet for the sake of unity. His was not a policy of peace and unity at all costs. Sacrifice of truth, hiding of facts and avoidance of controversial issues is no ground for fellowship; agreement may be found with some on those terms but not fellowship — fellowship can only be known in the light. God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all, and true fellowship between believers is only possible in the same light in which the Father and the Son have fellowship. The only possible answer to the question 'can two walk together except they be agreed?' is 'no'.

Further to that, Paul gives the uncompromising command 'be ye all of one mind' and further says 'all speak the same thing'. With Christ, and every other sensible person, he knew that in the last analysis experience and doctrine issue and flow from the same

source — they are nothing other than different forms of truth and life, applications of the same thing to the whole man. All churches must agree and every member of each church must acknowledge that doctrine is very important indeed. More than that, we must all agree about basic doctrine, especially about these seven simple statements of eternal truth written so plainly in scripture. The scripture is equally plain that no-one's soul is saved merely by believing anything other than true doctrine. Should persons do so their spoken witness will be faulty and their light defective to that degree.

The importance of this is all the more clear when it is considered that New Jerusalem is said to be the city of light and glory, and that the lamp thereof is the Lamb. In its relationship, importance and function in the new universe soon to be created, New Jerusalem is to be compared with a lampstand. She is the city of light because she holds the Lamp, the great shining Light-giver, Jesus the Lamb. In reality He is being held by God central to all — or if we may adapt John's words — He is 'the only begotten Son (who is) in the bosom of the Father'. Every lampstand on earth is an adaptation of this marvellous truth. That each of them bears seven lamps is only another instance of the fact that God always adapts eternal truth to present need. The one lamp of New Jerusalem becomes seven lamps on one lampstand for a church. Jesus the eternal light is central to all — one light shining by reason of seven lamps.

The rainbow is a well-known example of this very thing. It is common knowledge that the seven colours of the rainbow are nothing other than white light prismatically split up into the seven colours from which it is composed. All seven are needed; they cannot be changed nor can one be left out or white would no longer be white. Similarly the one great white Light of the new covenant, analysed intelligibly to the mind of every spiritual man, is the sevenfold doctrinal statement of truth Paul so faithfully recorded in the Ephesian epistle. Put together with understanding in the heart these seven are Jesus; they present Jesus to us in a doctrinal form. There is nothing outstandingly remarkable in this discovery; the fruit of the Spirit and the whole armour of God, in their particular fields, also accomplish the same.

This Lord Jesus, who is both the fruit of the Spirit and the whole armour of God, is also the doctrine of the Church. He stands central to the lampstands, the common light of the churches grouped around Him; He must be seen to be their light, they must be seen to be the light-bearers — it is an amazing combination. The duty of the high priest of old was to order the lamps from morning to evening. As he did so, the lamps shed their light upon him; it was unavoidable. They also gave light over against themselves — all the marvellous details of the lampstand were revealed by the golden glow as well as the raiment and features of the high priest. This was a daily function, it was an hourly function too — from morning to evening — he had to attend to it constantly and only he could do it. So it is with our blessed High Priest — He supplies the oil for the light, pouring it into the lampstand; the oil is through Him and from Him and when consumed into Light it is Him.

The seven churches in combination must give forth one light and the seven lamps in every church must give one light — it is impossible for it to be otherwise. Light is oil consumed in flame; the flame lives off and is fed by the oil; it is fed in only for that purpose. The risen Lord says, 'I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore', He is the One who must be seen. This is precisely what He meant when He said, 'ye shall be witnesses unto Me'. Therefore He pours the Spirit into the churches as He did into men to form the Church in the beginning and trims the natural

life of every member and orders the lamps on the lampstand. He handles each lamp with care, making sure each one is in its correct order on the lampstand and properly set to receive and hold the flow and fulness of the oil. Each one receives His personal attention and He is very particular, for each has its own distinct ministry among the seven and only when each is in its right place can the whole seven give one perfect light as He requires it.

The Lord intends that in its function in this world each church should be a reproduction of New Jerusalem, an adaptation of the heavenly light to the darkness of this age, an outpost of the 'mother' church John saw in the heavenlies. It was Paul who said 'Jerusalem which is above is the mother of us all'; he did so when in course of correcting the doctrine and hopefully the behaviour of the churches of Galatia. Their light had not been true, they were showing wrong things to the people. Wrong doctrine leads to wrong beliefs and wrong practices and wrong churches; the churches were being harmful to the Galatians: what a tragedy. Precisely stated, wrong doctrine inevitably becomes a perverted gospel in the end; it is a most serious matter. There are those who think it does not matter what doctrine is being taught as long as the Spirit is present and people love one another. Some say it does not matter much what you believe and that doctrine is unimportant, while yet others refuse to have any teaching at all if the Holy Spirit is in evidence in a manner acceptable to them and everybody is happy. Doctrinal preaching is contentious and divisive, they say, and will have none of it.

Presumably when the high priest went into the tabernacle and temple of old to order the lamps there was enough oil in the lampstand to keep the lamps, but that was only the residue of yesterday's fulness. He did not regard that as being sufficient though; he was not instructed by God to leave well alone: in any case he was not allowed to; it must be filled again. It was his routine duty to visit and inspect the lampstand at least twice every day to handle each individual lamp, correct it if necessary, check that the oil was flowing and set it properly to burn efficiently and constantly. However well it burned and shone, still he tended it again to ensure that each lamp was being constantly filled. There must be neither over-emphasis nor under-emphasis given to any of the seven; each was kept in perfect order or it would impair the perfection of the whole. The Lord by this is ensuring that there must certainly be no neglect of any aspect of the whole doctrine.

No-one else was allowed to handle the lamps but the high priest; God ordained that only he could attend to the light. He had sons but they were not permitted to minister to the sacred light-bearer or promote its light. In whatever covenant they serve, the priests are not allowed to trim, set or supply either the lamps or the oil or the light and they were certainly not permitted to alter them. What anyone thinks about the importance or the unimportance of doctrine is quite irrelevant. It has been set in scripture by Paul our Bezaleel, and men's opinions about it do not count. If our teachers are misguided they are all the worse for being sincere. As long as they are not allowed to touch the lampstand and the lamps it does not matter though, we still have God's word. 'Let there be light' God says, but He did not say 'anyhow'; it may only be by His word and ministry; the light is both ordered and orderly because it is supplied and regulated and kept constant by Him.

Each church must regard itself as a lamp shining in a dark place; in it is a sure word of prophecy, which did not come by the will of man. A holy man of God wrote it under

dictation from the Lord; it is an expression of God's will. That is why the letters from the High Priest were addressed to the angel of each respective church and through him to the congregation. He must be very watchful and they must be very careful not to try and alter the light, they must not attempt to interfere with it at all. On the contrary they must together believe — and teach it. 'The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'; the living Christ was speaking on Patmos; He wants the universal truth to shine forth as He inspired it, not as men may choose to believe and preach it. He is the truth and what He says and the way He says it (that is to say both the form and order of expression) are the only proper form and order of truth.

Precisely because Jesus was born and lived and died and rose a man, we know that man has always been in the present form and his parts have always been the same in number, order and shape since creation. Because Jesus came in that form we know Darwin's evolution theory and more recent modifications of it to be wrong. In the same way we must let Jesus' order of truth, as Paul reveals it to the Ephesians, stand unaltered; in form, number and order, it is truth. It cannot be that the order in which the Lord spoke to the churches was chosen at random. Like the number of lamps on the lampstand, there were seven churches and the Lord spoke to them all in turn. They are all clustered together in the book like a constellation of heavenly light, so that each of the churches should see both the light each gave and the light they gave together. They also could see the state of the churches as it then was and how they appeared in the Lord's eyes. The general need for attention was obvious; each should have been bearing exactly the same kind and amount of light without variance.

Take Heed unto the Doctrine

It is sometimes difficult for a church to assess its own effect on its neighbourhood, so the Lord steps in to reveal its efficiency or deficiency in His eyes. This is most needful, for the cumulative effect of the Church in the world is incalculable. Not only does one church affect a district, the combined churches of a country together affect that whole land, and that country affects the world. That is inevitable. The Lord said we are to go into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature and teach all nations. The message was so revolutionary that it was said of the early church, 'they that have turned the world upside down have come here also'. It is absolutely important therefore that the light in the churches be correct.

This is the reason why the Lord commences His letters to the churches with the message to the angel of the church at Ephesus — they were the people who received the fullest attention and longest period of ministry from the apostle Paul. To them he committed in writing the revelation of the sevenfold statement of truth which he called the 'unity of the Spirit'. 'Preserve it in the bond of peace' he said; let there be no controversy or argument or doubt about this. He not only sought identity of spirit and experience for them, but unity of thought and teaching too, so he set down the basic scheme of apostolic doctrine. It became the sevenfold lampstand of divine order in the early churches. Although, along with the other six, the Ephesian lampstand has long since been removed, the knowledge of the truth they all originally embraced and by which they existed, remains with us to this day. The true light remains, though the ministry of each has long since disappeared from the earth.

Despite the devil's attempts to eradicate the Book, he has failed; the Lord, who overrules all, has preserved this original order of doctrine so vital to us. We can be

sure, as the early churches in their day, that in this our day also, we have the original form of truth. But although we may be most thankful for that, we must beware, lest having the form of truth in the epistles, we break the spirit and power of it in our teaching and lives; this was the folly and sin of Israel. We must all have the same mind and speak the same thing on these matters. The apostle spoke with such tremendous authority and immeasurable weight to the Corinthians: 'though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet ye have not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel'. He makes this the ground of appeal to them to turn from their instructors, whoever they were, and listen to him: 'I beseech you, be followers of me; for this cause have I sent Timotheus, who is my beloved son'. He was gravely concerned about their doctrinal position — he knew that doctrine affects behaviour; despite the voice of the disclaimers it is of utmost importance.

Paul wrote his letters for many reasons, not the least of which was that people may be brought into remembrance of his ways and teaching everywhere in every church. That is the measure of importance Paul put upon doctrine. How then can it be thought that what we believe is of no matter? Whether we understand what has happened to us and can state it properly is not the point. Many of us do not have proper understanding even of natural light, but that does not disqualify or in any way prevent anyone from walking in it and enjoying it. On the other hand, if a scientifically trained man does understand and can explain light, he is not thereby prevented from walking in it either. It is true that God did not inspire and authorise a scheme of doctrine or affix a list of dogmatic theology to the Bible, but that does not mean that either is unimportant. The wisdom of God restrained him from doing so because millions might (almost certainly would) have thought their salvation assured because they accepted and believed them.

The gaining and teaching of knowledge for the sake of it is destructive of the unity the teacher should be promoting, and is to be avoided. Paul was an apostle and teacher of the gentiles; like his Lord he was a 'teacher come from God'. He says that the risen, exalted Christ has given teachers to men; he also set down what those teachers should be teaching. Therefore every would-be teacher of the churches must read his epistles carefully to make sure that what he himself is teaching is correct. All church teaching must be of the same truth and order as Paul's and his contemporary apostles'; every present-day apostle and teacher should be tested with this in mind. It is not sufficient that a company be gathered together calling themselves a church, claiming to have Jesus in the midst and shedding around some kind of light in its locality. Nor is it enough for the Lord that because love is there people should persist in their belief and say everything is all right, even though their doctrine is not right as it should be. Correct knowledge of doctrine is not necessary to salvation, but it is as vital to full maturity as it is to proper radiance, hence the Ephesian epistle.

Behold the Bridegroom Cometh

The Lord, the great I AM, complete and perfect in Himself, is in the midst of every true church every time it gathers. He not only comes as the High Priest to tend the light, He also comes as the Bridegroom-elect to prepare His espoused bride for marriage with Him and to fit her for her joint eternal calling with Him in the new creation. At present she is fulfilling her predestination and is called the Church, but she is destined to be called New Jerusalem, the heavenly city of God in that creation. She shall shine like the great sun of light in the new universe then, though she herself will have no need of sun or moon to shine in her, for she is lighted entirely by the

glory of God radiating through the Lamb. He is the one and only lamp in New Jerusalem, and by His love and skill she is now being wrought into the one and only lamp-holder; how privileged she is! It is with this in mind that our High Priest tends the seven lamps — they are nothing other than the perfections of Himself. Each one, when fully operational, radiates light by emphasising one particular aspect of the whole, and in doing so radiates the whole through itself; the light consists of seven lights which are one — not seven but ONE. Science declares that light is vocal and their united voice says 'He is everything, He is all in all'; the body and Spirit and calling and Lord and faith and baptism and God and Father are all His and Him, they are all one and only one, and by them we become one with Him. O wondrous grace! Each lamp must say so, each church must say so, every individual in the Church must say so.

The ideas suggested by the use of the word unity when describing the sevenfold doctrine are an advancement by Paul upon the more fundamental ideas inherent in John's use of the word fellowship. They neither improve on them nor differ from them in any degree but are an extension of the same truth into a different area. According to their calling and commission the two apostles teach identical doctrine in their own way from the same source of inspiration. So whether Paul or John writes to the Ephesians, the message is about true love as well as correct doctrine and pure light. 'Christ loved the Church' says Paul 'and gave Himself for it that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish' — that is a statement of fact and intention as well as of love and desire. 'Thou hast left thy first love' says John, 'thou art fallen', 'repent'. This is the voice of heartbreak calling with words of love; it is the Bridegroom calling to His bride.

No bride preparing for marriage affects to take no notice of her appearance, but prepares for the day with the greatest attention to detail. And shall she who is the bride-elect of the King of the universe be less concerned about correctness than an earthly bride? This royal marriage for which she is preparing is to be the greatest ceremony of the new creation; and shall a shoddy approach to truth best fit her for it? How can she pretend to love her Lord and believe it does not in the least matter how she appears or what she thinks? Unless she is lamentably irresponsible she thinks as He thinks, namely that she must be perfect. It is the dearest wish of her Bridegroom's heart and she desires to please Him who wants her to be perfect as He is perfect.

So she wishes the full light to shine upon her and through her that in fellowship with Him she may be light as He is light and walk in it with Him. Is she perfect by that light? Anyone living in the half light or some subdued and defective light can appear to be what they are not, perhaps even beautiful. Spots, blots, blemishes, wrinkles, deformities, discolourations can easily pass unnoticed where the light is faulty; there is no kindness nor sense nor love in that. Are we to stay in partial light so that imperfections may not be seen, or must we hide from truth or cease from preaching it for the sake of unity? Unity first of all must be with Him who is the Light and can only be fully achieved as we come to Him and walk fully in the wholeness of light.

Unlike Adam, who accepted his bride's fall in paradise, Jesus refuses to accept His bride's fall. Failing to stand firm and call Eve to repentance, Adam also fell and joined her in the transgression, and together they lost paradise and fellowship with God. But not so with our Jesus; He did not, cannot sin, He will never fall to our level, but

constantly calls us up to His. But whence came the church's fall? The clue is perhaps to be found in the contents of the letter — even in those early days there were those who said they were apostles and were not. Thank God that the church did not fear to try them and find them to be liars. Perhaps the basic law by which they were tried was the sevenfold doctrinal unity committed to their trust by Paul, as well as various other scriptural tests: the result was exposure and denunciation. We too must be alert; false prophets and false apostles are on the increase, they seem to abound everywhere; all claims must be tested by the word of God. Is the sevenfold light upheld? Is its light fed by their ministry, or is it confused? Is each lamp clear in its shining? Is its presence distinctly seen? Is it there? It is impossible to love the Lord and not love the truth, He is the embodiment of truth, 'I am the truth', He says.

The Call to First Love

The main emphasis running throughout the seven letters of Jesus by John is the need for clear perception of the true states of churches with a view to repentance and return to first love and first works. The Lord is insistent that the churches must recognise false claims and false teachers and false doctrines and reject them. Whether they be apostles, Jews, Nicolaitanes or Jezebels, whoever they are makes no difference to Jesus; all must be examined and if necessary rejected. If their teachings have reduced the churches to states of sin or ignorance or lukewarmness, that must be repented of and rectified. If you accept the wrong people, believe the wrong things you will lose your first love and suffer the loss of light and life — this is the message Jesus sent to Ephesus. The Bridegroom is in the light calling us to live in the light and to love Him, love Him in the radiance of the eternal light of the truth concerning Himself and us. We are to be married to Him who is our first real love; we are to be married to Love, the original Lover of mankind.

We never knew love, we never loved, nor could we love with true, pure love, until we loved Him. Because His is the first love, He is the first true Love of our lives. We did not know this nor would we have believed it; we only discovered it because He first loved us; He loved us with everlasting love from His Father's bosom. When this love reached John he found out the truth that God loved the whole world of men. John did not know this until God gave him His only begotten Son; John lived through Him. When John discovered Jesus' love for him it was so wonderful and he desired it so much that he lay his head on His bosom and he wished to abide there for ever and ever. Increasingly he had come to realise the immensity of the sacrifice lying behind it all. However had His Father been able to give Him up for us all? And O the love that moved Jesus to leave such love in order to come to us; dimly John began to understand. This love amazed him, and the manner of it filled him with wonder. He came gradually to think of himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved — to him that said it all: and when he was chosen out from all the apostles to receive the revelation of Jesus Christ he was absolutely overwhelmed with love. For him it was bliss beyond all he had ever known when he heard the Lord call the Church His Bride.

Glory upon glory — he saw her; he saw the Bride of Christ's heart, all was being opened unto him; he saw into heaven, into God's kingdom, into the new creation, into the Bride's heart; best of all, by it he saw into the heart of Christ Jesus. Right there in the centre of the bride's heart — at the centre of the universe — lay the manifestation of FIRST LOVE: he saw what had never before been revealed to mortal man, it was an open sight. The original love was laid bare before his eyes — God and the Lamb.

They were seated on The Throne at the head of the river of water of life; he found the source of the river — First Love enthroned.

It is absolutely essential above all else that every member of every church has this same great love flooding his or her own heart. The first love of the universe is the strong eternal love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father; it is the bond of perfectness, the blending of two persons in one by the Spirit, the wondrous bliss of having eternal being with those whose thoughts and feelings and powers and desires and purposes are one with your own. This, and so much more than this, is the quality and manner of that first love which Jesus seeks and must have in the churches, it is the all-enduring quality which gives New Jerusalem its everlasting life and strength. He never found it in anyone while He was on earth; though He longed for it He never sought it in men for He knew it was not there. He knew He had to go back home to His Father for that, so on His way to Gethsemane and prison and judgement He prayed for it.

He was conscious that up until that moment of time He had done everything His Father wanted Him to do and He broke into prayer about it. His mind ranged over the past three years and He poured His thanks into His Father's ears for all of it. Then He committed His disciples to God and sanctified Himself unto what more remained for Him to do. He knew what it was, He needed not to ask anyone; the work He had to do next was the real reason for which He had come into the world and He must do it by Himself. It was unique and would require all His attention and occupy Him to the full for the next few days. He was determined to give Himself to it completely, so freeing Himself from His immediate responsibility to His eleven apostles He handed them back to His Father. He Himself must now assume responsibility for the redemption of them and many many more. He wanted them all to be one, one as He and the Father were one.

He knew that if He should accomplish that, it would of itself be a most marvellous miracle, but He was not interested in miracles or fame; exhibitions of power meant nothing to Him. The knowledge that He had power to do spectacular things did not mean so much to Him as the awareness of the love welling up in His heart, and He burst out with prayer, 'Father I have declared unto then Thy name and will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them'. His prayer was finished; He had asked that original love should be shed abroad in the hearts of His elect ones; there was nothing more to say. He had reached His objective, He was ready to go now. He knew His prayer would be answered.

To Him real love was Father's love. He knew that love long before He knew any other or ever He asked for Peter's. It was native to Him; it was His life, the Spirit He was, the nature of eternal being, reality. In heaven or earth,. whether in this creation or the next, whether in God or the Church, in city or bride, body or priesthood, time or eternity, past, present or future, Jesus knew He could not for ever stay with anyone except in that first love. There could be no marriage contract between Him and anyone except that same love which was in Him was in them also. The basis of espousal between Him and any heart is that it should be redeemed and sanctified, cleansed and made alive in the Spirit, who sheds God's love abroad within it to make a home for Jesus the Bridegroom.

Peter visualizes the new creation as being a place of righteousness; Paul says it will be a place of rest for battle-weary warriors; John sees it as a place of love. All three are right, but unto John alone was the privilege granted of receiving Jesus' revelation. With mounting wonder he recorded all the miraculous events he saw and the things he heard: it is a preview and a prophecy covering all time from Pentecost to eternity. Events of earth and happenings in the heavens come into view and merge into one; through his pen the invisible becomes as real and open to our gaze as the visible, and eternity dawns. This is the world of the Spirit where only the spirits of men see. John was in the Spirit and it was the Lord's day; spirit forces were at work, he saw spirit beings, spiritual events, souls of men, angels, demons, gehenna, satan, heaven, God.

The Bride ... the Lamb's Wife

On goes the vision of the Lord still unfolding until a new heaven and a new earth come to sight and at last New Jerusalem and the throne of God. The holy city was coming down from God out of the new heaven on to the new earth — it was a most glorious sight and the only way he could describe it was 'as a bride adorned for her husband'; 'I John saw it', he said, and whether or not he had known it before, he knew then that the Bride is a city. Its coming was accompanied by a great voice out of heaven announcing 'Behold the tabernacle of God is with men'. What a moment, God was about to pitch His dwelling-place among men on the new earth to live with them for evermore, and John understood. Past events and words became clear to him; all that Jesus had spoken in the upper room about His Father's house now became plain. It sounded so very mysterious then, but now he knew, he could see; the house, the city and the bride are one.

This holy city is Father's house of many mansions, all of them built upon the foundation of the apostles; so much he had never properly understood before was clarifying to him. Now he knew what Jesus meant when He had told the mystified Judas, 'if a man love me he will keep my words and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our abode with him'. This New Jerusalem was built as a city compacted together, many abodes compacted together, each one of them a living person, a house of God; God filled the city, indwelling each He indwelt all; 'all in all', became a phrase of new and wondrous meaning to him now. Each person included in the city and indwelt by God is also part of the Bride and previously espoused to Christ for the purpose of this marriage union with Him. New Jerusalem is the Bride of brides, the aggregate of all those who love Jesus and have already married Him in heart; since then they have looked upon their time on earth as a period of espousal and have given themselves to the task of preparing for the actual marriage.

The first thing that struck John about the Bride was her glory and light, then it was her purity, then it was her transparency; everything was most precious and crystal clear. From his mountain-top viewpoint he could see right up through it from the very foundations; to its highest point the city was complete and fully functional. Nothing needed doing, everything was in place, not even a stone needed laying. The earth had been prepared for it; there was no digging, no sound of work, nothing but the voice of the angel in his ears; he was amazed. God's words came back to mind, 'Behold I make all things new, it is done'— it was complete to the smallest detail. The foundation stones attracted him, they were studded all over with precious stones, full of colour and flashing with light. There were names written on them: his eyes ran over them in

wonder, he was reading the familiar names of his fellow-apostles, his own was among them. They were all there, the twelve apostles of the Lamb; what a testimony to them, their lives had been clear and their examples true. Some of them were dead, but only scarcely, yet he was being shown the net result of their lives and work — this vast city. He had been carried to the end of time and saw what God had been able to build on them — it was marvellous; everything was pure, solid gold.

The city stood foursquare, a perfect cube, the length and breadth and height of it were equal like the Holy of Holies; the voice had said this was the real tabernacle of God in which He was going to dwell among the nations of the new earth and be their God. The gates specially attracted his attention — each was a pearl and wide open to receive the peoples and kings of earth with their gifts; the city was full of splendour, honour and glory abounded everywhere. He could not but specially notice these entrances of pearl; whichever way the nations approach the city the gateway is a pearl — there is no other way into it whatsoever. An altogether different aspect of his great and beloved theme of regeneration lay open to his wondering gaze, one he did not normally emphasize. In common with his fellows he knew and rejoiced in it, but he did not mention it in his Gospel. Matthew and Luke had given much space to the human side of Christ's birth, but in common with Mark he had ignored the human instrument altogether, speaking only of the Logos becoming flesh and never mentioning Jesus being born. But in the vision the place and function of the pearl is magnified in a twelve-fold way, laying an emphasis and highlighting a point of major importance.

The pearl, John knew, is the Church, for in company with his fellow apostles he had been given this understanding by the Lord Jesus, yet now he sees it as the only way into New Jerusalem which also is the Church. The Lord is revealing to us that the only way into the Church is through the Church. At first this may not be readily acceptable to the devout mind, but it is true; this is a great mystery, only explainable in terms of Jesus' birth. The only way into humanity for Him was through humanity — there was no other way. In order for Him to be born, God had to find a human being, a woman, willing to co-operate with Him for His purpose; only then could He overshadow her and endue with power from on high by the Spirit, and bring forth His Son.

It could be done no other way; an angel would not do, there are no female angels, they do not give birth and are not multiplied thereby, they are individually created. God could only become a human being by a human being — she was the instrument. So likewise, in order to bring forth His spiritual children and build His Church, the Lord endues the spirits of His people with power from on high, that through humanity human beings may be born of God. The only way for men to become sons of God is through the Church; the Church is His instrument. The daily flow of population through the gates of New Jerusalem is continuous demonstration of that fact, and John sees it; this Bride is through the pearl. Paul saw and said it another way; we should be married to Him who is risen from the dead that we should bring forth fruit unto God. All men of God say the same thing.

The Eternal Reality

It seems that all the great themes of love and grace are headed up and fulfilled and in some way demonstrated or illustrated in this great capital city of the new creation, and

no wonder, for it is the City / Church / Tabernacle / Temple / Bride of God. Truth is that, except sin and its grotesque forms and all it has wrought, there is nothing of or on this earth or in the whole universe which did not originally come from God. Everything made by Him was produced by His own power from His own self, an expression of His person; especially is this true of things to do with our salvation. We read more than we comprehend when we read the profound words of John: 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God; the same was in the beginning with God, all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made'. The inspired John is speaking from understanding gained on Patmos when he was caught up to heaven and the throne.

Except he had been commanded to write, he, as Paul before him, might have found it unlawful to utter all he saw and heard, but in obedience to God he wrote down by the Spirit what otherwise he would have found impossible to express. It was altogether too great for him; the opening words were like the notes of a trumpet and the accompanying vision was completely overpowering; overwhelmed he fell down as though dead at the burning feet of the one like unto the Son of Man. Except he had been raised up again he could never have written the revelation, and when he did write it was as one brought back from the dead. How greatly then we should treasure this book, for it is a word as from beyond the grave, a message to us from the throne.

Seeing into New Jerusalem, and especially its inner heart, John understood perfectly that 'without Him was not anything made that was made'. Whether the original creation, or produced from that original creation, God never made anything without the Logos, indeed He could not, it would have been quite impossible. Everything created was a projection from the Father and an adaptation of the Son, the Word spoken forth in the Spirit and formed into whatever God wanted. All was made with a view to the ultimate expression of the relationship of the Father and the Son. From Spirit to matter God made everything through the substance of the Son. If He desired a bride-like city, it should all be based upon the love relationship between Himself and His Son; if a head and body Church, it should be an extension to others of their own union; if it should be a shepherd and sheep relationship, He should be the Lamb and the Father the Shepherd, and so on. As all originated from God, so all was based on and developed from the eternal life and relationship of the members of the Godhead.

The Marriage of the Lamb

In the hands of God everything is moving to a fixed point in the future when everything in Him, whether in heaven or on earth, shall be summed up under the headship of Christ, then all the secret wonders and fulness of Him will be manifest. Blessed indeed in that day shall all those be who for His sake have forsaken all others to become members of the Bride company, who cleave only unto Him, determined to follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Truly espoused to Him, they are already married to Him in heart and regard all life as an opportunity to prepare for actual marriage to Him, whom having not seen they love. This whole creation is moving on toward the marriage of the Lamb, the bride with eagerness, but the Lord is not quite ready for that yet; when He is He will be ready also to bring in the entire new creation.

In prophetic preview John, who heard and saw it all, tells of the great events which directly precede the announcement of the Lamb's marriage. Before the bride is

mentioned or brought into view the great whore is judged and punished. Bursts of alleluias from a vast host of grateful hearts filled all heaven, wanting nothing other than to praise God. To John it was almost beyond description; it sounded like the pouring of many waters and rolling thunder. 'Alleluia', they said, 'for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. For so long it had seemed that Babylon, that great whore, was reigning, but not now; she was cast down. John was thrilled; it was a time of fulfilment for him as well as for the Lord; the Lamb's wife had made herself ready and he knew he had not laboured in vain. Gladder still, he heard the guiding angel say, 'Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb' and blessed indeed they were, for they too were saying 'Alleluia'. It was wonderful.

Everybody he could see and hear was overjoyed that the marriage of the Lamb was come and that His wife had made herself ready for it. He that sat on the throne granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; it was her righteousness, her very own, the righteousness of the saints. It was John's first glimpse of her and as he watched the investiture his rapture knew no bounds; he was overcome completely by the sight, all he wanted to do was worship, and he fell down at the feet of his informant and guide intending to do so. 'See thou do it not' he said. He was a heavenly being and had a lot more knowledge and power than John, but he was only a servant as John was; he said he was actually a fellow-servant of John's and also of all those that held the testimony of Jesus; 'worship God' he said.

Jesus was testifying to John of the revelation His Father had given Him, the angel was showing John the Lord's revelation not his own, he was only obeying orders. 'The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy', he said, and although much had been revealed to John already, the testimony was not yet complete. The Bridegroom was not yet ready to marry His bride, there were other things to be done before that. He must fight His last battles, defeat His ancient enemies, raise the dead, set up thrones, provide the marriage supper, open the books, check the names there, banish the devil and all those who have his mark and worship his image together with him to final death. When the Lord marries His bride all the old will have been already finished by Him for ever, so that together they can apply themselves without distraction to the business of the new creation.

John's eyes are now chiefly upon the Bride, wanting to watch her as she proceeds to her final destiny, but the angel directs his attention to another company who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Who these are is not disclosed to John, but it is certain they were not the Bride company; they were evidently special guests invited by God to join in the pre-marital festivity, and perhaps only to observe the ceremony. We cannot be certain who they are, but it may be correct to suppose that all the Bridegroom's friends (of whom John Baptist was a very special one) will be among them. Whoever they are they are very special and very blessed indeed, for they shall for ever live in the company of the Lamb and His wife on the new earth to behold His glory and the glory of the city of God. They shall have right to enter in through the gates of pearl and walk up the golden street of their capital city and drink freely of the water of the river of life flowing down the crystal road and eat the fruit of the tree of life and pluck its healing leaves. Best of all, theirs is the freedom of the city and they shall be granted audience with the King of kings, whose throne stands at the head of the waters in the midst of the city.

By tribe and nation, each with its kings and great ones, all the peoples of the earth shall come and go at will in the service of God and the Lamb in that new world. They shall bring their honour and glory into it as when of old thrice a year the sons of Israel went up to Jerusalem laden with gifts for their God. They shall see the face which Moses was forbidden to see, His dear name shall be in their foreheads, and they shall live and serve Him for ever and ever. Amen.

But the Bride, she abides constant with the Lord God Almighty and His Lamb as immovable and unchanging as He. All is mystery still. She is the city of God, Father's house of many abiding places; she is also the Tabernacle of God where He alone is worshipped and by whom He shall dwell among men for ever on the new earth, the great lampstand bearing the one true everlasting light of men and angels. The wondrous lamp through which the one eternal light shines is the Lamb. John sees the Beloved One held securely in the bosom of our Father, the Lord God Almighty, Lover and Redeemer of men. He had always held Him there, even when He was in the manger and in the tomb when He came to this earth to abolish death and bring life and immortality to light. In Him is life and the Life is the Light now shining in the native darkness of men in this world. In that universe it will shine in its native Light. The blessed Life of God, Father, Son and Spirit dwelling together in Love is true Light, and throughout all eternity the pure gold city / lampstand is the Bride of that Love.

No wonder Bezaleel of Israel was filled with the Spirit of wisdom and skill to make that first lampstand for the first tabernacle — it stood there for Christ in the holy place — it still stands for Christ now and shall stand only for Him for ever. It is the stand for His Lamp as the body is for the head — they are one.

The Time is at Hand

The revelation of Jesus Christ has been delivered, His testimony to John is ended and the vision is complete. The apostle is brought down again to this earth and Patmos with the admonition to worship God ringing in his ears; 'seal not the sayings of this prophecy', he is told, 'for the time is at hand'. John recognised the phrase: it took him back to the beginnings of the gospel; his attention was caught the very first time he heard his namesake John using it — 'repent ye for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'. He had not quite known all that it meant then, but it sounded like the gospel he was wanting to hear and he knew he wanted it, so he attached himself to John Baptist and became his disciple. From him he learned many elementary things, chiefly that it was vitally important for him to repent and be baptised for the remission of sins and to learn to pray for and await the coming Messiah. The Lamb of God was coming to take away the sins of the world and to baptise them in the Holy Ghost; truly the kingdom of heaven was at hand. When Jesus came He immediately took over John's position and repeated his words, 'the kingdom of heaven is at hand', but the change John expected did not immediately take place.

Whatever John may have understood by the phrase, there were no immediate or gradual changes in the structure or order of the universe; all material elements continued the same as before. But a great change came over him and many others with him; spiritually, mentally and in many instances physically also — he and multitudes of other people entered into an entirely new realm which could only be described as 'heavenly'. Therefore when he heard the angel's statement that the time

was at hand he knew precisely what was implied by it. There was to be no immediate cataclysmic fulfilment of all he had seen, the churches would have to shine on in this dark world longer yet without seeing all the changes he spoke of, but believing hearts could begin to enter into all the spiritual blessings and benefits of the revelation now. Let things be as they are, especially spiritual and moral conditions, do not try to alter them, he is told, these states are irremedial; men must either be saved from them, or go deeper into them, but do not try to lessen or improve the conditions by giving them other names or calling them problems instead of sin, or religious virtues instead of spiritual qualities.

'I come quickly, I am Alpha and Omega, I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things in the churches'. In them all was exactly the same as when He stood outside Bethany and said in John's hearing to Martha, 'I am the resurrection and the life'. It was not the time for the general resurrection, but it was the time for Lazarus to rise from the dead and enter into newness of life on this earth. In the same way it is granted unto spiritual men to enter into the golden city of God and eternal light, to marry the Lamb, to drink of the river, to eat of the tree of life, to come boldly to the throne. Dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers and murderers and idolators and lovers and makers of lies are still, and except they repent shall for ever remain, without the city.

GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS

O the wonder of it! This was above all that he had been able to ask or dared to think. The Baptism in the Holy Ghost and the life that came with and flowed from it far exceeded everything he had expected. How could words, even Jesus' words, have conveyed all that had eternally lain in God's heart? All the sorrow that had gripped his soul at the news of the departure of his beloved Jesus, and all the expectation that later grew within as he had listened to the promises of the risen Lord, were superseded in the realisation that now flooded him. As indescribable as it was imperative, the Baptism in the Holy Ghost answered and consummated all.

He was now in Christ; and in Him not far away off in some distant heaven, but here on earth, among men. He was supremely conscious of the Lord, His power, His position, His presence. He saw HIM, heard HIM, felt HIM everywhere; Christ was all and in all. Life was imbued with Christ. How could he have been so blind and deaf? Why, surely all was God; he was in heaven on earth. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, Caesarea, Lydda, Joppa, prison or temple, all were the same; he now realised that all these are none other than the heavenlies. There was no difference between heaven and earth; he had passed into the same Spirit that pervades both and all. He saw and clearly understood in a new way that which later another knew and voiced, 'In Him we live and move and have our being.'

Of course it had always been so; had not his blessed Lord meant as much and more when He said, 'I am in the Father and the Father in Me'? It was true, but he hadn't realised it then. He had been blind, dead — O how dead! But now, O the glory, he knew it also; it was in him; he knew that Jesus was in His Father, and he was in Jesus, and Jesus was in him; he knew it, he was alive and pulsating with it. The living God filled heaven and earth and his heart; for the first time and for eternal ages, he was living also. In one glorious, comprehending moment, he had passed into God; he lived in one dimension — Spirit — God.

Everything, everybody, was different now. Events moved around and toward him in harmony with the Spirit within him; he was perfectly attuned and poised to understand and interpret the groans of the whole creation. The Spirit that had given him access and brought him a-worshipping to the heart of God, brought him also to the heart of man, with utterance, boldness, action, power. He was a transformed man. Behold with what knowledge and assurance he speaks. As though Christ Himself were saying it, he directs the multitudes, 'Repent ... the promise is unto you your children ... all the Lord our God shall call'. Again, as though Christ Himself were doing it, (c.f. Mark 9.27) he lifts up an impotent man to make him whole, and says 'Why marvel ye at this ... God ... hath glorified His Son Jesus ...'. Jesus is sitting on the throne; he knows it and says so. Sovereign, divine life is flowing through the veins of his inward man; he is one with the true spiritual order of the universe, and is moving in it with ease and naturalness. Faith is the law that governs everything, and by grace the keys were in his own hands. Nothing could

remain locked up or be impossible to him; he was as a king in the kingdom over which his Lord was the King, and he knew it.

Supremely and abundantly God, only God, filled his vision. He knew God; that was all. When he heard the beggar cry for alms, he heard a call for God; when Ananias lied to him, he lied to God; he speaks His words, does His works, understands His scriptures, blesses His creatures, judges His enemies, heals with His power, lives with His life, uses His name, takes His place, represents Him. He becomes as God in the earth, because God is in the earth, the Holy Ghost is come. By that almighty baptism God possessed him; and not only him, but many more like him.

Peter's secret was GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS. He had progressed via believing to knowing. He was conscious of God supremely, always. Pure in heart, he saw God.

To be as thrillingly and continuously conscious of God as were the first 120 and the next 5000 and all that earliest company of the redeemed is the abiding heritage of the Church. Such knowledge and manifestation of HIM and His whereabouts can be ours this day. God-consciousness: that is to be more conscious of Him than of self. This is that most blissful fulfilment of all the heavenly blessings for which the heart craves. Our great God and Saviour has provided and intends to give this to all who will believe Him.

Let there be no hesitation about it. The heart cries out 'that I may know HIM ...'. Faith knows it can. Hear Peter, 'He hath shed forth this ...'. As free as the air you breathe and the sun that shines, God, greater than all, has poured forth HIMSELF. The Holy Ghost is here. He places the key in every open hand. Believe and enter in.

G.W.North

**THE TRUE EVIDENCE
OF BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT**

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First published August 1976. Revised July 1978 & May 1980.
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Originally entitled "Initial Evidence"

THE TRUE EVIDENCE OF BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

AN EXAMINATION OF *THE THEORY OF INITIAL EVIDENCE*

1. The False Theory.

It is sad that to the hearts of so many good people baptism in the Holy Ghost is an unwanted experience. To their eternal loss the great truth has been obscured and discredited, or made undesirable to them by reason of false emphases, and presented upon wrong grounds. Most of these grounds have been laid as a result of mistaken ideas as to its nature and purpose. In itself this is bad enough, but it is not as bad as the ill-effects it has had on earnest souls. Great mischief has been wrought among countless numbers of honest enquirers, deterring them from entering into the full blessings of God. 'For', they say, 'if these people who claim to be baptized in the Spirit cannot even agree among themselves as to what it is all about, or what things a person may look for as proofs that it has taken place in him, of what use is it all?'

However unjustifiable it may be, this position is not beyond understanding, for one of the most unhappy features of the controversial issues raised is that all these theories seem to be advanced upon some sort of scriptural basis, which to the unconvinced is most confusing. More exasperating still, many of these theories have also been as well-argued as they appear to have been textually based, which only makes the matter even more perplexing.

Lest this article should become one more contribution to the bewildering maze of ideas at present befogging the issue, let us consider the fact that the Lord: (1) desires that we each have a true spiritual experience of the Baptism in the Spirit, and (2) has in scripture provided us with indisputable facts and sound logical reasons from which we may draw proper conclusions.

With this in mind, we will proceed to examine one of the theories concerning the Baptism in the Spirit as it is held and propagated in some quarters, namely the theory of the 'initial evidence'. Although during the course of this paper, reference will be made to counterfeit experiences, we shall not primarily be concerning ourselves with these. It is our purpose only to establish that which is genuine.

Simply and fairly stated, the theory of initial evidence is that the Baptism in the Spirit must at the time of the experience, or almost immediately following it, be accompanied by speaking words in a tongue completely unknown to the person baptized. This phenomenon is the sole initial evidence that the baptism has genuinely taken place.

The Gift of Tongues

There can be little doubt that many people when baptized in the Spirit do immediately, or very shortly afterwards, speak words in a tongue which is completely unknown to them. This is a miraculous phenomenon with enough scriptural evidence

to convince any but the most prejudiced heart that it is a genuine gift from God. It is also an indisputable fact that this experience is not only the initial outward manifestation resulting from their personal Baptism, but is for them also the gateway into the glorious realm of further spiritual gifts which until then they did not possess.

When viewed in context of the Acts of the Apostles, or earliest Church history, this is a most happy position to be in, and honoured is the church which is privileged to have such persons among its members; such an experience is quite genuine. A glance into Acts chapter 2 confirms the fact that the phenomenon did accompany the initiating outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. It is only when 'Tongues' is wrested from its true position, unwarrantably elevated to the position of initial evidence and given a significance never intended by God, that the mischief is wrought.

A Sign - not *the* sign

Honest men have no option but to believe and recognize that Tongues are a sign, and must be accorded the distinction in an official sense. But it must be allowed only as one among many; it must not be made to be the sign, as though no other existed. The tragedy and folly of elevating the gift to such an exclusive position is that instead of Tongues being enhanced and ennobled thereby, it has become unavoidably debased thereby. One of the objects of this article is to rescue and reinstate this precious gift to its rightful position in the Church.

No scripturally taught person would deny that 'Tongues' is one of several scriptural experiences which may accompany the Baptism in the Spirit, but neither would he admit that it is the one evidence which proves it has taken place. In fact he would not even allow that it is in any degree necessary to believe that Baptism in the Spirit need be accompanied by any manifestation of an outward nature at all.

To Them that Believe Not

To some this may at first seem a completely unacceptable premise, especially when in I Corinthians 14:22, Paul says quite clearly that 'tongues are for a sign' ; and indeed had he ceased there the objection might appear to be sustained, but he adds, 'to them that believe not'. Examination of this section of scripture shews that this statement ought not to be advanced in support of the claim for the theory of initial evidence, for it is quite plain that Paul never intended it should be put to this use. The following reasons may be acceptable as evidences of that fact:

(1) the indefinite and not the definite article is used here — 'a' sign, not 'the' sign:

(2) Paul is not here speaking of either an individual or group experience immediately following Baptism in the Spirit.

The apostle was speaking of the use of Tongues in the Church as an abiding sign given by God to convince unbelievers of God's presence, which is quite a different thing from an initial sign. Contrary to the reason stated here, in certain sections of the modern Church it is believers, not unbelievers who mistakenly demand Tongues before they will accept a person's experience as genuine.

They were Amazed

The error of this is nowhere more powerfully demonstrated in scripture than on the day of Pentecost itself. None of the men whose attention was caught by the use of Tongues then was a man in the street as we know him today. They were all religious unbelievers, Christ-rejectors. When the initial and initiating Baptism took place, the sign was given especially for their sake. They were all religious people, believing in God according to the Law, but not one of them was a Christian. Not one of them was looking or listening for Tongues as being the evidence of Baptism in Spirit: to anyone seeking truth for truth's sake nothing could be plainer than that. However, when they heard their own tongues being spoken, they were greatly impressed and enquired what they should do.

The obvious mistake which has been made is to insist that because this phenomenon occurred when those people were baptized in the Spirit, it is therefore scripturally established that God intends it to take place every time to every person who is baptized in the Spirit.

A False Assumption

Upon the supposition that the above assumption is true, it is not an uncommon thing to hear people asking if someone has had an Acts 2:4 experience, the implication being that unless the answer is 'Yes', then the experience is not valid. Even if it were true, such a postulation is very confusing to say the least, for there is very little present day evidence to shew that people now have an identical experience to that which took place then. Here and there it happens that the tongue spoken is recognized by a hearer, but the occurrence is comparatively rare, and certainly, whenever it may have taken place, it has never been in such profusion and diversity as upon the day of Pentecost. However, when a person's vital experience seems to be parallel with a scriptural verse of so great importance, it is very easy to think that must be the genuine experience, and that any variation from it must be wrong.

This kind of unwarrantable thinking, once accepted, provides hasty minds with ground for the development of the initial evidence theory. From there it is an easy step to promote the error into a tenet of faith and a received doctrine. Under such misapprehensions, many a true experience of Baptism in the Spirit has been wrongly labelled 'an anointing', simply because there has been no demonstration in Tongues. What is meant by that term is not very clearly defined. In fact it is not true. On the other hand, because some kind of incomprehensible verbal demonstration has taken place at the time, many a false experience has been erroneously called the Baptism.

Again because of this false assumption, many have laboured long in states bordering upon hysteria to produce some kind of sounds which may prove acceptable to those who pray with them, hoping that someone will pronounce the demonstration to be genuine. These occasions are often accompanied by feelings of great heat, or by physical contortions or deep breathings, all of which are self-induced and sometimes encouraged and extremely dangerous. So great is the state of confusion in which many churches lie to this day.

Lest the false should displace the genuine, it must be said that the glorious experience may be received to the accompaniment of a most blessed sensation of being enveloped in warmth, or flooded with joy, or consumed in love. These, as well as speaking with tongues, are all of them absolutely valid; the thing that is wrong is the

search for physical demonstrations and sensations. So surely as these be sought, stereotyped substitutes for the real baptism will become the accepted procedure.

They Spoke the Word with Boldness

Perhaps some clarification is needed on the point of the scriptural evidence which is claimed for the theory. It has already been suggested that what took place on the day of Pentecost, real as it was, cannot be regarded by sincere investigators as initial evidence. Plainly that which genuinely takes place in people's experiences today cannot be compared with it. Upon that occasion, although all the original Church members spoke with other tongues, there is no evidence to prove that the other 3000 did so, even though they were baptized within minutes of the first 120. This seems to provide evidence that the first experience was **initiating** evidence, and not a demonstration of **initial** evidence.

Passing on to Acts 4, we read that a number of others were also filled with the Spirit, but we find no evidence that any of them spoke with other tongues. Instead they all spoke the word with boldness, which is a very different thing. Of course it could be surmised that perhaps some of the words were in other tongues, but that would be nothing but wishful thinking.

And in Samaria

Later, when the Samaritans were baptized in the Spirit, the watching Simon Magus undoubtedly observed some kind of evidence, but if any verbal manifestation took place, it is not mentioned, and so must not be presumed. To say that Tongues must have been spoken is specious pleading of a gross order indeed, and weakens the case for initial evidence altogether. Likewise, when Paul was baptized in the Spirit (chapter 9), nothing further than the fact is noted. It could be that in accordance with Paul's later teaching in I Corinthians 14, Tongues did occur, but is not mentioned because it is not a sign to believers, and only Ananias, a believer, was there. There is no justification for such a gratuitous assumption though; it is more likely, and almost certain, that it is not mentioned because it did not occur.

To the Gentiles also

Cornelius and his household certainly responded with Tongues (chapter 10), but turning to chapter 16, we find no evidence that the Philippians did, neither is there any record of the recurrence of the phenomenon in the intervening chapters. However, in chapter 19, we find Tongues in evidence again at Ephesus, where it was accompanied by and bracketed together with prophecy. This latter information is most interesting and quite vital to those who originate theories. It seems to present us with no option but to accept that in this matter prophecy is at least on a par with Tongues, and should be promoted to the dubious importance of being accepted as a twin-proof with Tongues that the Baptism has taken place. Apparently, however, that is no more an acceptable proposition than it is a proven fact, so it must be rejected.

The Witness of the Scriptures

Having briefly reviewed the scriptures in these eight places, it at once becomes clear that there is not sufficient ground upon which to establish proof that the theory of initial evidence is correct. Upon those eight occasions: (1) only twice is Tongues mentioned as the sole demonstration of supernatural utterance related to the event, (2)

on some, no mention is made of any kind of utterance, (3) on at least one occasion two kinds of supernatural utterances are mentioned. It is therefore scripturally unconfirmed that speaking in an unknown tongue is the initial evidence of the Baptism. Instead it becomes more astonishing that such a theory could ever have been formulated, for it is obviously being propounded contrary to scripture.

Surely the scriptures must be received for what they are, rather than for that for which they are used. The historical sections of the New Testament supply us with facts about the Church; they are the records of what took place under the apostles' ministry. They ought to be accepted for what they are and not be distorted into grounds upon which to propound an erroneous theory of necessity on this subject. They set forth actualities which open up ground for possibility. They do not enforce necessity.

As Spoken by the Prophet Joel

Another fact ought also to be considered here, namely that, contrary to what is inferred from it, Joel's prophecy did not specify Tongues as the sign of the Baptism. Instead he repeatedly said that the gift which would be in evidence following the outpouring of the Spirit was Prophecy. Supposing that with proselytizing zeal we were to seize upon this inspired information and insist upon making Prophecy the initial evidence of the Baptism in the Spirit, what would be the result but absolute chaos? Should this unwarrantably legal attitude be adopted and 'the letter' be enforced, we should be driven to the prohibitive conclusion that very few people indeed are baptized in Spirit, for as we have seen, only upon one occasion is it mentioned in connection with the event, and nowhere is it advanced as proof, either then or now.

We could, of course, insist, with little conviction and as little expectation of it being accepted as conclusive proof as those who argue for Tongues, that Prophecy was in evidence at Samaria. However, it is useless to serve vanity, and no-one knows whether there was any outward supernatural utterance when the Samaritans received the gift of the Holy Ghost. Assumption passes beyond limit and becomes presumption and specious pleading, profitless and finally destructive of the case it purports to advocate if such means be adopted. We will therefore leave the realm of unsupported imagination and proceed on the basis of scriptural certainty and sober truth.

It may however be accepted as given fact that as a result of the original outpouring on the day of Pentecost, Tongues and Prophecy were combined as one in the initial utterance, for the tongues spoken then, though unknown to those speaking them, were plainly understood by the hearers. They were undoubtedly prophetic utterances in Tongues, and not what is popularly referred to as the Glossalalia. This accords with the spirit of the statement made later by Paul in I Corinthians 14:6, that speaking with other tongues can be by prophecy.

Sadly enough there are those who believe that because upon an occasion they spoke some words or syllables in an unrecognizable jumble — they are baptized in Spirit. Despite the fact that the phenomenon has never been repeated, and did not continue or develop into a definite tongue, those dear ones believe it to have been the initial evidence. Worse still, it is asserted that this is an Acts 2:4 experience and quite genuine. This is due to the erroneous ideas associated with the 'Glossalalia', which lead people to believe that it is possible, indeed quite normal, to have an experience as previously described.

To support this view by quoting Paul 'do all speak with tongues?' is indefensible, and in any case destroys the whole position. In pursuit of truth it must be fully understood and accepted that at times assumptions must be received as righteous premises upon which factual beliefs may properly be built. This is unavoidable, and if it is done with true humility in utter dependence upon God and with proper safeguards, there is no cause for fear.

He that Should Come

The validity of allowing assumptions as proper ground from which to commence searching for the acceptance of ultimate truth is furnished for us by no less a person than the Lord Jesus Himself. When John Baptist was cast into prison by Herod, the prophet sent two of his disciples to Jesus asking 'Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?' In answer to John's question, the Lord, without hesitation pointed to His many miracles, advancing these as proof of His claims, and telling John's disciples to go and shew their master what they had heard and seen. The Lord did not point John back to the well-established facts of His baptism and anointing in Jordan. Instead, as proof of His claims, He invited John to draw conclusions from reports based upon observation of works alleged to have been done by Him subsequent to that experience. John needed to be absolutely sure, yet the Lord expected him to believe upon the ground of assumption, based upon reports made by other men.

It is to be presumed that John accepted the Lord's works as evidence, for there is nothing said to the contrary, and well he might, for to do this is a proper and universally accepted method of establishing truth. Certain things may quite rightly be established as genuine and accepted as evidence if upon exhaustive examination it be shewn that they invariably eventuate in clearly definable ways, and produce consistent results which are unmistakeably clear to those able to make correct judgements (I Corinthians 2:15).

A Man Named Saul

This method may be easily demonstrated from a thorough reading and correct interpretation of the biographical notes found scattered throughout the Acts of the Apostles concerning the life of the apostle Paul. By adding to these certain material gathered from his own writings, a clear picture emerges, upon which conclusions may be based. We know, for instance, that following his conversion to Christ upon the Damascus road, he was led into the city, later to be visited by Ananias, who brought to him the commandments for which he had earlier asked God. Upon receiving them, and accepting God's terms for his life and service, Paul was filled with the Spirit by the laying on of Ananias' hands; following that, he was baptized in water.

Now it is not directly stated in words that he was at that time baptized in Spirit, but it is absolutely right for us to assume that he was, 'He must have been', is the ejaculation which spontaneously springs to mind upon reading all the evidence given in scripture of his life and activities, for no-one could be an apostle apart from being baptized in Spirit. Again in the same way as there is no direct statement that he was baptized in Spirit, neither is it stated that he spoke in tongues at that time. Nevertheless we know from his later writings that he did speak with tongues, for he says so himself.

How then do we resolve the issue of initial evidence with reference to Paul? Simply by allowing the fact that according to the principle demonstrated above, although it is

logically true to assume that he was baptized in Spirit at Damascus, it is fallacious to believe that he spoke in tongues upon that occasion. The reasons for this conclusion are as follows: 1) there is no documentary evidence to prove it, 2) there are no scriptural grounds upon which to correctly assume it.

In such cases as these, presumptive evidence may only be allowed if founded upon submissions gathered from scripture recorded subsequent to the act and which may be reasonably assumed to be correct. By the application of this method we conclude that, although it is correct to assume that he was baptized in Spirit, it would be an unwarrantable assumption to assert that Tongues was the initial evidence of that Baptism.

Paul came to Ephesus

Turning to the Ephesian visitation, we find that all twelve spoke with tongues and prophesied. It could just be true that this is a repetition of what took place at Pentecost, and that the tongues were prophetic utterances. In this case 'and prophesied' should be understood to imply that they spoke with tongues 'and did so in prophetic vein'. We must also allow the possibility that every one of the twelve men baptized in Spirit at that time did actually speak in tongues and prophesied as two distinct exercises in that order. If this premise could be guaranteed to be true, it would appear to be almost solid proof of the theory of initial evidence, but again no-one knows with certainty what happened there, so speculation about it is quite useless.

Were this attempted with a view to providing evidence to support the claim, the exercise would only demonstrate the fact that in cases where self-convincement is the sole aim, any person normally selects what he wants to believe according to preferences or prejudices. Righteousness and honesty compel us to remain neutral and speak only of possibility or speculate about likelihood in the matter. We must not seek to make beliefs stand upon arguments lest dogma dethrone reason, in which case we become slaves to carnal minds, and doctrines become chains.

It could, of course, be stated with a certainty almost amounting to infallible proof, that both upon the occasion when the Spirit was poured out upon the Jews in Acts 2, and the Gentiles in Acts 10, no utterance beside that of Tongues was in evidence, for this phenomenon alone is mentioned. More than that, it was the fact that the Gentiles spoke with Tongues which convinced Peter and his party of the genuineness of the outpouring, and that Cornelius and those with him had actually received the gift of the Spirit.

This seems to be of great significance, even though it is almost certain that there was a great difference between the kinds of Tongues being manifest upon the two occasions. With such an array of seemingly irreconcilable facts before us, how is it possible to arrive at a definite conclusion about the Baptism which is acceptable to all? Attempting to discover the correct answer to this question, let us pay attention to the historic reasons for the Baptism.

I Will Confound their Language

On the day of Pentecost God did two epochal things: (1) He inaugurated an era, (2) He almost certainly commemorated an anniversary. The outpouring marked the giving of the Law to Israel at Sinai upon their deliverance and departure from Egypt.

Beside this, Pentecost was also the antitype of God's judgement which was passed upon the people at Babel some 500 years previous to the Exodus.

Upon this latter occasion men had attempted to build a tower which should reach up to the planetary heavens, with the result that God came down in judgement and confounded their intentions by confusing their speech. This characteristically lenient punishment had the effect of causing them to scatter over the face of the whole earth, gathering together into the nuclei of different national groups. Naturally as well as compulsively and all unknowingly, they fulfilled God's intention that men should replenish the earth, for, as may be expected, according to ability to understand each other they separated from those whose speech they could not understand.

If the implications and significance of these great historical events be thoroughly grasped, the scriptural background and reason both for the gift of Tongues and also for the different kinds of Tongues spoken on the day of Pentecost may be seen. The giving of the Law at Sinai was epochal; it was the unique occasion when the Covenant which God made with Abraham was confirmed to the nation. The Feast of Pentecost following the Passover was also ordained of God to become an annual Feast. It is quite possible that God's judgement at Babel was meted out upon the same day centuries earlier also, but in the absence of factual records it is better only to admit its likelihood.

In Their Own Tongues

However, whether this be just conjecture or no, we do know that on the day of Pentecost God again came down in great power as at Babel. This time, however, He did not come in judgement and punishment. He came in blessing, because the righteous Man had ascended from the lowest hell to sit down with Him on His right hand in the heavenlies. In response to this, at Jesus' request and according to the pre-arranged plan, God poured forth the Holy Ghost without measure. This was done so that in Him Jesus may baptize His expectant followers into His Body and thus commence to form the Church. At the same time by that process and also of necessity He wrote the law in each member's heart. He also gave the Holy Spirit to each one of them and thus sealed to them the Covenant.

One of the results of this was that at least 3000 people, probably more, of different races and language groups saw and heard uneducated men speak of the wonderful works of God in tongues they had never learned. The miracle, though accountable, was phenomenal, inaugural and therefore unique.

To the Uttermost Part of the Earth

Some years later, upon the occasion when the Lord inaugurated the Covenant with the Gentiles so that they also were brought into the kingdom, He gave them a somewhat similar experience. Their initiation was not absolutely identical with that which happened to the Jews though, for although they spoke with Tongues, it is not recorded that the listeners understood what they were saying. Peter and his party went to Caesarea, knowing exactly that it was to use the keys of the kingdom, he was the officer of Christ, sent by Him to the Gentiles that they might officially be brought into the Covenant.

This was to be more than a local blessing; far beyond that, it was to be the occasion when the door of faith was opened unto the entire gentile world; it was to be an inaugural event. For this reason, although it is to be presumed that every single person spoke with tongues, Peter and the men with him were not so much concerned about the particular experience of individuals. They did not take tongue-speaking to be the sign of any particular person's baptism in Spirit, so much as the sign that the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, had received the Holy Ghost. As at Pentecost, tongues at Caesarea was the inaugural sign of the commencement of the era of witness unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8).

God had initiated the last stage of the plan to fulfil the promise made to Abraham, 'In thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed'. This was a sectional inauguration, the Gentiles' Pentecost; God, in His grace, was now moving on to reach the rest of the vast world of mankind. His bowels were sounding out to the scattered language groups as yet unreached by the Spirit. It was for this reason therefore that, as had already happened with the Jews, Tongues were again in evidence. There is not the slightest doubt that Tongues was the initial evidence upon each of these initiating occasions, so there is no reason why it should not be heartily received as such.

The Initiating Evidence

By these things we have seen that it is reasonable to believe that (1) Tongues was an initiating or inaugural evidence, (2) they were given to mark epochal events rather than to be mistaken for an initial evidence of the Baptism in the Spirit. It is scripturally evident that upon the first outpouring of the Spirit upon both the Jews and the Gentiles, Tongues of one kind or another was the immediate outcome of the Baptism. We also see that, although Tongues-speaking was not regarded as confirmatory or evidential when the Baptism took place at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, it was certainly looked upon as such in Caesarea. This seems to be the very reason why God gave it, for it was by Tongues that Peter and his Jewish companions concluded that the Gentiles had received the Spirit.

When this is contrasted with other occasions when people were baptized in the Spirit following Pentecost, it becomes clear that Tongues did not excite the same amazement as at Caesarea. Tongues is specified here simply because the people speaking them were Gentiles. It had taken place when the Jews were baptized, so to Peter, the key man upon both occasions, Tongues held special significance; it was confirmation to him that the door of faith was open to the Gentiles. While fully accepting this perfectly genuine fact without disputation, there remains very much reason to reject the idea that speaking in Tongues was intended by God to be regarded by us as the initial evidence and sole proof that a person is baptized in the Spirit.

One of the worst errors made in Bible interpretation is to limit its great truths to the partial ideas held by the interpreter. This is a snare into which all are liable to fall. Another is to confine them to narrow sectarian doctrines, or to try to make the Book support specious denominational emphases. When on the day of Pentecost Peter used the phrase 'this is that', he definitely connected the events of Pentecost with Joel's prophecy, but it must not be thought that the baptism they experienced was limited to that of which Joel spoke; it was something more, much more than that.

The Transcendent Baptism

By far the greatest things that happened to men on the day of Pentecost were regeneration into life and constitution into a Body indwelt by Christ. These things were accomplished in them at an instant by Christ, who baptized them into His Church by identification with Himself in His death and resurrection. Simultaneously with this glorious experience they were initiated and entered into other states and blessings also, some of which are set out below:

- 1) I Corinthians 12:13 — 'In one Spirit they were baptized into one body and made to drink into one Spirit.'
- 2) Romans 6:3-11; Luke 12:50; Mark 10:38,39. They were made partakers of the one Baptism spoken of by Paul in Ephesians 4:4-6.
- 3) Acts 15:7-9. By receiving the Holy Ghost their hearts were purified by faith.
- 4) Romans 8:2-11. They were initiated into life in the Spirit where, by the operation of new laws, the fruit of the Spirit was brought forth.
- 5) John 14:15-20. They knew that Jesus was in the Father and they were in Jesus and Jesus was in them. Surely of all that is accomplished by that Baptism this is the dearest.
- 6) Matthew 16:18. They became the foundation members of the Church which Christ is building.
- 7) Acts 1:8. They received power to be witnesses unto the Lord Jesus.

A Greater Covenant

Of all the things that were initiated in the lives of the 120 on the day of Pentecost these are the most basic. It was the great inaugural day of the New Covenant when the Church of God was officially established on the earth in power as a company of new-born people; it was unique, historic. The things of which Joel spoke, though important, were not the most important things happening that day. He only spoke of that which could be seen and heard. Much, much greater and deeper than those were the things which could not be seen or heard; things as yet unknown by them, related more to eternity than to time, to God and Heaven more than to Men and Earth.

The Devastating Folly

Perhaps enough scriptural reason has already been given to convince hearts that the theory of initial evidence has been based upon assumption rather than proof; nevertheless we will consider some further reasons which also make its claims untenable. The first of these is the obvious folly of the theory. From the moment that anything is advanced as being the initial evidence of an event, a degree of infallibility is unavoidably accorded it. Resultantly nothing other than that particular thing can possibly be allowed as proof that the event has taken place. Worse still, however true a person's experience of the Baptism may be, without the so-called initial evidence, it is discounted and disallowed. It is the degree of infallibility engendered by the theory, which, beside creating great dangers, at once constitutes its greatest folly and demonstrates its utter falsity.

The theory of initial evidence does three things:

(1) it purports to invalidate every other claim to the Baptism in the Spirit, for it declares every other experience insufficient, and less than the Baptism, unless it be accompanied by Tongues:

(2) it declares this particular demonstration to be the only genuine evidence that baptism has taken place:

(3) since the Lord Jesus, speaking of 'the Baptism' said 'ye shall receive power', it confuses the whole issue, and leaves the impression that the 'power' is merely an ability to speak with Tongues. Thus the ability to use another tongue is substituted for power to be a witness to Jesus, who Himself did not speak with tongues in the accepted sense at any time in His life. If this is not plainly said, the implication is that the power of which Jesus speaks cannot be had by any person unless he speaks in Tongues. The psychological effect and spiritual impact of such claims upon untaught souls has been to lay them open for pseudo-baptisms, and in some cases wrong possession.

Two prevalent results of this are:

1) The self-inducement of some kind of demonstration in 'Tongues' on the part of the person being baptized in order to prove the genuineness of the experience he is supposedly undergoing.

2) The conditioning of a person for a demonstration in 'Tongues' spoken by an evil spirit either already resident within that person, or gaining entrance at that time.

Both of these demonstrations are deceptions: the first being self-induced is entirely human and soulish; the second being spirit-reproduced is devilish and psychic; neither is of the Holy Spirit nor genuine.

The Blinding Error

Because this kind of false manifestation is mixed up with that which is genuine, confusion inevitably reigns in the churches, causing a veil of misapprehension, unbelief and fear to hang like a pall over many hearts, obscuring and misrepresenting the truth. What is more, because in people's minds the gifts of the Spirit are connected with the Baptism in the Spirit, vast realms of power and usefulness which Christ bequeathed unto the Church have never been attained to by vast numbers of His truly born-again ones. It is sadly true that because Tongues is suspect, to many dear people all the rest is discounted and rejected.

Perhaps the degree of confusion which it creates is one of the worst features of the theory, for even deeper-rooted than the foregoing, it evinces the belief that they who so wrongly insist on it surely cannot themselves know what is the true Baptism.

Satanic Counterfeits

The second reason that makes the theory of initial evidence so untenable is its total illogic. Demanding Tongues-speaking as the initial evidence of the Baptism appears to prove great gullibility and ignorance, for speaking in Tongues in that manner for that reason can be plainly demonstrated to be false. Anyone who holds serious conversation with persons working among heathen tribes, may ascertain for themselves that during certain religious ceremonies involving special incantations

(frequently accompanied by gross bodily contortions and evil demonstrations), those taking part often speak fluently in tongues other than their own. No-one would think for a moment that those taking part were baptized in the Holy Ghost; on the contrary with one consent we would say that they were in the grip of Satan. How then can speaking with tongues possibly be the infallible proof of Baptism in Spirit?

Further to this, such reports as the following make it more certain still that speaking in another or an unknown tongue is not necessarily even an evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit: 'as we watched his whole face seemed to change, taking on the shape and features of a Chinese man; he began to speak in what seemed to be a Chinese tongue'. This was said by a Christian minister of his father who during his lifetime was a spiritualist medium. How then can it be possible for Tongues-speaking to be the certain proof that a man is filled with the Spirit? It would be quite illogical, beside being uncharacteristic of God to do such a thing. He would not so jeopardize the safety of the Church as to make something which the devil can so easily imitate the one infallible sign of such a fundamental experience.

Upon the testimony of both scripture and reason, as much as upon well-proven observation, to say nothing as yet of personal testimony, we conclude that initial evidence is not only an unproven, but also a dangerous theory. The scriptures so clearly shew that the Baptism in Holy Spirit is a simple, wise, logical, powerful and true experience, having no need of initial evidence as its bona fide.

2. The True Evidence.

Yet ... Not I

There are many scriptures which present to us what Baptism in the Spirit really is, and with what it is primarily concerned: a typical example of these is Galatians 2:20. Upon consideration of the statement in this verse we are driven to the astonishing conclusion that Paul here claims to be himself, yet not himself. He is quite sure he lives, he says, and he is equally sure that although he is alive, he is not his old self any longer, but an entirely new self. At the time of writing, if his claims are to be believed, Jesus Christ who had long since died and risen again and returned to heaven, was actually living in him. The outcome of this, as may be expected, was that he was now living by the faith of the Son of God, who was living in him. The claim is stupendous in all conscience, and the amazing thing is that upon examination, his life proves his claims to be true.

As We are One.

Now it is exactly this kind of life that God had always wanted for man, for it is His kind of life. Our God Himself has always lived in this manner from all eternity. He has had His being in trinity; that is, as three persons each indwelling the other two whilst still being Himself. This is an absolutely mind-baffling miracle to be sure. Perhaps more baffling still, from everlasting, God's desire was that His Son should personally live in many people other than just His own self and the Father and the Spirit. The Son had ever lived in His own conscious self, but beside that, God wanted Jesus to live His life in many people other than Himself.

To Live is Christ

This was the startlingly new concept of human/divine life for men, which, except upon the occasion in the upper room, God had kept unmentioned and totally unrevealed until Pentecost. During His earth-life rarely had Jesus even hinted at this, although He was the manifestation and example of it. Occasionally He referred to a life which, upon reflection, we see could be lived only upon this principle, but from Paul's testimony we learn that in him the miracle was consciously taking place.

Jesus Christ, so Paul claimed, was actually living in the person of Paul in Paul's body; that is, living him, so that Paul could live Christ. This is precisely what Paul claimed when writing to the Philippians, 'to me to live is Christ', he said so matter-of-factly. In the man Paul, Christ had being in a body other than the flesh-and-blood body known as Jesus of Nazareth, and He had being in it as though it was His own.

The Life I Now Live

It is evident that Paul with Christ had come to total realization of what Calvary's death and resurrection was all about; 'I was crucified' he said. He saw how God, by the Holy Ghost, had been able to make Golgotha permanent and available for all time, for all mankind, and he had experienced it. Entering wholly into God's will for him, the apostle understood what God had always wanted. Consequently he was able with sublime confidence to confess Christ as 'the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me'; he perfectly understood what it all meant. For his part he was not talking about something metaphysical, or hyper-spiritual; he was not living in some self-induced state or a mental elevation resulting from a new religious ideal or philosophy. He was talking right down to earth; 'the life I now live in the flesh' he said; that is plain, everyday, common-sense language; the man was living the life of Christ.

Similarly the Lord Jesus for His part had realized His purpose in Paul; He was in the man's flesh as though it were His own. This was the miracle for which God had planned and worked throughout the ages; how great a miracle can scarcely be grasped. However much He may have desired it, God could not have accomplished this, His fullest purpose for Himself and man, by any other means.

Vain Man's Idolatry

Earth's idolatrous philosophers have invented religious schemes propounding the myth of repetitive reincarnations for the purpose of self-improvement into some state acceptable to an unlikely god., but this is not what Paul is talking about. Jesus did not die in order to be released from the body of His first incarnation so that He might be born in the flesh again in some interminable and unexplainable cycle of reproduction by the natural process of procreation; this idea is as freakish as it is quite nauseous and impossible.

Vain man, idly speculating, conjures up such fleshly notions only because he rejects the fact of sin, which of course he must do, because it makes his theories unworkable and therefore preposterous. In any case, the scriptures show very clearly the impossibility of such an obnoxious idea by telling us that Jesus Christ was seen, heard and handled following His bodily resurrection from the tomb in which He had been laid. Moreover He once again did miracles on the earth before finally ascending bodily into the heavens, where He now sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But beside all this, God is original; His plan for mankind was far superior to that kind

of crude humanism. His wisdom is far too great to do anything that man may conceive or imitate or devils accomplish or counterfeit. What God did is unique. In the nature of things, if He wished to achieve His stated purpose, it was the only course possible even to Him.

The Divine Exclusiveness

At Jesus' conception the angel said to Mary, 'with God all things are possible' and in saying so said more than we may at first realize. With these confident words, the Lord commenced the opening phase of operations for personal redemption according to the plan He conceived in eternity. Thereby He introduced our hearts to the fact that there must be a place where a thing is possible only to God, conditioning us all to the realm of exclusiveness. Understanding this, the heart at once comes to rest; the degree of impossibility makes everything so safe; no-one but God could do it. Such a thing cannot be in any way counterfeited, either as to its substance, its accomplishment, its evidences or its fruit. It is this absolute exclusiveness which gives it such certainty, and precludes the need for dubious 'initial evidence', especially that which can be produced by both man and devil in psychological or psychic manifestation. Hereby the fallibility, frailty and falsity of the theory of initial evidence lies exposed.

Ye Shall Know the Truth

It must be accepted without reserve by all as indisputable truth that what God has accomplished in the Holy Ghost is unique and cannot be reproduced or copied. This is why 'Initial Evidence' is so plainly wrong; Jesus Christ is absolute Truth, and He did not speak in Tongues in any way which could be associated with or misconstrued as initial evidence. That man and devil throughout the ages have produced counterfeits of God's working in no way jeopardizes the fact that truth is absolute; it is this absoluteness which is its safeguard. No true saint of God is ever deceived long enough for the error to become heresy in him. He may be temporarily misled, but the Spirit of Truth soon rectifies the position. Everything God does by His Spirit, whether it be in conception or execution, is out of the reach of man and devil. Hallelujah!

The Transforming Miracle

The day of Pentecost revealed that God's perfect plan for man was Baptism in the Holy Ghost, Reviewing the historic occasion, we observe that the whole operation was carried out exclusively by God. Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead, immersed men and women in the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, unto the Father the first person of the Godhead. Seeing that He wanted a family/body of sons, there was no other way in which God the Father could possibly accomplish the miracle than by bringing them forth unto Himself by the Son in the Spirit. If He wanted sons of identical life with identical personality to His unique only-begotten Son, then that Son must live in them, and for Jesus to live in some body other than His own body of flesh and blood there was no alternative than to baptize that other person in Holy Spirit.

Can anyone think of or suggest any other way in which the miracle could be wrought? And if that were possible could anyone by any means produce, or provide from himself, the means whereby it could be accomplished? No! There is no other way. Such is the exclusiveness and purpose of this Baptism, that even God could not do otherwise than He did.

Into His Glorious Image

Yet, in doing this miracle, God had to preserve the human nature and distinct personality of the person in whose body His Son should have being and live, or else what is the purpose of the miracle? Although sin must be dealt with, and bondages broken and hearts purged, in the process of accomplishing this there must be no destruction of man's personality, for under heaven, man's personality is the crowning wonder of all God's glorious creation. Human personality is a wonderful thing; when totally free from sin and as like Jesus as God intended it to be it must be exceedingly glorious.

When God created the first person, He made him a living soul in His own image and likeness, that, in fellowship with his Creator-God, he should develop a most wonderful personality. God loved him then and although now he is a fallen creature God still loves him, and purposes in grace to restore all His sons to natural likeness to Himself, that God's glorious image may transfigure human personality once more, It would therefore have been utterly ruinous to His own plans if in process of regenerating man He obliterated his soul. Indeed the whole point of the Baptism is to preserve and restore it; for if He only ever wished to have one Son, why Calvary? If the cross was only revealed to us by God just so that it should be established in the earth as the greatest expression of His love for us, and later, having availed ourselves of its benefits, we were to discover that after all God's intention thereby was only to destroy and annihilate all human personalities other than Jesus, what kind of love should we think that to be?

Christ Liveth in Me

The cross was planned and endured by Jesus to the end that other men as well as He should be privileged to have and live the life of God in themselves as He in Himself, and in what better or more effective or more delightful way should or could this be accomplished than by immersing them in Holy Spirit? Only when and as a man is totally immersed in the Holy Spirit of God can the miracle of 'Christ liveth in me' be accomplished by God and acclaimed by man.

By this Baptism in God, by God, for God who created him, a man's personality can be preserved as being distinctly his own, and yet at the same time be the expression of another's, because, by virtue of that act and through the total and eternal immersion which that act inaugurates, that other actually lives in him. This fusion of two spirits, so that they become one spirit expressed as one soul in one body, can only become an actual fact as one indwells the other; it certainly cannot be accomplished by sincerest believing and sacrifice. This is the reason for the Baptism in the Spirit.

In this Baptism many things take place beside those which have been already mentioned. Therefore it is necessary for us to realize that although it is vital to us all, its importance does not lie in the initial experience of it, for this may be as varied in immediate conscious results as personalities themselves differ. This being so, conclusions about it may be difficult to draw and be very diverse the one from the other, therefore pontifical statements thereabouts will only bring confusion. The important things are the long-term results, the fruits which emerge in the life from miracles wrought deeper down in a person than levels of conscious knowledge or immediate powers of response.

A Life-long Miracle

There must be an initial experience, and in many instances this is so overwhelming and is accompanied by such glorious manifestations that many seem to think that there is little or nothing beyond it, whereas it is what it initiates more than that actual initiation which is far more important. God, by the Baptism, initiates a man into the results of the Baptism, which issue in the state of life which enables a man to say, 'Christ liveth in me'; he then knows and can claim, 'I live, no longer I'. The initiation has taken place and the lifelong miracle is now taking place.

This prolonged miracle of grace is accomplished in a man by the continued total immersion of self in the Spirit, whereby a man's whole personality is kept submerged in God unto total saturation with the Holy Ghost. By this means the Christ is formed in that man and may be said to live in him, and that person will then be able to say, 'I live no longer I, I live Christ; Christ is living in me; though it is not by I myself, it is nevertheless I myself by Christ Himself. This is how the new self consists; I and He; I-Himself'.

That, to a spiritual man, is logical. He sees that it is about the only way it could possibly be done, and that if there is such a thing as the Baptism in the Spirit, this is just about the effect it should have, and the state it should produce. He knows that, kept saturated with the Spirit, all can be possible in him. Also he sees that, besides direct promises, he has enough examples and illustrations in the scriptures to shew him how truly it all works.

Unto Identification

It is quite reasonable that if Baptism is by total immersion, it must be unto constant immersion with a view to saturation or impregnation; and what is more, because it is of Spirit and personality, it must also be unto identification. In other words its purpose and product is another person, living in another kingdom. There is no difficulty here; such an experience needs neither initial evidence in order to substantiate it to the person involved, nor yet to commend it to others. Which fact reveals the deeper confusion which reigns over this whole subject of the Baptism in the Spirit.

The real cause of all the trouble is the basic error in many people's thinking as to the purpose of God by the Baptism. All error, even as all truth, among men, arises in and issues from men's hearts; Jesus said 'as a man thinketh in his heart so is he'. Many ideas flit through a man's mind in the course of a day, but Jesus is not speaking of those. He is referring to what a man thinks with feeling and purpose, that which involves his whole self, what he means to think, or what he 'thinks up', as well as what he thinks upon; this kind of thinking reveals what he really is.

My Witnesses

Observation of and discussion with many people over a long period of time is sufficient to convince any investigator that most people who believe in the Baptism in the Spirit believe that it is for the purpose of imparting power for service, although the Bible nowhere says so. The idea is assumed from two observations: (1) the Lord forbade the apostles to go and preach the gospel to every creature and all nations until they were baptized in Spirit: (2) in their own experience people also find that they have no power to serve the Lord before their personal Pentecost. This appears to be

conclusive enough evidence, and if the Baptism is accompanied by speaking in Tongues, it seems to be more than proved that the power is for service of a special kind, namely with spiritual gifts. Thus the whole ground is laid in people's hearts for the propagation of the error.

An examination of the use of the word 'power' (Gk. *dunamis*) by Luke and Paul in the New Testament speedily reveals the error which has arisen from that kind of conditioned thinking about it. Luke records that the risen Lord said to His chosen ones that: 1) they must tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high, 2) they should receive power after that the Holy Ghost had come upon them. But He did not say that this was for service. Instead He distinctly said that this power was for a) clothing, and b) to make them witnesses unto Him.

Power for Life

Although we know that their future ministry lay beyond this empowering, He did not at that time mention either service or gifts, but He did speak of life as a result of power. In other words this power is first of all power 'to be' — or to live; then, having being as a result of the power, (afterwards in logic but simultaneously in effect) being clothed with power. The thought is power upon power, or 'being' first, clothing second. As always, the Lord was speaking with precision. He was not using inexactitudes, or speaking platitudes, nor was he being needlessly repetitive, as He would have been had He meant that this endowment and reception was equipment specifically for service.

Luke tells us that at a much earlier date the Lord had already given the twelve power for service, He 'gave them power and authority over all devils and to cure diseases.' Beside this, shortly afterwards He also gave to another seventy 'authority to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy', assuring them that in their consequent ministry nothing would by any means hurt them. At the same time He plainly told them (and us) not to rejoice about it, as though to imply that it was almost nothing, and by comparison with the fact that their names were written in the book of Life, neither is it, for to have one's name in the book of Life is a man's entitlement to the Baptism in the Spirit.

The Energizing Power

From such uncomplicated scriptures, except a man be of an obstinate, carnal mind, it must be confessed that on the day of Pentecost, none of these stood in need of either power or gifts for service from the Lord, for they already had them, plus authority also. Not only so, for a long time before He even died they had been sent out by Him specifically to preach and to use what He had bestowed upon them. That is indisputable Bible fact. What then was the real purpose of the Baptism in the Spirit? If it was not for service, what does it accomplish and why mention power? What is the power for?

Before these questions are answered, we will look at one or two Pauline usages of the word 'power' in Ephesians. In a striking passage in chapter 1, verses 15-23 he speaks of believing according to the energy of the strength of God's might, which He inwrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. Then he proceeds to tell us that we must receive the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in or for full knowledge of God, so that we may know what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward

who believe according to that standard of truth. Later, in chapter 3 verse 7, he develops this relationship of energy and power, saying that his ministry was what it was, as a result of, and according to the grace given to him according to the energy or inworking of God's power. In other words, he is saying that this power is energizing force.

Witnesses to Christ

Developing this teaching still further, he says in chapter 3 verse 20 that this power which is energizing us must give rise to thought and request unto God, who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the working of that powerful energy. All of which reveals that neither Luke nor Paul believed or wrote that power is specifically or exclusively for service or the operation of gifts in the sense that is unmistakably implied by the majority of the advocates of the theory of initial evidence. The people who knew by direct knowledge derived from experience and inspiration, reveal that power is primarily for inward energy and outward clothing. By the Baptism in the Spirit, a person is made a being of power, with a view to living a life and exercising a ministry which will make him a witness to Christ.

It may be optimistically said that all this must mean and surely implies that such a man is equipped for service. That is true, and that is just the point; but to say that a man has by a certain experience been equipped for service is not the same as saying that he has thereby been empowered to be a witness to Christ. The apostles are the scriptural examples of this; as we have seen, they had been equipped with power, authority and gifts for specified service during the Lord's lifetime on earth, but they were not witnesses to Him in the way He wanted. The Baptism in Spirit alone could supply the special power for that; entirely new power, not a further supply of the powers they already had.

Power to 'be'

The power a person receives upon being baptized by the Lord Jesus in the Holy Spirit is life-power, that is power to be, or to live in and as a member of His body, having His life. Until Pentecost the disciples only had working power, they did not have this power to be. After Pentecost, as may be expected, they still retained and used that working-power which they had received from Him prior to His death, but what was infinitely more, from Pentecost onward they had His life also; the new power to be witnesses to Christ had come.

Before that they could only witness to His works; they did this by repeating or reproducing them. This was an effectual way of witnessing to the fact that someone had sent them to do His works, and the Lord did not expect anything more of them then. They could not witness to Him by personality at that time, for they had not received His life, only an amount of His working-power for limited ends. He was with them, but not within them, He was outside them. He was their Lord and Master and Leader and many other things as well, and they were His disciples, apostles and servants, but He was not their head and they were not sons of God and members of His body. They were with Him in His service, but not in Him in His life, nor was He in them in their life.

Life in the Spirit

It will therefore be seen that although no-one ought to attempt to serve the Lord until he or she is baptized in Spirit, that Baptism is not specifically for service, nor yet for gifts for service. That people do receive gifts and have power to serve following their personal Pentecost is quite normal. Receiving the greater gift of Life in the Spirit, it is only reasonable that His lesser gifts should be included in, or the intention to give them be implied by, the greater. It is because this is so, that the mistake has been made. Moreover, believing the purpose of the Baptism to be power for the kind of service which includes operation of spiritual gifts, it was not a great step for some to believe also that one of those gifts, namely the power to speak in an unknown tongue, could reasonably be the initial evidence of the Baptism, especially when it accompanied the experience. God's bounty was mistakenly thought to be a new law of the Spirit and was therefore imposed on men as necessity.

Begging the question, it could now be asked how it is that men could have and operate gifts of the Spirit before they were baptized in Spirit. Such a question reveals how deeply ingrained into hearts is the error that distribution and use of gifts is the direct and specific reason for the Baptism, whereas they are only an indirect consequence of it. The answer is quite simply that they had and used them by the same power by which all the Old Testament prophets and miracle-workers had and used them long before Christ came.

Witnesses to the Risen Christ

Throughout history God chose to raise up and use certain men at different times for His sovereign purposes on the earth. He did this either by direct encounter, as with Abraham and Moses, who respectively were the great patriarch and the mighty mediator of the nation of Israel, or more frequently by an anointing at the hands of another which should enable them to work in power and authority for His glory on the earth. This continued in Israel and Judah in unbroken line until the time of Malachi, who it seems, as John Baptist after him, was a prophet who did no miracle.

Directly following John Baptist's birth, God came on to the earth personally as Jesus of Bethlehem, later becoming known as Jesus of Nazareth, who besides working Himself, also chose and enabled men to serve with Him in His kingdom. During His lifetime all service was rendered by them under His sovereignty; He was among them as the Anointed, and He did as He would, distributing equally to whom He chose.

That is how all the specially selected disciples were able to operate gifts before Pentecost, and it is still the way by which the elect of God may have and operate gifts to this day. The difference lies only in relationship and position; whereas of old the gifts and power were distributed equally among a group of persons who were then not of the body by experience, today they are distributed severally within the body of Christ and may operate in a person from the time he or she is baptized into it. It is true that gifts are empowerings for service, but this is only in order that the person should rightly witness to the risen Christ, whose life they now live and whose working powers they may now share.

A New Heart

At this point it may be profitable to append a personal testimony. Some thirty-five to forty years ago the Lord was graciously pleased to baptize me in the Holy Spirit. At that time I had no clear understanding of what that really meant. I knew that I needed

the Holy Spirit and that I desperately needed a new heart. However, I knew nothing of Pentecostal things; in fact by traditional belief I was against them, and at times derided the gifts of the Spirit, especially Tongues. However, in His mercy, in spite of my unwarrantably partisan attitude, the Lord enabled me to reach the point of faith where I asked Him to baptize me in the Spirit. This He did, giving me a clean heart and filling it with the Holy Ghost, sanctifying me wholly unto Himself, and making me an entirely new person. The experience was memorable, clear-cut and of infinite sweetness to this day. I did not then speak in other tongues, though certainly I received power from on high, and but for the need for brevity many are the anecdotes that could be added here in illustration of that fact.

And they shall Prophesy

It was not until many months later, whilst in a prayer-meeting, that I entered into the realm of spiritual gifts, and this is how it happened. A woman present first spoke in tongues in controlled spiritual worship and then spoke out in a tongue loudly. At the conclusion of the tongue I said 'Lord, tell us what that means'. Much to my astonishment and to the astonishment of all the people present, the sound of the letter 's' at the end of the word 'means' had not fully died off my lips, when a torrent of words flowed out of my mouth in a continuous stream, stopping finally as abruptly as it commenced. Following the meeting, a brother said to me, 'I didn't know you had the gift of interpretation, brother North', to which I made reply, 'if that is what it was, neither did I!'

At that point I had not spoken one word in another tongue. However, the new-found ability to interpret tongues continued with me all the week (and does until this day) in regular use. On the following Lord's day morning, whilst the usual service was in progress, the Spirit of the Lord moved me to open my mouth and speak as during the past days, only upon this occasion there was no message in tongues preceding it. Upon the conclusion of the meeting, which was mighty and precious, the same man, a fellow campaigner, said to me, 'I didn't know you had the gift of prophecy, brother', to which I replied 'If that is what it is, neither did I'. Again I add that at this time I had not spoken one word in another tongue.

They shall Speak with Other Tongues

After this I saw God do miracles of healing, but still could not speak other than in my mother tongue. Then one morning, when kneeling by my bed in prayer and worship, strange words arose within me which through an aching throat I finally uttered in His presence. I was not seeking a tongue; no-one but the Lord was there; I was not, as I remember, even thinking about spiritual phenomena, but I started to speak in another tongue. What then began has remained, increasing in volume and range, though I seldom give messages in tongues in meetings.

No Initial Evidence

To gather up the facts and state the order of the demonstration of the oral gifts in my own experience: it was first Interpretation of Tongues, second Prophecy, third speaking in Tongues. How then can it possibly be true that the Initial Evidence of the Baptism in Spirit is speaking with tongues, for with me that demonstration came last in order of expression of oral gifts. To quote that 'the exception proves the rule' is to repeat an outworn fallacy. Any exception to a rule is a demonstration of the fact that

what is generally accepted as the rule is wrong. That the gift in operation during or following Baptism in the Spirit is generally Tongues is without controversy, but the fact that there are many cases in which this is not so proves that Tongues cannot be stated to be the initial evidence of the experience. Sometimes other spiritual gifts operate before tongues. Sometimes, in fact many times, no supernatural demonstrations accompany the experience at all.

The Sweet Fruit of Jesus

In the end it is the fruit of the Spirit as recorded in Galatians 5:22 & 23 that is the proof or evidence of the fact that a person has been baptized in the Spirit and is living and walking in the Spirit. In these verses there is a ninefold statement of the virtues of Jesus, and it is most wonderful that these inner qualities of Jesus' life should become the fruit of the Spirit indwelling the child of God. It is gloriously true and so obviously right, although no-one who is familiar with scripture and Jesus after the Spirit would for one moment think of limiting the Spirit's fruit to such a small 'bunch of grapes', however sweet and wonderful they may be.

Perhaps only the major attributes of the personal life of the Lord Jesus have been brought out in this passage; but even that is doubtful, for there is no mention of tenderness, compassion, sweetness, loyalty and a host of other glorious qualities of the Life of Jesus which are the fruits of the Spirit's permanent indwelling and working in us also. Wonderful as this list may be, it is obvious that it is even so only selective, for most certainly it is not comprehensive. Clearly the apostle simply included the particular virtues which were necessary for him to complete his instructions to the Galatians, and by omitting to mention some of Christ's many other virtues, he does not mean to imply that they are in any way inferior, nor that only those mentioned may properly be called the fruit of the Spirit.

But to conclude the matter, it is sincerely hoped that sufficient has been said to enable every man to stand firmly upon scripture, reason and experience, while refuting the theory of initial evidence so that souls may be guided into truth and the flock be guarded from destructive error. We do not need to formulate or propagate theories, we need only walk in truth and let our light so shine, that men shall know that we live in fellowship with God in the Spirit, as He said.

G.W.N.

26-02-01

First published August 1976. Revised July 1978 & May 1980.
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Go Up Into God

G. W. North, Rora 1987

This transcript is from www.biblebased.co.uk file: intogod.mp3, Disk: CD04

This transcript has been attempted by a hard-of-hearing listener, using a computer linked to a loop system, a device for hearing aid users. Where difficulties were experienced, there is a note like this one (audio unclear,...*probable, or possible text*). If you find any errors, please note them and send a correction list to the Bible Based Ministry website administrator. The text has been arranged in approximately 5 minute sections.

It is suggested that you read Exodus Chapter 24 before you listen to the audio message or read this transcript.

0 min:

I want to come with you into the book of Exodus again. You will remember that last night we finished up where we did because we'd been reading in that sixth chapter. I want to come in through to chapter twenty-four this morning. And in the fourth verse you will notice, that Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and so far as we know, that was the first writing of Scripture ever put down. When you open your Bible you start at Genesis, but Genesis was written, I am persuaded, much later, of course, during Moses's lifetime. He started not with the record of creation but with the record of the covenant which starts in chapter twenty, "God spoke all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Alleluia. Praise the Name of the Lord. They were the first words of inspired writ, God, Moses, wrote them down. Afterwards, the revelation continues and of course Genesis was put in the place that it should hold, speaking of creation, bearing in mind an age of sceptics that would be born in the twentieth century, and of course, earlier. And it's a wonderful thing to read the revelation in sequence. But when it started God didn't tell them about creation. I sometimes get a little bit worried when I hear so many choruses on about God being the Great Creator, and so on, and so on, and so on, of course He is, of course He is! But the greatest thing is, beloved, that He is a God who has entered into covenant with mankind. And that's the thing that Moses had to write. Amen. He wrote down the twentieth chapter of Exodus, the twenty-first chapter of Exodus, the twenty-second chapter of Exodus, the twenty-third chapter of Exodus, Amen. That's a tremendous thing, but let's start at the beginning of chapter twenty-four, verse one. God says to Moses, "Come up unto the Lord," Oh! Hallelujah! What an invitation! What an invitation! How about it, are you coming up to the Lord this morning? No? Come up! Unto the Lord, glory be to His Wonderful Name. Amen, it's alright to come out. I've brought thee out of the land of Egypt. I have brought thee out from under the burdens. I have brought thee out of the house of bondage. Glory be to the Name of the Lord, they're all connected, burdens, the house of bondage, and the land of Egypt. If you're in Egypt, that is, in the world, you will be bound by the god of the world. It doesn't matter, or how you may think you are not, as surely as you are worldly, to the degree to which you are worldly, to the degree to which you accept worldliness into your life and into your home.

5 min:

To the degree that you copy the fans, the stars, the great ones of this world, in dress, in language, in decoration, if you do that, I call it distortion, then to that degree, you are worldly. You and I are to be in this world, we can't be anywhere else and thank God we are, this is where we had to come to hear the gospel. Amen, and remember, when the blood was shed it was shed in the world. In Egypt, when redemption was brought into being, wrought in the world to bring them out of the world. That's fundamentally what it was all about. You say, "It was to bring them out of sin." Strangely enough, you never find the word "sin" in Exodus twelve. In Exodus twelve there's no talk about sin, did you know that? Seems you didn't, seems you didn't. That is because we follow the line of popular preaching and with a New Testament content in our thinking. But when you read through Scripture you will not find God mention sin at all. So it seems that God says, I have come into the world to purchase you and bring you out of it. For as soon as you stay in the world you are going to be in sin to whatever degree you're in it. Now keep that clear. You are to be in it but not of it. To any degree. That's a tremendous thing. That's what the Lord Jesus said, that's

not my idea, at least it has become my idea, I have adopted it, since Jesus said it. And it's a tremendous thing for us to understand it. And it's a wonderful thing to be out, in this degree, but beloved, you and I are to see that there are greater things even than that. How long we stopped, falteringly taking our little steps, inwardly groaning, think we're doing something wonderful, an elder comes along, of course we all need encouragement, and they stroke you nicely and say, "You're doing very well lovey, you're doing very well," and of course, well-meaning. But beloved, to be turned wholeheartedly on to the Scripture, Ah! I fear this is where the lack lies. To be turned scripts in the Scriptures loose or to turn the Scriptures loose on you is the function of every true man of God. It is not to temporise with your foibles or ideas, it is to declare plainly what the truth is, wonderful. The truth is here. This is the written truth of God and God wants us to enter into it. And God is not satisfied just to get people out of the world. And just not satisfied to do miracles for them. Wonderful isn't it. God did miracles upon miracles and still He hadn't talked to them about sin. You'll find it if you read through Exodus. This is because they were so embedded in sin and sin was so much their nature and this is why they groaned and moaned and told lies about God, the redeemed people, told lies about God. And they did all sorts of things, they didn't sort of wilfully set out on a line of defamation of His character, it was simply because they lived in their circumstances, and everything got the bung, of course, they were born in sin, like the rest of us, and the revelation was coming very, very, gradually unto them, step by step, and God did a miracle. But, Oh! How deep they still were in sin. You know it's like that today, God does miracles for people and they can sing and dance and shout and they're all encouraged to, and why shouldn't they, and still they find they've got this deadly thing inside.

10 min:

Sin! Sin! A miracle on your body doesn't get rid of your sin. You do understand that don't you? A miracle of deliverance, say, setting you free from, let's say, the evil of nicotine, because it is an evil and you'll destroy your body with it! It doesn't get rid of your sin, it's just broken a habit, that's all it has done. The Lord wants us to see, and of course, by these things, if you like to think of it this way, we are guided in the nature of signposts to a greater glory. A more wonderful demonstration of power, and, God says, "Oh no, it's got to be more than this, more than this, more than this." Amen. And so God says, "You come up to me, Moses." Hallelujah! Now Moses had had a wonderful revelation of the burning bush, where the glory of the Lord came down to earth, you know the story, he saw the bush flaming with the presence of God. Fire then, how he had to come near and God spoke to him and all the rest that we referred to last night. But now God says, "Look, I've come down to you, Moses, now I want you to come up to me. Alright. I've come down to you, now I want you to come up to me, for there's something more wonderful that I have in mind for my people." You will excuse me putting words into the mouth of God, I'm but a poor human being. I'll gather you up into my thinking if you will come. And here then, is the glory and the wonder of the Lord. He says, "Come up unto the Lord, thou, and Aaron and Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship ye afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the Lord, but they, that is, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders, they shall not come nigh, neither shall the people go up with him." God's very clear, Moses came and told the people all the words of Lord, and all the judgments, and all the people answered with one voice, and said, all the words which the Lord has said, we believe, does it say that, NO!, WE WILL DO! Amen. Just to distinguish the great gap there lies between believing and doing. That's the tragedy.

Couldn't help thinking this morning when the requests were brought for prayer about dear old brother Lowe, you know what I mean by old, that's an affectionate term. I believe he's younger than some people in the room, but, there he is, I thought of him and we're well, well away from him. And now don't immediately think that I'm going to say that God's power can't work from afar, of course it can. We can pray for people here and a miracle happens in Australia, something like that, that's the great glory of God, because His Spirit encircles the earth in a flash. What a marvellous truth it all is. And my mind went to this, that that great incident in the New Testament, you will know of those four men who brought their friend in a bed to the Lord, and it says, that when He saw their faith, I'm jumping about in the story a bit, which, by the way, please don't only apply to the four that brought him.

15 min:

There was a fifth there, he had faith too. It's great for a man who's poorly and really unable to do something for himself, that he has some friends who believe with him, and aren't poorly, and can do things. Hallelujah. The impotent that can believe, and yet can't do anything, its grand that they have friends who are potent and full of power and can do something. Amen. That all saints should combine and things should be done, for this is what you read. That the moment when the bed came down through the roof to the feet of Jesus, listen, you may say, well, how in the world could they break through a roof and drop the bed right down at the feet of Jesus. Saints will always come to Jesus, in homes like that. True faith will reach Jesus, wherever he is, even if you're breaking through in the dark. Even if you've got veils over your eyes, if you've got a roof between, or the world between, or the devil between, faith, death, always on the spot. Amen. Right down to the feet of Jesus. The next word is this. When He saw their faith, well it was all action, it's what they'd done! They did this, they did that, they did the other. He wasn't looking for their belief, belief and faith aren't the same, we may think they are. I know that they are very closely joined in the Scripture, I know that. But this is where we get, (audio unclear,... *get, see we take a thing*),... and we believe, and they are theories and they're all theories until they are put into action. When He saw their faith. It was all work, work, work, work. They got hold of him, brought him, carried him, got up on the roof with him, tore the roof open, dropped him into the midst and that's what Jesus called faith. His eyes weren't searching their hearts to see whether their motives were right or this, there's this and that and the other of course (audio unclear,... *His eyes do see in your heart*). He saw what they had done. That's right. And He did something then. And I thought about that this morning with dear Bert Lowe, you know just to send him to Jesus, get hold of him, I wonder whether you did, whether you got hold of his bed or what it was and you just brought him to Jesus, I wonder whether you did, Jesus does the rest though. You're not struggling to hang on, I wonder, I wonder if it'll happen, I wonder if I'll have to take him back home again in his bed, I'm often wondering about that, I wondered this and I wondered that, but there was no alternative but healing. Now. When they did the work. Hallelujah. You know you can read Paul's faith, "The work of Faith." The work of faith, not works, but the work of faith. Faith that makes you do something and not sit there or stand there saying, I believe, I believe. That's the whole thing. And it's a great and glorious thing to do. When, you see. I know that we can vary this whole talk about faith and there's many aspects of it, but this is what got hold of my heart this morning. To bring dear Bert Lowe, (audio unclear,... ...), Amen. Wonderful isn't it. Alright, you see, Moses was called up into the presence of God. He said, "And bring all these others with you Moses," you can do that, but you.

20 min:

Because God wanted to give another revelation to His people. It's always like this. I want to speak to you preachers, teachers, leaders, elders. You that stand up and give words, you have tremendous responsibilities. The people will never get revelation if you don't get it first. You understand that. The grinding repetition of the old, old things. Now I know that nothing gets old in eternity and that the longest stored wine is the sweetest. Or at least it has a greater bouquet I believe. I'm not an expert in that realm. I've never been wined and dined and will never be. And I'll never take men out and wine and dine them in order to coerce them into my group you know, in quotes. Here is the greatest glory of God, beloved, that we move without bribery. And we move on a line of set truth and we don't hold saints hostage to worldliness. We move on the realms of God and in the end you go alone. Perhaps I ought to be speaking to the brethren's' conference, it's going to follow this. I don't know. But here then is the truth. Moses had to go up and get a fuller revelation of God's heart. I say, Oh! God! Give us men of this calibre. Oh! God! Give us men that would give up everything. Moses had longed for the children of Israel, given up their worldliness, and the world had to give them up. He had long ago forsaken the land of Egypt. Long ago. He may not have forsaken it in honour, he may not have forsaken it in a way that we should have liked, but he did it! And he chose, rather than riches, and money and prosperity, I hope you've all got your ears wide open. He chose to suffer affliction with the people of God. And he wanted none of the treasures of this world. He didn't want it's gold, he didn't want it's silver, he didn't want its accolades, he didn't want its positions. He didn't want anything that this world could confer upon him. For he knows that everything that comes along this line, comes tainted by satan. All the lot of it, and it will destroy. It cannot help but destroy. Even inanimate things that are amoral and have no power, we think. There is a power that directs them. There is a hand that gives them to you. There is an authority under which all these things function. The powers that be are ordained of God, but the wrong people are occupying the power, that's the thing that's wrong, the very power that satan uses was originally ordained and gifted by God but he has prostituted his power, he has gone wrong, and he has not so much usurped the position, as carried on in that thing, and is using it to the destruction of himself and everybody else. That's what he's doing. Now I didn't intend to say all that. (audio unclear,... *you see what I mean by people trying to get more from this side*). Let's go on. Here in this great and glorious way that God had elected to lead His people. Moses, as you see in verse two, as we've read, he had to go alone, in the end. Brave soul that he was, I'll point it out to you presently, and it says that Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments, and all the people answered with one voice and probably, if you had been standing among them you would have said, Oh! Hallelujah! We're all at one! Isn't it marvellous. Thank you, thank you Lord, they said.

25 min:

That's what you would have said, Ah, tremendous emotional release. Glory to God, most people I know need emotional release. It's where it goes to when it's released, that's the thing. And it says this. They answered with one voice, All the words which the Lord has said we will do, and Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. May I put in something that is not in the text but is manifestly true. That is that the words which the Lord had spoken to him so far, for you will know that the Lord spoke many, many, many more words to him. There's much more in the law than is contained in

the twentieth and twenty-first, twenty-second and twenty-third chapters of Exodus, as you will very well know. But he wrote it down, Glory! And he did it with a purpose. I don't suppose, I don't know, I'll ask him myself when I see him. I'm going to see him you know, one day, or, one eternity, I'm not quite sure what. But here is the great thing, I'll be able to ask him a lot of things that I still want to know, I want to know more things than I know, but, you know, beloved, some of the things I know but let's go right on. And it says this. He rose up when he'd done that, when he'd done that. It says he got up early in the morning, fancy staying up all night writing that down and then being up early in the morning. What a man he was. You're done in aren't you? About Wednesday you were saying, Oh, dear...yes. There, that's what you'll be saying, won't you? Are you a man or half a man? That's what I want to know. Praise the name of the Lord. You can train your body which way you want to train it, did you know that. I won't give illustrations, that wouldn't be fair. And he rose up early in the morning and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrifices and peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. What's he going to do with the other half? He put half of the blood on the altar, not all of it! Keep that clear. Not all of it. The other portion was reserved for another purpose just as important. And we forget the importance of the other side, which, in the end, is the only things that makes the blood on the altar useful to us. Leave out this part and the other part is no good to you, will be your condemnation. Here then is the great and glorious truth. He took the book of the covenant, he'd stayed up writing it. He took it fresh, before, may I say, the ink was dry, you will understand what I mean, almost. And he presented it to the people and he read it. First he told them, in their ears, then he read it to them and confirmed what he said. Glorious! And I want you to know this, that the written word was confirmation of the spoken word.

30 min:

You keep that clear. Since the word has been written, the spoken word has got to be a confirmation of the written word. Amen. That it works and it is true. In the mouth of two witnesses, the written word and the mouth that speaks it. Coming through from God. Here then is the truth. He read it in the audience of the people, and they said, "All that the Lord hath said we will do, and be obedient." And be obedient. Obedience is something that is absolutely hated in these days, we've even had it deleted from the marriage book. That's right, (audio unclear,... *I'm glad to say that one here isn't done like that*), I won't conduct a marriage service if you want that deleted so don't ask me. Amen. Here then is the great and glorious truth. For it isn't only women who should be obedient. What a tremendous truth it is. This word obedience is obnoxious in the ears of so many, so called, Spirit filled Christians. You see, the word, "obedience" implies that you're doing as you are told. That's right. It implies that you have responded to a commandment, please take this into your heart, and not to a 'call', this magic word, 'call'. People say, "Oh, I don't feel 'called'", but, ah, see last night, did you feel 'called' to wash up? It sounds funny doesn't it, but I mean it. I mean it. Every, do you see, you, elevate a person, you exalt them if you give them a call. Please will you come. Would you like to come. And so, in your majesty you rise up and say, Oh! Yes!, I'll respond to the "call". You love it don't you! You're a King. You're a Queen. Oh! How you love it! Then you've never been reached yet. You're to do as you're told. It's a magic word. Do you feel 'called' to the mission field. Do you feel 'called' to this? Do you feel 'called' to do that?. That's why I liked that first

hymn. I like that hymn. You know. Stand up for Jesus ye soldiers. Now there's one thing that soldiers do not get. "Calls!" They get commandments! Where duty calls. I'm not going to wait for a call. Do you think I should go there? Oh Lord, do you...., Oh, I'm going to pray about it. Fiddlesticks! You don't know what prayer is. And you don't know the grounds upon which it exists. That's the tragedy. It might be the tragedy in every fellowship represented here. You don't feel 'called' to clean stairs. You don't feel 'called' to do this. You don't feel 'called' to work with the baby. You don't feel 'called'. Now, if you're not able, you're not able, that's understood. But don't hide behind this word 'call'. Everybody that knows, including me, sees right through that. The art of success, I'll ask Norman, I'll ask every real man of God in this room. The art of success in the ministry, is getting up and doing things you don't feel called to do. Am I right or wrong? That's right. Oh, I'm 'called' to wait on a God says a man, when there's so much work to be done, I'm 'called' to get off into a quiet place. Yes, listen, let me tell you a story. Recently, I don't know whether I'll get down to this, recently, I was in Zimbabwe, lovely place, I can't understand why everybody doesn't want to go and work in Zimbabwe, marvellous place.

35 min:

Alright. I was called to go out to lunch one day away from Ameva Farm [laughter]. This, sir, was a call, an invitation. Nobody commanded me to go to the lunch. I went, with one purpose in mind. To have lunch, no, not particularly. To talk about the Lord, I went. Godly people that asked me to go, they were Christians. The only Christians in Zimbabwe do not live on Ameva Farm, you understand that. They're dear ones, and we had a nice lunch. And at lunch, the hostess said, "I've got something I want to say to you." So I said, "Well, what is it?" She said, "I'm ashamed really to say it." I said, "Never mind," seeing that things are quite public and there were about six or seven of us round the table. I didn't think it was anything that shouldn't be said, at least, in semi-publicity. And she began to say, "Well, it's about the farm." And away she went. And again she repeated, "I'm almost afraid to tell you about it, but I see I must." So I listened politely. And she said, "You see, when your people," I don't know why they call them 'my people', but I suppose I am a sort of a reference point. She said, "When your people came out here, they said that God had sent them and they felt the call of God upon them." And she said, "When we heard it, we said to one another, hmmm, well we'll wait and see." She said, "I'm ashamed to say this, but it's true. Didn't we?" To her husband. He said, "Yes." "You see," she said, "We had so many people have come out here, been sent by God, to do a work in Zimbabwe. From this place, to some other place. And they've got started, and then when the things got hard, and when the droughts came, and when the difficulties came, they got a 'call' somewhere else! We admire your people." she said. Unsolicited testimonial. Someone who doesn't come to the farm much. And they said if they could they'd send all the children on their estate to be educated there. That's what they told me. She said, "We admire them, they'd gone through, they'd stuck it." They this, that, and the other. It's ever so easy to imagine and conjure up a 'call' to somewhere. And these are people saying they were baptised in the Spirit and filled with the Holy Ghost. So they are, 'till the difficulties come. That's the tragedy. You see. What a tremendous thing it is. Alright. We will be obedient. We will do what the Lord says. We will, every word, we will. That's right. They were spelling out their own failure from a heart that was built up on miracle upon miracle without their spirits being changed in them. This is the tragedy. Not that the miracles shouldn't have taken place. Allelujah. God did them. But what's the result when something wonderful happens in your life. Is it an explosion into a great

shout of “Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!” And we’re all lifted up and excited by it and joining in with this, that and the other. Or is it a heart, beloved, that’s saying, Oh! God!

40 min:

I sometimes think that the mouth that says nothing is greater than the mouth that says a lot of things that they don’t really mean. Or, seems that they just speak out of momentary excitement. Bless the name of the Lord, Amen. Even God had to do something greater than speaking. He had to make the Word He spoke become flesh. He had to do it. That’s God. The Word had to be worked out in flesh. Glory be to God. Salvation came from that, it won’t come from anything else. Nothing. Now what a glorious thing it is, let’s go on. Here, we’re reading the truth. Moses, verse eight, took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, behold, the blood of the covenant, which God hath made with you, not just out of the goodness of His heart, though, it was that, but concerning all these words. That’s the covenant. God only made a covenant with you concerning all the things that He has said, that’s all. Even the new covenant, God never changes on the basis of covenant making to whatever people He makes them, or in whatever form He makes them. Glory be to the Name of the Lord. We can be sure of him. When this great word ‘trust’ came up this morning. Oh! Trust! What a word is trust beloved. Trust means that you’re not struggling to believe any more. Trust means that you’re not always invading God’s mind with this, that and the other. That you trust and you’ll know, alleluia! Knowledge is beyond belief, did you know that! It’s beyond belief. Trust is beyond faith. Trust is that into which faith should bring you. Amen. Trust is rest. Trust leaves me so that I don’t fret any more. Trust instates me in the security of God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Trust, trust means me asking God for none of these things, like Jesus said when He rose from the dead, or just before He went to the cross He said, in the day that you see me, apart from the resurrection, you won’t ask anything. How about that. Have you ever read John’s gospel? You will not ask me a thing. How about that. Well, how about it? In relationship to what to call your prayer life? What a wonderful and glorious thing it is to meet a trustful person, not just someone who can be trusted in, but are full of trust in their own faith. They don’t worry, though, don’t get alarmed. They don’t keep badgering on any of these lines. They’re supposed to be a testimony of faith. They trust. Amen. Trust is something that somehow holds all the promises and commandments of God in its hand. It’s wonderful. I can’t explain it. If you can, stand up, please, and tell me, and my heart will know whether you’re saying the truth or not. Trust has no worry. Trust doesn’t fret. Oh! We expect a bright tomorrow, don’t we? Amen. Glory be to God.

45 min:

What it is. Substance. Reality. It’s an impartation from God, it’s of His Being, of His inspiration, of His thinking, of His attitude, who and what He is, trust. This is how Father and Son and Holy Ghost exist together. Where, where is it, in the churches? Now may the Lord lead us on. It says this. This is the blood of the covenant. Behold it, He said, behold it, where? On the altar. Some of it, on me, look, it’s sprinkled on me, it’s all over me. I’ve got the blood. See it! See it! Amen. Personal contact. The application of the blood to me. Amen. Conscious of it. How can you not be? So that you don’t have to plead it anymore. It’s on your clothes man, it’s on you, woman, how can you need to plead it? Plead it? There’s one who’s pleading. His name is Jesus. That isn’t to say you shouldn’t learn to intercede. That’s another point we may

come to before the end of the week, I don't know. Here is the glory of the realisation. Here is the confidence of prayer. Here is the confidence of intercession. Here is the knowing. Yes. It's sprinkled on you man, on you, woman. This will take panic out of your soul. This will take fretfulness out of your being. This will bring you to rest. It will shut your mouth and open your heart. That's what it will do until you can open your mouth in streams of living glory. Moving out to men and women. Bringing them the reality of God, not imposing a new idea on them. Not just merely to give them a new insight into Scripture. So the Lord wants us see the wonder of these things. I know it was only in an old covenant, if I may say that. But I want you to keep the basis of the old covenant, of every covenant, is the same, because both the old covenant and the new covenant are developments, adaptations and applications of the eternal covenant. In the end there's only one covenant. It may sound strange to you when you've got a book in your hand which says old covenant and new covenant. What a marvellous thing it is. Only then it was outward. I said last night. It was impossible for God to show some things under the old covenant. Amen. Can you look inside and see your inner man that never wears trousers, or dresses? Can you look inside and see yourself, sprinkled with that blood. Can you? Amen. Oh! It's a marvellous thing to know the purpose of God. And when he'd done that, (audio unclear,... *Old Moses, Verse 8.*) It says he went with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and they saw the God of Israel: and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, as it were the body of heaven in its clearness. You may have an emendation in the margin which gives you, "The very heaven." And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He laid not His hand.

50 min:

Who now wonders? Because you have read that no man has seen God at any time, haven't you, haven't you? Yes, that's right. Well, you know, Moses did, only he saw His back parts. Did you know that? Especially when you have to meet Jehovah's witnesses on these kinds of things, they're all gened up along their line and want to disprove that Jesus Christ is God, because then you could sin. It's as simple as that you see. And as banal and ignorant as that. Here is the truth. They went up and they saw God. Now you see this is marvellous. I don't know where you are. To which point you've come. Thank God, (audio unclear,... *at last,*), according to last night, you're out of Egypt, and your bonds have been broken, and you're not bearing the burden, bless God if you're out, Allelujah! That's wonderful! But I want to say, so where are you? You see, at the bottom of the mountain, (audio unclear,... *you know what was happening*), and there are lots of people, they get as far as this, they build an altar. The word is written, they read the written word, there it is, or somebody reads it for them. Part of them couldn't read anyway, perhaps seventy-five per cent, perhaps ninety-nine per cent of them, couldn't read. They hadn't had the education that Moses had had. How wonderfully God prepares a man for it. And then he saw through it all and he thought it was all a load of rubbish and, thank God, I mean, all the things in Egypt, he left those all behind. And he could write. He could read. Bless the Lord. And he had done that. It was when they'd got the written word. They could have that, you see, wonderful! You could stand around the altar and say, "The Sacrifice!" Thank God for the book. Thank you Lord for childhood, you've got it. It's all there. Bless the Lord. You've come as far as that. But God says, I want you to come higher. Upon the basis of the blood shed. Upon the basis of the sacrifice, that was all around the bottom. Upon the basis of all your knowledge of the altar and everything that connected with it. Will anybody come up higher than that? Will they? You're

expecting the elders of every group to go there. Those who would be considered the nobles. And as for me, I wouldn't have anybody for an elder unless they did. Not me, you may, it's surprising to what a low standard we are prepared to move for God in these days. Seventy of the elders. In other words there were more than seventy. Seventy of them. Bless God. Only, as you will know, I don't know how (audio unclear,... *many million or so people there were there*). Out of that lot, and He chose the seventy. Nadab, Abihu and the great High Priest Himself. And they went up. Come on, come up. Bless God for the blood. Bless God for the blood. Now, I don't want you to see, "The blood of God", I want you to see, "The God of the blood". See, on the basis of the blood of God, excuse me using that term, it has upset lots of people, especially when it's been written, but here it is. He says, now upon the basis of the blood. I want you to see Me. I touched it last night, remember? I've heard of thee, with the hearing of my ears. Thou shalt have no other gods before me! And the next thing, you are not to imagine me to be like this, beloved either, you are not to make a God out of your own heart. (audio unclear,... *An effigy of God, many people are doing this in these days, it would disdain them ...*) to have one little thing in their home that spoke of accepted idolatry. Now, this is what God it is suffering from. Wrong projections of him.

55 min:

Excuse me, Lord, I know you're not suffering in this sense. But this is the whole thing. People's imaginations of Him. What they think He's like. From their experience of Him. Trying to size up their experience with what the Bible says. And they don't tally. So we make a God of our own. It fits into some snug corner inside, a thing we'd never have in the corner of our room, in stone, or silver or wood. I am unique, says God, you cannot imagine Me. You can't. Blessed be the Name of Lord. "I'm greater than you know". Here is the Lord and this is the very place that the gospel comes from, beloved, greater than we know, greater than I know. That's right. There isn't a person in this room, that you think you know, turn round and have a look at them. And I want to tell you, he or she is greater than you know. Well, she's only my wife, she's..., well, no, we won't say that. He's only my husband, we'll allow that. Here is the truth. She's greater than you know, man. He's greater than you know, woman. Don't you think you know them. Too many people come to me, they've lived with a man or a woman for ten years, "... And I thought this, and I thought that, and he was this, and he was that, she was this and she's..., and now....." Well. That's the story of the divorce courts. He's greater than you know. On the basis of this blood shed say, "Thank you, thank you, Jesus, thank you, thank you, Jesus!" And you thought, Oh! It's so wonderful. We've never been able to thank Him enough and we don't thank Him just by saying we thank Him. That's the point. Though it's good to teach us to be thankful. I taught my children, "Say thank you to mummy." that's right. My children, when asking for something, couldn't say, "I want the jam please. I said please, didn't I?" I'd say no, but you must say, "Please, may I have the jam." that's the way to train your child, to understand that they put "please", first. If it comes at the end, it almost comes as a demand. You've got to get the spirit of your children into your hands, you've got to mould the ways of the flesh. It's great to be thankful. Wonderful, and wonderful to say that you're thankful. But Aaron's seen God. These men. I don't know where I'm going to place them. Let's place them half way up the mountain shall we? They're there. Seventy of them. They saw the God of Israel. Listen to this. I told myself I'd be through by the time some of you mums had to go up for your children. I'm not so sure. But anyway. There's another day. Here is the

thing. This book's so full of truth, how can you leave it? How can you leave it? Do you know there was a time, I don't want to keep living in nostalgia, that I can remember a conference we had in the early days, Norman will remember. When every time I tried to stop, they said, "Go on, go on, go on", and I finished up preaching for nearly six hours. I had to stop at one period so people could use the necessary places, and then we just started again. What a people. Yes. Amen. The appetite has gone. We want to have praise sessions now. We don't want to know what God says, we want God to hear what we say. That's what praise is, didn't you know that?

60 min:

Should be! Here then is the truth. It says they saw this, the things that were under His feet. As it was clear, as clear, as clear! They saw, knew what they saw. Yes. And it says, and upon these people, that word "Nobles" is a great word, means "corners", you know, there are lots of cornerstones. All elders should be noble, and be a cornerstone, I can't stop on that at the moment. He didn't lay His hand on them. He didn't lay His hand. And they saw God, and then, and then, they sat down and ate. And that's as far as they got. Stomach won, stomach won. The flesh won. God knew what He was dealing with. He knows what's going to win in you. They saw God. You'd have thought they'd have been prostrate wouldn't you? I mean, I imagine, I really do, that when I see the Lord, I won't be skipping and dancing. I don't know might be wrong, perhaps you can correct me, perhaps you've got better ideas, when I see God. I might spend the first half of eternity on my face. I don't know. To see God. There's some of these old Church of England men knew better than we do today, really. Father of Jesus, (audio unclear,... *loves reward* ...), for what rapture it would be, prostrate before Thy Throne to lie and gaze, and gaze, and gaze and gaze on Thee. And your eyes will be where your spirit fed. You'll drink in and drink in and you'll learn more from that than a thousand praise sessions. Let me tell you. That's what they used to write. Hallelujah. Well, they say, God inhabits the praises of Israel, well, of course He does, but you think that's the only place He lived. That's the tragedy, short-sightedness. Harping on one thing. Until the (audio unclear,... *note*) comes, and I get tired of it. They say, "I thought you liked praising the Lord, well, I hope, you see I do". May the Lord open all our hearts and eyes beloved. You see, they got there, they saw God and sat down and ate. And we might read that and say, how wonderful. Do you know they even sat down, eating, looking at the Lord, now wasn't that marvellous. Absolutely marvellous. And so it is. And the Lord said to Moses, "Come up Moses, you come up out of this. You come up. You come to me Moses." Do you have to be a Moses, do you have to be a mighty man? To get something like this. No, listen, listen to me. Do you remember what Jesus said about John Baptist, and this includes Moses, now listen. He said, "A greater than John Baptist has not been born of women." And Moses was born of a woman, so was David, so was Solomon, so were Isaiah, and all of them, they were all born of women. And He says, "There's not been a greater than John Baptist." It was all focused into that one purpose, one person. And He says, "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." You think of that. Now if Moses could have this, and this is why it's in the Bible, how much more we, how much more?

65 min:

Come up Moses, He says, come up. Moses, when you get up the mount, I'll give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments that I have written; that thou mayest teach them. I'm not quite sure whether He's referring to the people, or the things that

he's written, I'm not quite sure, both, I guess. The only one really qualified to be a teacher, beloved, is the one who's gone up to God. Did you know that. That's what it says about elders. Acts 15. And there are people down at the bottom of the Mount and they say, "Oh! The blood, the sacrifice, thank you Lord!", and I'm not mocking. So we should. And there are some people there saying, "Oh, we've seen God, we've seen God, and God says, it's all good as far as it goes, Moses, you come up. This is the trouble. So many people are good as far as they go. But, Oh! The goal beyond. Into the beyond. Oh! The goal is of the highest, than which you can go no higher. Here it is. Moses rose up and his minister, Jesus. You will know Joshua is the Old Testament noun for Jesus. Jesus, in His minority, was under the law of Moses, you keep this very clear. Amen. Until He fulfilled it in His own wonderful way. I just give you preachers a lead for further thought. He went up with Moses. Yes. They went up into the mount of God. They started at the bottom of the Mount, which, if I may use the word, was awash with blood, and the smoke of the sacrifice was drifting around, and the 12 pillars stood, immovable as stone. There they were, yes. That's where it all started. Up, up, up. The seventy said, we've seen the Lord, I'm hungry, let's have a meal. All right. Wonderful isn't it. In verse fifteen, Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the Mount. There's a place my precious brother, my sister, that's blotted out from your view into which you cannot see, unless you will go, and no preacher can tell you about it. Not properly. The place where you go up, into the mount. It is a brave man, for it says this in seventeen, "The sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of God." It was as though God was reaching down, saying, come up, Moses. I'm wanting you too. I want to eat you. I want to devour you Moses. I want to fill you with my glory.

70 min:

I want you to be my food. Don't think I'm taking it too far will you? Here is the great and glorious thing. And he goes up there. Where Joshua was at this point, I don't know, we lose sight of him. But God is telling you that Jesus, in His minority was under Moses' law. He was circumcised the eighth day of the month, He went to the synagogue. He read from the prophecy. He went into all this, Hallelujah! It was His wont to go. He heard the reading from the veemar judgments' feet every Saturday. He fulfilled it. Glory be to the name of Lord. And then, as you know, latterly, He comes out in all His glory. Amen. But we're concentrating on Moses at the moment. He's a man just like us and up he went. Come up, Moses. Six days, the cloud covering the mount and the glory abiding there. I'm reading verse sixteen. The seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud. Do you see when God called Moses at this juncture, **WHEN HE HAD FULFILLED HIS COMMANDMENTS!** When he had obeyed, that's when the call reached him. That's when the glory was available. And he went up into it, and he was there forty days and forty nights. And he didn't call out to the elders, please bring me up some food, I'm hungry, I'm a natural man like you, he left them with their food. He left them with it. So many people are content to be with the things and feed upon the things of their own making and production. Albeit starting from God's original provision, such as corn, making bread from it. See, such as wine, making drinks, water, making wine from it. They're all content to do that. It's wonderful. They see, but not beyond the cloud. They see, but not the glory. They think they do. Isn't it glorious, that we see, we see, and they could come down, as they did. They all descended the mount. The elders forsook it. You say what, yes, of course they did, Moses was so long, and you can find them saying at the end. Listen, they were all there, Aaron was down there, he'd forsaken his post up the

mountain. He couldn't wait, so had Hur, Nadab and Abihu and all the nobles, they'd all forsaken their post, and went down, and this was their cry, up, Aaron, make us a god, but as for this Moses, we wot not what's become of him. His hare-brained scheme, his talk about this, his going up into the mount. What's happened to him and poor Joshua who was carried away with his dreaming. But he wasn't. You go up, stay with God. And when he came down he found an idol. As for this Moses we wot not what's become of him, where's he gone? He's gone away beyond us, beyond our sight. He's passed into God. He's passed into God.

75 min:

He reached the top. He didn't only forsake the pleasures of Egypt, he didn't just run away from all the worldly things. He wasn't content just to be a saviour, if I may put it that way, you know what I mean, more or less. He'd got something inside, I must have it, I must go. I don't know what his wife thought, I don't know what his children thought. I don't know anything about that. There comes a time when a man doesn't know what his own flesh-and-blood think. And in a sense he doesn't care, or think. They may misinterpret, they may misunderstand. But there's a place I must reach. There's a goal I must attain unto. There's a top that's in the glory. I must go, I hear the call. But you'll never hear it 'till you keep the commandments you say, we are not under the Old Testament, I know you're not. But Jesus gave a lot of commandments, didn't He? Oh! Lord! It's a one man's gift, it's a one woman's gift, that beyond the wish of the moment, knows, (audio unclear,...[many breaks and beeps in the audio between 76-78 minutes, the gist of which, when patched together, is:-] *"I can't stay down here at the bottom saying 'Come to the altar, come to the blood, come to the sacrifice, Oh, I can't just stay on that.' Hallelujah! For every evangelist that there is in the world, I mean a true one.*) A man, he says, I can't stay there Lord, my feet are in it, I'm haunted in it. Bless God! I know inside, come on, what it's all about. And last night, we sang, which you be free from the power of, or, your burden of sin, there's power in the blood, there's power in the blood. And what I want to say, beloved, is that the power in the blood wants to bring you into the power of the glory and the knowledge of the Lord, and it's the same power, that's right, it was the same mountain. They were down at the bottom of the mountain and here seventy or so are staying halfway up. They say, we've got visions of God, we've see this, we've seen the other, and God's says, "Come up Moses, it's beyond all that." based on it, but beyond it! And so few there are who go there. And you've been bought for it. It's not finished.

80 min:

You've been bought for it, don't you see. Don't make yourself content with this, you can if you want. But if I know a true child of God, he can't make himself content for long. God has to make you content, with His glory. Changed from glory unto glory. We know all the phrases, beloved, but who among us has gone up into God, who has been gathered up there. I don't know, not for me to judge. I wondered if I may tell you a personal incident. Excuse the "I". But if I don't say it there are some in here that will be thinking of it. I can remember a time, many years ago now, for as my daughter once remarked to some girlies with whom she was playing, when I left off working with my hands in the business that God allowed me to sell and by His grace. Many, many years ago, she told all the neighbours' children that, "My dad don't do any work now". That's what she said, that was her concept of work. I think I've worked a lot harder since, but, nevertheless, I can remember a time even beyond that, and was for

me, seems that it all had sprung. I worked in the paper mills, where the noise was dreadful. If you know anything about paper-making, I was in the paper-making trade. I worked there when the noise rolled like thunder in your ears as they dragged out the fibres of the rag to make the best paper such as best bank notes are made of, that sort of thing. And I was passing by this particular place, it was my duty to go and stand at a certain spot to watch the delivery of the drawn out fibre, you see. And I remember stepping down, as clear, as clear as some of you can remember the day you were born again. I stepped down and started to walk across and stopped, and everything faded, and I passed in, I passed in. I know that everything (audio unclear,... ..). For I heard the tinkle of the golden bell in the pomegranate, must have been the robes of our High Priest in heaven, don't tell me he's not wearing golden bells and pomegranates, don't tell me that, I know, and I passed in. There wasn't any noise. There was a quietness, and a hush, and my spirit, how long it lasted I cannot tell, a moment, two moments, three moments and I was in the glory of the Lord and wrapped up in it. And then I came to. I wasn't even kneeling, I wasn't fasting and praying. I wasn't doing anything, I was walking about my ordinary business and I was through. I don't say that too often. But so far as I know it's the source of all the ministry that God gave me. And is to this day. And a man sitting in this room was bold enough once to say to me, he said, "I sit and talk to you, then all of a sudden you're gone. You go somewhere, don't you?" He was the first man that had ever said it, and I said, "Yes, I do."

85 min:

It's my spirit going out of my body? No! Maybe the Lord didn't want me to hear the mans' chatter. He used to shut up. And I'd come out with the knowledge of the glory of God. Now, perhaps I oughtn't to have said that, but I know there's a place, beyond. You say, "Are you psychic?" I'm as thick as two planks. No! Nothing of that. God. God. If I'm not careful I'll go there now. I love the place of God's abode. I love the joy of His presence. I love the wonder of the Fellowship of the Father and the Holy Spirit with Christ, my King. Come on, beloved, where are you? Don't strive to have what I have, I don't know how God will deal with you. I've never lusted after Moses experience. I wasn't thinking of it. Wonderful Lord. Do you believe that you've been Godded with God? Do you believe you've been Christed with Christ? Do you know what the Baptism of the Spirit is all about? Do you know? Do you know, beloved? The mountain's open, there's always room at the top. Downstairs, down below there are pillars, all stone of course. Down there, there's an altar, stone, of course. Down there, there's fire, there's smoke, there's sacrifice. There's the written word, glory to God for it, don't let anybody think I despise them. It's because of these things of Calvary and the blood of God. It's because of them. But Oh! What a tragedy, when men and women come thus far saying, my burdens have been lifted, my bondage has been broken, I've come out, I'm following on. But it's all to know the Lord. Father. You'll have to go higher. I heard a man say once about the Ark, and I really must stop, don't want to, I heard a man say once about the Ark that it was built in three storeys, and he said, there's still plenty of room at the top. Elephants in the bottom, they're in, they're saved. They're in on the bottom floor though. And when Moses let out the Ark, the dove, or the Holy Ghost, he let him out the window at the top. Didn't open the door for the gigantic animals to come through. They were saved, safe? No. Saved for a different purpose. Saved to go through on another level, Oh! God! Let's go on.

90 min:

MAN-GOD'S
REVELATION
OF
HIMSELF

G.W. NORTH

First published 1977.
Revised 1978
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MAN — GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF.

(As it was in the Beginning)

1. THE TESTIMONY OF DAVID — A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART.

The Heavens Declare...

King David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, sings many a lay of the glories of God's creation. Reading his collection of psalms we come upon some outstanding examples of inspired praise, and bless the Lord that David ever took up his pen to touch so sweetly upon some of the glories of the mysterious universe.

Perhaps the chief of these psalms is the nineteenth, in which he views the heavens and the great heavenly bodies and orders in relationship to the greater spiritual treasures which God had committed to Israel. His comments upon the outer universe reveal that he approached the whole in the attitude of worship, in the spirit of meditation, holding God's being in reverence and beholding His works with awe.

Saint and poet that he was, it seems that by observing the effects of scientific laws in the heavens, David became more aware of the immutability of God's utterances and commitments to Israel. Did these heavenly orbs move with invariable precision in unchangeable patterns? Did they exercise immeasurable influence over the earth, and had they power to greatly affect men's lives? Did they speak in a universal language, perfectly understandable to all men? Then likewise so did God's law and testimonies and statutes and commandments and fear and judgements. They also are immovably fixed. Unchangeable in decree, they are immutable as the stars in their courses. Their end, he declares, is conversion to God, that the soul may be preserved in purity, sweetness, enlightenment and innocency. It is evident that from the knowledge of the law he had in his mind and the love of God he had in his heart, David gained great reward from his study of God's works in the heavens.

.... The Glory of God

Psalm 19 is an inspired gem of spiritual meditation; but perhaps even greater than this is that little jewel of heart-simplicity which the shepherd- king so beautifully set for us in the language of psalm 8. In these verses his comparison is not between the heavens and the law; instead his purpose is to lay emphasis upon man, for whom both the heavens and the law were given. God's glory is above the heavens, he declares, His name is excellent in all the earth. Babies who see and say such things shall grow strong; when the infants of God speak the name of Him who is above all heavens, the heathen enemies who only see the signs of God in the heavens shall take note and fear.

'What is man that Thou art mindful of him and the son of man that Thou visitest him?' David is seeing things through the eternal Spirit, and is perhaps under His guidance speaking from a consideration of the creation story. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth and all that in them is. He created man also, and being mindful

of him, placed him in a garden and regularly visited him there. Adam with his Eve, surrounded by beauty, kept in plenty, honoured by deity, was then God's sole example of humanity; he was the lord of all earth's creation. There were no human babies then. There may have been baby animals and baby birds, but there were no human babies. Cain and Abel were not born to Adam and Eve while they were still in the garden, and God's man was the lord of creation.

When later, through sin, Adam was excommunicated from God and turned out of the garden, though still retaining the form of lordship, he had lost his power. Outcast, he no longer had authority to call himself the son of God, but then he begat his own children. While Adam and Eve were still in paradise there were no sons of man for God to visit. He was just mindful of man.

Revealed unto Babes.

In accordance with God's statement to Eve, by the time David wrote and sang his psalms to Israel many sons of man had been born and had lived and died in ever-quickenning succession. He himself was both a man and a son of man, and had been visited by the Lord, his Lord, yet this great king only regarded himself as a son of man and a babe. He was so humble that he never even considered himself to be a man, leave alone a great man. He saw God and knew himself to be but an infant, and behaved himself as a weaned child, so he later said. In this psalm he speaks as a babe in its simplicity, and for that reason sees further into truth than many would-be teachers in Israel.

God's great enemies had conspired against Him, both in heaven and in earth. They had seemed to succeed too, for by their subtleties Adam had become a wreck and God's plan for him had been ruined. When at last the garden was finally closed, communion between God and man broken, and death reigned, not a child had been born to man. But despite the desolation, David the son of man sang his praises unto the name of the Lord as a babe sings to its father. To him creation and the name of the Lord and the idea of the human family seemed to be joined.

At no time, however, did David attempt to assemble his flashes of inspiration and meditative insight into a philosophy, nor did he ever compile a doctrine of man. Instead, with the hand of God upon him, he praised the Lord in sagas of creation and power and love and salvation, writing them down by the Spirit of God which inspired him. What a heritage he has left us; the consistency with which he saw truth reveals the constancy of his anointing. Sin he may have, and certainly did; many a time he stumbled and well-nigh slipped, but repentance in some dark valley and restoration beside waters stilled by God for him to drink, caused him to lie down again in the everlasting pastures he so much loved.

How his soul loved the evergreen covenant; if ever he wandered from those feeding-grounds of eternal righteousness, his heart longed to find rest in them again. They never changed; the unvarying stream of water bringing life to all flowed unhurriedly through those evergreen fields; here would he stay until, by God's goodness and mercy he should dwell in God's house for ever.

Abiding in the knowledge and unparalleled blessings of this security, the life-stream of inspiration flows consistently through his inward man, so that whether his themes be revelatory or hortatory, the truth never changes. Psalm upon psalm flows from his

pen; enlargements, additions and comparisons of truth are made, but no contradictions — truth is invariable.

The Unchangeable Pattern

On reaching his 139th psalm, David is again writing upon the theme of man. This time he is considering his origins and linking the son of man with the name of God and His enemies. Hating those enemies with perfect hatred, he says, 'Search me O God and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting'. He clearly saw that the name of God, God's creation, the human family and the enemies of God were connected.

Upon consideration such a conclusion is not very surprising, for God and His name and the family unit are linked as a triumvirate joined together by Him in the beginning of creation for His glory. He brought the human family into being for that reason, and all the devil's powers and seeming successes shall not in the end prevent it. The fact is that the whole of creation, from the original thought right through to the finished universe, was brought forth by God. It was patterned upon Himself, and every part of it to some degree portrays the unmistakable tri-unity of His being, and bears the indelible imprint of His handiwork.

However, refraining from universal investigation, we will rather pursue David's theme as already set out in condensed form and stated above. For this purpose we will mainly confine our meditations to the opening section of the book of Genesis and the story of creation unfolded there.

II. THE TESTIMONY OF MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD.

In Our Image, after Our Likeness.

Reading the first chapter of Genesis we are immediately introduced to God, His creation, His name, His Man and the suggestion of the human family. With classic brevity best befitting such a theme, Moses loses no time or opportunity to clarify our thinking about God. He does this by using a name for God which, by its very grammatical form, indicates that at least He is triune in being.

Unlike the English language, which only permits of, and therefore uses, the singular and plural forms of speech, the Hebrew grammar incorporates three forms — singular, dual and plural. When the English plural is used, any number from two upwards may be indicated, but when the plural is used in Hebrew, only that which is triple or more is implied. When the plural is used in English, it cannot refer to that which is singular, for to do so would be against the rules of grammar. Similarly, though with greater precision, when the Hebrew plural is used, it cannot refer to that which is either singular or dual, but only to that which is triple or more.

It is therefore of great significance that when speaking here of God, Moses uses the name Elohim. This name is the Hebrew plural form of the singular Eloah. By this we learn that the God of creation is at least a being of triple plurality. We also discover that although He is One, so that He says of Himself 'I AM', He is also recorded in this chapter as saying, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'. The word 'us' in this verse must be either a direct reference to God triune, and apply to Him only, or else be thought to imply an appeal or suggestion by God to some other agencies, such as angels, to assist Him in the creation of Man. Beside being highly improbable, this

latter is an entirely unacceptable idea, for angels do not have creative powers; they are themselves created beings.

Elohim, the Triune God.

We also see that although there are more than one engaged in the counsels of deity, He does not say 'WE ARE', as though there were or are three Gods, but 'I AM'. Recognition of this fact prepares us for the later definition of God as the sacred trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost as revealed in the New Testament.

By these things God has safeguarded us from the monadic ideas of traditional Jewish theology. Moreover, He has at the same time invalidated the perverted teachings of many latter-day cults, and also liberated us from the delusion and blasphemy of idol-worship.

There have been those who have made play of the fact that 'Elohim' may be used of God merely in honorific politeness, and need not therefore imply trinity at all. As we know, this kind of thing is commonly practised among men, as when they use the royal 'we'. It is true that by such artifices men do pay useless compliments to their superiors, who they know are commonly weak and just as singular as themselves. The use of such language is nothing but a sop to majesty among men, a vanity which has no reference at all to the persons addressed. It is either done for the direct purpose of flattery, or else with deference to protocol. It can never be really true of men, and when used of them is at best only honorific, a mark of esteem and / or acknowledgment. However, when the honorific is used of the being of God, He is properly honoured thereby, as indeed He ought to be, for He has by self-revelation shown that He is absolutely triune.

We cannot compliment God; He does not receive honour from men and it is certainly impossible to flatter Him. Nevertheless, it is only right and proper that we should both acknowledge and confess His true state of being, and worship Him as Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Therefore, when used of God, the honorific becomes more than a grammatical form; it is the truest testimony to Him who is one in being and nature, and three in persons.

Let them have Dominion.

This trinitarian revelation of God is remarkably brought out both in the language He uses to state His concept of man (quoted above) and also in the record that Moses gives of that creation: 'so God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them'. The sequence of words is 'man', 'him', 'them', and is in entire accord with the verbatim quotation from the words of Elohim, 'let us make MAN ... and let them have dominion'. In view of this, it can hardly be thought that it was Moses, the writer, who devised his own personal, or Israel's national concept of God and imposed it upon the world at large. God is here reported as thinking and expressing Himself about man in the same kind of language that is used of Himself.

Although at this point it cannot be shown that when used of man the word 'them' allows a trinitarian definition, we know that later events proved this to be exactly what God had in mind. There can be no doubt that when God said 'Man' — 'them', He intended us to understand that to a degree, perhaps beyond our expectation, Man was

deliberately fashioned upon the trinitarian pattern. It must therefore be concluded that when Moses reports God as saying of Himself, 'let us make Man', by 'us' He meant 'we three'. He is not puffing up, as when men vainly seek glory, nor is He worthlessly seeking to gain unwarrantable adulation from men who are ignorant of truth, but is stating plain fact, in which case the suggestion that the name Elohim is merely honorific is scurrilous.

We ought also to note here that God at that time did not use the specifically masculine pronoun 'him' when speaking of Man. God is most particular with language, and when He intends us to understand that He is only referring to the male, He says 'him' but when He wishes us to understand He is including both male and female, He says 'Man'. When He does this, He is always speaking of Man, the species, and not of a particular male member of the race.

The Unique Creation.

Now if it be true that when speaking so it is proper to use the term Man, it also follows that there could be a sense in which it is proper to think of God in somewhat similar terms. Not that there is a species of God; there is not. He did say, however, 'let us make Man in our own image, after our likeness thereby implying that as Man was created and is seen to be a singular yet plural species, so also must God be singular yet plural.

All things considered, it must be true that by creating Man, God achieved His most highly successful attempt at self-expression in this world. Adam was directly created by God, a living being. He was a man who could recognize himself; he was a Self. He had personal individual existence. But although he had independent existence, unlike his Maker he was not self-dependent; he had to receive air, food and water from without himself, and for these he was entirely dependent upon God's provision. In himself he was by God's design a tri-unity. He had an outward form and so was a body, but he was only a body because and when, by inspiration, within his body God created (a) soul.

The body was not created but 'formed of the dust of the ground'; the form was made, but the man was not created until God breathed the breath of life into the clay He had modelled from the watered dust. In that instant Man became a living soul; that was the act of creation and that was what He created. God created just one soul; He did it by combining breath with sculptured clay made from moistured dust that day. Adam then became a man; he was just one man, and yet he was also Man; in him, though as yet all unknown, lay Eve and all his children. In fact the whole race of Mankind lay within him; he was the first of a species, but although their procession from him should be cumulative through thousands of generations to myriads of myriads of human beings, each individual could only be like him in nature and being. Join together as male and female as they may, and certainly did, their union could only produce and display the trinitarian stamp of God the Creator in the larger unit of a particular family group within the human race.

The Breath of Life.

Man was a special creation. It seems as though all other forms and species of animate life came into being en masse by God's will when He spoke His word. To use a phrase which may be acceptable in this connection, they, in common with the inanimate

creation into which they were brought forth, were mass-produced. Presumably, in accordance with God's design, they lived simultaneously with their emergence into existence from His mind, by in-breathing the air in the atmosphere which surrounded them. But Adam was made as an individual, God's special creation made from dust. Neither he nor Eve after him was mass-produced. Each was made as one of a kind. Animals and birds were produced male and female in great numbers; man and woman were individually made.

Not only in method of creation and style of formation is Man different from the lower orders of creation, but also in life itself. For having been finally sculptured by God, and while still lying in his surrounding native dust, he did not spontaneously live by inbreathing the air around him. To give him life God had to stoop and directly breathe into Man His own breath of life. How truly Man came from God.

In common with Man, at death all animate creatures and everything of God's inanimate creation on earth goes to dust, yet we are told that man only was made from dust. Two methods used by God in creation are here set forth by Moses. The first is displayed by the way in which birds, fish, all vegetation and heavenly bodies sprang into being at God's word. This method has a parallel in the New Testament. In it is set forth an example of Jesus' works as instanced when He by-passed the process of wine-making when turning water into wine at Cana of Galilee.

Perhaps we should pause here and briefly note that in John's Gospel we have testimony to the beautiful precision of God in inspiration. It commences with, 'In the beginning was the word', and in keeping with that, sets forth 'this beginning of miracles'. This miracle reveals Jesus, the Creator, using the same method of working which He employed when creating at the very beginning of time, namely the direct word. When making man, however, He took dust and moulded and shaped and sculpted it into the form 'likest to the divine'. This second method reveals the painstaking artistry that God used in making His chiefest creation, and it finds its parallel in John chapter 9. When giving the blind man sight, the Lord again used clay, and thus laid indisputable claim to being the Creator. Note the words of the man upon whom the miracle was wrought: 'since the beginning of the world'. He evidently knew of and believed that Adam was formed of moistured dust. The implication of the miracle was greater than the miracle itself: Adam's Maker was here.

When God breathed His own breath into His handiwork that day, the work of His fingers was crowned with the glorious blessing of having His own type of life. By that final gesture, God implanted in Adam a different spirit from that which was in all other forms and orders of animate life on earth, True it is that Man now continues to live by breathing the same air as do the beasts and the birds, but that is not how he began life.

Man became a Living Soul.

On that day of creation something was imparted to Man far beyond mere air, something so important that had it not been given him, he would have been only another form of animal life, but which having been given him, made him superior to all. That 'something' was soul. God-imparted, divinely designed, deliberately limited in capacity though it be, it was nevertheless so deeply impressed in Man, that it is ineradicable. Soul is a conditioned summation and implantation of God's characteristics, an adaptation of the basic qualities and powers of God, subsisting by

spirit in Man. The Lord, in that act of inspiration, exhaled from Himself into Man high degrees of will, affection, emotion, reason, imagination, desire and conscience; in short His own image — Man-soul. The true image of God on earth is Man-soul without sin, as it was in limited capacity in Adam in the beginning and as it was in fulness of development in Jesus, the last Adam, in the end. Man was a living Soul, and he was so because he was a spirit direct from God, living as (a) soul in a specially designed body. We are aware that unregenerate man now exists in his body, a dead soul, a mere shard. He is left empty because he is bereft of God at the centre of his being. This is because righteousness of spirit, the basic moral life-principle of pure being, died in him directly he refused to live by every word that proceeded from the mouth of God.

The spirit which God breathed into Adam that day was a direct expiration from Himself. God is Spirit-Being, and when He begat Man, He begat another spirit-being a little lower than the angels. Being from Himself, that spirit was righteous and holy, gentle and loving, upright and noble, as capable of ruling over all the lower animate creation around him as he was of having communion with God. Spirit is the real being of Man; it is impossible to destroy; it can never know annihilation. While indwelling a human body, spirit is knowable only as soul — Man became a living soul; soul is capacity. It may be likened to space, into which at the beginning God brought forth all creation, that within it His works should have both being and function.

Space is immeasurable, a vast capacity which, though at first void, is seemingly limitless; it is sometimes spoken of wrongly, though understandably, as infinite. Of itself space has no power, but God's power and powers are moving in it to express and manifest His mind. Because this is so, the universe is said by some to be God — this kind of thinking finds expression in such statements as 'God and Nature are the same'. A moment's thought reveals that this is not any more true than that sun and sunlight are the same, or that fire is the same as warmth or heat. Soul is capacity, in and by which spirit expresses itself, into which it develops and displays and through which it communicates, as sun into light by beams, and fire into heat by radiation. Because it has such seemingly unlimited capacity, and is capable of tremendous development, soul holds great possibility and powers, but this is only because of the power of spirit which works within it.

Man was created (a) soul by God breathing (a) spirit into dust. Body fixes and retains soul in this world and identifies it until it is released by the departure of the spirit from the body at death. From that moment body rapidly corrupts and goes to dust, and soul-growth (development) completely stops. While resident in body, spirit all the time and under all circumstances has been developing to an inevitable end according to the source from which it draws its life. Upon departure from body, spirit has grown in good or evil to the extent to which it has developed in soul-dimension or stature while in (the) body. The aggregate of its words and works ought at that point to be found entirely good as were God's works of creation in space. His outward works were exact reproductions by power of His words, which in turn were precise definitions of the thoughts, imaginations, desires and purposes of His heart.

Likewise a man's outward works can have no more worth before God than the value and standard of the morality which is developed in his soul. This is transmitted by spirit to soul and is achieved as his spirit lives in communion with God. It is accomplished in man-soul only by reason of the Spirit of God indwelling his spirit to

empower, guide and instruct it. This combination by identification results in parallelism between inward development and the outward work. Spirit and soul develop (or deteriorate) together and can do no other. This process is called spiritual growth — whether for good or evil, it develops during earth existence to a logical and inevitable end.

There was not found a Help ...

Adam was created to be the good lord over all the good earth, but there was one thing about him which was not for his good — he was alone. Whereas other forms of life on earth were all created male and female together if not in pairs, the man was created one single being. In such a state he was too inadequate a means to show forth the three persons of God; God knew he was too limited for that, therefore that was neither good for Man nor God. By his triune being as a person he could by himself exhibit the idea of threefold being, but he could not possibly be a manifestation of three persons in one being. That was quite impossible, and God intended that it should be so. Adam, wonderful as he was, could only be but the first vital step toward the fulfilment of God's purpose with humanity.

Although he did not know it, Adam was Man. He was the foundation upon which God was going to build the whole house of man; God planned to found upon him the whole human race. So with this in mind, God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man, giving him a commission to tend it for Him, which Adam did. But do that as he may, he still fell far short of all the potential within him; besides there was no-one to help him fulfil the greater command of God, which was that he should multiply and replenish the earth; in this respect Adam was entirely helpless. So having accomplished the first steps of His plan, God moved toward its further development.

For this God brought all the animals to Adam that he should see and name them; this Adam did, but among them all none was found capable of being a help meet for him. In the whole of creation not a living thing could assist him to do God's will, and he knew it, so neither he nor God chose anything from among the lower order. At that time Adam made no first choices for himself, but was content to have God choose for him. The Lord's intention had always been to make Eve; He had not planned that Adam should choose some animal from lower creation for a wife. In fact the thought of such a thing was to Him a monstrosity — an abomination which was later directly forbidden by Him when He gave the law to Israel.

God's Law written in His Heart.

This episode furnishes us with an opportunity to contrast God's methods with satan's in the matter of temptation. Before doing so, firstly let us understand that the word temptation simply means 'test', as when it is said in Genesis 22 that God did tempt Abraham. When satan tested Eve, he deliberately solicited her to evil by inciting her to act against God's will. This is the sense in which the word is generally used today. Quite opposite to that, when God tests a person, as here in the garden, His simple purpose is to grant opportunity, create a situation or allow circumstances, (in this case He arranged everything) whereby man has fullest possibility to make a free choice.

God never solicits to evil, but in all circumstances He always encourages freedom of choice and grants opportunity to exercise the will, for this is the only way the moral

growth or soul-development He desires in man can be achieved. By God's overruling power, at this stage of man's training, Satan was not allowed to interfere at all. Adam, though created bodily a man was spiritually only a babe; the man was young, therefore the whole episode, though vast, was quite elementary. In process of time more advanced types of testing were developed by God in His dealings with man, but these He used only on the more highly developed souls. An instance of this may be found in the story of God's test of Abraham at Beersheba and Moriah. What took place when God tested Adam in the garden was only a very simple exercise.

It is a testimony to the man's likeness to God that although he did not know God's will about it, Adam nevertheless did that will quite naturally, a fact which undoubtedly pleased the Lord, for following this He moved forward to the next event in His plan of self-revelation.

Bone of My Bones.

God did so by first causing a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and removing a rib from him. Healing up Adam's wounded side, He then made a woman by building her from the bone. Having done so, He brought her to Adam to become his wife. Forthwith Adam named her, and said, 'this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh'. From such a knowledgeable statement it becomes obvious that God must have told him what He had done, for otherwise he would not have known from whence she had come. Perhaps the Lord even explained to him beforehand what He was about to do. Realization of this enables us to see the probabilities and possibilities of conversation, information, revelation and instruction which lay in the communion established between God and Man.

By this, His latest miracle at that time, we see that God had set forth the fact of duality, for one became two; Man became 'them', male and female, as God had said. Paul has this in mind when writing his first letter to the Corinthians. As usual he has thoroughly grasped the truth, and refers to it with depth of understanding in chapter 11, verses 8-12. 'The woman was created for the man', he says, and then goes on to reveal what was in God's heart right from the beginning. Although 'man is not of the woman ... Neither was the man created for the woman ... Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man ... For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.' They are of one, for they are of God; they are also one because they share one bone and flesh. More than that, in the act of creation they were each involved in the creation of the other, for she was in his body as a rib and he is in her as bone, built up into a body. In the mind of God to this day neither one is, nor can be, without the other, for on the level of humanity man cannot achieve his greatest possibilities as a man without her, and neither can she achieve her highest potential as a woman without him.

These things are all of God, who set them in the being called Man exactly as He originally planned and designed them. Therefore in order to properly become Man, male and female must be joined together. Man and wife, each a unit in themselves, when joined by God become a unit complete in itself. In His plan and execution of creation, God did not intend that there should be any addition either to the singularity or union of 'man and woman as such, and because God willed and created it so, no further addition or development is possible along the line of the sexes. There are only two, there cannot be a third. Man is complete as male and female. Woman is the only

development made by God from man and is included in Man the species. Because she was made from him, in marriage with him she is his glory, but even so she has to realize that he must be her glory too, for he is her glory, though in a different way. The male primarily is the glory of the marriage union, for he not she is God's first glory.

They shall be One.

We are told that there are differences of glory, both in kind and degree, and this is nowhere more clearly revealed than in the creation of Man. Man was created directly from dust, when as yet there was no other such creature on earth. At creation he was at once Man the species and Man the foundation of the race and man the male. But the woman, wonderful as she is, having been created from a part of a human being already in existence, was only a prototype of all women, not of the whole species. They were each a special creation in that each of their forms was made directly by God and each began life by direct inspiration from God. In this they were equal, for Eve as well as Adam was inspirited by God; but manifestly it was more glorious for God to create him than her. Nevertheless, whether male or female, and whichever method of creation He chose to use for His respective ends, dust or bone, since this is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes.

This then is the most perfect picture of duality of being which it was possible for God to create — two persons living together and becoming one — male and female — Man. But wonderful example of God's handiwork though it is, duality is still an insufficient unit and medium by which to display to fullest advantage the being and purposes of God, for it is not basically true to His triune Self. Duality in unity could not properly portray trinity, so it could only be a step, (though a necessary one) along the way to its portrayal.

God now moved on to the final stage in the development of Man into the fullest possible revelation of His image and likeness on the earth. As we shall later see, much intervened between the second and third stages of God's plan, but eventually God achieved His particular goal, and the final state appeared, namely the human family.

The Unique Revelation.

There can be no doubt that of all creation, the human family unit is most suited to be the greatest revelation of the divine Being, for it is a trinity patterned by God upon Himself for this purpose. The family unit reveals God in three basic ways:

1. In the same way as the name God includes and is intended to convey the idea of trinity, so also does the name Man. The name Man is a group name implying the whole of mankind; so also is the name God (Elohim) a group-name implying the whole of God. The difference lies only in the numbers involved and the numerical value of the noun. Man is a race of persons each of separate being; God is three Persons only. As we have seen, God is also honorific, but Man cannot be spoken of in that manner. As each member of the Godhead is God in His own right, so that whether He be the Father, the Son or the Holy Ghost, each ought to be referred to as God, so also it is with Man. Each member of the human family, whether father, mother or child, ought properly to be called Man, for that is exactly what each person is:

2. As God eternally lives a Trinity, and can only continue to be that and can be no other, so Man also is perpetually in trinitarian form, and in order to be Man cannot change that form of existence:

3. As no member of the Godhead can have being independently of the other two, yet together they comprise one unit of Father, Holy Ghost, Son, so also is it with Man — he must continue to be a family unit of father, mother, child (son or daughter). It may possibly be objected that this trinitarian pattern of father, mother, offspring is observable in fish and birds and animals, and indeed in inanimate forms and expressions of life also, That is so, but the fact of individual creation marks Man as being distinctly unique. Not only is this so in the physical realm, but also in the directness of spirit transmission from God, which resulted in him being the soul he is with the high degree of moral intelligence he has.

Every Living Creature after his Kind.

There is no doubt that beside humans, other animate beings are of trinitarian pattern also. They have bodies and without doubt are indwelt by spirit of some sort, and in measure are souls. It seems that the factor largely determining the presence of soul is whether or not creatures have lungs and are air-breathing; if so, they are spirit-soul-body in being. Soul cannot initially be in or continue to exist in a body except spontaneously as a result of in-breathing.

Although this is so in all forms of animate life on earth, in the case of animals and birds, by the intention of God, there is no capacity for moral function and ethical behaviour as there is with human kind. They are therefore known for their coat or plumage or skin or colour or song or meat — all to do with body, and none with soul. Therefore, unlike man, they are not called Souls, for although they are intelligent to varying degrees according to species, and may be trained to accomplish certain things, they are not moral intelligences. In them both the perceptive faculty of inward knowledge and also the guiding principle and directive is instinct, which in the majority, if not in all, is far more highly developed than reason. Their minds are geared to intuitive habit rather than intelligent thought and moral choice. When God created them He carefully precluded that possibility, though what degree of moral rather than intuitive intelligence they may have had before the fall who can tell? We do know, however, that when speaking them into existence, the Lord deliberately refrained from special creation and individual inspiration. Physical, biological, natural law governs them; therefore they are more natural than spiritual; conscience, the governing factor of morality and ethics, seems to be missing from their make-up, leaving them prey to instinctive knowledge, desires and behaviour. For that reason these cannot be as admirably suited as Man to express Him who is the highest moral intelligence of all.

The Interdependent Tri-unity.

All human beings are in themselves a demonstration of the tri-unity which, by Paul's definition, is one whole spirit, soul, body. God patterned Man upon Himself exclusively because He wished this particular creation to reveal His own likeness and image. When existing in isolation in the beginning, Adam was exactly that in himself. But when God used the word 'them' concerning Man, He revealed the intention He did not precisely state, namely that He planned to use Adam the singular tri-unity to bring into being yet another and greater trinity. In himself the man was a true adaptation of

the Being of God as He naturally is in each Person of the Trinity. But although this was so, Adam was not the best likeness of the relationships which each Person of the Godhead knows with the others.

Each Person of the Godhead, whether He be Father, Son or Holy Ghost, is in Himself a perfect trinity. Father is indwelt by Son and Holy Spirit; Son is indwelt by Father and Holy Spirit; Holy Spirit is indwelt by Father and Son. One cannot be without the others; each is dependent upon the others for His personal existence; each consists of three. Upon this knowledge of true eternal life, Paul bases his statement in 1 Corinthians 11, that neither is the man without the woman. This is the mode of eternal existence, it is the only possible form or way of Life that is God. It has always been thus, it is now and ever shall be so; no single person of the Godhead can possibly be without the others. The Trinity is a trinity of tri-unities. That is why God made Adam a trinity in himself — He had to do so if He wished Adam to be the true kind of being He planned that he should be.

Since Adam, every human person is likewise patterned upon the same trinitarian principle, and except he were, could not have existed, for God placed that same pattern forever in the race as the indelible mark and infallible proof of its Creator.

A Help ... Meet.

Although all this is indisputably so, the trinitarian pattern as displayed in Adam the individual could not fully satisfy the desires of God unless it could be developed further. So from Adam the Lord produced Eve, who in herself was as trinitarian as he, and therefore perfectly suited to be a help meet for him.

Perhaps before her appearance on earth other creatures had been of some help to Adam, but although this might have been so, none of these, helpful as they may have been, were in themselves 'meet' for him. They were purposely made to be creatures of a different order than he, and although perfectly suited to whatever purpose God had in mind for them, they were of an inferior pattern to man. The idea of the Great Original trinitarian principle was copied out in them on a lower plane, and in them the glory of God is only dimly discernible; indeed in some it is scarcely traceable at all. As has been suggested, they could possibly have been of help to Adam to a degree on the level of companionship or usefulness, but not on the level of parity — they could not commune with him.

At last God gave him another person admirably suited to him, who was basically like himself, differing from him only slightly in the bodily realm, so quite logically they cleaved together, for they were one and of one; she was meet for him. She could be of help to her husband, and together with her husband a help to God also, for she met Adam's need of help to fulfil the greatest purposes God had in mind when creating Man. Although she did not know it, she was necessary both to God and His man.

We see then that two persons in trinitarian form of life, one created and the other made from that creation, were placed together by God to exist as one, together forming a duality. We observe also that in the limited medium of flesh God was developing the thought, desire and intention of His heart. Man was not a spontaneous, self-existent being as is God his Creator, nor could he be, nevertheless he was the chosen means of God's self-expression; by him God was beginning His plan to gradually bring the knowledge of Himself to light.

The Undefeatable Purpose.

How long Adam and Eve continued in their natural, innocent relationship we do not know. What we are told is that there came a day when they fell from their state of innocency, and their communion with God. This was a great tragedy, but great as we know it to be, it was far greater than may at first be thought. For although we all acknowledge the tragic, ever-increasing results of this catastrophe, the worst thing by far was that the devil for his part had deliberately, and apparently successfully, interfered with God's plans. At that stage of God's work, Man had not been developed into the fulness God intended; in fact he was very far from it. The incoming of sin broke communion with God long before God had finished His designs and completed His trinity of Man to perfection.

This seemed a master-stroke on the part of satan; all now seemed lost to God. But, as we shall see, God's enemy did not prevent His plans from being fulfilled, he only delayed their fulfilment. The devil's attempt was to foil God's plan to reveal Himself as the Tri-unity of Persons He is; but the devil failed. In His love and wisdom God had already placed within Man the ability to reproduce himself, and some time later Cain and Abel were born.

So it was that though by then shut out of the Paradise of God, and in conditions other than God at first provided, the original plan was seen in its fulness. Man, by God's will and power, was shown to be exactly what He is — a trinity. The family unit was at last displayed as a trinity of trinities. The family unit is the masterpiece of masterpieces — father, mother, sons. When viewed in the light of the entire scripture, this fact speaks volumes to the Spirit-taught man, for it reveals far more of God's heart than the bald statement of the actual text itself. Singular father, singular mother, plurality of sons; what depth of implied spiritual meaning is revealed here. Beyond the wondrous promise that 'the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head', there lies before our eyes the hint 'that He, by the grace of God, should bring many sons to glory' also. The devil had got in and seemingly ruined it all, but he could no more turn God from His eternal plans than he could prevent Him from His immediate design, or from His ultimate purpose with Man. Hallelujah! The immediate will of God in creation **was** that Man should be sinless in his own personal being and that being so, he should reveal the: (1) existence, (2) being (manner of), (3) life (state of), (4) persons, (5) relationship, (6) order, (7) purpose, of the Godhead.

Through his folly the man failed of God's highest desires, and fell from his original position long before God had completed his education in paradise. Yet although by reason of this Adam was forced ever afterwards to live in adverse conditions, he still had opportunity to learn much of the One who was his Maker and Lord.

III. IN THE IMAGE OF GOD.

1. Of His Existence.

The Opening Understanding.

Had Adam existed on the earth alone, God's plan could never have been known. Although it is possible that Adam knew three persons in God, and that he himself, though formed of dust, had been inbreathed by God into a living soul, he could never have known his own trinitarian being unless he had physically died. If he had done so,

no-one would have known, for there would have been no-one to know. To be told, even by God, (as we have been) that we are a trinity, is to be left in much uncertainty about our being, for who can divide between spirit and soul except God? However, Adam was a living proof of the existence of God. The very fact that he was a living soul, able to commune with God his great Creator and Superior who came to talk with him, who also planted things in an orderly manner, gave him commandments and made him superior over all other animate life in a garden most beautiful, proved to him that God existed. He had never seen Him, but had never doubted that God was. It must have been a most wonderful experience to walk and talk with someone invisible.

Thousands of years later, with perfect knowledge and full understanding of these things, the apostle John took up his pen to write his first epistle. Whether or not at the time his thoughts were upon the creation story and Adam we cannot tell, but we do know that He whose Spirit inspired the privileged apostle was most certainly dwelling upon it in thought. Praise God for the grace and wisdom which caused Him to give to us the New Testament, for it holds the key to all His former works and writings. By doing it this way He has ensured that we read the entire Bible, for unless men do so, they cannot arrive at the fullest understanding of God and His ways as they ought.

John wrote of 'that which was from the beginning', and by those words reveals God's desire that we should know how things were during the period of creation and also between Himself and Adam. In the opening words of his Gospel, John tells us both how and what things were with God before the creation period began. 'In the beginning was the Word (Logos = thought, idea, beauty, plan; the word is a veritable cosmos of truth) and the Word was with God and the Word was God'. That is the inspired revelation of the original position, or how things were with God before creation and time.

The Bible goes no further back than that; there are no records, for God has volunteered no further information along this line about Himself. Inquiry beyond this point is impossible, and having reached it, all one may do is allow the soul, by the Spirit, to enter into union with God infinite. Uncreation; that which is and hath no beginning and ending; where everything just is; eternity.

The Hallowed Communion.

Passing on from that profundity, John in briefer terms reaffirms his statement with a view to disclosures concerning God and creation and thereby prepares our hearts for Moses' words in Genesis 1, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'. Here Moses reveals how God moved from uncreation and timelessness to creation and time. First of all God made the grand beginning, and from that initial beginning, as day succeeded day, entered upon a series of beginnings and endings, each one commencing with the evening and finishing in the morning. So it continued, until on the seventh day He ceased from His works of creation and together with the man He had made in His own image and likeness, entered into a hallowed rest.

After resting awhile in enjoyment of love, in communion with His creature, God extended His works still further by planting a very special paradise garden in Eden. Creating it for the man, He placed him in it, that in ideal conditions He should develop him into the person He wanted him to be. This He commenced to do by coming down regularly in the cool of every day to fellowship with him in the garden. At those times Adam would cease from everything else, laying all aside to walk with

his God. Being triune in his being, Adam found no difficulty in this, for he was like his Creator. In that he was flesh and God is Spirit, Adam was unlike Him, but he was His very image in that he was a soul / spirit, a bodily being impressed with the abilities of his Maker. Adam was a marvellous miracle, the reflection of God to His creation.

Image and likeness though Adam was, however, he was but a babe, and only at the beginning of the realization of the potential within him. God intended as time proceeded to develop this spirit / soul being into more godlike proportions, and this was one of the chief reasons for His visits to His garden. We do not know that He appeared in bodily form upon those occasions, in fact it is practically certain that He did not, for, as John says, 'no man (not even Adam) hath seen God at any time'. So Adam needed to be able to recognize God by other means and faculties than physical sight and touch. We know that Adam knew God's voice, for we are told so, but beyond that there is no record that he either saw or touched Him.

The Living Word.

Yet Adam knew God all right, and it is John to whom we are indebted for knowledge of the means. In his Gospel he tells us that 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us ... full of grace and truth'. During that time John, together with his colleagues, heard, saw with his eyes, looked upon and handled the Word of Life. He goes on to explain that this was possible to them then only because the life was manifested to them (in the flesh). Having told us of their unspeakably special privilege, he says that we who never heard or saw or looked upon or handled that man of flesh may with them also have fellowship with the Father and the Son. Seeing that this is entirely beyond the possibility of physical powers, he must be referring exclusively to spirit / soul powers, entirely beyond the range of fleshly ability. In other words, fellowship with God is dependent upon, expressed by and manifest to powers other than are possessed by the outward body of human flesh.

It was by these powers that Adam knew God. At the appointed hour God would come, and although He did not descry a form, Adam would sense His presence; He was there. Man, the real inward man, touched and handled God; he saw Him with the inward eye; heard Him; was taught by Him. There was no covenant made, no words written, no vows taken, no extraneous means at all: Adam's life, growth and development began to mature in bonds of perfect love and communion. God appeared to Adam by His word; He revealed Himself by it just as everyone else does. Adam was vividly alive to Him; he knew, and was learning and all the time coming to an understanding of God and His plans for his life.

2. Of His Being.

The True Communion.

Beyond all this, Adam discovered what manner or kind of Being God was. During this period of his life the man never knew sin, so he had no standard of comparison on moral and ethical levels whereby to assess the character of his Maker. Perhaps it is true and could be taken for granted that God revealed to Adam that He is I AM, but that can only be an assumption, for we are not told. It is likely also that Adam knew God by the name Elohim, or perhaps by the word in its more simple form, Eloah, but again we do not know.

In none of his recorded conversations with God does the man call Him by any name, which at first thought may be very surprising. However, when it is remembered that there was no other person on the earth at that time, this is not really surprising after all. When Adam spoke to any moral intelligence other than himself, it had to be God, for as far as he knew only God and he existed. It may be that God had informed him of the devil and his angels and sin and rebellion and its punishment, but again we are not told so. Perhaps also God brought His angelic train to earth when He talked and fellowshiped with Adam, but that too is only conjecture. In any case we have no information that Adam had conversation with any other form of animate life at that time except God.

We do know that Adam named animals and birds during this period; he may have talked to them in much the same way as humans do to animals and birds today, but he did not hold conversations with them. So when he spoke to a moral intelligence other than himself it was God. Therefore he did not need to know a name whereby to address God, for there was no possibility of confusion about who was being addressed. As we know, names are used for distinction and originally came into use as descriptions.

It was the same also with God. He only created one man, so when He commenced to speak to the man He did not use a name as though to distinguish between him and another person or another lower form of being, He just started to speak. That is the highest mark of true communion. Every man who lives in communion with God knows this. It is the ideal, the unspoken testimony to the actual enjoyment of the sweetest and most natural form of eternal communion, in which there exists no need for introduction or preliminaries. This living communication, uninterrupted and without cessation is the everlasting state of God; it is the norm of spiritual life.

The Union of Love

It is not until the idea leading to the building of woman is introduced that the name Adam appears in the text. This is because distinction has now become necessary. Even so, God Himself does not use either name when speaking to them. Instead reference is made in the narrative to 'the man' or 'the woman'. The word Adam simply means 'man', and the word Eve means 'woman' (Heb. ish, isha). Here we have the original instance of how descriptions became names. They were called what they were as a result of God's handiwork; they were 'God's workmanship; created'.

Whilst still alone, Adam not only knew that God existed, he also knew His mode of being. He knew the state in which the three persons maintained existence as one, namely communion or fellowship. God lives in eternal mutual love, or the giving of the whole self to each of the others, thinking, feeling, willing, desiring for the others, seeking their glory and moving with them in concert, so that no division of interest, purpose, desire or works can exist. Perfect union, perfect being, perfect love. Adam not only knew that God is, but also that He is One, and that He is Love.

3. Of His Life.

From Life into Death.

Adam knew also that God is Life, for he himself was alive. While living in the garden he had no means of knowing this by comparison, for he had never seen a dead body.

It was not until the fall that physical death entered the world. Perhaps soon after that he witnessed animals fighting and slaying one another, and wondered at the lifelessness of the carcasses of the dead creatures, but until then he had not seen physical death. From the moment of his fall from ignorance and innocence into knowledge and sin, however, Adam died spiritually. He continued from that event in a state of soul-death, until centuries later physical death occurred.

It is hard for us to imagine what the fall from life into death must have been like to Adam. As the days passed he was to find out much about it, but only by contrasting his present state with his former self and what he had known of God then. Perhaps an idea of what Adam felt can best be understood by those who, by contrast, have been raised from spiritual death into newness of life by Christ in regeneration. Certain it is that no-one else on this earth but they can possibly know a sudden passing from death to life or in any way grasp what happened to Adam in the reverse order upon partaking of the forbidden fruit. At that moment he experienced an instantaneous passing from life to death.

Previously he had known only life, which presumably was sustained in its basic principle upon its original ground by eating the tree of life in paradise. The fact that Adam knew and kept in touch with God was the direct cause of his spiritual life; the fact that he obeyed, co-operated with and continued to learn from God was the direct cause of his soul-life; and although he could eat of all the trees of the garden except the tree in its midst, the fact that he ate of the tree of life was the chief means of sustenance for his physical life.

The Vulnerable Love.

During that period, ignorance for Adam lay chiefly in ignorance of good and evil, and his innocence in that he had never known sin. He knew that good and evil existed, for there was a tree of that description producing fruit in the garden, but he had never needed to make moral judgements between these two ethical opposites. All Adam needed to do was to obey God. He did not need to know the fine line which philosophy or sophistry may draw between good and evil in some issues. God did not require that of him, for evil is far too great a mystery for that. Adam would not have known that however good the fruit of the tree was, the reason for its presence was an enigma hidden in a mystery. Its roots were deeply embedded in God's heartache because of unrequited love.

For the most part God has drawn a veil over the jealousy, envy, pride and folly which arose among some individuals of His former angelical creation. The disobedience, rebellion and hurt in heaven was too painful to recall; it was best left shrouded in unspoken mystery. Why God ever put the tree in the garden at all is very difficult for us to understand. He knew very well what would happen; He fully anticipated a repetition of the trouble; then whatever made Him allow the possibility? Did He want to be hurt again?

The answer to these questions lies in part in the greatness of His loving desires for Man. He did so truly want Man to achieve his utmost potential and become all He had designed him to be, so although He knew what it could mean in terms of self-suffering, He was prepared to expose Himself all over again. Love, which originally produced and developed a creature capable of being, thinking, speaking and doing right, also wanted him to will and choose the right; the Lord wanted him to be an

embodiment and expression of His righteousness, as well as of His love and power. Adam was the first step toward the achievement of His honest attempt to reproduce His own perfections in a race of lesser beings than Himself.

At the time God created Adam, both good and evil were already fully known and openly displayed among the men of His former heavenly creation. Many, perhaps most, of these who had observed the evil which had arisen in some of their fellow-creatures, had with dismay watched its development and spread, and had been forced to make their choice against it, lest they themselves should be implicated in it; these only knew about evil as opposite to good. But there were others of them who, although they also knew both good and evil, and were originally made good like their companions, deliberately refused to remain so; they chose the evil and became evil. Chief among these was Lucifer, son of the morning, the anointed cherub. This being chose to set himself up against his God and Maker. It was he who originated and spread sin in heaven and organized and led the first great rebellion against his Creator and His loyal subjects. Therefore, at the time God created Adam, both good and evil were already known among the angels.

Nevertheless these things did not deter God from His purpose. Even though He fully realized that by creating Adam He was creating a person in whom lay the same possibility of rebellion, God carried through His purpose. The true and righteous Lord so dearly desired a creature of perfect moral uprightness and finished perfection, that despite all the dangers involved and the situation which He foresaw He took the risk. He made Adam a little lower than the angels, crowned him with glory and honour, set him over the works of His hands, and quite deliberately placed him in a garden wherein He had already planted the tree which held the possibility of temptation and death.

The Loving Prohibition.

In keeping with all His former works, God made Adam good; he was the crowning glory of a glorious week of creation in which everything was very good and pleasing to God. In the whole of the inanimate creation the only thing which held possibility of threatened evil was one solitary tree. The tree and its fruit were as good as any other tree and fruit, for God said so, but to eat of its fruit under prohibition from God was certain death. Although it was good in itself, at that time, for reasons best known to Himself, God forbade the man to eat of it. We do not know whether or not the prohibition was only a temporary measure, introduced by God because the man was at that time insufficiently developed to handle the knowledge that was to be gained from eating the fruit. God knew though, and He also knew perfectly well what He was about.

There was nothing morally or ethically wrong in what God did. He had pronounced everything good. The whole range and provision of His creation for Man, limited by just one prohibition, could bring no hardship and be no wrong. To the contrary it would test the morality of the man and thereby assist God in His plan for the spiritual development of Man — that of itself was very good.

Perhaps it is true that by everything He created, God originally illustrated and set forth something of His own self, or nature, or characteristics, or beauty or being. Design, order, power, exactness, meaning are all around us throughout the whole universe. Whether viewing the microscopic world of incredible minutiae, or the

telescopic world without, where vast bodies move through uncharted paths of outer space, we discover that by whirling atoms and inescapable law, God has revealed to men some little details of His own greatness. When He began His work there was nothing for Him to copy. No-one before Him had created a Cosmos or made a world. There was no god before Him, neither is there any beside Him; no-one has been His counsellor, neither has He consulted with anyone; He is both Architect and Artificer of the universe. The whole of creation therefore came from Himself. If therefore serious thought is given to the matter, it is not really as surprising as it may at first seem that there should be a tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden He made for man.

The Unavoidable Hazard.

Through Lucifer's fall and felony, evil had already come into being. Before that, evil had never been. In the very beginning there was nothing but perfect good — God and the Word. God is and always was and ever shall be good only; but the fact and existence of good postulates that its opposite must have been a possibility also, even though as yet it had no existence save in the mind of God as a conjecture. Indeed, had this not been so, God could be charged with naivety and ignorance. The thought of a possibility however is not sin, nor can it constitute the one who thinks it evil in nature and disposition.

Evil had no being until Lucifer, a creature who was possibly the highest moral intelligence next to God, conjectured for himself a position outside of God's will for him. By the very law of mind, this thought developed into an imaginary possibility, the contemplation of which filled him with delight. Had he rejected it then and there all would have been well, but instead he gave himself over to thinking and feeling himself to be in that position. Developed further, this imagination and feeling hardened into intention to be what he at first mentally pictured and then heartily imagined. This gained such power in him that he decided to induce the conditions whereby he could create for himself the position he coveted. He then attempted to bring about the situation by inciting and leading a rebellion, and so evil was created.

Evil did not exist until then, nor could it have come into being except by this kind of process. It was an abortive coup, but from it we learn that like good, evil cannot exist until someone gives it being. When therefore Lucifer turned possibility into actuality, evil had come to stay, and from that moment God could not ignore it. Evil was and is, and ever shall be it seems. Just as God is, and good is because God is, so also because satan is, evil is.

Therefore when bringing forth His creation, and especially since He was intending to make Man and place him in it to develop him into full moral stature, God could not do otherwise than He did. If He had not done it precisely that way He would have needed to have done something of a similar nature; but since He did it this way, it must be the best. He dared not make another moral intelligence whom He intended to be to Him as a son, and not allow him also the possibility of choice between the opposites of good and evil which now existed. What had first been to Himself a postulated possibility, and became by Lucifer dreadful actuality, must now be placed within the reach of Man as a perilous possibility. The whole drama must be outworked again. Only this time not in two heavenly minds, (to one of which it was known only as a possibility and eternally rejected, and when conjectured in the other was also

conceived and brought forth as sin) it must be done within man on earth. Truly everything is seen in the form of a riddle within an enigma, only to be solved in eternity.

To Love is to Trust.

It may be that there are many reasons for this which have been hidden by God well beyond the power of human comprehension, for which we ought to be extremely grateful, and rejoice that our salvation does not rest for its power upon the ability of men to understand the Infinite. But there are also some reasons not so deeply hidden, nor entirely incomprehensible to the spiritual mind, which when properly grasped, enable us to understand the righteousness of God in doing as He did.

One of the most endearing features of God is His trustfulness. He does not always explain His acts, and this is not because He is God and can please Himself, or that we would not understand anyway, or that we have not sufficient brains to take it in, or that in order to do so it would require more books than the world itself could contain, or any such thing. The deepest and dearest of reasons why He does not always explain Himself or His acts is that He trusts us and wants us to trust Him. He does not expect His trusting people to demand an explanation. Enlightenment gradually comes to the mind which is taught of God to be as trustful as He.

In one of his most indignant passages, Paul cries out, 'nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?' His enlightened mind understood, but O he was finding it difficult to make men see what he saw. Even Jesus once said, 'how is it that ye do not understand? Do ye not yet understand?' But the Lord and His servant do not often speak in such a way; more usually their mouths are filled with patient appeal to heart and mind. For the most part forthright statements and loving appeals crowned their logic and love, bringing enlightenment to darkened minds.

When we read Moses' account of creation, we find little but narrative; explanations are rare, and on many subjects we are left completely without answers to our questions. Why did God place the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in paradise, forbid Adam to eat of it, and yet tell him to tend it? Simply because He knew it was the only way to achieve His ends. If God wanted what He said He wanted, He had no alternative but to subject man to the same kind of tests as those through which He Himself had gone. Though not of equal degree, the tests must be the same in principle and purpose.

The Unassailable Righteousness.

When Jesus, the last Adam, came down to earth, He was made like His brethren in all things. One of the stated reasons why He took our nature was that He should be tempted in all things like as we are. In accordance with this, right at the beginning of His ministry, we find Him out in the wilderness being tempted of the devil. What happened upon that occasion between Him and satan was substantially the same kind of thing as that which took place between satan and Adam in the garden of Eden. That is the reason why it was engineered of God.

When reading the account of Jesus' temptations, it must be borne in mind that when God made Man, He had already been through His own great test. Remembering this,

it can scarcely be doubted that it was as much in memory of that ordeal as being correct procedure in those circumstances that Jesus told satan, 'thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God'. Millenia earlier the tempter had already done so to God in heaven, and at that moment was doing it again to God on earth, but — and here is the great difference between the first and the last Adam — although he succeeded with Adam in the garden, satan could not succeed in making Jesus tempt the Lord His God as Adam had done.

By tempting Jesus, the devil was attempting the master-stroke of diabolical cunning far beyond the seemingly simple solicitations to evil which lay in his words; all at once he was tempting both God and Man, and also seeking to destroy the very existence of God and His kingdom. But satan was defeated. The Man Christ Jesus neither fell from His position in the Godhead; nor did He, as being God, succumb to the devil's wiles; nor did He, as being Adam, tempt the Lord His God to excommunicate Him for the same offence as Adam. He did not forsake God's word in order to live by the word which came out of the devil's mouth; He lived by every word which proceeded out of God's mouth. What would have happened had He not done so is surely too ghastly to contemplate.

The Inevitable Exposure of Love.

We have then a reason why God acted as He did when placing Man in the garden. The man He had made was a perfect example of His handiwork, but He did not only want a very good man, he wanted both an image and a perfect likeness of Himself. He did not create Man to be a god whom He should worship and serve, He wanted His creature within certain limits, to develop from a perfect beginning to the ultimate perfection of the full moral stature of God's son.

Just all He had in mind for him we are not told, even though we may gather much information about it from scripture; one thing however is certain: whatever the Lord desired and visualized as the finished character was not attainable by Adam unless he were given the opportunity to fail as well as to succeed. God knew that failure on man's part would mean more than just the sadness of unsuccess, for the temptation which was sure to come involved morality. If man failed the test, he would also cease to be the man he was. Though not in so many words, when forbidding him to eat of the tree God told him that: 'thou shalt surely die' He said.

Nevertheless, love in God's heart and the perfection He desired for Adam demanded that the risk be taken; there was no other way. Although the risk was great, the end in view justified the means. What God did was right. Adam was not only the man he was, but must also be shown to be the man he was. That is a universally accepted principle of justice and morality.

The Chiefest Glory.

Connected with all this, deeply involved in the mystery of God, something else emerges with regard to God's purposes by the tree. As we have previously noted, on some occasion preceding the creation of the world and the advent of man, God created a heavenly race of angelic beings (called men by John in the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ). These men were of at least two orders, seraphim and cherubim; the latter seem to be much less in number than the former, although they have a higher function. Of these Lucifer was the greatest and most privileged. He was

the most glorious of all God's heavenly men and could be spoken of as the glory of God.

It seems that having reaped disappointment from the first created race of heavenly men, God made a new creation and commenced afresh with earthly Man. The man Adam, the highest of all earth's creatures, became God's glory, taking fallen and dethroned Lucifer's place in His affections. Imagine then the rage, hate and jealousy in satan's implacable heart against God and Man. How long Adam remained alone as God's chief single glory is not revealed, but it would appear that all the time that first state and simple relationship continued the man was invulnerable, though the tree stood in the garden and satan's wrath was bitter. But there came a day when, in His great love for the man, God decided to make Eve and give her to him. As we know, God did this by causing a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, extracting one of his ribs, and from it building a woman.

This loving gesture, done in wisdom and intended entirely for Adam's help and blessing furnished Adam with some indirect ground for glory. God knew that it would do this, but in the nature of the case could not do otherwise than He did. Hitherto nothing had been made by God through the media of Man; all things had been created by God directly from Himself through the media of His word and dust. But with the advent of Eve, Man could say, 'this creation came forth from me'. Although he did not create her, he knew that God had made her from himself. She was not only his by gift from God, but also because his bone and flesh were her basic substance — she was indeed his glory, and subsequent events proved that he gloried in her. Foreseeing the possibility of this, satan at once devised a scheme for man's destruction, and patiently awaited an opportunity to put it into effect.

The plan was devilishly clever. When it was finally put into words it was simple and plausible, but it was full of diabolical cunning and planned with ruthless logic. He knew that it was through himself (God's former chiefest glory) that the great test had originally come to his creator. He therefore reasoned that as it had been with himself and God, so also it could be with Eve and Adam. God knew that too, and that is why He arranged things the way He did.

The Test of Glory.

God did not make a mistake by placing the tree in the garden and making Eve for Adam. He knew exactly what He was doing and what was going to happen as a result of it. He also knew that, unless pride had completely blinded satan's eyes, he would not be slow to take advantage of his opportunity. Why then did God do it? Simply because, being righteous, He is as righteous in His dealings with satan as He is in His dealings with men and angels.

Satan was a creation of God originally, so, fallen though he is, he also must be treated completely fairly. Man, though fallen, is still loved by God, and finding grace in God's eyes, is handled most fairly by Him, that in all His doings He might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Therefore in absolute justice the Lord God gave opportunity to satan. With what end in view we may only surmise, but it is certain that by the tree he also was being tested by the Lord. Satan's wisdom had become folly, and his love implacable hatred — his heart was stone and his mind fixed. He was then and still is hard, bitter, jealous, envious, totally unrepentant and openly militant against God. From the beginning of his existence as one of the

cherubim, he had perfect knowledge of God's ways, and knew them to be love and holiness, so perhaps he thought he knew exactly what God would do.

The devil knew that his Creator and Lord had completely vanquished him; it was blind stupidity that made him fail to see that God was giving him a chance to restrain himself from further sin. But instead of doing this, with skill and subtlety befitting his evil genius, he gave himself over entirely to entrapping the man. When the opportune moment came, he threw himself into tempting Adam, luring him on until he committed the devil's own sin. Author of sin and creator of evil, the devil also became the father of death by suicide. By seeking to take God's (kind, position of) life from Him, Lucifer lost his own kind and position of life. It was for this reason that centuries later he tempted Jesus to commit suicide by casting Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem. In the past satan had committed spiritual suicide; he had also murdered Adam by successfully tempting him to spiritual suicide and soul-death, so he was bound to try and convince Jesus that He should do likewise, but he failed. Spiritual, mental, moral and physical suicide is sin; satan is the father of it all. Not being in possession of all the facts of the matter, it is impossible to be dogmatic, but it seems that in sheer devilish hatred, satan deliberately set himself to ruin God's plan and destroy Man.

The mysteries of sin and iniquity and death were already working, and so were the mysteries of redemption and love and sacrifice and life, So God did not restrain him, nor refrain from creating the tree and the man and woman. Righteousness decreed that the test be given to both satan and Man. Man must not only be tested, he must be tempted in the same way as God was. Adam was tempted by satan through Eve, his glory, and he fell.

The Perilous Glory

There is a lesson here for us all to learn, namely this: it is that in which we glory most, other than in God alone, which is the greatest source of danger to us. Even though God created that glory for us and not we ourselves, does not alter the fact that it is from us, and that is its greatest danger, for there we are most vulnerable. Yet, although this is true, and the Lord knows the danger, God has no alternative but to allow us some measure of glory now. How else shall He prepare us for the future exceeding and eternal weight of glory He has in mind for us? The element of risk is always involved, for although the present glory is entirely by His grace, it is also as of ourselves, and so brings with it the possibility of danger. Because Paul knew this so very well, he says, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world' ... 'not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God'.

If only Adam had thought nothing as of himself, but had remained true to God, the whole story would have been so different. Eve, his glory, would either surely have fallen and died, or else, upon his refusal to partake, might have repented unto restoration to obedience, so that no division could have occurred. But whatever might have been the case with Eve, Adam would still have remained alive as God is alive. What is more, if Adam had remained true and faithful to God, and Eve had perished, God could have repeated His former mercy and given the man another wife.

Having lost Lucifer, His own first chief heavenly glory, God made for Himself another glory in the person of Adam, and had the man chosen aright He could have done the same for him also. Instead of withstanding the temptation to seek his own glory Adam failed and fell, with the result that God reaped His second great disappointment. His efforts for perfection had failed in both the heavenly and the earthly realms of created beings.

So it was by death that Adam knew life. The knowledge came along two lines:

- (1) by contrasting his present state with his own former state;
- (2) by contrasting himself as a fallen human being with the Being of God.

It was tragic knowledge.

4. Of the Persons of the Godhead.

The Inexorable Death.

How much Adam knew about himself is not told us, though we may imagine that during those days in which he had walked alone, or in company with Eve and the Lord, he had learned much from Him. Whether he then knew the three persons of the Godhead as such is open to question, but the subsequent events of the fall provided him with sufficient facts to enable him to draw conclusions and gain knowledge about himself. These in turn should have provided him with ample clues as to the constitution of the Being who had originally created him a perfect being also.

Perhaps he knew he was formed from dust; He certainly knew that he would die if he ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for God had said he would. Yet when he did eat of the tree he did not immediately go back to his original dust. Whatever he understood later, both at the moment of eating and during the following minutes he still remained physically intact. He was alive and breathing and well; his health had not suffered, Eve was still his, the garden was still there, but he had changed. All the fulness of sin and death which he let in by his act he had yet to discover, but he knew that something within him had changed.

For instance he found he could no longer look upon Eve as he had formerly done, nor she upon him, so they sewed fig leaves together for their covering. Some parts of their bodies became immediately private to themselves, and must be hidden from their own and each other's eyes. At the same time fear and guilt entered his soul and he somehow knew that he would no longer be able to look upon, or even to face whatever he knew as the presence of God. This was soon proven to him, for later in the cool of the day, when as usual the Creator came into the garden, Adam hid himself. His communion with God was broken. His confidence with God was gone; his conscience within him was accusing him, his childlike innocence had come to an end; he was desperately afraid.

The process of death had commenced; he had begun to understand what it was to die and die. Soon he was to know the full outworking of death, but he had already tasted it; the fruit of the tree may have been sweet, but the knowledge he had gained through it was bitter as gall. He did not then know that he was sharing satan's death, but he learned that, while still existing in full enjoyment of perfect physical life in outward conditions of absolute bliss, he had died. The real, essential Adam was dead, and he

was entirely conscious of the fact. What was it that God had actually said? 'Dying thou shalt die' — now he knew what that meant.

Against the stated will of God, as well as against His obvious desires and plain warning, Adam had committed himself to continuous death. By his act he had not only immediately died, he had also started the process of death. He had launched himself firmly and surely along the road which only led into more death. Now he knew what God had meant when He said to him, 'thou shalt die immediately (He had spoken with intensity and certainty), die without end'. What a dreadful consequence! Was it a sentence or had it been a warning? Had God passed judgement on him or solemnly told him what would be the result of contravening the word of God and breaking a spiritual law? He did not know; what a terrible thing he had done.

The Ultimate Love.

We shall never know the depth of sorrowful anger against the man, nor yet the fullest degree of burning hatred against Satan lying in God's heart because of Adam's sin that day. Whether He had pronounced sentence, or sounded a warning, we do not know; we can only rejoice that any degree of sentence implied in the words God uttered was in the end passed upon Himself.

Oh the mystery of sin and hatred, of righteousness and love; oh the eternal infinite reach of Calvary's death. Who shall explain the incomprehensible love and make plain the miracle that God by Christ should punish Adam and Christ by Adam? It was by Jesus that Adam's sin was expiated, therefore it was because of Adam that Jesus was punished. Who can understand how it was that Jesus became the last Adam, so that Adam's crime against God should end? But it was so. That word spoken in Eden ran its inevitable course until He came who was its terminal end, that by Him sin should be finished for ever by God.

History can furnish nothing comparable to this, for its love has no equal. King Saul said to his son Jonathan, 'thou shalt surely die', and did not keep his threat. David cried out for his son, 'Oh Absalom, Absalom, would God I had died for thee', but couldn't fulfil his wish. But by God's royal word and law Jesus was made sin bodily. The Man was made the last dreadful manifestation of evil at which God struck; His Lamb bore away the sin of the world. God had to be its logical end, for no-one else could be.

Strangely the tragedy of Adam's sin and God's sentence worked itself out in all the complexity of dead and dying humanity's unexplainable torments and emotional turmoil, and will do so until doomsday. But God has made an end of sin and death for us. The feelings that smoked in His eyes in Eden and blazed into fire at Calvary, are the twin flames burning now in the eyes of the Lord of the churches, the Light of the world. The mystery is resolved in Him, and blessed are all they who lie on His breast to find the solution.

Dying thou shalt die.

Adam knew death by sin. The life of love and communion with God had gone. He could no longer walk and talk with his Maker. He could no longer stay in the garden; he was cut off from the tree of life; he was excommunicated, thrust off into an outer world of enmity and conflict and death. He not only found it impossible to commune

with God, he was rejected by Him. All hope of restoration to paradise and communion died at the point of a flaming sword. Adam no longer lived, he existed.

Eve also was condemned to a life of sorrow. She brought forth two sons, Cain and Abel, who for a while brought them happiness and hope, but this soon died in their breasts. Murderer and Murdered they might have called them; their fruit brought death to them. Broken-hearted they bowed to the outworking of the worst results of the conflict that rent their breasts. Poor, sad, hopeless pair; death was their heredity, their progeny and their destiny. Their souls had died, and now they existed in a world of inescapable death. Bathe their own and each other's souls in sympathy as they would, they could find no remission, the results of their sin were cumulative. Their original folly was magnified unto them on every hand, multiplied and compounded into destiny of death.

What is soul-death but the outworking and manifestation of the suffering and misery of a dead spirit in understandable terms of pain? To intelligently grasp the possibility of unending miseries is to drape the heart in the black horror of terrible fear. Even though some of the joys of life may bring temporary alleviation, always the tide of suffering comes surging back again, relentless as the unconquerable ocean.

Adam knew he was dead and constantly dying. Spirit and soul he was already aborted and at the conclusion of almost a thousand years he knew physical death also. It is to be supposed that before Adam personally tasted it, he had seen it a hundred or more times, as the same curse and sin he knew in himself worked with dreadful effect also in the creatures around him. What remorse and self-recrimination must have gripped him as he witnessed creatures that he had named and fondled and loved, dying as a result of his own selfish folly. The whole world was full of death. Little lives expired or gigantic bodies either hurled themselves against each other in hate or ran in fear.

He had to stand by in helplessness and watch it happen, or else filled with anger or fear or sorrow or remorse flee from it in self-protection. But there was no respite from it. Where and how it all would end, and how long he would be a witness of it he did not know. If death happened to them, when would it happen to him? And how about Eve; would he have to stand by and see the dread spectre carry her away too? He had no answer. He was more ignorant now that he had eaten of the tree than he had been before. How the devil had deceived them both.

The Great Gulf Fixed.

He knew that now he no longer had right to the tree of life. He was cut off from it, yet he was fully aware that his life depended on it — he knew that if he could not eat of it he would surely die. No other food could take its place. God had put it there specially for him, so that by constant partaking of its fruit he would live for ever. But now it was impossible to exist eternally; God did not want him to; he had forfeited the privilege. The way to the tree was kept by an angel with a flaming sword. Everywhere he looked he saw death, if he did not eat of the tree he would die, if he attempted to approach it he would be killed.

Everything had been so bright and full of life when waking from sleep he had first seen the woman God gave him. He had called her Eve; it had seemed so appropriate then — the mother of all living. But she brought forth death to him. What a hollow mockery everything was. She was death — had been death to him, was still death to

him and he only begat death through her — she was the mother of all death and dying, and he was the father. Mental suffering, pain, grief, inward torture wracked him; of all deaths this was surely the death. What was the physical death he witnessed and now anticipated compared with this, and how long would this go on?

There was no answer, only the word — 'thou shalt surely die'. Somehow he knew that, ask himself as he would for a solution to his sufferings, there would still be no answer — he was dead. God, he knew, was alive, but where was He? Somewhere up in heaven, or behind the flaming sword? Unapproachable. His body, he knew, would die; every carcase he saw and perhaps buried out of sight, shouted unavoidable death to him. He was permanently under the devil's power of unending death. What contrast to his former state of life and glory; he had sold his heritage for nought. Instead of being the god the devil suggested he would be, he felt more like satan. So this was death. Coming to an understanding of these things, Adam, the wonderful creation of God, could have learned by circumstantial evidence of his own triune being and also of God's.

5. Of the Relationships within the Godhead.

The Invincible God.

It is doubtful whether Adam knew much if anything about the relationships between the persons of the Godhead, for these may only be known to souls taught of God. To such persons one of the exceeding wonders of God is the marvellous way in which He brings untold blessings out of terrible tragedy. They know that whatever the devil does, he cannot prevent God from manipulating satan's worst works to the best ends. Grace has taught them the truth written in the word — the devil is only the god of this world and the prince of the power of the air. Boast as he may, and work as he can, he is not God Almighty, whose Son is the Prince of the kings of the earth.

God was determined that as nearly as possible He would set forth by Man a true representation of Himself. The fall of Adam prevented God from finishing His work at leisure in paradise, but He did not allow it to force Him to abandon His plans altogether. He therefore speeded up His entire programme so that sin, abhorrent as it is, far from deflecting Him, was made to serve His purposes. This is His greatness.

As we have seen, until the fall Man only knew and set forth duality — man and woman. But man and woman, beside being dual Man, were also male and female. Between them they possessed the ability and potential to bring forth. So upon their fall, with the pronouncement of the curse, God also announced the fact of a speeding up of conception. Thus it came about that soon after their expulsion from paradise, a child was born unto the fallen pair. From within themselves the twain produced a third, and so in time, despite the devil's intentions, the human family appeared. They who had been one nature became one flesh, then one family also.

Whether Adam and Eve understood then all that God was doing is arbitrary, but for those who have eyes to see, the most wonderful and natural picture of the trinity had emerged and was now solidly displayed. Man is a trinity. He is not a monad, nor yet just a duality, but a trinity like his Maker, a trinity of three distinct persons.

No Other God.

Apparently God could not or did not wish to make Man three persons in one being as He Himself. He had designed Adam and Eve and their progeny to exist as separate individuals. They were modelled upon the basic plan of the tri-unity that each person of the Godhead knows within Himself, as well as between themselves. He did not, indeed could not, create another God, which in the nature of things simply cannot be. There was no other being before God to create Him God, and He did not create any other being to be God beside Him, neither has He created anyone to be God after Him. He has no before or after in terms of time. According to His will He has before and behind in terms of position, that is in relationship of others to Himself as a divine being, and Himself to others as His creatures — that is all. He is, always has been, and always will be.

Perhaps the most profound truth of the whole Bible is stated and suggested to us by the form of the opening words in the book of Hebrews: 'God, who'. This is more profound even than the Mosaic 'In the beginning God', and the Johannine 'In the beginning was the Word'. God! There is no talk of beginning here; no introductory easing into the profound immensity. Human understanding must at some time bow and acknowledge that it has no right to reason beyond a certain point, and that to enquire further would be impertinence. God is the ultimate challenge to all men. He is the unchallengeable, eternal bedrock of faith.

Upon consideration it may be conceded that the English language is singularly adapted to the expression of the eternal Being. In simplest words, constructed by joining letters together in easiest numerical formation, moving from singular through dual to trinitarian, we make up and use the phrase 'I AM GOD'. Looking at it in print, it seems almost as though our very language gives us added advantage. It enables us to express our understanding of God's self-understanding in terms of Hebrew numerical thought, singular, dual, plural — all is comprehended within six letters in this form — one, one two, one two three.

The Changeless Prototype.

Unlike his Creator, Man, as of himself, has no consciousness within himself of eternal being. However, although this is so, Man is nevertheless a representation to consciousness of the triune being of God, and purposely so. In creating Man, God incorporated into the human race certain possibilities and powers which suggest the idea of eternity.

As we know, there was an age when human beings did not exist — for Man there had to be a beginning. We also know that there is an age to come when Man shall have no further physical being. Nevertheless God has imparted to the race a certain means of continuity, thereby suggesting to the mind the fact of endless being. This He did by placing within Man powers of procreation that He may perpetuate human life by reproduction. However faint a picture of Him it may be, to do this was necessary to His plan, for it ensured continuity of the species in the exact image of the prototype, Adam. There could be no allowance for evolution of form or being; throughout the ages Man has remained unchanged, he is exactly the same as he ever was. From the very beginning he had to be so, and still has to be so, because God is so. The whole idea of the evolution of Man is thus seen to be ludicrous, the contemptible brainchild of atheistic delusions.

These things had to be of course. Man has to explain himself somehow. Science demands it; philosophy demands it; God demands it. However, unlike science and philosophy, which have produced their own theories, God has produced His self-evidence. Science seeks for answers from deductions based upon laws of existence which it discovers in the material universe; philosophy searches the inner universe of the mind, seeking for logical explanations of self. They were both bound to fail, for each refuses to account for spirit and finds sin unacceptable. But God created Man a living soul by spirit with physical being, that he should indicate, witness to and, with certain limitations, explain His own being.

Contrary to the majority of the predications and hopes of scientists and philosophers, and the suggestions of biologists, ever since Man's fall, all the elements of devolution and corruption have become inherent and manifest in him. Sadly enough grotesque forms of life have at times been produced from human parents, but these live and die without introducing a new strain among men. The original form still remains unaltered and will do so until the end. God has set certain things in Man which are the hallmark of his Creator, and these must not vary from generation to generation. All the time Man begets Man there will be a threefold testimony on earth: (1) to the existence of God, (2) to God's mode of being, (3) to God's eternity of being.

The Profound Mystery.

But beyond this, God also placed in the race a testimony to the relationships in the Godhead. He wanted us to know the manner in which the persons of the Trinity relate to each other. For this the family unit was devised and produced. Adam by himself could not do this — his was a personal testimony — but given Eve, they could together show forth more of God's being than each could do individually; yet not until the family unit was displayed could the fullest truth be shown. As a man Adam was as a god reigning in his majesty in his kingdom. This continued with him throughout — it was permanent; he represented God. The later creation of Eve from himself and their union in flesh in no way altered the man's primary privilege, in fact it underlined it. Adam was first formed, says Paul.

Adam was formed, that is he was complete in himself. The building of Eve from his rib in no way depleted him; he lost nothing, he gained an improvement of one of his bones. Adam stood for God as a god, both in the whole creation and in his union with Eve. But great as that was, his function was not just to establish himself as a god over all created life; he had other roles to fill also. These were bound up with the consummation of his marriage to Eve. He had to be a father. Alone and in himself he was a triune being, but the triune God had decided that each member of the heavenly trinity must have personal portrayal in Man, and it was Adam's part to display the Father.

In his first role he displayed God the Son, for he was the child of God's desire and design, created and begotten a son; so sonship was his first glory. Secondly he was as God, being the god(head) over all creation — which at that time represented the kingdom of heaven on earth. Thirdly he displaced fatherhood; he had a son. God is not only a Creator, He is a Father also. Bound up with this is the display of a further function of God, namely headship. Although in order of realization this should precede fatherhood, it is perhaps better placed here than earlier, for it more naturally leads to the consideration of other relationships at this point. Adam here represents

Jesus, the Son. Joined to Eve as one, he was nevertheless her head. She was to him as body to head; the woman is man's body, the man is woman's head. The relationship between Adam and Eve was as that between Christ and the Church; they are one.

The Paraclete has come.

The woman taken from Adam had a most precious part to play in this self-revelation of God through His handiwork. She, according to Adam's enthusiastic admiration of her being, was 'the mother of all living'. By this statement it is evident that Adam considered himself to be the father of all living, which to say the least, is most illuminating. Eve's actual marriage in flesh to Adam, followed by her sin and subsequent temptation of him, leading to the fall, was unparalleled tragedy, for in her eventual motherhood she became the mother of all dying. Nevertheless she was the logical one through whom God should show forth certain divine mysteries.

Firstly she was taken from the son, Adam, whilst he was in deep sleep; bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. How truly in this she represents the Church which is His body. Then she rightly speaks of the woman who was married to Him who was raised from the dead that she should bring forth fruit unto God (Romans 7). Also, in a yet more mysterious way, she was to represent the precious Holy Ghost, without whose aid the Son could not make anything, nor the Father beget any children. She was the help meet for Adam, the one who proceeded directly from him as did the Holy Spirit from Jesus who sent Him, and His name is Paraclete — 'one called alongside to help'.

That is precisely what happened in the garden. Eve was called alongside Adam to help him beget children. He was the head, she was the body from which the sons came, and by her those two mysterious scriptures find union which respectively say, 'His name shall be called ... the everlasting father' and 'I and the children that God hath given me are all of one'. In the latter He acknowledged both His eternal Sonship and everlasting Fatherhood; He is of the Father God, yet He is Himself a Father, by God's grace. In the former His everlasting humility is magnified as He allows natural procession of thought to exalt Him to a fatherhood of which He is the everlasting Son. His consciousness of this is plainly revealed in scriptures like the following: 'He that hath seen me hath seen the father, I and my father are one — no man cometh unto the father but by me'. By the family unit it is naturally seen that although the father begets the son, the son in turn himself becomes the father, for that is how perpetuity or continuity, the human counterpart of God's eternity, is maintained.

It is Eve, the mother, by whom it is all possible. She represents the bride; she speaks of His body the Church, which beside being born of the Spirit, is also the embodiment of the Holy Ghost who came to possess, fill and dwell in the Church in Jesus' name. She helps Him to Fatherhood; He helps her to motherhood; the Father begets His family by and in the Holy Ghost. How marvellously the whole Godhead is displayed by and mysteriously engaged in the family unit. What a composite picture of God it is, of the Being, persons and relationship of God; of their nature, dispositions and unity; their love, humility and sweetness, their individual power and combined might.

A Son is Given.

The family unit is the truest revelation of God in the whole earth. It has no equal. Peerless in its comprehensiveness, unrivalled for its dumb eloquence, unequalled in its precision, undeniable in its testimony; to this present day a human family

ineradically typifies God. Man, woman, child, — father, mother, son; between them they set forth an order of thought most readily acceptable to the mind. If this is not the way in which the three members of the Godhead thought of themselves in an unrecorded eternity, it is certainly that which is revealed in the portion of eternity which we call time and has to do with creation.

This need not be pressed beyond the bounds of sense, for it is not an all-important point which we discuss here. It is not common for members of a family which is of adult age and mature thought to be concerned with correct order of thought about priorities among themselves. Nevertheless it is in the inescapable nature of things that father and mother have their proper place in the midst of their children. 'Honour thy father and thy mother', the Lord commanded the children of Israel. It surely cannot be without deep meaning that longevity and enjoyment of their possessions was made contingent upon obedience to this commandment. It was the first commandment with promise, we are told by Paul.

If the foregoing analogy is correct, there is much to be gained from a proper recognition of God in His Father / Mother capacity; His ability to beget and give birth to children has been reproduced and represented in the human race by creating Man male and female. Father and mother combine to produce the son. That is the sacred order revealed on earth, when God brought forth His Son made of a woman. The Father and the Holy Spirit did it; their combined work is the Son. He is their glory — God's Son — the eternal Son displayed on earth in mortal flesh. The Son, the fruit of Father and Mother is the focal point, of the whole Trinity.

The Speaking Blood.

The son of Adam and Eve became a murderer, the outworking and first-fruit of their disobedience. He exhibited what it was that secretly lay in sin — death. In him it became death to God's creature and his own brother. It had commenced in the heart of Lucifer as death to God. Had it been possible for that wish to have been fulfilled, it would have meant defeat, dethronement, shame, mockery, total loss, undeserved punishment, enslavement, despair. That is what death, had it been possible, would have meant to God.

To Abel it meant cessation of physical life, that is all. He was the first martyr. His blood speaks great things to God and to us. To God it cries out for vengeance, as does the blood of the martyrs in Revelation 6:10, and the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their blood must be avenged; it is so precious. Abel's blood had to be avenged — it was the blood of a simple, obedient man, who was killed because he was righteous. The righteousness which was in his blood was testified to by God, who centuries later visited it upon the same generation which crucified His Son, whose blood has yet to be avenged upon all mankind that rejects Him.

In His righteous manhood, Jesus' blood and death are linked with all the righteous who preceded Him upon earth, but in His unique Godhead they remain unavenged, awaiting the final judgements, which yet must be outpoured in order that perfect righteousness should be fulfilled. At that time the blood and death of all the holy martyrs, who when Jesus spoke the words on earth were as yet unborn and unsaved, will be linked with His, as was that of the former martyrs at the time of His death. But let us be grateful that the days of vengeance are staved off for us by the days of grace in which we live.

The Triumphant Righteousness.

Unlike Cain, the Lord Jesus was the embodiment of obedience. He was full of humility and submission to the Father. Many of the virtues and qualities we ascribe to the Son stem from our knowledge of the fact that He is eternal God, co-equal with the Father, but there are some which have been made known to us by direct statement. Among these, and perhaps foremost of all, He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. There is also the mysterious information that He was the Word which was in the beginning with God.

Each of these descriptions, coupled with such Old Testament statements as 'Behold my servant', and 'Out of thee shall he come forth unto ... whose goings forth have been from of old', (each spoken of the Lord Jesus) point to someone who is subservient to a higher, greater person than the speaker. Someone must have slain the Lamb, and spoken the Word, and be the Lord and Master of the Servant, and to have called Him forth to Himself.

As God, in unison with Father and Holy Ghost, Jesus decided that God's purposes should be fulfilled in Himself; as Son He allowed Himself to be His Father's idea and Word; as God's Seed He co-operated to be brought forth by the Holy Spirit to the Father at Bethlehem; as Servant He kept His eye upon His Lord and His ear open to His commands; to become the slain Lamb, He submitted to be led by men to Calvary.

His was the perfect human life resulting from the union of Father and Holy Ghost in Mary. He was their single glory and joy, the realization and setting forth of their love. Love is nothing else but obedience — the interaction of perfect Being in self-giving, resulting in reproduction in exact likeness. Not as Adam and Eve, who combined to bring forth in the likeness and image of their death, Father and Holy Ghost united to bring forth their ideal in the likeness and image of their life — His name is Jesus.

6. Of the Order within the Godhead.

God — Triune and Uncreated.

How much was known by Adam of the order of the persons of the Godhead is uncertain. There is no absolute statement upon this subject in the whole of scripture. It is therefore very doubtful that Adam knew much about it, unless he was privileged like Isaiah, who at a much later date was made privy to conversations between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Nevertheless we will at this point give some time to a consideration of the order of the Godhead revealed in Genesis 1, as being: God the Father — verse 1, God the Spirit — verse 2, God the Son (the Word, later revealed in John 1:1-14, as Jesus) — verse 3.

At first sight this statement of what appears to be an arrangement of order in God may be found strange, especially as the Lord Jesus Himself used a different order in Matthew 28:19. But there is no discrepancy here, for the statement of order as above set out has only been adduced from a simple analysis of scripture. It is not an inspired definition of God given by Himself; the record was not given for that purpose. This is how it was in the beginning, and it was like that simply because it had to be so. We may be sure that God never does anything out of proper order or apart from righteousness and without good reason. Likewise the order pronounced by the Lord Jesus is not to be taken as the final definition of the order of God; it is simply a

presentation to the mind of the natural order of procession of the persons of God from Himself to Man.

Like the above order it is not a statement made with the intention of defining the order of importance or self-recognition in the being of God. Neither is it a revelation of voluntary eternal alignment, or of degree of honour or merit in the Godhead. No statement in scripture involving the holy Trinity is to be regarded as a definition of the order of their being. None was made with that intention, nor is it possible that there can be any such formula. Moreover, as has been previously said, it is essential to bear in mind that on no account may God be thought of as existing first as singular, then as dual, and then as triune, as though He existed as Father first, Son next and Holy Ghost last. The tri-unity of God has ever been; all three persons have existed together simultaneously and spontaneously as one. Father is eternal, Son is eternal, Holy Ghost is eternal.

The Immortal Being is three persons. None of them is successive; the Son did not come into existence and proceed to be after the Father, neither did the Holy Ghost commence to be after the Son or the Father had commenced to be; not one of them preceded the others in being or life, nor did any one of them follow the others, as being created by or for the others. Each person is, and all three together are, God uncreated. God in three persons is eternally self-existent. At no point did one exist without or apart from the other two; they each existed and exist and shall for ever exist with and in the others. Could one of them have been after the others, that one would not have life in Himself as being the source of life and would not therefore be eternal. The point of emergence, or generation, or manifestation, or recognition by the others would have dated Him. He would have been a child or a begetting of time, even though that time be calculated in ages and not in centuries or millenia. Far beyond the power or grasp of finite minds, God ever has been, and ever shall be as He is.

Co-equal and Co-existent.

Our minds can readily grasp the idea and propriety of order in the creation of Man as being first male, second female from the male, third child from male and female. Equally we also grasp the fact that, although the child of any family is subsequent in existence to its parents, it by no means follows that the father existed before the mother, for she may be the older of the two. The fact that in the course of history multiplication of families may be seen to vary in this respect helps to illustrate the point that there is no strict order of persons revealed in the Godhead.

It is distinctly noticeable that in Genesis 1:1-3, where God reveals His approach to the work of creation, it is in the order of Father, Holy Ghost, Son. The Hebrew word 'brooding' used in verse 2 definitely evokes the idea of the female gender and therefore motherhood. To the human mind it seems to be a logical enough order, for that is the order we find in Man. We ordinarily speak of father, mother, child, rather than mother, father, child, or father, child, mother, or any of the various possible alternatives.

In God this has nothing to do with differences of sex, there are no sexes in the Godhead; He is not male, female, child. The Holy Ghost is not the mother corresponding to father, as Eve to Adam. Nevertheless it is easily traceable in scripture that whenever the female or female element or idea is involved to any major

degree in what God is doing, the Holy Ghost is the particular member of the Godhead mentioned. Instances of this are Mary the mother of Jesus, and the Church which is the bride of Christ. When God made Man in His image and likeness, He created a male, not a female. This in itself is testimony enough to the fact that, although God ought not to be thought of as either male or female, He is always referred to in the masculine gender.

Yet even so, there is that in God which in order to be rightly revealed, could only be represented by the creation of male and female. One person of God is called the Father, that is masculine enough, another is called the Son, that is also masculine, but the word mother is nowhere used in scripture regarding God. Therefore He ought not to be addressed nor be referred to as such. However, we rejoice that the fact of begetting in the Godhead has been very pointedly made known to us. In fact the whole plan and achievement of salvation turns upon the only-begotten Son.

According to our knowledge of the means of birth among men, because God is a begetting God we must of necessity ascribe to another person the obligatory function of bearing. In the Godhead it is the Holy Ghost who holds that glorious position in relationship to God's activities among men. However, from our knowledge of the sexes and their function, we must not argue backwards to impute to God identical genders in Him. Male and female creatures are not exact copies of identical persons in God, they are designs expressed from His powers — forms of expression only. God has power to beget, so according to His desires He created the male to have that power. He also has the ability to be begotten, and this ability also He revealed to His creatures. Male and female in their physical form, gender and abilities are representations of God's powers, not His person.

A Spiritual Likeness.

The image and likeness of Himself which God created in man is not physical but spiritual. Mankind, which is male and female, is an adaptation of and projection from the principle of God's being. We are also an expression according to God's good pleasure of His manifold power of life. That this found demonstration in creation as male and female is only because God willed it so. We see then that because Man is male and female, issuing in child or offspring, it does not mean that God is male and female issuing in offspring, any more than an oak tree bearing acorns proves that God is stock, root, branch and leaf, bearing fruit with cup and seed. Nevertheless there is a traceable pattern discernible in all nature. The principle of life found in inanimate spheres is the same as that which is found in animate life. Everything follows the law and pattern of life and being recognizable in the Godhead as shown in Genesis 1.

When Jesus made His orderly statement in Matthew 28, He did not change the order of the being of God; He simply made a pronouncement which set out the order of human recognition of God according to His self-revelation in the New Covenant. This order is Father, Son and Holy Ghost. His words recorded in John 14 clearly show us the reason for this; but we will commence still further back than that.

When the Lord began His teaching-mission among men, He did not plainly mention His Father, but as time proceeded He gradually began to introduce the fact of His divine sonship. Having done so, He steadily persisted in making two closely allied statements about Himself, namely: (1) God was His Father, (2) He and His Father were one. These basic claims, together with others of equal significance, were the

direct cause of the hatred in men's hearts which eventually brought about His death. A summary of these sayings may be collated and set out thus:

- (1) 'My Father is greater than all;
- (2) I proceeded forth and came from the Father;
- (3) I came out from God;
- (4) No man cometh unto the Father but by me;
- (5) I leave the world and go to the Father;
- (6) I will pray the Father and He shall give you another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth which proceedeth from the Father;
- (7) He shall glorify me, for He shall take of the things of mine and show them unto you.'

These provide the scriptural foundation for His arrangement of order in the Godhead. They also outline the scheme which underlay the order of procession of God to man. Eventually this found expression in the statement of Matthew 28.

The Only True God.

This raises the problem of Jesus' statement concerning Himself as the Alpha and the Omega — the first and the last — the beginning and the ending. The Lord's personal claim seems to militate against the demands of the trinitarian doctrine of the tri-unity, coexistence and co-equality of the three persons of the Being of God. If a person claims to be the beginning and the ending, he is either asserting that everything commenced and finished with him, and that therefore nothing else exists, nor could have existed outside of him, and that he alone is God and none other, or else he is making an elliptical quotation, a contraction of, as well as an extraction from a far greater truth of which he knows, and in context of which he is speaking.

If that be so, then reason has it that it ought only to be made upon the ground that the fuller truth be expressed elsewhere, for if this is not done the statement is definitely misleading, and the person could be thought guilty of giving false impressions. For how can we be assured of the certainty of truth if statements which seem contrary to it are made without possibility of substantiation or contradiction? Thank God we do have the entire Bible from which to gather the full truth God wishes us to know about Himself. This being so, we are able to place this statement upon the subject alongside many others made both by Jesus Himself, and also by the apostles and prophets. By so doing we shall be able to assess its truest meaning.

From such comparison it is certain that the Lord was not making claims to be the only true God. Far from meaning that, He publicly expressed the fact that His Father was the only true God, who had sent His Son Jesus into the world. At first glance, until we realize what He is meaning, this statement seems to imply some sort of contradiction to His other assertion, but this is not so. It is certain that He did not mean to imply that He Himself was not true God, for He also said, 'I and Father are one', which is the same as saying, 'I and the true God are one'. The seeming anomaly is solved when we realize that at the time of speaking He was referring to Himself as a human being in relationship to God. This is a position He loved to adopt and which He made clear upon many occasions.

Jesus mostly referred to Himself as Son of Man, and John 17 is one of the occasions when He was praying as a man from His manhood to God. He counted not equality

with God a thing to be grasped at; that was Satan's sin and the cause of his downfall. The Son is co-equal with the Father, but being found in fashion as a man He prayed as a man should to His heavenly Father who begat Him. Having humbled Himself to this human relationship to God, He faithfully observed it; in every way and to fullest degree He regarded the Father as His God.

At His birth Jesus for the first time was manifest on the earth as God incarnate. He had appeared on the earth before that, but was not manifest in the medium of flesh until then. Now flesh is not everlasting; it was never intended to be eternal; ordinarily it is subject to mortality — Jesus' incarnation was only a temporary arrangement between the members of the Godhead for the purposes of redemption. Therefore men could not be allowed to think that God manifest in flesh, true God though He was and is, was the true God, or God in truest form. True God is ever Spirit, which, though temporarily veiled by incarnation, can never be flesh. God did not die when Jesus died. He publicly cried out 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' The body of God manifest in flesh died. That body was subjected to mortality by the sheer power of God.

Jesus told Pilate he could have no power against Him except it were given him from above. Jesus' death was God's greatest miracle. With advance knowledge of this, Jesus made His statements with care according to eternal truth. Even though His body was going to be resurrected and changed, He would not allow people to think that incarnated God is truest eternal God.

The Only-Begotten Son hath Declared Him.

Perhaps the flesh and form that Jesus took by birth cannot be better described than by the word 'tabernacle', which John uses when writing of His incarnation (John 1:14). As we know, the Tabernacle of old was not God; it was God's tent, the place where He lived. It was manufactured to be a type of the body and person of Jesus Christ. It was made by flesh and blood to house God, but it was not Him. Likewise, the flesh and blood body of Jesus that men saw and handled was not God, it was made of a woman to be the human house or tabernacle of God the Son. It is noteworthy that He said of Himself, 'the flesh profiteth nothing'. When answering His challengers in John 2, Jesus said of His body 'destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it again'.

It is significant that although He invited them to destroy His temple / body, He did not say 'destroy me', That would have been impossible, so He did not invite them to do so. He spoke in full knowledge of the fact that by crucifixion they could not destroy Him. It was because of this that He so confidently said, 'I will raise it (My body) again'. He called His body 'this temple', which we know is the house of God, but not God Himself, nor yet His outward form. Jesus was in the form of God before He became a man, not when He was found in fashion as a man. He was not fashioned a man at birth, but was found in that fashion by the shepherds at Bethlehem.

We see then that in His prayer in John 17, the Lord was shifting the eyes of our understanding from flesh to Spirit. The only true God was never visible to mortal eye in eternity past; in His wisdom He who was immortal also remained invisible. He is not now visible and shall never be visible to mortal eyes, for He is not manifest in flesh. That God has 'form', is quite clearly stated by Paul in the memorable words of Philippians 2, but just what we are meant to understand by that is not explained.

Perhaps the key is given us in the words used of Moses in Hebrews 11, 'he endured as seeing Him who is invisible'. The power of sight referred to here is neither to be linked with mortal eyes, nor confused with the sight of the Visionary. The eyes that need to be enlightened are the eyes of our understanding. We are told that the nobles of Israel saw God, but Moses who wrote that, also informed all Israel that at Sinai 'your eyes saw no form'. This was one of the reasons why Israel were commanded by God that they should not make idols or engrave images of any description. The fact that every eye shall see Him at His returning simply means that He will again assume visible form.

Despite greatest pains, we are in difficulties here. It is absolutely impossible by words to convey God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, to man. God Himself could not do it either by creation, or generation, or simulation, or imagination, or manifestation, or words. While on earth, Jesus was only a veiled revelation of God, and He knew it. Within Himself He was not spiritually veiled from God, but from man. The veil of His flesh was so thick and heavy upon Him that He longed to be free of it all — He felt and said that it straitened Him. When seen in transfiguration on the mount He was marvellous in the eyes of His apostles. His glowing spirit radiated through His flesh like glory through the veil. Later, in resurrection, He was so changed in form that occasionally even His disciples could not recognize Him. Obviously the outward bodily manifestation was not the important thing. That was only a means, an adaptation.

It was the spiritual form in which He existed before being made in the likeness of flesh which was and is and ever shall be God. He was eternally that in heaven and was also that while on earth. Because of this alone He could be made truest Man. But although He laid aside and emptied Himself of much in order to be made truest Man, He never lost or forsook His form or position as God. He retained all that is meant by the word 'form' and humbled Himself to be incarnated in the fashion of Man. Being found in fashion as a man, He enslaved Himself to the Father's will — as all men should to God. Having done so, He declared His Father to be true God, for He was ever God and never a man.

The Profound Equality.

Man though He was, Jesus was ever God. Being in the form of man on the earth, He directed our attention to the possibility of man in God. In the very same chapter as that in which He commenced praying with the words, 'Father, glorify thy son that he also may glorify thee', He also said, 'now come I to thee'. It is therefore obvious that when the Lord said that He was the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, He was not asserting that He alone is God. He was not implying that He is the first or beginning of the three persons of the Godhead, but that He is equally first with the Father. They are one God. In the same way, when He says that His Father is the only true God, He does not mean that He is not equal with the Father, or that there was a time when He had no being.

The Father and the Holy Ghost are not second and third to the Son. If this were so, it would unavoidably mean that there was a time when the Father and the Holy Ghost were not, and that a time came when they commenced to be, which is absurd. More foolish still, by all rules of logic, the Son must be thought of as being the Father,

which, if it could be true, would be tantamount to insisting upon a reversal of the persons and roles in the Godhead, which would be confusion worse confounded.

Not to pursue the subject further, but to assist understanding, it may be profitable to say that the scriptures are purposely given by God to be informative to the point He deems sufficient. It is quite impossible for Him to fully explain Himself to His creatures, therefore He addresses Himself to faith. Where necessary He introduces truth adequate enough for our hearts to believe. If it is imperative to explain it He does so; if not, He relates truth to the matter in hand, just because we need to know the particular fact, and then passes on to more important or relevant things.

The Unrevealed Son.

From a careful perusal of the whole Bible, it becomes apparent that until the Son introduced any other idea about it, the revealed order had always been Father, Holy Spirit, Son. Re-reading Genesis and moving on from the creation story to chapter 6, we note that God says, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with Man'; there is no mention of the Son here at all. That we may find Him typified in the Ark and agree that typically He appears thereby to be most largely there is true, but quite beside the point, and to speak of it only reinforces the truth of the original pattern. The order here is definitely : God — the Spirit — the Son (ark). As at the creation, the Son is mentioned in the text by implication, but the Father and the Holy Ghost are spoken of directly. Breaking into scripture again at Zechariah 4:6, we read, 'not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit saith the Lord'. Again the Son is not mentioned — just the Lord (Father) and His Spirit (the Holy Spirit). That is how it appears to have been ever since God introduced Himself to us by His word from the beginning.

When in process of time the Lord Jesus wished to show Himself in all the scriptures to His apostles He had to open their eyes. They knew the Old Testament scriptures, but in common with all the lawyers, scribes, pharisees and priests, they had never seen Jesus in them. The reason for this is very simple. As we have seen, they could plainly read about God the Father and the Holy Spirit there, but they had never seen the Son; He was there but hidden. The person of the Lord Jesus is written into the Old Testament sometimes deeply, sometimes less obscurely, in types, figures, shadows and prophecies. To discover His hidden presence there is to uncover one of the major secrets of the Book. But even so we see that in the Old Testament the open order of the revelation of the persons of the Godhead was firstly the Father, then the Spirit, and lastly the Son.

There is One Mediator.

Upon entering the New Testament, we discover it to be exactly the same again. In fact this order of Father, Holy Spirit, Son is brought out never so clearly as upon the occasion when God made His first move to bring His Son into the world. Luke reveals how it all took place; God the Father sent His angel to tell Mary (Note: 'tell', not 'ask permission of') that she was to bear His Son into the world. Upon enquiring how this could be, she was told, 'the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, therefore that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God'. The secret was out; He who had been hidden was now to be revealed, and a brief moment of thought shows that again the order is as it was in the beginning, Father, Spirit, Son.

The idea of a rearrangement of thought concerning the order of persons in the Godhead only emerged during the lifetime and ministry of Jesus. As we have noted, this came out when He urged men to ask the Father for the Holy Ghost. It also appears in His assertion that the Father who had sent Him would also send the Comforter. As well as this, the Lord says that He personally would pray the Father, with the result that He would give them the Holy Ghost. Rising from this expression of intention, an order of divine thought is plainly suggested to us. By His own words it appears that Jesus is here showing Himself to be both the intermediary between God and Man, and also the middle person of the three persons of God. Following His death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus gathered up all the inferential truths implicit in His teaching, and with clearest statement put the order thus — the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Later still, upon the conclusion of the ministry which followed His resurrection, and before finally leaving the earth, the Lord directly re-stated and reinforced what He had earlier said about Himself and the Holy Spirit. Then, as a climax to His ascension to heaven and the throne, He substantiated His words by receiving of the Father the promise of the Spirit and pouring forth upon man(kind) the third person of the triune God. By this the Son is now revealed as the Mediator between God and Man — a kind of middle person — mediating the Holy Spirit from the Father to men. By such a plain succession of events, an understanding was gained and an order of thought concerning God became established among men.

Reason has it that since the Holy Ghost is the person who men knew to have come to them after Jesus departed, and the Son who preceded Him had repeatedly said that the Father was greater than He, then this must be the eternal order of the divine Being. It is the logical procession of thought that men should place the Father first, Son second and Holy Ghost last. Jesus did not confuse men's minds by reversing or in any way interfering with that order, but to no degree does it alter the original one. However, since this original order was never expressed in any form, the single expression of divine order attributed to the Lord Jesus Himself by Matthew is the one usually adopted. Even so that is not the final word on the matter, for by reading 2 Corinthians 13:14, we discover yet a different order still, namely the Lord Jesus Christ first, God (the Father) next and the Holy Ghost last. We may well ask 'why this change? What does it signify?'

... but God is One.

As we have now seen, there are three statements of order concerning the relationship of divine persons in the New Testament. One is implicit in the text, and two are orders of utterance. From the first one we infer that the trinity, as originally discoverable in the Old Testament, is Father, Holy Ghost, Son. The first of the two statements in the New Testament is plainly Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The second is clearly the Son, the Father, the Holy Ghost. That this is so should be to us a sure indication that there is no set order in which the Holy Trinity should be mentioned. It also indicates that we should not even think that there is a set order which they themselves keep and in which they think of themselves in relation to each other.

This discovery brings us to the belief that the three persons live as one, combining in and relating themselves to and working with each other according to their united purposes in and through the thing they are doing. This may mean that for a particular

event one person and His function and work must for a time be emphasized above and before the others. Unavoidably this allows the possibility that He may be thought by man to be the most important of all, whereas He is only most important at that time and for that particular purpose.

Obviously the Son came into the world from the Father by the Spirit; it could not be otherwise. The Father begat Him when the Spirit came upon the virgin to conceive Him. In the event, and upon her willing consent Mary was taken over completely by God, that from God, through God, for God, God should be a man. Thereby the Son was born and lived and died on earth as a man, so that He should remove all the reasons why man, while still on this earth, could not or should not receive the Holy Ghost. Having successfully done that, He returned to the Father and from Him mediated through Himself the Spirit to us. By doing this the original order revealed in the story of creation, (namely Father, Spirit, Son) was restored and can now take effect in a realm which hitherto was impossible, namely regeneration. It is at once obvious that the second order could be thought of as a convenience and means to restore the first order — 'as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be'.

We will come.

In regeneration, the Holy Ghost (by whom Jesus preaches the gospel through men to men) comes upon people in much the same way as in the beginning. He brooded over the waters for creation, and upon Mary for conception and birth. Because this is so, by the work of Jesus which has been established and is now being held in the eternal Spirit, Father begets a son. This may seem very mysterious and complicated, nevertheless it is the way it was arranged in God and the way it is all done. When Jesus set forth the order — Father, Son and Holy Ghost, He was stating the logical procession of the Spirit from the Father through Himself to us for sonship in His image and likeness. He was most certainly not thereby stating an order of reception as though He was telling us that first we must receive the Father, then the Son and then the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, on the contrary, according to His own words in John 14, we must receive the Holy Ghost first, and with that reception the Son and the Father also. This is a complete reversal of all generally accepted ideas among men. If it were to be accepted as it ought, it would constitute a major change in gospel preaching. But seeing it is the Lord who says it, and He is the central figure in the work of salvation, we do ill to disbelieve it. Worse, we betray men into the dead formalism of evangelical belief. No less a person than Peter makes this same order unmistakably clear on the day of Pentecost: having set forth the death, resurrection, ascension and glorification of Christ, he says 'believe, be baptized, receive ... the Holy Ghost ... save yourselves'.

The order of procession and of thought revealed in these words is designed to lead us to an understanding of the order and procession of personages which takes place in new birth; God has no other end in view here. Both John and Peter are in accord over this. John records Jesus as saying, 'Father will give you the Spirit. I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you ... we (My Father and I) will come'. That is the way Jesus speaks according to John. The Holy Ghost by Peter is very clear also, saying that He, the Holy Ghost, must be received first.

The order in which Paul names the persons of God, though different from that in which Jesus mentions them, is not intended by him to notify us of a revolutionary new

way of approach to God. It simply is the best possible way of presenting the different persons of the triune God in relationship to the matters of which he has been speaking. The statement underlines the acknowledged fact that only by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ do we know the love of the Father and are made partakers in the communion of the Spirit.

God — the Infinite Mystery.

We see then that the fellowship spoken of here is the end objective, and is revealed as such by a procession of logical thought. That is the reason why the Trinity is set out here in this order, for the Fellowship is God, in whom we shall eternally dwell. Without doing harm to the truth, we can just as truly say that it was only by the love of God that the grace of Christ was revealed to us, and in doing so restore the order to its original position, but there is no need, for it does not matter. By none of these things do we come nearer to truth, but only to a logical procession of thought more suited to our feeble grasp of infinity and the Infinite.

Of all the great mysteries of the Bible, none is so great as the mystery of God, and all statements about Him which differ in order from that which is revealed in the beginning, even if they be made by God Himself, are only adaptations and accommodations made to men's understandings and their abilities to grasp truth according to their own experiences of it.

Christ Greater than Words.

Better than any statements about it, the Lord set forth in Man, and especially in the family unit, the true order of the trinity, for He said He would make Man in His own image and likeness. What He made, and therefore what is, is greater than what He caused to be spoken and written, and what is implicit in the text is greater than the text.

As an illustration of this, we need only take one of the answers Jesus made to satan during the period of temptation in the wilderness. When satan tempted the Lord to turn stones into bread, the Lord answered, 'it is written that Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God'. He was quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3. His answer was absolutely scriptural, it was equally true; but what was implicit in the answer was more than the text quoted, and also the truth of the text quoted. Jesus was implying that contrary to the first man Adam, He the Son of Man and of God was living by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God, which fact enabled Him to quote the text with truth and power. The Christ of the scriptures is greater than the scriptures of Christ.

7. The Purpose of God.

They shall have Dominion.

Much has been said about this subject in course of the previous pages, and a composite view of God's purposes may be gained from reading them with this in mind. Despite sin and its results, we have seen His will displayed in each successive stage of the development of Man. Yet there is a further truth connected with the human family, which although obliquely referred to earlier, needs emphasis, and takes its logical position at this point, namely the purpose God had in mind when He made the original proposition to create Man, as recorded in Genesis 1:26-28. "Let us make

Man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion ... male and female created He them and God blessed them and said unto them, 'be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion over behold I have given you meat'."

God created Man in His own image and likeness in order that he might have dominion. God made him specifically for the purpose of being His representative on the earth. Adam was made and was being trained by God in the garden in preparation for the day when he could rightly be acknowledged and renowned as lord over all the earth. God had planned a day when the whole of creation should say, 'Adam is lord; he is king of creation'. That was the purpose in God's heart when He made His statement; it arose and was expressed synchronously with the imagination of the idea to create Adam — 'let us make Man in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion'.

A Glorious Destiny.

That was both the concept in God's mind and His expressed purpose; so in His own mind and probably synchronously He imaged Man 'according to the purpose He purposed in Himself'. Having with power imagined Adam, He conformed him to His own image and then with skill and delicacy moulded him exactly in the form most suited to display His own likeness. He then created him, fully endowed with faculties ideally suited to His plan to reproduce His own spiritual and moral similitude in the Man.

This verisimilitude was the crowning glory of all His handiwork, even taking precedence over all He had accomplished when formerly He had skilfully formed Man's body. The precious faculties which God projected and impressed from Himself into the yielding clay turned it into throbbing flesh. Under the warm breathing of His Spirit, the clay form became a living creature, a soul endowed with ability to imagine and think as God. God thought of Himself as God; Man thought of himself as man, and both were at a new beginning. To God it was one of many, to man it was the first.

Gently, in the dawn of a new era, into this innocent babe of a man God gradually began to instil the idea of his destiny. From His own loving imagination the Lord impressed and introduced into Adam's the intuitions, suggestings and images of greatness. The spirit of his mind having been inbreathed gently from God did not puff up the man's soul; he was not proud of his predestined position and glory; everything was perfect. He learned he was to be changed from glory to glory, and that the glory of each successive position would be greater than the glory of the former, and he was perfectly content to abide God's will and time.

A Man Under Authority.

God's words begin and end with the word 'dominion'. Following the occasion when God herded all the beasts and birds in to the garden to be named by Adam it must have been perfectly obvious to them all that this was God's intention. At that time all cattle, fowl and beasts came to be named according to their species by this one creature who was different from them all and their lord. He was placed 'over' them right from the very beginning; there was none greater than he in all the earth, save God: the man certainly held unchallenged dominion. But wonderful as this event was,

God had far greater things than this for Adam. His purposes for Man were no more than begun.

How much knowledge of these the man had at that time is not revealed, for although Moses informs us of God's intentions, he does not indicate whether God instructed Adam about them. However, we do know that the Lord began to train Adam for his destiny by placing him in a divinely planted and well-watered garden specially created for him. Eden was a paradise, but it was only a very small portion of God's new creation, and God's plans for Adam's life embraced the whole world. It all commenced in a small acreage of ground, yet His purpose for Man was that he should eventually subdue the whole earth which stretched away in its vastness — north, south, east and west of Eden. Whether it exactly or closely or remotely resembled the earth as we now know it is impossible to tell, but we do know that God spoke of its need of subjugation. Whatever is implied by the word 'subdue' is not within conjecturable knowledge, but putting aside far-fetched ideas about it, we know that with the passage of time, untended nature would have needed some degree of mastery, training and cultivation.

It is perfectly feasible that ideas developed in Eden were to be put into practice and applied later when Adam went forth to subdue the whole earth. Paradise was only a training ground. That is why God caused to grow there every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. Man would find these different species all over the world, when having served his apprenticeship under God he should set out upon service in the world.

Love's Plan Aborted.

There can be no doubting God's original intentions to keep Adam and Eve in His garden for a much longer period than finally transpired. Nor can it be seriously doubted that Man was finally cast out of paradise long before his training was completed. For when they were excommunicated by God for their sin, there was no man in the whole earth 'to till the ground', and they as yet had no children. How then could they have subdued and dominated the whole earth? God intended their children to be born in paradise so that there should be multiplied Adams and Eves to fulfil the commission. Therefore when they were expelled from the garden God greatly multiplied Eve's conception, lest the curse He had pronounced upon the ground for Adam's sake should imperil the fulfilment of the promise to which He had committed Himself.

In judgement God was very merciful. Grace is always greater than we know or deserve, but the curse took effect in the earth far beyond what is normally associated with it in thought. Beside the thorns and thistles which at present mar the world's fertile lands, sterile deserts, howling wildernesses, barren tundra and frozen wastes all testify to the power of God's curse. Unless men were to be multiplied quickly, the spreading dereliction would have desolated the entire globe. God ensured that men must till the ground and eat their bread in the sweat of their faces. It was all an emergency plan, devised by God to prevent inexorable nature, now cursed, from swamping its former lord out of existence.

The Gentle Husbandman.

In the beginning God did not intend to thrust out Adam and Eve alone, ill-equipped and totally unable to cope with the gigantic task ahead of them. He wanted Adam to have dominion over everything as a lord. He did not wish him to slave as a serf, fighting desperately to defend and save his life in a hostile world. Therefore, when He originally made them, He blessed the man and his wife and said, 'be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion over ... behold I have given you meat'. The man in God's image and likeness, destined for dominion, was to be given meat for the task, that he may be sustained in his strength. All seed-bearing herbs and fruits were to be the means of his bodily life, and the fruit of the tree of life was to be his chief source of sustenance. Everything was conceived in terms of growth, fruit, fulness, multiplication — productivity and abundance were natural states of Paradise.

While working in the garden under God's supervision and instruction, Man himself was God's husbandry; in common with all life he was under command to be fruitful. The special commission given to them to multiply and replenish the earth was entirely dependent upon their ability to bring forth fruit unto God the Lord. He caused the garden to bring forth fruit unto them and He wanted them to bring forth fruit unto Him. The garden was their special husbandry, just as they were His special husbandry. Kept for a while under God's care and cultivation in that garden, they were ultimately to go forth fully prepared, multiplied and multiplying to replenish the earth.

With what or how they were to do the latter we are not told. Whether they were ever informed of anything further along that line we do not know. We can be sure that if God did not explain Himself fully then, He would have done so in time. He intended paradise to be the nursery or seed-plot of the earth — a kind of Arboretum or Botanical Garden in which to fully develop, multiply and equip men and women for His purposes all over the earth. In His mind this was equated with lordship, which entailed subjugation with a view to having dominion, and was expressed openly among the persons of the Godhead in this way. By these means Man was eventually to attain unto the dominion for which he was created.

The Ruined Plan.

When first Adam lay breathing in his native dust, and rising stretched himself to his full physical stature as a man, he was only a babe. His knowledge of God was nil. However, being created by God in a garden of holiness, he was perfect; he had neither hindrance nor handicap. Nothing could prevent him from being all God wanted him to be. He had nothing to unlearn; his heart was as a blank sheet of paper, ready and prepared to receive God's writing.

Almost certainly he was a quick learner, with a great capacity to be taught and retain his instructions, plus a natural aptitude to obey God's directions. His growth would have been fast and his abilities phenomenal. But in spite of this, when he was turned out of the garden he was far from full-grown or mature. 'He went out not knowing whither he went', in much the same way as man commences his spiritual life when he steps out with God by faith. Adam did not go out in faith though — he obeyed because he had to, and went out in unwillingness and fear. His garden had been his home; it had been to him as the house of God, a Bethel as was Luz to Jacob. Excommunicated, he was a lost soul in a lost world. What was to have been his kingdom was now his grave, for glory he had shame, and finally he fell into the

ground and died alone, an utter failure. The harvest of the tragedy is yet being reaped; for some endlessly.

The Lord from Heaven.

Imagine therefore how great was God's disappointment with His 'new creature'. He had made and expressed such wonderful plans for Adam when He created him. To best understand how these should have worked out, it is essential to firmly grasp hold of one of the reasons why Jesus Christ is called the last Adam. The Lord was deliberately given this name in order to draw our attention to the possibilities which were open to the first Adam. The first Adam failed to achieve his destiny, so God Himself became Adam. He did this, that by so doing He could, as He should, achieve all and more than the first Adam could and should have achieved. Just all that was in God's plan for the man Adam and Man his progeny, had he remained faithful to God, we do not now know, for when Adam was rejected the plan was dropped, long before it could be developed in its fulness. But when we see Jesus, and read of all the fulness of the Godhead which dwelt bodily in Him, we are to an extent able rightly to assess what God intended for Adam.

With necessary limitations, and taking proper precautions to safeguard the fact of Jesus' deity, it may safely be said that what is true of Him as the God-Man from heaven could have been rightly displayed in certain measure in God's Man of earth also. This is the most precious of all the reasons why Jesus was called Adam — the last. Somewhere latent in God's work in the man of Eden lay potential, which could have been developed in all good time into the perfect image of God revealed in Jesus. How many generations it may have required and how much time it would have needed to accomplish it who can tell? What further measures or means or plans or moves God might have introduced in order to fulfil His purpose could only be of doubtful speculation. We do know, however, that by revealing Jesus His Son to be the last Adam, God has given us a glimpse into what was in His heart for man from the beginning.

We shall be Like Him.

The first Adam lost it for the whole race, but the gospel to us is based upon the certain fact that as all men were potentially in the first Adam, so are all redeemed men dynamically in the last Adam. In Adam all men died to the possibility of attaining unto the purposes of God; but in Christ all men are made alive again. We who have borne the image of the earthly Adam, must and shall bear the image of the heavenly. Just how much, if any of this was made known unto Adam is without our knowledge, but unto us God's purpose is made known; we are to be like Jesus. When He appears we shall be like Him, says John.

The statement is clear, the likeness must be unmistakable, the image unmarred. We must be as He is in this world, so that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, whether we be gathered from heaven or earth, we may be shown to be like Him. God has declared that His ultimate purpose along this line is to gather together those who are His workmanship and sum us up under one head. We all shall be so like Him, such an exact image in fact, that God can do no better than make His face ours. We the body and He the head are all one; the face of our head is surely our face; the purpose shall then in part be fulfilled.

Jesus — Lord of All.

Jesus is the last Adam; there is no possibility of development beyond Him. He is the fulfilment of God's original idea for man; the ideal; perfect above degree or compare; absolutely unique. In that final age when the last stage of the plan is initiated, it will be seen that what was first begun in Eden is summed up in Christ. God only made a commencement in Eden. Paradise was the place He chose to set the whole plan in motion. What God said there only amounted to an outline, which barely indicates to us what His purposes were in flesh and blood. God was sharing with His creature as much as he could bear at that time. The fullest revelation however He reserved to show to us by Jesus Christ. Following His death and resurrection, it was made known to, and is revealed only to those who live in the Spirit.

Thanking God for such amazing grace, and returning again to the beginning of the Book, we read with joy the sevenfold declaration of His intentions when making Man. Before ever He commenced to create His masterpiece, He announced His reasons for doing so in these terms: Man should be in His image and likeness; be blessed; be fruitful; multiply; replenish the earth; subdue it; have dominion over all other forms of animate creatures. These are the seven pillars of wisdom upon and around which God proposed to build the whole structure of human life in this world; and what a house it would have been had He accomplished it! We cannot here fully examine each of these mighty pillars individually, nor explore their corporate strength and glory, but looking afresh at God's first man, we gain a glimpse of the greatness that lay within him through God's power and gentleness with him. The Lord was beginning to build him up into a mighty edifice, full of potential glory, but had scarcely commenced when Adam ruined it all.

IV. THE TESTIMONY OF THE IMMUTABLE LAW OF GOD.

The Inward Similitude.

The tragedy of the fall and spiritual death of Adam lay in the fact that although by it he lost his likeness to God, he did not lose the image of his Maker. That is to say he did not then and there cease to have the powers of thought, imagination, desire, feeling (emotions), affections (love), will and conscience, which God gave him at creation. He retained these, but they ceased to be wholly good. The glory of God's handiwork in Adam lay in the perfect way He imaged or reproduced His own moral powers in and into His creature. When he fell, Adam did not lose these, he did not become amoral like the animals, he became immoral like the devil; until then he had been moral like God.

When men make images, their handiwork bears resemblance to features of men, animals etc. — they can only reproduce externalities. When God made His image, He created a likeness to His own inward features, that is His morality. Falling by an act of disobedience into a state of sin, Adam lost his likeness to God, but still retained the image of God. To this day that image has remained the living proof that he came from God by direct creation, and did not emerge or evolve to human through animal from some form of primeval slime.

There is an unbridgeable gulf fixed by God between human and all other forms and states of life. It is this which in the end defies and testifies against all the anti-scriptural theories men have concocted about man. Pure in spirit and moral in soul,

Adam should have been more than able to withstand the devil's temptation. The same will which made him moral, and the conscience which kept him upright so that he did not descend to the habits and practices of animals, were sufficient also to keep him from falling into the sin of devils.

The informed mind, together with the enlightened conscience and a perfect will is capable of making moral choices honouring to God and preventive of evil. A man thereby remains good. But at the beginning of spiritual life temptation mostly comes to man concerning things about which he has had little information and of which he has had no experience. This is how it was with Adam. His information about the results of eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was almost nil; his experience of it was entirely so.

It may then be asked, since he knew so little about the fruit, how could he form judgements about it and how could God hold him morally accountable for his act? In other words how could sin have been imputed by God to a man who acted purely upon desire, without having had sufficient grounds to form an opinion about the results of his action? Shouldn't the experiment have been excused? After all wasn't it a first offence?

The Irrevocable Choice.

The answer to such questionings may be arrived at very speedily when the grounds upon which sin is imputed are carefully examined. God knew that experientially Adam was totally ignorant of the consequences of taking the fruit in disobedience. But Adam had learned all he knew by living under the direct tuition of his Maker. God had never misinformed him about anything; everything was as God had made it and was what He said it to be. Adam had not ever been asked to decide the spiritual or moral qualities of anything by experimentation; he had taken God's word for it.

From the beginning righteousness had been imputed to Adam over and above his original innocence upon the ground of his belief in and obedience to God's word. This involved moral choice on his part, but decision for him was easy. He would have had no consciousness of real conflict. Righteousness or sin are still being imputed to men upon this same ground of moral choice. Sin is imputed when men choose to gain self-satisfaction by experimentation contrary to God's commandment. But righteousness is imputed when a man as a matter of course believes and obeys God.

At the time of his temptation Adam was not, nor ever had been, a sinner. He was to all intents and purposes a man of God. When Adam partook of the tree he fell into the temptation. Sin was then imputed to him by God on the grounds of his refusal to believe God's word and obey Him. Adam made a moral choice in full knowledge of what he was doing. That was serious enough in all conscience; but worse still, because in the act of disobeying God he chose to obey satan, the devil imparted to him a nature to sin also. So Adam existed a fallen creature, having sin both imputed to him by God and imparted to him by satan.

Centuries later, Abraham, a descendant of Adam, and in common with all men affected by Adam's sin, was called on by God to believe that He would make his seed as the stars of heaven for multitude. This man had but lately left his native land, where he had been living in the darkness and sin of heathendom, worshipping idols. Yet that night, despite all difficulties and improbabilities, Abraham believed what God said to

him. Because he did so, God imputed righteousness to him. We see then that imputation by God, whether it be of sin or of righteousness, depends upon a man's moral reaction to what God says to him. It does not depend upon choice made through knowledge gained from results of experimentation, either in the prohibited thing, or in the area concerning which the promise is made.

A New ... Living Way.

The subtlety of satan's temptation to Adam lay in the fact that he obscured this truth. By an insinuation against God's character, the devil implied that by barring Adam from the fruit of the tree, God was neither good nor wise, but to the contrary was his enemy. Eve was deceived by satan, but Adam was not. He knew what he was doing and chose the evil way. It was an irremediable act, for since he was the father of the as yet unborn race, in him all his progeny died. With the exception of Jesus Christ, every person born since that transaction with satan in Eden has been born fallen, inheriting from him a nature biased to sin.

In that each is a spirit / soul person he is born in the image of God, but none now has His likeness. When a man comes into this world his soul is structured in the same way as was Adam's and bears the same image. This gives him capability to develop into a most powerful personality. But although he applies himself to this with great zeal, in nothing can he be like God. To be like God, a man must be born from above. He must die to himself and the world and sin and the devil, and undergo a new birth.

When he is born from above he is born in God's likeness. It is totally impossible to attain to that blessed reflection by any other means. This likeness is a spiritual one. It is man's spirit which is born. He is then raised from the state of total spiritual death into which he was naturally born. By regeneration the nature of his spirit is made like unto God. This is accomplished by the incoming and indwelling of the Spirit of God.

From that moment a man's business in this world is to give all his time and powers without reservation to the development of a soul-life comparable to that of Jesus who is the last Adam. This is God's intention for him and is quite possible. By the power of the blood of the cross and the forgiveness made available because of the cross, plus old Adam's crucifixion on the cross, and the reconciliation made at the cross and the cross itself, the soul of man can be instantly and completely renovated. Therefore, with spirit newborn into God's likeness, and a soul regenerated in God's image, man may commence again to live as God desires.

The Foolishness of God is Wiser than Men.

Since the days when God created the earth and the heavens, He has made great changes in them both. By the universal flood in Noah's day and the global divisions undertaken in Peleg's day, together with local changes such as were effected during Abraham's lifetime and at the resurrection of Christ, the contours and areas of lands and sea have been purposely altered by the Lord. But the original purpose of God still lives on in human hearts. It is not recognized as such, for it has become greatly disfigured and changed by the fall and the curse. Nevertheless it is easily traceable in some, for it burns in them like an indomitable flame.

Sin has ruined all nature. God's pacific intentions have been defiled and mutilated, men have directed them to harsh and sadistic ends. Contrary to God's original will,

throughout the centuries subjugation and dominion have been achieved by warfare and slavery. It is not surprising therefore that in view of the state of nature and the ways of man, speaking from the depths of his heart the cynic may ask the questions: what is the purpose of it all? Who will show me any good? Bitterness and hopelessness drive some men to wish they had never been born, for they see no reason for life. Perhaps the atheistic dialectic theory of evolution sprang from this source.

If thinking men, examining the amorality of men at large, conclude that their savagery precludes the probability of God who is love, then some satisfactory alternative to God and creation must be found. Man must have a way to explain himself and the universe in which he lives. Mind must think, and if he discards the Bible, man has no other recourse than to seek evidence from the universe in which he finds himself. He has no alternative. Under such conditions Man, the investigator, must become his own interpreter also.

Being inventive of ideas, coldly scientific as he may think he is, he is bound to make subjective decisions. Man cannot do otherwise than derive and couch his statements from the ground of what he thinks based upon his observations. To some extent in certain fields of enquiry man is able, by experimentation, to establish causes from effects, and can with confidence pronounce with exactitude upon them. He is therefore prone to think that given time, provided he prosecutes his investigations with sufficient zeal, he will come up with all the answers. But in the end, objective as he feels he may be or has been, if he is honest he cannot but admit that his conclusions are subjective and that after all it has been impossible to escape himself.

How can it be otherwise with men who insist upon rejecting intervention from, or who refuse to pay any respect to the words of any being other than Man? It is sadly true that men with no proof whatsoever insist upon saying and persist in believing that there is no such thing as special inspiration. Because they themselves have no personal experience of it, they cannot accept that any of their fellow-creatures have been inspired by God to furnish a book of facts. Taking up this unwarrantable attitude, they have no hope of being objective enough to be scientific.

The Inescapable Bias.

The Bible is the only ground upon which any scientist may stand with real hope of being sufficiently objective in his investigation to arrive at truth. It must be understood, however, that eventual proof of its assertions in all the most important realms of which it treats cannot be gained apart from a subjective experience. A man must discover that God asks no more of him than, that in pursuit of truth, he behaves as normally with what He says as he does with what anyone else says. There is nothing in the whole universe which supports the theories of atheism. There are many things in the world of men which in effect are not of God, but there is nothing which disproves that He is. The very things which seem by their existence to prove that there is no God, do in fact on the contrary testify that He is.

Such things or conditions for instance as disease, warfare, pain, suffering, famine, death, to name but a few of the more horrible conditions prevailing in the universe, do not deny that God is. Though these are contrary to man's good, they cannot of themselves prove that there is no God. How can abstract things prove or disprove anything? These can only be regarded as evidences for or against God according to the pre-conditioning of the mind that observes them. A man's mind is either judicious

or prejudicial within him. He makes pronouncements on any matter, and especially with regard to God, according to his relationship to Him and his attitude to the Bible.

Man's mind is unavoidably biased and partial — he cannot help but think for or against God. This is because the mind of Man is either carnal or spiritual: it is quite impossible for it to be simply natural; such a condition is only theoretically possible. Mind is developed within the brain of man. It cannot exist as pure simple natural mind: it can only be carnal or spiritual according to the spiritual state of the inward man to whom it belongs. Man is not, never has been, and never shall be able to exist independently. Everyone is influenced by good or evil, and by one of two beings other than himself, therefore to attempt to construct a system of thought upon the assumption that God is not, is to be unavoidably influenced for evil by satan.

Indeed every man in his natural estate, however naturally religious he may be, can do no other than think anti-Christ, even when meditating upon God. Anyone who believes he can think completely independently, especially upon spiritual subjects, is deluded. Therefore to believe that it is possible to approach the task of formulating original opinions on any subject is in itself a delusion. A man may be able to think independently of other men, though in the last analysis this is very doubtful, but he cannot think independently of God or satan.

Bias to good or evil is endemic in the human mind, even though it be concerned with reasonings in things quite unrelated to religion. Whether he be engaged in the pure sciences, or in any other branch of study known to man, including theology itself, Man cannot do other than pronounce upon it from either the carnal or the spiritual mind. The fact that these two kinds of mind may on some subjects arrive at the same conclusions and say identical things in no way proves that all mind is alike. The final test of a man's mind, both as to its quality and calibre, is how he pronounces upon God. It will be proven then, that although a man may seek to speak objectively, God being the object upon which he focusses his thoughts, he can only think about Him subjectively. This is because Man was made by God, who being Himself Spirit, devised mind upon the basis of spirit.

The Law is Good.

Man's spirit within him is either dead or alive to God. In practical terms this means that he is either aware or unaware of God. This being so, he either recognizes and takes cognisance of God, or else he does not. If he does not, it does not prove that God is not, but that the man himself is not (in life). When a man is born naturally, he is born unable to perceive and receive the things of the spirit of God. Therefore, as he develops, his spirit is not able to lay hold of and correctly interpret the spiritual truth underlying the phenomena he observes. His mind may range over the objects God has created, and be able to record, particularize and utilize some of the laws by which they function, but he cannot rightly assess the spirit within those laws. He may conclude that there must be (a) power or force, as well as (a) mind from which all came, but he cannot recognize the Spirit. Being dead he cannot 'see' the God in whose mind all was originally thought and planned.

Therefore such men do not know that the power, force or energy, call it what you will, is God's power; to that and to Him they are dead. For this reason they are not aware that the laws they recognize and classify and name are based upon principles of being and were originally expressions of personality. Yet with the complete illogicality,

often so much scorned among them, they are prepared to base the whole of the science of psychology upon the fact that the human personality is derived from and functions by law.

One would have thought that a man as impartial as a scientist is famed to be would have accepted the logical implications of that. Surely there is sufficient ground to assume that evidence must also exist for the belief that behind all things lies a great personality, namely God the eternal Being, who is discoverable to everybody who will seek Him. But perhaps to admit the possibility would be too costly, for if this be acknowledged everyone is left without excuse.

In order to avoid the logical conclusions which follow from such an admission, the mind must swing away from unacceptable implications and say that the whole idea of God is but an unwarrantable inference, insufficiently supported by facts. 'Why, everything about Man is unethical and amoral', they say, 'there is no true justice among men anywhere'. But if there be no God, there can be no absolute standard of ethics or morals either. Similarly if this be so there are no standards of right or wrong by which to judge, for there is no finality, only group agreements. Instead of morals, convenient arrangements must be made, each as easy of adjustment or banishment as of establishment. Self-justifying societies are only zoos filled with animals, insufficiently educated to admit the fact.

The apostle Paul found it so in his day, saying, 'if after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me if the dead rise not?' His next cryptic comment leaves us with no doubt as to his estimate of the matter, 'let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'. If there be no God and no resurrection, let us just live unto the moment and fulfil our basic animal lusts — death ends all. It is fine sarcasm, as well as complete logic. But he also said that God gives the Spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind. The farther the human mind drifts or deliberately turns away from the divine mind, the greater its insanity and instability.

To quote Paul again, 'we see through a glass (in a mirror — riddle — or enigma) darkly' at best, but some see and can explain more than others according to their life with God and the accumulated and growing knowledge derived therefrom. This is by no means dependent upon formal education and can easily be acquired without it, though having it a person may use it to advantage.

The Firmament Sheweth His Handiwork.

It was with simple logic that of all the different branches of science then known to Man, the psalmist chose to relate his revelation to astronomy. He could not have chosen anything better suited to what he had to say, for above all things, the heavens and the heavenly bodies are universal. Whether entirely landlocked in vast deserts, or ice-bound in frozen tundra, or lying upon the bosom of the embracing sea, Man has only to lift up his eyes and the heavenly orders lie open to his gaze. Of moral or civil, or criminal, or spiritual, or constitutional, or commercial, or scientific law, he may know nothing, but if he looks up long enough and often enough to the skies, he cannot fail to notice some basic and undeniable facts. However primitive he may be, given time the heavenly orders will speak volumes to him.

Morals and ethics aside, the existence and function of the stars and planets reveal law and order of absolute precision. Are the stellar and planetary systems accidental? Did

law just happen? Is it all merely mechanical, or does such precision, order and power testify to the existence of a great mind working by an all-powerful Spirit from an everlasting throne?

The writers of the Bible tell us that God created it all, that His stamp is upon everything, that He is the source of all true law. He does not claim to be the originator of all rules. Men make and break those at their own convenience, as when devising games, or safeguarding institutions. These are then regarded as laws, but are not law. All real law is absolute. In its highest form it is as impossible of attainment as of destruction or even interference by humans, for it is God. Eternal life is eternal law. Absolute law is the function of eternal being, it is spontaneous.

For His own purposes, throughout history God has decreed temporary laws. For instance much of the Mosaic code was temporary. While it existed it was law; but it was only ordained for the time being. The whole of the Levitical sacrificial laws came to fulness with the advent, death and resurrection of Christ. Being fulfilled, they ceased to be of any more use, so God terminated them altogether. That kind or class of law, though a convenience ordained of God, was at that time completely necessitous. It could be broken, though to break it incurred penalties in the form of judgements. There is also a class or quality of law (for instance health laws) which may be broken at will, and being broken, immediately effects irremediable results. But there are some laws no man can touch, and therefore cannot alter, even if he can interfere with and change their effects.

The Unchangeable Eternal Law.

As an example of this last-mentioned class of law, which is within the reach of man's experimentation, we may cite a river. It is utterly impossible to stop the rising and flowing of a river. Man may alter its course, extract from it at places and lessen its volume, poison and pollute it, all contrary to its proper and original purpose and form, but he cannot interfere with its source. The law of a river governing its existence and rise is unalterable. If we move from land to sea, we are in a realm where all is beyond man's power of interference. The law governing tidal movement and its effects may be harnessed to a minimal degree, but it cannot be interfered with.

Moving yet again outward into the atmosphere, we are still more impotent. Man thinks he knows how air-movements are caused and can plot the course of the wind and take advantage of its undependable aid, but he cannot touch or interfere with the laws that govern it. Considering the heavens: God set the stars in their courses and man can do nothing about the laws that govern them.

These laws are projections by sovereign will according to original mind from principles of eternal Being. This kind, class or quality of law is everlasting. It is nothing other than God's fixed intention to have things as He desires them to be. By this He adapts His inward powers of self-existence to a specific end. That is why there is universal uniformity in Creation — Einstein stumbled upon the idea and demonstrated it as Relativity, but he did not find God. There is no personality in Creation, only evidences of it. God moves in His Creation, but it is not God; He is behind it, above it, over it, through it, but not it.

The Light Shined in the Darkness.

Although there be fire at the heart of the earth and at the centre of the solar system, there is no warmth of love. The heavens declare the glory of God's power, suggest the order of His Being, reveal the majesty of His mind, the immensity of His strength, the awe of His presence and the eternity of His existence. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard and to some extent understood. Whether or not it is obeyed or correctly interpreted is another matter. They are literally an expression of God — God said, 'Light be', and light was — and still is.

Whether or not it will ever be finally decided by man that light is waves or particles or both or neither is of little save academic interest. Light is vocal, it was vocalized from God with intent that it should become the universal condition in which He would work and in which all created objects and subjects should exist. It is therefore discoverable that God is Light. Because light came from Him and constantly remains unalterable, we know that He is Light. We know this is so in exactly the same way as we know that a person who constantly and unalterably does wicked things is wicked.

The instance quoted on a previous page of a river will serve us to illustrate a further point which needs to be understood. Because a river may be polluted, it by no means proves that it is wrong at source. What was originally designed good for purposes of good, if tampered with at source becomes a threat to life. Through men's folly, those same laws which God designed for good can be used to evil ends, spreading disease, poison, pollution and death. We see then that some laws, because they can be interfered with, can do the very opposite to that for which they were instituted. Precisely because they fail to take cognizance of this, men blame God for that which is not His fault. The devil knows how to take advantage of God's laws and use them to destroy men, the while blaming or inciting men to blame God for it, and the Lord allows him to do this.

Man's Inescapable Destiny — Dominion! Under Authority.

Sin from a former, higher creation has been transmitted to this lower one and implanted in man, a creature of law. Because this is so, it is now working out according to the laws of his being, and all the while he persists in rebelling against God nothing can prevent it. Nevertheless, despite this, God's original purposes are still being worked out. No-one can alter what God did in the beginning; pollution and perversion have caused His benign laws to serve evil ends so that His will is not being done, but His laws cannot be changed.

Whether for good or evil, man must have dominion — he was created for it. The means and kind of dominion are for him a matter of choice, which is as inescapable as the laws of his being. He must choose to have and serve one of two masters; he must either retain the devil as his lord, or he may choose Jesus to be his Lord. Man cannot achieve dominion unless he is himself under dominion. The devil offers man all the kingdoms of this world, at the price of the loss of his own soul, A man may choose them, but he will never have them. The devil is a deceiver. On the other hand the Lord Jesus offers Man an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for him in heaven. The earnest of this is made available to men on earth now. By His Spirit God seals it to a man's heart in utter sincerity from the moment of his new birth.

Immediately the Lord commences to educate His newborn child in the exercise of dominion; at first in the measure a baby can take and then in gradually-increasing

measure the lessons must be learned. There is a fulness to which each must attain in this life, which leads to a greater fulness in the next. The greatest is held in reserve. What we have here is but a token. For all its glory, earth's period of dominion is as nothing compared with that which is to come.

Meantime we must increase and multiply, replenish and subdue the earth. God will give us meat for the task. Having created and blessed us, He will cause all things to work together for our good. Even the laws which have been tampered with by satan must serve His purposes. The devil cannot interfere with law, only with laws. Let us live for God's will alone. Through Christ Paradise and heaven are ours and the earth also.

G.W.N.

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19-MAY-03

First published 1977.

Revised 1978

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ONE BAPTISM

G. W. North

ONE BAPTISM

**An examination of the truth of Baptism in the Spirit
as revealed in Old Testament type and New Testament doctrine**

Chapter One - THE END OF ALL FLESH

'I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all, and in you all.' (Ephesians 4:1-6)

Reading the above words from the pen of Tychicus under the dictation of the apostle Paul, we acquaint ourselves with the title and thematic ground of this book. The whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation declares with one voice that there is only one Baptism, although the privilege of actually saying so is given exclusively to the apostle Paul. Within these pages, an attempt is made to arrive at a clear assessment of the truth expressed in the phrase, 'One Baptism', by examining it in:

1. Type, as it is illustrated in the Old Testament;
2. The immediate context in which the phrase is found;
3. The wider background of the book in which that context and the passage itself are set;
4. The whole revelation of the New Testament of which that book is a part.

There could hardly be found a more simple and straightforward, yet profound, statement of truth than the above passage. Perhaps one of the most surprising features of it to modern minds is that the apostle makes no attempt to explain or expound it to his readers; it must therefore be assumed that they knew exactly what he meant.

When a direct categorical statement on any subject is made in the Bible by any man under inspiration of God, it is absolutely true; nothing said anywhere else in scripture on that subject can be in any way contrary to it, either in word or in spirit. Other things may be and often are said, additional to or explanatory of it, but never contradictory to it. God says that there is 'One Baptism'; that is precisely what He means. He does not mean that there are two or three baptisms when He says that there is one. He says what He means, and He expects us to believe what He says. Moreover, having once said that there is one baptism, He does not say anything anywhere else that in any degree contradicts that statement. It is either true or false.

This one baptism is fully illustrated in scripture by four outstanding types, all to be found in the Old Testament. At first reading these may appear to have very little in common with the One Baptism spoken of by Paul, but closer examination discloses their usefulness in this connection. Although each is to be found in the Old Testament, it is the New Testament which informs us that the first and second of them were indeed of the nature of a baptism. This procedure may seem a little surprising, but it is not unusual with God; indeed it was very necessary that He should employ this

method, and for the following reason: primitive historical facts recorded in ancient times, even though given under inspiration, were not always at the time of writing accorded their fullest spiritual meaning. This was simply because:

1. Their true spiritual value, proper meaning and fullest implications were not at the time of writing properly assessed and appreciated.
2. Their necessary place and function in the overall plan of God was not then fully revealed and so could not be known by those who wrote of them.
3. The recording of the facts was controlled by God with a view to the future when other men, under the same inspiration and control, yet in a better position to understand, would recognize their true significance and be able to correlate them into a whole, thus giving them their greatest meaning.

In I Corinthians 15:46, Paul states a principle which is most helpful to us at this point. To gain fullest benefit from it we will momentarily alter the word 'natural' to 'material'; doing so will not harm the sacred text we love, but will demonstrate more easily the truth we seek. The apostle says, 'that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual'. Altering the word in thought for our immediate purposes has in no way strained the truth; in fact it has enhanced it, for the principle is true of both. In addition to what is so simply stated here, God has supplied vital information about a key factor which underlies all His works of creation. Whether they be vegetable, mineral or abstract, everything physical or material reveals this same principle. To quote Hebrews 11:3, things which are seen 'were not made of things which do appear', but 'from the creation of the world, the invisible things of Him are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made', Romans 1:20. So although throughout the whole universe the first thing to strike the eye, or by any means impress itself on the sense of the observer may be that which is natural or material, we understand afterwards that all is quite secondary to the spiritual. The spiritual is always first and can be no other, although it is never seen or understood first. The text is dealing with the order of human understanding and approach to reality, not the order of logic and eternal truth.

In fact, there is no order of truth in God in this respect, for in Him natural and spiritual are one. Nevertheless, to us who belong to a lower order, that which is first is natural (physical or material) and can be no other. We always understand that which is spiritual afterwards or lastly, and only through and because of its manifestation. But scripture clearly reveals that firstly it is God: 'In the beginning God', and 'all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made'. It was God who created the whole of this material, physical and natural world in which we live, and underlying all that God does is God Himself; because this is so, there is spiritual meaning and significance in everything. Even though since the fall of Lucifer — and man his victim — everything may be evil affected: in the beginning the earth was formed and the ages fitted together by the Word of God. Originally everything is a manifestation of or a projection from spiritual reality. It is God's intention that His material creation should lead us to an awareness, if not an understanding of Himself, the original Spiritual Life from whence it came.

Because of this, historical biblical events have a typical value and hold spiritual meaning for modern man. We may learn spiritual lessons from all things; as the seraphim said in Isaiah's hearing, 'the whole earth is full of Thy glory'. God had these records made, that by them He may set forth the principles and ways from which He

never deviates in any age. As we pursue our theme through the Bible, we shall discover this to be true of all the illustrations we shall examine. Each is a historical event of such importance that it is totally impossible to exaggerate any one of them. Yet true as this is, it is doubtful that any but God Himself has ever correctly evaluated them or understands their fullest spiritual meaning. Certainly, in the physical or national or personal lives of those who were involved in them, they were absolutely miraculous. However, although they were real happenings of tremendous magnitude when they took place, they are of even greater import in typical meaning. At the conclusion, when we gather all together into the relative positions they hold within the eternal plan of God, we shall be amazed at such an overwhelming revelation of His grace and wisdom.

The first of these illustrations is the well-known story of the Flood, found in the book of Genesis. At first glance this event may seem to have no connection with baptism whatsoever. However, Peter in his first epistle, chapter 3, verses 20 and 21, leaves us in no doubt about it at all — 'the like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us'. He majors chiefly on the Ark (of salvation) and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and proceeds to draw lessons from the historic event relative to the ordinance; he also arrives at certain basic conclusions. A study of Peter's whole ministry, taking special note of his sayings on the subject of water baptism, is most rewarding. It reveals that his reason for insisting on the ordinance was based on his appreciation of that work Christ wrought at Calvary, which finds particular illustration by the miracle of the Flood.

The apostle was a primitive man, elemental in nature, fundamental in beliefs, and simple and radical in all that he said and did. He did not have a formal education, and had no opportunity to gain the cultural and social finesse of a Saul of Tarsus; his background and training was Galilee, his companions the fishing community. He had not sat at the feet of Gamaliel, nor had he known the student body of Tarsus University. Nevertheless he was among the chiefest of the apostles, if not the very chief, and from the day of his regeneration he lived and moved with tremendous power and authority in rugged primal things. Both in his writings and in his speakings he dealt with simple basic truths in a manner thoroughly consistent with his personality. He was the natural leader among the twelve apostles. He also held the foremost place among the 'chosen three', as did the Tachmonite among David's three mighty men (II Samuel 23:8). It is therefore only to be expected that in the matter of baptism Peter should adduce fundamental truths from the elemental facts of the Flood, and authoritatively apply them to us with forthrightness.

The story of the Flood is important. It is recorded in Genesis 6,7 and 8, and also referred to in other parts of scripture. It all began when God warned Noah that He was about to destroy the earth with a flood, and instructed him to build an Ark. Strange as it may seem, although God told him about it and what to do, He never told him when it should happen. The only indication Noah had about the time of the event was bound up in the meaning of a name borne by one of his blood-relations. Noah came of a very distinguished family; his great-grandfather was Enoch, a man who walked with God. He was a prophet in close communion with his Lord, and when his wife gave birth to their first son, he named him Methuselah, which meant 'when he is dead it shall be sent', or 'when he is dead it shall come to pass'.

It was a prophetic name, but nobody, it seems, knew exactly what it indicated. Was it a pointer to Enoch? Did it refer to Enoch's death? God answered that problem by removing Enoch from the scene; he did not die, God took him; so everyone knew that name was not a hidden reference to the father's death: it must be the living son. This man Methuselah lived longer on earth than any other man before or since, and by his longevity God showed forth His grace in a most remarkable way. As the name indicates, the year that Methuselah died the Flood came. All the while he was alive, people had warning from God that something was impending, though for much of the time they knew not what.

Noah, Methuselah's great grandson, was a 'preacher of righteousness' during an age, or day (nearly a millennium) of grace. This is very wonderful and appears so much more wonderful to us than to them, for we know the much more glorious truth that our blessed Lord was actually 'The Word made flesh'. The importance of Methuselah is that he in his day was also a word in flesh; all he had to do to declare God's word was live. He was Enoch's great prophecy to all mankind. In him mercy and judgement were met together; mercy in that all the while he lived the flood of judgement was withheld; judgement in that shortly after his death the Flood came. He outlived his son Lamech, Noah's father, by five years, thus continuing the testimony right up to the actual time of the Flood. Of course as soon as God warned Noah of the coming deluge, he knew immediately why his great grandfather received his name.

It was during the last century of this man's life that Noah, being moved with fear, prepared the Ark for the time to come. His reason for doing so was twofold: 1. saving his house; 2. preservation of life for the unknown future. He built the House of salvation according to God's specifications on a large, yet limited, scale; it was large enough to hold all those God intended to save from that creation, yet its human occupants were limited to one family, and the reason for this was plainly stated by God: Noah was just, perfect in his generation, and he walked with God, righteous among the men of his day. His family was the last surviving family unit which was perfect in its generation, and represented to God His original design in marriage. In common with his forebears, Noah had preserved the godly line, keeping the righteous seed unmixed.

In his day Sons of God were marrying daughters of men, with the result that all sorts of abominations were taking place on the earth. The pure line had been preserved, but Noah was the last of it, so to prevent its extermination God determined to save him. God's Spirit had long striven with man in an effort to save him from himself, but despite all God's efforts, original sin had erupted into unrestrained sexual lust, and carried away all flesh to total depravity. 'Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart was only evil continually'; corruption and violence reigned throughout the whole race of men. Repentance and grief gripped the heart of God that He had ever created man on the earth, so with reluctance He took the decision to destroy them. When there remains not even one good imagination in the thought of any heart, there is only one course to take — utter destruction — so the Lord took it.

There is always an intrinsic rightness about the way God does things. This is strikingly revealed by the particular form of judgement wherewith He finally closed that antediluvian era. The Flood was an absolutely perfect portrayal of God's repentance. True repentance, in whomsoever it is found, is always accompanied by uttermost grief, and the insight afforded us here into God's terrible grief is amazing

beyond words. How truly Paul speaks when he says, 'godly sorrow worketh repentance not to be repented of', godly sorrow is immeasurable; it is the foundation of all true repentance. This account of the Flood provides us with an insight into the mystery of the sorrow which caused God to pass sentence and execute judgement upon the world of the ungodly. If the enormity of the Flood is anything to go by, God was broken-hearted, and if its intensity is likewise an indication of His feelings, then He was very angry also. Who can imagine what the breaking up of the fountains of the deep and the openings of the windows of heaven betokened? If God intended to give us a revelation of the great flood of grief and indignation welling up in His stricken heart, He has certainly succeeded. Elements of wrath and judgement are always present in the truth of the Baptism, and inescapably so, for besides being principles affecting moral action, they are also fundamental and necessary to the truth of salvation. What was blessing and deliverance to Noah's family, was curse and destruction to multitudes of others. Even so, God never judges with impunity, nor pours out punishment with pleasure. As witnessed by this story, destruction, when executed by Him, is accompanied by an unparalleled and overwhelming testimony to His heart-brokenness. All of God is always in all that He does.

How graphically the basic principles of salvation are woven into the factual information given us by the Spirit concerning the Flood. The persons around whom the story revolves, and the method of salvation used, as well as the Flood itself, have much to teach us. But even though we seek to gain maximum benefit from the story, we can only briefly touch upon it here. When Noah had completed the Ark, God's moment for putting salvation into effect for the righteous family had arrived, so this He proceeded to do. At this point we find a surprising illustration of a well-loved New Testament statement recorded for us by Paul in II Corinthians 5.19, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself', for the invitation to enter the Ark seems to have come from within the Ark: 'Come thou into the Ark'. God did not direct or command them to go into the Ark, but called them into it as though He were already inside.

Noah had built the Ark for God: he was God's representative. He did it by faith, that is as though it were God doing it. But although he had worked upon it and in it, he never attempted to go and take up residence therein until he was invited to do so by God. From the moment this call came to Noah and his family, to the time they were finally shut in, seven days elapsed. During that period, under God's instructions, Noah gathered into the Ark many pairs of selected animals and birds and 'creeping things' from the lower orders of creation. Upon completion of this, 'the Lord shut him in, and the Flood was forty days upon the earth, and the waters increased', until the old creation was entirely blotted out.

Making allowance for the fact that all types have their shortcomings, and therefore cannot possibly be absolutely exact, we may see that in a very real sense Noah and his family were baptized into the Ark. More than that also, the type shows that Noah's family were baptized unto him in the Ark, for had the Flood not come, they would not have been with him in the Ark of salvation. This is the first Biblical hint of the truth of baptismal-regeneration. All Noah's sons had previously been born to him upon the earth; now, by the Flood, in the Ark, they were in a figure born again to him. All the floods of God's judgement beat upon that vessel, but all within were safe, whereas had they stayed outside they would have been but dead men. Instead, by God's grace, they were being preserved alive in order to populate the 'new earth' that should appear

when the judgement was past. To use a New Testament quotation, and suiting it to the type, by God's will they alone were predestined to be the eight new people 'in the regeneration', that is the regenerated earth.

The figure is plain, its teaching simple, its logic powerful, its force primitive. If we are to be saved, we must be baptized into Christ. As then, there was no place of safety or life outside the Ark, so now there is no place or hope of safety and life outside of Christ. To understand properly what God is seeking to teach us by the figure, it is necessary to observe that neither the thought of forgiveness of sins nor of atonement is referred to in this whole passage. There is no talk of blood and sacrifice, or of worship and praise; God is not dealing here with sin, but with its evil results and manifestations. He is judging the flesh; that is men and women in whom sin had run its uncontrolled course to the full. It is in contrast with such condition that God pronounced Noah's family to be the perfect generation.

Looking at that latest generation, now safe within the Ark, and tracing back their lineage through Noah, Lamech, Methuselah and Enoch, we come to Jared, Mahaleel, Cainan, Enos, Seth and eventually Adam. This is the spiritual line perfectly preserved from fleshly sin, kept and approved of God from the beginning of creation. But parallel with this there runs another genealogy also; this line in all its generations is traced with great precision in Genesis 4. Glancing at it we see that this is a much shorter record indeed. Proceeding from Adam through Cain to Enoch, it continues via Irad to Mehujael, and then to Methusael and Lamech; there the lineage stops. This is very strange: it is cut off dead; there is no continuation beyond that point. By this God has made known to us something of great magnitude, through which He intends to teach us an unforgettable lesson. This genealogy represents the line of 'the flesh', coming down from Adam through Cain; upon examining it we find some names exactly the same as those in the spiritual line. One is so surprisingly like Methuselah, that we are driven to the conclusion that it is almost an exact copy of its spiritual counterpart.

What we have discovered provides us with a striking illustration of the parable of the wheat and the tares, spoken by the Lord in Matthew 13. We note that directly preceding His exposition of the parable to the disciples, the Lord says, 'I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world'. This quotation in itself is an adaptation and amplification of David's statement in Psalm 78:2, in which psalm he briefly interprets to Israel their history. The psalmist writes purposely to exhibit to the nation their inherent Jacobean qualities; commencing with Jacob, he says, 'I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old'. He then proceeds to point out to them the tragic failures of the flesh as contrasted with the unfailing grace and mercy of God shown to the nation. On the other hand the Lord Jesus deals with the flesh in another way; He traces everything back to satan, for He is not, as David, just dealing with dark sayings of old, but with things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. Jesus did not come to deal with nationalistic Jacobean manifestations of flesh only, but with 'Flesh' in its entirety. The 'Flesh' in its ethically bad sense did not originate with Jacob, but with Adam; it is a demonstration in human flesh and blood of the original sin of Lucifer. Sin was introduced and reproduced by satan in Adam by means of the temptation through Eve, with the intention of degenerating the whole human race. When speaking in Matthew, the Lord deals with what we have found in the type we

are studying. From Adam downwards the fleshly line, as opposed to the spiritual seed, descended to utter destruction through Cain in the way set out above.

The Lord in His parable said, 'Let both grow together until the harvest', (Matthew 13:30). 'The harvest is the end of the age', verse 39. Different ages run different courses and have different beginnings and gospels and endings. The Lord is speaking of this present age and future consummation when fire is to be the medium of judgement, but basic spiritual elements never vary in any age this side of 'the regeneration'. Although media of judgement may vary from age to age, basic principles of judgement can never alter. God frequently changes interim means, but never eternal principles or ultimate ends. Nor is this surprising, for eternal principles cannot be changed, and neither can ultimate ends. Destinies are not decided in an arbitrary manner; they result from the outworkings of principles; these in turn become laws governing and producing the succession of events that unavoidably proceeds to an inescapable destination. We have an example of these things set before us in the history of Sodom and Gomorrah. In those twin cities of sin, men burned in their lust one toward another and reaped the due reward of their sin. Their end could not be other than fire; they had burned, so they must be burned.

Thus in the parable we find that, as to the inexperienced eye, dandelion while in growth is practically indistinguishable from wheat, and must grow together with it undisturbed until harvest and the judgement of fire, so does the fleshly line of Cain appear similar in many respects to the spiritual line of Seth; they developed together until the Flood. The man of the fleshly line has many features seemingly identical with the spiritual man, having both an Enoch and a Lamech of whom to boast, but there the similarity ends. Enoch of Cain's line did not beget a Methuselah, but a Methusael, for unlike his spiritual namesake, carnal Enoch was not in the habit of walking with God. Through the spiritual prophet Enoch (to adapt a precious New Testament phrase) 'God spake unto us (that age) through a son', Methuselah. But not so with Enoch of the fleshly line; because his progeny proved to be so vastly different from those of his spiritual namesake, the line is cut short and destroyed. It goes as far as Lamech, the man of wild power — that is savagery and violence — and then to death; and there it is left. That is the end of all flesh — it is unforgivable, there is no resurrection for it. The baptismal judgement, as the Flood so graphically indicates, is epochal, age-abiding, eternal. But Lamech of the godly line produced a Noah and an Ark of salvation and a generation ready for a new heaven and a new earth.

As we have earlier seen, this type of the One Baptism is not set forth as a treatise upon forgiveness and atonement, but as something far greater. By it God is not teaching forgiveness because of imputed righteousness through atonement; there is no mention of blood here. Not until the Flood has subsided, the Ark vacated and the 'new earth' entered and occupied, is there any hint of sacrifice in connection with this event. The Saving-Ark typifies unto us salvation from the old (man) creation into the new (man) creation. When at the invitation of God that family first crossed the threshold of the Ark, they stepped out of the old world of the flesh; when they stepped back over that same threshold nearly a year later they were in the new order of the Spirit. Of course, all is highly figurative to us, but then everything connected with actual water baptism is as surely figurative to this day; the spiritual truth is what we seek.

Turning back in our Bibles to Genesis 1:6 and 7, and reading of God's activities on the second day of creation, we find that they included the making of a firmament. His purpose in so doing was to divide the waters upon which His Spirit was moving. He called the firmament heaven. Apparently its function at that early stage of God's preparation for the advent of man was to divide the waters which were above the firmament from the waters which were under it, later called seas. We may not know all God's purposes in doing this, but upon reading the story of the Flood, we can see one very clear reason for it: those waters were stored up above the firmament in the beginning that they should later be poured out through the opened windows of heaven to deluge and inundate the whole earth.

Peter, writing in his second epistle, leaves little room for doubt that the Flood effected unimagined changes in this planet; indeed, perhaps in the whole universe also, for he speaks of the heavens as well. So great is the change, that he refers to the antediluvian state as 'the world that then was', and to this present order of things as 'the heavens and the earth which are now'. Just as the existing heaven and earth are being kept in store, reserved unto fiery judgement at the end of the age, so surely those waters which God had gathered up above the firmament were kept in store for use in the judgement that overflowed the world of the ungodly then. All of this lends weight to the probability that it was in much more than a figurative sense, though certainly in that, that the righteous generation went forth from the Ark at last to inhabit the (new) earth.

What is at least as wonderful, if not more wonderful still, is the miracle that appears to have taken place within the Ark itself. We know that previously there had never been any such vessel in existence, for it had been constructed at God's command, to God's specifications. But beyond that, although in a limited sense, both it and all within it represented a new creation. The whole company of men and animals and birds within that peculiar vessel lived together as though they were one new family. This is a wondrous illustration of the truth that 'if any man be in Christ he is a new creature', or as it could as well be rendered, 'if any man be in Christ there is a new creation'. In a manner also it sets forth an illustration of the answer to Christ's prayer 'that they all may be one'; this is the first and deepest reason for the Baptism in the Spirit.

It was a most fascinatingly novel and miraculous experience, for by God's command a remnant of the whole animate air-breathing creation was gathered within that floating 'world'. In a sense it was Paradise regained, or the millennium anticipated. Inside there the curse and sin and death were non-existent (although as we know they were only held in abeyance). 'In all that holy mountain' nothing harmed or hurt, or stung, and none preyed upon another; it floated serenely above earth's highest hills in perfect peace and rest. God and Noah, and the righteous family, together with restored creation, were in perfect harmony within that new creation, the Ark. For them it was a kind of predestination in there — a conforming to the original pattern and state of creation 'as it was in the beginning'. Not a great deal of imagination is required for us to realize the degree of amazement with which the family of God lived in such close contact with the animals. Perfect in its generations under its head, Noah, it enjoyed absolute liberty and safety, although confined with beasts that in their natural environment would have rent and torn and devoured them. Instead of enmity and bloodshed, all within the Ark was peace and rest and love and enjoyment. The law of the jungle was non-existent. What a heaven on earth!

The type is suggestive rather than comprehensive, limited rather than expansive, but what a wealth of instruction it holds for us concerning the truth of the Baptism. It is beautifully expressive of the limited comprehensions of the mind that first listens to the gospel, and responds from the heart to the drawings of the Spirit to Christ for salvation. In the initial stages of its response to the gospel, mansoul does not generally grasp all the great riches of the fullness of Christ. Generally a need is felt, a desire is acknowledged, a door is open, a call heard, then a decision is taken, entrance is made and salvation is assured to the penitent heart. The first realizations gained in the initial experience of the One Baptism are rescue and preservation from death, and life begun in Christ. Much of the truth typically set before us above will not at first be known; exploration and understanding of that will be a later achievement; to get into Christ is the major concern. The Baptism in the Spirit must be plainly understood to be regeneration. As Noah and his family responded to God's invitation, entered the Ark and were brought ultimately to the discovery of a new world, so also must we all go on to discover, become partakers of, and taste the powers of the world to come.

The New Testament furnishes us with many instances of truth within truth. As we know, much more lies beyond primary impressions or initial understanding than we can at once grasp. The words of the famous text in Matthew 11:28, as well as being linked with our theme, are also a good example of this very thing 'Come unto me all ye'. Whilst He was visibly manifest on earth, our straitened Lord at times perforce used limited statements when speaking to people. But even when He did speak plainly, the things He said could only be understood by His hearers according to known standards of interpretation and their ability to apply them. For instance, when He said 'come unto me', they could easily respond and come to Him; they knew what He meant; they could see Him, touch Him, believe and follow Him, and many did just that. They comprehended all they understood Him to mean by His words, but deeper than everything they could be expected to understand, there lay a greater meaning and a higher invitation awaiting clearer understanding.

The Lord used a word here which means both 'Unto' and 'Into'. To those who first heard the invitation it could only mean 'come unto me'. Their minds just could not interpret it to mean anything else; but to men of spiritual enlightenment who know eternal truth, it means 'come into me' — a far greater thing. So also with the word in John 14:1. To us He is saying (and it makes complete sense), 'believe also into me'. He is not just setting God and Himself forth here as the object of faith, someone upon whom faith can finally rest, as the limitation of the word 'in' would suggest; He is saying something vastly greater than that. The power of the word 'into' used here makes clear that He is inviting people to enter Him; 'Ye believe in God, believe also into me'. He is revealing God and Himself as the eternal life and abiding-place of mansoul into which we can and must enter.

It is almost certain that the apostles at that time could not begin to understand the things implicit in His speech. Indeed the whole of this section of John is a revelation of their abysmal ignorance of both their Lord and His sayings. It was not that He deliberately used words which they could not understand; He spoke to them simply and plainly in language which they normally used, but He could not convey to them the things He meant. How could they come into Him, or believe into Him? Only by the Baptism in the Spirit, but at that time this was not available to them. The Lord had not undergone it Himself, so as yet it had not been created for them; He dared not minimize the truth though. He just had to express it in ways acceptable to their minds,

even though He knew that only later would they enter in and understand with their spirits.

Before closing this chapter, we should note something further from Peter's use of the story of the Flood. He impresses upon us that baptism in water should be a man's spontaneous response to the gospel. At the same time he is careful to make clear that baptism in water must not be construed to mean something God never intended. The act of water baptism does not mean that thereby a man's sins are forgiven and his filth washed away. Even though in the great prototype of the Flood, the end of all flesh with its corruption and filthiness and violence came before God, He never dealt with it there, nor could He. What took place there was a judgement representing both the final judgement wherein God ends all His judgements upon the world, and the judgement which took place at the cross. The eternal judgement dealing with flesh and sin took place at Calvary; God dealt with everything there in the death of Christ. But this is not generally the first thing that engages the mind of the newly-converted person. He is usually taken up with an overwhelming sense of thankfulness to God for His exceeding grace in saving him from the ultimate penalty of his sins.

Whilst this great sense of gratitude is still upon him, the believer should be impressed with the need for immediate baptism. There is a very real link between salvation and baptism, and it is stated for us by no less a person than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Mark 16:16, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved'. This is a remarkably plain and unadorned statement which cannot be disregarded if we, like Him, are going to fulfil all righteousness. Now while it is quite true that he that believeth not shall not be saved, it is not true that he who is not baptized in water shall not be saved. Salvation does not rest upon water baptism, but the salvation / regeneration which we preach does rest upon being baptized into Christ. Seeing then that baptism in water is used by the Lord as a symbol and picture of that Spiritual Baptism, it can hardly be expected that sincere persons who experience the latter would or should quibble about submitting to the former. Moreover, as we are informed in Acts 2 that those who gladly received Peter's word on the day of Pentecost were baptized, it cannot be said that anyone refusing such baptism is one spirit with the early Church.

It is obvious that from John Baptist onwards into the commencement of the Church age, it was normal practice that when a person received the word, he or she also received baptism. In fact baptism is so identified with heart-faith that in some cases it is spoken of as though it were that faith; repentance and baptism are linked together in scripture as one would normally link repentance and faith. This is most enlightening, and upon reflection it is most natural; repentance, faith, baptism are three progressive steps in a natural progress. Not that baptism is to be regarded or in any way made to be a substitute for faith, it is an expression of heart-obedience to faith. This is very sweetly shown to us by the uncomplicated person of Lydia of Philippi. That lady, responding to the preached word of Paul immediately desired to be baptized as an expression of her faithfulness to the Lord.

At this point the question ought to be asked — should faithfulness be judged in beginners today, how many new converts would be found faithful in God's eyes upon the same basis. This raises another issue, best faced at this juncture, for it is the answer to the question begged above, namely this: baptism should be regarded as the first step in true discipleship, and urged upon people as the immediate response of the obedient heart to the Lord. The idea that converts should not be baptized until they

have been catechized or indoctrinated is quite a modern innovation; it finds neither precedent in scripture, nor support from the apostles. Under the apostles' ministry all believers were either commanded or exhorted, certainly they were expected, to be baptized immediately upon salvation.

It appears that this principle and practice of immediacy was first instituted in Jewry by John Baptist. It was afterwards given a degree of permanence by the Lord Himself, when baptism was conducted in His name during the period of His personal ministry among men. The disciples administered the rite under the authority of His anointing as an ordinance of His kingdom on earth, and continued the same tradition of immediacy which they had learned originally from His forerunner. It is not surprising then, that after the Lord's return to heaven, His apostles continued the ordinance in the same way, as an authoritative ordinance divinely established in the Church; it became common practice. The apostles perfectly understood the words of the Lord Jesus recorded in Matthew 28:18-20, and applied them literally and liberally to all men. From their acts it is plainly to be seen that these men fulfilled the commission in the order Jesus set forth. Still under His authority and in His presence they went and preached, made disciples, baptized and taught them.

Now both in the nature of things, as also in scriptural order, this is shown to be exactly right. The Lord places baptism before teaching, and does so in order to teach us that obedience is better esteemed with God than acquired knowledge, indeed it is the most important lesson of all, and fundamental to the gaining of all spiritual knowledge from God. Baptism must be a thing of the heart rather than of the intellect, a provoked response rather than a studiously considered step. The fact that occasionally one may hear such remarks as, 'I wish I had waited until I understood more about it before I was baptized', does not mean that the person saying so was wrong to have been baptized. The fact that he or she spontaneously responded to this word of the Lord is a commendation to that heart and not a cause for criticism. As long as a person is truly the Lord's, he or she is absolutely correct in desiring to be baptized immediately. It is a good thing in beginners that affections and emotions and desires should outstrip the intellect; that is just the response God wants. The answer of a good conscience towards God is eagerly watched for in heaven, for it is not the mind but the spirit of man that moves his conscience. This is of prime importance when considering water baptism.

A desire to obey the primary urge when moving in the things of God is a most commendable thing. It is as correct as the desire which urged and moved the Lord Jesus Himself to be baptized in His day, and thus fulfil all righteousness at that time. To know and move in such a way is to be in the true experience of faith and at that stage nothing better could be desired or required of any man. All the evidences of the reconstituted heart are being exhibited by the burning desire to be baptized. It has been made righteous, and without intelligently knowing it is so, the heart is instinctively desiring to act like Jesus and fulfil all the righteousness it knows — which is to be obedient.

It is significant that Paul, when dealing with baptism in Romans 6, speaks of 'obeying from the heart that form (type, mould) of doctrine which was delivered you, or unto which you were delivered' (Gk.). Then and thereby a man is made free from sin and becomes a servant of righteousness, and finds no reason why he should not be immersed in water. The form into which we are delivered is Jesus Christ in His death

and resurrection (His baptism, Luke 12:50), which form He typified and exhibited to us by His baptism in water at His first public appearance. Until that baptism He was not known or identified before men, and had no public recognition. Apparently this kind of spontaneous response is what had taken place in the lives of the Roman saints to whom Paul wrote saying that their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world. In common with all the saints of their day, they had heard, believed and been baptized, but it seems that it was only when Paul wrote to them concerning it that the full intellectual grasp of the spiritual meaning of the rite became clear to their understanding.

Chapter Two - IN THE MIDST OF THE SEA

The event under consideration in this chapter is really an abstraction from the story found in Exodus chapters 12-14. Chiefly it is that part which deals with the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea. The key to this second Old Testament illustration of the One Baptism is to be found in I Corinthians 10:1 and 2: '...all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea'. Not the slightest hint is to be found in Exodus that either the Lord or Israel then looked upon it as a baptism. We should not have known had God not told us His heart about it, and to this day we cannot say that Israel ever knew it was their baptism. This fact, beside revealing unsuspected truth, points out the possibility that people do not know what the Baptism is, or what it accomplishes, or when it takes place. As with the Children of Israel in their day, many today know something great has happened to them, but because it is not called Baptism in Spirit, they do not know how to describe it.

The great historic event we study here is of quite a different character from the one we considered in the previous chapter. From it we are to learn a new lesson about the One Baptism we may share with our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first Corinthian letter is most valuable; it speaks very emphatically on a variety of spiritual issues, and the verse quoted above is an unexpected corroboration of the vital truth spoken of in chapter 12 verse 13 — 'by (Gk. 'in') one Spirit are we all baptized into one body'. This means that it is by means or use of the Spirit that the Lord Jesus baptizes us into His Body. Comparison of these scriptures concerning the fundamental Baptism leads us to note first of all that the Baptism of the New Covenant is greatly superior to that of the Old. The New Testament Baptism is an experience wherein the spirits of men are immersed in the Spirit of God and thereby baptized into Christ's body. The Old Testament baptism was an outward event; it took place in the physical realm only; it was entirely inadequate, even if God had desired it, to baptize the Children of Israel into Moses' body. Obviously such a thing was not possible; God did not intend that it should be. Moses had neither died nor risen again for Israel; furthermore, in the very nature of things, they could not enter into him and have a share in his exact life, and even if that had been possible, it would have been a quality of life no different from that which they had already.

But God did intend that their baptism should give them a sense of oneness and of belonging to a homogeneous body of people with a visible head. They were to be a new national family, 'born again' to go into their inheritance and develop their own culture in a new land. Therefore the Lord enforced baptism upon them by causing them to go through the sea, baptizing them in the cloud in the process. He did this to

show all men that He cannot depart from basic principles of life. Throughout the entire history of Redemption, God's provision of new life for His people has always been through Baptism in the Spirit, and can be no other. Quite unmistakably by this the Lord in type set the Baptism centrally and basically in the history of the Old Covenant people. At the same time He did something else of equal importance also; He set the Spirit and the water in their respective positions in relationship to the Baptism. In God's ordering, each receives its proper emphasis; this enables us to get things into true spiritual perspective. The order as here stated is 'in the cloud and in the sea'.

There can be no doubting where the importance lies in God's eyes. The thing He accomplished so simply at the Red Sea was the all-important baptism in the cloud, the type of the Holy Ghost. The spiritual lessons derived from this event gain in significance when it is realised that water was not used in this baptism at all. It was staged upon the bed of the Sea; geographically the Red Sea was the location where all was accomplished, but the water of the Sea was not used. As a matter of fact, in each of the four typical instances of the One Baptism we consider in this book, the watery element is comparatively negligible. It had a part to play, but it was only of minor importance; in no case were the people involved actually immersed in it. Each instance is designed to show that the actual baptism is entirely in the Spirit, for every one of those being baptized remained thoroughly dry throughout. Then as now, the water, being an outward element of minimal importance, was only used by God to point and insist on the Baptism in the Spirit.

When the people of old 'passed through the waters,' they did not get wet; the water did not even touch them; it was no longer there. God took His people through the sea, walking upon the sea bed in order that thereupon He might baptize them in the Spirit. As plainly as possible the Lord is showing us that only as we are baptized in the Spirit are we baptized into His death and resurrection. As surely as the cloud typifies the Holy Spirit, so the Red Sea typifies the Lord's death and burial from which He emerged in resurrection.

This is sincerely brought home to our hearts by the fact that Moses was told to stretch out his rod over the Sea. How majestically he did so — like a monarch stretching forth his sceptre over his kingdom. That rod speaks of the cross, Christ's sceptre, by which He took away the sting of death, which is sin. Death was rendered harmless for us, and in the Spirit we are baptized into the now harmless path which King Jesus has opened for us into fullness of life. When a man is baptized in the Holy Spirit, he is baptized into the body of Jesus Christ, and there is no other way into Him than through His own death and resurrection. It is only when a man is prepared to share in that death and resurrection, and thus make it his own, that he can be so baptized.

Here let us pause to recognize two simple facts of great importance: 1. That which is but one event or experience in the New Covenant is perforce typified by many events and experiences in the Old. 2. As a general rule, New Covenant truth must never be conceived in limited Old Covenant ideas. It is a feature of the Bible that exactly the reverse is intended by God. The Old Testament may be thought of in some aspects as a gradual approach to the New.

Bearing these things in mind, we notice that God's work of salvation in bringing Israel out of Egypt involved two distinct events:

1. The Lord's passover in Egypt.
2. The Children of Israel's passover of the Red Sea.

Now these two events are unavoidably divided by some three days of time. Because of this, and because they are recorded as independent happenings, each complete in itself, we are in danger of thinking that they are unconnected, whereas they are but one. As surely as the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord are two distinct events, each complete in itself yet but one, so also are these one. In both cases the events are manifestly interdependent; one would have been quite ineffective without the other. God passed over the Children of Israel that they in turn might pass over the Sea; the latter was the completion of the former, and was planned to be such. The correct interpretation of the type requires that they both be regarded as one event, two halves of one whole. Only the compulsory time factor divided them; this was simply due to the fact that it was physically impossible for them to cross over the Red Sea the same night as the Lord passed over them. The only thing that gave spiritual value to any of the physical acts or events in which the Children of Israel participated, or made them of any eternal worth to the persons involved in them, was faith. This is clearly shown in the famous eleventh chapter of Hebrews.

In Egypt the Children of Israel sprinkled the blood of the slain lamb upon the lintels and sideposts of the houses to indicate to God that they were inside eating its flesh. There was no spiritual value in the lamb, nor in its blood, nor in its roast flesh. The virtue and value of all lay in the fact that they did exactly what God told them to do in the way He told them to do it. But sadly, even so, their action in no way effected any change in their own inward lives and personalities; everything was outward. It is obvious from the reading that no deep spiritual change took place in them as a consequence of their act. They still remained a nation of rebellious murmurers, full of fleshly lusts, worldly, cowardly and disobedient. Yet for all that, the events we are studying have much of spiritual value to teach those who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

Comparison at this point with the facts discovered in the type of Noah and the Ark reveals that in the earlier event only the word of God was involved, but on this occasion we see that other elements are involved in the transaction. These are the blood, the Spirit and the water; in Egypt the Lamb and the blood, at the Red Sea the Spirit and the water. In this we find an advance from the original idea, resulting in an expansion of truth. Whereas in Genesis it was a simple invitation, 'Come ... into the Ark', here it is, 'baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea'. The Ark was yet on dry ground without a sign of the imminent water-floods anywhere to be seen when the Lord gave the command to the Noahic family. But the Holy Ghost introduces us to this Mosaic type at the point of the nation's union with God in the cloud and in the Sea. The idea of association in death is brought in here.

Earlier in the course of writing the first epistle to the Corinthians, in chapter 5 verse 7, Paul speaks very briefly about God's passover in Egypt, saying 'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us'. He only just touches on it and leaves it, passing on to mention the historic event in chapter 10 as an illustration to point the truth that in one Spirit we are all baptized into His Body. By the fact that the cloud was in the Sea, that is in the place where the water should have been, we learn that the Red Sea became for the Children of Israel the water of the Spirit. Typically, when the Children of Israel came up out of the Sea on the other side they were 'born of water and the Spirit'. Typically

also they underwent their first experience of 'the washing of water by the word,' and by those two means illustrate that profound Baptism for which the blood of Christ was shed. From a unique passage in John's first epistle, chapter 5 verses 7 and 8, we will abstract a few words — 'for there are three that bear record ... the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree in one. There is not another statement like this in the whole of scripture, and as an illustration of it the type we are at present examining could not be bettered. John also says in verse 6, 'it is the Spirit that beareth witness because the Spirit is truth', and in this account of the twin passovers he is surely bearing witness to invariable and eternal truth. This epochal event makes it very clear, for from this whole story we learn that the blood without the Spirit and the water is quite insufficient for regeneration.

Reading in the psalms, we discover how often David insists that it was through the miracle wrought at the crossing of the Red Sea that God gained a name and fame among the nations; Rahab is a witness to this, as she says herself in Joshua 2:10. The blood was shed in Egypt, but for all its immediate effect there, it was quite useless for full deliverance apart from the Spirit and the water. Quite obviously God did not intend that it should be anything other than the first and most fundamental of three vital elements necessary to their salvation. It was He who led the people to the Red Sea, carrying Joseph's bones, following the pillar of cloud and fire; it was He who commanded them to encamp there and wait for the way of salvation unto life to appear through the waters. Whether in Old or New, the principles are unchanged and unchangeable; the blood apart from the Spirit and the water was never envisaged or provided by God as anything other than the prime, basic factor of redemption. For New Testament salvation involving regeneration from sin to righteousness, self to Christ, and death to life, the Spirit and the water are as vital and necessary as the blood.

It is clearly shown in the book of Genesis that originally, as the Spirit moved upon the waters, the whole earth was generated out from them by the word of God. In the same way we find this principle to be operative again at the Flood. Before the renewed earth could come forth, the Spirit (the Dove) had to move upon the face of the waters. This is a preview of the regeneration, for we note that it came from Noah within the Ark, prefiguring the giving of the Spirit through Christ. In this event also we have it exactly the same; the cloud, typifying the Spirit, moves into and stands over the Sea, and eventually up out of the waters came the nation. They entered through the way initially opened up by Moses' rod, which represents the cross; it was God's word to them, 'the logos of the cross', as Paul put it in I Corinthians 1:18. We see by these things that the original idea, elements and method used by God in creation were later adapted to and administered as baptism; they have always been present in all God's ways of bringing to birth and life.

But here a striking contrast must be taken into account; in the two major Old Testament crises of original Creation and the subsequent re-creation by the Flood, baptism is shown as an outward experience or spectacle, but in the New Testament both an inward and outward experience are alluded to — 'in one Spirit are we all baptized into one body ... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit'. Although this is an entirely spiritual experience, needing no outward element at all, its truth is set forth in language that brings to mind both an outward and an inward experience. To be in Christ's Body we must have an immersion into and in Spirit; to have the Spirit of that Body we must drink in and into the Spirit. This is a simultaneous event,

implying an outward and an inward immersion — Christ is baptized into me and I into Him — it is synchronous.

The Baptism of the New Testament, although it is always associated with an inward experience, 'made to drink into', is explained to our minds by means of language pertaining to an outward figure, 'baptized', which is almost invariably associated in our thinking with immersion in water. It is worthy of note that on the day of Pentecost, those who observed the 120 after that initial Baptism, associated their condition with drinking (Acts 2.13). It is as we inwardly drink of the Spirit that the inner man is, as it were, outwardly baptized, that is plunged by the Lord into the larger divine manhood of His Body. The Baptism is an inward baptism because the New Covenant is an inward covenant, and is effected in us and Himself by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Baptizer. He accomplishes this by baptizing the entire inward manhood into a shared spiritual nature union with Himself, resulting in an individual soul-personality likeness to Himself in the Holy Spirit.

Until the moment this takes place in a man the Holy Ghost is outside that person, although for some time He may have been moving upon him. This is why, in keeping with the original truth shown in Genesis and Exodus, the idea of an outward baptism is always used; but in the comparable New Testament experience this is only wrought in us as we 'drink in' the Holy Spirit. The in-drinking and the Baptism are one; the drinking is effected in the Baptism, and the Baptism by the drinking. It all takes place together, the initiative being with the Lord and the initiation ours. In the one Spirit we are baptized into the one body — His.

Although this truth was not revealed to Noah who built the Ark, nor yet to Moses who wrote the story, this One Baptism into one body was well typified by Noah's action while still within the Ark. The dove that represents the Holy Spirit was 'sent forth' from Noah within the vessel as it rested upon the mountains of Ararat. Of course, the dove had been with him there all the time, and in this knowledge we have a faint intimation of a further thing that the Ark prefigures to us. It is not Christ after the flesh — Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary — who baptizes us in the Spirit, but Christ after the Spirit — Jesus of the New Jerusalem, the Son of God. It was as though the righteous family was baptized into one body — the Ark — by Noah, the head of that Ark. This ancient event, so scorned by the mockers, holds so much wealth of meaningful incident and detail that we could linger on it to still greater profit. But we must return to the later story, for the composite type is cumulative, gathering truth from all four illustrations and finally presenting one complete picture. We see, then, that by Noah God presents the simple truth of an open door, and by Moses the more advanced truth of an open way. In process of doing this, He also showed something of how that door was opened and what took place in Jesus' death and what it accomplished in the spirit world.

The Children of Israel had to go through the waters for three reasons:

1. That therein they might be baptized into (Gk.) Moses.
2. In order that Pharaoh and his host should be destroyed.
3. So that the people might be safe from destruction, or recapture and return to slavery in Egypt.

When the Children of Israel passed through the sea together, they became Moses' people in a special way. In every ordinary way they had always been his people.

Moses had been born a Hebrew; in the day he had returned to Egypt from his forty years' exile he did so because he wished to go back to his brethren there. They were his flesh and blood; but in the Cloud in the Sea Israel became his people in a peculiar way, not formerly possible. So much so indeed, that God later called them Moses' people, Exodus 32:7. We see by this to what great extent Moses typified the Lord Jesus. But we also see the limitations of Moses; his ordinary humanity prevented his people from being baptized into him; nevertheless, whether or not he or they realized it, unto Moses they were certainly a baptized nation as they stood together on the resurrection side of the Red Sea following their passover.

In Egypt Moses had become their flesh and blood saviour. It was he who had spoken of the lamb, and ordered its blood to be shed and sprinkled, and its flesh roasted and eaten. By this he had become unto them something of a redeemer. But they could no more be baptized into their saviour than they could eat his flesh and drink his blood: they could not become part of him; the act did not work any spiritual transformation in them. Even though the obedience of faith gave their passover some spiritual value, they themselves were not thereby and thereafter in (within) Moses, nor was he formed in them. But this is exactly what is effected in us by the Baptism, because by it we are not only brought immediately into all that took place at Calvary and Pentecost, but also into all the results of that experience. Spiritually / historically God worked out in Christ what before He had only physically / historically set forth by Moses. Now in this lies a great lesson, for here before us is the reason for the vast difference between the Old and New Covenants. Faith was the sole virtue in them to which God imputed spiritual worth which they never actually had. But with us it is entirely different. Not so much the faith, indispensable and praiseworthy as it is, but the results of faith are the greater things, that is the actual life of Christ in us.

God has never varied the basic principles of truth inwrought by Him in baptism; they are forever fixed; He has no need to change them, and indeed cannot do so, for the baptism is one of God's invariables. His ideas become principles of working; His thoughts become words and works, and a world appears and takes shape before our eyes. The truth remains the same, though its application may vary considerably in different ages. The underlying order to be found in historic truth as it was revealed in Moses' day remains unchanged to this day, for all is based upon and exists in and sets forth one whole; first the Passover, then the Baptism. That is the order we see in the person and work of our Lord Jesus also, Calvary — Pentecost; with an unavoidable lapse of time separating the bloodshed from the baptism upon both occasions. As with the first historic event, so also with the second; the bloodshed and the baptism are but two parts of the one experience. The difference between them lies chiefly in the fact that, better than Israel, we may now indeed be baptized into Jesus. He is the eternal Lamb who laid down His life in order that the sheep may have it, which latter is quite impossible apart from being so baptized. It was as though at Calvary His flesh was removed in order that we may enter into that which was within the flesh (spoken of as a veil in Tabernacle imagery), that is the Spirit, thereby becoming members of His body, of His flesh and bones.

Here let us avail ourselves of yet another delightful insight into something more of the eternal truth this figure holds for us. Perhaps surprisingly, we find upon reading Exodus 12 that the main emphasis of Moses is the lamb and not the blood. There are three times as many direct references to the lamb as to its blood in this chapter. To the Israelites the blood was to be but a token, like the bow was to Noah; God's real

concern was that they stayed inside their houses and ate the flesh of the lamb. Their charge, therefore, was to eat the roast flesh from which the blood had been drained and sprinkled upon doorpost and lintel. There in plain view, it was a token to God both of their faith and their faithfulness; it indicated to Him that according to His desire they were inside, eating the lamb. Thus in a figure they were made to set forth the present necessity laid upon us to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Lamb. To this we add the fact that the Children of Israel were also charged with the custody and removal of Joseph's bones to the Promised Land. In this we see how the phrase quoted above 'of His flesh and of His bones', is also beautifully re-phrased in this foreshadowing of the spiritual substance of His Body.

Bearing in mind that all now is spiritual, and all then was physical, at their baptism the Children of Israel were as nearly as the type can show 'of His flesh and of His bones'. 'A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have', said Jesus to His people after His resurrection. His Spirit must have flesh and bones (that is a body) in which to live; so it is that we, being baptized in the Spirit, are formed into the spiritual body of which He is the Head. It is a great mystery, but it is nevertheless true that He is 're-housed' and re-formed in us in the flesh in a way that was not possible with Moses and his people. Still, for all that, God had them go through an experience whereby they were typically baptized unto each other; Moses unto them and they unto him, because at all times and in all peoples God speaks and shows one truth.

Now all this, correctly enough, is set into the unfolding account of the beginning of the national life of Israel. In the same chapter 12 that exalts the lamb and its blood, God says 'this shall be unto you the beginning ... the first', for He intended that by the events we have been examining, Israel should have its birth as a nation. When Jacob went down to Joseph in Egypt, Israel was a large family group or clan comprised of small families, numbering seventy souls in all, with one paternal head. During their stay there, these families had developed into tribes, and when those tribes left Egypt they had grown sufficiently to become a nation, but they were not then recognized as such. They were not accorded any distinctive recognition in Egypt as a nation in its own right. They were the Egyptians' slaves, and at the time of the Exodus the males were scattered among the nationals finding materials for brick-making.

We see then that the Children of Israel had their national beginning by means of the Passover and the passage of the Sea. The nation was 'born in a day' as they came out of Egypt. Again, it is the same invariable picture of the true baptismal-regeneration. In Egypt only a comparatively small specified group was saved from destruction. Each one of this group was someone's firstborn, foreshadowing the eternal truth of 'the Church of the firstborn ones which are written in heaven', of which we cannot here speak particularly. But at the Red Sea they were all without exception baptized unto Moses. By this we understand the importance of the position the One Baptism holds in the whole scheme of New Testament salvation. Historically / spiritually it happened at the conclusion of Christ's earthly life, that in the Spirit it may be established for the Church as the means and time of its beginning.

During the earthly life of our Lord Jesus, the Baptism was still only possible of typical illustration. When He was baptized in Jordan, it was as Israel's Messiah. At that time He was presented to them by water only (1 John 5:6), and quite rightly so, for water is an entirely insufficient medium for the spiritual purpose of God to be fulfilled therein. He could only 'come' in flesh by water; He could not thereby 'come' in Spirit. Though

in Jordan the Lord remained true to and moved consistently in line with eternal truth, so that again over the water the dove appeared, He could not yet 'come' to His people as He wished.

Perhaps this appearance of the dove held for John a twofold significance: (1) to mark out the Lord Jesus; (2) to emphasize that everything still was part of the Old Testament where all is symbolic. Although he craved for it, he could have no part in the greater Baptism he sought, saying to the Lord, 'I have need to be baptized of thee'. The people at that time could not be baptized into Jesus Christ, nor He into them, nor was it God's intention then. Not by water nor yet by such a baptist could God's plan be put into effect. What took place then was but a type of things not known as yet. The Lord, whose body was there dipped in water, was looking forward to His personal Baptism in Spirit (perhaps praying for it, who knows?) and His re-formation into a new Body of regenerate spirits, each of whom, as He their Head, should be baptized with the same Baptism as He. In that Baptism, by eternal ordination, He was to be the only Baptist, because in the nature of things He is the only one who could possibly administer that Baptism.

This is the uniqueness of Jesus' Baptism. He alone, of all who have been associated either with the rite or the experience of baptism, both initiated it by undergoing it and also administers it. The Lord Jesus is and always has been the only true Baptizer; He even had to baptize Himself into His own death at Calvary. He had to do it; it was absolutely necessary that He should, for until then He had never been real Man as He found him to be on the earth when He came. His special birth had prevented that from happening. He was God's second Man, the Lord from heaven manifested on earth, heaven's Man, real Man as God had intended Man to be; but spiritually Jesus was not the earth Man as He found him when He came, for earth Man was spiritually fallen Adam.

Old, old Adam had been bad enough in the beginning, but on his unbroken passage through millennia of sin and violence he had become worse in every successive generation. Jesus was the second man directly made by God. We speak of His coming as an advent, not a creation; differently from Adam who was made of dust, He was made of a woman. He was a new kind of Man, and therefore could not be Man as He found him, for all men born on the earth between the creation of the first man and the advent of the second were not Man as God meant him to be. By spiritual heredity all men are born children of fallen Adam, but He was the direct child of God the Father, unfallen; He was and is 'the quickening Spirit' — 'born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth' into His heredity.

In its origin His manhood was not of the Earth, earthy, nor was He of satan, satanic by spiritual heredity, He was the Lord of glory. Therefore, in order to reach man as He found him to be, and remake him as He wanted him to be, He had to become Adam and somehow end Adam's line; that is, He must become the last Adam. But because He was God's second Man by supernatural birth, He could not be a second Adam during His life. From the moment of his fall in Eden, down through the ages, Adam had become more than a person, he had become a nature and way of life, a prototype, a kind. This Adam Man, by normal procreation, immediately became Cain and Abel, and in them is revealed to be a split, lustful, murderous dual-personality, worsening in his progeny unto unpardonable sin and total depravity, as the Flood and Babel and Sodom and Gomorrah heartbreakingly reveal. So it was that Jesus came into the world

as the wonderful second Man, born by the power of the Spirit direct from God in order that at Calvary He should personalize old Adam, thereby becoming last Adam, destroying him in the act.

In Jesus God made a new start; it was and still is exactly as He says 'I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end'. In His first, that is His natural birth (for only His conception was supernatural, not His birth), the Spirit makes clear the truth written by John, 'this is He that came by water and blood ... there are three that bear record ... the Spirit and the water and the blood'. The first part of the quotation is true of us all; every man born of flesh on the earth comes by water and blood, and every natural birth is a kind of baptism; it is only through the waters that the babe, formed of and from the blood, has its birth, as all known simple biological facts and laws of nature demonstrate. Thus in procreation, as well as in the original creation of the universe, all harmoniously extols the basic principle which may be defined as 'baptismal generation'. Therefore in His natural birth Jesus, in common with all men, had to come by water and blood. But Jesus' supernaturalness lay in the fact that, although His birth was natural, His generation was not, and herein lies the truth of the second part of the quotation above, 'there are three that bear witness (or record), the Spirit and the water and the blood'. The Babe of Bethlehem was generated by the Father, because the Spirit came on Mary in order that Jesus may be both the Son of God and the true Son of Man, as God intended men to be. All other men born of woman came by water and blood only; they do not come into the world by the Spirit. In their birth is to be found the dual witness, water and blood, but in His is the treble witness, the Spirit and the water and the blood.

To be the second man as God intended (and so much more as the God-Man), wonderful as that is, would of itself still have been insufficient qualification for Jesus to have effected man's redemption. For if Jesus had only been that, He would unavoidably have condemned all other men, because He immeasurably outclassed them. Who could attain unto Him? He could not even be an example to unregenerate man, for to be a true example one must also be a sample of the whole, and this He certainly was not. There was not, nor ever had been another like Him, so how could God expect of any man the same standards He expected of His Son? Jesus knew He could not set the Adam-man an example, so He never attempted it. During His earth life He could not even reach men in their basic state, nor could they reach Him in His; they did not know Him, nor had they ever really seen Him, as John 14:9 so plainly shows. He accomplished much by becoming (a) man; He took his flesh, his humanity, his low estate, his environment and much of his limitation; in His humility He took so much, but not all. He had to take much, much more in order to become all Man as Man really is; to do that He must take his sin and all his sinful Adam-nature-self. To reach and deal with and enter and possess man, so that He could have him eternally, the second Man had to become the last, literally the last Adam. He must head up and become that loathsome, depraved, unredeemable, ultimate totality of all corruption and iniquity, Man, the end-product of Adam's unholy alliance with satan; He must be condemned and rejected and forsaken by God, absolutely deserving of the extremest punishment that divine justice could give. But this He could never become, for He did no sin. So God made Him to be sin. It was for this He became both Man's and Jehovah's servant, that He should, as God, render the highest service that had ever been rendered either to God or man.

As second man He was straitened all His life unto Calvary, the point where and when He should become the last Adam. It was to be the supreme moment of His life, so He moved to it with all the unparalleled majesty of God. It was to be His baptism, the moment of utter dedication to the purpose of eternal life, the reason for His first birth, superseding both that and His water baptism as the heavens are higher than the earth. All that had gone before was only leading up to this, and had held or could hold only symbolic or lesser meanings to Him as He underwent in His heart what later He achieved in the flesh and Spirit in utter reality. The Cross / death Baptism was His only possible hope and means of becoming last Adam as he really was; dead, utterly dead — death itself. Man is not just dead, he is death; Jesus is life and Man is death. Physical death is a representation to man of his historic spiritual state before God. It may be a hard lesson to learn, but it is a true one. As is a corpse to man, so is man's inward state to God.

Man in himself is either life or death according to whether or not he has been baptized with Christ's Baptism. He was baptized, utterly plunged into spiritual death by Adam in Eden, and since then has remained totally immersed in it. The original sin of Adam has manifested itself increasingly in ever-worsening ways as successive generations of men have worked out their own damnation. Satan is working in them, willing and doing his own displeasure. To reach and regenerate Man the Lord, having redeemed him on the cross, was baptized into Adam, the Old Man. There was no other way for Jesus to become Adam to God for man.

He as deliberately chose to be baptized into death on the cross as Adam chose to plunge the whole human race into death in the garden. The Man Christ Jesus was His own baptizer; His God left Him on the cross to do it Himself, and He did it. His Name be for ever praised! There in the loneliness, having first finished everything God gave Him to do as a man, assuming His Godhead, He dismissed His own Spirit and passed away from His body. He did it voluntarily; there was nothing else to do; He had reached the ultimate point and had concluded the reason for living. In the Godhead He was the Resurrection and the Life; it was always understood there; but among men it was not known — He had to prove it to them. Not even the thieves, so physically close on crosses either side of Him, could see it, neither could John and His mother, Mary, who each had so loyally stood by Him; it was dark. But angel eyes beheld Him, and Father received His Spirit; so He moved into a new position. He became death and burial, God's new death and burial into which we may be baptized by the power of God. As He was then and there baptized into Adam-man, so, in successive order to Jesus Christ, may we be baptized into that Manhood of which He was the second in line to appear on earth. The new Man is not only who, but also what Jesus really is; therefore, being baptized into Him, we become new Man as He is. John later takes up these three simple words and makes them one of the wonderful recurring themes of his first epistle — 'as He is'.

Jesus lost His limitations in death. By death He was unstraitened, able to do what He had lived for, so that if any man will be baptized with His Baptism, that is die His death as God grants him the priceless precious privilege, he may also enter into all the results of it according to God's promise. This then is the one true Baptism. It results in, and immediately achieves, the free merging and flowing of a man's spirit into, and within Christ. For by this Baptism God incorporates the spirit of Man into, and in and with His own. 'We know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an

understanding, that we may know Him that is true and that we are in Him that is true, even in His Son; this is the true God and eternal life'. Amen. So it is.

Thinking of all this in terms of the type before us, on reading Ephesians 1:7 and 12-14, we find Paul setting forth the correct relationship of the truth embraced within this Baptism. In the earlier verse Paul says, 'we have redemption through His blood ... in Him', and then in the later verses tells us that the seal of saving faith is the Holy Spirit. Thus the blood and the Baptism are related in the context of being 'in Him', which is the theme of the chapter, and indeed also of all the book. For this is precisely what the Baptism does; it baptizes us into Christ, the Beloved, by the way He made for us through His blood. Therefore we have the redemption, which in experience is nothing other than full enjoyment of the total life of Jesus, the Beloved. Beside many other things this means complete freedom from the bondage of having to exist in sin, even though we live in a world of men under the power and dominion of the devil. This is what God intends us to understand by the type.

It would have been utterly useless for Israel to have slain the lamb and eaten its flesh within their blood-sprinkled hovels, if the baptism had not been planned for them by the Lord. For that baptism was both the final way of escape for the nation, and the sealing to them of the reason for the sprinkling of the blood; beside which it was in fact the only logical thing to do. For God to have slain Pharaoh's firstborn just in order to redeem His own firstborn, and not to have done anything about Pharaoh himself, would have achieved little. Besides which, God had not made promise to Abraham that He would slay Egypt's firstborn, but He had promised him a land, and that land lay beyond the Red Sea. How thorough God is; how true to basic principles and original promises, as well as to unborn peoples. He was not only seeking firstborn sons by sprinkling, but also a whole firstborn body of people by the baptism. In the fulness of the work wrought by God and shown in the type, not only was Pharaoh's firstborn (that is, old or first Adam) destroyed, but also Pharaoh himself and all his host and his chosen captains (principalities and powers). Thus the interdependence of the bloodshed and this Baptism is revealed. The one has no effective existence in reality without the other, and each ought never to be conceived of or preached about apart from the other, as being of itself sufficient to regenerate. Each by itself would have been inefficient because insufficient, but being one they are each perfectly suited to the end God had in view when instituting them.

The Hebrews letter brings out this truth to perfection in the second chapter. Verse 3 reminds us that our salvation is so great that we must not in any way neglect it. In verses 6-10 we find a précis on the theme of man, culminating with Jesus bringing many sons to glory; here Jesus' suffering and death was brought into view. Then the writer sweeps on to tell us that through that same death the devil was destroyed and deliverance accomplished for all those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. All this, we observe, is accompanied with signs and wonders and miracles and gifts (distributions) of the Holy Ghost according to His own will, by which God bore witness to the preached word. Combining all this with the words in Colossians 2:8-3:3, especially 2:15, we are afforded a sight into what the Baptism wherewith He was baptized really is, and what it accomplished for us.

It is more particularly this aspect of the Baptism that Israel's experience in the Red Sea emphasizes. It sets forth the Baptism as God's means of destroying Satan and his hosts as well as His way of bringing many sons unto glory (Exodus 15:1, 6, 11 and

16:7-10 and 24:16). More than that, we are redeemed from the world (Egypt) also. People cannot really enjoy Egypt and desire to live there when once the redemption has been truly manifest in them as regeneration. In the last analysis there is no such person as a worldly Christian; a man is either a worldling or a Christian. That Israel did indeed lust after 'leeks and garlic' after their passover, and desired to go back to Egypt, is because they were not regenerate. Their experiences were outward only. The goodness and blessing of God were extended to them all the time, and He was constantly working on their behalf with signs and miracles and wonders, but their evil hearts of unbelief still remained. There was an obedience of faith in response to signs and wonders and divers miracles; God did not give the Holy Ghost to them, for at that time it was not His will to do so. The age of the Spirit had not yet come. God was dealing with them in respect of the Covenant He had made with Abraham His friend; it was sheerest grace displayed in sovereignty of purpose. He had spoken and was bringing it to pass. Which consideration begs a question, and introduces us to the matter of sin.

We have touched on the subject of sin in this chapter, but this particular type does not major on sin, nor redemption from it, for it is not in view here. As their behaviour showed, sin was present, for since Adam it is in every man, though not then defined as such. The reason for this is very simple, and for the key to the answer we must as usual turn to the New Testament. In Romans 5:13,14, Paul tells us that sin was in the world from Adam to Moses, and that death was reigning during that time. Sin, though there, was not imputed to anyone because the law had not been given, Romans 3:19,20. At the time of the actual Exodus, the Children of Israel were entirely without God's law, as were the Egyptians. Pharaoh (and indeed each of them) was tested by the word of God. He rejected the spoken word and paid the penalty. Of course, sin was in the hearts and actions of all men, but God was dealing with their naturalness rather than their sins. Ephesians 2:1-3 speaks of the Gentiles being 'by nature the children of wrath' as well as being 'dead in trespasses and sins'. Therefore, because He had not given His law to Pharaoh, He did not, nor could He in all fairness, judge the Egyptians upon whether or not they kept it. Instead He said to Pharaoh, 'Let my people go', and because Pharaoh did not do it, he had to pay the penalty of disobedience.

We find the same absence of any reference to sin even when we consider Israel and the lamb. The lamb was not slain as an offering for sin, neither was its blood given upon an altar, nor sprinkled upon a Mercy Seat for atonement. Sin was not in view, for it had not been exposed by the Law, and therefore it could not be dealt with even in the sense of being covered. Everything turned on the acceptance or rejection of the word of God, as indeed it still does. But at Sinai God added to all the words He had ever spoken, and also codified basic spiritual and social principles into a written law for righteousness. From that moment, because God's word had become written, man's responsibility became twofold; he had to believe, receive and obey both the spoken and also the written word. When the Law, with its long list of prohibitions, was given to the nation, the era which may be called the era of imputation came of age.

It had always been of course. Commencing with Adam in the garden, it had been an understood thing with God that righteousness should be imputed to everyone who obeyed Him, and unrighteousness to all who refused to obey His word. This is brought out quite clearly to us Hebrews chapter 11, but from the time of the giving of the Law onwards, it became an established principle among men. To break one of

God's commandments in the realm of personal hygiene, or social relationships, or religious rites, was to be a sinner in God's sight. The incredible and detailed magnitude of the principle of sin that lay in the act of disobedience in the Garden was extensively revealed by the giving of the law. It was not fully revealed by the Law however; it required the death of Christ to reveal fully what depths of iniquity lay undiscovered in sin. Even so, Paul says it was by the Law that he discovered indwelling sin. It was by imputed sin that his inherent sin was discovered. Inherent sin was never imputed to anyone, nor can it be. To seek to impute sin which is already there, having been received by inheritance from Adam through our forbears, would be the height of folly and confusion. Sin was imputed to a man and revealed to his consciousness as guilt whenever and wherever the legal code was broken by that person. Sin was by commission or omission according to the commandments and ordinances of God.

Here let us see the wisdom of God in ordering the lamb to be slain and its blood sprinkled and its flesh eaten in Egypt. It was all because in a not very distant future He was going to take up the lamb and its blood and systematize its use and function by law for His people in Canaan. But being wise after the event, we must not impute to the slain lamb(s) in Egypt a function it never fulfilled, or a virtue it never possessed, or a meaning God did not intend. God did not at that time save His people from their sins but brought them 'out of the land of Egypt out of the house of bondage', as He had said. At the same time and by the same miracle, He also destroyed the master bondman and his hosts.

Chapter Three - TO POSSESS

This chapter is taken up with another major crisis in the history of the Children of Israel. True to the divine principle of baptism, we shall discover the Lord repeating His former works, though with a different purpose in view, and as we may say, in a diminutive form. The first event concerned a universal flood, the second a small Sea; this one concerns the river Jordan. The account of the miracle with which we are here concerned is to be found in the book of Joshua, Moses' successor. Joshua, the name of the man chosen of God to lead His people over the river into the Promised Land, is the Hebrew form of the name that God gave to his Son — Jesus. Because of this, the book holds special significance for us, and if for our purpose we think of it as the book of Jesus, we shall perhaps be the more able to receive and apply its message to ourselves. The particular subject matter we need lies within the compass of the first five chapters, and contains yet more of the glories of the person of our Saviour and of the greatness of the salvation into which He has brought us.

Approaching the river from the wilderness through the land of Moab, which lay on the east side of Jordan, the Children of Israel found that the Promised Land lay westward from them over on the other side of the waters. To enter the land of the promise and make it their possession, they had to cross the river, which at the time they reached it was in full flood. It was harvest time: Jordan always overflowed its banks during the harvest period. The story of this crossing, called a pass-over, furnishes us with another marvellous insight into the glorious fulness of the One Baptism. The country which they were to possess was already occupied by seven nations, each of which was greater in power and numbers than themselves. Nevertheless, by oft-repeated promises, God had given the land to them for an inheritance. He had brought them to its borders fully intending to bring them right

into it and make good to them all the things He had led them to believe in over the years. All He had meant when He made the original promises to Abraham, repeating them to Isaac and Jacob and Moses, He was about to fulfil.

Centuries before, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the three great national patriarchs, had lived in this land, but we are told that even though God had promised it to them, they had only been strangers in it. Moses, who had brought them to Jordan, had never dwelt in the land at all; he was only granted a fleeting glimpse of it before God took him away from the earth. All four of these men had received the promises of God, and in faith of God's word had embraced them; perhaps also they had dimly seen the fulfilment of them afar off, but now the redeemed nation was about to enter in to possess the land and realize the promises. Most probably it was a time of mixed emotions for many, for behind them, strewn across the wilderness of tragedy, lay a lost generation, a multitude of men and women of their own flesh and blood, who had failed to reach their desired haven. Fathers and mothers, uncles and aunts, grandfathers and grandmothers, brothers and sisters, had died, overthrown in the wilderness for lusting after evil things, or practising idolatry, or fornication, or murmuring and tempting God. Yet they all had been included by God when He originally described the Children of Israel as His firstborn, to whom belonged the birthright and the 'double portion' of the inheritance. They all should have known both the joys of absolute deliverance from Egypt and also the wealth and blessings of unlimited possessions in the land of Promise, plus the immeasurable glory of having God as their God. But like Esau of old, they had despised their birthright, selling it for less than a 'mess of pottage', and had finally died, victims of their own lusts and disobedience, tasting bitterly of God's breach of promise action against them in the desert. They 'failed of the grace of God' and fell in the wilderness as carcases, some for burning, some for burial, but all for banishment.

What a dreadful anti-climax it had all been. They had left Egypt in such glorious victory; Canaan was only a few days' march across the desert, they should soon have been there; their God would supply all their need. Instead of this, frustration, bitterness, defeat, death; a harvest of hate. Refusals, disobedience, murders, rebellions, stubbornness, jealousy, presumption had welled up from within their hearts against God, until long-deserved judgement from the Lord quelled their insurrection and stilled their murmurs and complaints. The Lord had been preparing the Children of Israel for possession, but in the process of learning obedience a whole generation had died. For them and for God it had been an unspeakable tragedy. Nevertheless we see God's mercy in it all, for although that whole first generation had to pass away, it was in order that a new generation might take its place and receive the blessings which their fathers had forfeited. What a significant thing this is, full of plainest truth; if we will allow it to speak to our hearts, it will teach us a great lesson. But for the moment we will defer developing this precious truth, and examine something more of the dreadful loss suffered by that first generation of people who were the original passers-over.

The Hebrews letter, from which we may gather so much knowledge of the tragic affair, informs us that unto them was the gospel preached and the promises given, as well as unto their children. Yet they failed totally to grasp what everything was about, and what God was doing. It was an onerous and enormous mistake; but the fearfulness of it all is that the mistake made by that first privileged generation did not die with them; it is still tragically common among us to this day. In their self-centred

ambition to possess what God had promised, they completely disregarded what He wanted from them in return for His faithfulness. Let no man be misled over this, for the lesson is vitally important. The entire Hebrews book is written as a precautionary, as well as an explanatory epistle, and the warnings that God gives in it are placed there to keep us from making the same mistakes as the Children of Israel. They made all these sinful errors because they failed to grasp the magnitude of the great salvation spoken of in Hebrews 2:3. It is utterly impossible for God to convey all His fulness of intention in words, but let us make sure that we do not fail like those of old to apprehend what God means by His statements in this our day. We must give earnest heed to the things we have heard lest at any time we should let them slip, for unto us as well as unto them is this gospel preached. It is a far more serious matter for us, because beyond what He promised to Israel, God intends to give us HIMSELF and all He has in a much more personal way.

The greatest promise made to the Children of Israel was not possession of the land, as their carnal minds mistakenly believed, nor yet was it self-fulfillment in terms of material things after which their craving hearts wrongly lusted. The chiefest joy and blessing designed for them was that in Canaan they should fully inherit and possess God, as God fully inherited and possessed them. That was the reason why He had made His promises, He included the lesser in the greater, but if this was known unto the Children of Israel, it was little accounted of by them. The thought that seemed to possess them rose from the anticipation of possessing cities they had not built, fields they had not sown, trees they had not planted, and cattle they had not reared, in a land full of blossoms and fruit they had not produced, flowing with milk and honey. It was perfectly natural that they should visualize all this in their imagination, but utterly carnal that it should take precedence over the desire to have God for Himself. Their slavish hearts and downtrodden souls sought a Canaan-paradise, but they did not want God and His righteousness. This was all so disappointingly revealed after only a comparatively few days' journey through the wilderness immediately upon their departure from Egypt, and long before they drew near to the Promised Land. Delivered from Satan and Pharaoh and his host at the Red Sea they surely were, but not from self and sin, as the records in Exodus and Numbers all too clearly show. And who among us knows but that had he been there in an unregenerate and piteous state as they, he may not himself have been like them, even though, with them, he had enjoyed as many favours of God?

In Numbers 14 we see how God's dealings with that generation reached such a climax that He absolutely abandoned all hope and intention of bringing them into the land. It happened as the result of the undeservedly evil report of the land which rose from the evil unbelieving hearts of ten of the chief rulers of the people. This fell upon the ears of the people like a death-knell; it sounded so true to their equally unbelieving hearts, that they rejected the good report given by Joshua and Caleb. This awful national habit of tempting God had persistently developed by the people from the moment when Moses first announced his gospel to them in Egypt. From the very first they had never really believed God. And although since then He had done so many miracles for them, they still did not believe, but openly rebelled against Him. So when they eventually accepted the lies about the Promised Land, God finally said 'enough'. In grief and anger He reluctantly pronounced judgement upon them and refused to let them go one step further towards their goal; instead He turned them all to wandering in the wilderness, and the responsible males to death. It was all so paradoxical; the exact opposite of all their original hopes and the absolute antithesis of all God's

promises. Virtually a whole generation of males and multitudes of females lost the promises and missed the blessing. Worse still, for the next forty years the entire nation, including many innocent children, became nomads; homeless, frustrated roamers, bitter of soul and sick at heart because of deferred hope.

It was because of this that the passage of Jordan had become necessary. It need not to have taken place at all, had the 'first-born' been true to their calling; it only became necessary to the second generation because of their forefathers' unbelief. As a result it is written into scripture as an event which took place in the nation of Israel quite separate in time from the crossing of the Red Sea. But it need not be thought, nor ought it to be taught, that by this God intends to convey to the reader the idea of a second experience through which all people must pass, for He had never originally planned it so. He plainly intended that the actual people He brought out of Egypt should enter Canaan, as Exodus 3:7,8, 16-18 and 6:1-8 clearly show. Why then, we may ask, did it not happen as God intended?

God does not make promises without intending to keep them. When He originally promised the land to Abraham, He brought him into it. To whom God makes promises, He commits Himself thereby to fulfil those promises; He is not a man that He should lie. That first generation of men who refused to go into the land sealed their own doom. God's refusal to let them enter later was manifestly right also; what happened subsequently in the wilderness was proof enough that He was absolutely justified in His action. All the sin lying latent in their hearts was fully manifested under wilderness conditions. Although it was not seen when God made the decision to turn them into the wilderness, it was nevertheless there, and had been from the very beginning. Sin and rebellion lay in their very nature. Despite all God's love, they could not believe and so they could not enter in. But God is faithful; He keeps His promise to the faithful heart; so in the second generation He brought the nation again to the borders of the land of His choice for them. This time they who had been robbed of the blessings by their fathers' sin, had the opportunity to enter in to what their fathers had rejected. The choice was theirs now. They had sought the Promised Land long enough, now for the first time they were to have opportunity to believe, obey and enter for themselves.

When a person seeks truth for the truth's sake and not in order to explain personal experience, it is often seen that what may have been reached or gained in some experience subsequent to conversion was what God intended to be obtained in the original experience and, for His will in the matter, was there to be taken at that time. Certainly when seeking principles of truth in matters of Bible interpretation, it becomes increasingly clear that the crossing of Jordan should not be preached doctrinally as a second experience properly so-called. Neither should it be taught as being an experience different from, subsequent to and consequent upon new birth. At first glance it may appear to permit of such interpretation, but closer examination of the facts makes it obvious that it was neither a second nor a first experience. As we proceed, we shall see that it was an unique, distinctive event, in fact the only one of its order.

Having brought the Israelites out of Egypt, God did not immediately lead them into Canaan. Had He wished, He could quite easily have taken them more swiftly to their promised home, but instead, for many necessary reasons, He delayed the journey. To Him the time factor was not important; His attitude to time and journeyings is

luminously and parabolically revealed in Exodus 19:4. There He speaks of the whole period and labours of the prolonged operation of deliverance from Egypt, as bearing and bringing the Children of Israel on eagles' wings to Himself. Apparently it was just one swift, simple, sure solution to their need, which in execution brought total satisfaction to His own heart. It is equally certain that meeting the host on Canaan's shore decades later, He could have said the same thing to that second generation concerning their journeyings.

Upon leaving the Red Sea, the Children of Israel faced a journey to Canaan which, though tedious, could have been accomplished without undue haste within fourteen days. However, having many things to teach them, the Lord took a more leisurely pace and halted them for a number of months at Sinai. There He imparted unto them His handwritten law for righteousness, together with instructions for making and furnishing Him a Tabernacle. He was their God and He wished to dwell among them. He wanted to come right down to their level and have His own tent just as they all had theirs; further, if their hearts were willing for this, He also wanted to have some of them as household servants. This was a very precious thought to His heart — those people must have been unspeakably dear to Him, but they were ignorant of Him and of His ways. They had no love for Him at all; they could not even endure to wait forty days needed by Moses to receive all his instructions and learn the design for God's house. Even at that early stage of the journey their impatient hearts broke out into open rebellion at the delay, and utterly rejected both God and Moses. In open insult they deliberately substituted a calf of gold for God their glory, and foolishly denied all intentions of going on to any Promised Land.

It is almost unbelievable that within a few weeks of their thrilling exodus from the house of bondage, they should publicly exhibit such abysmal depths of inbred sin, and seek to go back to Egypt, but they did. To Egypt they would have returned except that God brought them out, and as far as He was concerned that was that; they were going to stay out. He made quite plain to Moses that. He would rather destroy them than that they should go back there. True it is that in the future their implacable attitude and repeated acts of temptation would finally result in God prohibiting them from Canaan, but even though He did not allow them to enter there, they could not go back to Egypt. God's will was set. If they would not go forward, they certainly could not go back.

Against the Lord's original intention, forty years of wandering intervened between deliverance from Egypt and entrance into Canaan, and it was entirely the fault of the Children of Israel. 'They could not enter in because of unbelief', we are told. It was not a momentary doubt that lost them the land; it was the final evil demonstration of a set disposition to disbelieve God that cost them their inheritance. God refused them permission to enter Canaan because they were in that unregenerate, hardhearted, rebellious, cynical condition which always turns all God's gracious truth into a lie. So instead of entering in, they were sent into the deserts until all those men worked out their own sin and died in shame in the wilderness. In that generation the inevitable outworking of sin and the consequent severity of God against it is displayed to the full. But extending far beyond His severity, we see also His innate goodness, for having exterminated the rebels, and eliminated the rebellion, He gave the next generation the opportunity to obtain all their fathers refused to have. Of this generation some had been babes, or at the most lads, when they passed over the Red Sea, and some had not even been born. They were, as near as typology can prefigure,

a new race of men, and it is of this new generation of men that the book of Joshua treats.

In the preceding book of Deuteronomy we find this nation gathered on the wilderness side of Jordan with the long years of waiting, wasting, wandering and wickedness far behind them. They are standing listening to Moses reading to them the Law, together with the ordinances and the commandments and the judgements of God. It was as though they stood where their fathers had stood years ago at Sinai; for they are listening to the second giving of the Law. Now, differently from that past occasion, the floods of Jordan flowed at their feet, barring them from the Promised Land, and their baptism lay immediately before them. Their fathers' baptism had lain behind them when they had heard that same Law, but this generation was being shown the truth that the baptism and the giving of the Law were somehow joined. God had intended that the original people who had shed and sheltered behind the blood and eaten the lamb and had been baptized into life in the cloud and in the Sea, should also be the people of the Law and the Land and the Lord. His purpose had been to lead them from Sinai into the land. When they refused to go in, He had to bring about His purpose another way.

Man's disobedience and irregularity of behaviour always confuses his understanding of doctrine and experience of truth; but it never confuses God. To receive the Law, they must also receive the baptism. The works of Sinai and Pentecost are just as much one as the work of Calvary and Pentecost are one. In the actual process of the Baptism in the Spirit a man is baptized into all that Christ wrought on the cross, and all that Christ wrought there is baptized into him. The supreme reason why Christ wrought His work on the cross was to demonstrate the utter rightness of righteousness against the extreme sinfulness of sin. The Lord there vindicated Sinai and showed the righteousness of the Law in all its moral, ethical and philosophical rectitude, and also in its judgements. At the same time He justified the Levitical system of sacrifice, showing that it was really an amazing display of grace. Under that system He exacted less than the price of his sin from every man, taking but a token sacrifice from him whilst accepting all his gratitude as a thank-offering. The supreme revelation of the cross is hereby shown to be love. The complete work that Jesus wrought there, even if it could be fully known, is far too great to examine here, but we must not fail to notice that the supreme reason for the cross was the declaration of God's righteousness. So it is that at his pentecost, a man has the Law written in his heart; it must be, for otherwise it cannot be made new. See Hebrews 8:11 and II Corinthians 3:3-6.

Returning to the type, we see that Israel at Jordan received the Law and went into their baptism, and this accomplished their passover (Joshua 5). The order here is reversed from that which took place originally. When first introduced it was Passover, Baptism, Law, but sin and disobedience had necessitated a different order. This may explain much that appears to be so irregular in many modern so-called 'baptisms' or 'births' or conversions. But in whatever order the three come, they form a unity of experience and therefore must be kept together, for they agree in one. They have a joint testimony because they form one whole work. As far as was humanly possible, that generation of people was going into the baptism with the Law ringing in their ears. It was repeated unto their hearts and put into their minds as well as Moses, the mediator of that Old Covenant, was able to do it. In type they were going to be baptized into Jesus (Joshua), and for that they must be baptized into heart and mind law in the flesh, not stone and Book Law in an ark. As with their fathers before them,

they must experience a personal passover. With their forbears it had been unto Moses in the cloud and in the Sea; with them it was to be unto Joshua in the cloud and in the Jordan. The cloud is not mentioned here, but we know that it was there, for God had said that it should be with them; they would not have attempted to go over Jordan without its clear leading to show them the way (Exodus 40:38). Obviously then, this crossing was to be to these people the most important journey they would ever make.

Of all the men of the former generation who had passed over the Red Sea, only Joshua and Caleb remained at this time. It is also probable, indeed almost certain, that some of the women who passed over Jordan had also experienced the exodus passover. All these would be elderly survivors of husbands or brothers who, over the years, had died off as a result of their folly and disobedience, but to the vast majority it was an entirely new experience; however, these women are not under consideration here. This is not because they are of no importance; on the contrary, the very fact that they were now entering into what their husbands or brothers had rejected proves their value in God's eyes. The reason why those who belonged to a former generation and baptism were accorded the second baptism is simply this — they were women. Under Mosaic jurisdiction the female never bore the responsibility for making spiritual or legal decisions; therefore unless they were partners to their husbands' sins and decisions (as in the case of Achan and his wife and family), they never had to bear the punishments for them. All decisions and responsibilities at that time lay firmly upon the shoulders of the male. Taking this into account, the whole episode is brought into correct focus.

We see then that it was as a newborn race that Israel came to Jordan. Their fathers a generation before had come to the Red Sea, just as though they had been but newly born. Had that first generation behaved as God intended, they would have gone into the land by one baptism only, for neither the journey demanded, nor did they need, nor did God intend them to cross over Jordan. He had not planned more than one baptism for them any more than He has for any man, but He did plan and insist upon one. That is why Moses firstly led toward and Joshua finally brought Israel through Jordan. There was no evading it; both Moses and Joshua insist on one baptism per person, and it is seen to be the same with both John Baptist, Moses' representative, and Jesus, for each insisted upon the one baptism he ministered. So just as their fathers before them, the unbaptized sons of Israel had to face it in their day; the whole host must be baptized. It was an absolutely new and unique experience to them — their one and only passover-baptism.

We have seen that of the former responsible males, none but Joshua and Caleb remain alive. They had wholly followed the Lord, and because of this they both had special roles to fill in the future of the nation, and were preserved with a purpose. Joshua, we know, was elected of God to take the place of Moses as leader of the people, and became a type of Jesus; Caleb represents the true Israelite in whom there is no guile. Neither of them needed any such thing as a second experience of the baptism in either of its elements. Caleb is the perfect type of the one who, together with his Lord, steps straight out of Egypt into Canaan, which is God's intention and provision for every man. Caleb's inheritance was already known to him; he had already trodden on it and in his heart he was living in it. God testified that he had quite another spirit in him from all his contemporaries who had died by the way in the wilderness.

When these factors are taken into account, it becomes clearer than ever that what is so often preached as clear Bible proof of the need of a second experience leading to a second blessing, is in fact proof of the exact opposite. It is only the application of the first experience to a second generation. It was necessary because that first generation of unbelievers had to be annihilated. That being so, how could they undergo a second blessing baptism? Indeed they were cut off by God precisely so that they should not be said or held to have experienced a first and second experience.

By this the Lord Himself has emphatically precluded:

1. the possibility of experiencing the Baptism in the Spirit as a second blessing;
2. the propriety of using this event as a basis for preaching it.

To understand correctly the true spiritual meaning and importance of this passage of Jordan, we must once again leap the time-gap of forty years, and in thought substitute Jordan for the Red Sea. As we have seen, it was God's intention to lead His people directly from Egypt to Canaan. Only disobedience had delayed it, so now, the cause for the delay being removed, the delay in time, or the time-lapse, for the completion of the exercise may also itself be removed from our thinking. This is what is meant by leaping the time-gap. For the purposes of what God is trying to teach us it is as though the Children of Israel had stepped into the Red Sea from Goshen and had stepped ashore in Canaan. Yet there are certain differences in the two crossings which we must observe in order that we should learn just how much spiritual meaning lies within this national baptism.

This time there is no Pharaoh with his host of chariots in hot pursuit of the people so lately escaped from the house of bondage; the nation no longer felt that they were slaves. There was no fear in their hearts; recapture and re-enslavement had died out of their thinking, and they no longer had any desire to return to Egypt. That land was by now but a bitter memory in the minds of a few people, mostly elderly women. For a long while now Israel had been a victorious people, approaching the land wherein their days were going to be as the days of heaven on earth. Already they had encountered and conquered some of the giants their fathers had so feared to face, God's own personal Tabernacle was with them, and the Ark of the Covenant with His throne upon it was in their midst. They were His chosen people, His personal charge. He ruled over them in mercy, and His 'standard', the pillar of cloud and fire, towered above and over them day and night. They were an entirely different company from that which had earlier fled in fear from Pharaoh. Standing confidently at the waters' edge with the echoes of Moses' voice ringing in their memories, they calmly waited to pass over the river and possess their possessions.

They also had a new leader. By divine appointment Joshua now replaced Moses, who through disobedience, because of the weakness of the flesh, had been refused entrance into the land. He who gave the Law could not give the Land, and in this God is teaching us yet more of His eternal truth. He had originally given the land to Abraham by promise; it was an entirely undeserved favour, unmixed with legal qualification, and so before God could fulfil that promise, Moses must be removed. This same principle is revealed by Paul in Galatians 3:17, 18. The inheritance could not be given to them as of law, so Moses, the giver and the representative of the Law, had to go. God took him out of the way. He did not appoint Joshua over Moses' head, as though to demote law and exalt grace, neither did He appoint a junior above a senior, but He

first removed Moses because his work was fulfilled. Moses had acted as schoolmaster or pedagogue to bring Israel to Christ (Joshua), and therefore his work was done.

There are other reasons why Moses must give way to Joshua, and perhaps not the least of these lies in the meanings of their names — and not just in their respective meaning only, but also in a further thing, perhaps not at first noted. Moses' name was given him as a baby by an Egyptian princess. In that name she described the action whereby he became hers, and being a heathen did so in terms of her superstitious beliefs; Moses means 'drawn out'. He was thereby named as a child of Egypt and a son of the Nile-god, with all the superstitious connotations and fleshly undertones and worldly ambitions that such a name could mean. Therefore, great as he became, Moses could not be allowed to lead God's people into the land of Promise, for in that land God intended all the reproach of Egypt to be rolled away. The entrance, conquest and occupation of Canaan was to be accomplished as the dispensation of the fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham, and not even an Egyptian name could be connected with it.

In personal stature Moses had no equal in Israel. God was not dealing in personalities when He substituted Joshua for Moses. Neither before nor after Moses was there another prophet better than he; it was his name that was at fault, for not only was its origin wrong, but its meaning was too limited. 'Drawn out' only signified one aspect of the great work being wrought by God in the earth for His people; it is partial, incomplete. Also it is somewhat negative, like the words 'Thou shalt not', in which the law of Moses was couched. The move to bring His people out of Egypt was only preparation, a necessary prelude to bringing them into Canaan. God had no intention of bringing them into that land under the lawgiver, for that would seem to display inconsistency and a lack of concern for the promotion of eternal truth on His part. It would have been in retrospect a betrayal of Abraham and in prospect a denial of Jesus. Joshua, on the other hand, is a typically Israelitish name meaning Jehovah / Saviour, or Salvation of Jehovah. The truth is that the salvation of Jehovah which He had in mind for the Children of Israel was not a state of being just 'drawn out' of Egypt or of being just across the Red Sea, but right in Canaan. In himself as a man Joshua was no greater than, if as great as Moses, but in the plan of God he had to fill a more positive role. He must be a type of Jesus leading his people into personal experience of the fulfilment of the Promise and the promises. He was chosen of the Lord to divide unto the people their inheritance and this is just what he did.

Careful study of the opening chapters of Joshua's book will yield instructions of much value to those who wish to learn more detailed truth about our great salvation. Enlightening and desirable as this is, we shall not give time and space to indulge ourselves in it all here, but continue to pursue the main line of truth upon which we are set. This turns around the magnification of the person of Joshua and the work which he typically accomplished when he was chosen to represent Jesus Christ to us. This is brought into focus in chapter 3, where we discover that in the passage of Jordan, Joshua is very closely associated with the Ark, which is here called 'the Ark of the Covenant'. The place of their association is in Jordan, the river of death; Joshua and the Covenant are revealed as one there. At this vital juncture of the revelation of the mystery it is important for us to note this: so close is their union that as the account unfolds, the point of emphasis moves constantly from the one to the other. Watching closely as we follow the progress of the Children of Israel over Jordan on their way into the Promised Land, we shall see how some of the finer details of the

death of our Lord Jesus Christ are pinpointed and highlighted. The outstanding lesson to learn is that the living Jesus, in leading His people into their inheritance, first stands, then stands firm, and remains standing in Covenant with them in His death; this He does in order to bring them by resurrection into His life.

Now we know that the Ark represented the crux of all the bloodshed and sacrifices and offerings of the Law. All that was ever done under law according to the Levitical code was done unto Him who sat on His merciful throne on the Ark. Spiritually the Mercy Seat and He who sat on it was the end of the Law in a twofold way, namely objectively and finally. Objectively it was the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believed, and this was so because annually the blood of atonement was sprinkled there. Finally it was the end of the Law because there the Law ceased. Beyond that, it had no jurisdiction. All over Israel it had jurisdiction, but from that point upwards it had no power over anyone. Neither sin nor legal code has any dominion in heaven, and from the Mercy Seat upwards all was heaven. The Law was in the Ark; the Mercy Seat was upon that; the cloud was upon that; God appeared in that; and all was glory. That is finality. God was not under the Law but over it; the Law was under Him; it was in His body (the Ark), His Being.

Ordinarily the Ark was set in its exact position within the veil which covered the Holiest of All at the east end of the Tabernacle, but on this occasion it stood in Jordan; it was in transit. According to God's instructions it was wrapped within its veil, covered with sealskin, spread over with a cloth wholly of blue, its staves in place, the blood but a stain upon its throne, with the living cloud resting upon it and spreading far out over the river, the way, and the people. What more could God have done to show us (even if they did not then understand it) the glory of the Lord in death, and the wonder of that Baptism wherewith we are baptized? Here we see Jesus in all His glorious humanity, the Lord of life reigning over all in His brief death. Having dealt with sin where sin abounded, He deals with death where death abounded, that He might show us grace where grace abounds, and give us life, because life abounds; all is of His humanity.

How intimately the veil wrapped the Ark in Jordan. Just so, in death, the flesh of our Lord did not hang distantly from Him as the veil hung remotely some little distance from the Ark when set in the Tabernacle. The veil represented His flesh, and at Calvary the flesh and Spirit were especially one; they had each to serve the other for God's purposes there. The Invisible became the Visible especially for this, and by this picture we see how Jesus lived unto and in and through death. How appropriate now also is the covering of sealskin (note, not badger-skin but sealskin; the seal is a water animal), for He was born for this Baptism which, though it come in into His soul, should never be able to flood or destroy Him. Outside and around all, like an outer cloak, clung the cloth 'wholly of blue'. All was wrapped up in, yet revealed as total love. Above the Ark stood the cloud, as though it were the impenetrable density of heavenly love filling all space, reaching down from the blue infinity of heaven like the finger of God pointing out the Ark. All was love; love above and love below with the cloud in between: Father, Holy Ghost, Son, God so loved His people. He so wanted them to have eternal life (their inheritance) that He gave His Son. The whole scene presents God's view of Calvary. It is Christ's death as related to the priesthood. Joshua / Jesus is there, but he is only associated with the Ark, he is not carrying it. The priests are carrying it. In Jordan the Ark is Christ offered without spot to God through the eternal Spirit, and there passing by within sight of it were the people. It

was invisible, yet it was visible; they saw it yet didn't see it. In a figure they could look upon God as though they had no conscience of sin, and by Christ pass over into their possessions, a nation of priests.

Approaching it all from another angle, we see how clearly too this prefigures Jesus' own water baptism in that same Jordan so long afterwards. As we examine it afresh, we find that all was just the same then, and confess with awe that whenever God appears, whatever be His purpose, eternal truth can never vary. The Gospels show us Jesus in the water — the Holy Ghost coming upon Him there and Father so lovingly and so gladly owning and presenting Him to the people. Then as always, all was enveloped in and overshadowed by love, for even so, that baptism was only a picture of the greater to follow. In fulfilment of this greatest Baptism, as though anticipating Calvary, the feet of the priests that bore the Ark stood on dry land; in the sides of the Ark were the wooden crosspieces, the staves upon which all was hung. All the love of God ever shown over the millennia was revealed by the cross. By the way of the cross He went into death, and by its virtue and power made death a way for all His people. Now denuded of all power of evil and terrors of hell, this death and resurrection way represents only the overpowering goodness of God and the glorious blessings of heaven. The whole scene is a setting forth of 'Christ crucified.. the power of God, and the wisdom of God'. Yet the feet of those priests did get wet. The outer waters of the floods of death did come in unto His soul. He had to taste death for every man, but the great eternal spirit of Him drove back the floods, stopped the river and stood mid-stream to hold back the waters and make the royal highway for His spiritual house to pass over.

The blood on the Mercy Seat in Jordan was but a stain. It was not the bright crimson of blood in circulation, but the deep purple-brown stain of blood long shed. It was the blood of a past atonement, and it spoke of redemption previously accomplished; the sacrifice had been accepted, righteousness was established and declared. God was reigning in grace, because in the figure, Jesus who died was standing there alive, and His throne was for ever and ever. It was the blood of a past sacrifice perpetuated. At the seat of it all was the blood, and at the heart of it all was love, but the root of it all was the Law for righteousness lying as sacred treasure at the bottom of the Ark. The blood-seed and foundation of His life was righteousness; not just negative sinlessness, but positive sin-overcoming-and-destroying righteousness. The New Covenant was in His blood. If love is the bond of perfectness, then it is because righteousness is the sceptre of correct living and just rule. All this and much more in hidden meaning stood there in Jordan, and as Joshua drew everyone's attention to the Ark that day, he himself began to be magnified in everyone's eyes (chapter 3: 3, 6, 8, 11, 13-15 & 17).

Joshua was pointing to God's earthly throne, for it was in order to bear the throne upon its lid that the box was made. It was the treasure-chest of heaven and earth, holding within it the two tablets of stone which bore God's own handwriting. Treasured up at the heart of the nation, the law-stones were guarded from humankind and prevented from idolatrous worship by the presence of God. Had He departed from His throne, His very handiwork must surely have become an idol, and the Law He wrote would have become His rival. In fact, later this did actually happen: Israel sinfully worshipped the fact that they had the Law of God, and lost the God of the Law. Perhaps from this we ought to learn a lesson and be warned of the danger of allowing Bible-worship to substitute Him in our hearts. But whatever the failure in a later day, when Joshua pointed to the Ark, God was reigning there.

This was probably the greatest thing Joshua ever did in all his life. It is not surprising therefore to find that our Lord also did something similar to this. During His lifetime on earth, and especially as He neared the end of His ministry, the Lord referred increasingly to His cross; to Him it was absolutely crucial. Although only the barest facts of this are recorded by the four Gospel writers. They present enough detail for us to understand that the Lord made His meaning abundantly clear: the cross and the grave were the goal of His earthly life. Following their accounts of the crucifixion, each of the writers passes on to the story of the resurrection, and some to record the ascension, and one goes on to point to His enthronement in glory. Having faithfully fulfilled his task, Luke was chosen of God to take up and continue the story in the Acts of the Apostles. He first refers back to the Lord's crucifixion and enthronement, showing that it was with a view to the outpouring of the Spirit and the birth of the Church, and then goes on to record the history of its growth and spread. But it is through the epistles of the apostles that the living glorified Lord really teaches us the full and spiritual meaning of the value of His triumphant death. Consistently with this whole scheme of revelation and true to the type, John Baptist, when baptizing Jesus in water, pointed Him out as the Lamb of God while He was still in the world. John was Moses' representative, and it was Moses who, while still in Egypt (the world), pointed Israel to the lamb and its blood; but his successor, Joshua, that is the one who was raised up in his stead to represent the living Jesus, points to the Ark / Throne.

Reading the New Testament, we find that following the ascension and enthronement of the Lord Jesus, all the writers do this same thing, Peter leading the way on the day of Pentecost. How vital and indispensable all this is, for although while hanging on the cross the Lord did all the work necessary for our total redemption and reconciliation, it was not until He returned to heaven and was enthroned in glory that the gospel of His grace could be fully preached. The gospel for the present day is declared from the eternal throne and not as from Galilee or Judea, or even the historic cross. When Paul said 'we preach Christ crucified', he meant that we preach the living Christ, who, having been once crucified, now baptizes in the Holy Ghost into all the virtues of the cross. This is the particular aspect of truth which is so plainly being revealed at Jordan. Of old the people waiting in fear at the Red Sea for their baptism unto Moses, were fleeing from Pharaoh and the power and dominion of his throne. At that time Pharaoh was the great king over all the earth; but to the nation under Joshua, Pharaoh was nothing but a memory; he and his powers and principalities had been very effectively destroyed forty years earlier. Under Joshua it is the Lord enthroned on the Ark of the Covenant who is the centre of all thoughts and the object of everyone's vision. He is the Lord of all the Earth. The result is that no-one is running away from a pursuing host or casting fearful glances behind. Instead, in perfect peace, the great King of kings is majestically supervising His people's passover into the Promised Land. In the process of the unfolding type He is teaching us something of the scope of the eternal work which He wrought at Calvary in relationship to the throne of God. Far beyond what they saw or what was witnessed centuries later at Calvary, we see that in His death the Lord Jesus set up His throne.

The gospel preached to us is not a partial one. It is not just the story of the birth, life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but also of His ascension and enthronement, His glorification and Kingdom and coming again, and things too numerous to be completely known or mentioned by any man. Because of this, it is to the throne that we are pointed at this time and not to the blood, important and indispensable though it is. The Mercy Seat on which the blood was sprinkled was the more important thing,

for it was in order to be sprinkled on the throne that the blood was shed. Joshua did not say, 'When you see the blood ...', but 'When you see the Ark, go after it'. It is God who had to see the blood; He said so in Egypt — 'When I see the blood I will pass over you'. At that time it was painted on the houses in which they were sheltering, eating the lamb. It was public blood; not only God but everybody saw it. But on the Mercy Seat it was private blood, God's exclusively; only He saw it. In Egypt what they received by virtue of it was seen and known, but sprinkled there on the Mercy Seat it speaks of what God got from it. Far beyond what Israel saw or could have anticipated when the Lord insisted that they shed and sprinkled the blood in Egypt, all was anticipatory of and consistent with the future thing that He intended to do in Canaan. When the blood was originally shed at His command, He had not fully revealed His purpose concerning it; unknown to them then, He planned to have the blood always in His sight, and whether or not the people at Jordan realized it, that was the thing which mattered most to them on their day of baptism.

God was keeping His sovereign word and oath to them — the Covenant He had made with Abraham. They could not see the blood under which lay the tables of the Covenant. They possibly did not even know then that the Law for righteousness which lay in the Ark was God's confirmation of the original promise made to Abraham, but it was. Had they known, it was the proof that they were certainly going to live in the land. God gave it them to be the Law for righteousness that He required of them, that by it they may live in the land of His promise into which they were now passing. All they had to do at Joshua's command was to trace the dim outlines of God's earthly throne under its many veils and follow the King through the flood and over the river to possess their possessions in full realization of all the promises of God.

Sometimes in our fervent evangelical zeal, and because of deepest heartfelt appreciation of the eternal worth of the precious blood of Christ we may endanger the objective which He had in view when He shed it. Due to fear lest the vital truths of our redemption be filched from us by humanistic tendencies or modernistic teaching, we give the blood an over-emphasis neither intended by God nor needed by man. Such fears need not be. A sane spiritual approach to both the whole and the wholeness of the Bible concedes nothing to unbelief. Faith grows the stronger for the thought, and truth flourishes by investigation and thrives on honesty.

The relationship of the blood and the throne is as vital as the relationship of the blood and the cross. The blood had to be shed, for it is the only remedy for sin. Except it had been outpoured at Calvary there could be no redemption, no conclusive fulfilment of and justification for all the shed blood of past atonements, and no present reconciliation brought in. In the whole plan of reconciliation the blood in Jesus' veins had to become the blood of His cross, which in turn had to be brought in by Him to become blood on the throne. The throne was before the blood was, and the blood was before the cross was. Both the blood and the cross were, indeed just had to be, because of the throne. By use and means of the cross the redeeming blood was shed; from the cross it was sprinkled on the throne. Jesus used the cross for the throne; it was totally necessary to the throne and Him that sits on it. Apart from the blood on the throne there could be no redemption. Sprinkled there it had reached its ultimate end and achieved its greatest work.

It is totally erroneous to think or preach that redemption was completed or that reconciliation was fully effected at the cross. Without belittling for one moment the complete and consummate work that Jesus accomplished there, we must see most clearly that no-one would have been saved except the blood shed at Calvary had been carried up and on to the throne. The two actions are indispensable parts of a whole in which each is necessary to the other or else could have no meaning to us. So it was that Joshua in the day of his magnification in the eyes of Israel, shows his magnificence by turning all eyes to the Ark.

Among the many things God accomplished by this man at that time, two were of outstanding value to the Children of Israel: (1) He cut everything down to size; (2) He put all things into perspective; that is He showed things up for what they really were. This was especially necessary in connection with Jordan, for to Israel it represented death. Now Jordan does not represent physical death, although erroneously it is pressed into that meaning from time to time. Quite contrary to the popular ideas all too often versified for use as hymns, Jordan does not represent the physical death which came by sin and is now the common end of all flesh, but the royal spiritual death that came by Jesus Christ, the Resurrection and the Life. It is an entirely new death, being spoken of in Romans 6 as 'His death'; it is the death into which all must be baptized if ever they are to become men as God requires. Since the memorable day when Israel crossed Jordan, it has represented the Lord's death. The Lord Jesus used physical death as a means to reveal the death He died to sin for us. His death is the immediate death to the sin-death of man and the eventual death to his physical death too. By means of physical death the great Spirit, Jesus the God-Man, proved that He could not be overcome and slain as were others. He did this by first taking man's sin-death upon Him and then entering the realms of physical death in order that He might reach the place where all other human spirits lay dead, slain by satan and sin.

One of the main reasons why the Children of Israel were brought to Jordan when it was in flood was to set forth this lesson. Before their eyes the waters (of death) were first cut back to proper proportions, so that the main stream (the real death) should be revealed. It was there, and not in the deceptive floodwaters, that the true business of 'His death' was really transacted and established. The feet of the priests did not 'stand firm' until they rested on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, though they momentarily paused as soon as the soles of their feet rested in its floodwaters. Of all the people, they alone got their feet wet; no-one else did; they took the first unseeable, adventurous steps — for all the others it was firm, dry walking. As nearly as possible God has shown us by this how truly Jesus 'tasted death' for every man, and then stood firm in His death that every son of God should cross over 'dry' unto glory. Hallelujah, what a man calls death is not the real death at all. In His love the Lord has revealed all to us so that we shall not be deceived or held by terrors.

Let us watch it all happening as it is recorded in the story. When the feet of the Ark-bearing priests touched the brim of the water, straight away things really began to happen. Immediately the floods started to assuage, and as the waters receded, before their eyes the river assumed its correct size, falling into true shape and taking its proper course; very soon it disappeared altogether, leaving the bed bare and dry. The waters were cut off before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the earth. Then, with majestic pace, the priests proceeded into the midst of the river bed. The waters had either fled helter-skelter downstream to the sea of death, or piling up somewhere back upstream away from His presence, had refused to come near His face. It was an

amazing spectacle — a miracle wrought in a physical element; yet viewing it today we see the wonder of the Lord's working for us in the far more important realm of the Spirit.

Pausing to cast back a reflective glance to Noah, we note that terminologically the flooding of Jordan strangely links up with the original Flood. Pondering further we can see that the second of our illustrations also joins with the first and this third illustration of the Baptism to reveal just one event, for Jordan was swollen almost to flood proportions, and was like a sizeable inland sea. So Noah's flood and Moses' sea and Joshua's river are as one for the telling of the story of the true Baptism, each speaking the same thing in another way. Thereby they provide the opportunity of examining that Baptism in three different aspects of its amazing fullness. The exactitude of God in this speaks with inexorable logic. God does not wander from the original truth when further outlining or illustrating new ideas of a definitive nature connected with it. Instead, as we see here, when bringing in another new aspect of eternal truth, He also hints at and includes things revealed of old. This is He who says that 'the wise scribe who is instructed into the Kingdom of Heaven bringeth forth out of his treasures things new and old', for He Himself does it. In this way we see the whole in perspective and are instructed into the continuity, progression and development of the doctrine of the Baptism.

The crossing of Jordan took place 'very far from the city Adam'. Undoubtedly the spot was chosen most carefully by God in order to speak most powerfully and unmistakably to our hearts. The introduction of this name is of great significance, for as the fact of the flooding river links us with the tragedy of the Flood, so does the name Adam carry us back beyond the Flood to the greater tragedy that originally made it necessary. Adam provides us with the key to the special emphasis given by God to this particular illustration of the Baptism. It is the only place in scripture where we find that name attached to a city. Apart from the fact that it was hard by Zaretan, we know nothing about it, except that the waters of Jordan piled up a long way from it. It is as though God was saying with amazing insistence that in passing over Jordan's flood, they were leaving all of old Adam behind; a long way behind; altogether behind. There was no passover for him, for it was he who passed the whole human race over to satan, who flooded humanity with sin. Moreover, the Children of Israel were not going over Jordan just to settle down and rest in Adam again. They could not possess the land or inherit the promises of God in old Adam; neither in any connection with him nor anywhere near him. Never again! Adam, with his legacy of sin and death is finished. What a terrible legacy it was.

Yet linking Adam with Joshua, God is bringing to the fore the real lesson of this chapter, for Joshua represents Jesus, the last Adam. So we have before us the first, old, evil Adam, and the last, new, good Adam. The one in whom sin began in man, and the One who as a Man ended sin. First Adam became a sinner and commenced it among men; the last Adam was made sin to end it among men. In this incident we may also find an interesting pictorial comment upon that difficult scripture which says, 'As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive'. Jordan, the river of death, flowed by Adam into the world and flooded out upon and into all men (Romans 5:12). Adam died and left all men in death, but our Joshua leads through death into the chosen life of God for His people. God finished Adam by Christ. That is the chief reason why on the cross He cried, 'It is finished'. So much was ended there — it was the terminal point of much more than we know, and the pivotal point of all time. Then

and there God brought to judgement and death the elusive Old Man of satan and sin; there He finally nailed him down and buried him.

Until that moment Adam had lived on in the human race unchallengeable and unassailable as the nature of sin in man. Physically Adam died at the age of 930 years, but in spiritual nature he lived on in the race for millennia until a new spiritual nature from God came and destroyed him. Only Abraham among men has outlived Adam spiritually. Abraham became the new 'father' in Adam's place because he was the man of obedient faith as against the disobedience and unbelief of Adam. By this he has lived on spiritually far longer than Adam in man, for at Calvary Adam was crucified and slain and buried, but at the same time Abraham was justified. Abraham rejoiced to see Jesus' day, 'and', says Jesus, 'he saw it and was glad'. Until the cross Adam and Abraham co-existed as spiritual 'fathers' in the race, producing two kinds of person, which at times co-existed as dual natures in one person. Since Calvary, however, Adam has been slain, so that no man need live now as a split personality, having two different springs of spiritual nature rising and warring within his one human nature.

When the Lord Jesus came into the world, He was born of Abraham's seed; physically He was born in the likeness of sinful flesh, but spiritually He was born in the image of God. This was accomplished by using the seed of the woman, Genesis 3:15, instead of the seed of man. Even in so doing God had to use the highest power (Gk. 'dunamis') he had, overshadowing Mary with the Holy Ghost in order to bring forth His Son of Man. It is very doubtful that the seed of the woman is in and of itself less tainted by sin than man's, but in exact contrast to Eve, who believed the word of satan, Mary believed the word of God by the angel. That word being mixed with faith in her, became the human life-seed from which the babe Jesus was generated. So apart from man, and being all-powerfully operated upon by the Holy Ghost, Mary brought forth her firstborn son. Whatever else God did in commencing in Mary the birth-cycle which resulted in the babe of Bethlehem, He certainly showed by Christ that old Adam was finished with; that degenerate man was not the father of the spiritual or natural life of the carpenter of Nazareth. God's utter rejection of Adam is nowhere more plainly shown than in the birth of Jesus Christ; nor is that fact more openly exhibited than in His death.

The Lord Jesus on the cross dealt with all the original and cumulative characteristics of the sinful man; He bore his curse, carried his sins, took his punishment, died his death and buried him in his grave. More, much more, He superseded him — blotted him out. He nullified the accumulated power and effects of his continuing existence during the thousands of years which had run their course between his rejection in Eden and Calvary. More than that, He made those years themselves to appear as though they had never been, for we read that Jesus is the second man. The Lord who created the first man, Himself became the second. So again, in order to understand truth so vital to us, we have to leap the time gap, for this thing is spiritual. What we seek to demonstrate is entirely in the realm of Spirit. This is why it is always the Spirit that bears witness, for the Spirit is constant; things are always consistent in meaning and interpretation as well as constant in power in the kingdom of the Spirit.

In the man Christ Jesus, God finished that old Adam, but continued with man. By the life that He lived Jesus showed that by His birth He had ended the inevitability of the continuity of the Old Adam nature and manhood of sin. Much more, by carrying that life over into His death in our behalf, He also finished that old nature for us forever. It

was to show us this that the Ark stood firm in Jordan, where it remained central in the stream of death until all the people had passed clean over into the land of promise; it was first in but last out. He is Alpha and Omega whenever He appears. In keeping with this Joshua fills two roles at Jordan: he standing with the Ark in the centre as the last Adam and he leads many sons unto the glory of Canaan as the second Man.

Again it is as though those centuries of sin, failure, frustration, disappointment, toil, pain, bondage, heartache, Egypt, taskmasters, Pharaoh, and the wilderness had never existed. Adam the first commenced sin; Adam the last ended it. The first man lost paradise, the second gained Canaan for all the children of God. Even though men seem yet to be cast in the mould of Adam the first, they who by spiritual heredity are the children of God in the line and nature of the second man, may know sweetness far above Adam's lost paradise and Joshua's Canaan, for our Jesus is the Leader of all the file of God's sons who with Him share jointly in all the Father has.

What a glorious insight all this affords us into the character of God. He has always stood with His people. No-one would have thought it wrong if the Ark, instead of standing still in Jordan, had continued on leading the people into Canaan. But had it done so, the type would not have been true, although no-one would have known it, for none knew that what was happening was in fact a prefiguring of a greater reality yet to be revealed. God's concern is that we by this should get a clear sight of the truth that Jesus stayed long enough in death for the whole multitude of the redeemed to pass over. So vital is this truth, that by God's own commands the memorials of it were retained to Israel in a peculiar way.

From the very place where the feet of the priests that bore the Ark stood firm in Jordan, twelve fore-ordained men bore a stone apiece over with them onto the other bank to build a cairn at Gilgal. Similarly, Joshua built a cairn in the exact hallowed spot midstream where the feet of the priests that bore the Ark stood firm in Jordan, and from whence the twelve other memorial stones were taken. The floods eventually returned and swamped from view the stones which Joshua erected, so that no-one could see the path through the mighty waters, but the identical erection built by Joshua's command at Gilgal remained. It bore visible testimony to succeeding generations that God dried up the waters of Jordan before His people as He did the waters of the Red Sea before their fathers. In this way the Lord links the two crossings as one. By these two witnesses everybody's thoughts were to be directed to four things — Egypt, Red Sea, Jordan, Canaan. To us the truth abides clear. Jesus did not come up out of death until He had completely dealt with and finished all our enemies and brought every one of His people into His life in God through His death for them. Sin, Judgement, Death, Adam, Pharaoh, Principalities, Powers, everything was overcome in that one solitary act. It abides as total as it is eternal.

The people passed over as 'new creatures', baptized unto Joshua, no longer now to be wilderness wanderers, any more than they were ever again to be Egyptian slaves. In Canaan they were no more in the wilds than in the world; they had not only passed over, but also 'out of' and 'into'. God had not brought them out of Egypt to live as nomads in the wilderness, but to possess their possessions in fulfilment of His promises. But man has to learn his old nature and see the justice and righteousness of God in condemning it to the cross. He may not like the lesson, but in so learning he will also be taught the grace and love of Christ in taking it to the cross for him. Moses had already said that God led them into the wilderness to prove them and know what

was in their heart, and to make them know that man can only live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. But this is a very hard lesson for man to learn, and a painful one, for natural carnal man wants to live by every word that proceeds out of his own mouth. He loves to decide for himself, gainsay the word of God, make fear or his better knowledge the plea when it is only pride, unbelief and rebellion that generate his refusal to do as God says. A man always has to learn that it is his own evil heart of unbelief which causes him to live in a wilderness. He also has to learn that only by baptism into Christ can he discover his Promised Land and enter into his possessions.

As we have seen, when the Children of Israel came up out of Jordan, they were not allowed to stay 'just over' on its bank. In any case it was impossible, for the river was in flood, so they pitched their camp in Gilgal. There the cairn of stones was erected, and there the Lord kept them until some further things upon which He insisted should be fulfilled. The significance of what took place during those early days at Gilgal must not be regarded as something taking place some time much later than or subsequent to the baptism. All that took place at Gilgal at that time, whether in the natural or spiritual realms, is directly connected with the Jordan crossing, and must be regarded as taking place in the one true Baptism. The New Testament shows that by it God synchronizes many things which may not be consciously realized as having been wrought thereby, and which cannot be shown as simultaneous in the type. The things listed in Joshua 5 have great spiritual significance for us. They are as follows:

1. Israel was circumcised;
2. They kept the passover;
3. They ceased to eat Manna and ate the old corn of the land;
4. The captain of the Lord's host assumed command.

These four are closely linked by God with one another and with the passage of Jordan. It is, therefore, vital that we come to an understanding of what it was that God accomplished at Gilgal, for spiritually it is at this precise place and in this experience that the true Baptism 'lands' us. Firstly God revived and reinstated the neglected sign of the Covenant — Circumcision. Gilgal means 'rolling', and God brought them there with the intention of rolling away from them what He called 'the reproach of Egypt', and it could only be accomplished by this means. It was in keeping His Covenant with Abraham that He had brought them into the Promised Land. At Gilgal God enforced circumcision upon them, for circumcision, besides being the sign of the Covenant, was the seal of their faith in the promises of God, and it had to be cut into their mortal bodies. The Baptism in the Spirit is for this purpose — it accomplishes heart-circumcision, the initial putting away of the filth of the flesh and the inscription in the heart of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

The Baptism in the Spirit is to produce men of the Spirit, who live in the Spirit, and possess the promises of God. The flesh cannot inherit the promises, hence the circumcising Baptism. The reproach of Egypt is fixed permanently in the flesh; 'the world' and 'the flesh' cannot be separated, for without the flesh there could be no world. Worldliness is the indulgence and expression of the lusts of the flesh in the earth, and a man is not out of the world until his flesh is circumcised from him with the circumcision of Christ. This 'circumcision of Christ' is not to be confused with the ceremonial circumcision which took place in His boyhood. It is rather to be thought of as the spiritual power with which He invested the cross in taking there all His

perfection of life manifest in the flesh. The fact of His birth as the Son of God, together with the accumulated virtue of His private life as Jesus of Nazareth and His public life as the Christ (during which He proved too strong to succumb to either the direct or indirect temptations of the devil) gave power to His cross to become God's 'sharp knife' for circumcision. We may see how truly this is highlighted by examining the two major occasions in His life when He was directly confronted with the choice of doing: (a) the devil's will, or (b) His own.

In the first, when He was tempted in the wilderness at the beginning of His ministry, it was in the three realms of all human existence — spirit, soul and body. This only proved that He was indeed fit for the immediate ministry unto which He had just been anointed. Had He failed in either test, it would have been through the flesh or self-indulgence. To have sought bread for His body, or the keeping and protection of angels for Himself, or to have hoped for life or gain or 'blessing' on the devil's terms, or even at his suggestion, would have been of the flesh; He refused point blank. So also in Gethsemane, where He underwent the second test. This time He proved that He was fit for the ministry of Reconciliation immediately to hand, and ultimately for the ministry of mediation which lay beyond resurrection. To have insisted on doing His own will and having things His own way would have been then, as at any other time, nothing but 'flesh'. This complete absence of desire for self-fulfilment, total refusal to gratify mental, emotional, spiritual and bodily desires for solely selfish ends is indeed truest proof of heart circumcision. His testings proved how truly the world, the flesh and the devil were cut off from Him. This utter refusal on His part either to live or die for self gave power to His cross to become the instrument of God unto circumcision. To receive it all we must be baptized into His death.

By circumcision this baptism was directly linked with the original covenant promise to Abraham. Canaan was the land of promise given originally to him by God, wherein all God's promises to him were to find fulfilment. Insisting upon this before anything else should take place, the Lord was beginning again at the beginning and showing the deep fundamental importance of the Baptism — what it is, what it deals with, and the means by which it is accomplished. At the same time He also showed that the Passover was secondary in importance to circumcision, for it is plain that the feast may only be kept by people already in the covenant of circumcision. This order of truth is strikingly brought out in Colossians 2 by Paul, where he speaks of circumcision in verse 11, and then afterwards of the spoiling of principalities and powers in verse 15. Going on from that point, he first tells us of our completeness in Him who is the head of them all, showing that all was accomplished by the cross and death and burial and resurrection of Christ. Thus we find that what We have discussed of the Red Sea and Jordan is joined in one in the New Testament doctrine of Christ. In Him all is dealt with at once, for all was done by Him in one glorious act.

The wandering man of the wilderness is an uncircumcised man. He may be out of Egypt, but he is also out of a personal experience of the covenant which is most vital to him. Man's salvation rests only in the fact that God covenanted to save him; apart from that covenant he has no hope at all. The important thing was to be not only out of the world, but also in God's covenanted Salvation in the Promised Land, otherwise there was no point in bringing them out of Egypt. That is why, after forty years of wandering, the only way into Canaan for them was by baptism, just as for their fathers the final episode of the exodus from Egypt was by the Red Sea. Following our earlier practice of putting the two incidents together, we arrive at the truth. God had told

them in Egypt that they were to keep the Passover when they were come to the Land; it was never conceived or instituted as a wilderness feast. So although the Passover came first in *national* history, upon crossing Jordan it was placed in its correct position by the Lord, that is secondary to and dependent upon personal circumcision.

Long before the institution of the Passover, the Lord, in Abraham, constituted membership of the race in the sign of circumcision — 'the seal of the faith'. The race was fathered in circumcision. Born in circumcision, it was emancipated in the Passover which was to be 'kept' annually only in remembrance of a past redemption by blood, water and Spirit, but circumcision is an intensely individual thing. By its very nature it has to be a personal, intimate experience, not a national ritual kept by all at once on one special day of the year; circumcision was almost certainly being ministered to someone every day of the year throughout the whole nation. Thus as God intended, it became the basic 'common' ritual of everyday life and not a special religious festival. Individuals were personally, privately brought into the covenant by circumcision, and thereby qualified to eat the lamb; no-one else was allowed the privilege. The penalty for eating the Passover uncircumcised was death. God does not allow uncircumcision to accompany possession. At Gilgal His perfect will was applied to His people. All being adjusted to the eternal order, we discover that circumcision precedes the Passover; the reason for this being that it is the greater of the two.

Rectifying their disorder and putting all things in proper perspective, God caused them to keep the Passover in the bond of the Covenant as He originally intended. It is only as we accept the implications of this that we may arrive at the full message of the type, for the Lord Jesus combined both the Circumcision and the Passover at the cross. When dying as the Passover Lamb, He not only shed the Lamb's passover blood, He also forged the sharp knife of circumcision for use in connection with the One Baptism. It was as improper to keep the Passover and be uncircumcised as it was to be circumcised and not keep the Passover. Upon reading the New Testament, we find that the work of the cross seems to point the fact that, beyond impropriety, in the realm of the Spirit it is impossible also.

The third thing recorded at this point is just as surely joined to the Passover as the Passover was to Circumcision, and by the Passover is linked with it: 'The Manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land'. This was something else the Lord had been aiming to do. Manna was a mystery, as its name signifies; it had been their wilderness food. Supplied originally by God as a temporary measure, it was intended only to be a short-term provision until His people should reach 'the land of corn and wine'. He had no more intended them to live the rest of their lives on Manna than He had originally intended them to live for forty years in the wilderness; He had always had something better in mind for them. Their fathers had once said that their souls loathed 'this light food'; it was a strong expression, but they felt they wanted something more solid and meaty, and of greater variety than the Manna, and God had lovingly provided some better thing for these their children but not in the wilderness. Manna, we are told, was really angels' food. Small, white, wafer-thin and honey-like, it was an emergency ration only. God's real intention and provision for them was the corn of the land, so He brought the nation over Jordan in the time of barley harvest. Now although this was so, we must note that upon entrance into the land they did not eat of their own immediate reaping and threshing. Likewise they did not eat of the stores laid up by dint of their own self-effort; they were not

allowed to eat new corn either, but 'the old corn of the land'. It was the new food for a new people in a new land.

Manna represents Jesus in the body of His flesh as He is revealed in the Gospels, an entirely unknown entity, unknowable in quantity and quality. They never could understand what He meant when He said, 'My Father is in Me', or 'I and My Father are one'. Who was He? What was He? Was He really three in one and one in three? Reading John 14, we find Jesus saying to Philip, 'Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me?' No-one apparently knew Jesus Christ after the flesh. He was a complete mystery even to His disciples before Pentecost. Consistently with this whole truth, we read in John chapter 6 that having fed the multitude in the wilderness, Jesus, in talking with those who came after Him, made reference to this Manna. He said, 'Moses gave *you* not that bread in the wilderness, but my Father giveth *you* the true bread from heaven'. He was speaking of Himself, but they were mystified, for He had deliberately changed the figure from Manna to Old Corn or Bread, that is from the wilderness food to the food of the promised land. Of old in the wilderness His Father had given Manna, or angels' food to the Children of Israel, but now He was offering them His very own food if they would have it. They were actually being given the opportunity of accepting God's living, life-giving bread — Jesus. Jesus is the Bread of God, the original 'Old Corn' of the land, but they had no appetite or taste for Him.

Old Corn, gathered up and stored from an old or past harvest is not for the old man; he seeks to feed on small, white, round, sweet, seed-like things gathered in the morning dew, tasting like honey, mixed and milled together for staple diet, the result of the ritual of the self-effort of early rising and much searching. True it was better than hunting for straw and stubble in Egyptian slavery, but it was not God's best, except under the circumstances. Miraculous it was, but not mature. God-given and guaranteed, it was created fresh every morning from heaven, with a glory sweet and precious among men, but not yet the Jesus ascended up into the former and everlasting glory that He had with His Father before the world was. The bread of the new man is the Jesus in and of the Spirit, not Jesus in the flesh, though both are essentially the same for they are one.

At the time of speaking Jesus was God's bread, but not yet man's, for the simple reason that He had not yet died and risen again. Moreover, those to whom He was speaking were all as yet unborn — their nature was Old Man. The risen, glorified Lord of the Acts and the Epistles and the Revelation is the new man's true bread. He is God the Father's bread; the Father feeds on the Son even as the Son feeds on and lives by the Father — each is food to the other. So when upon crossing Jordan and being circumcised and partaking of the passover lamb they ate of the old corn of the land, the Children of Israel ate new food. Thus it is that in progression of true spiritual thought, as well as in scriptural order, we pass from the truth of circumcision to the passover and then on to the provision of the old corn of the land. From there it is but a step, and fourthly we are brought to see and recognize the captain of the Lord's host.

Joshua, out walking one day, sees a man with a drawn sword in his hand. Approaching him, Joshua is warned not to draw nigh but to take his shoes from off his feet because he is standing on holy ground. When Joshua asked this man if he was on Israel's side or for their enemies, he replied, 'As Captain of the Lord's host am I now come'. Hitherto Joshua had been recognized as Israel's captain, but now a heavenly

captain appears and Joshua on earth had to give place to him. Something like this also happened to Jesus in the flesh. The two on the Emmaus road as good as said so: 'We trusted that it had been He that had redeemed Israel', they said of the earthly Jesus to the unrecognized 'Stranger'. But He soon identified Himself to be the same Jesus when they broke bread at Emmaus and thus He was referred to by the angels later on the mount of Ascension.

He had said earlier in the guest chamber in Jerusalem before His crucifixion, 'I will come to you ... at that day'. So on 'that day' of Pentecost He came by the Spirit to take up His rightful place at the head of His people. According to the heavenly revelation, that day coincided with the Lamb standing in the midst of the throne with the book in His hands, and breaking the first seal, so that the rider on the white horse should go forth conquering and to conquer. By the Spirit, Jesus of earth who had become Jesus of the heavens came all unseen, yet now to be known in all fulness to His people as Captain of the Lord's host. He was the same Jesus of Nazareth they had followed on earth, come back to lead them on in victory unto victory.

So in the type before us we see Joshua the man-captain on earth bowing and yielding to this Man-Captain from heaven. It is a picture, though not yet the fullest picture, of what happened on the day of Pentecost. 'At that day' Jesus came to them with the sword of the Spirit in His hand to lead His people on to complete victory and full possession of their inheritance. Whilst He was with them in the flesh they rejoiced and entered into His blessings and shared in His ministry; now they were to enter into that which was their own. Having been faithful in that which was another Man's (His) they were given their own, and how truly they inherited and lived in it all in His name and power, and for His sake. Thus we see the way that circumcision finds its fuller outcome in victory under the personal captaincy of Jesus. We are to find our inheritance among all them who are sanctified; we are on holy ground. All the hosts and powers of darkness that have invested Mansoul are indeed defeated and destroyed in this Baptism, and we are to prove it so.

Finally, and in connection with this, before we leave this account of the Children of Israel at Gilgal, we will notice one thing more. The opening verses of this fifth chapter show quite clearly the defeated condition of the Canaanites. All that the people of God needed to do was to act with the moral courage of faith, in the spiritual power of Christ, under His leadership, and possession was assured. The inhabitants of the land were shut up in fear and trembling. The news of what God had done for His people in delivering them from Pharaoh had preceded them. Oh why then had they wasted their time in the wilderness of internal strifes and rebellion and revolution for forty years? All the nations in Canaan already knew and had known in their hearts for forty years that they were defeated; the defeat of the major power at the Red Sea had also been the death-knell to all other powers. All these knew it, and were afraid of the Children of Israel, yet the Children of Israel had been afraid of them. How paradoxical is the spiritual state to which disobedience degrades us! Nevertheless, we see that not only was their heavenly Joshua come to them at this time, but their enemies were found to be without power also. Our risen Lord has told us that all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, 'Go ye into all the world', He said, 'and preach the gospel to every creature', and 'lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world'.

When the Ark of the Lord of all the earth had gone over Jordan before the Children of Israel it was immediately followed by the armed men leading the rest of the nation on their way into the promised land. They were going to possess Canaan by conquest as well as by promise and gift. From this fact we have much to learn, because for us Canaan represents Mansoul. By crossing over in this order they staked their claim to the land in its entirety; they were in. So it is with us in regeneration. At the immediate point of our birth / Baptism the new life and manhood is assured; the soul is saved; the future is secured; the ultimate destiny is fixed; yet possession of all our possessions in the immediate and progressive future depends entirely upon obedience to our heavenly Jesus. Each individual of old had to possess his own inheritance for himself. At the time of crossing they all knew beyond question that they were the people of God and the extent of their land, but no-one knew as yet the particular lot of his inheritance. This each of them had to discover and possess for himself.

Whatever it meant to them then, today we must understand that the extent of 'the land' we are to possess is the entirety of the soul-state of the proper man, Christ Jesus. Each individual is promised and privileged, and therefore must possess the glory of that blessed state in his own soul; that is the fulness of the length and depth and breadth and height of the promise. But knowing it for himself he may not therein rest content, for the battle must be joined until all regenerate spirits commonly enjoy in their own souls Jesus' personal soul-life; this is 'the lot of our inheritance'. Not knowing the exact number of souls that are saved or are yet to be saved, our commission is to press on until all are in possession of their souls — until no power or state foreign to those known and enjoyed by our one Lord shall remain in the soul of any redeemed person. We all must enjoy our common heritage; in our souls all the promises of God for us in Christ Jesus must find fulfilment. The Lord seals us with His Spirit that this should be so, telling us that all God's promises are in Him 'Yes' and in Him 'Amen'.

In Jesus every one of God's promises was fulfilled as well as all the Law and the commandments and ordinances. He lived His eternal life in and by these to the glory of God the Father, that we who are in Him may also glorify God as they are fulfilled in us as our own conscious experience of eternal life. They were fulfilled in and enjoyed by Him to God's glory and it was precisely in this accomplishment that His soul-life lay: these same experiences that He knew are also our inheritance, for this is the life He laid down in order that we might have it. We do not fully inherit our land, that is the full possibilities and capacities of our souls, whilst living on this earth, unless by His Spirit we are enjoying His spotless soul-life. Being spiritually regenerated by the Baptism, we have to possess (take in possession) our own souls. We are saved from sin because He, having preserved His own soul from sin grants us to know and show forth His own victorious living. Our eternal spiritual inheritance is God, not a land; because He came to us as a Man we may truly inherit Him. Only as we do so shall we surely inherit true and fullest manhood here and now.

Because Israel of old became obsessed with their land and their possessions and not with the God of all the earth, they comparatively soon lost what they had gained. By this let us be warned in our day. We must not allow the present popular trend of preaching, which over-emphasizes the emergence and manifestation of the sons of God and their inheritance, and their ministry and gifts and joys and blessings and soul-states, to become the main content of our ministry, lest running on unchecked to its logical end, it should so fill our vision that we lose sight of Him. Should we do that we shall lose all. The subtle danger is all the more insidious because it lies unseen and

unrecognized beneath the surface of such phrases as 'Body-ministry', 'Deliverance', etc. Talk about milk and honey, and vines and wines and pomegranates and inheritances and possessions could, if unwatched, result in the exact opposite of what is intended. God's purpose is to shift the soul from self to Christ, not from Christ to self. Ministry must be of Him and not of subjective experience, though the two must never be divorced. The latter is manifestly subject to the former, because it is and ever must be the proper enjoyment of it. I must be in Christ, not dwelling in self, or in mere joy or blessings or a hundred other additional soul-states that His salvation provides, wonderful and real in me as they are. Perhaps one of the biggest lessons we have to learn in these days is that which John on Patmos points out for all who have eyes to see, as well as ears to hear. When he saw the Lord revealed in the midst of the churches, John says that His body was covered. Head and hands and feet were exposed, but the body was thoroughly clothed from head to foot; it was obviously there, but hidden. Let us all agree to let it remain so. We are told to hold the Head, not the body, for the body is us. We are to hold and enjoy the experience of the Head; it is only for this that the Body exists at all.

We must therefore note the relationship between the destruction of the devil and all his hosts in the earlier picture of this Baptism and the full conquest of the land. This latter entailed many battles with many powers and princes until all had rest, while the former was a cataclysmic judgement resulting in total annihilation. A full study of the book of Joshua with this in mind would be out of place here, so confining ourselves strictly to the theme, we note that all the time the Children of Israel maintained the order of God and destroyed everything, leaving nothing to breathe, all was well. The joint lesson of the Flood, the Red Sea and Jordan is totality — complete, constant destruction. To disregard this fundamental lesson is finally to lose all. The Children of Israel proceeded in utter victory all the time they practised utter destruction. God ordered complete extermination of all the former inhabitants of Canaan, but altering that to partial extermination with a degree of subjugation, the Children of Israel brought about their own undoing. The land was never totally cleared of the seven nations that previously indwelt it, and was therefore never fully occupied by Israel alone. Conquest, sadly enough, was mixed with compromise which inevitably ultimately turned conquest into defeat.

The secret of utter victory is first to understand the devastating all-comprehensive power and intention of the cross, and then to carry it over into every situation of life. Paul, in I Corinthians 15, says 'thanks be to God who giveth us the victory'. Note the definiteness of it — not a victory, but *the* victory'. He also says in Romans 8 that we are 'more than conquerors'. What a glorious position! To fight a battle and win it is to be a conqueror, but if one lives in the blessing and glory of a former victory, enjoying what is won, he is more than a conqueror, he is a ruler and sharer of the spoil. Scripture assures us that Jesus divides the spoil with the strong. He won the victory and gives it to us, inviting us to live and rule in it with Him; His is a shared victory. This is His eternal life, which is the gift of God to us. There are too many people fighting too many battles, struggling to get the victory in their own lives, when they ought to be resting and ruling with Him. Because Paul needed not to fight his own battles, he was free to fight for other people. He had great conflict he said, but it was for the Colossians and the Laodiceans and others in need, not for himself. Like His Lord, he was free from his own inner conflicts, so that he could fight for the world of men that they also might enter into the victory of Jesus.

Certain it is that we shall never in this life, if ever, fully understand the mystery of Jesus' work at Calvary, and there will almost certainly be occasions when we are pressed out of measure beyond strength so that we even despair of our life, but this need not be because of inner conflicts. Jesus knew such times. Those who have experienced the true Baptism are crucified with Christ unto His death and resurrection within themselves, so that they can and do live by His faith and not their own. To such people inner conflict can only arise if they seek to re-introduce their own self-life again. Subtle or blatant assertion of one's own will, or questioning the wisdom of God, or disobeying the word of God, or seeking one's own interests will most certainly do it. Seeking one's own life and finding it destroys the work of God in the soul. By such things spiritual gifts sink into psychic powers (spectacular but not spiritual, and if persisted in, self-destructive), or fleshly demonstrations, or else they disappear entirely. But let a person seek nothing else except to fulfil and achieve the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, which is that same high(est) calling of God to which Jesus responded and followed throughout all His life on earth, and he shall entirely possess all his possessions — for that is exactly how our Joshua / Jesus possessed His.

Chapter Four - THE CLOAK FROM ON HIGH

The second book of Kings furnishes us with our fourth and final Old Testament illustration of the One True Baptism; it is to be found in chapter 2. This is a most important chapter, for by it the events we have been studying are linked with the New Testament in a most peculiar and direct way. Astonishingly enough, the link with the past is also directly established in verse 1 — Gilgal. Immediately we are at the very same spot where the Children of Israel first encamped upon emerging from Jordan. So once more, in order to obtain the fullest benefit from what these scriptures have to teach us, we must leap the time-gap. The Gilgal link is the intimation that the story now unfolding must be regarded as a direct continuation of what took place at Gilgal in Joshua's day.

The connection with the New Testament lies in the amazing identity of language and similarity of ideas found in this chapter with the writings in the New Testament concerning the Baptism in the Spirit. Such well-known words as 'tarry' (thrice repeated), 'head', 'mantle', 'the spirit', together with a wealth of other detail, are here set in the background of Elijah's translation and ascension into heaven. In general pattern this is all so like that which happened between the Lord and His chosen apostles and disciples during the vital Passover and Pentecost of the Gospels and Acts, that the obvious connection is too suggestive and apparent to be mistaken. The particular truth under emphasis here is the Church's need of the enduement of power from on high, and the way in which God has met that need. The names of the two men around whom the account turns have a significant meaning: Elijah, who represents the Lord Jesus — 'My God is Jah' or 'Jehovah'; Elisha, who represents the Church — 'Salvation of my God'. Through these two men we are to learn that the salvation which God has provided for the Church is greater than has been portrayed by the other three illustrations.

The almost cryptic statements of this chapter give rise to the same general impression encountered upon reading the Gospel accounts of the closing hours the Lord Jesus spent with His apostles on earth. He was pressing on to the time of His departure from this world, and one of the noticeable things about Him then is the desire He had for

the human companionship of His apostles, especially the chosen three. Yet He knew that He must leave them all. 'Little children', He said, 'whither I go ye cannot come'. We find it to be somewhat like this with Elijah also. As he went on his last journey in company with Elisha, he said, 'Tarry here ... the Lord hath sent me to Bethel' — but Elisha would not tarry at Gilgal.

The Gilgal experience as recounted in the book of Joshua was preparatory to all that followed in the Promised Land, but vital as it is, it does not complete in man the work which God wishes to do for him. In order to live out on earth the eternal life in the Spirit to the very fullest possible degree, a man must also know the enduement of power from on high, the sacred anointing for service. Elisha in his day knew that. In order to follow the successful ministry of Elijah and accomplish all that was still needed in Israel, Elisha knew that he personally needed something more than he already had.

For a long time there had lain deep in his heart an unspoken desire. Later it was to rise to his lips and find confession in the crisis hour beyond Jordan, but as yet it lay unexpressed within him. He knew that beyond what he already had, he needed another spirit, and Elijah's behaviour and words at this time stirred within him the latent desire; it must be now. This, plus the growing determination to have what he desired, drove him on to reply with such vehemence to Elijah, 'As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee'. So off they go together to Bethel; 'the house of God'.

While they were there the sons of the prophets made some very significant remarks to Elisha wherein they likened Elijah's removal from him to the removal of a head from a body. This was no strange news to Elisha, who was equally a prophet with them; he lived so close to his master, that he already knew about it, and had anticipated all they said. He deeply regretted the expected loss of his 'head', but knew it was of no use to attempt to prevent it. Instead, knowing its certainty, he wanted above all to make sure that when that 'head' was removed, the spirit of the head should be retained by and remain in him, 'the body'. More than that, without fail he wanted to receive a double portion of it. That is why the command to tarry at the house of God fell on deaf ears indeed. The sons of the prophets may elect to tarry there and be content with what they had, but that was not his choice. Anyway, Elisha was not a son of a prophet by natural generation — he knew he had been chosen of God, and he intended to go further and ensure to himself the knowledge of 'sonship'. He wanted the double portion of the firstborn as proof of it. What a wonderful example he is to us in this; he truly had things in proper perspective. From this man we may learn many much needed lessons. But for the greatest significance of his historic tenacity of purpose, let us examine some New Testament scriptures.

Following the words quoted above from John's Gospel, the Lord proceeds to speak to the apostles about 'His Father's house', John 14:2. He says that in it there are 'many mansions' or abiding places — halls of residence — places where God dwells eternally. The word here translated 'mansions', is also translated 'abode' lower down in this same chapter, 'We will come and make our abode with him', verse 23. This is one of the most glorious promises the Lord ever made concerning the purposes of the Baptism in the Spirit, and by it He made clear what is 'the double portion' of the firstborn in the New Covenant. The inheritance of those who are the firstborn of God by the Holy Spirit is both the Father and the Son. This constitutes a double portion of

such magnitude that its fulness can never be comprehended nor measured; it cannot be adequately presented, even in the most glorious scriptures deliberately penned for that specific purpose. For instance, Jesus' teaching in this particular section is far greater in import and deeper in meaning than may at first be realized. General ideas concerning the Lord's words in verses 2 and 3 may perhaps be fairly stated as 'the Lord has gone back to heaven where He is now preparing a place for all those who are saved, and one day when His preparations are completed, He will come back again for them. Having received them to Himself, He will install each soul into its heavenly abode, where, in company with all the saved, it will dwell with Him for evermore'. The element of truth in this is very real, and as far as it goes is correct, but it does not go far enough to embrace the greater truth that the Lord is here seeking to fix in our hearts.

What the Lord is really saying here is that the important thing for His disciples to know is that they are part of and therefore have a place in the city which is God's abode for eternity. This is the whole point of regeneration. It is of far greater importance that a man should know he is God's dwelling-place than to know where he himself is going to dwell for ever. The knowledge of the greater wonder swallows up all need for concern about the lesser. When Jesus said, 'I go to prepare a place for you', He did not go immediately home but directly to Calvary. All that He did there was done as preparation for us to follow Him there afterwards. He had to go to the cross and endure death alone first in order that He may prepare it for Peter and all others of us in faith to go there afterwards.

Already there is a Man with the Father; He has gone to Him rising from the earth through death and resurrection. That Man was God on earth, and when He left the Earth and entered heaven, He did so as the one human being in whom God in all completeness had always dwelt. The grace of God to us in regeneration is that we, too, as He (unworthy though we are) may be God's abode(s) on the earth. To ensure that we belong to and are part of the Father's house in that heavenly realm in the eternal future, we must here and now already on the earth be His habitation. If this is not so with us here, we have no ground for entertaining any hope of it happening hereafter. For it to be so then it must be so now. The regenerate and Spirit-filled sons of God are abiding-places or mansions: for that very purpose He infills on the earth those whom He would indwell in eternity, thus assuring them of abiding in Father's House for ever. The glorious truth is that as Father with the Son abides in them now, each is a vital part of His heavenly house, being already one of His mansions or abodes.

Despite the fact that they had been with their Master for over three years, those to whom Jesus spoke at that time did not know Him, consequently they could not understand what He was talking about. It is sadly true that very little of the deepest significance of the Lord's teachings was understood by His apostles while He was yet on earth. Prior to the day of Pentecost, the greatest revelations of God relating to eternity were not given to men. Only God knew the end from the beginning, and He chose to hold back the revelation of His eternal abode until He should enlighten the apostles and prophets of the New Covenant about it all. We must bear in mind that in interpreting scripture, we have first to see the beginning from the end, for it is only by doing so that we can see the end from the beginning. It is quite impossible to interpret typology unless we first know the end to which God is moving, for all is designed to reveal that. We must always remember, when reading the Old Testament, that God

was creating or engineering from His original thought a type of the end which He had in view, prefiguring and foreshadowing eternal things so that all history may conform to and teach one thing.

At Bethel we reach the point where the first hint of the wonderful head / body relationship between Christ and His Church is introduced into the story. The connection is most significant here, for Bethel was a place where many other precious things also occurred. It is the name conferred by Jacob upon the town formerly called Luz, where he dreamed of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven with the angels of God passing up and down upon it. He so revered the spot and cherished the experience, that he called the place 'the House of God'. Erecting and anointing his stony pillow for a memorial, he stood and made vows there unto the Lord. At the time it happened he was a fearful fugitive, fleeing from his brother's wrath. He was a complicated man, but deeper than all else in his heart lay a desire to go to the land of his father to seek a bride. Bethel was for him a place of rest and revelation en route to heart's desire.

Turning to the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ given through John, the prisoner of Patmos, we read of his vision of New Jerusalem, the beautiful Bridal City. It was God's great house of many mansions descending from God out of heaven, the city where He dwells with His Lamb in the midst of His people in the New Creation for ever. Jacob was seeking a bride when fleeing to Syria, and seeking her he came upon the House of God. Jesus said that He came to be about His Father's business; at the same time He was seeking a bride: further still, He declared that He would build the Church which is His body. How wonderfully the whole truth takes shape before our eyes and how closely all is linked in the type as Elijah and Elisha press on to their united baptism.

John shows us His Lord's conception and revelation of New Jerusalem, the city in the heavenlies which is to be the metropolis of the New Creation. Beyond that, the city is also Father's House and the Bride of Christ; more, it is also the Church of the firstborn ones; even more, it is the Father's family, and even more still, it is the Body of Christ. She finally comes down from God out of heaven to be the New Earth(ly) House of God, the Tabernacle of which the Father and the Son are the inner Temple. It is the Royal City, the Temple City, the Priestly City, the Treasure City, the City of Love and Life and Light, the Glory of the New Creation. It far exceeds in beauty Jacob's Bethel or David's Jerusalem, or Solomon's temple, and to be a mansion therein is far greater than possessing all the possessions of the Joshua-type traditions of men, and all else beside.

But Elijah cannot stop at Bethel, and neither will Elisha tarry there, so on they go to the next place appointed of the Lord — Jericho. Possibly to Elisha this was a very puzzling part of the journey. A glance at the map makes it obvious that, except it was the will of the Lord that Elijah should go to Jericho via Bethel, it was the very last way he ought to have gone. Jericho is quite near to Gilgal, a distance of perhaps under five miles as the crow flies, lying south and slightly west across a tributary of Jordan; but Bethel lay about twenty miles almost due west and just a little north of their original starting-point. It was a very long way round indeed, except God had some purpose in it. Elijah was expecting his translation to heaven, so surely he would not have wanted to prolong the journey needlessly. All this must mean that there was

some very real reason why he took this roundabout route to Jericho. Looking further, we see that the way back from Bethel to Jericho lay past, perhaps even through Ai.

This was to be a historic journey indeed, for Ai held great spiritual meaning and emotional memories for the Children of Israel. In the first place this was ground over which Abraham, their early progenitor, had travelled in the beginning when, at the call of God, he had originally entered the Promised Land. On a mountain somewhere between Bethel and Ai, the great man had builded an altar to the Lord and had called on His name. It was the second of a series of altars that Abraham was to build in the land given him by God, and according to the record, marked the spot where for the very first time he called on the Lord. It was a new experience for him in his discovery of God; at that time he was only a beginner, a pilgrim stepping out into the life that later earned him the title 'the father of the faithful'. High upon the mountain, standing there by his altar that day, he could see Ai on one side and Bethel on the other, but he wanted neither of them. They could not attract his permanent attention, for Ai means 'a heap of ruins' and Bethel 'house of God'; but he was looking for a 'city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God'. He preferred therefore to continue living in a tent, rather than accept or live in a city that was anything less than the best or lower than the highest.

On the other hand, at the point of the story before us, Elijah was finishing his course, and Elisha was about to be launched on his. What a wonderful idea it was then to take Elisha over such hallowed ground, for how much could be learned from the life of the great man of faith and his experiences. Then again it was from Jordan to Gilgal, to Jericho, to Ai, that Joshua had led the triumphant army of Israel upon their original invasion and conquest of Canaan. How great this man Abraham is; everything that is of vital worth seems at some point to link up with him somewhere, and not less here than anywhere, for Israel's possession of the Promised Land under Joshua was only possible as a consequence of brave Abraham's lone faith. From him who had been as good as dead sprang the conquering seed that under Joshua came in to possess the land that God had originally promised to Abraham.

Over this ground of sacred memory and victorious faith Elijah led Elisha on their last journey together. Perhaps the absence of conversation from the narrative is intended to suggest that it was in contemplative mood that the two friends made their way to Jericho. Certainly nothing is mentioned of any conversation they might possibly have had; only the way they went, not what they said is recorded. It was as though the master, by taking his servant this long, hard way round, was testing the patience and endurance of Elisha's personal faith and also showing his pupil where the true riches and glories of his inheritance were rooted. Ai was the place where everything was conditionally given to God's people of old, whereas previously at Jericho all was to have been unreservedly God's. It was to Jericho that they were going, but their approach to Ai was in the exact opposite direction from that in which Joshua led the nation generations before. Under Joshua's leadership Israel proceeded from Jericho's resounding victory to Ai's delayed conquest. Whatever Elisha gained from the exercise, this reversal of direction on the part of Elijah seems to have been for the purpose of showing us, if not his companion, that all is sure if first all is the Lord's. It is a reinforcement of the same principle we have already seen concerning the relative importance of the two eternal dwelling-places, God's and man's. God's interests must come first; this perhaps is one of the greatest lessons we can ever learn. Oneness is the great secret of God, and in all life's lessons it is this He is seeking to teach us.

And so to Jericho the two prophets came, the place of total devotion to God, where Israel was tested as to their preparedness for the utter destruction of all flesh, which, so we are told, was exactly the reason for the Flood. At that time God said, 'the end of all flesh is come before me', and He instructed Noah to build an ark in which He would save the one man and family which He found to be righteous. Here, centuries later, we find God developing His plans. Moving on from His original revelation through Noah and his Ark, the Lord subsequently, through Abraham, brought forth for Himself a people in the midst of whom He was going to dwell on the earth. After the passage of centuries, having delivered them from Egypt, He led them in the wilderness and through Jordan into the land by another Ark, with the intention of eliminating all carnality from among them there. This He does by testing, finding, pointing, singling, killing and burning out Achan and his family from the nation, that no flesh should glory in His presence. What an unforgettable lesson this is. Elijah took Elisha to Jericho along this historic route, and if the younger man learned the lesson afforded, the long journey was well worth it.

The name Jericho means 'city of the moon'. Whatever connotations that may have had in Canaanite culture, or whether it meant anything to Elisha, we cannot tell, but there is certainly something here for us to learn. Elijah was the prophet of fire, who during the reigns of several Israelitish kings, had illuminated and dominated the spiritual and national scene like a great burning sun. But his day was ending; he had run his course, and was now going to be removed to his heavenly home so that Elisha should take his place. To be required to follow on in the steps of such a great master would be enough to daunt the heart of any disciple, however privileged he may be. Compared with Elijah, in the eyes of men Elisha must have appeared only some pale moon to a brilliant sun. Elisha's was an unenviable task; it seems that he alone of all the Old Testament prophets was called upon to fill such a role. But although history showed no precedents, he truly determined in his heart that he would be a worthy successor of Elijah; above all he wanted a double portion of the spirit of his master and head.

It had all started on the day when Elijah, in obedience to God's command to anoint Elisha to be prophet in his room, had implemented God's choice by casting his cloak over the man. This had provoked an immediate response in Elisha; his spirit rose to the full implications of the honour done to him and from that day he left all and followed Elijah. He knew somehow that one day the cloak was to be his, but as he followed and served Elijah, beyond the cloak he wanted in every way to reflect his Elijah. So great was his devotion to and admiration for that man, that his one desire was to magnify him, even though only as a moon its sun.

It is an extraordinary fact that this is the only place in scripture where a prophet was called by this method. This is how Elisha knew that he had been specially chosen. He was not anointed in the ordinary way. Beyond that which it signified, he had also been clothed. Beyond being a prophet, he was to be *the* prophet in Elijah's room. We cannot fail to see that in a most remarkable way Elisha typifies the apostles of Jesus of Nazareth. They were not anointed by their Master in the way that prophets are ordinarily anointed. They were prophets, and more than prophets, apostles, yet prior to Pentecost they moved and served as though anointed in a special way, and so they were. They, like Elisha, were called from their occupations and at times temporarily wore and bore their Master's cloak of power, but not until Pentecost did they wear it permanently. They, as Elisha, were cloaked, not anointed. He the Christ was the Anointed, and by His call and within His cloak they functioned until the day it all

became theirs, and they found themselves anointed prophets in Jesus' name. But to proceed with our story!

Whatever the inward feelings of Elijah and Elisha at that time, neither of them could stay at Jericho. The great urge in the soul of Elijah was to go where the Lord sent him, and this was matched in Elisha's heart by the equal determination to go with him all the way; each man was only prepared to accept the inevitable. So when the sons of the prophets repeat to Elisha the already familiar word of knowledge about Elijah's departure, his reply was the same as before, 'I know, hold ye your peace'; Elisha knew that by divine election he was the spiritual heir of this prophet. Consistent with this, his master's repeated 'Tarry' continued to meet with the same uncompromising repetition of the vow, 'As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee'. So the scene is set. In this determination of spirit, each bent upon his own business and watched by fifty men of the sons of the prophets, they together turn their faces toward Jordan and stride out upon the last stage of their journey.

Perhaps Elijah led Elisha to the exact spot where formerly the nation came up out of Jordan into their inheritance; who can tell? It is known that Bethabara, the spot where John baptized, means 'the place of crossing', and perhaps we can hardly afford to miss the force of these implicit ideas. But be that as it may, it is certain that all these tremendous events took place somewhere in the same vicinity; however, the territorial or geographical significance is not the chief factor linking these events together; it is the spiritual link that is so important. It was God who chose the place for Israel's 'baptism' in Canaan, and sent Elijah to Jordan, and at a later date John to Bethabara and Jesus to His baptism there. It is He who wove the events of Israel's history into this pattern. History is His-story, and here in His story of Elijah and Elisha He has chosen to give us a preview of the vital and indispensable endowment of power from on high which came upon those who tarried in the upper room in Jerusalem to be baptized in the Holy Ghost and fire.

The significance of this passage of Jordan is unmistakable. We could not anywhere be told or shown more plainly the relationship between Calvary and Pentecost, or that the power of Pentecost is the power of Calvary. They are identical, as I Corinthians 1:18, 23 and 24 so simply show; the power of Pentecost (Acts 1:8) is the power of the cross and of the Christ crucified. The crucified Christ is the power. Going to the cross, He endued it with power so that it became effectual to Himself and to us, and He is now both Christ crucified and Christ *the* power of God. All the events that took place at that time are to be understood as one, inseparably one, even as this whole incident when considered together with the other three we have examined before, is revealed to bear a part with them of one baptism. Standing at Jordan's brink, Elijah took his mantle in his hand and with it smote the waters. Before their eyes, in a way now familiar to us, at their feet emerged a dry path over unto the further bank. Crossing over the river bed and through the waters together, they continued their journey on the other side, whilst the disrupted river closed its waters behind them again and returned to its former flow. It was over there beyond Jordan that the great miracle of the translation of Elijah to heaven and the transference of his spirit and power to Elisha was to take place.

Relating this to the person of the Lord Jesus, and with a view to deepening our own experience of His grace, we will turn to the New Testament and observe His actions as He drew nearer to His final hours with them before Calvary. All about Him the

multitudes were milling around, busy about their preparations for the national feast, so He withdrew Himself from them in order that His final hours should be given over to the task of trying to make His own understand the importance and power of His death. The importance and power of His life they already knew, or they thought they did. They had openly rebelled against the thought of His assassination, and consistently refused to accept the fact that His death could, in any way, be at all beneficial either to themselves or to mankind. To them His death could not possibly mean anything other than disaster. They had no idea that it was the most vital part of His life work, and to have suggested such a thing to them would have evoked nothing but unbelief.

They did not know that Jesus' consummate act was dying. Rising from the grave was not His greatest miracle, although that may appear so to man. After all, given the fact that He is the Resurrection and the Life, rising from the dead was quite natural to Him once He had entered into death: dying was the greatest thing He ever did. But neither the article of death, nor the expiration of His last breath was the great death. Cessation of physical life was but the moment of release into the first step of His great triumphal procession through the many states of that unseen netherworld. A greater, indeed the greatest death, was His identity with sin: 'He was made sin for us'. To be made that was as death unto Him. To Jesus, death lay primarily in accepting responsibility for the full result of the spiritual condition into which Adam by transgression fell.

The dread of this lay on Him for hours in the Garden, long before He hung on the cross at Calvary, but He finally offered Himself, and His Father accepted Him, as the living sacrifice for sin. This done, on the cross at last God made HIM to be SIN; the life that was lived in the midst of sin without sinning was sacrificed unto Sin and God there. So He hung and continued meekly upon the cross until the Sin-state was terminated. Having accomplished this, He victoriously dismissed His Spirit into His Father's hands, and completed the whole work by dying physically.

Through His self-initiated and self-controlled physical death He signified that He had finished the spiritual death called Sin. Living through death was His greatest miracle. He had to be sacrificed for sin. Jesus did not die under the burden of sin, He lived under it — strangely enough, in His Spirit, over the top of it. It never slew Him, He brought it to death by overcoming it finally on the cross. But this overcoming was not for Himself. He had always overcome sin and Satan and had successfully resisted all contrary appeals to His mere human nature. On the cross He overcame sin for those other than Himself, who had always been overcome by it. But Jesus' disciples could not know any of these great spiritual truths before He died, for they were as yet all locked up in Him. All He could do was to inform them of the facts and try His best to teach them by symbolism and parable the things that He could not make them understand by words only. But let us return to the detail of the story in Kings, and follow it through to the end.

We take up the story at the point where the two men continue their walk together on the other side of the river — turning to his servant, the master asks what he should do for him before he was finally taken away from him. For Elisha the moment had arrived; this was a leading question, and it gave Elisha just the opportunity he was seeking. The request was practically trembling on his lips; it had lain so long in the depths of his admiring heart that without hesitation he voiced the matter; 'Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me'. It was the greatest prayer he knew to pray, but the request was not the easiest thing to grant. 'Thou hast asked a hard thing', Elijah said,

'nevertheless, if thou seest me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so'. With that they lapsed into silence and with this understanding between them continued their walk together, Elijah moving towards his glorification, Elisha concentrating upon the promise. There was nothing else to say or do, the next move was up to God. Suddenly it happened — seemingly from nowhere, Israel's chariot and horses of fire drove straight between them, parting them. This was swiftly followed by a whirlwind which singled out Elijah, encircled him in its powerful embrace and caught him up to heaven. It was almost quicker than the eye could see; he was snatched quickly away from earth and Elisha, and gone in a moment. But confused as he was, Elisha saw him and cried out, 'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof'. He had succeeded! Excited, elated, and triumphant, he established his claim to sonship and favour for the answer to his prayer. Believing with all his heart, in the absolute certainty of faith, he rent his clothes from his back, grasped the mantle which had fallen from Elijah, his head, and returned to Jordan.

The absolute vital certainty of that which took place out there beyond the river is this: it all happened because Elisha was in union with his master in life beyond death. This point is impossible of over-magnification or exaggeration. Elijah, the 'head' of Elisha, had ascended to heaven; Elisha, the 'body' of Elijah, remained behind on earth. The double portion of the spirit now took the place of the 'head' upon it, and the mantle of power clothed it. All had come from the wind and the fire. It is as true a picture of Pentecost as ever any of the prophets saw and presented. Seven things gathered up from the story speak to our hearts of the perfection of God. Jordan (death), Head (Elijah), Body (Elisha), Wind, Fire, Spirit, Mantle. We could require little more than this to speak more plainly or loudly to us of the unity of Calvary and Pentecost, for although these two events are separated by fifty days in time, they are not divided in spiritual reality or in the heart of God, nor can be in the experience of any member of His 'Body'; they are one and must be one in experience.

Standing there beyond Jordan, Elisha needed to do but one more thing in order to establish himself in Israel as the unique and fully authenticated representation of Elijah: he must come back as from the dead. To the astonishment of the sons of the prophets this is exactly what he did. Watching as Elisha walked up to the further bank of Jordan (probably to the spot where he had earlier crossed with Elijah), they saw him grasp the mantle of 'power from on high' in his hand and as Elijah before him, smite the waters flowing at his feet. At the same time he cried out, 'where is the Lord God of Elijah?' and to their amazement they beheld the scurrying waters flee away. Blessed Elisha; he was a transformed man. It all happened for him exactly the same way as it had done for Elijah before him, and he knew in himself that the unspoken answer to his cry was, 'with you, Elisha'.

Elisha came up from the river to the people in the name and power of 'the Lord God of Elijah'. To him, as to us, Jordan had symbolized both death and resurrection and the consequent emergence of the 'new man' clothed with power from on high. He did not come back from Jordan in his own name and spirit and power and clothing, but in another's. In this a twofold thing is accomplished: (a) Elisha links us back with Caleb, who came out of Egypt right into the Promised Land because he had 'another spirit in him'; (b) he also directly carries the continuity of the type of the One Baptism forward as from Caleb, thereby adding to it and delivering it in fuller development and glory

to us who in this day claim to have another Spirit within, even the Spirit of Christ. Elisha came back from Jordan a witness unto Elijah.

It is a remarkable fact, worthy of notice in this connection, that the Lord Jesus Christ never referred to Himself as the 'faithful Witness' and the 'faithful and true Witness' until He was risen from the dead, (Revelation 1:5 and 3:14). This is markedly shown in the first reference, where the statement is linked with 'the first begotten from the dead'; in the second it is directly spoken by the Lord to the angel of the church at Laodicea, 'I am He that liveth and was dead and behold I am alive for evermore', He says, 'Amen'. He is 'THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS', but the Laodiceans were not. The Church was not to Him what Elisha was to Elijah, and He rebuked them and deservedly so. The Lord grants unto His people infinitely greater blessings than Elijah gave to his servant, and if Elisha's experience could so transform him, how much more changed should we be who claim to be baptized with(in) the Holy Spirit. If Elisha 'rose' from Jordan with a new life of power to be a 'witness' unto Elijah, how much more ought those who now claim to be full of resurrection life and power be witnesses unto the Lord Jesus.

Elisha did not hesitate to ask Elijah for the double portion of his spirit; he knew very well what such a request meant. It was a bold claim. As far as we know Elijah, like Jesus, was a bachelor with no children of his own and no earthly possessions to leave anyone. So Elisha's request was a sure testimony to the fact that he believed himself to be the direct spiritual lineal descendant of Elijah. Elisha held a special place in Elijah's affections and he knew it. He was also fully aware that God had given him to Elijah with the strict instruction that he was to be anointed prophet in Elijah's room. Knowing that he was already chosen to highest office, he did not fail to grasp to the full the divine favours being conferred upon him, nor allow false modesty to deter him. Finally being associated with his master in his departure from this world, he laid hold of the opportunity presented to him with both hands. He knew that by appointment of God he had certain rights, and he was determined to receive them. 'My father, my father', he had called after the ascending Elijah.

Elisha knew that he was a son. More, he knew that he was the firstborn son, for without hesitation in his heart, or reproof either from God or Elijah, he claimed the double portion which was the inheritance of the firstborn. Neither false humility, nor lack of faith, nor fear, nor pride, nor sloth withheld him from seeking the favour; all the laws of God governing the right of inheritance were working for and within him. By spiritual heredity, by divine election, by sovereign grace, by the sacred bond of affection and by the desire of his heart he was Elijah's firstborn, indeed his only-begotten, therefore he asked for and received the double portion of Elijah's spirit. Beside this, he also saw and spoke of 'the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof'. It divided between them in preparation for Elijah's home-going, but it touched both of them, Elijah for departure, Elisha for continuance. Elisha knew that he was in the ongoing move of God; the fire had touched him.

The preciousness of it all was that the mantle first cast around him by Elijah was now his by heredity. The temporary had become the permanent. It was the one thing that the master left behind, perhaps the only earthly possession he had, and it was firmly grasped in Elisha's hand. Instead of a visible Elijah as his lord, he had the double portion of Elijah's spirit upon him as his invisible 'head'. The invisible spirit of Elijah had taken the place of the visible Elijah, and being upon Elisha, they were one, as

head and body. So it is with us today, the Spirit and Jesus are one as head upon the body, the Church. There is no difference between them, they are one even as Jesus and the Father are one. Most probably it was in this sense that Elisha understood that Elijah was his 'head', and this being so would explain the pointed vehemence and sensitivity of his reaction over the remark concerning his head in the incident of the boys and the bears. It was an insult to Elijah, his 'head', the spirit of Elijah that was upon him who was now Elijah's body.

Now this experience did not turn Elisha into another Elijah. He never developed the romantic, fiery personality of his head; but reading the subsequent chapters of his life and exploits, we see that for every miracle that Elijah performed, Elisha performed two. The double portion of spirit apparently worked out in twice as many works of power. Perhaps in this we have a guide as to one way of interpreting the verse in John 14, wherein Jesus says to His apostles, 'the works that I do shall ye do also, and greater works than these shall ye do'— 'greater' referring to quantity rather than quality.

Earlier Jesus had made a somewhat similar statement to this concerning His own ministry, saying that He would Himself do greater works than He had already done (John 5:17-21). But He made this entirely contingent upon the will of His Father to show Him to do them; all evidently was dependent upon this principle of revelation — not desire, nor ability, nor power, nor authority, not even the anointing, nor yet love nor faith are sufficient. Although each is important and all must be there, not one or many, or all of these combined are sufficient for the ministry to which the Lord was sent and for which He was given of God. We cannot doubt that as it was with Him, so must it be for His apostles. Therefore, when making this promise to them, He adds to it the qualifying clauses, 'because I go unto my Father, and whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son', and 'if ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it'. It is important to observe that He does not say, 'the works that I have done', but 'the works that I do shall ye do also'. He is speaking of present not past activity; Jesus is still alive today and fully able and willing to do His works.

Two major dangers springing from a common root attend upon desire to fulfil this promise of the Lord; each is as destructive as the other. They are as follows: presumption to take a promise made exclusively to apostles and make it appear to have been given to all church members; and presumption to believe that because the gospels furnish us with a complete spectrum of the works of Jesus, He is expecting these to be done in exactly the same manner today. To fall into the first error is to find presumption akin to pride, as in Lucifer. There are those who may be called present-day apostles; these are not to be considered as being equal to the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Let the Church recognize them, and let them recognize their office and in all humility fulfil their calling, but let us not saddle all the saints with a burden they were not intended to bear, lest we be found deserving the Lord's stern reprimand about 'binding burdens grievous to be borne' upon those for whom they were never intended, without touching them ourselves. Our cry must be 'who and where are the apostles of the present-day Church?' We need them, and the cry must be to both God and man. To God, for He alone can give them, and to men for they must recognize them when they are given. We must re-read our New Testament without prejudice, determined to be free from traditions of men and set denominational interpretation, so that the Lord may guide us into all truth written therein. The Church is built upon the

foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Corner Stone among them.

He is our great Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor and Teacher; indeed all offices and powers and functions and authorities are His. In fact, He is all, being both Head and Body, for they are only one; the body is His being, His fulness. All the many splendours of the person of our Lord are invested in principle and power and prescribed measure, and placed permanently in the Church, which is to perpetuate Him in the earth until it is translated to glory. Therefore, within the company of redeemed and regenerate members of the apostolic Church, the Lord chooses and sets in the body those who in their calling and measure must bear some of the responsibility and privileges of His own apostolic calling. These are the present-day apostles of the churches; that they may not be recognized or called by that name is immaterial, it is the office that is important, and they must function in it as such, or else the churches on earth cannot be built as they ought, nor function as they should.

The modern practice of trying to build upon evangelists, pastors and teachers is an error commonly inherited from forebears who equally erroneously believed that the twelve apostles of the Lamb were the only apostles the Lord ever chose. Whereas, although those twelve held an exclusive place in the Church, the apostles' office and calling did not die with them; on the contrary, upon their death the first apostles only vacated their positions for others to fill them. To say the least, this is only common sense, for commands and promises given exclusively to apostles may only be received and carried out by apostles; for others to attempt to do such things is both presumptive and abortive.

The second presumption is closely allied to the first, and it is the Lord Jesus who shows us the folly of it. We may observe that the blessed Christ, unique and all-glorious though He was, never presumed to know anything as of Himself as a man. To observe His use of the scripture provides us with an object lesson in this. He never read the Bible with a view to discovering a method or pattern to copy. neither did He seek to better the works of the many who had done miracles or shown signs before Him on earth. Instead, He depended utterly upon His Father to show Him what to do, and having accomplished His Father's will, He publicly disclaimed credit for any of the things He did. He accepted full responsibility for His works, but never took credit or glory for them in any degree. Such phrases as 'my Father doeth the works', or 'the words I speak unto you are not mine but His', or 'I must', were often upon His lips. 'When Jesus knew' is also recorded of Him, which plainly allows the inference that He did not know until it was revealed to Him of His Father. Further, a graduation in manifestation of works of power is also observable in His ministry, so that the greatest demonstration of power came at the end of His life; and all this was in order that the glory should be given to the Father. From this we see the truth of what He meant when He said that what He saw the Father do He also did likewise. It is almost as though the Father had first insisted to Him in principle what He later applied to His apostles in the Upper Room, 'the works that I do, Jesus, shall ye do also'.

This is most likely true, for it conforms to that which He expresses in prayer to His Father in John 17:8, 'I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me and they have received them...', having said a few moments before, 'I have finished the works which thou gavest me to do'. Surely one of the truest accusations that could be brought against us as ministers of Christ is that so often we fail to accomplish what

we attempt to do. The world says that it is better to have tried and failed than never to have tried at all, and the degree of wisdom in that saying is beyond question, but if that were God's attitude we should not be saved. If it had been written of Jesus that He tried and failed it would have been in a forgotten book, the scripture of hell. Jesus said, 'the works that I do shall ye do also'. 'I do', He said, not 'I attempt to do'. The spirit that attempts or wants to try is human; God's Spirit always accomplishes what is His will to do. I AM, I WILL, I CAN, I DO, I SHALL, I HAVE DONE — that is God.

The indispensable factor needed by a human spirit indwelt and identified with God's Spirit for the successful accomplishment of His will is unfailing obedience to the original revelation, plus progressive instruction accorded us as we continue in that will. The New Testament gives the infallible revelation of the eternal truth in a general pattern. Within the scope of that must come personal revelation of the same order as that which the Lord Jesus knew. That what Jesus did He will do again, is a safe assumption, but to say 'I will do what Jesus did', however praiseworthy the motive, is presumption. We must learn to say, 'I can of mine own self do nothing'. If all God's children were brave enough to stop moving from calculations based on relationship plus understanding of the Bible, and commenced to live a life based on revelation which develops from communion with Him, failure would be practically eliminated from among us.

Especially is this so when we recall that the Lord Jesus is the firstborn from among the dead, and in grace calls us all to share His fulness and glory. There is a precious word in Hebrews 12:23, which ensures this to us by giving us a glimpse into the grace of God. We are told here that we 'are come to... the Church of the firstborn which are written in heaven'. The word 'firstborn' in this passage does not specifically or exclusively refer to the Lord Jesus, for it is written in the plural and could rightly be translated as 'firstborn ones'. We are not being told here that Jesus is the firstborn and that this Church is His Church; instead God is telling us that the Church is made up of people, every one of whom is a 'firstborn' (son). This, of course, must be so if the Church is His Body, for He is (all of Him) the firstborn. He is not just the firstborn head alone; the firstborn body together with Him the Head, comprises the whole of the firstborn. Therefore the whole Church of Jesus Christ has the right of the firstborn, and in measure ought to be the manifestation of the fulness of the Son, for being given to us, it is given to Him.

When of old Elisha asked of Elijah a double portion of his spirit, he was told by his master that he had asked a hard thing. Elisha was in no way encouraged by Elijah to make such a request — it was not planted in his heart by his 'head'. Rather it seems that Elijah rebuffed his servant and discouraged the idea; certainly according to the record, he made it plain that his spiritual heir was being difficult. But this is not the case with us; on the contrary it is our Head who first sowed in the heart of His own the idea that they should ask for the Holy Ghost. However, He found no response in His servants' hearts to this suggestion. The saying, apparently, was too hard or too big for them to grasp — certainly it was 'new'; no-one else had ever said that it was possible to ask for the Holy Ghost. Throughout Israel's history, the Holy Ghost had been bestowed sovereignly by God's will, not at man's request; no-one had ever asked for the Holy Ghost, so believing their theology rather than Jesus. Though the Lord had instructed them to ask for the Holy Ghost, they never did what He suggested to them and encouraged them to do. It was absolutely necessary that they should have the

Spirit and this the Lord made plain to them, saying that He Himself would ask the Father for the Holy Ghost for them. In this, as usual, He went beyond all Old Testament laws and ideas concerning the firstborn. He promised them so much more than the restrictive commands and promises of the Law could offer, saying, 'at that day we will come unto him and make our abode with him', (John 14:20-23). Pentecost was to be the greatest day of their lives; it was to be the occasion when they entered into their inheritance as sons of God.

In Isaiah's prophecy chapter 9, verse 6, it had been written of the child that was to be born unto us — 'His name shall be called ... the everlasting Father'. Jesus' name includes within it hints of the everlasting fatherhood of God. This is not readily understandable at first, but He was quite conscious of His oneness with His Father, and said 'I and my Father are one'. He is unquestionably the Son of God, and if He be the Son, how can He at the same time be the Father? The answer to this question may be better understood if we examine the practices of ancient Israel concerning sonship and the distribution of wealth in a family.

It was recognized practice among the families of Israel that upon the decease of the father, a double portion of his total wealth was bestowed on the firstborn son; it was his special inheritance. The purpose for this extra gift was that by it he should be able to fulfil his responsibilities to the family left behind, which were as follows:

1. He must care for (be a husband to) the widowed mother if she outlived her husband.
2. He must care for (be a father to) the younger children.
3. He must be (as he already was) a true brother to his brothers and sisters.

In other words, upon the father's death, the firstborn must fill the role or assume the position of the father; he must become the father-figure and fulfil his father's responsibilities to the family. Now it was for this purpose that the double portion was bestowed; it was the enabling or power (Gk. *dunamis*) given him from on high, or from his head. This enabled him in a very practical way to become the head to the body of family members left behind. Although the father was the head of the whole family, it was the firstborn to whom he was the immediate head; he was directly next to him in order of life and authority, and because this was so, could rightly be the continuing 'father', for he was the elder brother. Therefore we see the rightness of the gift, for only by the gift bestowed upon him was he enabled to fulfil the role or office which he held by virtue of his birth. The double portion enabled the firstborn to administer his father's love and bounty as well as to fulfil his father's will. Thereby, as far as was humanly possible, he took his father's place.

Properly understood, this common practice in Israel gives us some guide as to the position that the Lord Jesus held and fulfilled among men. He truly filled and fulfilled the role of the everlasting (age-abiding) Father to men, and especially to the household of faith. Being on earth as the Father's Son, He had within Him the double portion of the firstborn, for both the Father and the Holy Ghost were in Him, as the scripture says, '... in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily'. He was thus able to administer the will of the Father and use the gifts and distribute the bounty of the double portion as any had need, and discharge His responsibility to His Father and to men. Paul tells us that the head of Christ is God; so we see how He represents the head of the family to us, for as He says, 'all that the Father hath is mine'. The Son that

is given has everlastingly become the Father-figure to us, for He eternally disburses Father's bounty to His family. So much then do we learn from the comparison; but by contrast we learn much more. In a manner far superior to that which any earthly heir could or was ever expected to achieve, He excelled all that Moses taught or the Patriarchs before him practised. Moving the whole concept of inheritance onto a higher plane altogether, He told His apostles that on the day the Holy Ghost came, both He and His Father would come as well. We find then that the basic right of God's first-born is a triple portion; Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the whole blessed Trinity of persons, all God.

The Lord is virtually saying, 'We will all come and make you our abode'. The glorious revelation is that by the Holy Ghost the Father dwells in His sons just as He dwells in the Son, and that by the Holy Ghost the sons dwell in the Father as the Son does. That is the miracle of all miracles. The Lord Jesus intends to share with us to the full His own precious heritage and for this He is pleased to call us His brethren. All that He lived and enjoyed of life and power from on high as a man on this earth He intends to share with His Father's family — He really does.

Observing Him, we see that before He was allowed of the Father to go out into His life of ministry, Jesus had to know a personal symbolic death and resurrection. For this, as Elisha before Him, He went to Jordan. There He submitted to John in order that in His day He too might receive the enduement from His Father on high. According to the unbreakable laws of life, under John's hand He was symbolically baptized into death, that it may be seen that only through death could He rise into the newness of the life of public ministry. This was not the same newness of life that comes to us by the putting away of sin, and cleansing from the filth of the flesh. Jesus' baptism in water did not represent the crucifixion, death and burial of His own Old Man and the destruction of the ego of self. He did not need it for that, and neither does any other man; but in order to be the perfect example, He did need the anointing or enduement with power for the new phase of ministry into which he entered. From that time forward He would no more return to the carpenter's bench at Nazareth, or as the 'firstborn' continue to provide for, or supervise the family now fatherless at home, nor would He any longer carry on the same duties or live in the same pattern of good works that He had known and fulfilled from His childhood. He put away His former manner of life so completely, and became such an amazingly 'new person', that when later He returned to His hometown and synagogue, everybody marvelled at Him and could hardly believe the evidence of their own eyes and ears.

Because that which Elisha typified in coming up from Jordan was fulfilled by the Lord Himself in His own life and ministry, it is also exemplified unto us by Him as a basic necessity for all the chosen ones. Elisha was identified with Elijah in death, refusing under any circumstances or pressure to be separated from him, therefore he came back from death with Elijah's spirit and power upon him. So also must it be with the true Church; not that we rely for our authority upon a scriptural type, but upon the pattern set by the Lord. Elisha went from Jordan with power unto a new life of ministry and works, and so must it be with the Church, for Christ crucified is the power of God.

Of old the Children of Israel came up out of Jordan under Joshua to take possession of and dwell in the land where they were to inherit all the promises of God. Therein they were to be taught the art of victorious living. Under their heavenly captain they went

forth conquering and to conquer. From victory unto victory the Lord led His baptized people into possession of lands and cities, fruits and flocks and herds in abundance; they enjoyed a life of constant miracles, marvelling the while at the special works of power wrought for them by their great leader, Joshua. Following him, at his command and by his instruction, they also shared in those miracles, exploiting to the full the situations originally created by his faith and power. So they learned to possess and live in the land that flowed with milk and honey for them.

Likewise today there are many who enjoy the kind of life outlined by that type. They know truest union with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection, and enjoy full victory over all enemies of the soul as they press on to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ. Their soul is a land that flows with milk and honey as the rivers of the Holy Ghost flow through their spirit. The comfort of the sincere milk of the Word and the natural sweetness of honey are their basic soul-states, as those who meet and fellowship or live with them truly prove. They know miracles in their lives and love to recount them, and they are many. Truly they enjoy the fruit of the Spirit in all righteousness and peace, living and dwelling in the Light. Thus far they enjoy the great Baptism in the Spirit; but there is more, far more in this Baptism than as yet they have known. To recognize and accept and enjoy three quarters of the whole, even though it be the greater, or best, or most important part, is manifestly to be one quarter short of that whole. The Baptism set forth in scripture is as four-square as New Jerusalem; it is not just threefold but four-dimensional. In this further picture of the one great Baptism set before us, we are shown the fact and necessity of an enduement of power from on high, beyond putting us in a place where we can possess our own possessions according to the promise of God, this also places power in the sense of authority upon us for the proper preaching and presentation of the Kingdom of God to all people.

The Lord Jesus very clearly said three things concerning the day of Pentecost, which we must unreservedly accept and believe because they came from His sacred lips alone. The first is recorded in John 14:20, and was spoken in the Upper Room; the second is recorded in Luke 24:49, and possibly was spoken in the same room some days later after the Resurrection; the third, perhaps again in that same room some days later still, is recorded in Acts 1:8. These three are vital to our understanding of the mighty thing which God began in that Upper Room on 'that (great) day'. We have no proof, but only reasonable and perhaps sentimental hopes, that the Upper Room that became the Lord's Guest-Chamber for the last Passover meal of the old Order and the first supper of the New Covenant was possibly the same one in which He visited them after His Resurrection and ascension. It is an appealing thought though, for there is a sweet sense of 'rightness' about it, for that Upper Room was chosen by the Lord for Himself and His apostles. It was His provision for them in a hostile city where they would find few, if any other doors open to welcome them. But if He had opened a door for them, no man could shut it, and into it they would surely resort for refuge when the tides of hatred and persecution rose high against them. Then again it was a well-known place to others of the larger band of disciples, who although excluded from it upon the occasion of the Passover feast, must nevertheless have known of its whereabouts. This is proven by the sure arrival there of the two from Emmaus upon their return to Jerusalem in the darkness of the night following the first Easter day. Perhaps more than all this, the inherent unity of the truth of the three 'words' He spoke either sows or else strengthens the idea that the same Upper Room was the place where all the messages were given; perhaps also it was the venue of the

consummating Baptism to which all three messages refer. Whether or not this is true, by those three 'words' the Lord informed these men of what they must expect to happen to them when they were baptized in the Holy Ghost.

The first was concerning inner knowledge of personal integration and union within the Godhead; 'at that day (Pentecost) ye shall know that I am in My Father and ye in me and I in you'. This was the dearest wish in Jesus' heart for them; it is by far the most important thing that takes place in the Baptism in / of / with the Spirit, and is therefore the foremost thing that Jesus mentions in this connection. For this He prayed on the way to Gethsemane, lovingly spending much time and thought upon it, expressing it audibly within the hearing and for the hearts of His chosen ones. It is a great mystery, although not the greatest mystery of all mysteries referred to in the Bible, for God Himself is that. This is surely the next greatest, and for this all other things spoken of as mysteries are and were and had to be; God and man — one; just one; only one; not two, but one. God wanted just that, and because of this, all mysteries other than the greatest have an explanation and a reason.

This is the real reason why Jesus Himself was born, and why He died, and rose again and ascended back to His Father. It was all done that in this process of successive acts and events He should eliminate, destroy or overcome everything that prevented us from being in and one with God. This was the impossible thing, it just could not be; God is God and man is man; in the very nature of things it was quite impossible for God and man to be one. Moreover, in the order of reason and logic, as well as in the nature and practice of philosophy and religion, and in the realms of true propriety and aestheticism, it is utterly improper for such a thought to arise. But Jesus said that on the day of Pentecost, following the Baptism of the Spirit, His disciples would know secret eternal being in the life of God. In certification of this, He said three things which would put the mystery beyond all doubt. Examining the words, it is apparent that they would each know - (1) where He was *primarily*; 'in my Father', (2) where they were *eternally*; 'and ye in me', and (3) where He was simultaneously: 'and I in you'; all was to be one great conscious knowledge. With such words He assured them with mind-baffling matter-of-factness that He would be in them as and when they were in Him, when and where and as He was in the Father. Apparently He regarded the amazing simplicity of it not worthy or necessary of comment or explanation; the truth is the truth and quite impossible of understanding before the event, and even then and thereafter only with the spirit as it becomes personal reality.

One of the surest ways of losing the point and power of truth that is intended to be enjoyed in the present is to relegate it to the future. If in this case we think that the Lord is referring to some future life in 'the hereafter', we shall miss all that He intended us to know and enjoy now. It embraces 'the hereafter' in the sense of future eternity, but only in the same way as Jesus intended it. Whilst He was still on earth He said that He Himself was in the Father and the Father in Him, and this kind of experience and knowledge is to be ours also whilst yet on the earth. Such knowledge is only offered to and can only be known by the inner spiritual consciousness. It cannot be understood until a person is baptized in Spirit, and then only as the carnal mind is forsaken and the mind of the Spirit functions within him. This then is the first thing that was wrought in these disciples at 'that day'. By the Baptism in the Spirit on the day of Pentecost they knew that they were as much part of God as Jesus — not uniquely or as originally as He, but certainly as really as He. Two scriptures, each a word from the inner consciousness of the apostles that wrote them, set forth this very

truth, 'he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit', I Corinthians 6:17, and, 'we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ', 1 John 5:20. No greater knowledge could be granted to man; it is the most amazing grace, the very ultimate of revelation concerning the fundament of eternal life — the Word fulfilled.

The second thing that the Lord assured them would happen was that they would be endued, or clothed, with power from on high. Referring back to the story of the two prophets, we see that to Elisha this aspect of the truth was very real. His cry at Jordan reveals his great heart concern about it, 'where is the God of Elijah?' he said. At the same time he was smiting the waters with the cloak which came down from on high. He placed no faith in the piece of clothing; his action was the spontaneous natural gesture that went with the cry, and he was copying what he had seen Elijah do. It was Elijah's God, not Elijah's cloak, that performed miracles. Elijah was God's Elijah — he had done God's works by God's power; but just because Elijah had gone up to heaven, it surely could not mean that God was quitting the earth also. Bold with faith, Elisha had therefore rent off his own mantle and left it in the wilderness; he would have no further use for it. That cloak was the mantle of Elisha, Elijah's servant, in which he had done all the former works of service relative to that position. Now he discards it, and in its place would wear Elijah's mantle as though he were the son and heir of that great man. From now on it should be his own, not Elijah's — he had no further use for it. The God of Elijah would now clothe Elisha with power as He had done his master and 'father' before him. Elijah being translated and the power being transferred, Elisha was now transformed. Elijah's position was now fully taken by Elisha; thus he became the Elijah figure which was God's figure to Israel. As Elijah before him had used it for his last great miracle, so Elisha now wielded the cloak for his first great miracle; it was all very spectacular. Afterwards, however, Elisha used it as it was originally designed and intended to be used — he wore it. As upon the original occasion it had been cast about him temporarily, so now it had been bequeathed him to wear; in order to do so he needed to discard his own — so this he did. Spectacular use upon special occasion it may have had, but beyond all that it was to become the habit of his life, his ordinary cloak.

It must indeed have been a spectacular sight for the watching sons of the prophets to view. Whether or not they saw the discarded mantle fall to the earth from Elijah's translated body we do not know, but it is certain that they had seen his use of it. And now, as though still in the hands of Elijah, but surely held in the hand of Elisha, it flew through the air with a flourish and fell with power upon Jordan like the voice of the Lord dividing the waters asunder. They did not then know that it was never to be used in the same way again, but it was a wonderful, heartening sight to behold. In the same sovereign power as Elijah before him, it was now God's intention for Elisha to move out over the land, and this he did, for he could; beyond Jordan God had done a mighty and amazing thing to this man. With a double portion of Elijah's spirit within, and Elijah's cloak to clothe him without, he commenced his true life of ministry to the people: Elisha yet Elijah — a true witness to his living head.

It is the latter fact that lies fundamental to the strange, and perhaps somewhat distasteful occurrence earlier referred to, which is recorded in the end of the same chapter. Returning from Jordan via Jericho to Bethel, he was met by a company of children. Perhaps they had seen him earlier when he had gone down the road in company with Elijah a few days before. Now they see this man coming up alone, his dynamic, flamboyant, romantic companion gone. Instead of the hairy Elijah, they saw

this bald-headed assistant coming up the trail clothed in his master's mantle, and they mocked the colourless man. In their eyes he was a man who presumed to wear his master's cloak, but lacked his master's personality. They possibly knew nothing of the Jordan experience and certainly did not know what God had done for Elisha. They had not dared to mock at Elijah, the mighty prophet of Israel; the stories of his works and the power of his words were common among them, so they feared him, but they had no such regard for Elisha. They made the fatal and common mistake of having regard to persons; they had respect unto Elijah and not unto the God of Elijah. But the God of Elijah was also the God of Elisha, so Elisha cursed them for their mockery of God's work in him, and forty-two of them were torn of the she-bears.

The Lord Jesus is of an entirely different Spirit; He has instructed all New Testament prophets to 'love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you'. He teaches all His Father's children 'to be perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect', but Elijah never taught his disciple any such thing. Elisha followed the example of his 'father' and 'head' who had not hesitated in the past to call down fire from heaven upon the heads of his enemies. He was indwelt by a double portion of Elijah's spirit and wore his Elijah's clothing, so he acted in the same vein as that in which he had seen Elijah act in the past, and doubtless would have seen him act again in this situation had he stood in Elisha's shoes, as Elisha stood clothed in his mantle at that moment. Contrary to Elisha and Elijah, our Jesus cited His Father's providential care, and by personal example teaches us that we must make the smiling sunshine of our love to rise on both the evil and the good, Matthew 5:44-48. What Elisha did was undoubtedly right as he saw it under a stern covenant of law, but such will not do today for those who, under a better covenant, are taught by Him who ended the old, to live in grace towards all.

It is not that mockery against the Spirit and power from on high does not deserve the same destructive punishment as that which Elisha meted out of old — it certainly does; but we are simply forbidden by Jesus to act in such manner, and that is sufficient. Beside this, all who are baptized into His body are given a heart to act as He, so that is all they wish to do. Only the thoughts and words and works of the head may be entertained and worked out through the body; there is no other way they can be done, and certainly no other life than His ought to be lived in His own body. Elisha was a representative of Elijah; Elijah's spirit was in him, so he had the fixed attitude of heart and mind to do the works and carry out the identical wishes of his head. It was all correct enough then and should teach us a great lesson. If this man, under the relationship he had with his head, could act in such manner, how much more ought we, who have the Spirit and attitude and thoughts and words and works of our Head within us, be able to do and speak as our Head. There is no more excuse for us acting according to the Elijah / Elisha relationship than there is reason for expecting Elisha to act according to the Christ / Church, Head / Body relationship which we enjoy. We are in a better covenant, based upon better promises; there is no excuse for degeneracy.

Nevertheless, so great are the uses of types, and so many and varied are the lessons to be learned from them, that we may find yet another solemn level of truth lying just below the surface of the incident we are considering. The humble Lord Jesus said that all manner of blasphemies and sins committed or spoken against Him could be forgiven, but that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost never has forgiveness, either in this world or the next. In this story of Elisha and the children we have a dim

foreshadowing of that fact. When those ignorant 'young lads' (margin) mocked the spirit and power of Elijah in Elisha it was fatal, for in a figure Elisha had been baptized in and was full of the Holy Spirit. In a different yet somewhat parallel experience to be found in the New Testament, Ananias and Sapphira also discovered that fatal consequences resulted from their agreement together to deceive the early Church and tempt the Holy Spirit. By such tremendous apostolic judgement as that which was meted out to these two, the early Church was kept pure. Perhaps we shall find that their sin will find forgiveness in the next world; it certainly did not in this. They were cut off before anyone had a chance (even if they had the desire) to plead with them to repent. Summary judgement, approved of God, swiftly executed, removed them from the possibility of setting up a cancer in Christ's body on earth. If they are members of the body of Christ they will be dealt with as such. If they never were such, but total impostors (the text does not support that view), they went swiftly down to their doom. If they blasphemed the Holy Spirit (and again there is no evidence that they did so in the ordinary recognised sense), they are eternally lost, but if not, they will be saved, 'yet so as by fire' (1 Corinthians 3:15).

It is refreshing to find that the precious cloak of Elijah / Elisha was never held or passed on as an object of superstitious veneration. We do not find that the sons of the prophets ever vied or competed with each other to obtain such a prize, nor that Elisha passed it on as an heirloom to some 'son' of the faith, or that anyone in the ministry asked it of him. The mantle was an outward symbol of power, that is all. Elisha put it to a miraculous use, but its prime purpose was to clothe and warm and protect and cover its owner. In a manner similar to this, Jesus says that we are to be clothed with power (Gk. ability) from on high. He did not say that we should be given power in our hands, but that power was to be our clothing, a very different and vastly superior thing. Pride, greed, and misunderstanding often put things to superstitious uses and invest things with improper meanings, causing men to perish in grasping for possessions and positions which they may not be intended to have; but faith perceives all and patiently strengthens itself by gaining knowledge and understanding of the real purposes of God in the one true Baptism. The Lord did not intend that all of us should perform outwardly observable miracles, but He does intend us all to wear that mantle of power.

The first and most important thing a man must know by and about the Baptism is this — that Jesus is in the Father, and that where He is, there he is also; he in Him, and He in him. Already we are in the eternal relationship for which He prayed in John 17, saying, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am'. Paul tells us that we were chosen in Christ before the world began; conscious faith-knowledge of this in a man's spirit will lead on to understanding and experience of the soul's full function in its heavenly calling on earth; the meanwhile he will still be reaching out into the future to attain unto his own high calling of God in Christ Jesus. This can only happen in us as we recognize and consciously unite with our Head in His Baptism into our death, that we also might be associated with Him in His death. That being so, we may stand with Him also where He stood in His Jordan anointing.

The place where the feet of the priests that bore the Ark stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan was clearly marked by Joshua with a cairn of stones as the place of crossing. Centuries later, when by divine appointment John Baptist came to the same river to baptize, he chose Bethabara, 'the house or place of crossing', because there was much water there. It was to this place that Jesus came in order to fulfil all

righteousness and to emerge from the waters unto His anointing into the ministry, for which He was 'the Anointed'. Clothed with power from on high, He went in all the authority of Christhood unto all Israel. Let present-day prophets and their sons stand to view this thing in all its implications, that we all may be found true Sons of God indeed, and not be wasting our time grasping at empty shards or cloaks of power to cover our naked impotence. Let us recognize that power from on high is to be worn by us as the everyday clothing of the Life which the Lord Jesus once promised, and has now provided for all His people.

Because the Lord Jesus has left the earth and gone up on high, we are not to think or act as though God has left the earth. Paul says that 'Christ is God's', but he also says, 'and ye are Christ's'. Elijah was God's, but Elisha was Elijah's, and perhaps it is high time we had in our hearts a similar cry with relation to our Head as Elisha had to his, 'Where is the God of Jesus?' Before His ascension the Lord sent Mary Magdalene to His disciples to tell them that He was ascending to 'my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'. In taking His Son back home, their Father and God was not planning to quit the earth or to withdraw His power from men; He was simply proceeding with the plan which the blessed Trinity had prepared before the foundation of the world, and had now instituted, for the complete salvation of men. Jesus had told them that He must go away. He had to go in order to make way for the Holy Ghost to come, and the next stage of the plan to be introduced. The Holy Ghost would not come until the Lord Jesus went, for man must ask for Him as Jesus had said, Luke 11:13. His word being neglected on that occasion, Jesus had to go Himself and ask for, receive and pour out the promised Holy Ghost for men, that in one great act He should both baptize His disciples in Him and give Him to them at the same time. This was all part of the plan, so having been given the Holy Ghost by the Father, Jesus had the joy of sending Him upon the disciples. This is why, upon rising from the dead and before leaving the earth, He told them to 'tarry in Jerusalem' for the enduement of power from on high, which would be the result of the Father's promise being sent upon them. For this to take place Jesus had to be in heaven, for He has heavenly work to do which is absolutely indispensable to our continued salvation, and because He is doing His heavenly work for us we must be doing His earthly work for Him.

Quite clearly God must still be at work in the earth now, for some of the works which Jesus did while here He had only just commenced, Acts 1:1. Before He died He had already completed much, as He said in John 17:4, but when He died He completed so much more; in fact, all the fundamental work that was needed for our total reconciliation to God. When He arose He had completed even more; and when He ascended He commenced a completely new phase of heavenly ministry, without which we can no more be saved than without Calvary we could be redeemed. But much more had been left unfinished on the earth, and much had not even been initiated, nor could be except man receive the Holy Ghost. So by this heavenly ministry, which He now constantly pursues, we are intended and enabled to continue the works which He purposely left unfinished upon His death, namely evangelizing, pastoring and teaching the world of men. This we are to do, as far as we are able, in His name, and in the same manner, and by the same power by which He did it in His localized ministry to Israel. Precisely because we cannot continue this ministry of the Lord apart from being clothed with power from on high, He returned to heaven and sent the Holy Ghost, for the work can be done only by this blessed Person in us, I Peter 1:12

When Elisha rent off his clothes beyond Jordan, he became thereby basic man. Typically he went through a crisis wherein he the servant was transformed by putting off himself as concerning the former manner or habit of life, and he did it in order to become a son. To use another New Testament scripture, he 'ceased from his own works as God did from His', Hebrews 4:10. Vital as it is that we should claim the death of the Old Man at Calvary, it is also absolutely necessary to put him off as to the clothing, or habit of works we do. Failure to do this is the reason why so many do not put on the new man as regards the kind of life-work they do. Thus, with a certain amount of Calvary's benefits, men commence a life which is clothed with 'own works'. To be sure these are not all the works of the ethically bad flesh, such as are listed in Galatians 5:18-21, so obviously distasteful and obnoxious to the sanctified soul. Being in benefit of the transfixion of the Old Man on the cross by our Lord Jesus, instead of continuing the works of the flesh, they now bring forth the fruit of the Spirit. Basically good and indispensable as this is, there is that which is still better, as we shall find from observing the ways of the Lord God Himself as recorded for us in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. We believe devoutly that the works which God did during the six days of creation were none of them evil, but all good, and at least one of them was very good. But we are told that He ceased from all His good works when He entered into His rest. Works are good; some are very good: but rest is excellence.

We may see this even more plainly shown to us in the person of our Lord Jesus. There can be no doubt that from boyhood onward until He was thirty years of age, Jesus did good works. But from the moment He was anointed in Jordan, He never returned to Nazareth to live His former life and do those former works again. He entered into His rest, a state of ceasing from His own works in order to do His Father's works instead, so that they then became His works. He did not cease from his own Jesus of Nazareth works because they were wrong or wicked, but because He was given some greater works to do by and for His Father and in His Father's name. Jesus Himself was the bodily fruit of the Spirit as outlined in Galatians 5:22 and 23. He embodied these from childhood, and the works that He did were a natural corollary of that fact. Attendance upon worship, prayers, scripture reading, running errands, visiting the sick, maintaining good works for necessary uses, all these and more, with self-denyings and fastings and goings and comings with their attendant virtues and rewards a man may well do, and yet be doing his own works as springing from his new nature by the Spirit, for undoubtedly Jesus of Nazareth also did them.

They are the 'naturals' of the new nature, and the New Testament writers spent much time and space in eulogising them and exhorting their readers not to neglect them, for they must have a very real and proper place in the life of the churches. Yet from the anointing onwards, Jesus ceased from living wholly absorbed in them as being the normal, fixed pattern of His life, and this He did in order that He might give Himself to the works that His Father gave Him to do. This revolutionized His life. Similarly, although not then born again, those disciples who left all and followed Him, working under the delegated authority of His anointing, ceased from their own works, both natural and religious, and did His works. Here then, the new realm of ministry is revealed. We cannot bring our own works into it but must cease from them in order that the new works of God should become the preoccupying fulness of life.

Elisha's former works were good, but he stopped doing them and commenced better works. We sometimes act as though all the good works that a good Jew or a devout humanitarian, or a sincere social worker can do, providing our motives are right and

we have an assurance of salvation, are really Christian works, for we do no better than they, and perhaps no more. To cease from our own good works and do the Lord's works is our privilege. Good self can do so much good; but good Jesus said, 'I can of mine own self do nothing'. His own clothing with power from on high revealed 'this to be an absolutely accurate statement; it also guaranteed the continuance of it as He walked in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

All this leads us on to the third saying of the Lord in connection with the Baptism in the Spirit, Acts 1:8, 'Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me...'. More literally the text reads, 'Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you'. The Lord had said previously that the power was an enduement, or clothing from on high. Clearly then, apart from this enduement, it is totally impossible to be a witness unto Him. These men were already witnesses of the things regarded as the fundamental, historical facts of the faith. Indeed, one of the reasons they were originally chosen to be the apostles of the Lord was that they should personally observe those facts and bear testimony to their accuracy. He as good as said this to them when they accompanied Him on His journey to Gethsemane from the Upper Room, John 15:26 and 27. They had all seen the betrayal in the garden and between them had either directly seen or indirectly heard of all the things that followed upon Judas' terrible deed; they witnessed the trials, the scourgings, the mockings, the dishonouring, the crowning with thorns, the crucifixion, the blood, the dreadful cries, the death, the tomb, the infallible proofs of His Resurrection, and afterwards His ascension; everything. Their knowledge of facts was complete, but their ability to be witnesses to HIMSELF was nil; yet this is the most important thing concerning witnessing.

Understanding the teachings of the Lord aright, we discover by many statements and illustrations that it is more important to be someone than to do something. The first thing to learn is that we must be witnesses unto a Person, and that person indwelling us. After that we may witness unto His works and words by doing and saying the same kind of things that He did and said. Presumably, before these men were baptized in the Spirit they could have gone everywhere telling the historical details of the birth, life, teaching, miracles and death and resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus. They could have attempted to fill the world with books concerning Him, but that was not what He wanted of them. It is quite natural and so perilously easy to impart knowledge of things to others, and yet all the time and thereby be nothing but a witness to oneself. It is tragically true that all too often this is being done, in the mistaken hope or belief that such is gospel preaching, whereas the gospel can only be preached 'with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven' for the purpose.

It is of course the great desire in the heart of God that the gospel should be preached in all the world and to every creature, and that certain signs should follow them that believe, but that is not the first purpose for which the Holy Ghost comes upon people. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit that we all should be witnesses unto Him; each of us must be living, undeniable evidence of Him; proof that He is, and that He is Who and What He is, and that He is with men. This is what He means, therefore, when He insists that we must be witnesses to Him. We must be the kind of people He would accept and choose if He were seeking someone infallibly to show others that He is the living true God and Saviour of mankind. Primarily His evidence to the world is not phenomena or facts, but people; neither is it past history, but present life. This obviously follows

from the first thing He said in the Upper Room concerning the coming of the Spirit. It is a logical outcome of the knowledge of union within God.

Nature itself can teach us lessons along this line. Learning from the world around, we may observe that a degree of identity is often achieved in nature as a result of union between two living organisms. Much more in the realm of the Spirit, things that are impossible in the natural order by reason of their very naturalness can be quite easily achieved. The degree of identity as a result of union in the spiritual realm is so profound, so far exceeding anything in nature, that the apostle Paul could write such verses as Galatians 2:20, 1:15, 16 and 4:14, and be found speaking the truth. He was a man Jesus Christ chose, equipped and ordained as a witness unto Himself. Receiving the Holy Ghost three days after his meeting with, and conversion unto Jesus Christ, he was simultaneously born again and filled with the Spirit to become a chosen vessel unto the Lord Jesus. So real was this to both the Lord and Paul, that the new human vessel could immediately bear Jesus' name before and to men. That is the degree to which he and the Lord became one. He was that kind of witness unto the Lord Jesus; he spoke His words, did His works and bore His name. The fulness of the Spirit alone makes all this possible in a man, and it is marvellous beyond degree.

There is much confused thinking about this Baptism. Many think it is only an enduement with power for service, but neither the Lord Jesus nor any other person in scripture says it is. Indeed, on the contrary, all the apostles who were with the Lord Jesus while He was on earth had already received both power and authority from Him, and had been serving their Master and men with miracles many months before they were baptized in the Spirit. We see therefore that the scriptures themselves show, that power for service can neither be the real nor the most important reason for this Baptism. This is not to say that anyone should attempt to serve God before he is baptized in the Spirit, for that is as impossible as thinking that an unborn child is capable of service. To try to do such a thing is as wrong as believing that the prime and directly stated purpose for the Baptism is service. The presence of the person of the Lord Jesus Himself, on the earth with those men of old, was imputed to them then as supplying all that the Anointing of the Spirit supplies to men now.

Again, many think that this Baptism is only in order that men may exercise a ministry of the miraculous not otherwise possible. But not only had the apostles cast out devils, and healed the sick, and cleansed lepers long before Calvary or Pentecost, so also had the seventy others, who because of the pressure of work the Lord appointed to service during His lifetime. Perhaps all these were there in the house on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost was first shed abroad. It is a nice surmise; but be that as it may, it is certain that to all who were there the Baptism in the Spirit had to mean something much more than an ability or empowering to perform miracles, for this, many if not most of them could already do. However, privileged as they had been, in doing such things they had not been witnesses to Him as He wished them to be. This the crucifixion proved beyond doubt, for betrayal, denial, cowardice and unbelief caused them all to forsake Him as He was led away like a lamb to the slaughter. One solitary figure, He witnessed entirely alone to Himself; they all together witnessed to themselves; so great was the difference.

The Greek word 'witness' means 'martyr', and at that time none of the apostles were willing to be apprehended, tried and crucified with Him. Despite the affirmations they all made to Peter's plainly spoken words, 'If I should die with thee I will not deny thee

in anywise', they had no heart for it. None of them as yet had the martyr spirit, or power to fulfil their pious hopes, so their statements were quite valueless, well-intentioned though they all were. The Lord Jesus was one lone, true and faithful Witness on earth; at that time they were not witnesses, although they were disciples. The martyr / witness spirit is born in a man when he is born of the Spirit, and this they did not then know. At times during His ministry the Lord did and said things that showed the spiritual source from which all His works and words flowed. One such occasion was the incident that took place in Gethsemane, when they came with lanterns and staves to apprehend Him, Jesus asked them, 'Whom seek ye?' They answered Him, 'Jesus of Nazareth'. In answer He simply said, 'I am', and they all went backwards and fell to the ground. Such was the impact of eternal truth upon them. He only told them who He was and is and ever shall be; He was simply being the faithful and true Witness to them, that is all; from this example we learn that witnessing is primarily a matter of being, not of doing.

However, we must not lose sight of the fact that there is an empowering or authorization for service other than and distinct from the Baptism in the Spirit, but under no circumstances must this be confused with it. It is less than it, and we should be deceived as well as foolish indeed to be satisfied with it as a substitute for the Baptism, good and right though it is. The Baptism in the Spirit is for life, not service. That it is with a view to service is true, but it is as utterly superior to it as the Earth is superior to the buildings built upon it. The importance of noting the difference between the two is brought out by the Lord's own statement in Matthew 7:21-23, wherein He is quoted as saying to miracle-workers who claimed to be doing their works in Jesus' name, 'depart from me, I never knew you'. The word 'know' here does not refer to intellectual knowledge, but to knowledge gained by union and identity with another spirit. The Lord is making clear to us that likeness of works does not mean identity of spirit; that is accomplished by the Baptism alone.

Paul's remarkable statement in 1 Corinthians 15:10 draws our wondering attention to this man's simple testimony to the same truth. His language concerning himself is almost exactly identical with the words that God uses concerning Himself in Exodus 3:14. Identifying Himself to Moses, God says of Himself, 'I am that I am'; and Paul, using language almost exactly the same as God's, says of himself, 'I am what I am'. Only the change of one letter marks the difference between God and man, between infinity and finiteness; but by the comparison we learn that Paul was as conscious of eternal being as God: God, because He is God, and Paul because God is God, and the grace of God which had made Paul what he was. This is the greatest function of the grace of God — by it He makes a person conscious of being alive with the identical life of Jesus Christ.

This then is the prime factor of witness; it provides indestructible proof and irrefutable evidence that the testimony already given is absolutely true. Jesus of Nazareth made the original testimony; He claimed that He was the Son of God, and for that unswerving testimony to truth the Jews insisted that He must be crucified. When He stood before the Sanhedrin the high priest asked Him, 'Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' and Jesus said, 'I am, and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power ...' That settled it; so saying He sealed His doom. He died because He was the faithful and true Witness, the I AM, the Son of God. It is to give further evidence to this that all the true witnesses are raised up in every generation. But before each witness can be living proof that Jesus Christ is Lord and God, he

must be able to say of himself, 'I am a son of God'; more, he must also be able to demonstrate that fact or his evidence will not be believed. For this he will need to know the fulness of the Baptism — he must speak the words and do the works as well as live the life. At any time to any man Jesus Christ should be able to say of every one of God's children, 'this is My witness; I produce this person; he is My undeniable evidence; he proves that I AM'. This is just what we see in the Acts of the Apostles. The early Church comprised such men and women. Each of them was such a personal witness to Jesus Christ that collectively they were the faithful, true and living witness that Jesus Christ is, and that He is God, and that His claims are genuine.

In order to be the true Church, the Church must be the revelation of Jesus Christ; the justification of His claims, the incarnation of His Spirit, the idealization of His desires, the expression of His mind, the perfection of His love, the glorification of His suffering, the manifestation of His presence, the demonstration of His ability, the realization of His hopes, the consummation of His being; and all this by identification with Himself. Such is the purpose and power of grace. It is recorded in Hebrews 2:9 and 10 that the Lord Jesus is the Leader of the file of many witness-sons He is bringing to glory.

So far as we are able to tell, the next son that went to glory following the Lord Jesus was the martyr / witness Stephen. His death is not the first death to be recorded in the Acts of the Apostles following Calvary. Before him Ananias and Sapphira had gone to their death, their hearts filled by Satan; excised from the Vine because they bore no fruit; 'men gathered them up', carried them out and buried them. But Stephen, a man full of the Holy Ghost and faith, standing under trial with his face shining like an angel, speaks first of the glory of God that appeared to Abraham, and lastly of Jesus whom he saw in an open heaven, standing on the right hand of the throne of God, rising to meet him, greet him, welcome him home. In every possible way Stephen was a witness to Jesus Christ.

Of course, being a witness involves much more than having just sufficient life to enable us to live. Jesus Christ did more than just live. What He did and said was important also. His life was as virtuous when He was twenty as it was when at thirty He presented Himself to be baptized in Jordan, and it was only because of this that the event took place as planned by His Father. He was conscious of this, and told John quite plainly that He had come to him to fulfil all righteousness — that is, so that both past and future righteousness should be fulfilled. Because of this He earned and received His Father's public commendation, and was anointed and sealed under His Father's loving approval, 'Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased'. Thirty years of living unto Father's good pleasure were followed by some three years of pouring out the blessing bestowed upon Him as a result of such well-pleasing. The power (Gk. 'dunamis' = ability) to live had been innate since His birth, hence His claim — I AM ... the LIFE. So when the authority (Gk. 'exousia') of Christhood came upon Him at Jordan, He naturally ministered in all power and authority as a result. What years of outpouring they were; the whole country was reached and stirred and challenged by the witness of one single life.

Truly, as Isaiah 55:4 says, He was given for a witness, firstly to God and then to men; and so must we be. As the Children of Israel of old were Jehovah's witnesses (Isaiah 43:8-13), so are we now to be Jesus' witnesses. Jehovah claimed the entire nation of Israel as His witness to the fact that He is, and was, and ever shall be God. So does

Jesus claim the Spirit-baptized ones as witnesses that He is, and was, and ever shall be God. It is sadly true that Israel failed in their witness, but whether they failed or succeeded made no difference — in their day they were still the infallible proof that God is. No less than they, and even though we too fail, which God forbid, the true Church of Jesus Christ is the evidence He advances to the world in proof of His eternal being. We should not fail; there is no excuse.

The Church of Jesus Christ is so much more blessed, and has so many more advantages than Israel, that comparison between them must give way to contrast as the two peoples are viewed in the light of scripture. For which of the pictorial events called baptism through which Israel was led could do more than typify the mighty Baptism wherewith we are baptized? And what of Elisha, in whose experience both the watery and fiery 'baptism' and consequent enduement with power from on high combined? Did any of these thereby know identity with the person of Jesus Christ and inclusion in His body? No, not one; reference to Luke 9: 51-56 gives a clear insight into that fact. Reading these verses, we find that James and John wanted to act like Elijah and call down fire from heaven to destroy the Christ-rejecting Samaritans, but the Lord summarily rebuked them: 'ye know not what spirit ye are of', He said. To do what they wanted to do would have been quite contrary to the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

As we have seen before, Elisha had found it quite possible and desirable to have two she-bears come out of a wood and maul a whole company of children, who suffered for no greater crime than that they cried, 'Go up thou baldhead'. The reason he found it so easy to will and to do such a thing is not hard to find. He was the direct spiritual lineal descendant of a man who called down fire from heaven to destroy people; he therefore found no difficulty in acting in that same spirit; it was the spirit of that age under that Covenant. Had he been baptized into the body of Christ, he could not have done what he did; he was of the ascended Elijah's spirit, so he just continued Elijah's works and will; and upon the occasion of which Luke writes, so also were the apostles. Because they were not yet baptized in the Spirit, they were not of Jesus' Spirit, although they were Jesus' chosen apostles. They were functioning by Christ's anointing, but because as yet they were not of His Baptism and not therefore baptized into His body, they were not of His Spirit. To be of His Body and His Spirit, a man must be baptized with His Baptism.

Although the apostles had responded to the call of the Lord and were learning of the New Covenant, as yet its deepest secrets were not revealed to them; spiritually they still belonged to the Old. The Baptism in the Spirit entirely changed this, for by it they were initiated into and integrated with the Spiritual Man, Christ Jesus. By this one and the same Baptism are we all, with them, baptized into One Body, in order that we may be united and unified into one Man. When we all alike live His life, that is, speak His words and do His works, and display His disposition and attitudes towards the needs of all men, the world will know and believe that the Father hath sent the Son. This then is the essential reason for which the Baptism in the Spirit was instituted; it is the only ground and hope that we shall ever be like Jesus, because it is the method chosen by God to accomplish this.

Baptism in water is not the One Baptism, but has a special relationship to it as an illustration, and has the function of a photograph or a print or a diagram inserted in the text of a book. Some books would be as complete without such things as with them; their inclusion has interest value to either the author or the reader, but they are

not vital to the proper understanding of the book, whilst others make a more vital contribution to the message which the author has to communicate and are included for that purpose. Nevertheless they are but illustrations, serving an end, deemed advisable or necessary by the author for a clearer understanding of the whole, but these must not be mistaken for the main thing. They do but serve to focus the mind more readily upon some important details as the message proper is being propounded.

Such then is water baptism. It is an illustration to the onlooker, and more so to the participator and the demonstrator. By striking words in Mark 16:16, it is enjoined by Jesus upon every one that believeth; it is commanded by Peter in Acts 10:48, and practised by the entire church. Paul expounded its true significance in Romans 6, and placed it in its proper perspective in I Corinthians 1:14-17. Philosophy, sophistry and sentiment may invest it with meanings and significance not plainly stated in the scriptures, and valuable only to those who practise ritual baptism according to their religious system. These all may be disregarded without loss.

The Lord Jesus Himself doubtless gave to water baptism its chief virtue when He said to John Baptist, 'Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness'. The act must be included in the sum total of perfection which earned high commendation from His Father — '... in thee I am well pleased'. To Him John's baptism was obviously not the One Baptism, else He would not have instituted another. The Jordan episode was an illustration of the true Baptism to which He was moving all the time as the goal, the fixed necessity for Him. He gave full expression to it later, 'I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened till it be accomplished', which word, in order to be properly understood, must be read in conjunction with His cry in John 12:23-28, 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit ... for this cause came I unto this hour'. Jesus was 'alone' and 'straitened', and unless He had fallen into the ground and died — been baptized with that Baptism of which He spoke — He would have remained 'straitened' and 'alone' for ever. Calvary and the subsequent events up until Pentecost held for Jesus a threefold meaning of fulfilment not normally recognized:

1. In relationship to Moses and the Red Sea; it was the type of His exodus which He accomplished at Jerusalem, Luke 9:31.
2. In relationship to Joshua and Jordan; it was the occasion of His entrance into His glory — 'His inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away', Luke 24:26, John 17:5, 1 Peter 1:4.
3. In relationship to Elisha and Jordan; it was the period of His receiving 'from the Father the promise of the Spirit' and the shedding forth of 'this which ye now see and hear', Acts 2:33.

Jesus' Baptism therefore supersedes and substitutes John's baptism.

No-one is baptized with John's baptism now; it ceased officially on the day he was arrested and put in prison. He had some disciples who sought to continue it, but Paul adequately dealt with the error at Ephesus. To invest water baptism with the title 'John's baptism' is to confess to total misunderstanding and misinterpretation of scripture. For those who have eyes to see it, Jesus' baptism by John invested John's baptism with an entirely new meaning. For those who will receive it, it typified the fulfilment of the word in Micah 7:19, 'thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea', so before stepping into Jordan to fulfil all righteousness, the Lord was

nominated 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world'. Therefore, leaving Jordan, the Lord terminated John's ministry, for it was fulfilled. Its purpose was to make Jesus manifest to Israel as the Baptizer in the Spirit. So the next thing we find is that Jesus is baptizing and that all the people are going to Him and not to John; and gradually John, with his important though inferior baptism, is eclipsed and then eliminated from the scene, while Jesus hands over water baptism to His disciples (John 3:22-26, 4:1-2), who now baptize in His name. John's baptism was thus ended.

It is totally impossible to baptize with John's baptism today, and it is quite untrue to suggest that one can do so. Moreover, it is patently obvious that no-one administers or receives such baptism, for where now does anyone confess their sins in and over the waters into which he or she is shortly to be plunged? It is invidious and totally misleading to seek to clarify the difference between present-day water baptism and Baptism in the Spirit by calling the former 'John's baptism'. All baptism in water today must be done in the name of Jesus, but lest a misinterpretation be placed upon this plainly commanded practice, it must be understood that everything else that is done by the true minister of Jesus Christ must be done in that same name also; baptism in water is just part of the whole ministry, that is all. During His ministry on earth His disciples baptized people in water in His name, that is in His stead, for that was all they could then do. Until His death and resurrection He could not command them to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. But following the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, they were to baptize in a name they never knew until then, for it had never been spoken before. This is one of the reasons why they were not allowed after Calvary to go and preach and baptize until they themselves were baptized in the Holy Ghost. Until Pentecost they could not do other than baptize in the name of Jesus only. It could not be done in the name of John, or of the Father, or of the Holy Ghost; it could only be in the one name they knew — Jesus.

Of course Jesus knew that baptism in water was not 'that' Baptism; almost certainly this is the reason why He handed over water baptism to His disciples. To have administered it Himself would have unavoidably confused men's minds, so He made a clear distinction between the greater and the lesser thing. He was going to baptize 'with the Holy Ghost and fire', but in order to do this He had Himself to be baptized first. Until this was accomplished He could not enlarge or expand beyond His straitened natural body into His spiritual Body of many human-being members. He would have been one lonely, lovely figure in the whole of history; the loveliest but the loneliest. His baptism into death and all that it entailed for Him was the only way for Him and for us. What God wanted could not have been accomplished without it. We sometimes forget that as well as being a historical act, Calvary is an eternal spiritual fact — or at least we seem mostly to act and preach as though it was only the former.

The only way to enter death is to be baptized into it. The experience of dying plunges us into the state or condition of death; it is a baptism. Paul tells us this in Romans 6:4. And Jesus says quite plainly in Mark 10:38 and 39 that it is possible and for some quite certain that they shall be baptized with His Baptism. Therefore Paul again says in Romans 6:3, that to be baptized into Jesus Christ we must be baptized into His death. In the Spirit the death of Jesus is now, here, real and powerful as ever, (paradoxically enough) living, existing in the Spirit. What He accomplished in death is forever and must be so, because the only way into the Body of Jesus Christ is by baptism into His death, of which baptism into water is a symbol. Beyond symbolizing the remission and washing away of sins (Acts 2:38 and 22:16), it now represents the

open tomb of Jesus Christ, into which the believer is buried and through which he rises into newness of life, and total spiritual regeneration.

As Paul says in Romans 6:7, 'he that is dead is justified (Gk.) from sin'; There is no ground for believing that anyone else is. Regeneration of a spirit is into life in the Body of Jesus Christ. This is perfectly consistent with the whole tenor of revealed truth. Surely all our regeneration-salvation consists less in what the Lord Jesus did for us than in what He is in Himself, what He was made for us, and is become to us, and shares with us. Of course, He had to do the many and great things for us that no-one else could do, for only by these gracious deeds could we be saved. His substitutionary and vicarious works have probably never been fully told or enumerated; but He Himself is altogether superior to His works as the craftsman is to his craft, or the artist to his art, or the builder to his building, the creator to his creation, the saviour to his work of salvation, and the lover to his love.

Having in some measure examined the truth revealed in these scriptural illustrations of the One Baptism, we will seek to relate and combine into a whole the teaching elicited from them, that seeing God's provision, we may each boldly seek Him, that our own spiritual experience may be adjusted thereto. There is not the slightest reason on God's side why any one of His children need come short of the glory of God, for He intends all His children to be included into His own conscious knowledge of eternal life. Being integrated into Christ's body, we must be partakers of His fulness.

Many believers today are only partially experiencing the Lord's blessings. They could and should be enjoying all the fulness of the blessing of the gospel, but because of restricted faith or incomplete ministry of the word to them, or limited believing, or perhaps sheer ignorance, the fulness of blessing is unknown to them. Without pressing the point beyond credibility or formalizing anything, such partial or restricted or limited or incomplete experience may be described as being but a quarter, or a half, or three quarters of the whole truth as outlined in the foregoing pages. The majority know only what is typified by the story of the Flood; a comparative minority live in the enjoyment of the spiritual counterpart of the Passover and Red Sea crossing; fewer still have any experimental knowledge of the truth typified by the passage of Jordan under Joshua, while comparatively very few indeed have any real personal experience of what is pictured for us in the events that surround the translation of Elijah. Finally it must be sadly confessed that it is a very small minority who live in and enjoy that which is set forth by the whole. But it is folly indeed to be satisfied with one or two, or even three parts of the whole, when the complete salvation of God is proffered to us.

This salvation includes:

1. Safety in Christ from final and eternal judgement, as typified by Noah and the ark.
2. Utter deliverance from the devil and his hosts in this present evil world, as illustrated by the passage of the Red Sea.
3. The destruction of the Old Man, Adam, unto complete possession of the soul in Christ-likeness, which is shown by the crossing of Jordan.
4. The enduement of power from on high in order that we may be witnesses unto Jesus Christ, of which the incident concerning Elijah and Elisha is the illustration.

In order of revelation we may see that salvation is from:

- I. Death, hell and judgement for sin.

2. The world and the devil and all his hosts.
3. The flesh with all its works.
4. Self and all its impotence.

Being thus delivered as God intends us to be, we may then be true witnesses unto another who, while on this earth, was not of this world; whose Father was God, so that He was God manifest in the flesh; a life-giving Spirit who overcame the devil and said, 'I can of mine own self do nothing'. He was the last Adam, the second man, in whose image many sons have since been begotten by God the Father.

Lamentably enough, because of great ignorance and much misunderstanding, many who otherwise would have realized and entered into the whole truth of this Baptism have been prevented from doing so. Instead they have tried to make the most of an uneasy rest in one or even two or three parts of the whole. The clear testimony of scripture is that God is wanting many sons just like Jesus, whose greatest work is not just to change wicked, hell-deserving sinners into inhabitants of heaven in order to prevent their eternal destruction, but to make us new creatures, sons of God whilst here on earth. It is what Jesus Christ did for me as me, and that He lives for me as me, that is my chief joy and greatest glory. He in me, and I in Him in God, and God in Him in me; this is God's aim and stated desire, it is the terminal point in scripture revelation.

Chapter Five - THERE IS ONE BAPTISM

It is widely believed and specifically stated by some that there are three baptisms, one in water and two in the Spirit. One of these is said to be a baptism into the body of Christ and the other the baptism which is an empowering for service. Still others think that there is a baptism of fire extra to the Baptism in the Spirit; while some speak of a baptism of love beyond the Baptism in the Spirit. Adding up the possibilities mentioned, it would seem that if all this is true, there may be five baptisms. Now if that is what God means by the phrase 'one baptism', it is not what He says, which is an alarming thing. If indeed it is true, He is acting completely out of character. Worse still, He is forcing His apostle to do the same. Since such a possibility borders on blasphemy, we must reject it out of hand.

When writing to these Ephesians, of all people on the subject of baptism, Paul had for many reasons to be most meticulously careful. He had administered water baptism to the foundation members of the church there, but before that they had also been immersed in water by Apollos, a minister of the Old Covenant. It is therefore of major significance, as well as being singularly opportune, that it was to them he should speak of there being only one baptism. It is as though he is saying that he considers water baptism not to be worthy of mention, and by comparison neither is it; they knew exactly what he meant. When speaking of one baptism, Paul was not referring directly to either of the occasions when they were dipped in water. The first occasion, although it had been administered and received in all sincerity, had been a total mistake. The second was only valid because by water baptism a visual enactment of the One Baptism is presented to the senses.

In these verses Paul is setting forth seven statements, which find place in this list solely by virtue of the fact that there is only one of each. Therefore to single out one of them and pluralize it is at least an arbitrary practice; especially is this so if it be allowed or argued that each of the other six must retain singularity. To do this sort of

thing would be confusing and dishonest. The whole point of the matter is that none of the things or persons mentioned in this list would have been included in it had there been more than one of any of them. Each of them is not just one, but the only one. Had the possibility existed that there could have been more than one of any of them, it would not have been included. Each thing or person mentioned in it is exclusively one. Upon reflection, we must surely conclude that God has compiled this list quite purposely. The implicit reason for including the phrase 'One Baptism' in this section is that we should plainly infer and wholeheartedly believe that there is *only One Baptism*. There it stands, an integral part of a sevenfold body of truth which stands or falls together. If we attempt to qualify one part of it, we must in all honesty qualify all.

The people to whom this statement was originally made were 'the saints which are at Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus'. Quite noticeably he does not address it to the church at Ephesus, but to the saints there. That is exactly the same thing of course, but his choice of phrase is not casual but careful and significant. The age-abiding message of the book is for 'the Church which is His body' (1:23); a company including 'the saints at Ephesus', but far greater than they. Paul writes for the whole Church in every place throughout all time, so he does not say anything to the Ephesians that could possibly be construed to have only local meaning. The man's utter consistency is not only to be found in the actual words he writes, but also in the very structure of the truth he imparts.

To these people he is entrusting revelation which is for the whole Church of Jesus Christ on earth, and only for that body. It is written exclusively for those who are included in and described as 'us'— verses 3, 4, 5, 6, etc. There are those to whom this writing does not directly apply. Some of these may find Paul's writings very instructive, but that is quite secondary to the point he is making. Nothing in the New Testament is primarily for 'the man in the street'; all is for the Church. Immediately then we are made aware of an 'us' and 'them' position, and since this has been deliberately created by God, it is vital that we accept it.

This position is brought out straightforwardly in 1 Corinthians 8.4-6, where the apostle puts it in the plainest language: 'we know that ... there is none other God but One. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many and lords many) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him'. This is very clear, and supplies a clue to the proper understanding of the fuller Ephesian statement.

The observation is not made by Paul, any more than it is cited here, in defence of the fact that there is only one God. It is obvious that the Corinthians already knew and accepted the fundamental truth he stated, for he says quite plainly, 'we know that there is none other God but one'. He is deliberately establishing the 'us and them' position though, and he can do no other because it has been distinctly and unavoidably created by God Himself.

Taking up this greatest of all Bible themes, we may use it as the key to our understanding of the whole matter. Investigating the Book we find it records the names of many gods; to mention but a few, Tammuz, Baal, Remphan, Moloch, Dagon. In addition to these, the Lord Jesus Himself more than once when referring to

satan called him the prince of this world. Paul goes even further, calling him the god of this age. Now this god has personal being; he really exists, and is worshipped by some; to them he is god, but we know that neither he nor any of the above-mentioned is the one true God. The devil's claims mean nothing to us, and each of the others is entirely false. They are, or were at some time or other, worshipped as though they were that one and only true God, but that did not make them so. Satan was the only god among them who had actual personal being. All the others, being man-made, had no existence at all except in fantasy. Who then would entertain the thought or propagate the lie that there are five Gods?

Further to this, would anyone say that there are three or four Bodies, or Fathers, or Callings, or Spirits, or Faiths, or Lords? If any would state that there is not more than one Father, we need only cite Jesus' statement 'ye are of your father the devil' or Paul's 'we have had fathers of our flesh', or 'not many fathers'. This allows that there are four fathers, three spiritual and one natural. So the point may be made that Paul is speaking of the Father as being one of many classes of father. However, what he is really doing is speaking to those who love the truth for the truth's sake, who have spiritual understanding and whose eyes have been opened. To them there is one God and Father. To some he may speak of many fathers, but here he is speaking to those whom he addresses with the exclusive pronoun 'us'. We do not allow that there is more than one Father. People who live in the heavenlies know no other.

Now this Corinthian passage only deals with and confirms one of the seven statements made to the Ephesians. We may find it greatly helpful therefore if we reverently adapt and rephrase its thought forms to suit our subject: 'though there be that are called baptisms ... on earth (as there be baptisms or ritual washings many), but to us there is but one baptism, the Regenerating, in which are all things and we by it'. As to 'us' there is only one God, so also to us there is but One Baptism. True, there are many experiences on earth called baptism, and we shall be examining some of them, but for the Church which is His Body there is only one that may be properly called 'the Baptism'. We acknowledge freely that there are things or beings called 'god'; we also know that there are experiences called 'baptism', but for the Church which is His body there are no more baptisms than one, even as there are no more Spirits, or Lords, or Fathers than One.

We who are the Church, being members of the 'us' company, acknowledge no plurality in any of the things listed in Ephesians 4. There may be plurality in many other things, but not in these. Indeed, we read in chapter 1 verse 3, that there are multiplicities of blessings in the heavenly places for us, but there are not multiplicities of any of the things mentioned in this list. These are described as 'the unity of the Spirit' which we have 'to keep' (Gk. 'watch', 'preserve'). God put them together, so we must watch that no one filches them from us; they are one whole, unique in scripture. Their importance cannot possibly be over-emphasized; there is no such list to be found anywhere else in the New Testament — it is not even repeated. It holds the place in the New Testament which the ten commandments hold in the Old Testament. But it is far superior, for following its original inscription, first by God and then by Moses, the Decalogue finds occasional repetition, but not so this testimony; it is once given.

Those ten commandments, written on two tables of stone and given to Israel by God, were the foundation-stone of spiritual and social life under the Old Covenant. They

were to be the basis of God's new civilization, and the Children of Israel were commanded to keep them as a whole; the Law was their life. Though written on two tablets of stone, the ten commandments were an acknowledged unity; so much so indeed, that they were called 'the Law', not 'the laws'. In a somewhat similar way these seven 'words' from God form a perfect declaration of basic spiritual life for the Church. We too must keep our revelation as a whole, for in a far greater degree with us than with them, it literally is our eternal life. Paul calls it 'the Unity of the Spirit'; it is most precisely that.

James in his epistle sternly tells us that to offend in one point of the Law is to break the whole. If any man deliberately sinned he incurred God's wrath on four counts: (1) the particular thing he did or omitted to do broke one commandment; (2) by the offence he broke the wholeness of the commandments; (3) he therefore showed contempt for the Law; (4) he offended against the spirit of the Law. Such an attitude of heart displays incipient rebellion against God, which left unchecked leads on to anarchy. Contempt of the Law meant contempt of God; it warranted death. If this be true in regard to that ancient list, how much more ought we to be concerned to keep the present unity of truth? Theirs is indeed a unity of truth; ours is the truth of the Unity. That is a body of truth, but this is the truth of the body. Significantly enough the list commences with this word: One Body — no wonder the writer to the Hebrews is so alarmingly pointed in the question he poses in chapter 2 verses 2 & 3.

Manifestly then the glory of that former declaration is not to be compared with the glory of this latter. The first was a wonderful manifesto of spiritual and moral law for the governing of a nation, and the foundation of man's acceptance with God. This is the law governing the formation and form, and the function and fulness of the Body of Christ, and of man's union with God. The tenfold Law is sincere milk, this sevenfold law is minced meat. That of old was outward, something superimposed upon a people not spiritually regenerate. It was given to be learned through the mind and practised in life; it was the set standard of behaviour for those who would live in God's kingdom of heaven on earth. This new is a statement of eternal life itself: it is not dependent on me to make me dependent upon it. It is. There is no talk of 'thou shalt', or 'thou shalt not' — it is. It is at once a presentation of the Unity of the Spirit who is God, and a doctrinal definition of the means of our incorporation into it. It is an expression of eternal life in unity, forming a body, an organism called the Church. The Unity of the Spirit is simply Life; that which is, is the Unity of the Spirit — God.

All this is very wonderful, but it is not the end. These seven may be written out thus: 'there is only one body, and only one Spirit, even as ye are called in only one hope of your calling, only one Lord, only one faith, only one baptism, only one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all'. To commence this statement we could have added the qualifying words, 'to us' — they are absolutely necessary. Paul can only be speaking 'to us', for he says that God is the Father of all to whom he is speaking. Without the limiting 'us', everybody would be included, and that would be Universalism of the most heretical order. Universalism finds no support from the Bible. It was written partly with the express purpose of denying and destroying that wrong notion.

More marvellous still than their uniqueness in all the realm of revealed spiritual truth, each of these is in itself a unity. As the Spirit is a Unity, so is the hope of the calling and the body and the Lord Himself, and so on down through the entire list, including

the One Baptism. In fact, lower down in this chapter Paul speaks of 'the unity of the faith' and doing so adds to faith the definite article, making it 'the faith'. This is most obviously true, for seeing that there is only one faith, it must of necessity be 'the faith'; it cannot be any other. Continuing the thought further, we arrive at the conviction that if this be true of faith, then it must also be true of all the others. How could it possibly be otherwise? Turning back to Ephesians 1:3, we discover this to be indeed the case with the last statement of the sevenfold Unity, 'the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'; here again the definite article is used; it had to be of course. All the rules of grammar and logic and truth and common sense and of God Himself demand it; it could not be otherwise. Moreover mental honesty and spiritual law demand that it must be so with all seven; if there is one of each and only one, it must be *the* one. Applying the accumulation of the above facts to the statement with which we are currently engaged, we set forth this three-fold truth: (1) there is *only one* Baptism; (2) it is *the* Baptism; (3) baptism is a *unity*.

Proceeding yet further, we set forth the premise that if that 'One Baptism' be 'The Baptism', then it must of necessity be God's own Baptism. To be so exclusive it must be something God does, or gives, or experiences. Unless this were so, it could neither be fundamental nor universal to the experience of life eternal. If it was the baptism of some being other than God, it would permit of as many repetitions and variations as there are other beings. To be absolutely exclusive it must be God's alone. This can very easily be demonstrated in the case of the 'one hope of your calling'. We shall not need to look further than the first chapter of the epistle to find the grounds for the demonstration. When writing there of the 'one hope', Paul speaks of it in a slightly different way, 'the hope of His calling'. We see then that the calling is both 'His' and 'yours', that is both God the Father's and ours:— His because He is the caller, ours because we are the called; but the hope is one in both hearts, His and ours.

When we first hear the call we are not generally aware of the full meaning of it; but it does bring with it hope. With the passage of time however, this state of hope takes one positive and clearly defined form in the spirit — Christ-likeness. To the truly regenerate Spirit-filled man, the absorbing passion of the soul is to be like Jesus (4:20-24). Whether the hope be His or ours, whether in the heart of the caller or the called, Christ-likeness is the one and only hope of the calling. To make this possible the Lord has to baptize us into His body, for therein lies the only hope of achieving it. As is to be expected, God was the first one to have this hope in the beginning. He first conceived the thought and said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness'. In order to share this one intention and hope with us, in fulness of time God became man. This same thing could be as fully established from scripture concerning each of the remaining 'unities', but we will confine ourselves to this one.

By grasping the principle of truth demonstrated here, we shall be able more easily to realize the fact that there is only One Baptism. This should not be difficult to any child of God, for in reality the Baptism is only ONE's Baptism, and that ONE is JESUS CHRIST, the SON OF GOD. The same thing is true of all these seven cardinal points mentioned by the apostle; the body is His; the Spirit is His; the hope of the calling is His; He is the Lord; His is the faith; His is the Baptism; His is the God and Father. All is His. It is all HIM. The united truth is just ONE, only one, THE ONE, and the glorious gospel of it all is that He shares all with us, so that what is His becomes ours too.

The Lord Jesus was unique, the singular Unity of God and man on the earth, and it is by this originating miracle that all else is one. Because He was God on the earth, that same Baptism was man's baptism too, for He combined God and man, and in that union made all one. His great grace toward us lies in His intention to share with us all He accomplished by that union. In order to achieve this He baptizes us with His Baptism, so making the baptism which belonged to God alone our baptism. No-one who is united with Him in the Baptism should find difficulty in understanding the meaning of a phrase like 'the unity of the One Baptism'.

Now it may appear, upon reading a passage in the letter to the Hebrews, that the conclusions drawn above are incorrect and that in fact there are more baptisms than one. In chapter 6 verse 2, we read of 'the doctrine of baptisms'. This would seem to intimate very clearly that there must be more than one baptism. But the apparent disparity disappears as soon as we discover that the word baptisms should really be 'washings'. The word 'Baptism' is an entirely New Testament word; it is not to be found anywhere in the Old Testament. Nevertheless the Old Testament writers speak of a variety of practices ordained of God to be incorporated into their system of worship as ceremonial washings; it is to these that the writer refers in Hebrews 9:10, when he actually uses the word 'washings'. Beside this occasion, the particular form of the word translated in chapter 6 as 'baptisms' occurs twice more in the New Testament. Each of these references is to be found in Mark chapter 7, where he uses it once himself and once when reporting the Lord Jesus verbatim.

However, it is neither the tradition of baptisms nor the practice of baptism to which the writer to the Hebrews is drawing our attention here. We are being pointed to the doctrine (singular) of baptisms. There was only one official doctrine running through the whole system of baptisms, namely entire sanctification — complete cleansing and separation from all sin, with a view to total acceptance by God. It is upon this that he is wanting us to dwell, and not upon Jewish malpractice of baptism.

At the time of writing the Ephesian epistle Paul had for many years been seeing the wholeness and oneness of things spiritual. For over a quarter of a century he had been the prisoner of the Lord, captured and captivated and shut up in Him. In this relationship the apostle had learned the truth that now he was so desirous to commit to writing for all to read. He saw and felt the truth exactly as the Lord Jesus Christ felt and saw it on His way to the cross, 'that they all may be one as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ... one, I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one'.

From this inner knowledge of God Paul speaks, exhorting his readers to 'keep the unity of the Spirit'. He sees that however or by whatever person truth is expressed, it is invariably the same, and it is always one. He had been consciously living in this unity for such a long time that, as may be expected, he had come to realize what it was: God Himself. God is (a) glorious Unity of Spirit; three blessed persons in one eternal Spirit-Being. Therefore, all He does and says with intention to impart or establish something of an everlasting nature, must be a creation by or a projection of or a demonstration from Himself. It is not surprising then that the apostle should speak so emphatically about the unity he knew so well.

Paul was a master of words, yet as he outlined the doctrine of unity which men must keep, he was reduced to almost cryptic language. The whole passage from chapter

4:3-6 could be rewritten thus: 'giving all diligence to keep (in the sense of preserve) the Unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all and in you all'. As a simple, straightforward, comprehensive outline of truth it has no equal and could not be bettered. It commends and endears itself to our hearts as the word of the Lord, for in its sevenfold unity it breathes the simple perfection of God. It is the doctrinal basis of the Church, which is itself another unity. God is a unity of three persons in one Being; the Church is a unity of many members in one body; this doctrinal basis of the Church is a unity of seven statements in one manifesto.

It is noticeable that between this statement and the revelation of the Church given lower down in the chapter, Paul makes reference to apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Therefore it may not be very far wrong to assume that what is here presented is nothing other than 'the Apostles' Doctrine'. Perhaps after all it may be the original 'Apostles' Creed'. It would be typical of this responsible man that he should supply us with the doctrine which all the apostles taught by common inspiration and agreement. These surely cannot be just Paul's exclusive teachings (see Galatians 1:12, 18 & 2:1, 2, 7). If this is true, it was in this identical doctrine that the Church continued in fellowship from its natal day of Pentecost onward. Little wonder if this be so, that the Lord added to it daily such as were being saved. Since no manifesto similar or comparable to this is to be found anywhere else in scripture, we may be sure that no other is needed. Had it been necessary, it would have been given, for some such concise, bedrock credal statement as this is absolutely vital to the Church in the world. Its perfection may best be described by borrowing and adapting a phrase from James — 'it is perfect and entire, wanting nothing'.

Manifestly all else of Church doctrine is the development of the truth so clearly presented and firmly established here. Much more teaching is to be found in this and other letters that flowed from the same inspired pen, but this is basic to all, forever grounding the whole firmly in God. Obviously this is why it is given to us, for in these seven we find that each member of the Godhead is mentioned, working together with one another unto the end in view, namely the Church, its distinctiveness and calling in this age.

Seeing that Paul mentions baptism as one of the seven fundamentals of the unity of the doctrine of the Church, it is of vital importance that we should understand its place and meaning in both scripture and life. To do this we must first take note that all these seven are spiritual — that is that they are entirely of and in the Spirit. They are truly a Unity of Spirit, for they require no other medium than Spirit for their being; they have existence only in that realm. Indeed, because they concern the divine Being and human beings, they cannot exist in any other realm than Spirit. We must therefore understand that, in common with the other six things mentioned, baptism is of and in Spirit. This 'One Baptism' is wholly spiritual, and that well-known, strong, definitive, scriptural phrase, 'this is that' could most certainly be used about it.

Having established that the Holy Ghost emphatically says that there is only one baptism, it may reasonably be asked why many speak of two or three or more baptisms. There are two main reasons for this sad mistake:

1. Preaching the Bible without differentiating between the Church and other groups mentioned therein (although in some measure some of these obviously typify the

Church).

2. Failure to distinguish between one's own experience and plainly stated truth.

We must be at pains to ensure that our personal experience and the scriptures as they apply to us are in accord, but while doing this, a preacher must avoid making the common mistake of trying to fit scripture into his experience, as though what has happened to him is the standard experience set by God for everybody. In no sense or degree may we seek vindication of our position; we must seek validity, authenticity; these must be our watchwords. The Bible has been given to us for many reasons, and perhaps not the least important is that we should read it and honestly adjust our thinking to it. The resultant mental renewal arising from this exercise must lead on to real transformation of life followed by fearless reformation of doctrine wherever necessary.

It is interesting to note that baptism is not here grammatically pointed out as *the* baptism, nor is it grammatically emphasized in that way anywhere else in scripture. In every place it is spoken of without the article, and it is a rule in Greek grammar that the absence of the article denotes character; but perhaps more remarkable still is the fact that the definite article is absent throughout the whole of this section. More amazingly, even God Himself is not pointed out in this way. One might think that He ought to be referred to as *the* God, but no; yet no-one would for a moment think that Paul intended us to believe that he was not speaking of the one and only true God. Again, the body is not pointed out as 'The Body' as opposed to 'a body'; but no-one taught of God has any doubt that when Paul spoke of one body he meant The Body; in fact, lower down in the chapter that is exactly how he does refer to it. This being so, it cannot be doubted that he intends the same thing to be understood concerning each of the seven.

The reason for the absence of the article here is that Paul is pointing out the Unity of the Spirit rather than the importance of each very important part. Each phrase of this sevenfold doctrinal statement is characteristically and naturally an integral part of one whole statement. He is drawing our attention to something, namely this: the very absence of the article strengthens the truth that each is an indispensable part of the characteristic Unity of the Spirit. The writer insists upon it; the statement is one interdependent whole. Each of the truths specified by each phrase is important and singular in its own sphere and meaning, therefore it has its own indispensable position in the doctrine of Unity; all are necessary to each and each is entirely dependent upon all. Therefore grammatically, purposely and necessarily these seven lose their own pointed distinctiveness in order to gain greater importance. Each contributes to the one whole; they all combine to make the aggregate greater than the particular, and so together present the full truth.

This is no novel idea — it originates with God, for He Himself is like this. Each member of our ever-blessed triune God is distinctively and fully God in His own right, yet each combines with and subjects Himself to the others in one united will. Again, in keeping with the truth God is, each member, though exactly what the other two are in nature and substance, has a distinctive personality and function of His own, and is the only one there is. We see then something of the reason for the absence of the definite article from these verses. It is perfectly consistent with God and with the rest of scripture.

Looking at these verses as a whole, we can see God's way of achieving that grand union between man and Himself in the Spirit, namely the one true Church which in the dispensation of the fulness of times shall be revealed before all. The truth is hidden in these few statements as treasure in a field, yet it lies quite open for all to seek and find. God has done it this way, that being discovered it may be understood and enjoyed in all its glorious simplicity; it is a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

We see first of all that in the construction of the sevenfold statement the one Lord is placed centrally (i.e. fourthly) and worshipfully confess Him to be the pivotal Person around Whom all else is grouped. By Him and for Him everything consists. That understood, we proceed to the knowledge that in order to be our God and Father, even as He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, God gave the Lord Jesus to be our one Lord. Because Jesus is the one Lord of the Church, He baptizes us into Himself in one Spirit, and doing so integrates us into one Body. This one Baptism is the true and only baptism / inauguration in the Spirit, otherwise called regeneration. At that moment the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ begets us and thereby becomes the one God and Father of all so baptized. By this means He is above all and through all and in all His children, for they all become one Body of people, over which Christ Jesus is both Lord and Head. This body, formed by the Lord, only exists in the Spirit, and does so in order to be filled and inspirited by one Spirit, His own. His Spirit must be the spirit of His (own) Body. Being so privileged, each son must give his all to realize fully in himself the one hope of his calling; it is He. Each for himself and all together must arrive at full realization of themselves in Him, and of Himself in them.

There is *only one God and Father*, His; there is *only one Lord*, it is He; there is *only one faith*, His; there is *only one Body*, His; there is *only one Spirit* in that Body, His; there is *only one hope of our calling*, it is He; there is *only one Baptism*, His. He is all and all is His; He is the Lord who by that Baptism brings us into all of Himself and everything that is His. All is one.

That all is not consciously realized at one moment in any individual's experience is no proof that they are not one, nor does it mean that it is not possible to enter into all at once. Realization so often depends upon understanding, which is the reason why Paul prayed with such passion, 'that God ... may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation ...' (Ephesians 1:17). Realization of revealed truth in living experience is conditioned by many factors, and varies in different persons and groups to great degree, affecting both prayer and preaching. The result of this is that all too often the partial at least obscures the whole, if it does not by neglect deliberately seek to destroy what it does not embrace.

Therefore let us understand this, that there is no eternal life outside of Christ. All other natures and forms and expressions of life, animate and inanimate, created by God outside of Himself, though from Him are other than Him. None of these have His personal life, and must remain outside Him forever unless a genuine means of including them into Himself be devised and ministered by Him to them. We have not been informed by God of any such future intention on His part, but we have set before us here His way for men now. The truth about it is that Jesus Christ came into this world and lived and died and rose again in order to baptize us into Himself, so that we poor humans may share His life.

Chapter Six - TO FULFIL ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS

We now return to the only man spoken of in the Bible with whom water baptism is particularly connected, that is John Baptist. He was directly sent to Israel by God with the ministry of the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Unlike many prophets who preceded him, he never performed any miracles. This is very surprising indeed, for he came in the spirit and power of Elijah, who in his day did some amazing things, and wrought some outstanding miracles; but not so John. Each of Israel's long line of God-given prophets had his own powerful, and often sign-attested ministry, but none save John could claim the distinction of being sent by God with the ministry of baptism. True to his distinctive calling, John it was who first commanded repentance unto baptism as God's requirement of Israel at that time. His was a bold faith; he was a brave and outstanding man.

John's message was entirely new. It was not a paraphrase of the Mosaic law, nor was it couched in the same words, nor was it ministered in the tradition of any prophet before him. Jesus Himself said that a greater than John had not been born of woman, calling him a burning and a shining light. The truth of this testimony is amply borne out by the fact that for a season the remnant of Israel accepted his message and rejoiced in that light. The Baptist swiftly became a very popular and romantic figure among the people. He lived in the wilderness, dressed in camel-skins, was remarkably frugal in his eating habits, used great directness of speech and fired the imagination of all who flocked to hear him. They accepted the man, responded to his message and ministry, and were baptized of him in water.

But John's baptism was not that 'One Baptism' and he knew it. His insistent message was that he was merely preparing the way for One mightier than he, who was coming to administer a greater baptism. John administered baptism in the ordinary element of water, because it was entirely suited to his ministry. But John had been told by God that the prime reason for his baptism and service was to present Christ and His Baptism to the nation. Therefore his primary task was to relate all he said and preached to the baptism he administered. This he faithfully did, even though when baptizing Christ he did it under protest.

The introduction of his Superior to the nation by baptism was a most spectacular event. He had been specially instructed of God about Jesus on one particular point: 'Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost'. John had already announced Jesus as 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world', but apparently he had no direct commandment from God to announce that fact. Presumably it came out in the course of his prophetic ministry, (or was it a word of knowledge?) and it was true. But he was definitely briefed by Him that sent him to say of Jesus Christ, 'this is He which baptizeth in the Holy Ghost', so he said it.

John's ministry was admirably suited to foreshadow Jesus' ministry, for what better way to introduce and symbolize Baptism in Spirit than by this water baptism? Under John's ministry, baptism became the focal point in a man's experience; indisputably he made it obligatory to the salvation he preached. It was an entirely new move by God. Without doubt, if the prophet was to be believed, forgiveness was made dependent upon baptism. Not that the water had any power to wash away sins. Physical elements used in religious rites are always only symbolic. Then, as now, water had no innate

properties or virtue to deal with the sins of mansoul. Water baptism was a foreshadowing rite enforced on the people through John by God simply because He chose to do it that way.

The virtue of water baptism to those men of the Old Covenant lay in the obedience of faith in a man's heart, which caused him to obey the command of God as proof that he believed the word preached to him. But by this ministry of baptism, God, by John, was seeking to shift the whole trend and emphasis of spiritual truth away from traditional religion. Judaism was bereft of power: since the captivity and dispersion of Israel, and the destruction of the Temple with its original furniture, there had been no value at all in the Jews' religion. There was no Ark, with its Mercy Seat and tables of Covenant, in Jerusalem. All ritual blood-offering and sacrifices after the Levitical order was useless for redemption and atonement — by it there was no forgiveness. What was enacted in daily, weekly and yearly ritual was entirely without saving strength. Beside this, centuries had passed since Malachi had added the final contribution to Israel's sacred canon; everything had gone dead. Then John appeared, sent from God with a revolutionary message and insisting upon a new ordinance. It was epochal.

The nation that had waited so long for the Messiah thought this must be He, for prior to this neither patriarch, prophet nor king had ever preached and practised these things. John's ministry was not traditional, for Moses had not commanded anything even remotely like this. Then was it additional? For it was certainly extra-Mosaic. They soon discovered that it was neither; it was utterly different. As an instance of this, when they responded to John's ministry, surprisingly enough he did not send his converts hastening from baptism to the Temple to offer sacrifice for their sins. Instead he taught them that to be baptized for remission of sins was enough. They also learned that John's ministry was only temporary and his baptism introductory. Listening to him further, it became obvious that all he did was unto a greater end. He said plainly that he and his baptism were only valuable to them as both he and it foreshadowed another and greater Person and Baptism. They must understand two things: (1) forgiveness was only being granted, and the rite enacted, because God was sending His Lamb into the world to take away sins, and (2) baptism was only being ministered to them as a kind of earnest of the fact that the Son of God would baptize them in the Holy Ghost and Fire. John's baptism was certainly not traditional, nor was it merely additional; it was transitional. His dynamic ministry was sent by God to the remnant of Israel, that by it a greater, more dynamic ministry should be introduced and applied to them, and by them given to the world.

Although perhaps few people of his generation had eyes to see it, the first glimmerings of a fuller truth began to flicker and shine in the darkness of the gross ignorance which enveloped them. John did not know, and so could not teach, any of the doctrine that we now associate with water baptism, but he was absolutely adamant about its administration. The complete revelation concerning baptism was held in abeyance in the person of the Lord Jesus, to be later defined in all its glory by Paul. Even Jesus could not make it fully known, for the typical value of water baptism lies in its representation of what He accomplished by the Cross. Most of the actual value of the One Baptism is only effective in us at, and following upon, our individual Pentecost.

To the discerning eye John's baptism, though meaning much, could have implied more than he plainly stated because the place and means he chose for his ministration was the river Jordan. Whether or not John recognized the full significance of his actions we do not know, but his ministry illustrated the wonderful promise God had made through the prophet Micah that He would 'cast all their sins into the depths of the sea'. Jordan rises high in the mountainous regions of Lebanon and flows southward on its tortuous course to the Dead Sea; it then formed the eastern border of Israel. John's converts joined him in the river, and confessing their sins were immersed by him in its flowing waters. The baptism was a token of God's faithfulness; it was a pictorial demonstration of the immediacy with which God acted to forgive and cleanse sins out of their souls. His mercy and grace washed them from the soul swifter than Jordan's flowing current, to be buried forever in the sea of death.

That was the first great meaning of the rite, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Yet more than this was revealed by it also. Pondering the deep significance of this baptism against the background of Israel's history, we may reach the conclusion that the Lord was seeking to jolt the people wide awake as to their true identity. They were the nation God redeemed from Egypt by the hand of Moses, and afterwards brought over this very Jordan into the land of their promised inheritance by the hand of Joshua. He took over leadership from Moses after forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and set the nation heading for Canaan across this same river into their possessions. Now, before the eyes of the people, as though taking the place of Joshua, John stands uncompromisingly firm in the midst of this same Jordan talking about the kingdom of heaven being at hand. As has been said, the place he chose to announce the fact has a most significant name — Bethabara, 'the place of passage or crossing'.

Somewhere in Jordan Joshua had built a cairn of twelve stones; it marked the exact spot where he stood with the Ark of God on dry land. It is hardly likely that John's feet stood firm in the identical spot where originally the Ark waited in Jordan, but there was no mistaking John's meaning. He bore no Ark and built no cairn, but commanded all to go to him in the river, and continued baptizing there until one day Jesus came. It was as if by this John was saying to the nation, 'Behold your Joshua, this is He; every one of you must come back to the beginning. God is giving you an opportunity to make a fresh start. As it was with your fathers, so also must it be with you; there is no other way, it is from here that you must enter your Promised Land'. It is a very striking parallel. Just as of old they had to 'pass through the waters' into Canaan, so in John's day the remnant of the Children of Israel must come up out of Jordan into their inheritance.

Shortly the land was going to flow with the real milk and honey — Jesus was the sincere milk of the word and the sweetest person that ever lived. Although they did not know it, the time was at hand; God was in process of fulfilling His promise to them.

In John's gospel, chapter 10 verses 39-41, we read that later in His ministry Jesus again resorted to Bethabara 'where John at first baptized.' He did so in order to re-emphasize the purpose of His former visit there, though at this time there was no John, no baptism, no voice or dove or anointing. It was a critically important time for Him; the miracles He had done as a testimony to His Christhood were under hostile examination. Worse still, He was being hounded to death by the authorities. But his retirement to Jordan was not a defeat; He was actually about to work His greatest

miracle before men, so He carefully prepared the background. He intended to prove as conclusively and reasonably as reasonable men ought to demand, that He was indeed the Son of God. Short of His own death and resurrection, it was to be the greatest sign that could possibly be shown to men, and it was carefully arranged so that He should declare more fully who He was. Therefore, He was about to do two things: make the greatest claim He had ever made among men — 'I am the Resurrection and the Life' and raise Lazarus from the dead as the sign to prove it: so back He goes to Jordan to the 'place of passage' where John baptized Him. From there He set out again upon the greatest mission of His life. As though He had just died and been buried and had risen again from the dead, He went forth to perform His greatest miracle on earth that side of Calvary. Straight from Bethabara Jesus went to the home of Martha and Mary and Lazarus at Bethany to demonstrate that He is the Resurrection and the Life. Amen! It is Jesus who invests Jordan with its greatest meaning. As though fresh from His own baptism He raised Lazarus from his rock cavern. Can anyone or anything withstand Him, or anything be plainer to the honest heart? He is thus giving baptism its proper meaning and truest setting; death, resurrection and life, or new birth.

Although at the time none but the Lord Jesus could see the whole strategy of God, John's ministry in relation thereto was to enable people to discover who they themselves were and who Jesus was. This done, John must gradually retire from the scene. On the other hand, Jesus on His part, having commenced to reform and adapt the nature and purpose of baptism, went on to complete the plan. That is why, even before He was baptized, Jesus firmly established the fact that all righteousness must be fulfilled. Whatever John Baptist understood by these words of the Lord when He insisted upon baptism we do not know, but God had to be just even in this. If it was righteous that upon repentance men should be immediately forgiven, then it must be shown how and why. At Jordan men confessed their sins and were forgiven, so into the place 'where sin abounded' stepped God's sinless Son, God's Lamb which taketh away the sin of the world. This was a kind of prophetic identification; Jesus was identifying Himself with all those who, in humble confession, had previously stood there. God used water to introduce baptism as His new method and to manifest the Lamb by whom He would accomplish the true Baptism in Spirit. He was also showing that He would remove the already discounted sacrificial system and replace it finally with the new Baptism of which this was a picture. He was preparing them for the revelation of the 'One Baptism' which was to be administered in the future by Jesus Christ in the Spirit of God.

Hundreds of years earlier God had said through Jeremiah (31:31) that He would make a new covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah. From that moment His attitude towards the Mosaic covenant was public knowledge. God made that statement, He had fixed His will and given a verdict; He made the first covenant old. Predictably, from that moment it began to wax old in His eyes, and by the time John stood in Jordan it was ready to vanish away. This is why God sent John as a forerunner to Jesus.

By his ministry John accomplished four very important things in relationship to that old covenant he represented:

1. He served on the nation God's final notice of His impending official break with the things received by tradition from their fathers.
2. He pictorially displayed to them the exact moment and means by which God was going to do so; hence his revolutionary new message and ministry.

3. He presented the Person who was going to do it.
4. He revealed both an eternal principle and a divine order. The plan of God for winding up the age and the commencement of the new age was death, resurrection and the descent of the Spirit.

Everything God does is according to unchanging principles and eternal order.

From that time forward Jesus gradually began the prearranged take-over from John. Commencing His ministry with the same message and baptism as His forerunner, He thereby ratified them, and before long superseded both. Bringing a far greater message and ministry than John's, He removed the lesser gospel of John Baptist and established His own as the Gospel for this age. In process of this His light speedily eclipsed that which had shone in Jordan; His works and preaching evoked from men such remarks as 'we never saw it on this wise' and 'never man spoke as this man'; so it was throughout His life, until by death and resurrection He wrought the one new, true Baptism. At the same time He completed the phasing out of the Old Covenant in preparation for the New to begin. His actual Baptism had taken the place of the lesser baptism that John had administered; substance had taken the place of shadow.

All this can best be summed up in the words of Hebrews 10:5-9. Jesus took away the first covenant in order to establish the new, second and eternal covenant. That is why, in common with His forerunner, the Lord did not direct men to practise the sacrificial system of the Mosaic law in order to obtain forgiveness. What John had commenced in a figure, Jesus continued and completed in reality at Calvary. Now and again however, the Lord did tell men to re-visit the old; His purpose in doing so was clearly that of two-fold testimony only: firstly to testify of Himself to the people involved in it, and secondly to testify to the divine origins of the Mosaic ritual.

Occasionally the Lord sent men to show themselves to the priests, but never once did He direct men to its sacerdotal rites in order to obtain forgiveness or cleansing. He sent the lepers to 'offer for their cleansing', but not to make a sacrifice in order to obtain it; they offered the ritual gift because they had been cleansed already. By this means the priests learned that a greater than Annas or Caiaphas was among them and a greater than Aaron also. The lepers were already cleansed, but Jesus was teaching them that until the Old had vanished away entirely it must be honoured, even though in a man's individual experience its function was fulfilled.

Bearing all this in mind, perhaps one of the most remarkable features of the four Gospels is their unanimous witness about the public testimony of John Baptist. With one voice they testify that he said Jesus would baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire. More noticeably still perhaps, John made no direct reference at all to the Lord's redemptive work. Only once did he connect Jesus with sacrifice, saying 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world', John 1:29. More surprisingly than ever, three of the gospel writers do not even mention this last fact at all. Significantly enough, having said it, the apostle John goes on immediately to record John Baptist's words that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Ghost; that apparently was the reason why He bore away the sin. Obviously all the writers thought that if this was not the greatest reason for the Baptist's ministry, it was certainly the culminating point of it. Their unanimous testimony is as unmistakable as it is undeniable, they emphasize it as the terminal point and climacteric utterance of his ministry. If their evidence is to be believed this is the most important point.

Now we know that the Holy Ghost was given the responsibility to inspire and oversee the authorship of the Gospels: His intention was to draw attention to the Lord Jesus and not to Himself. He has come and ever works to glorify His predecessor on the earth. Yet *He* inspired each of the four writers of the Gospels to give this prominence to John's declarations about the Baptism in the Holy Ghost: Why? The simple fact emerges that the Baptism must be very important, for the purpose of the faithful Holy Ghost is to place emphasis exactly where it is needed.

The whole period covered by the earthly ministries of John Baptist and Jesus Christ was sandwiched between two baptisms. During the whole of that time God was moving to a new position in His saving purposes among men. It commenced with water baptism by John and ended with Spirit Baptism by Jesus: even so, neither of these is that 'One Baptism' spoken of in Ephesians 4. Each has a definite relationship to it though, and as an elementary illustration John's baptism introduced men and women into the truth of it. On the day of Pentecost, by being baptized in Spirit, men and women were baptized with Christ's personal baptism, and introduced to the ages of the ages of eternal life in Him.

Reading the opening chapters of each of the four Gospels, we discover that Mark and John virtually commence with the baptism of John, and Matthew and Luke with a genealogy of Jesus. The two latter give complementary accounts of His birth and associated events, and then also pass swiftly on to His baptism in water by John. Then according to his personal directive, each writes a Gospel of His life and work, and a full and detailed account of His trial and death and resurrection; three of them also speak of His ascension. Thus the way is left clear for the next book, the Acts of the Apostles, under the authorship and editorship of the Holy Ghost, to commence with the account of the birth of the Church. Significantly and inevitably it begins with the story of a baptism — Jesus' not John's; the new era had come. On the day of Pentecost men were being baptized in Holy Spirit instead of water. It was an epochal occasion. The ascended, enthroned Lord Jesus Christ was bestowing upon men the privilege of Sonship. Pentecost was an initiating and inclusive, as well as an inaugural occasion. On that day men were being baptized with the One Baptism of the new order. The risen, glorified Lord Jesus could now do this in all righteousness. He had completely removed the old order and clearly established the new, because on the cross He had made the one and only eternal sacrifice for sin.

The Bible says that Jesus was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world; exactly when we are not told. Whether it happened following the beginning of sin in heaven, or whether God did it beforehand in anticipation of that sin we do not know, but this information is certainly a revelation of the heart of God towards man. So when at last Jesus appeared and died on earth, it was all over. The sacrifice had already been made before the world was, and it only awaited the fulness of time to be offered on man's behalf on earth. After that happened, blood need never again be shed for sin, and about that God was entirely happy. Consequent upon that final act of total reconciliation, He could establish and bring to perfection His plan to regenerate mankind. It was because His method of effecting that regeneration was so entirely new that He introduced it first in parabolic form through John Baptist. Having done so, He retained water baptism as 'a visual aid', an outward picture of far less importance than the great Baptism it so inadequately portrays.

Water baptism, even though it was only an outward institution in the physical realm, was real enough, and every time the prophet administered the rite he was insisting on the need for the more important baptism of which he repeatedly spoke. John, like the Holy Ghost who filled him, knew that his mission was to glorify Christ by baptizing Him in water. At first, recognizing the superiority of Christ's baptism, he refused to do so. He knew that the Christ was a baptizer too, and although he was a man full of the Holy Ghost, he knew and said that he himself needed to be baptized by Jesus in the Spirit. What he understood by that is difficult for us to know, but in heartfelt words he indicated most clearly how greatly superior to himself and his baptism he regarded Jesus and His Baptism to be. Nevertheless, upon the Lord's insistence, John co-operated with Him to fulfil all righteousness, and so the lesser baptized the greater in water. Whereupon he immediately knew that he had done the right thing, for he saw the blessed Spirit, like a dove, descend from heaven to alight and remain upon his Lord in the sacred anointing of Messiahship, and his ministry was fulfilled.

Months after this, when the Lord had been ministering to men under the power of that anointing for a long while, and as He was nearing the cross, He made some mysterious references to another baptism. That He was not speaking of His past baptism at the hands of John is as obvious as language can make it. He was unquestionably speaking of a future event — 'I have a baptism to be baptized with and how am I straitened until it be accomplished', He said. Many of those who followed Him must have been sorely puzzled by the remark. They had previously witnessed His baptism at the hands of John; they also knew by John's testimony that there was an experience called baptism connected with the Holy Ghost, and that Jesus would administer it. Indeed, it is almost certain that some of His disciples were following Him bearing this promise in mind and looking for its fulfilment. Now they heard Him speak of another baptism; and in such personal terms too, 'I have a baptism', He said; but He did not go on to say ... 'to administer'. Had He said that they could have understood Him, for was not that in essence the thing that John had said? But He said, 'to be baptized with'; it was another, a different baptism, and it was for Himself, but He did not say who was going to be the Baptist. He seemed to make it so distinctly personal. They had been baptized in water; they also were expecting to be baptized in the Spirit, but they had not been included in this Baptism; His speech was exclusive. More than that, He said that He was 'straitened until it be accomplished'. Apparently for Him it was either unavoidable and inescapable, or else He was determined to undergo it, or both.

His anointing had obviously been such an enlargement to Him. How greatly He had been magnified from Jordan onwards. How then could He speak of being 'straitened' as though He were narrowed down, kept within bounds, shut up? If, following His baptism in Jordan, He was so magnified and enlarged that all men knew of Him, and yet He spoke of being 'straitened', whatever would be the result of the next baptism? Could there be any limits to the results of such a baptism as that to which He now moved? He said that He was going to 'accomplish it'; strange words! But one thing was plain, this Baptism was not for the multitudes as was John's; it seemed to be for Him alone; His Baptism. Just His. One Man, it seemed, was going to accomplish One Baptism; how, no-one knew except Himself alone.

Upon the occasion when this subject was raised, the Lord asked two of the apostles He had chosen whether they were able to be baptized with this Baptism. They answered, 'we are able', and their hearts rejoiced. They had at the time been asking

Him for privileges in His kingdom (in fact the highest positions it was possible for anybody to have) which were not His to give, and to their sorrow He had to refuse them; but to compensate them for their disappointment He asked them the question quoted above. They did not know that by so doing He was granting them the greatest opportunity and highest possible privilege a mortal man can know — His own Baptism.

It was the most wonderful and yet the most terrible experience He ever knew or accomplished as a man; it was the crowning glory of His life. To this end He had been born and for this purpose He came into the world; it both fulfilled and consummated Him, eclipsing in splendour everything else He had ever done. By its sheer overwhelming brilliance and wealth of love, His Baptism, and what He accomplished therein and thereby, outshines all creation, all His works, and all His other miracles. In offering them this, He offered them the opportunity of achieving the prize they sought and had requested of Him, for He Himself knew no way to His throne other than via His Baptism. He took them at their word; they were going to share His Baptism.

What a Baptism it was and still is! Unlike the one administered at Jordan, it was not to be of a visible nature in water. Nor was this Baptism to be a baptism in blood, though His own blood was much in evidence when it happened. Neither was it a baptism in the suffering He endured then, great and inevitable as that was; all these atrocities and horrors, terrible as they were, were but introductory to it. Jesus' Baptism was to be accomplished by Him by death; so to death He went, grieving, sweating and dripping with blood. Hanging on a cross He bore sin and expiated it, overcoming all the hosts of darkness in motionless battle as He swept majestically onward to the final act of baptism. He knew that neither His bloodshed nor His suffering would, of themselves, justify God in granting expiation for the past sins of mankind; there must be more than that — far, far more.

All the truths normally associated with the work of Christ on the cross could only be, or be effective unto salvation, as all was done with a view to the death of God's Son. His precious blood, even the blood of His cross, is only effective and redemptive because He died there. It was not the blood of the whipping-post, nor of His shameful crowning, that bought our redemption and purged our sins. All of it was the precious blood of the precious Lamb, and it flowed generously from the Redeemer, but it was the dying Lamb who was the redeeming Lamb, not just the suffering Lamb, nor yet the bleeding Lamb; it had to be by the blood of His cross, sealed by His death.

In the aggregate of course all counts, for all was necessary as part of a great whole; His blood is most precious, every drop of it. Wheresoever it was shed, in whatsoever capacity, or whoever it was that exacted it, all was foreknown and planned by God. It was precious at the whipping-post as it fell from His torn flesh there; it was also very precious — as it dripped from the cruel spikes of His crown in Herod's palace; but it is most precious of all on the cross, where Jesus died for us. It is only because He died that everything else He was and did and endured has any relevance for us today. The fact that He suffered and bled, necessary and indispensable and savage as all was, is only valid in the redemptive aggregate as it was the suffering and bleeding of His dying. It was the sacrifice and offering and laying down of His life that saved us. The savaging of His body and the shedding of His blood and the suffering of His soul,

though each contributed its special and necessary value to the whole as part of His expiatory work, could not of themselves, nor all together, have reached man.

All would have been in vain had He not died, for man is a dead spirit, existing in the body as a dead soul, totally uncomprehending and unimaginative of eternal life and utterly incapable of responding to it. So the Lord had to die, that by dying He might invade and enter the state of death where man was imprisoned. At the moment His physical body died by the expiry of its breath and the departure of His spirit, His Spiritual Life plunged into man's spiritual death. Everything He endured previously led up to this precise moment; for reasons far too numerous to mention He had to hang on the tree until all God's requirements were met. That done, He was ready to move unhindered unto His next and greatest task, the moment of triumphant death, the Baptism to which He had referred. By His death the Lord reached Man; at last He came to where he was, and to what He found him to be — Death. It required the act called Baptism in order for Him to accomplish it.

Gazing upon Calvary one could have witnessed a process of dying that could be counterparted among men in many and various ways, though happily for the most part less barbarous than His. But all physical death is not a process, as sudden accidents all too shockingly demonstrate to us. The sudden plunging from life into death is a sharp, and to some a painfully terrifying reminder that death really is a baptism. It is an unceremonious immersion into a completely new realm or world of existence, from which there is no return to the former mode of life. Death is not generally thought of as a baptism, but nevertheless that is exactly what it is, and it was towards this that the Lord Jesus was moving and to this that He was referring in Luke 12 verse 50. His birth and earthly life, as well as His physical dying, were all a straitening unto this end. He was born, and lived and hanged upon a tree as a necessary preparation for and prelude to His Baptism. He voluntarily, and God His Father deliberately, and the Holy Ghost comprehensively engineered it; together the blessed Trinity had moved to the point in time when God could retrieve His loss.

Perhaps we ought to pause here and seek to distinguish some things that differ. When speaking of Christ's death it is possible so to use the term that the most important truth of it is lost through generalization. Yet failure to apprehend truth is liable to cause us to be at peril in our understanding where, says Paul, we ought to be men. For instance in the accepted sense of the word Christ did not 'die' on the cross, for it was quite impossible for Him to die in the manner that we apprehend death. Unlike ordinary men, if He had not voluntarily dismissed His Spirit, He could never have died. When the Lord did that He did so with the mighty shout of a conqueror, and strictly speaking, until He dismissed His Spirit from the cross He lived on it. Therefore Jesus accomplished our redemption and reconciliation while hanging still alive on the cross; it was by His living blood, not by His dying blood that the ransom was paid. He never more truly and fully lived than when He was dying. He of all people had to be baptized into death, because He could not die as other men — it was quite impossible. Having borne sin and its penalty in His body on the tree, He arrived at the moment of full release unto which He had been straitened all His life. Plunging in spirit into the death wherein man was held prisoner, the Lord furthered His many conquests unto ultimate victory. Life entered death then. Until that moment He had been penetrating through the environs of man's death, but having done that the Lord stormed the stronghold of satan and reached His beloved Man.

Although so much that was wrought out in the flesh at Calvary was visible to the eye, it was a Spirit Baptism. It is ever the things which the eye does not see, or the ear hear, or the mind understand that are the most vital things of all. It was what was wrought in the invisible world of Spirit that was most important. God is Spirit, so is satan, and so essentially is Man. Calvary was primarily to do with Spirit — God who is the Living Spirit and Man the dead spirit — a captive of satan who is the spirit of death. On the cross Jesus, the Living or Life-giving Spirit, overcame and thoroughly defeated satan, the death (or death-dealing) spirit, and consequently released the enslaved, dead spirit of Man. That is what the Baptism is all about. In the act of dismissing His Spirit He accomplished greater things than He did in the process of dying. It was the most glorious and intensely righteous thing He ever did, and is the deepest meaning behind the remark He made to John Baptist, 'Suffer it to be so now for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness'. Water baptism was a righteous act to Jesus at that time because the Life-into-death Baptism towards which He was then moving is righteousness eternal in the Spirit.

More than at any other moment since the creation of the world those last moments on the cross reveal righteousness superb and love supreme. Voluntarily accepting fullest responsibility and obligation, without pressure, knowing that it was the correct and only thing to do, Jesus did it. That is the final act of Righteousness from which Regeneration springs. It was through the death of His physical body, whereby so many other righteous things were accomplished, that He did it. The Baptism was not accomplished in the body but out of it — as His Spirit went from His body. Whilst in the flesh He could and did do so much, but in the moment and act of departure from it He accomplished more, much more, the most difficult thing of all.

Everything was in the realm of Spirit; even His blood was only valuable because of the spiritual life He lived in the flesh. So, because all is basically and virtually Spirit, it is in Spirit that the Baptism must take place. He was not a sinner, but became as the sinner; He was not sin, but was made sin; He was not death but was baptized into it in order that His death may be for us the only death there is. Therefore, His death is the new death, all the old forms and expressions of death being superseded by it. The death of sin for us was accomplished at Calvary. Death *to* sin for us took place also at Calvary. Spiritual Death is destroyed, so is Hell, so is satan (Hebrews 2:14), the spirit who had the power of death. Physical death is now also destroyed — that is, rendered powerless, or annulled — and renamed sleep. Jesus was laughed to scorn when He spoke of death as sleep, but He was right. Luke tells us that Stephen 'fell asleep' and he was right also. Life cannot die, but its physical frame can sleep. For us there is but one death. As He was made sin for us, so was He made death for us, that He may be both Righteousness and Life to us. In every way our precious Lord and the things He did, and what He accomplished as events took place in His life is absolutely *all*. Even His glorious claim to be Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, assumes fresh lustre as we see it outworking in such a dreadful realm as this.

In the beginning satan had made Adam to be sin and death to the race, so it was perfectly in order that the last Adam should be made sin and death to us by God. In all things He must have the preeminence, even in this. There was no other way but death for Jesus the Last Adam, for He had come to end the reign of sin and death. 'I am the Way', He said in the upper room, and within a few hours of making that statement He was baptized into death. There is no other means of access to death than baptism. Lucifer plunged himself into sin and death, thereby becoming satan; in turn by Adam

he plunged the whole human race into sin and death also. Because of this, in His day the Last Adam, Jesus Christ, was made sin by God and plunged all living (that is, vitally righteous and holy) and loving into that death which is the result of sin. This is that wonderful, almighty and most mysterious experience which is only faintly pictured and hinted to us in the practice of water baptism.

Seeing that water baptism is not that One Baptism, but only a dim picture of it, we must understand clearly at this point that identity in name because of parallel symbolic ideas is not necessarily an equation of power or experience. Water baptism is basically the projection of an idea from the spiritual to the natural, a suggestion of an invisible experience. Were it not an ordination of God, it could only be regarded as a substitute, an imitation, a grotesque caricature of the real, an empty mocking charade. It would only be a dumb miming of a dim idea not fully known, a cruel cynical deception, for of itself it has no value at all. Like so many other 'things' of old, it has no intrinsic worth of its own, and can, of itself, bestow no merit upon those who engage in it, either as minister or recipient. If there is any spiritual danger attached to water baptism, it lies only in the superstition ingrained in the minds of men who religiously invest it with mystical, sinking almost to magical, powers never intended by God when He originally ordained it. Obviously then, if only for this reason, it could never be the one and only true Baptism.

Chapter Seven - INTO LIFE ETERNAL

Like the other six that combine with it to set forth the wondrous Unity of the Spirit, the One Baptism must be of an eternal nature and import. It must be incorruptible, impossible to secularize or profane, and quite beyond anyone's power to debase to a mere superstitious rite. In the end, a heart must be able to repose everlasting trust in something; there must be some things which cannot be shaken or removed. Praise God there are such things, and they provide everlasting security, and become sure ground on which to build our thinking because they remain indestructibly eternal. Therefore God ordained the Baptism as an eternal means; it is not a temporary measure. In itself though it is not a final end; the Baptism is always 'in', 'into', 'unto'. In its administration there is an end in view, a point to reach and a position to be realized — Regeneration.

Further reflection makes clearer still why John's baptism, or any like it in the same element, could not possibly be the One Baptism. It is concerned with the reasoning that lay behind the questions in the minds of the priests and Levites who spoke to John. To them baptism was such a departure from tradition that whether or not it was right, to have any justification for existence at all it should only have been administered by Elijah or 'that Prophet', or 'the Christ', John 1:19-25. In the minds of these people the whole concept of baptism, whether it be administered by the forerunner of the Messiah or the Christ Himself, was only held to be valid in the context of the Messianic Kingdom. This is a most significant thing. The Christ, apparently, was expected to do something comparable to baptism. Their scripture for instance spoke of outpourings of water upon thirsty souls and floods upon dry ground, and by this they understood that the writers were implying the Spirit, hence they were in danger of confusing John the Baptist with the Messiah.

Had they given deeper consideration to John's ministry, it would have been apparent that it could not have been the Messianic Baptism, for John's was not an outpouring,

but an immersion. Perhaps confusion arose because water was used, but the scriptures remained clear; the Messiah would usher in His Kingdom by pouring out the Spirit. Hence the confusion in their minds; John was immersing. Why? The significance of the method used should have settled the problem; John's baptism was as perfect a means as could be desired of depicting death and resurrection. It did not typify the Baptism in the Spirit as revealed at Pentecost, but the baptism wherewith Jesus baptized Himself at Calvary in order to create the means of new birth.

Objections to the truth of baptismal regeneration as here set out are generally based upon John 20:22, where we read that Jesus breathed on the assembled disciples and said unto them, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost'. This, so it is said, was the moment of regeneration for the disciples. This passage should be compared with Luke 24:33-42. It is not easy to tell just how many were there at that time or to exactly determine who of the 120 persons gathered together on the day of Pentecost was selected to receive this special favour. If it be that only apostles were present, then there were only ten. There should have been eleven, but for some reason Thomas, being absent, missed the blessing; he lived for eight days in polite scepticism of both the resurrection and the result. However, it is widely believed that just ten apostles were there upon the occasion when the risen Lord breathed upon or into them the Holy Ghost.

If this be so, and this was the time of new birth for them, then from the scripture records we know that only this small proportion — a twelfth in fact — of the company gathered together on the day of Pentecost were already born again. The implication of this is that whatever had happened to the apostles, the larger number must have been born again by the Baptism in the Spirit. If this view is unacceptable, then they must have been born at some time subsequent to that experience, but that is absurd. If it be that neither of these propositions is true, then when were they born? If they (and presumably Thomas also) were granted a similar kind of experience to the ten prior to Pentecost, the scriptures are strangely silent about it. Where in scripture is the slightest hint given that we all must have some experience equivalent to the ten in order to be born? No-one insists upon it. Yet who can doubt that the early Church expected all to be baptized in Spirit?

That the day of Pentecost was in fact the day of regeneration for the whole company, including the apostles, receives striking corroboration from the use of the Greek word 'pnoe' for 'wind' in Acts 2:2. Luke the physician, who also wrote the glorious account of the conception and birth of our Lord Jesus, is on familiar ground here — he is using a medical term. In his day doctors and midwives used this word when speaking of birth; it is specifically used to describe the incoming breath of the newly-born babe. Ancient medical journals, we are informed, also make use of this same word when describing the result of the action taken by a doctor or midwife to induce breathing at birth. Such action is still common among us, with the same results.

Further to the point, the writers of the Septuagint version of the Old Testament in 200 B.C. use this same Greek word 'pnoe' when translating Genesis 2:7. 'God. ..breathed into his nostrils the breath of life'. It is quite obvious that Luke, guided by the Spirit, used a word commonly understood by all to mean the beginning of life; all of which appears to be fairly conclusive evidence of what the original members of the Church believed. Perhaps the fact that Luke claims in his Gospel only to write of 'things generally believed' among them, and since 'they' included the apostles with whom he travelled, we are on safe ground in making the claim. Whether breathed into a clay

man formed in a garden, or into a flesh and blood baby formed in a womb, or into those one hundred and twenty, the initial breath of life means birth. Adam was formed and created a man, a babe is formed and born a child, the Church was formed and created and born on the day of Pentecost by the Baptism in the Spirit. By and in that experience each person received the gift of the Holy Ghost by inspiration of God and was made alive; until that moment they had no personal, spiritual existence or corporate form, save in the mind and will of God. They were baptized into the body of Christ in whom is life, and received the breath of the life of that body. To those who thereby became the first members of the Church, that experience was baptismal regeneration. Since this is so, what did happen to the ten apostles on the Lord's great day of Resurrection?

For the answer to this question we need to go back into John 14. There the Lord is recorded as speaking to the eleven concerning the person and coming of the Holy Ghost; 'the Comforter' He calls Him. Not only so, but the Lord also fixes their attention upon the day of His coming, verse 20, 'at' (or 'in') that day. The Lord is very specific; He needed to be; so beyond dispute we must be able to fix 'that day'. It is quite a simple matter to do this, for the Lord said it was the day when, upon His request, the Father would give them the other Comforter to abide with them for ever. It could be thought, and certainly has been said by some, that this is precisely what took place on Easter day.

Now if this be so, it must be agreed by all that this must be 'that day', but there is no proof of this. On the contrary it would appear most certain that the gift of the person of the Holy Ghost was not made to them at Easter, but on the day of Pentecost. This seems clear enough, both from Peter's words on the day of Pentecost to the Jews in the presence of the Church, and also his later statements to the apostles. Without controversy, Peter must be regarded as the chief witness of the Lord in this matter. He it was who made all the original statements about this baptism, and examination of them proves that he is absolutely consistent in his deposition. Much of what the Lord said in John 14 certainly did have a fulfilment on Easter day though, as we shall see.

Speaking of that day, He said 'I will come to you', and He most certainly did that. Another thing He said was, 'because I live ye shall live also', and if breathing on them accomplished that, then on Easter Day they undoubtedly lived because He did. However, there is not sufficient evidence to show that they lived; in fact, once again most of the evidence seems to prove exactly the opposite. Jesus said, 'at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me and I in you', and that is precisely what they did not know upon that occasion. On the contrary He certainly was not in them and they in Him; He was outside them and they were outside Him; both they and He knew it and so does everyone else who reads the scripture. Beside this, subsequent events proved it to them beyond measure:

1. He again appeared to them (without) eight days after.
2. 'He showed Himself again' to them (afar off from them and their boat) upon the shore of the Sea of Tiberias.
3. He entertained them to a meal and afterwards walked along the beach with Peter, followed by John.
4. 'He led them out as far as to Bethany'.
5. 'The eleven disciples went away into Galilee into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them ... they saw Him ... Jesus came and spake unto them'.

6. After the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God.
7. Angels said to them, 'this same Jesus which is taken from you into heaven...'

This seems to be conclusive enough evidence that Easter day was not 'that day' of which the Lord spoke in the upper room, for manifestly during all these days He was not inside but outside them, and quite deliberately so. He was certainly not one with them and they with Him and with each other as He had prayed they should be; 'that day' of fulfilment did not arrive until 'the day of Pentecost had fully come'. When 'that day' came, all the Lord had said would happen to them did happen; especially those things He spoke in John 14:20. Beside this, we read in Acts 2:44, 'all that believed were together and had all things common', which is even more than the Lord had said. We see then that what happened to the apostles on Easter day was less than the Lord had said, but that what happened at Pentecost was more than He had said. This good measure, pressed down and running over seems to be logical proof that the Lord's statements were truly fulfilled in them then. 'At that day' He had said, ye shall know that I am in my Father and ye in Me and I in you', and sure enough when they were baptized in the Holy Ghost they immediately knew these things, and that His word was truth (Acts 2:32-36), but they did not know on Easter day. All they knew upon that occasion was that He was risen from the dead and was with them, speaking, showing them His hands and side, breathing on them, commissioning them for further service. Except for the nail-prints and special on-breathing, He had done such things before.

Having seen from scripture that what took place in the apostles' experience on Easter day was not regeneration, it ought to be possible to come to some understanding of what did happen, for it is often far more easy to show what a thing is not, than to prove what it is. An attempt to show what did actually happen is therefore set out below.

If we allow the miraculous event to stand as it is, without trying to invest it with mystical power beyond what we plainly read, we shall do ourselves the greatest service in the matter. Doing this, we see at once that the Lord's action in breathing on them was all part of His plan to identify Himself to His fearful disciples. Up until that time they had thought Him to be only an apparition. They had not fully accepted that He was really alive, and had received reports of the resurrection as idle tales. So when He appeared, the Lord repeated the normal daily greeting, and then used special words to them *which they alone had heard Him speak*. It was a simple enough plan; only they had heard Him say to His Father, 'As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world'. So seeking to reassure their hearts, He takes up the same words, and uses them in a slightly different form, 'as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you'. It was not the only reason why He used those words, but it must have been wonderfully comforting to their hearts.

Yet with sweeter intentions and something of grace and power beyond what they had ever known He went further still. Drawing even nearer, He dispelled their last lurking doubts and fears by breathing on them. That did it; His lovely warm breath (as John the recorder especially had felt it in the upper room when he laid his head on his breast), chased away all their hesitations and questionings; their lingering doubts vanished. This was no deception, it was Jesus; it was no cold deceiving spirit, it was really HE. 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost', He said, 'whose soever sins ye remit, they are

remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained'. He came to establish His bona fides; they saw Him, heard His voice, felt His breath, saw His wounds, remembered His words, received His command. Quite clearly in this lies the reason why they needed the special impartation of the Holy Spirit; the commission makes clear the need for the ministration, and what an unique charge it was. No-one else had ever had such an awesome responsibility placed upon them before. The staggering fact was that from that moment, in a limited capacity, they were to act as God on the earth. They had done this before in a much more limited way when they had preached and healed and cast out demons in Jesus' name, but never had they dealt in authoritative forgiveness of sins.

Upon an earlier occasion they had heard Jesus grant to a man absolution from his sins; it happened during the course of a miraculous healing. For this He was accused by His enemies of making blasphemous statements and being an imposter; 'who can forgive sins but God alone?' they said. Until Easter day He had never delegated that kind of authority to anyone; lesser things, yes, but never had He even suggested to them that they should, or could, forgive sins. This was entirely new. Never before had He allowed them to do anything more than prophets and sent-ones of the Old Testament had done. Their fathers had acted with authority to speak and heal in their day, but had never been granted powers of absolution or retention. But now with this impartation, they were enabled and commissioned to deal with sins also; it was almost too incredible to take in. Every one in that room, including the Lord Himself, knew that this was quite impossible unless He gave them some most extraordinary gift or presence or power. There would have been no problem in the minds of the apostles as to why they needed this special in-breathing of the Holy Ghost; they knew exactly for what reason it was granted.

With the final exposure of the sham of degenerate Judaistic practices came the need for their replacement. Hearts in Israel, though confused by events, were crying out for reality. When Jesus died, God rent the veil in the Temple from top to bottom; there was nothing there, 'Ichabod' was written over everything. There were no means on earth for men to have their sins forgiven; worse still there was no-one now to whom they could go, for Jesus was no longer in the world. Therefore God had to do something lest He leave Himself without witness. So by the on-breathing of the Holy Ghost, He committed to these men what, until then, had been the sole prerogative of God; the supreme authority and ability to forgive sins.

It was a special dispensation; undoubtedly it was bestowed in anticipation of new birth and the life they would receive at Pentecost. Later they were to be given command to tarry till they were endued with power from on high; they had the commission, but not the life and power. They must not attempt to act in their authority until they should by new birth become living witnesses unto Jesus Christ. It was a great commission, far exceeding anything that went before, but it no more required new birth for its reception than did the commission to work miracles which they had received years earlier. They still retained that and to it this was added. Then we may ask the question, 'why could it not all have been done together on the day of Pentecost?' An answer to that is, 'simply because the Lord did not wish the general state of regeneration to include this special authorization.' It belonged exclusively to the apostles of the Lamb, and the Lord did not intend it to be passed on to others in apostolic succession either.

There is perhaps also another acceptable reason to be found for this special bestowal of the Spirit before Pentecost. In Acts 1:1 and 2, we read that 'Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He was taken up'. For forty days following His resurrection He showed Himself alive to His apostles by many infallible proofs, speaking to them of the Kingdom of God; this he did 'by the Holy Ghost'. It was a very important time, and it was obviously for this that He needed to impart the Holy Ghost to them; the Spirit was to be the necessary link between them and their Lord. This is what He was doing when He breathed on them in the house that day. By this initial impartation by on-breathing, and the consequent ministration throughout the following period, the Lord graciously prepared them for the new era. On the day of ascension He finally left the earth to go home to His Father; knowing of this He instituted the means by which He could train them for the time to come when His visible presence (may we say 'Parousia' Gk?) would no longer be with them. They needed to become used to the experience of Jesus speaking to them when not visibly present with them. What better method or what more timely moment, then, to introduce and authenticate to them the oral gifts? Although all of them had already been given the gifts of healing and miracles, so far as we know none of those men had as yet received the gift of prophecy. Excepting one or two rare occasions, the oral gifts were unknown to the apostles before Calvary; the great prophets before them had spoken words of wisdom or knowledge or prophecy, but as far as we can trace only one of them had done so; they needed to move into a new realm, so He breathed on them the Holy Spirit.

Of course they had heard the marvellous utterances of the Lord, but He had always been visibly present with them at the time of utterance, so they had no difficulty in associating the words with the person. However, because of His necessary absence, and according to His future plans for them and all men, they needed to be assured of the genuineness of the oral gifts, so over the period of forty days, with patient love, He came and taught them, perhaps by this method. We do not exactly know this to be true, but (summarizing the above) we do know that:

1. None of the apostles appeared to possess or use oral gifts before the Resurrection.
2. The Lord had breathed on them purposely to impart the Holy Spirit.
3. Peter appeared to possess an oral gift following the Resurrection and before Pentecost, (Acts 1:15-22), which allows the assumption that they may all have received one.
4. These gifts are later called the gifts of the Spirit.
5. The scripture definitely says 'He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments unto the apostles'.
6. This must have been an extraordinary occurrence to have received such special mention, for had it been usual, attention would not have been deliberately drawn to it.
7. Had the communications been made as they had always been, no mention need have been made of the Holy Spirit.

Thus it may not be so much a gratuitous assumption as an allowable deduction that the Lord only taught the apostles by: (1) showing Himself alive and talking to them in the normal ways, (2) by remaining invisible and using the oral gift of prophecy for the purpose. However, whichever way He did it, they were perfectly prepared by Him for His coming to them on the day of Pentecost, as He had said in John 14. During those forty days they still awaited 'that day' of knowledge that He had come to abide with them for ever, and looked forward confidently to it in sure hope of His word.

Recognition of all this clarifies many things otherwise inexplicable, stabilizing and fixing them in the understanding.

Arising from this sure foundation, a simple fact emerges, namely that strictly speaking the gifts of the Spirit do not function by the Baptism of the Spirit. As we have seen, some gifts were being operated by at least 82 disciples long before the day of Pentecost, and also that to some of them other gifts may have been added just prior to it. Granted this, it is true to say that upon such evidence it cannot be accepted as a scripturally proven fact that the gifts of the Spirit are either given in or function by the Baptism of the Spirit. On the other hand, scripture provides sure ground for believing that they function in the Church by special authorization under the anointing of the Spirit. They are dispensed in the body of Christ for two main reasons: (1) the edification of His body, (2) the testimony to the world that 'the kingdom of heaven is (still) at hand'. We will not now pursue this line any further, instead we will return to the opening thematic outline and consider the truth of the One Baptism in the context of the New Testament epistles.

Upon examination, it is evident that none of the apostles' writings directly say, or in any way hint, that they thought — even if they did not teach — that there is any more than One Baptism. Commencing with the book of Romans, we discover that the references to the subject are very few. In chapter 6:3,4, Paul speaks of the Baptism in words which leave us with no doubt as to what he means. At this point he is introducing his exposition of life in the Spirit. He develops the theme in chapter 8, elaborates it still further in chapter 12, and completes it in chapter 15, culminating in verse 19. Besides these chapters, there are only two other references to the Holy Spirit in the whole epistle. Nowhere in this letter does the phrase 'baptism with, or in, or of the Spirit' occur, and neither does the phrase 'one baptism', but it is quite obvious that when speaking of baptism Paul is alluding to the one and only Baptism in the Holy Ghost.

In the first of these scriptures it is most evident that the reference is to a spiritual baptism. Water cannot be found in Romans 6, for water cannot possibly be the medium wherein men are baptized into Jesus Christ. Water is only used as the most suitable medium in which to enact the idea of death, burial and resurrection before the eyes of men. Before God, the only medium in which the real death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ could possibly be experienced is the Spirit, for it is the only realm in which it exists. We have to be baptized in the Spirit in order to be baptized via His death and burial and resurrection into Him; it cannot be otherwise, for all He ever did for us historically now exists only in that realm. We are not immersed in or made beneficiaries of a now non-existent event — a memory. The redeeming, regenerating act and experience lies in (the) Spirit. It was accomplished by Christ with this in mind and only for that purpose. In order that we may have the eternal life referred to in chapter 6 verse 23, it is absolutely necessary for us to be baptized in the Spirit. Eternal life is 'in Christ Jesus', chapter 8 verse 1, and being baptized into Him, we shall find the life which is described in detail in the rest of the chapter developing in us to the full. Thereby we shall be formed in the image of the Son to which we were conformed by God's will before the world began. This is life in the Spirit as opposed to the life under law, so graphically revealed in chapter 7.

In chapter 12, Paul moves straight on from the famous opening verse to speak of 'one body', 'many members', 'different offices', and 'then gifts'. Nowhere in any of these

verses has he even remotely hinted that between the baptism of chapter 6 verse 3, and installation into these offices and possession of these gifts, and their operations and ministries, there must be another baptism. If it be true that before a man can have power to operate gifts for service he must undergo a further baptism, why in this most logical and closely argued epistle does not Paul mention it? If a man needs it, and God provides and therefore demands it, then where is it? For an apostle charged with the special duty of teaching the Gentiles, Paul is strangely silent on the matter of plurality of baptisms. The whole implication, if not the clear statement of the apostle in this epistle, is that there is only One Baptism.

Proceeding to his first epistle to the Corinthians, we find the same kind of thing. In the 12th chapter he writes with absolute clarity about being baptized in one Spirit into one body, and being 'made to drink into one Spirit'. This is set in the opening verses of a chapter specifically dealing with the gifts of the Spirit, at the beginning of the most famous and detailed section on the subject in the whole Bible. He leaves the unprejudiced reader under no illusion here: he says we all ought to possess and function in these gifts, and tells us how properly to do so to the glory of God; but he does not anywhere speak one word of another so-called baptism in the Spirit beyond the one already mentioned in verse 13. If it be true that there is in fact another baptism and Paul did not mention it, he must surely be charged with neglecting his responsibilities to the point of dereliction of duty. Of course, this charge can never be brought, for there is no other baptism but one, as he so plainly said later in the Ephesian letter.

Writing to the Galatians, Paul mentions the word baptism once only — in 3:27. This verse is as clear an allusion to the verses we have seen in 1 Corinthians 12 as is possible to wish for. It comes at the end of a chapter dealing with receiving 'the promise of the Spirit through faith', which is set subsequent in order of truth to the cross. All this is presented in the context of such words as, 'the blessing', 'the covenant', 'the inheritance', and being 'children of God'. It is most obviously to this that the baptism refers and certainly not directly to gifts of the Spirit. Nevertheless although he does not mention these specifically, they do have their place in the chapter: it is by no means a prominent one, but we arrive at that conclusion by inference from verse 5. Seeing that so far throughout the whole of the epistles into which we have searched there has been no reference to the subject, why does not this responsible man tell us that we need another baptism for power or some such thing? The answer must simply be because it has no foundation in fact, and therefore has no place in the Bible.

Passing on now to the Ephesian letter, we find that the subject of baptism comes up but once in chapter 4 verse 5, as 'one baptism'. It is so unequivocal that it is almost superfluous to write about it. It is true; that is why it is written. Despite that, however, it has been thought by some that a second spiritual baptism is intended to be understood, or may be presumed to exist and rightly to be inferred from Paul's language in 1:12 & 13. Because he says 'ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise *after* that ye believed', it is presumed he meant to say one of two things: either 'ye were baptized in the Spirit a long time after ye believed, or ye were baptized in the Spirit when ye believed the second time', but he did not say that, nor did he mean it. It is absolutely true that the baptism or sealing only takes place after a person believes; it is most certain that no-one can receive a second baptism in the Holy

Ghost. The assumption is that the first baptism is into the body for life, and the second is the enduement of power for service, or for entire sanctification.

One clear look into the Greek of the passage should dispel that whole idea. The word 'trusted' in verse 12 is really half a word. In order to convey the original thought, it should be hyphenated to 'first', making one word — 'first-hoped' or 'fore-hoped'. The second word 'trusted' in verse 13 is not there at all in the original. Reading these verses with this in mind, the inspired statement can be understood to mean, 'when you heard at first you hoped; then later when your hope turned to faith ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise'. In other words, 'you were baptized in the Holy Spirit after you had heard and believed the gospel'. Paul here is almost certainly referring to their experience as recorded in Acts 19:1-6. Under John Baptist's heraldic ministry, people had only 'fore-hoped' in Christ. They at first hoped that John was the Christ, then when he disillusioned them about that, they were baptized under him in hope that their Messiah would immediately come. It was this preaching and ministry that the Ephesians had received through Apollos, John's disciple. Later when Paul went to Ephesus, this was the kind of background he found there, but when he preached the gospel to them, their fore-hopes turned to faith — they believed and received.

There is no mention of the word baptism in the Philippian letter, so we pass on to Colossians and note the single reference to it there in chapter 2 verse 12. Here again, with persistent clarity of purpose, the blessed Holy Spirit tells us all that we ought to wish to know from this epistle on this matter. It is God's method of including us into and making us partakers with Christ of His burial and resurrection; it is an operation of God. So strongly is the whole point made, that the word 'baptism' here can only rightly be translated '*the* Baptism', for it is definitely and objectively pointed out to the mind. There could hardly be found a clearer way of saying, 'This is the objective to aim at; this is that most important experience for you to undergo; this Baptism; definitely it is this'. Quite unmistakably it is the only one spoken of, and just as clearly it has no direct connection with the gifts of the Spirit, but apparently it does bring us into the body of Christ (verses 17 and 19). There are references in other epistles which have been considered already so that we need not examine them here.

Perhaps one of the greatest mistakes made in seeking to interpret scripture, and especially this truth of the Baptism in the Spirit, is in assuming that the Bible has always been in its present format. This is not so. When one considers, for instance, that the scripture from which Jesus read in the synagogue was possibly just a scroll of Isaiah, and not even a complete copy of the Old Testament as it then existed, and also that the early Church never had a New Testament at all, it may help us to grasp a very salutary yet simple fact, most significant to us now.

In Acts 2 Luke has recorded the story of the Church's Pentecost — its true birth-day. Sadly enough, the whole thing was immediately opposed by the entire Jewish religious world. With amazement and doubt, and some mockery even, the question was asked, 'what meaneth this?' Standing up with the eleven, Peter took upon himself the responsibility of answering the question. The result was a foregone conclusion, for during the early events connected with the resurrection, the Lord had opened the understanding of the apostles to comprehend the scriptures. It seems that upon that occasion He took them through Moses and the prophets and David's psalms, giving them special insight into the prophetic statements concerning His suffering and death

and resurrection. It is not surprising then that, following that clothing from heaven, Peter is found handling the Hebrew scriptures with unerring accuracy.

Therefore in answer to the question, the apostle says, 'this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel'. Going on to quote him at length, Peter then points to 'Jesus of Nazareth', a man who, although He was 'approved of God' among them, was unreasonably crucified at their hands. This Jesus, he said, was raised up and exalted by God to shed forth 'this which ye now see and hear'. Although it was a visible, audible, recognizable experience, what was seen and heard was objected to, and still is by some. This is a great pity, but it is not altogether the fault of the objectors that the mighty Baptism is discredited; it is sometimes the fault of the good folk who seek to defend it upon wrong ground. Strange to tell, the biggest mistakes are usually made upon the interpretation of verse 16, the text upon which the defenders of the doctrine take their surest stand.

It is absolutely true that Peter's words are precisely right. They were then; they are now. What is not true though is that he said 'This is that', and *only this* is that, and that's that, and nothing else is that because 'this' is all there is to it. Such a specious approach to the text misinterprets Peter to mean 'this' is all that God intends you to understand by the words 'the Baptism in the Spirit', and only 'this'. Nothing could be more absurd: Peter did not say that because it is not true. What he said is absolutely true as far as it goes of course, and cannot be improved upon, but there is a lot more in the Baptism than that which Joel wrote. If it be perfectly true that what took place on the day of Pentecost was that which Joel had said about the Baptism in the Spirit, ought it not to be equally true that what Jesus said about that Baptism also took place at the same time? The answer to that question is undoubtedly an unqualified 'Yes'. But it would have been useless for the apostles to attempt to repeat what Jesus had said exclusively to them, to a crowd of devout Jews. These people had but lately crucified and slain their Lord, and were still refusing to believe in His resurrection. What did they care about anything He had said about this or any other subject?

Behold the wisdom of God in this. Peter did not refer to Jesus' sayings, for to the company he was addressing Jesus was a discounted, discredited criminal liar, who had suffered capital punishment for His blasphemous crimes. It looks horrible in print, but nevertheless it was what they thought at that time. Peter could not therefore sensibly refer to the Lord's promises, and even had he done so, it would have been worse than useless, for to those Jews and proselytes, there was no proof that Jesus had ever said anything. His words were not in their scriptures. Further, Peter could not make any reference to what New Testament scriptures said about it, for none of them were written. He could not say, 'as the apostle John wrote in the fourteenth chapter of his Gospel, verses 15-20', for John had no idea at that time that he would ever write a Gospel, and he was quite unknown anyway. Nor could Peter say, 'this is that which our brother Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12', because Saul of Tarsus was at that time an unconverted blasphemer, one of 'them'. Obviously he had not then written of the glories of the Church's experience and superior knowledge of the Baptism.

At the time Peter was speaking, all the writers of the New Testament had as yet to take up their pens, so on the day of Pentecost there was nothing of Gospel or Epistle to which Peter could refer. Moreover, the occasion could not be repeated. Peter just had to take an Old Testament reference and apply that to the event taking place, even though it was woefully inadequate to describe properly and fully the mighty Baptism

taking place on that day. There was nothing else to use, for there was no other inspired source to which he could refer. Under the Spirit's hand, Peter selected Joel's prophecy, and applied it to the occasion because it is a true reference to what was taking place. There are also other references to it in the Old Testament, any of which he could have used with equal accuracy, but however many he may have quoted, all would have been partial and incomplete. Neither Joel nor Isaiah nor any other prophet of Israel could give the whole, nor yet the greatest, nor yet the most vitally important testimony to the Baptism. The great tragedy is that, because of prevailing ignorance about these things, the incompleteness of the Old Testament has caused severely limited thinking to develop in the Church about it. Inevitably this has affected the ministry, which in turn has led to partial and shallow experiences among God's people. Tragedy upon tragedy, the Church in many instances does not see to which covenant it belongs, preferring to make much of what an Old Testament prophet said about the One true Baptism and nothing, or little, of the sayings of the great apostles of the New Testament when they wrote on the subject.

Surely the men who experienced that mighty initial baptismal regeneration into the Church knew far more of what it meant than any of those who, in an earlier dispensation, wrote with minds which were confessedly enquiring into what it all meant: 1 Peter 1:10-12. Joel wrote by inspiration alone, knowing nothing of the experience of it, therefore he had to write informatively only, and having only this lesser part, he wrote of the lesser, partial experience. The better part has been written by the saints of the New Testament, who from experience supply us with the details of the basic life it brings. These are they who by the same Spirit inform us of these far more important truths of the Baptism which are missing from the Old Testament.

We need to know all the things written in scripture, or God would not have recorded them, but it is of far greater importance for us to know what the apostles of Christ's Church said about that Church, than what non-member prophets said about it. The simple reason for their lack of complete knowledge is that the truth of the Church was hidden from them. Even though God spoke in times past by the prophets, for ages and generations the mystery of the Church lay hidden from them all. Because the apostle referred to the prophet, it does not mean that he was thereby abdicating his own office; Joel's description was absolutely right, but only as far as it went. Like everything under the Old Covenant, it was weak through the flesh and was superseded, firstly because it did not go far enough, secondly because it was incomplete, and thirdly because it was most certainly not final.

The Old Testament deals chiefly with outward manifestations, but inward reality and spiritual truth came all graciously with the Lord Jesus Christ. and with this the New Testament is principally concerned. The prophets, including Joel, prophesied of outward things; it is therefore absolutely right that they should speak of outward signs; but the apostles, in common with their Lord, spoke of inward things. Therefore we must ever bear in mind that although the Baptism is 'that' which Joel spoke, it is more than 'that', it is also what Jesus and Paul and John say.

The substance of Peter's prophetic ministry that day will supply us with just the illustration we need. He said, 'Jesus of Nazareth, a man'. So He was; this Jesus of Nazareth is that man. Yes, He was a man; but He was more, oh how much more than that. See Him now, seated on the throne; the fulfilment of Davidic prophecy, the glory of God, the Baptizer in the Holy Ghost; King, God, Man, Lord, Christ. *This One* is

That Man. He was certainly that, but more than That; He is also that I AM.
Hallelujah! The audible tongue that speaks in unknown outward praise is good; the inward tongue that cries 'Abba Father' is far, far better. But having the greater, let us not refuse the lesser, for although the better be of greater value, the best of all is to have both the greater and the lesser together. Each is for its purpose, and must not be confused with the other, lest, like Esau of old, we should cry 'I have enough'; whereas his brother Israel could say 'I have all'. Paul, whose statement commenced and inspired these pages, shall end the matter for us in words which go even further than Israel's, 'I have all and abound, I am full'.

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12-MAY-03
81 pages (A4)

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REDEMPTION

G.W.NORTH

First published in booklet form September 1979.
Revised and reprinted September 1983
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REDEMPTION

1 - IN HIM THROUGH HIS BLOOD.

Redemption is a mystery. In the Colossian letter Paul relates it to 'the kingdom of his dear Son', into which we have been translated. He speaks of the Father's dear Son in whom we have redemption through His blood, and places all in context of creation, deliverance, firstborn, the Church. This array of familiar words connected here with such phrases as inheritance of the saints in light, kingdom of His dear Son, image of the invisible God, power of darkness, firstborn from the dead, has greater significance than may at first appear. In other settings these phrases would be very familiar, for each of them carries historical overtones. But leaving these, we will consider the great miracle of redemption itself.

It is not the fact and means of redemption that concerns us here, but Paul's assertion that we have redemption in the Son of His love. The fact that redemption is through His blood inspires us all with grateful love that He should have been so lovingly willing and unspeakably ready to suffer and die for us. Our souls need little stirring up to wonder at such love and grace. Redemption is through bloodshed. This is declared again and again throughout scripture, in the Old Testament by Moses and in the New Testament by Peter, Paul and John and the writer to the Hebrews. Each of these emphasises the importance of bloodshed, saying that apart from it there could have been no remission of sins.

In his first epistle Peter writes, 'ye were not redeemed with corruptible things but with the precious blood of Christ'. The Hebrews letter states, 'almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission'. Both these writers also speak of the blood of sprinkling, the latter drawing our attention to what it accomplishes. John in turn tells of its amazing power to cleanse and loose, and the part it plays in overcoming satan. Should we be able to compile a list of the virtues, uses and accomplishments of the blood of the Lamb, it would surely be almost unending. Poets and prophets, preachers and teachers have left us such a legacy of sacred knowledge of the blood of Christ that no attempt to add to it need be made here. We are all sufficiently acquainted with this vast treasure to be able to quote many of the various authors verbatim; and so we should, for who would be redeemed except the blood had been shed, and who could have supplied blood so precious as His? We must never submit to any attempt to diminish the abundance of testimony to the redeeming power of the blood of Christ; instead we too must for ever testify to the efficacy of that blood and strongly assert its indispensable place in the whole scheme of redemption.

To do this properly we all need to be taught of the Spirit, especially with regard to the revelation given through Paul. This apostle claims to have been caught up to paradise to receive special revelation from God. He says also that there came a time in his life when he went up to Jerusalem in order to communicate to the apostles and elders the gospel he was preaching. They 'added nothing to me', he says, but there is no doubt he

added to them. In certain matters the Lord through Paul greatly enlarged upon the things He had previously revealed to Peter and John. Through Paul, the Lord has been pleased to make known vast mysteries, taking him into His confidence and revealing to him the workings of many secrets not otherwise revealed. This precious knowledge of our oneness and identity with the Lord Jesus is of incalculable worth; it is also of utmost importance to us, for apart from this we should not have known the deepest secrets or redemption.

All the great amount of truth previously revealed on the subject would have been incomplete without Paul's vital contribution. The extensive scriptural literature on the subject, from Moses onwards into the Church age, makes much of it, but it is given to Paul alone to tell us 'in Him we have redemption'. Seldom is the little preposition 'in' emphasised, with the result that the immeasurable truth it opens up is largely unknown.

The word 'in' emphasises the person above His blood; it announces plainly that the shedding of His blood was a means to an end. The bloodshed was necessary and indispensable to our redemption. It was not the end of it, however, but only the foundation. Beyond the fact of redemption through bloodshed, that little word 'in' draws our attention to the Redeemer who shed it. Properly understood, it reveals redemption in an entirely new and greater light, for it draws attention to truth not otherwise made known. This new realm of truth may be best summed up in the word identity.

What glories await discovery by the awakened heart beginning to understand the fullest implications of this miracle wrought by God. No wonder the apostle prays for the Ephesians that the eyes of their hearts may be enlightened. He had just told them they had been made acceptable in the Beloved 'in whom they had redemption through His blood.' Now he prays that they shall 'see' all he is writing to them. He wants all men to see and enter into the 'in-ness' of it all. Much has been made of the outwardness of redemption — the cross, the tortures, the blood, the suffering, the death, and rightly so, but it is high time the churches entered with understanding into the 'in-ness' of it all.

2 - IDENTIFICATION AND SUBSTITUTION.

We must enter into the meaning of this saying - 'Jesus died for me as me'. The truth of substitution may be defined as 'one in place of another'; it has often been preached in such words as 'in my room and stead'. This has come to mean 'one taking the place of another with the purpose of taking the sin of - bearing the punishment of - paying the debt of - dying the death of - another, upon the condition that the other be entirely exonerated, reprieved and set free'. More than that, because of the justifying intention of God in the act, the one reprieved goes out from under all condemnation, entirely forgiven by Him and given a righteousness which not only avails for the present, but also for all the past days of his life. This righteousness is the righteousness of man, for it is the righteousness of the Man Christ Jesus. It is also the righteousness of God made manifest in flesh; it is perfect.

Substitution has come to mean transference also. In the act of redemption the sinner's sin is transferred from him to Jesus Christ, the righteous Man, and this righteous Man's righteousness is transferred to the sinner. It should be noted at this point that

the state of sinlessness cannot exist as of itself. God is sinless, but He cannot be sinless unless He is righteous. Sinlessness is a negative state - absence of sin; it can only exist as the result of the positive, powerful state of righteousness. That is why in order to save men God has to impart righteousness to them. In us it becomes the powerful working principle of new life apart from which it could not be.

Sinlessness, righteousness and holiness must co-exist in us as one as they do in God, or else they cannot exist in us at all. Righteousness precludes sin and produces holiness. In regenerate men sinlessness is the direct result of the powerful working of righteousness producing holiness as its fruit in the life. Sin does not grow on the tree of righteousness, its fruit is holiness. 'Either make the tree good and its fruit good', says Jesus, 'or else make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt'. A good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

These truths introduce us to some of the basic powers and workings of redemption, without which it could not be. But Paul informs us of something greater by far, unto which all these are steps on the way. Words like substitution, atonement, justification etc. are technical terms of theology. They are classifications necessary to analytical thought; they must never be accepted as rigid limitations or watertight compartments. For instance substitution must not only be understood as Jesus dying for me instead of me, but also for me as me.

When He hung on the cross, Jesus was not only made sin, He was also made the sinner. He was made murder, adultery, filth, uncleanness, the lie, deceit, pride, betrayal and whatever other manifestation of evil may be named as sin. He was also made and treated as the murderer, the adulterer, the source of filth and uncleanness, the one who both did and was capable of doing all these things. Jesus went to the cross as the sinner, there to be made the sin, the one needing cleansing, forgiving, justifying, saving, reconciling, redeeming. He also went to the cross as God, the one who cleanses, forgives, justifies, saves, reconciles, redeems. More, He went there as cleansing, forgiveness, justification, salvation, reconciliation, redemption. So completely is Christ Jesus everything, and made everything to us.

On this ground of realisation Paul seeks to impart the revelation to us - identification. Substitution has neither justification nor spiritual meaning unless it is part of this. God Himself would not have been true, nor could He have justified us unless upon this ground. In fact there could have been no justification for anyone or anything except upon the basis of identification. All would have been a manipulation of ideas having no substance, and entirely without truth. There could be no true God; in fact nothing. Spiritual identification, as it is now revealed unto men, arose from identity of being in God, and is not, nor could have been, possible apart from it. New Testament salvation is an adaptation and application of God's own being and life and requirements to man and his needs. Its comprehensiveness is astounding; even the beginnings of understanding are overwhelming. God's propositions and provisions to us in Christ are well-nigh incredible.

This is why each one in the New Covenant must be taught of God. To read the writings of those who were so taught is to receive the first faint glimmerings of the seeming broad daylight of understanding in which they lived. Their intention by writing was to bring us all into their own enjoyed state; it is also the purpose of God

who inspired them. He wants us to pass into Him in conscious experience of redemption and to live eternally in that state. For this reason God became Man.

We behold the beginnings of this identification in the incarnation when God miraculously identified Himself with man by birth. We further see it at Jordan, as the Lord steps into the place of sinners and identifies Himself with them there by water baptism. There John said, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world'. Jesus said, 'Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness'; and God the Father said, 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased'. But not until Calvary do we see it in all fullness.

God did a marvellous thing at Calvary, but it was not the final goal; the blood shed there was the most vital factor in the plan of redemption as it was revealed at that point, because it flowed from that identity and unification from which all came and into which it brings (all). Jesus was not a sinner by birth, nor was He a sinner at Jordan, but at Golgotha He was made the sinner. He had to be, or else He had no business with the cross, nor would it have been right for His Father to sacrifice Him there. God had to be just in what He did.

Not for Him the high-handed actions and despotic words of men. In all His words and works He had to be justified before angels; He also has to be seen to be right in the eyes of all devils and principalities and powers. More than that, God has to be seen to be righteous and just and faithful in all He does before the eyes of all His saints. Not that God is judged of men, or that man ought to approach his Lord with this in mind, but so great and gracious is our God that He has even acted with this in mind too. He is absolutely perfect beyond degree. Therefore everything He achieved at Calvary was primarily by identification, and as following logically from that by substitution also. All was accomplished in, and upon, and by, one person, in one act, at one time.

Gethsemane had been the place of final decision. To God, Jesus' sweat there was as precious as His blood on the cross; it is recorded plainly enough, 'his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground'. To His Father that hour of agony sealed the redemptive virtues latent in His blood, so soon to be shed; it justified the whole course they had so far travelled together, and vindicated the actions He intended shortly to take. 'Abba, Father', Jesus cried in repetitive assertion of Sonship; child and Son and man though He was, He felt a babe as the shadow of death loomed over Him, dark and threatening. 'Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

What the Father said to Him there no one knows; we only have the record of what Jesus said to His Father. It may be that between the words 'me' and 'nevertheless' the Father said 'it is not possible' or 'no Son, this cup must be drunk to the bottom', and Jesus replied in resignation and agreement, 'nevertheless not my will but thine be done'. On the other hand, perhaps this is the first of the occasions when Jesus called upon His Father and received no answer. We have no means of knowing. Angels came and ministered to Him.

He arose strengthened from His vigil, physically restored, and went obediently to the cross, confident in His God and Father. The Man's last appeals against God's sentence were uttered, He had received and agreed to His final directives. From that moment He was treated as the sinner; the Spirit led Him all the way. Betrayal, apprehension, desertion by man followed in swift succession, but these were only the beginning of

sorrows; imprisonment, torture, mockery, beating, blasphemy, denial, judgement all following in their train added to His miseries.

To us who view afar off, all were so wrong, but to Him all was so right. He had accepted the cup and was drinking it. It was self-applied, though given Him from His Father's hand; He blamed nobody. He loved and excused His civil judge and totally forgave those who carried out the sentence. Having taken the sinners' place, He was fully prepared to be made sin. He pleaded no cause, sought no reprieve, asked no mercy, begged no pardon; boldly He approached the awful hour, bearing His cross, accepting the terrible curse. He had consented to it all; He knew His own righteousness would sustain Him; His Father would keep Him and His God would save Him.

So as the man of sin - the sinner bearing his own sin - the Man bearing the sin of the world - the victim of the curse - He went to the cross. There He hung totally identified with man, as the outcast, the unforgivable, the unjustifiable, the unredeemable, the forsaken. He was the soul needing salvation, humanity needing redemption, personality needing justifying, enmity needing reconciling, nature needing regenerating, death needing life and man needing God. Hopeless, helpless, He became nothing and less than nothing. With awful wonder we are permitted to see His identification with man going far beyond 'being found in fashion as a man', to utter identity with him in his sin. More even than that, going further still beyond the comprehension of the mind, He became the representation of man's nature - sin itself.

Here lies the deepest mystery of everything connected with God's love and man's salvation. At the same time He became as the sinner, and on that same cross where He was so identified with sin, He was the sinless man utterly identified with God and clearly identifiable as righteousness. The wonder of Jesus on the cross was that there He was also the Christ; He did not need to forsake one in order to become the other. He was both; had He not been both He would have ceased to have been either. While still representing the sin-man in extremity of need, He was also the man born of God to destroy that evil man and end that extreme need.

In short, Christ Jesus is made unto us absolutely everything. He was both the man needing to be redeemed and the Redeemer supplying the redemption he needed. Paul saw this great truth as clearly as any man. At what point he was caught up to paradise to receive the heavenly revelation is difficult to decide, but the knowledge gained from insight into this mystery lay behind many, if not all the things he said. With marvellous clarity of vision he says, 'I am (was) crucified with Christ'; with breadth of understanding he writes, 'through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus through faith in his blood', and further still says, 'in whom we have redemption'.

3 - ATONEMENT.

The idea of redemption is first introduced into the Bible in the Old Testament, and is most basic of all to the salvation therein revealed. Unlike its companion truth Atonement, it is not exclusive to that covenant, but by Christ Jesus is basic also to the salvation God provides in the New Covenant. On no account must the blood of redemption be confused in our thinking with the blood of atonements; they are not the same. In the Old Testament different sacrifices had different meanings and were made for a variety of reasons, and their blood(s) effected different results.

In most cases the multiplicity of blood(s) and the reasons for which it was shed is answered in the New Testament by the blood of Christ, but not in every case. The reason for this is that atonement was never intended for, nor is it provided by God, for the Church. It is not a Church experience, therefore it is not a New Testament doctrine. The doctrine of the Atonement belongs exclusively to the Old Testament; it was an interim provision of God for Israel only; He introduced it to them at Sinai when He gave them the law. Atonement rightly belongs to law, it goes with its nature and partakes of its limitations.

Atonement perfectly fits in with the system of imputed righteousness which God instituted for Israel, for its stated purpose is to provide coverage. Upon the basis of the implied coverage afforded by a specific atonement made according to the Law of God, a man could find forgiveness for a particular sin and be justified in His sight. That is why the word is better used always in a plural sense - atonements. By its very nature this provision could only be most limited, very repetitive and entirely retrospective and retroactive; priests made an atonement only. The blood made atonement for the soul, but when shed it only made an atonement.

Beside personal atonements, Israel also kept an annual national atonement. This was completely retrospective in character. It was ordained of God to take place on the tenth day of the seventh month each year. We will not here examine the ordinance in detail, but notice the points relevant to our theme. The atonement made on that day was for the stated purpose of cleansing the people from all their sins before the Lord. It was comprehensive. As stated, it embraced all sins of a certain kind.

The writer to the Hebrews is most helpful here. Referring in chapter nine to the annual atonement, he plainly states that upon that occasion the offering was for the errors of the people. Of old in Israel these errors were not called errors but 'sins of ignorance'. The atonement was not instituted to deal with the sins of which the people were aware, but the sins of which they had no knowledge, either on the Day of Atonement or at the time when they were committed. A whole range of things is covered by this classification, all of which could be described as sins of omission or commission because of ignorance. These were all dealt with at once, a whole year's sins of ignorance were 'covered', atoned for, blotted out, in one day.

Sins of which the people had knowledge were not included in that particular atonement however. Everyone of these had to be atoned for individually, either as soon as it was committed or immediately it was recognised for what it was; refusal to do this meant excommunication from Israel, and forfeiture of life. In those days certain sins were entirely unforgivable. Careful reading in the book of Leviticus will be sufficient to inform the enquiring mind of all it should know about this.

It is a most comforting thought that errors are regarded as such by God, for few there are who would think they never made any mistakes. But it is the more sobering description given by God to Moses which more truly shows the nature of errors. Before the Lord they are sins. Before men and women they may truly be errors, but not in His eyes. He must deal with everything according to its intrinsic as well as its moral nature and manifestation and occurrence. So, although He did not impute sin to the person who did it in ignorance, or punish the people because of their errors, He nevertheless still regarded all these as sins. He did not overlook or excuse them, but

kindly remembered all, appointing a day of special atonement that the offence they caused Him should be totally forgiven.

The element in which the atonement was effected was blood sprinkled upon the mercy seat by the high priest. But all blood was not the same blood; God neither regarded it as the same nor allowed it to be used for the same purposes. Special selection of animals and bloods was ordered by Him, each strictly legalised and appointed for and limited to specific purposes and ends. He did this because He was dealing with different kinds of sins.

On the Day of Atonement the blood which was ordained of God for these was goats' blood. Previously the same day the blood of a lamb, together with its body, had been offered upon the altar of burnt sacrifice. There was to be no mixture or confusion of bloods; God's selection for the atonement was deliberately not lambs' blood. On that day, as on every other, no blood may be shed until the lambs' blood was shed: that blood must take precedence over all other blood(s). The blood of the lamb on the altar - the blood of the goat on the mercy seat. The Hebrews' letter is quite clear about this, 'the blood of bulls and of goats', it repeatedly says, adding nothing about the lamb. Taking note of this, we may well ask, 'why the difference and what is it?'

4 - THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING.

Turning to the New Testament we discover that John is the great advocate of the Lamb: he sets Him forth in his Gospel and exalts Him in the Revelation. To John the blood is 'the blood of THE LAMB', and there is no other blood beside. It is exclusively of the Lamb's blood he is speaking when he says, 'the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin'. That his mind is also taken up with the ritual associated with the events of the Day of Atonement can hardly be doubted, for closely following the above remark he says of Jesus Christ the righteous that 'He is the propitiation (Gk. place of propitiation, or Propitiatory - Mercy Seat) for our sins'. He makes no reference to bulls or goats, yet with spiritual insight and divine understanding the apostle is dealing in this section of his epistle with sins of ignorance. These are the sins which are being constantly cleansed from us as we walk in the light, sins of which we are ignorant, sins not recognised as such by us, mistakes, sometimes repeatedly made, words, works, tones, deportment - so many things about us which are as yet unlike Jesus whom we love so well. This is the continuous function and ministry of the blood to us as we walk on in the light unto the full image and likeness of sonship.

Lower down in the epistle John deals with the other side of the sin question, and in this shows the hand of the same God at work. There must be clear understanding of heart and absolute cleavage in the mind between known sin and sins of ignorance. This passage deals with known sin, stating that 'he who is born of God does not commit sin', going even further and saying 'he cannot sin'. This is a very strong statement, which at first may appear by implication to be contradictory in spirit to what he has said earlier. So much so in fact that some have dared to alter the text in order to tone it down to some degree. But all to no avail. God cannot be corrected, and to tamper with His word is in itself sin, and an attempt to administer Him a rebuke. John meant what he said, and seeing that he was God's amanuensis, so does God. Nevertheless, the two seemingly contradictory passages do present a problem to many

devout souls who have not seen the distinction drawn by God between sins in this manner.

Unseen by us but known to God there is an iniquity even about our holy things because there is a part of us as yet unredeemed. By His power and in His grace God can and does sanctify to us things that originated in sin and came from Satan via the fall into the human race. He also sanctifies unto Himself what He has not yet redeemed, but not by the coverage afforded under the old covenant by atonement. In the New Covenant sanctification is by the cleansing power of the blood of the Lamb. However, although He does guarantee entire sanctity, God cannot overlook the evil origins of things, or shut His eyes to their nature. Nevertheless, upon His terms He keeps us cleansed by the blood, sanctifying us from all evil unto fellowship with Himself and each other without sin. For this reason no one taught of God says he has no sin. He does claim to have the seed of God in him though, and believes he does not habitually commit sin; parallel with that he also knows he is not without errors and needs cleansing constantly from them. Each of these is a manifestation of the power of the original intentions of Satan and the purpose of his present contamination of the saints who may be unaware of these things. They are glaringly offensive to God though, and must be purged by the momentary cleansing of the blood. God does not now allow for an annual cleansing, He sanctifies by permanent cleansing administered constantly.

The holy things of the Old Testament, though they were inanimate things and amoral, had to be atoned for also, therefore annual cleansing was administered to all these that they should be sanctified to God too. This done they were fitted for continued use for another year. As the people's sins of ignorance were counted as covered on the Day of Atonement so that Israel could continue as a nation, so were the 'holy things', which the priests handled and thereby contaminated, cleansed and given further permission to continue in use.

All this is bound up in the great mystery of the redemption and the Redeemer; it lies deeply rooted in the still greater mystery of identification. How could Jesus be God and man at once? How could He be made sin and yet remain free from it at the same time? The answer to the second question is found in the correct answer to the first. No man can explain the mystery but all men may rejoice in it. Similarly we cannot explain how it is possible to be free from sin and yet never be able to say we have no sin: all depends upon the power of the blood of Jesus Christ and the pleasure of God. We may all rejoice in the experience of it though and cry with John 'the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleanses us from ALL sin'.

The retroactive aspect of the blood shed and then sprinkled on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement is very clear; that blood did not cover the future but the past. The children of Israel were not thereby granted another twelve months license to sin, but pardon for a past year of unrecognised sins and absolution from the punishment they deserved. Atonement must not be confused in the mind with indulgence; it was not a contrivance whereby permission to sin was gained from God. It was a method devised by God to cover the past twelve months of sin, and should draw our attention to His exceeding great patience and everlasting mercy. It was effective only for those who, upon recognition and conviction of some previous sin, had confessed it to God and brought Him the appropriate atonement at once. Although atonement gave assurance about the future, it did not allow presumption.

Unlike the justification and sanctification afforded by the blood of the Old Testament atonements, the blood of the New Covenant does not cover sin. Superior to that it is sprinkled on hearts to actually cleanse away the sin. It is not the blood of atonement but the blood of redemption; we are actually redeemed from sin. But although the blood of Christ is effective throughout all eternity over the whole range of human sin, according to God's purposes, it is no more prospective in application than the blood of bulls and goats. The historic sacrifice and bloodshed of Jesus was sufficient to deal with all sin for ever. But no man must become presumptuous; a redeemed person may only experience the power and efficacy of the blood by continually walking in the light where constant cleansing is available. Cleansing is only moment by moment. It is designed by God to keep us instantly cleansed throughout this life as we walk in fellowship with Him on all matters. Permanent cleansing is only effected by instant cleansing.

It is important to notice that when thinking in terms of the animal creation and Jesus, nowhere does the scripture refer to Jesus' blood as the blood of a goat or of a bull; always it is presented as the blood of a lamb. Jesus is not called the goat of God or the bull of God but the Lamb of God; John says of Him that He (Himself the person), 'beareth away the sin of the world' and 'the blood of His Son cleanseth us from all sin'. Jesus the person bore it away bodily; Jesus' blood cleanses from the contamination of it. Redemption, justification and sanctification by cleansing combine in His blood and are set forth in the New Testament as superior to the coverage granted to Israel by atonement.

Something else of major importance confronts us here. A particular controversy which has long raged among theologians at once disappears when the word atonement is banished from our thinking and from the preaching of the New Covenant. Such phrases as 'partial atonement' or 'limited atonement' are seen to be misleading if only it is recognised that sin cannot be covered. If the thought of a collation of sins be retained, limited coverage might be entertained, but God in Christ did not principally deal with a multitude of sins, but with sin as a principle. Sin is the nature of the seed from which human life comes, defiling the springs of thoughts, expressing itself in words and actions. How then could God deal with it partially? It is not possible; there is no coverage for sin, only total exposure.

Principles cannot be dealt with by half, or by partial measures. Counter action extending to the whole, plus the introduction of new principles is the only way they may be dealt with. Less would leave them still operative and at best could only be considered repressive. This whole principle is revealed by redemption. The entire nation of Israel was redeemed in and from Egypt; redemption was all-inclusive. On the other hand justification was only operative for the individual who sought atonement for his sin - it was imputed to that person alone upon bloodshed and sacrifice. But the blood of the lamb upon the houses in Egypt was for the entire house of Israel. Although each house of each family was full of sinful men, if it was sprinkled with the blood of the lamb it was passed over by God. All Israel was redeemed, but of no Israelite was it said that he or she was justified or that atonement had been made. Atonement for sin was a later revelation.

5 - THE LION-LAMB.

The Lord the Lamb is referred to by John in Revelation chapter five as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, which may at first be regarded as surprising, for the lion is an unclean beast. The lion had no place in the Levitical scheme of sacrifices, but roamed freely on the earth as the mighty lord of the animal kingdom. But this titular relationship to the animal world is not made about Jesus in connection with sacrifice. When He is called the Lion it is by one of the elders around the throne, but when John looks for the lion he sees 'a Lamb as it had been slain' standing in the midst of the throne. The Lion and the Lamb are one; the elder sees the Lamb as the Lion and John sees the Lion as the Lamb.

At the time both are gazing upon the throne, John sees the cross, the sacrificial Lamb, the blood; the elder sees the tomb, the royal Lion-King, the resurrection. John, all-human, can never forget the One whom they pierced; the elder, all-divine, can never think of Him save as King of creation. Their individual perspective was quite natural to them both. They speak as they should, each from their first and longest knowledge of their Lord. The elder knew Him first as God and King. John knew Him first as man and slave: the elder knew Him as God and King made man and slave, but John knew Him as man and slave made God and King. Each knew and worshipped Him in the reverse order to the other and therefore spoke of Him in that way - we know Him to be one and the same. What a privilege is granted us.

It seems that the elder regarded Calvary as the great battleground where Jesus won honour and gained the authority to open the seven-sealed book held in the hand of the inscrutable One sitting on the throne. He saw the cross as the place where the greatest spiritual battle of all the ages was fought. It was as though Golgotha was a jungle where two mighty lions met and fought to the death. Neither granted the other any mercy; two ancient enemies matched themselves against each other in sheer naked strength. As those two lions met and engaged in battle, primitive forces of good and evil were unleashed, and with unmitigated hatred they fought on until one should destroy the other.

It was a foregone conclusion who would win. The battle was short and sharp, and even though he mustered all demon forces to his aid, the devil was defeated. He rallied all his hosts, but the lone Lion of Judah overcame him and them. In view of this, some things spoken by Jesus before His crucifixion take on new significance: one was spoken in Gethsemane - 'Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?' The other was to Pilate - 'Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above'.

Just previously Pilate, in his ignorance, had said, 'I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee', and Jesus' remark was primarily an answer to that claim. But His final acceptance of the Father's will in Gethsemane and the point-blank refusal to accept angelic help were the Lord's declaration that He was determined to allow nothing to stand between Him and the cross, and that He required help from no one. The Lord's answer to Pilate could be interpreted to mean, 'I am going into battle with satan and you cannot prevent me'. He went, He won. Hallelujah! That is how the elder saw it.

However, the words John heard were more than a revelation of an angelic or heavenly view of Calvary; his words also show the divine view of history. Jesus, the Lion of the

tribe of Judah, is the root of David, the warrior-king. In Jewish eyes David was the greatest king in Israel's history; he was the man who won back the promised land for Israel. Kings of Judah liked to trace back their lineage to him but few of the kings who sprang from David were like their 'root father'. None of them knew that he himself in spirit sprang from Jesus the Lion, the root of the tribe. Jesus is the root and foundation of true kingship; His lion-like effort and total victory at Calvary took Him to the cross and the throne. He had overcome satan as surely as David had overcome the raging lion, the prowling bear and mighty Goliath; He was the root of David's victory, and the foundation of his throne and kingdom and royalty and glory.

The patriarch and prophet Jacob had first seen it. Judah was his fourth son and seemed unlikely indeed to be given the kingly crown and sceptre; had he not three brothers older than himself? He had indeed but, as the eye of God, Jacob penetrates into the cause of present events and also sees into the distant future. Reuben, his firstborn was weak, unstable as water; he could not have the pre-eminence, there was nothing kingly about him. Simeon and Levi, next in order and named together, joined to commit a most deceitful crime; they united their strength to sin and consequently forfeited what either separately might have obtained. They were therefore divided and scattered in Israel; neither of them could wear the crown.

'Judah', said Israel his father with prophetic voice, 'thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise', and first in Judah as a person and then through his family and tribe the lion-like qualities of his father emerged, culminating eventually in the kingly virtues of David and then of David's Son. Neither weak nor divided, He was first a lion's whelp, then He couched as a lion, an old lion, waiting till the crown and sceptre were His; He became the root from which David sprang.

The prophetic saga of Judah was the spiritual manifest of the best qualities of Jacob the man, Israel the nation and David the conquering shepherd king. But chiefest of all, the Lion-Shiloh, unto whom the crown and sceptre belong and the gathering of the people shall be, is Jesus Christ the King. The elder saw it all and proclaimed Him as 'the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David', and there before him John saw Jesus the Lamb on the throne. As realisation dawned on him, John in heart and by many visions passed into the fulfilment of Jacob's prophecy. At last he heard myriads of angels around the beasts and elders, together with every creature in heaven and earth and under the earth and in the sea, praising God and the Lamb. Every one was gathered.

What a Lion the Lamb is! How much He accomplished on the cross - far too much for us to attempt to list or classify here even if we knew it all. New discoveries of His triumphant crucifixion shall surely continuously be revealed to us as time unfolds; and eternity itself shall add new dimensions and perspectives to our grateful understanding. Although we must await these great future revelations, let us with all our heart enter more deeply into the things that are already revealed. The Lion-Lamb has both overcome satan and also completely borne away the sin of the world.

In this chapter the theme of praise around the throne is the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain to redeem us to God and to make us a kingdom of priests who shall reign on the earth. In heaven the theme is redemption through the blood of the Lamb; in this connection the Lord's name is never directly linked with any other animal on earth, not even with those listed in the Pentateuch. The reason for this is that of all the

animals mentioned in the Bible the lamb is the one most commonly associated with sacrifice, and the only one named for redemption. When referring to the sacrifice made before the foundation of the world it is the Lamb that was slain. The sacrifice of the Lamb is foundational to everything God builds.

No other kinds of animal were slain for redemption; their blood(s) were not even considered by God for that purpose. For reasons decided by Him alone, only the blood of the lamb was redemptive. There is a quality of life in the Son of God so precious in His Father's eyes that has earned Him the title 'the Lamb of God'. Somehow this divine mystery has been woven into nature itself, for in the whole realm of the animal kingdom there is nothing so sweet and endearing to the human heart as a lamb. There of course the likeness between the innocent animal and Jesus ends, for a lamb is well-nigh helpless and powerless. It is not these features of a lamb that speak to us of the Lord, and this is why, in order to describe Him as adequately as possible in animal terms, the qualities of the lion are ascribed to Him. On the cross He was a lion to destroy the devil and his minions, and a lamb to redeem souls in their millions.

6 - A LAMB FOR A HOUSE.

When God of old moved Moses from the backside of the desert into Egypt, it was because the time had come for Him to redeem His people. Four hundred years before, though not in so many words, He had promised Abraham He would do so. At that time the fullness of the promise was unknown to men, but with God it was already an eternal oath involving an eventual blood covenant. Time and again He enlarged it, making further commitments to Abraham, until the day he at last made the great prophetic statement, 'God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering'. Abraham was the original patriarch, the founding father of the nation of Israel. Through him God best displayed the basic relationship of Father and Son in the Godhead, and revealed its fundamental purpose. Two fifths of a millennium passed into history before Abraham's seed had developed to race-like proportions, and by that time the children of Israel were prisoners in Egypt. So it came about that in fulfilment of His promise to Abraham, Moses was sent by God into Egypt. He was about to found a nation.

When the children of Israel went down into Egypt they were literally the family of Jacob, seventy souls in all, as yet only the beginnings of the tribes which later became the nation. But now they were a great and growing people whom God regarded as His house. How then could He leave them in the land of Egypt, 'the house of bondage'? He had determined to put into effect the eternal covenant of redemption and bring His people out of Egypt to the new homeland He had promised them through Abraham. This accomplished He would dwell in (the midst of) them and fulfil all He intended when He made that original promise to Abraham, then they would be His people and He would be their God.

God knew He could not found a house or take a nation to Himself except by the lamb, nor could He redeem them except by its blood. With this in mind He sent Moses down to Egypt and following some preliminary exchanges with Pharaoh judged and punished that nation with a series of plagues. All of this, miraculous and necessary as it was, led up to the point where He revealed redemption to Israel. He planned that this should be the basis of the last plague, as well as the substance of the last

judgement He intended to mete out upon Egypt; He carefully instructed Moses in the divine method.

Unlike His form of procedure in the other nine plagues, the Lord did not move in the same way with the tenth. Until this last occasion He had sharply divided between Egypt and Israel, dealing with each as separate nations; now He was going to deal with them individually according to their families. Every household, whether they were Egyptians or Israelites, was to be dealt with in the same way. Whereas as far as the plagues had been visited upon Egyptians only, this last plague would be visited upon all without discrimination or exception unless they obeyed God. On the other hand everybody who obeyed Him would be saved quite irrespective of race. This was entirely new, so God gave His instructions very clearly.

He said that on a certain day every man was to take a lamb - a lamb for a house. It was to be without blemish, a young male; it was to be kept until a particular day and killed at a certain hour. Its blood must then be sprinkled upon the lintels and side posts of each house in which the lamb was to be eaten. God was precise about this; the lamb was to be eaten only by those within the house upon which its blood was sprinkled. God allowed only one exception to this commandment, namely, if the number of persons in the household were too few to eat the whole lamb it could be shared with a neighbouring household, providing the house was sprinkled with the blood of the same lamb whose flesh they ate. The whole lamb had to be devoured, God was adamant about that; He would allow nothing of it to remain in Egypt; if for any reason some of it remained uneaten, it must be burned before they fled. God was redeeming His house and the whole lamb was for that whole house and that alone. As none of His redeemed people were to be left in Egypt, so nothing of the redeeming lamb could be left; God's word was 'a lamb for a house'. The blood was not acceptable to Him unless it was sprinkled upon the house: only there was it acceptable to Him. It was to be a token of their faithfulness, declaring to Him that they were within eating the lamb. If they would not eat the lamb, God would not redeem them; it was all very clear.

So it happened according to God's word; God brought out His people from Egypt and founded His nation and His house on the slain lamb. Doing so He kept to His eternal plan and also broadened the revelation. In the beginning it was 'the lamb slain from the foundation of the world'; then in Canaan it was, 'God will provide Himself a lamb'; in Egypt it is 'a lamb for a house'. Until now no mention had been made of its blood: now the blood has been given a special function; only when God saw the blood did He pass over the house on which it was sprinkled; that house and only that house was safe. But this itself was only an indication, a further step towards a fuller revelation.

7 - THE TABERNACLE (GOD'S HOUSE).

The Lord had planned that the house of Israel should be brought to and built in the land He had originally given to Abraham by promise, so He proceeded to lead the people there. The arrival there was delayed by many tragic events, during which the whole generation of responsible males that came out of Egypt was destroyed: this judgement of God spread out over forty years. When at last the judgement was complete, the nation came to Canaan and their home(-land) eventually fixed, God approached them about making Him a place for His abode.

His plan was that Israel in the land were to be God's house, His intention had been to dwell in His own tabernacle in the midst of them there. He had prepared them for this earlier when He halted them at Sinai soon after crossing the Red Sea. He gathered them to Him there and gave them His law, then He gave them instructions about making and erecting His tent, and after that told them who He wanted as His servants. This done He gave them elaborate commandments about the sacrifices and offerings He required and how they were to be offered to Him. This was the equivalent of ordering the food He desired, telling them in detail what He wanted - or His likes, and what He would not have - His dislikes. He even told them how to prepare it for Him, taking meticulous care that they understood Him aright. All was to be laid upon three 'tables' specially constructed for Him according to His designs. He called these respectively the brazen altar, the altar of shewbread and the golden altar. These were to be sanctified entirely to His use.

Nobody was allowed to touch or even to go near these except the priests in their special anointed liveries. Everything and everybody that stood and served within the tabernacle was to be holy unto the Lord. Each article of furniture and every vessel had been carefully made and then placed and anointed according to His commands. Every vessel was holy, however menial its use. Some were of gold, some of silver, some were earthen vessels, some were unto honour and some unto dishonour, and all had to be fit for the Master's use. Some contained the precious blood for God, some carried meat for men, some carried ashes to desolation without the camp, some held dead sparrows, some held incense, some oil. Of different shapes and sizes and uses, they were made for a variety of reasons unto different ends; He had a use for them all, but all must be fit for the Lord's service.

Now almost all this was based upon a system of atonements devised by God for the benefit of His people. At first glance this system may appear very complex, certainly it was most exact. It was a method whereby, upon fulfilment of certain conditions, every person in Israel could be kept in favour and communication with God. While they were in Egypt it was unknown to them, for the system was only devised to function in connection with God's dwelling-place on earth. This was not in existence while as yet the people were still in Egypt. They had to be brought out of the world before there could be any house or law or any system of atonement. The blood of atonement(s) was never shed in Egypt, it was for God's house only. The blood shed in Egypt was the blood of redemption.

The blood of redemption was shed and used for a different purpose than the blood of atonement. Redeeming blood was far more fundamental to Israel than the blood of atonement, indicating purchase with a view to salvation from death and possession and ownership. Nothing of this is ever attributed to the blood of atonement; nowhere in scripture does God claim Israel as His because of atonement. He never says, 'I am thy Atoner', but He says, 'I am thy Redeemer.. .I have redeemed thee, thou art mine'

For this reason the Lord founded the whole scheme of atonements upon the fact of redemption. This is plainly brought out by the instructions He gave Moses concerning the inauguration of public worship following the consecration of the priests. Having fully installed these men according to God's word, Moses had to prepare the altar for God and the people. This involved a ceremony lasting a week: for seven days a sin-offering for atonement had to be offered upon it to God. By this He was insisting that the altar must be thoroughly cleansed through perfect atonement. Following that, it

had to be anointed and sanctified wholly, and from that moment whosoever and whatsoever touched the altar must be holy. All this was done in preparation for the beginning of public worship in the house of the Lord; it was a clean, holy start.

Having established His house and His servants to His satisfaction, the Lord now proceeds to establish the order of worship for the people. Day by day continually two lambs were to be offered to Him, one in the morning and the other in the evening - 'throughout your generations', He said. So it was He founded everything to do with Himself and His people, His house and His worship, upon the lamb and his blood. The lamb first. Not all the other variety of animals and offerings. They had to do with atonement(s) for sin, but the lamb alone represented redemption. In common with other creatures, it was also used for atonement, but they never shared in the distinction of redemption with the lamb; that honour belonged to the lamb alone. By this the Lord was insisting that worship was for a redeemed people only: each day began and ended with the lamb. He showed them that the lamb was for a house. He called Israel His house. Whether it was for each house, or shared in Egypt between two houses or more because one house was too small for it, the lamb and the house were joined for ever. In a wonderful way God had planned to keep this forever fixed in the sight of all Israel.

Properly viewed on the day of its erection the layout of the Tabernacle was nothing other than an adaptation of the historic events through which Israel had recently passed. God never said this was so, nevertheless it is plain to be seen. The Lord was very strict with Moses about the Tabernacle. First He took him up into the mount and showed him the pattern, so that Moses knew exactly how He wanted it. Up there with God, Moses studied the plan of the finished work with care, noting the position of each piece of furniture and its layout in relationship to each of the others. It was obvious to him that God had worked to a plan and was determined to have it carried out to the last detail.

It was obvious also that for the time being the Lord had set up His headquarters on Horeb. It was from there He had directed His campaign for the deliverance of Israel. This accomplished, He brought them right from Egypt to Himself at His headquarters in the holy mount. Having done so, He addressed Israel through Moses in marvellous language, likening the whole episode to the idea of a great eagle bearing its young on its wings to its mountain eyrie. Having arrived there, for the next nine to ten (lunar) months they were to rest from travel and devote themselves entirely to making the Lord their God a home. He wanted a tabernacle as they themselves had, but not according to human design. They were not allowed to make it as they wished. He was most precise in His specifications, asking of them the very best materials and their most precious possessions, and in their hearts He found a ready response.

Israel brought gold, silver, precious stones, brass, skins, linens, colours - all He asked - and lavished them upon Him with love. Then with all their strength and mind and soul they devoted themselves to Him and worked with skill and might until all was as God wanted. Following His instructions with meticulous care, under divine guidance every detail of the divine mind was wrought out to perfection until at last everything was assembled according to God's will. Their labours took up the whole of their time for the remaining months of the year. It was a kind of human gestation period; the Tabernacle was formed within the nation who gave it issue from God.

He always thought of Israel as His wife. Looking back later upon those first two or three months when He led them from Egypt, He said He remembered them as the time of loving espousal. It was a wonderful period to Him; wilderness journey though it had been, Israel had gone after Him; they loved Him, wanted Him, were prepared to follow Him anywhere. The kindness and love of those days was like the springtime of their first youthful awakening to pure love, and it lived in His heart. 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love', He could say, but His words spoken through Jeremiah were tinged with sorrow; not all His memories of them were sweet. 'My people have forgotten me days without number', He mourned; 'yet will I not forget thee', His faithful heart asserted through Isaiah. He had entered into the sacred covenant of marriage with Israel at Horeb and to Him it was unbreakable. There He had joined them to Himself in holy wedlock and there sowed the seed and thought of the Tabernacle, which eventually took shape before Him at the second year of their union.

The foot of Sinai was a scene of busy labour during those months of expectation. Supervised by Moses, the children of Israel, led by Bezaleel and Aholiab, wrought with affection and zeal to complete the sacred task, and over all the Lord watched from His mountain headquarters. He and they were awaiting the day when He could remove from Sinai into the home of love, and live in the midst of His people. Hopes were high as the day of completion drew near, and when finally all was finished and brought to Moses for inspection and approval he responded with a benediction; (perhaps also the entire congregation said a big unrecorded 'Amen!') All had gone according to plan - the reproduction of the heavenly pattern was perfect.

The last two chapters of Exodus record the erection of the Tabernacle at Sinai; they seem to be full of the repetitive phrase, 'as the Lord commanded Moses'. Fifteen times in all, the testimony to Israel's faithfulness and obedience is recorded. God was pleased with them beyond words, and waiting only for the dawn of the first day of the year, they rose with one accord and assembled the Tabernacle. It was all done 'as the Lord commanded Moses'; he set it out in the order he had seen in the pattern God showed him in the mount; it was exact. Then the Lord descended from the mount. He came down to take up His abode in His new headquarters in the wilderness; thenceforward it was to be known as the Holy of Holies.

The Lord could dwell there because all was right. He had insisted on having His way. There was no other way He could dwell with men. The pattern was right and so was the finished product; He had worked it out to the last detail, His house spelled out the truth that had set Israel free; it told the story of redemption. That is why He had it laid out in this order; He had planned it, prepared a pattern or model of it, instructed Moses about it, furnished it to His taste, timed its erection, arranged for a retinue of servants and taken up His abode in it. All Israel knew He had come. He filled the place with the glorious cloud, baptising it in His sanctity, both revealing His presence to them and veiling Himself from their eyes at the same time. They needed to see it all, it was so reassuring to their hearts. They had seen the cloud and fire upon Sinai, it had hovered there night and day for months. The whole vicinity was lighted and warmed at night by its strange light and welcome warmth. It was the same cloud they had followed from Egypt, leading them on through the wilderness, keeping them in the way. Now its abiding presence assured them that God was in His temple in their Tabernacle.

Much more than they knew, it was the Tabernacle of the Congregation. It was the Tabernacle of Witness too; God had seen to that. Before He would take up His abode there He ensured it should ever be an undeniable testimony to them and their children after them. Whether or not they knew it, the Lord had ordered and laid out the major pieces of His house furniture in such a way as to tell the story of their deliverance. This is why He descended visibly in the cloud from Sinai to sit upon the Mercy Seat of the Ark. The operation He had mounted from Sinai was completed; He accomplished it in three major stages:

- (1) God's Passover in Egypt;
- (2) Israel's passage (passover) of the Red Sea;
- (3) Israel's meeting with God at Sinai.

Without informing Israel of the strategy behind His basic plan, the Lord had incorporated this into the layout of the Tabernacle.

Every adult Israelite knew that to approach God in His house he must come via the Altar and the Laver. True, he must be represented by a priest, but everyone knew that the priest in course of his ministry was really a substitute for another; the priest represented every man's clean, anointed, acceptable self moving into the nearer presence of the Lord. To make this possible, the Lord had the Altar and Laver placed outside the actual living apartment of His house, right in plain view so that everyone could see what was happening.

By the Altar at the dawning and departing of each day a lamb was slain; its blood, followed by its body, was placed upon the Altar table, one to be roast and eaten and the other to be drunk by the fire until nothing of either remained. It was the perpetual reminder to them of their redemption from Egypt. Twice in every twenty-four hours God caused them to observe the sacrifice. He insisted that whether day or night all Israel should know that time only began for them and continued to be for them as a nation by redemption. It was a kind of re-enactment whereby God kept fresh before their eyes the most fundamental elements of their national existence. Unless they were a redeemed nation they were not a nation at all, nor the people of God; the Lord redeemed them by the lamb - its blood and its flesh - the whole lamb. The Lord was spelling out redemption to His people.

Next in exact order of redemption as laid out by God in His Tabernacle was the Laver. From the people's standpoint this stood between the Altar and God's holy place into which the priests entered to accomplish their service. By this Laver the second vital step of their recent experience was constantly displayed to them. When they had left Egypt heading for Canaan that solemn night twelve months earlier, the Red Sea lay between them and safety. Pharaoh and his host pressing hard on their heels pursued them to the brink of death in its waters, and God, to save them, opened up a way in the sea; the path lay through the mighty waters. So the Lord had the Laver placed next in order to the Altar - first the lamb and its blood, then the sea and its water - redemption - regeneration: Calvary followed by Pentecost: bought to be baptised, purchased to live unto God. By the Laver God was saying, 'through this baptism you have passed through death and resurrection into me all the priests passed into God's house on their behalf via the Laver; there was no other way.

The third major event emphasised by the symbolic realism of the Tabernacle was God's descent to the throne on the Ark. The stated purpose of God by redemption was

to bring Israel to Himself at Sinai. Having accomplished this He gave them His Law, instructing Moses, the mediator of it, to place it in the Ark which immediately became the Ark of the Covenant. It was constructed to hold the Law and bear the Mercy Seat with its attendant cherubim in-turned to gaze upon the sprinkled blood and blazing glory. Upon its completion and erection the Tabernacle was ordered by Moses, with the Ark of the Covenant in the chief place; this he did first, for it was to be the throne of God in His private chamber. Gradually, placing everything else in position as he went, Moses withdrew, until at last the order completed he stood outside the courts of the Lord. Then the cloud, which until then abode on Sinai, covered the Tabernacle and the Lord's glory filled it. God had taken up residence in His house to complete the story of redemption. 'I have brought you to myself', He had said at Sinai, and there He and they tarried, wedded with intention to bring forth the Tabernacle of His abiding presence. All led up to this.

So it was that throughout their history the children of Israel had in their midst a permanent testimony to their original redemption. God had insisted on it. Whether in the wilderness or the land, in tent or temple, the pattern of redemption was ever before them; they were a redeemed people. God had brought them to Himself, and He installed into His 'house-testimony' this most fundamental method of salvation. He also developed a system of atonements based upon the same plan. He needed to do this because, by the Law He had given them, they had knowledge of sin; He gave it for that reason. He therefore provided for justification from sin by atonement, but this was only possible because of redemption.

This was made clear to them by the practice of morning and evening sacrifice. Each day and each night was heralded and bounded by redemption. Every day was a day of redemption; God was fixing it upon their minds, their lives, indeed time for them was only possible because of redemption. Their existence as a nation dated from the redemption, so each day must tell the same story, redeemed! The enforced limitations of the Levitical sacrifices show to advantage the difference between redemption and atonement. No sacrifice offered for redemption could atone for sin. God had laid this down firmly, that it should be understood clearly right at the beginning. When the lambs were slain in Egypt and their blood sprinkled at the entrances to Israel's houses, sin was not in view. The blood and body of the lamb were for the entire family sheltering inside. What could not be eaten must be burned within the camp. They were an exclusive company, the people of the lamb. Sheep and sheep-keepers were an abomination to the Egyptians, they never ate lamb anyway; but Israel kept and ate sheep and became God's sheep. That is what redemption is all about: belonging to God exclusively - total possession by God; 'I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine'.

The episode at Sinai when God said He would destroy Israel was a most dreadful experience. It seemed almost impossible that God should even think of doing such a thing, leave alone saying it. Why should He bring a nation of people out of Egypt through the Red Sea to Himself, sustain them by a series of unprecedented miracles, give to Moses a law for them, and then threaten to kill them? Simply because they broke the basic law of redemption. The first 'word' of the Law, which was soon to become the foundation of their civilisation, was 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me'. That was the logical outcome of redemption; God first and God alone as God. But while Moses was assimilating this and other associated commandments, the people down below were making and worshipping a golden calf. They were

destroying the first, second and third principles of the philosophy and doctrine of redemption, they had no understanding of it whatever.

Their behaviour was inexcusable. God was very angry; He had already told them they must not do these things and had also just written the commandment into stone to be a permanent prohibition to them. 'Thou shalt not make unto thee Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God'. But Israel broke the lot. They were not blamed because they did not understand the principles of redemption, but for disobedience. Their attitude towards Him was intolerable. He did not expect them all to be philosophers or theologians, but He did expect them to be grateful enough to obey Him. But they would not, therefore He would slay them, and but for Moses' intercession would certainly have done so because of their total disregard of the basic principles of eternal life.

8 - THE LAMB OF GOD - THE FIRSTBORN.

As has been pointed out, when God brought His people out of Egypt by the blood of the lamb He did not mention sin. Sin was there of course, but as He says, because the Law had not yet been given He did not impute sin to the people. The scriptures say He went to redeem a people for Himself, it was no part of His purpose then to define or particularise sin; He did that later. He was not ready at that time to inaugurate His system of atonements for sin. He had already planned it, but Egypt was not the place for it, so He did not introduce it there.

First He redeemed His people from Egypt utterly, then He taught them the truth of atonement. By this He was saying 'redemption makes you mine, atonement keeps you mine': John writes in this vein. First he presents the Lamb of God in chapter one, and then in chapter fourteen tells us what Jesus said about His Father's house and that He is the way, the truth and the life by which all must come to the Father. This was nothing new in substance really, for He said as much in another way in His discourse recorded in chapter six, when speaking as the Lamb in view of the approaching Passover.

The people are gathered unto Him in great numbers, He is seated on a mountain. He feeds them with a view to teaching them and us some vital lessons. 'I am the bread of life', He says, 'the bread of God the true bread from heaven not as your fathers did eat bread (manna), and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever'. He points them back to the Passover; 'eat my flesh', He says, 'drink my blood; except you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you' - in a word, dead. It was as though He was saying, 'you think you are the firstborn nation, the premier people of the world; the nation that has life; the redeemed people, Israel, the house of God. You think you are alive just like the firstborn son in every blood-sprinkled house in Egypt, but you are dead. I am the Lamb; as your fathers had to eat the flesh of their lambs in Egypt in order to live, so must you eat my flesh and drink my blood in order to live. I am the firstborn; each of your fathers ate of the lamb to become part of the firstborn nation and the house of God. If you do not eat the first-born you are not one of the firstborn and part of the house of God'.

Many of His disciples left Him then, they could not take what He said. He was seeking to build the spiritual house of God - the spiritual house of Israel - they could not accept it. Only those stayed with Him who believed He was speaking words of

eternal life. They fed on the truth of His soul as they listened to the words of His mouth. He uttered from His Spirit and life, and they ate Him and drank Him. He was their Lamb, their unleavened bread, their bitter herbs, although they never understood all He was saying. No one could listen to Him without realising premonitions of an impending tragedy in His words; truly the bitter herbs of a terrible death were mingled with His flesh and blood. No leaven of sin was mixed with and baked in the bread, neither sin nor its sting were in Him; but the bitterness of being made sin was with Him on the cross, so that was in the diet too.

In keeping with the type sin is not mentioned, it was there of course creating need in every man, but it is not the main point of emphasis in redemption, nor the chief reason for it. Redemption is the first great reason why the Lamb of God was slain for man. That man needed to be justified, sanctified, reconciled, regenerated, forgiven, cleansed is also true, and all was accomplished in the one great sacrifice of Christ; these things are inseparable. But because the sacrifice is so great and accomplishes so many things, it has to be analysed and the various works classified. This is done for us in scripture by the Holy Ghost in the course of His ministries, using the words above listed. Analysis is not to be mistaken for division; its purpose is definition with a view to emphasis without confusion.

9 - THE KINSMAN-REDEEMER.

There are several ideas introduced into scripture by the different words used for redemption. These vary between the old and new testaments, and combine throughout them both to present a glorious whole. The basic idea common to both testaments is very plain, namely purchase with a view to ownership. In the New Testament the thought of liberation is also introduced, implying that in the redeeming act someone or something, as the case may be, is set free. Added to this also there is the suggestion of a degree of finality about the transaction. Combining these ideas we arrive at the conclusion that to be redeemed is to be purchased, liberated and kept for ever. In the Old Testament yet another idea is presented to the mind. The writers from Moses onwards use a word which introduces the thought of relationship. When applied to a person making the purchase it can best be expressed as kinsman-redeemer. So when we read of God saying, 'I am thy Redeemer', He is really saying, 'I am thy kinsman who has redeemed thee'.

This thought is so dear to the Lord that He actually legalised it in Israel. One of the reasons the little book of Ruth is introduced into scripture is that it sweetly highlights this aspect of redemption, and we shall examine it later. The importance of this truth is its emphasis on authority - ability because of right - to redeem; this underlines the basic necessity required by the Law. Joining the whole of these aspects of truth together, we may say that redemption is the act of a man towards his blood-relative whereby he purchases and liberates him and his completely, finally making him his own. These ideas are greatly expanded, illustrated and legalised in the Old Testament canon, and fulfilled and finalised in the person of Christ in the New.

Three outstanding aspects of redemption are presented in the Old Testament, each by a different means: the first is the familiar one of the redemption of the children of Israel from Egypt; the second is the redemption of persons and possessions within Israel; the third is the redemption of Israel from Babylon. The first we have already examined and is by the blood of the lamb. The second has also been referred to and

was by money. The third, as yet unmentioned, is by the outpouring of the Spirit. All were by power and the second and third were based upon the first historic redemption by blood in Egypt. Much is known of this first and most basic act of redemption, so we will pass immediately to the second, the redemption of persons and possessions within Israel. This could not be better shown than by the story of redemption related in the book of Ruth.

The incident took place during the days of the Judges, at a time when spiritual and natural famine desolated the land. Because of it, Elimelech, a man of the tribe of Judah, left all his earthly possessions in Israel and departed with his family to live in Moab. There they settled, and eventually his two sons each married one of the daughters of Moab. Before long tragedy hit the family again, wiping out the three men and leaving behind three sorrowful widows, Naomi, Orpah and Ruth. Some time after this, news reached Naomi that God had visited Israel in blessing and prosperity, so sick and bitter in heart she decided to return to Israel. Orpah refused to go with her, but Ruth refused to be separated from her mother-in-law, and so the two women departed from Moab, arriving eventually in Israel at Bethlehem. There the little drama is played out to the end, and a whole aspect of redemption comes into fullest focus.

They arrived home at the time of barley harvest when all available hands went to the fields to reap grain. It was a very propitious time, for it was law in Israel that the poor, the stranger, the widowed and the fatherless were permitted to glean among the reapers. The poverty of the two women was evident. They had no possessions of their own and were without any means of livelihood; they were in acute need. The only hope of life and sustenance for them was that they should find grace in someone's sight and be allowed to glean in his field. They needed enough grain to meet present needs and also to lay up in store against harder days ahead. Therefore, taking advantage of this merciful law, Ruth set out one morning to find a field in which to glean. Now at Bethlehem lived a very wealthy man named Boaz, who was a great landowner and husbandman, and a relative of the now deceased Elimelech. Into one of his fields Ruth all unknowingly came and commenced to glean.

The delightful story continues to unfold through chapter three, in which discoveries were made and identities revealed, all finalising with Boaz promising Ruth to 'do the part of a kinsman' to her. Naomi planned, the Lord overruled and Ruth obeyed, so that eventually the redemption of both Ruth and Elimelech's possession took place as may be expected. The story is a beautiful idyll. The fourth chapter discloses the end of it all. From its detail we gather these facts:

- (1) the redeemer must be the nearest blood-relative on the father's side;
- (2) by the transaction he must not mar his own inheritance;
- (3) he must raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.

There is a wealth of other detail, all of it most instructive, but for our purposes these three will suffice.

The first of these is of most interest to us here; by it we are granted an opportunity of further insight into the person of the Lord Jesus. He is our heavenly Boaz, the true kinsman-redeemer. The self-evident connection with Bethlehem need hardly be pointed out, it was the place of His birth. Yet for the truth we need to learn it cannot be overstressed, for it is around this that the whole point turns. In his day Boaz was a wealthy Jew, he belonged to the race of Israel, the tribe of Judah and the family of

Elimelech; perhaps the description 'lion of the tribe of Judah' may well have fitted him, for he was truly lionised of men.

On the other hand the Lord Jesus, when He was born, had none of the earthly things with which Boaz was blessed. Jesus was an Israelite indeed, of the tribe of Judah; in fact Boaz was the great-grandfather of David, of whom Jesus is often called 'the greater son'. But there the similarity ends, for He was only of David through Mary His mother. Joseph, we know, was also of David's line through another branch of the family, but he was not Jesus' father. Paternally Jesus was not of the same race or tribe or family as David or Boaz or Elimelech; paternally He was of God.

Both Mary who bore Him and Joseph who adopted Him were of the house and lineage of David though, so Jesus is rightly called the son of David. He is properly 'the lion of the tribe of Judah', for greater than any man He was begotten into the human race by God through a virgin of that tribe. It is noticeable that though man called Him 'the King of Israel' and 'the King of the Jews', Jesus Himself never claimed the titles. His title is displayed in the book of the Revelation as 'King of kings and Lord of lords'; He had no need to make lesser claims. Also genetically speaking it would not have been true had He made them. Claim to kingship or inheritance in Israel was made only according to paternal, not maternal parentage, hence the silence of Jesus on the matter. He knew that if God was His Father, He could not, as David's son Solomon, claim to be of Bethlehem-Judah; His Father was of heaven.

To those of us who were not born Israelites of the tribe of Judah these things are of good comfort as well as of great importance, for by the very fact that in this respect Jesus was not wholly Jewish, He could be the kinsman of all. The basic relationship required for redemption by a kinsman was of blood, not of flesh or town. The right of redemption did not belong to an in-law, for as in the case of Ruth herself, he or she could be a foreigner; it was vested in blood alone. Paul told the Athenians that God 'hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth'. Save in the matter of blood-group, human blood is the same the world over, and may be transfused from nation to nation without fear.

However, it is with particular thankfulness that we marvel at the extraordinary way in which Jesus is the Son of Man and not the child of Israel. His flesh was the Word, His blood was God's; He is literally the nearest blood-relative that man could have, and therefore his only redeemer. He is the only one who could be said to be the blood-relative of every man. This is one of the reasons that the angelic herald of His birth told the shepherds that the good tidings of great joy was to all people; 'unto you' he said, 'is born a Saviour'. Jesus was born to all of us, He is the Son of Man. Adam did not beget Him, neither did Abraham, nor David, nor Joseph, but God.

During the months preceding Jesus' birth Joseph and Mary were married and together they awaited the birth of the babe conceived of the Holy Ghost. For the event they were lodged in the inn at Bethlehem where, some time before the shepherds reached the manger, somewhere out in the dark a lamb was slain. The babe was Mary's firstborn son, and according to the Law of God, in remembrance of Israel's redemption and consequent deliverance from Egypt, Jesus had to be redeemed. A lamb died and its blood was shed in order that He as a human being might live, and living, live unto God. When the shepherds saw Him they were looking at a redeemed life. In common with all Israel He bore testimony that they were a redeemed nation.

On the eighth day He was circumcised to show that He was of the seed of Abraham, and within two months was presented to the Lord in the temple. At the same time Mary, of her poverty, brought her own compulsory offering for cleansing according to the Law - 'two young pigeons or a pair of turtle doves'.

As the little group entered the temple intent on their business, so also did Simeon, a prophet of the Lord. At the sight of Jesus, the man of God, quite unasked, took Him up in his arms, prayed and prophesied over Him, and then presented Him to God. Scarcely was this over, when an aged prophetess named Anna took up the strain, speaking of Him 'to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem'. So within the first three months of Jesus' young life He was both legally and prophetically encompassed by redemption. It would be difficult to know exactly what Anna understood from her own prophecy. To which kind of redemption was she referring - national/material and spiritual, or individual/spiritual? Whatever others thought, the Lord meant fullness of redemption, but almost certainly none of those who heard the prophecy would have understood it to mean that. Perhaps some people's hopes were raised to a feeling that something was afoot, but who could have imagined that this was the world's kinsman-redeemer? Simeon spoke of 'Thy salvation - a light - the glory'. Anna spoke of redemption. The message was salvation by redemption, but who understood it?

It is probably true that reports of these happenings had persisted throughout the Lord's life. Certain it is that thoughts of redemption had been in the minds of at least some of Jesus' disciples when He died, for they spoke of their hopes of it to the Stranger who joined them on the road to Emmaus. However these hopes had all been dashed when Jesus was crucified. As far as men's expectations were concerned He had died without redeeming them. Because He had not in some way delivered the nation from the bondage of Rome they regarded His mission as an unfinished project. Perhaps their hopes had been raised because in word and deed He had exceeded both Moses and David. In their day each of these had been a deliverer, a kinsman of some sort, who had set the nation free from Egypt and the Philistines. By His words and in His works Jesus had either directly claimed or plainly implied that He was greater than either of these national heroes, yet at His death He had not accomplished anything like the kind of redemption achieved by either of them. To His disciples He did not appear to be the anointed redeemer after all, yet of all men he was the only one by whom all the requirements of God for redemption were fulfilled.

The reason why Boaz appears in the Bible is that in the unfolding revelation of Jesus as the kinsman-redeemer, this man gives us an insight into the Lord's role as the lion of the tribe of Judah, 'the root of David'. Moses was a Levite and therefore could not be Judah's lion; David, though of Bethlehem-Judah, could not be his own root, for he could not bear himself. Great though both were, these men only partially filled the role of kinsman-redeemer. But Jesus fulfilled all.

There is no talk of redemption by bloodshed in the book of Ruth. It was surely by blood though, the blood of relationship. The emphasis of the story is not upon purchase by money as of right; God underlines Jesus' ability and authority. Boaz had ability to redeem because he was a wealthy landowner with great possessions; he had the right to redeem because of blood relationship to Elimelech. He had the desire to redeem because of his love for Ruth, and in the end it was discovered that there was no one else to do it. He could though; without marring his own heritage he could raise

up the name of the dead and also marry Ruth; he was able, willing, righteous and loving to redeem. Whether he was a bachelor or not we are not told, but it would seem so, for all mention of other women who could be wives is noticeably absent from the text. From things said in course of the blessings and good wishes and congratulations showered upon them by friends and admirer's, it would appear that Boaz's hopes of children lay entirely in this union.

Many of the elements of redemption are present in the Ruth story: her former husband (her old man) was dead. She had been brought up out of the land where she formerly lived; together with all she possessed she was purchased outright by Boaz. She was truly 'married to another that she would bring forth fruit unto God. She became the ground of redemption from which David in the fourth generation sprang. Everything about it is spiritually, ethically, morally and legally correct. When legalising the role of kinsman-redeemer in Israel, God acted in conformity with principles of righteousness. He could have granted legal rights of redemption to someone other than a blood-relative, but He did not. Everything was founded upon Himself and His loving designs for man. From all eternity He is the world's only Kinsman-Redeemer.

Now, sweet as is the story unfolded in the book of Ruth, and great as Boaz was, they could not between them do more than hint at the redemption provided by God in Christ. Ruth could lie at the feet of Boaz, be covered by his skirts, glean in his fields, receive his favour, become his wife, live in his home and bear his children, but she could not be in him. She had redemption through her husband, but not in him, except hopefully. In common with all Israel with whom her lot was cast, she shared in the blessings which were their God-given heritage. Perhaps above the majority she enjoyed blessings and possessions and security to the degree her station allowed. She was the wife of a very wealthy man who held a position of great power in the nation, but how far short both he and she fell of the eternal glories of the redeemed in Christ revealed in the New Testament scriptures. She was chosen by Boaz when he saw her; we were chosen by the Father in Christ before the foundation of the world. She was blessed with just about all earthly blessings in Israel, but we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. And so we could go on piling up the superiority of our position and its advantages over Ruth's, making endless comparisons and contrasts. But, sure of our grace, let us instead occupy ourselves with more profitable things.

10 - JUSTIFICATION.

Paul, who received from God the revelation of our election in Christ and delivered it to us, makes much of this knowledge, unfolding its many splendours in the various letters he wrote to the churches. To the Romans he writes of the glory of God that he by grace should justify sinners absolutely freely. This is a marvellous revelation, quite beyond the minds of men to accept and totally impossible except he add, 'through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus'. It is unethical to think and believe that a man can be forgiven and more than forgiven apart from some atonement made on his part or on his behalf. Unless there is a factor unknown to man, yet operative on his behalf, which justifies him before God, it would be utterly wrong and amoral to absolve him. So it is that Paul states the basis of justification, thereby assuring man, justifying God and vindicating the gospel. He does this by making inspired use of the means familiar to himself and all Jews, and made fully known to all men in the scriptures of truth, namely the tabernacle/temple type and ritual of ancient Israel. He speaks of 'Christ

Jesus whom God hath set forth - a propitiation - through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God'.

As is so often the case, Paul is referring to the great day of atonement, Israel's yearly feast. On that day God freely forgave His people all the sins He had forbore to visit upon them during the past year, sins of which they were totally ignorant and for which therefore they could not make atonement. If God had punished them for those it would have been utterly unjust, for why should a man be punished for sins of which he knows nothing? So God devised and ordained a means whereby He could forgive all, and in doing so be completely just, as well as the only justifier of Israel. He therefore had the Ark of the Covenant made to His specifications, that His Law for righteousness may be placed in it, and His Mercy Seat be set on it for a lid. Upon this throne of mercy He commanded the blood of atonement to be sprinkled annually. This Ark of the Covenant represented Christ Jesus standing before God in absolute holiness. In the New Testament another name used for this Mercy Seat is 'the propitiatory', or 'place of propitiation'; it describes the place where the atoning blood was sprinkled. It was the exact spot where God fully absolved His people from all their sins.

Now Jesus Christ, says Paul, is set forth by God in order to declare His righteousness; this is symbolised in the Ark of the Covenant by the ten commandments. Because Jesus was so perfectly righteous He could be set forth as the One whose sacrifice could completely justify God in justifying men. His whole self and life was predestined to be propitiatory, so in the end at Calvary, when crowned with His own blood, shed on behalf of men, He achieved His purpose. He was both the propitiation and the propitiatory - He was the propitiation which propitiates and the place where the propitiation was made. Himself offered Himself upon Himself, because He was Himself.

That which He did was perfectly satisfying to God, and because of it He can righteously justify everyone who believes in Jesus; that is grace. Now the Day of Atonement was celebrated annually in goats' blood because through the blood of the lamb they were already a redeemed people. True to this, Paul says all is 'through redemption that is in Christ Jesus'. He is telling us that whether it be Israel or anyone else, there would have been no such thing as justification had it not been for the redemption. Justification is only possible because of redemption.

In relation to Israel this is most clearly seen and is not less true for men today. Analytically speaking God never justified His people in Egypt, He redeemed them from it. As regards order of time redemption was accomplished by God first; justification was introduced later. The Lord does not justify people in their worldliness and sin, but from the world and sin. God redeems people while they are still in sin in the world system of Satan's kingdom. This is what Paul stresses most clearly to the Romans, 'God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us'.

The lamb was slain and its blood sprinkled on the houses of sinners while still in Egypt under Pharaoh's power in 'the house of bondage'. By first birth spiritually we all are the devil's children in experience, though God's children in reality. We all are firstborn to Satan in his house of bondage, yet by God's choice and in His elective

purposes we belonged to Him before the foundation of the world. We are His firstborn in that by His will we were chosen by Him in Christ before we were ever born in this world. For these reasons God made the final plague in Egypt the judgement of the first-born; it was all about firstborn sons - God's and Satan's. The devil's firstborn, being so to speak a plague to God, were cut off at one stroke. Doing this God dealt with the thing that both grieved His heart and plagued the earth, incorporating the operation into redemption.

Redemption has to do with spirit, soul and body. It is outright purchase of the human being, God claiming the right to have man wholly in order to do with him as He pleases. Everything depends on this. Redemption is directly connected with the covenant, the oath God swore to Abraham. He redeemed Israel because He had made promise to their fathers. Whether or not they were in sin made no difference, God had committed Himself to His friend Abraham; if for no other reason, He would have done it for his sake alone. It was as much a matter of honour as a revelation of love and a display of power: 'Hath He not said and shall he not do it?'

Herein lies the pre-eminence of redemption over every other thing God wrought through the death of His Son. The person He was and the life He lived was redemptive, He was in Himself the Redeemer. When He shed His blood it was to purchase us and in this sense we were redeemed, but redemption can only be experienced as we are baptised into Him. Redemption is in Him as well as through or by Him. In order to teach men this, God ordered His people to be brought to Him at Sinai. There He gave them His law for righteousness.

He had shown Himself to be righteous in that He had redeemed them, though they had done nothing to merit it. God's righteousness towards them lay in His faithfulness to keep His word to Abraham. They could not enter into Christ as we can, yet figuratively they did so. It was for this reason that God gave them His Law and His instructions about the Tabernacle which was to be His home. The Tabernacle was a figure of Christ Jesus. Its structure and furnishings spoke wholly of Him, and although only a few select priests were allowed to enter into it, through them Israel vicariously entered into and found their redemption in Him. Even though it was impossible for them in their day to be the Church of Jesus Christ, when dealing with them God could not depart from basic principles of eternal truth. They were therefore regarded by Him as His Church; indeed Stephen called them 'the church in the wilderness'.

God is insistent about the facts and order of truth. The Tabernacle before the land is a revelation of invariable eternal principle. Entrance into Christ was typified to them primarily in terms of the priesthood and tabernacle worship, and only later as entering the Promised Land. Entrance into the Promised Land was delayed for some forty years and therefore is quite secondary to entrance into the House of God. In the Tabernacle all spoke of Christ. Basically the Promised Land itself represents man's soul in its natural state when fully possessed by Christ - flowing with milk and honey - 'a land of corn and wine and oil, favoured with God's peculiar smile'. This is nothing other than a metaphorical way of describing the normal soul-state of Jesus the man.

Unlike the children of Israel, and better than they, we enter into Him for redemption, not into a tabernacle or a land. Structures and territories have no meaning now, everything to do with our salvation is spiritual. We are saved into Him through His

own blood in order to experience His spirit/soul state for our God-given inheritance - 'In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will'.

The invariable laws governing all God's gracious dealings with His redeemed were well known to Paul. The word 'obtained' in Ephesians chapter one means 'to obtain by lot', and is a direct reference to the occasion when Joshua cast lots before the Lord to determine the tribal and family inheritance of the children of Israel in the Promised Land. By the lot each man's inheritance was predetermined; he had to go to the portion of Canaan given to him by God, and he must possess it and live and work there - nowhere else. It was all part of the predestinating process; it was done according to purpose as God's will counselled him.

Redemption itself is all part of God's great predestinating will. God planned and purposed and created Canaan to be an inheritance for Israel; before the nation existed He promised the land to Abraham. Likewise, before we had any existence, save in God's will and Jesus' heart, He planned and purposed Christ's glorified eternal inward states to be our inheritance. The act of redemption through bloodshed at Calvary was just one phase of the operation of God according to the overall plan of salvation. It was the most costly thing He ever did, involving far more than the actual bloodshed so vitally necessary for the purchase. But the Lamb slain in heart from the foundation of the world shed no blood then; in that sacrifice His death was not physical. He was slain prehistorically that the mind of God may be justifiably made up and the decision to save unborn men be taken, and even the world itself be founded.

God sought nobody's counsel about His action, but moved in absolute love and justice. Redemption was validated then without bloodshed; there was no Calvary. There was much suffering though; that is why on earth Jesus was a man of sorrows - He was acquainted with grief in eternity. When He came to earth He was already our Redeemer - redemption was in Him as of nature, He was made redemption to us of purpose. It was all part of God's predestinating will and action to bring us into Him that we should obtain our inheritance, namely the spiritual status of sons of God, enjoying the soul-state of Jesus the man of God. This is the absolutely irreducible minimal basis of eternal life for the sons of men. For us the lot has been cast, the decision made, the inheritance given, the will fixed, the destination settled; we are now the redeemed in Christ the Beloved.

Paul had a wonderful grasp of eternal truth; time and again he brings out treasures of knowledge connected with being in Christ. In one place he speaks of himself as having been 'carnal, sold under sin'; it is a reference to Adam's transaction with satan in Eden. At that time the whole human race was sold to the devil; Adam did it for the prize of being allowed to retain Eve. Paul realised that without his knowledge he was included in that transaction, that Adam betrayed his trust and that in Adam he died; he said, 'as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive'. The redeeming act purchased us - the full price for Adam's heinous original sin was the sum total exacted of Jesus in recovering God's loss and restoring that which He took not away; it was love beyond degree and grace beyond deserts.

Adam sold us all out to the devil, robbing God of His created man. He never paid God anything, he robbed Him. So the last Adam came and as man paid God full price for man; having done so He kept him, but not for Himself, He gave him to His Father and

God. This then is the defeat of Satan, the negation of Adam's sin, the resolution of the problem - God chose us in Christ before the world began, but only in redemption - 'in Christ shall all be made alive'. The crowning virtue of Jesus' wholly virtuous life was His willingness to die for us. Because of the redemption in Him we are justified freely, but He could not do that for us until we belonged to Him wholly; justification is conditional and entirely dependent upon redemption.

It seems that many in the early Church did not properly understand this conditional salvation. At any rate Paul had repeatedly to make it clear to his converts, firmly grounding his doctrines in the Old Testament scriptures, and invariably using God's dealings with Israel to illustrate his points. Not that everything commenced with Israel; it did not, but so much of redemption truth now known to the Church was first either applied to or plainly typed in them. Therefore when Paul wishes to bring understanding of redemption to the Church he draws upon his vast knowledge of scripture and Israel's history.

For instance, what he tells the Corinthians is typical of his style, 'ye are not your own.. ye are bought with a price'. Always this is his starting point. That is why, following some brief opening remarks, he presents the cross to them right in the first chapter. The effectiveness of the cross lies in its comprehensiveness, its completeness and its finality. It applied the innate power of Christ to the total basic needs of man according to the total requirements of God. Because of that, by the cross God bought every member of His Church outright. In chapter five Paul rightly connects this with the Lamb - 'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us', he says, 'let us keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth'.

The redemption of Israel was unto a feast of bread without leaven. Taking up this feast and using it as a figure, Paul says we are an unleavened lump; redemption through the blood of Christ is from sin. New Testament redemption involves more than being purchased, it also means being purged. This is implied in the use of the word which means to loose or to liberate. To Israel this aspect of redemption was spelled out to them in the words 'out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage'. This meant that God would bring them out from under Pharaoh's yoke completely; redemption effected total deliverance out from under all the tasks and burdens of the Egyptians. To them redemption meant that they would be liberated from slavery and the slave-master, it did not mean, nor was it ever suggested, that it effected liberation from sin. The blood of the lambs on the houses of Egypt could no more take away sins than could the blood of the bulls and goats on the Altars of Canaan, or on the Mercy Seat itself. But testifying of the superior blood of Jesus, John says, 'unto him that loved us, and loosed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us a kingdom of priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory for ever and ever. Amen'.

The liberation in Jesus' blood is by inward purging rather than by outward release. Paul spoke frankly to servants still 'under the yoke', telling them not to seek release from bondage to a master, but to be free from sin and turn their slavery into joyful service for Jesus. His blood is the powerful antidote to sin. We have faith in His blood that it is the faultless blood of a righteous man - a lamb without blemish and without spot in His outward life in this world. Lambs anciently sacrificed in Egypt or Canaan had to be of this quality in their bodies; whatever their behavioural patterns were did not matter as long as their bodies were of this standard of perfection. On the contrary,

when Jesus was crucified, far from being without physical blemish, 'he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our sins was upon him.. .with his stripes we are healed'. God demanded that sacrificial lambs should be physically perfect' as a testimony to the spiritual perfection of the inward manhood and outward life of Jesus. (They did not bear sins in their bodies, or suffer for others, they only died that their blood should justify God in first redeeming Israel and later forgiving the people their sins. That was all God required of them).

In the New Testament the purpose of the four Gospels is to furnish proof of the perfections of Jesus. The spirit within the man of Galilee was clearly God, for the life manifest in His flesh was purest soul; inwardly and outwardly He was without blemish or spot or even a wrinkle. He was the perfect Redeemer. The whole body of the truth of justification by faith, though hinted at in the Gospels, is not properly introduced until after Pentecost. Apart from a reference here and there to expiation and forgiveness, the Gospels largely ignore Christ's propitiatory function in favour of presenting Him as the redeeming Lamb.

This is a remarkable testimony to the fact and truth of inspiration. Each of the Gospels was written long after the revelation of justification by faith through the blood of Christ, yet none of them refer to it in any degree. There is not any suggestion that Jesus ever gave systematic teaching along that line; their testimony is given under the control of the Holy Spirit and is exclusively overruled to give conclusive proof to the unprejudiced mind that Jesus is indeed the Kinsman-Redeemer. That is the most important point of all. Nothing else of truth could be developed unless it was first established that Jesus is the redeeming Lamb.

Anna's prophecy to Israel could be summed up as 'look for redemption, behold this babe, observe His life'. On the mount of transfiguration the theme of conversation between Moses, Elijah and Jesus was the exodus He should accomplish at Jerusalem. The disappointed testimony of the two on the road to Emmaus when speaking of Jesus was 'we trusted it had been he that should have redeemed Israel'. There are a few recorded occasions when He had forgiven people their sins, but this was not the main emphasis of His teachings and ministry among men. The reason for this was that until the redeeming blood was shed He could not speak about justifying anybody. It would have been premature to have done so.

Even on the day of Pentecost when the new era had dawned, Peter did not speak of justification. Instead he pursued the theme of redemption. He did not even mention the word righteousness, but laboured to show that Jesus is Lord and Christ. Those to whom he spoke understood perfectly what he meant. Under the power of the Spirit Peter skilfully linked King David with Jesus, and presented the crucified, dead, buried, raised, ascended, exalted, enthroned Messiah-Kinsman-Redeemer. Not until later, and chiefly through the selection and installation of Paul to the apostolate, was the propitiatory aspect of Christ's death and the theme of justification introduced and developed in the sacred canon. This does not mean that Peter and the rest of the apostles did not know or believe that Christ is the propitiation; on the contrary they all rejoiced in it.

It does mean however that the scriptures are the word of truth and shows that all was written under the strict control, revelation, inspiration, supervision and order of the Spirit. He constrained and restrained the men of the New Covenant, so that they wrote

in the same doctrinal vein as the men of the Old Covenant, namely first redemption, then justification. This was no great difficulty for Him, given the right instruments, for the history of salvation recorded in the Book runs a parallel course with world events. It unfolds naturally and honestly; there is no need to twist facts and concoct stories, nothing is strained or contrived. There is no suppression of facts in the Bible; the New Testament flows on and out from the Old Testament as a great river of truth growing deeper and wider the further it flows.

Redemption for Israel - the few - grows into redemption for the world - for many. God's love for Israel is shown to be only a part of His love for the world; indeed it is revealed to be but the foundation of the greater love. He selected Israel chiefly that He might use them for the purpose of bringing His Son into the world for a greater redemption and exodus than Israel ever knew. Redemption of the few (Israelites) by the blood of many lambs has been superseded by the redemption of the many by the blood of one Lamb.

11 - CAPTIVITY TURNED - PENTECOST.

Redemption was made effective for us by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This is how it was accomplished for ancient Israel when captive in Babylon. In effect what God said to Israel through Isaiah when promising them salvation was, 'I have redeemed thee thou art mine. I will pour out my Spirit water floods'. As a result Israel would be brought back from captivity.

It is quite clear from scripture that redemption is not possible to men except through baptism in the Spirit. There is only one method known to God and therefore revealed in the Bible whereby a person may experience 'the redemption in Christ Jesus by faith in His blood', namely by the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. Jesus must baptise us into Himself and He can only do that in one way - the way of Himself. He went to the cross and the tomb accomplishing the act of redemption en route, pouring out His precious blood and rising again from the dead. He did not immediately baptise His restored disciples into Himself however, but promised them He would do so 'not many days hence' and that they would be as truly baptised in the Holy Ghost as they were in water when John baptised them in Jordan.

Jesus was waiting until the day of Pentecost should fully come. That was the day God planned that Christ should fully come into them and they fully into Christ. He knew this could not be accomplished except each person was baptised in the same way as Jesus, via the cross and the grave; each must be crucified, dead and buried and raised as He. What happened to Him physically must happen to us spiritually. This is the whole point; everything turns on this. Except there is individual experience of it there can be no life for anyone. So important is it that Jesus Himself must both supervise and personally administer that death and resurrection to each person who would know redemption. For this He needed the assistance of the Holy Ghost. Jesus could no more accomplish redemption of mankind without the help of the Spirit than without the cross.

This is one of the main reasons the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter - Paraclete - one called alongside to help. He was needed by Jesus to be the medium in which believers could be baptised into the eternal life in Himself. Therefore on the day of Pentecost Jesus baptised men and women in the Spirit into Himself via the cross and

the grave that they might know His redemptive life. It is His life alone which gave virtue and power to the blood to make it redemptive in effect to us all that we might live in eternal redemption in Him.

This is why Isaiah so clearly makes redemption contingent upon the outpouring of the Spirit. In the chapters dealing with it he is speaking to a people in captivity. In the first great captivity Moses speaks of the lamb and the blood; in this second captivity by the same inspiration Isaiah speaks of the Spirit. He does not mention the blood in relationship to it at all. For redemption from Egypt the blood of the lamb, for redemption from Babylon the Holy Ghost. In no other book of the Bible are so many references made to redemption as in Isaiah. More notably still, for its size, by comparison Ruth outstrips even this major prophet in the number of times redemption is mentioned. As already noted, in Ruth the thought of purchase is uppermost, but in Isaiah it is the outpoured Spirit.

The prophet insists that in order to effect salvation from captivity and bondage and sin, Israel's Creator and Redeemer, their Holy One who had chosen them, would pour out the Spirit in floods: 'I have redeemed thee', He says, 'I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine'. He deliberately introduces the same elements as those He enforced upon their forefathers in Egypt; Israel had to be redeemed by blood and pass through the Red Sea in the beginning, and now so must they — 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee'.

Previous generations of Israel had passed through the mighty waters of the Red Sea and Jordan's river respectively, and there is no different way out from captivity in Babylon. But there was to be no comparative bloodshed for them in their day; neither was any blood redemption wrought for Israel at Jordan; in neither case was it necessary. The one great redemptive act was sufficient for Israel for all time, 'I have redeemed thee', (N.B. past tense, not 'I will redeem thee').

The blood once shed in Egypt was all sufficient for all Israel throughout their history, but it could not be made effective to them without the Baptism of the Spirit. Although the blood is insisted upon only once for redemption in Egypt, the Holy Spirit is referred to on all three occasions. Whether it was in Egypt or Canaan or Babylon, the Holy Ghost is made indispensable to redemption. In the first generation the children of Israel were baptised at the Red Sea. In the second generation they were baptised at Jordan and now they must be baptised at the point of crisis in Babylon.

Ezekiel's prophecy opens with the prophet sitting among the captives on the banks of Chebar. Babylon lay east of the Euphrates: to return to their land Israel had to cross the river, travelling westward to Canaan. At the conclusion of the book Ezekiel shows the river proceeding from the temple in Jerusalem and repeatedly insists that it is crossed over — 'he brought me through the waters' — until at the last attempt it could not be crossed — waters to swim in. The pathway to blessing for the redeemed of the Lord is through the waters.

The Lord never attempted of old, nor does He promise for the present day or in the future, that redemption can be experienced or known apart from the baptism in the Spirit.

In this way the Lord consistently taught that redemption is only possible through baptism. Water was the chosen element then, for as yet the Holy Spirit had not been outpoured, the universally comprehensive redemption had not been accomplished and the situation did not warrant it. Redemption was at that time national and not international, local not universal. Nevertheless, although Israel could not be baptised in the Spirit to form them into a nation, they had to be seemingly baptised in water. In fact neither at the Red Sea, nor yet at Jordan, were they immersed in water - instead they discovered the path through the water(s). They found the way - God had hidden His way beneath the waters of the Red Sea and Jordan. Until He revealed it no one ever dreamed that beneath the sea and the river lay a path for the redeemed of the Lord to pass over. It was there all the time, but hidden from every eye.

The Calvary way of crucifixion - death, burial and resurrection - is revealed upon the pages of scripture, but hidden away from human understanding in the Baptism of the Spirit. Many preachers, teachers, expositors and commentators have taught the typical significance of water baptism. Throughout the years champions of truth have spoken of dying with Christ, buried with Christ, risen with Christ, but few have seen and taught that water baptism can only be valid as it is presented as a type of the baptism in the Spirit administered by Jesus the Christ. Herein the body of flesh never gets wet, but the spirit is totally immersed and the soul is saturated and the being filled in, by and with, the Holy Spirit as the person is processed through Christ's Calvary into Christ's body. This is eternal life through total redemption unto absolute possession — 'I have redeemed thee, thou art mine'

By the waters of the Red Sea the redemption of Israel is seen to be 'out of'. By the river Jordan it is shown to be 'in to', and by the 'waters' (literal or figurative of the Spirit) of Babylon the same truth is revealed, 'out of' and 'in to'. In the former two the emphasis should be laid upon the Holy Ghost as the way, while in the latter the emphasis is on being filled - drinking in the Holy Spirit - a privilege connected with and opened only to the people of the New Covenant - that is spiritual Israel.

If Pentecost had not followed Calvary the way of redemption could not have been revealed, for it only revealed to us as being in the Spirit. 'We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel', mourned the disciples on the Emmaus road; they did not know that they were talking to the Redeemer or that Redemption had been achieved at Calvary. The unknown Christ spoke to them of the necessity of His sufferings and glorification, opening the theme from the scriptures, and finally revealing Himself to their wondering gaze, only to vanish from their sight again. They had listened with burning hearts to His teachings by the way, but never heard Him say one word about redemption.

Not once did the risen Lord speak the word they longed to hear. He couldn't, for until the Holy Ghost was outpoured it was not available to them. They needed a new concept of redemption altogether - they needed to be baptised into Him. The redemption God has provided for us, as for them, is in Christ who paid for it at Calvary and supplied it at Pentecost. It is total purchase of and immersion into all the inward states of the person of the Christ. The redeeming act leads to the redemption experience, which is realised in the redemptive state of the person of the Redeemer.

None of this was available to Israel in Egypt or the wilderness or Canaan. Ruth knew nothing of it, nor did the captives returning from Babylon. All these experienced and

understood something of the gracious dealings of God in their lives and in them to some degree certain aspects of the redemption in Christ Jesus are typified. But although God did such great things for them, whereof they were glad, it is said, whether nationally or individually, they only experienced outward redemption.

This is not to say that many of them did not enjoy soul salvation to the fullest extent possible under law. There is no doubt many did, but God 'has provided some better thing for us' and we are more glad than they. The redeeming act of Jesus enabled Him to administer to us the redemptive experience whereby we are powerfully initiated into Himself, the Redeemer, so that we should be redeemed by Him and in Him.

The
Representative
Man

G. W. North

First published 1976.
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The Representative Man

Birth

To some it may be entirely new to think of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Representative Man. That He ever was and is the only begotten, eternal Son of God, and the only Saviour of men we devoutly believe; but that God also set Him forth as an Example unto all His people may be a completely new thought.

Men of grace understand clearly that no man is regenerated by following His example, or by trying to obey His teaching. Only as we trust implicitly and absolutely in His blood and all that He accomplished for us on the cross are we saved. Yet, once in this understanding and experience, we are subsequently pointed to the example of Jesus' life, that, being born of God, we also may live unto our heavenly Father. Lesser men than Jesus, be they never so great and honourable, are not set forth by God to be our prime example; He is. With this in mind we will look into scripture to discover the man Christ Jesus as our Example.

Of the four Gospels, one is generally acknowledged to be the Gospel of the Son of Man, viz., the Gospel according to St. Luke. We will therefore turn to this Gospel and trace through its opening chapters something of the wonders of the Lord Jesus Christ, revealed there as a Man of the Spirit. Perhaps we have not sufficiently recognised that the Lord Jesus Christ was totally dependent on the Holy Spirit. As recorded in John's Gospel, He' Himself said that He was utterly dependent upon the Father. There never has been on earth a more totally dependent Man than Jesus Christ; He said He could not do anything except His Father showed Him. Have you ever thought about that? He said, 'I can of my own self do nothing.' Never in all His earthly walk did He say, 'I'm God manifest in the flesh and I can do so and so and so.' As a matter of fact He said, 'My Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works.' He also said that the actual words He spoke were not His own but the Father's; so humbly and gloriously did the Lord Jesus live a life of total dependence upon the Father.

Now He did all this by the Holy Spirit. No man can live this life of inward knowledge of the Father, in the same sense in which the Lord Jesus did, unless he also, as Jesus, recognises and is dependent upon the Holy Spirit. This is the real reason why the Holy Spirit came. He is the only One who can show us the way by which we can know the Father, and Jesus Christ whom He sent. Firstly, we must learn how Jesus Christ, The Representative Man, the Son of God, became the earthly child of His heavenly Father by the operation of the Holy Ghost. The account of this happening is to be found in the familiar verses of the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 1: 26-35:— 'And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb,

and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost... There it is! 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.' That is how Jesus was born. He would not have been the Son of the Highest unless the power of the Highest by the Holy Spirit had come upon Mary. We must get that clear. The power of the Highest came upon Mary with the coming of the Holy Ghost upon her. A scripture elsewhere records that she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. The angel also said, 'Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.' Hallelujah! God took great pains to write this book of the New Testament, beloved. He never gave us any of it until the blood of His Son was shed. It may also be truly said that the Old Testament was written because Jesus was coming and would die for the sins of the whole world. It is as though every word was written with a pen dipped in His blood, and for that reason is precious beyond compare.

When we pause to think over the statement made by the angel, it is an amazing thing that he did not use the word 'babe' or 'child' with the word 'holy' when he was so obviously speaking of Jesus. The messenger said, 'holy thing.' How truly this Bible of ours keeps the great wonders of God ever freshly before our eyes, that they may be applied to our hearts. For when Jesus was born, a holy thing was born also. God hereby introduced to men's understanding something entirely new and breathtakingly glorious; that new and holy thing has come to stay. Beyond substantiating in flesh and blood the union of God and man in the person of the Son, the holy thing that the Lord God has given unto us is the eternal truth of this unique conception, and birth, and life. It came at that time to stay forever in the Spirit. The secret working of the Spirit within us is a holy thing to be eternally treasured. The Lord God the Father has not only given unto man a Son by birth, but has also given birth to a wonderful new revelation, a marvellous holy thing superseding all else ever known by man. The Son and the holy thing are one; but except those within whom it is revealed no-one knows the sublime secret. No man can be a son of God unless he is born of the Holy Spirit of God. That is how Jesus began in the flesh. The Holy Ghost. He had to begin on earth that way, and that is how we too must begin.

The Greek word translated in this verse as 'power' is the same word which is translated 'power' in Acts 1:8. There we are told, 'You shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you'; or better in the Greek (as here), 'You shall receive the power of Holy Spirit coming upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto me.' (Jesus called Himself the Faithful and True Witness, in one of the letters in the opening chapters of the Revelation). The Holy Ghost came down upon that woman and God took over her fleshly abilities, overshadowing all her properties and potentials with the power of the Highest. Thereby this glorious Jesus Christ of God came forth into manhood in our flesh. How unspeakably holy and precious this is.

Everybody has to begin here. To have and to live eternal life we all must know an experience at a definite time in life when the Holy Ghost comes on us, and we are born from above of the Holy Spirit. To this end God's overshadowing wings come upon us, and we are effectively cut off from all men as the Word of God is spoken to the inward sensibilities. When he is 'thus being honoured to receive the Word of God

a man must attend to the Word of God alone; at that time he must pay no attention to what he feels, or what he thinks, or what mere men say or have said. All must know that this glorious birth from heaven is by the Holy Ghost exclusively. You may be sure that if the Son of God Himself had to start there, every son of man must start there too.

What a tremendous thing this is. It needs the power from on High to bring forth children of God. It is not by the oratory of men, or the knowledge of theology, or the doctrines under which he is brought up that a man is born; it is accomplished solely by the power of God coming upon a man or upon a woman. All began with the speaking of the word and the coming of the Holy Spirit; in 'this realm everything comes from the Holy Ghost. Amen!

There can be no doubt that the person of the Holy Ghost has been far too much neglected by us. It would be a tragedy if the Holy Ghost was as neglectful of us as we of Him. It is almost as though men think He ought not to be mentioned; or that all talk about Him must be abandoned in favour of Jesus Christ because it is wrong to talk about the Holy Ghost. It is a major tragedy in a person's life to be brought up under that kind of preaching. For decades if not centuries, it seems, men have been deadly scared to mention the Holy Ghost lest to do so should be to rob the Lord Jesus of His rightful glory; whereas, in order that man should behold His glory as the only begotten of the Father, the angel said to Mary, 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon you.' Similarly, when He comes on men today, that which is formed in them shall be called Jesus, the Son of God. Glory be to God in the Highest. What a favour then is bestowed upon us that such a holy thing should be to mortal man. When the Holy Ghost comes upon a man (or a woman) with the power of the Highest, making all within gloriously new, he finds that he is in Christ and Christ in him; he is a new creation. From that moment onwards, everything is of God; old things are passed away, and all things within are new and truly glorious. When a man is brought there he has made a good beginning, but it is only a beginning. Sadly enough, some people seem to get as far as that and then make a withdrawal or a stop, whereas one of the reasons why we have the precious Bible is to reveal unto us that God makes a pointed start and goes right through to an appointed end.

Increase

The next point of importance is disclosed to us in the second chapter. Speaking of Jesus, it says in v. 40, 'The child grew, and waxed strong in spirit.' He came from the Spirit so, not surprisingly, He waxed strong in His spirit. Growth is important, but to wax strong in spirit is equally important. Growth into weakness is of no value: growth must be with and unto strength. 'Big and strong' is a testimony of health, and is surely the way of the Holy Spirit of God. The Lord Jesus was born to be great, and, understanding rightly what life is all about, so are we. If every son of God by new birth could only see into what God has for him in the future, he would gladly forsake everything else on earth in order to attain it. The unparalleled greatness of God's destiny for us on earth is so wonderful that if we knew all its fullness we would have no more collusion with this world at all. We would gladly say with Paul, 'I am dead to the world and it is dead to me.' We would not want to sin again, or make allowance for or feed the fleshly appetites, or waste money or spend time to accumulate possessions in this world any more. God's desire is that we should be so absorbed with HIM and His desires for us, that we should give all attention to the need to grow

stronger and stronger unto all greatness in Spirit. He has made every provision for it, and sent the Spirit for that purpose.

Earlier in the chapter we see something of this greatness to which the child of the Spirit is predestined in this life. Again it is the Holy Spirit who is authorising and inspiring the truth about the Lord Jesus, through the lips of Simeon, v. 32, 'A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory....., This was added to by the prophetess Anna who 'spoke of Him to all them that looked for redemption.' So we see that He was to be both a light and the glory before the eyes of all those who were looking for redemption. Now, as then, there are many who are looking for redemption. But how shall they see without a light, and how shall there be light without glory, and how shall men in darkness and shame know redemption sufficiently to want it, if there be no light and glory in the world? Matt. 5:14, Phil. 2:15, Romans 8: 30. God has called us with the high and holy calling of sons, having predestined us unto it whilst here on earth. Aspire with all your heart to this position, wax strong in spirit and grow up into it as did your Lord.

How you develop physically is not of chiefest importance. We are told in scripture that bodily exercise only profiteth little, or for a little (time). Grow strong in spirit; be filled with wisdom; and let grace be the mark of your person and presence during this period. Strength; growth; these two go together and so do wisdom and grace. Wisdom apart from grace makes a child precocious, unbearable, proud, so these two must go together also. Grace poured into the life causes a man of wisdom and understanding to speak and act with concern for the ignorant, and the weak, and the dwarfed. Wouldn't it be wonderful if all the babes born of the Spirit on the upward way to manhood and true power had grown this way, into this kind of youth? God has a great future on this earth for us all, beloved.

One of the greatest tragedies of our day is that many want to become men before they are youths (or, for that matter, even before they are born), and are wishing to run before they can walk. The Holy Spirit comes, doing a marvellous work in them, but then inadvisably the axiom 'Saved to Serve' is forced on them. Something so true in principle is thus propounded to them to their hurt. Consequently, poor babes in their 'napkins' are pushed out prematurely to do some 'service' or 'work' when they are hardly able to walk, leave alone to serve as they should or would. But when Jesus was born He was not directly pushed out, while still a babe, to serve men. Father knew that was not right, so He did not expect it of His Son; neither does He expect it from His lesser sons. Time for growth into a strong, healthy, wise and gracious spirit would have prevented many, many people from becoming spiritual and psychological wreckage. Many men and women lie out on the scrap heap today, broken; smashed; because these things we see so plainly written of our Lord and Saviour have been ignored. Hot-headed men with ill-conceived advice have led many to an untimely end in this way. 'Not a novice,' says Paul, 'not a novice.'

Oh, if only we had properly understood the sanity of the whole principle of growth and development and maturity underlying such instruction, we would not have acted so hastily or pressed so hard upon babes to serve. Before we talk about 'power for service,' let us dwell and insist upon the true work of the Spirit in the life of a man. Let us be more keen to see a man filled with wisdom and have the grace of God upon him, than to see him serving on dizzy peaks of 'power'. We had better be 'strong' than 'powerful'. Only the strong can bear power. Only the wise know how to use it. Only the gracious can be trusted with it. To be filled with the wisdom of the Spirit is better

than to be filled with the power. The order of scripture and in the person of Jesus is the true one. For Him the power ministry was deferred in favour of His growth. Development into all the proper God/man's indispensable spiritual qualities by far precedes in importance any works of power. Grace is to bring us up into manhood. Its presence and work must mark our developing years, as well as originally bring us to truth. Grace is shown to us in order that it might be revealed to men, having already worked, and still working in us.

'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world,' has done so in order 'that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.' This is the thing we must understand. We are to 'be' before we may 'do' or 'go' or 'work'. We must grow in grace; the blessings, the favours, the wonders of God. O beloved, are you giving attention to this? If you only knew it, the Divine favour is toward you in all situations and conditions. Think of this — the Son of God had to go grubbing about on the floor of a carpenter's workroom. Think of it. Jesus did that. Praise Him! I bless God that He did not send forth some jumped up young 'jackanapes' who was thinking he was going to convert the world in five minutes. Father left Him back there in Nazareth that He should grow, and get strong in Spirit, and be wise and gracious at home. Because they receive a gift, some people think they are going to convert everybody with it. The thing for us to realise about all this is that the Lord Himself had to abide content and lowly in spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that counts. You realise, don't you, beloved, that everything vital about you is in and of the Spirit? It is there, in the end, where you will have to take your stand; there, first and last, is where you must be strong. In the course of life, when the tides are running against you and the devil is fighting hard and all sorts of unaccountable things are happening, it is in the Spirit where you will have to make your stand, and standing, be strong, and wise, and gracious to all. We shall presently see the benefit of this period of private development in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Grace

The next lesson we are afforded from this examination of the earthly life of our Lord is to be found in this same chapter, v. 41:— 'Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and His mother knew not of it. But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found Him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. And when they saw Him, they were amazed: and His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.'

Let us here notice one of those exquisite touches of the Holy Spirit which make the written Word of God so delightful to all His people. 'Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover.. . And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and His mother knew not of it... And when they saw Him, they were amazed: and His mother said unto Him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' (vv. 41, 43, 48, 49). It is evident that by the time Jesus was twelve years of age the family of Nazareth had become a little palace of love. It seems that Joseph had been accepted by Jesus even as Joseph had accepted Him. What a blessing is acceptance, and by contrast what a desperate pity is rejection. Joseph and Mary are called Jesus' parents. Perhaps Jesus had even been calling him 'Daddy,' even though He knew positively well that Joseph was not His father. The Holy Spirit makes this quite plain in v. 43 where we see the distinction finely drawn by Him, 'Joseph and His mother.' She was His mother but he was not Jesus' father. Searching for and discovering the boy sitting in the temple among the doctors of the Law, we find Mary saying, 'Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing.' But to this the child Jesus, with absolute clarity of understanding, replies, 'How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' Perhaps they did not understand what He was meaning.

Quite firmly and politely Jesus was correcting the trend and implications of family jargon. It was fitting that He should be a son of the household at Nazareth, but He knew also that, at the very moment in which they found Him, He was sitting in His true Father's House, and that both in it and for it He had a special work to do at a future date. Yet how graciously He uses His wisdom and strength. How wisely and gently He corrects the mistake. Even at this stage of His growth, His strength and wisdom and grace already appear in all their glory as He states the truth. He spoke truth in love: that is grace. He was strong to withstand error, but gracious to avoid the sin of adopting a wrong attitude, which latter sad state is the arrogance of knowledge. His Father's business was not carpentry, even though He had devised the cross. But Joseph was not hurt by such grace; neither was Mary offended by the implied rebuke; and He was only twelve. How long is it since you were born again? Are you conscious you have been born again and are alive for a purpose? 'I must be about my Father's business,' He said, but He was not yet allowed to do the work for which He knew He was born. For another eighteen years He had to go back to Nazareth and do a mundane job properly there. Amen!

He was already a great teacher with a marvellous future as a public figure, but He was not sent to anything other than the normal Rabbinical School. Not the way of publicity for Jesus. He had to go back to the carpenter's bench, and there learn skill and life poking about with bits of wood and finding how things fit together in a world other than spiritual. As v. 51 so aptly says, He learned all these things right down there at home in subjection to His parents, where every young man ought to be in order to learn how to live and work. Oh God, we do need to get these things right and to straighten out our thinking; Thou knowest! Mary and Joseph did not understand what He was saying, but nevertheless He went down with them to Nazareth and the carpenter's shop and was subject unto them there at home. Thus He gave Himself to the next eighteen years of obscure growth; and thereby, we read, 'Jesus increased.' By going down with them and being subject to them He increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man. That is the way to increase. He had grown but He

grew more; He was strong but He got stronger; He was wise but He needed to get wiser; He already had unmerited favour upon Him, and yet how much more gracious He became. Apparently, getting 'down' to work and being in subjection is God's method of increase. It may have been thought that increase is only in or by what is called 'the ministry'. Many young men think (and say to an older brother), 'I'd love to go round with you, brother, I would like to serve my apprenticeship with you.' Then come knowledgeable quotes, related to Bible texts, such as, 'He sent them out two by two'; or, 'Paul had a party of brethren with him'; or again, 'Paul took young Timothy with him.' There are so many quotable scriptures, correct enough in all conscience; but Jesus went down and was subject to Joseph and Mary.

Go home and learn to be lowly, humble, teachable, obedient. Be shown how to stick one bit of wood in another. Learn how to be patient with lumps of timber, for if you can master the art of living piously with your family and working skilfully in the occupation God has chosen for you, you will become more or less basically qualified to do all the other things He plans for you in the future. Learn to be a good son. When God sent forth His Son He sent forth a Man! Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man. If I could whisper in the ears of leaders of fellowships and churches and ask, 'Who among you has increased in wisdom and stature and favour with God and man,' I wonder who would be the ones named? Do you think it would be the spectacularly gifted ones who would be listed? I wonder!

When God begins a work in a man He perfects it. When you start in the Spirit you have to stay in the Spirit. Jesus was in and never out of the Spirit. Turn to Galatians 3, v. 1, and you will find this word: 'O foolish Galatians, Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before Whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?' Many are so bewitched, they stop running, or get off course. Jesus did not do that. It is unthinkable, but if Jesus Christ the boy of twelve had insisted on His independence and said, 'I'm going to be about my Father's business; goodbye Mary and goodbye Joseph, I'm going out preaching,' everybody standing around with their mouths wide open listening to this marvellous boy might have thought it wonderful and said, 'Hallelujah!' But if He had gone then He would have been in sin; abhorrent as the thought is, He would have been in the flesh as surely as His name was Jesus.

What a tremendous thing this is then, beloved. Having begun in the Spirit, stay in the Spirit. Walk in glorious obedience and subjection. See that you increase in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God 'and man. Not that by so doing you are trying to curry favour with anyone — a man must die to all such vanities — but that the unmistakable sweetness and glory, which only comes upon the man who abides exclusively in the grace of God, may be with you. When this grace of God is upon you, every look, word, thought and deed will 'be grace. This is that in which Jesus had to grow. Primarily, He 'had to go out into the world to be the Man of grace, and this He later did, so that afterwards men could write of Him, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.' O, 'hallelujah, all must be of and in and by grace! Grace must be upon you, so that everything is in grace and of grace, and ministered to a man as favour from God without condescension. Oh, when you preach to men let it be favour to them. When you put your hand on them 'and tell the demon to come out of them, and when you put your hand on them 'to be healed, it is again favour to them; and

when you go into their home it is favour to them, and all from God. Not that when staying in anyone's home you are to be a horribly ingratiating person; everybody knows you are a sinner if you do that. The naturalness of you is to be grace, because it has been your babyhood and your boyhood and has become your manhood. Make no 'mistake about it, he is no man of 'God except he has the grace of God upon him. Just to hear such a one speak brings grace to the ears, and to look upon his face is a gracious benediction of God. There are no thunderclouds of inward storms there, his heart is at rest, and nothing but the glory of the Spirit and power of God is in him, developing his soul and bringing him into all the inward states of the Life that was Jesus Christ manifest in the flesh. Sin and unholiness and fleshliness and worldliness cannot be there. Whether you bend and pick up a shaving from the floor, or whether you go and speak a word or give a command in the midst of men, or whether you sit and teach the doctors or whatever you do, all must be in and by the favour of this God-granted life. A human being is far more than a sermon; God speaks in a son. That is more than a gift of the Spirit, or a miracle, or a blessing. A babe and son and man of the Spirit is what the Father seeks to make everyone. Know this, that because the glorious and splendid One, Who is our rightful, only, final, and highest Example lived like that, so must we.

Anointing

Now we will turn to the next thing by which we shall learn more of our blessed Lord. In Luke 3:1-2, we have an insight into the heart of God and Luke, and are privileged to enjoy the flavour of real Bible humour. Here is set forth a list of names, beginning with the Emperor and passing down from him through kings and priests of local importance and renown. All the royal, governmental and religious power of that New Testament world is here represented, but instead of informing them, quite deliberately, 'the Word of God came unto John . . . in the wilderness.' It did not come to Caesar, nor any of these other men, but to John, a man filled with the Holy Ghost. Everything to do with this life of Jesus is of HIM, the Holy Ghost. Now that is typical of God. Do you see the pattern? Can you see the majestic sweetness of Him? Tiberias Caesar may be exalted in his imperial majesty and adulated in his worldly status among men, but God will pass him by when He would send His Word, leaving him in the sandy desert of his court. The man to whom the Word of God comes, though he be clothed with a leathern girdle and a camel skin and eat wild honey and locusts, will stand up as in the heavenly palaces and become the flaming power of God to his generation. That is what will happen, and praise God for it. This is how it always happens, for it is part of the whole principle and pattern of God's ways. In much the same way it all happened to a Man scraping up shavings from a carpenter's floor in Nazareth when He was about thirty years of age — Jesus the Son of God. That is the way God does it. This John came out of the depths of the desert unto Jordan preaching the Word, whilst all the celebrities were talking worldly wisdom or religious jargon. To John went out multitudes of people, to hear the Word and to be baptised of him; and among them came Jesus, the Son of God, born of the Spirit. He was about to experience a further gift from His Father, which was as necessary to Him for His life work and redemptive act, as was His birth for His life on earth.

We are distinctly told by the Lord Jesus Himself what happened to Him in Jordan. The Holy Ghost through Luke has faithfully recorded the words for us in chapter 4, v. 18; Jesus says, 'The Lord... hath anointed me.' It is of greater importance than at first may be realised that we fully understand what took place in Jordan. To deal with all at this time is not our purpose. We will simply note that only physically was Jesus

baptised, and that in water; spiritually He was not baptised, but anointed. He was not baptised in Spirit because He did not need to be; He was not a sinner. He had no sins to confess, for He did not sin. Let that sink deep, deep down into your heart. The baptism with or in the Holy Spirit deals with sin. The thorough immersion of the entire being in the Holy Ghost is God's remedy for all sin. Every person needs to be baptised, dipped down and held in the Holy Ghost; so that the blessed fiery Spirit should burn the rottenness of sin out of the very marrow of the bones of his inward man. But that done, he still needs to be anointed with the Spirit as was Jesus.

Our experience of baptism in the Spirit was equated in the person of the Lord with birth. Birth and baptism are one. His generation into flesh was by a type of baptism in Spirit, taking place in His mother Mary, whereby the sin factor present in human procreation was effectively screened from being transmitted to Him. His generation is equated in us with regeneration. It is our comparable experience. But behold, being born of the Spirit as He was, He did not suddenly at thirty years of age say, 'Well, I'm thirty years old, it's time I got out and did something in the world; please pray for me, I'm going out to evangelise, or to be a missionary.' Even Jesus could not do that. But the terrible tragedy is that so many lesser sons than He do just that. Jesus did not just decide He could be a minister or preacher sent from heaven. He had to wait till He was anointed. Who is it that decides how and when a man should become a minister? None but the Father, as in Jesus' case, anointing Him with the Holy Ghost for the purpose. Although He was eager to serve while still only twelve years of age He had to commence His schooling in scriptures instead. By the time He was fifteen He must have been well read in the Word and about the most qualified person on earth to teach the Bible. But the Lord God, His Father, did not send Him out to become a Bible Teacher. He had not come to teach the Bible; He had come to teach us God. There are not many teachers doing that today. So many are teaching the Bible in one way or another, but who among men is teaching us God by life and revelation? Example before ministry is God's order. Jesus had to stand in Jordan, praying into an opened heaven, whence in response to His prayer the tender Spirit descended dove-like upon Him; He had to receive the Anointing for His ministry, and hear His approving Father say, 'Thou art My beloved Son.' Father was ever so pleased with HIM; sufficiently so, apparently, to let Him be about Father's business as He had always wished. He could send Him now, even to the ends of the earth if He so desired. He could now go on to His nearing doom, but three years away in time. When Father is pleased with a man He can send him to the biggest heartbreak of his life; to betrayal, treachery, death; anything.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if, after you have lived thirty years in the Spirit, the Father could say to you, 'I'm pleased with you, son.' What a life you must already have lived in order for such a commendation. Bless God! O grant that it may be so of everyone of us. This occasion in the life of Jesus is the only one upon which the Holy Ghost is seen in bodily form. He comes down as a dove upon the Lamb and John sees Him settle onto the glorious person of the Lord Jesus. The prophet's wondering eyes, filled with amazement, continue to watch steadily, as the dove, remaining there, loses its own distinctive form and becomes absorbed into the waiting person of the Son, and disappears from view. His distinctive form melts away, but His presence and power remain. Such a Man as this, under this glorious, extra, permanent and heavenly anointing may now go Out into the ministry of God.

Power

But not yet; not quite yet, for in the life of the Representative Man everything had to be just perfect. At the beginning of the chapter and directly following the record of His baptism and anointing we read, 'And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost....' There it is. So we learn by this that the Holy Spirit's fullness has not reached its greatest degree and dimension and possibility in any of us until we are anointed. He was the Child of the Spirit. He was anointed of the Spirit. He was full of the Holy Ghost. Let us be very honest now. How many men of our acquaintance are full of the Holy Spirit according to this standard? His is the standard. God's only standard is Jesus. There He is, set forth before us full of the Holy Ghost, with Father saying, 'I'm ever so pleased with you, Son.' Bless the Name of the Lord.

I want this precious One to bring me out of all my lack, and out of all the littlenesses of men, that would scale me down to something dwarf-like while preaching greatness to me, saying that is What is meant by being filled. I need someone to raise up my heart and send it soaring up and away unto the ideal of God — Jesus. I do not want anything less. If I have anything less it can only be allowed in me temporarily as a stepping-stone to this. But I do not want to stop there. If I be less than God's man it may only be permitted because in the time-order of growth I must have a beginning. But there must also be a growing; and, oh, I must have a going on and up into all the fullness of God. Amen! Father, be pleased with me. Oh, to wrap my arms around Father's neck and love and love Him, and be pleased with Him and He with me. How can a man wish for anything better? The inner craving to be about Father's business always arrives at a point of culmination, a moment when it is brought to fullness. God always brings a man to a place where He pours forth from heaven upon him in sacred anointing, when the lovely Dove-Spirit comes down upon him, and his empowering is all from that Dove. Empowering is hereby seen to be by gentleness added to gentleness, grace upon grace, power coming upon power, Spirit coming upon Spirit, God coming upon God. Hallelujah! This is the thing that God is after in each life. The Holy Ghost lost the distinctive shape of the Dove and took the form of a man, even Jesus. Glory be to God. Why do we all live and breathe if not for this?

Excepting this event we are not told anywhere that Jesus was full of the Holy Ghost. This is not to suggest that He was not full of the Spirit either before or after this remark, but to point out the precise and special things that take place in a person at such time. God is especially drawing our attention to the fact that Jesus was a Spirit-filled person at that time; and now, filled, anointed, He returns from Jordan, 'and was led by the Spirit.' In these words is revealed to us the secret of a fully-used life; 'led by the Spirit.' Many people today are seeking guidance. Among the most popular books upon Christian bookstalls are those about guidance. All men seek guidance. Many are the requests that come seeking prayer for guidance. Jesus did not need guidance; when He was filled with the Spirit, He was led of the Spirit. From that moment His path was assured. He was to be the Way. Born; filled; anointed; led. That is the order of truth. The feature of Jesus' life following His anointing was the leading of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost comes to be Leader. When He comes to us He comes in Jesus' name to bring leadership to our lives. Failure to understand this fundamental point has resulted in much squandering of life and time, beside dissipation of power. On all sides from people seeking guidance one hears such expressions as, 'I have put out a fleece.' Apparently a place has been reached where guidance is needed before another step be taken, so in some way or another something is laid out in much the same way as Gideon of old laid out his famous fleece because he needed assurance about God's word. It seems everybody has a fleece out. One man (and that in the old covenant,

mark you) put out a fleece, and apparently set the fashion for all time — for all God's children. They think this is a good, proper, scriptural way to receive spiritual guidance. But he who needs this kind of guidance lacks leadership. It seems that with the coming of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost all such extraneous means of guidance passed away. Certainly the reference to casting lots in Acts 1: 26 seems to be the final one in the entire Bible. The reason for this is that guidance is usually dependent upon outward 'signs', 'words', etc., but leadership is from within. The Holy Ghost guides from within, leading with power from the inward man. The Lord Jesus is both our Leader and Example in this. We must look to Him, not to the Old Testament examples, great as they were.

Reading that verse in Isaiah 53, which says 'He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter,' we may conjure up visions of horrible men leading Jesus on to death. But He was not really led of them, He was led of the Spirit. That He was led by those 'awful' Roman soldiers was purely of secondary importance. He was led by the Spirit as a Lamb to the slaughter. No wonder His Father had insisted that in those days of youth He stay in Nazareth and grow in grace and wisdom and be strong in Spirit. Let us see and understand this very clearly. Too many people are wanting to push out too many others before they are strong enough to go, with the result that they crack up or break down. So many pitiful wrecks are to be found strung out round the world, smashed and ruined, because these great cardinal truths have not been recognised.

Perhaps the most surprising thing about this leadership is where the Spirit led HIM. It may be that we have never seen that the Holy Ghost sometimes leads into the wilderness. What He never does is lead us into the wilderness of sin nor leave us in the wilderness of carnality, but He does at some time lead all God's sons unto the wilderness of temptation, a place of conflict with and victory over the devil. We are not led of the Spirit and lost in the wilderness at the same time. Jesus was not lost, or going round in frustrating circles in the wilderness, but led of the Spirit to accomplish the next thing chosen by His Father for Him to do. Forty days and forty nights He was there with the wild beasts. Tempted, tempted, tempted; no food day in, day out: in the presence of wild beasts and under the power of the devil. But how can this be? The Spirit-filled Son of God; surrounded by wild beasts; 'that cannot be right,' one is tempted to think. But it was right. For the next few years He was always to have wild beasts around Him, and in far worse conditions than these, and the beasts were to be men; human beings existing in a spiritual wilderness. Look at Peter. Look at Judas. Listen to John, the beloved disciple, talking like a son of thunder and saying in effect, 'Let's kill them; let's call down fire from heaven; that's the way, let's blast a way through for our Lord.' These were the favoured apostles, chosen to be the foundation of the Church. Further, He was absolutely surrounded by wild beasts on the cross. Psalm 22, with reference to His cross, speaks of bulls of Bashan and unicorns. All His life He was hounded by Herod, a man that was a fox. So a Lamb went out with the wild beasts and proved that all the wild beasts could not eat Him, nor men touch Him, for the gentle, tender Dove was upon Him and in Him. Hallelujah! All this time He was learning obedience. He was still full of the Spirit out there in the wilderness. He had been led there by the Spirit for those forty days of terrible testing that culminated in the three great temptations which summed up and pointed all the devil could at that time level at Him. This is why He went out there all alone except for God. He must meet the devil and defeat him for the purposes of the ministry to which He was called and which He must fulfil. It was all in order that the Man in whom God is well-pleased should enter the ministry having personally defeated that old serpent the

devil, for in the course of that ministry He had to be able to say to demons, 'Come out,' and be sure that they would come out of their victims. And this is precisely what did happen. His ministry in this field was really only a mopping-up campaign. He had won the decisive battle out in the wilderness; the dragon had been overcome there. This is why you never read of Jesus saying to a demon, 'I bind your power,' or some such thing. He bound it in the wilderness long before He attempted to loose people in the land. He bound the strong man in the desert. He says that you cannot get into a strong man's house until you first bind the strong man. It is truth. So He went out there and bound the strong man. He went to the cross finally and destroyed him, the Hebrews' letter says — 'He destroyed him that had the power of death' — but in the wilderness He bound him that had the power of bringing sicknesses, and diseases, and dementia, and lunacy, and depressions, and darkenesses on people.

In this ministry He was a Man full of the Holy Ghost, dictating to the devil. You may say, 'But surely He did this because He was God.' Yes, that is quite right, but God humbled Himself, to teach us how every man should do it. He humbled Himself, we are told, and took upon Himself the form of a slave. 'Being found in fashion as a man' He did not go around saying, 'Look here, I'm God!' His favourite description of Himself was 'Son of Man.' Jesus Christ did everything as a Man by the same means by which men like you and I can do it. He was born of the Spirit; anointed by the Spirit; full of the Spirit; led by the Spirit; and by the Spirit victorious over that great opposing spirit, the devil. That is how you and I can do it. We all can do it providing we will go God's way.

At this point let us pause to gather comfort for our souls in contemplation of the ways and experiences of this wonderful God-Man. When we are sorely tormented, and tossed, and tried, and not knowing which way to look or where to turn, remember Jesus. It may not be generally realised that our blessed Lord, during the time of these awful tests at the devil's hands, was actually under Satan's power, but He was. Who carried Jesus away and put Him on a pinnacle of the temple? None other than the devil. Jesus did not go there Himself. We are not told that angels took Him there, and He most certainly did not climb that pinnacle Himself. It says that the devil set Him on that pinnacle of the temple. It is astonishing to believe that He was actually under the power of Satan for that purpose. Do not read too much into it but believe what the scripture says. The devil put Him there, your Bible says so. The devil also took Him up into an exceedingly high mountain; not in His imagination; there is nothing imaginary about this thing, it was actual. See! When the devil got Jesus there upon that temple steeple he said, 'Cast yourself down.' In other words Jesus was at that moment tempted by the devil to commit suicide!

'Go on,' says the devil to many a man, 'cast yourself down, destroy yourself.' We know how the devil falsified the word originally intended as blessing to us from God; he did it oh so subtly; he just omitted a few vital words from the original promise, that is all. It sounded right but it was wrong. But even if the devil actually quotes the word of God verbatim it is still wrong, because it is he who is quoting it. Do not make too much of it if in quoting the Bible you accidentally leave out a word or two; it is the deliberate omission or addition of words that is wrong. This was evil; because as well as being manipulated it was quoted from a wrong motive in the heart of him who said it. It is the motive in the heart and the end in view that decides what is really being said, and whose word it is, God's or the devil's. The spirit in which a thing is said, the attitude of the heart, is the deciding factor as to what is meant.

But the glory of all this is that at the vital point of decision, the precise moment preceding the end in view or the action aimed at, Jesus said, 'No.' In this He has given us the example and shown us the way to act in temptation. When the tempter's power is strong and we are being powerfully operated upon by him, and seem irresistibly borne along under his will to terrible depths of sin, or heights of pride or desire, the sin has not marked us if at the crucial moment we say 'No.' Temptation has no meaning and is of no value unless it has power to attract or impel or carry toward the object of desire. But having accomplished this it has not yet become sin in us. Our will and consent must be procured in the matter before sin is either practised or imputed. The Lord Jesus is our example here. So the devil left Him. Apparently on top of the temple. How He got down we are not told. But we do know that angels came and ministered to Him, so perhaps they got Him down. The devil had tempted the Lord to step outside the angels' charge over Him, and had He obeyed Satan He would have missed the true angelic ministry. By presuming to act as though He could not fail to have it He would surely have lost it. The ministry of angels is for people who live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, and are led of the Spirit. Amen! All heaven's hosts crowd around to minister to the sons of God. What a glorious thing this is! Abiding there, how safe you are.

We will proceed one step further and see the end of this great truth, in verses 13 and 14. 'When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit.' There is the word again, 'the power' (Greek — 'dunamis'). After that He was the Man of power among men. Hast thou power? Jesus' first use of power was to bind the devil. That is the example set by Jesus; first render the devil impotent to prevent your works. How far reaching all this is. How many of us have done it? We will not resort to any 'trumpet-blowing', but how many of us have done it? Herein lies the secret of the successful ministry of Jesus; this was how He got glory on earth among men. This is the truth, the way and the Life of the Spirit of God as set forth by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ministry

Let us observe Him now as He returns in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. We read that His fame goes out through all the region round about. 'And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.' How truly He has earned it. In any man wisdom, grace, power deserve fame, especially when he has defeated the devil. So He goes home to Nazareth. That is the place to go when you are talking of wisdom, grace and power; go to the place where you have been brought up. It is there first you must stand the test and show that you are full of the power of the Spirit. 'I've got the power,' says someone, 'I'm going out to the Amazon!' The first place to Visit, beloved, is your Nazareth. They will know there whether or not you have the power. Perhaps before any of us try miracles we ought to try something like this. He went back to the place where He had been brought up and everybody knew Him. He had lived with them, so to them He had to return; He went home; it is as simple as that. Going back among the people that knew Him, in the power of the Spirit, it was soon clear to all that this power He now had was utterly consistent with the grace that had been upon Him all His life.

Now, one of the first things to learn about the use of power is apparently the correct way to interpret and relate the scriptures to oneself. He comes to Nazareth (v. 16), 'Where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the

book of the prophet Esaias. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it is written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." One can almost hear Him saying, 'I've been longing to do it for these years, but now I come in the Spirit of the Lord to do so.' He stood there, anointed to preach the gospel to the poor, wanting to heal the broken-hearted, ready to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty those that were bruised. Oh, how willing He was to preach the acceptable year of the Lord to them, and now the moment had arrived! When he had read this scripture the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him (v. 20). Not on the Bible, note, but on Him. He closed the book; not finally for all time, but finally for that occasion. He opened it again afterwards, of course, because the book was written about Him. But the words and the action were significant enough to cause the eyes of everybody in the synagogue to fasten upon HIM; watching, and listening, and waiting. 'He began to say unto them, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.'" That, just that, is what every Spirit-anointed man must be able to do. He was fulfilling the scripture; the word in flesh right there in their presence, able to do the thing He read, their eyes and ears being witness that He had said it. Herein lies the essence of all Bible reading in public by such men. We must learn to take up scripture more for its application to the needs of the moment and its fulfilment in men than for our summarising, or preaching, or teaching. The Spirit-born, -filled, -anointed, -led, -empowered man is the man who fulfils scripture. That, primarily, is His ministry.

One night, following a meeting in a room, two young ladies remained behind after everyone else had gone. Both had demons in them. One knelt for ministry, and as the demon left her she screamed as much in terror as under the torment of the horrible thing that had been indwelling her. The other girl, sitting and watching, was absolutely terrified. She had never seen or heard anything like it before. She could have been told, 'This day is scripture being fulfilled in your ears!' This is what happened when Jesus moved amongst men and women. It is true scriptural ministry. Jesus did not stand up and preach a sermon to them in Nazareth, He just read scripture and said, 'Now this is fulfilled.' Beloved, if you are a preacher of the word, fulfil it in the eyes and ears of the congregation. This is what Spirit-filled men will do. Fulfil the word. Unless it is fulfilled, both the scriptures and all you say will be thought to be empty words. All must be completely filled out by a life: and only the Spirit-empowered life can do that. The letter kills; only the Spirit gives life.

From Nazareth Jesus went out over that land on a mission of fulfilment; he opened the eyes of the blind, delivered the captives, and ministered to the broken-hearted; because He was so full Himself He could fulfil scripture to them. Do you see Him as His heart goes out to that poor woman following the corpse of the son who is borne dead (as his father before him) to the grave? Imagine the infinite compassion of this Man of the Spirit as He halts the funeral procession, raises the young man from the dead and gives him back to his mother; Jesus' own mother was a widow, and He was her eldest son! Heart-healing is the most wonderful ministry. Have you got such a desire and ministry to build Father's House? Have you met anyone like a man who is really anointed and filled with the Spirit of God, living and moving in power and compassion? Have you ever met a man like Jesus? Have you? He came back in the power of the Spirit from His victory over Satan. He was full. He had always been full of grace it seems. He had been growing and 'increasing in that for thirty years. Now for three years He was going to move in 'the power'. In those three years He swept

over His country like fire from heaven. Oh, God raise up such ministers! Where are they? Put down all others, Lord; put them down. We need men and women filled with the Spirit of God moving only in the leadings of the Spirit.

Maybe it is strange to us today that the assertions Jesus made at Nazareth should evoke such murderous thoughts in His neighbours' hearts. But people do not like the dead letter closed by a living hand. Leave them with their scriptures and their dreams and hopes and all is well. Say you have come to fulfil them and interest will turn to hate in some quarters. But a man must follow his Lord. Nobody ought to start his preaching career until he can start where Jesus started both geographically and socially, beside scripturally, especially in regard to power. The tale of the desolation all over the whole wide world is the tale of unanointed preachers. Our gospel is not words, it is the power of the Spirit working with and through the preached words unto demonstration in human lives.

This is not the end of the references in Luke's Gospel to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. We have briefly looked at the beginnings of the ways of God in the life of the Man from heaven, believing that the inspired writer presents Him unto us in a representative manner; our Example. If you have been latterly born of the Spirit, do not start blaming yourself that you are not yet ministering as Jesus. Being born of God — that is, being baptised in the Spirit — set your heart to be all that you may be in His name as outlined in these scriptures. Birth is unto growth and manhood of grace and wisdom and power. The anointing, and the leading of the Spirit is your privileged heritage, that you too may move and fulfil your part in this precious, powerful ministry of the Lord. Though others' lives do have bearing upon our own, look not to others for your prime example, but to the Lord Himself. By the Spirit He will live out the same glorious life and works through us as He did Himself, accomplishing His same powerful ministry within and through all those chosen, as He, to do His Father's will.

27-02-01

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A SIGN OF AUTHORITY

G. W. North

First published January 1976. Revised March 1978 & May 1989.
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A SIGN OF AUTHORITY

Headship in the Church of Jesus Christ

This is the Way - Walk Ye in It

From internal information we know that Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians in answer, if not in response to, a specific request in a letter from some person or persons in the church. Within the church had arisen great concern and disgust over the sinful behaviour and rebellious habits of many of its members; wrong attitudes to eternal truth and principles of living had arisen and were being openly practised. Fearing lest these decadent behaviour patterns should become accepted as though they were right, they wrote to the apostle for help and instruction.

Although we can only assume that the position, practices and powers of women in the church were mentioned in the letter, we may do so with a degree of certainty, for in course of answering it the man of God handles the subject with typical forthrightness. There is no doubt that to him it was a very vital issue, yet, in spite of his unmistakable ruling on the matter, to this day it still retains its controversial nature among the churches of the Western Hemisphere. Perhaps, before we attempt to approach the subject now, we ought to pause and consider a fact which should condition our whole attitude towards it.

Although Paul wrote his commandments concerning female head-covering as a corrective to unspiritual people of his day, by doing so he also left on record the unchanging mind of God about it, that we should read his precious instruction to spiritual people who wish to know and do God's will. That he found it necessary to do so should be sufficient ground for us to recognise that both the true Church and the apostle (with the Spirit of God who inspired him) knew of the gravity of the error into which the church had fallen. The fact that necessity was laid upon him to reprove and correct these women, and indeed the church majority, should itself reveal to us the magnitude of the wrongdoing in the eyes of the Lord. It should not be thought that, because these instructions concern women, only they were at fault. Paul wrote to the church, not to the ladies only. The whole church were wrong, especially the elders; in fact upon them lay the greatest blame. It is a solemn Biblical truth that where the women are at fault and may even take the initiative in sin or misdemeanour, it is the men upon whom God lays the blame. They are the head of the women as Paul so clearly states following God's example in Eden. If the ladies do it, it is because the men allow it - alas, may also encourage it. Is not this a pointed and partial fulfilment of the scripture 'a woman shall encompass a man'? Whereas the man must encompass the woman as it was before the fall.

To Obey is Better than Sacrifice

Paul opens his remarks on the subject with a clear injunction to men to uncover their heads when praying or prophesying, and follows it with just as clear instructions to the women to cover their heads. God does not always choose to explain why He has

made His decisions but there is no doubting the wisdom of all He does. We must respect His wishes and accept His choices without demur, believing obedience to be the highest form of love's trust.

It is of little use trying to make these verses mean anything other than what they plainly declare, and to say the least it is most unkind and certainly unjustifiable to murmur against Paul that he had a prejudice against women. These instructions have a simple explanation based upon eternal principles, giving rise to cogent reasonings, as we shall presently see. He who says to all that we are to 'turn the other cheek' and 'go the second mile', does not expect His gracious people to object to His wishes and demand a satisfactory reason before they will obey. Ought not we all, especially the ladies, rather, as Mary of old, say, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word'?

Contrary to such humble acceptance, the women, with the consent of at least some of the men at Corinth, were, by their unseemly behaviour, challenging the headship of God. Perhaps by deliberately leaving off their head-covering they were thinking to contest the authority or supposed ascendancy of the male; we are not told. Perhaps not everyone understood just all that was implied in such publicly displayed misbehaviour; it may also be true and charitable to think that many today are just as ignorant of the vital issues involved in the transgression. Do all realise that in challenging God's order, whether in Paul's day or in modern times, churches are rebelling against God's institution. Whenever this is done God Himself is also being called in question, and to do that is very serious indeed.

Doth Not Even Nature Itself Teach You?

Head-covering by women in the church is firstly an acknowledgement of natural order. Here we must acknowledge something so very basic that we sometimes do not recognise it, namely that when people act contrary to the simple natural order they act against spiritual order and cannot do other, for God created it. Providing it is accepted and acquiesced to with understanding and grace there's no sin in that which is of simply natural order, but it is absolute folly to go against it.

Man's headship is natural; God made him first by direct creation, forming his body from the dust and inbreathing His Spirit into him. Woman He made later, building her up from the man's bone and giving her to him. She was not the direct work of God from dust, but was an extension of God's work from an original creation. Being second she is not to be regarded as secondary, indeed she has so many things that make her more attractive than the male. He was created by God to be His glory in the flesh; she was made of his flesh to be his glory in flesh. Therefore, in this respect, when joined to him she is most glorious and so is he, but she must not presume to be his equal in realms where God has chosen otherwise. God decided this, He willed and created it this way; it is His order and is absolute. Grace does not change this basic natural order, but works harmoniously with it, improving and enhancing it.

Let us here observe a synthesis of logical ideas which is manifest in the truth of head-covering. In the natural order by creation God ordained that a woman's hair should be given her for a covering; in the spiritual order God ordains that the woman is to cover her head with something as a sign that both she and the whole church submits to God's headship. This is a most sensible as well as a natural and logical procedure, being at once a recognition of that which is both natural and spiritual. In chapter

fifteen verse sixteen Paul said, 'first that which is natural and then that which is spiritual' , and in this particular matter he makes no exception.

Outside church gatherings a woman is under no obligation from God to cover her head. Within the bounds of decency men and women may dress as they please or according to the laws of the country in which they live. This passage is not primarily written to regulate the proper relationship which should exist between husband and wife. Necessary as that is, Paul's purpose here is far greater than that; its point is to emphasise the true relationship between man and woman, and between them and God. Properly understood this passage sets out the relationship between the Church and Christ, which in turn is derived from the higher relationship between Christ and God upon which all is based.

It seems that Paul was explaining what he himself had either formerly instituted or else insisted upon in the churches in the beginning. If so it is not an isolated instance of this kind of apostolic ruling. Reading Romans six, it becomes obvious that therein he was giving instruction about a past experience which had been instituted previously and was still being practised among them. Whether or not that is so, in this Corinthian passage he sets forth an application of a divine principle which the Lord expects to find in practice in the churches at His coming.

Dwelling for the moment upon the sexual behaviour of men and women, with which he had dealt in earlier chapters, he touches upon a point in verses five and six which is introduced for its symbolic meaning. It holds a valuable and instructive position in his teaching about the order in spiritual relationships. By the commandment of God and the custom of men in those days, every woman found guilty of immoral sexual behaviour was shorn of her hair as a sign to all that she had broken moral codes and public laws. All moral codes were originally instituted of God in His holiness to protect man's innocence, people who disregard them are also breaking spiritual law. Moral law is for the safeguarding of man's original status and dignity. It is intended by God to regulate the behaviour of human souls one to the other on earth. Whilst in the body each of us is an individual manifestation of spiritual being known as a person and loved of God.

From the fact that the Corinthian church was comprised mainly of gentile believers, it may be correctly assumed that Paul's commandment to them in respect of head-covering was neither unintentional nor mistaken. It was not given merely for the purpose of superimposing a Jewish cultural custom or a religious habit upon a gentile situation. The reason for the commandment lies deeper down than Judaistic cultural or religious rites, and much further back than time could embrace. This commandment rises from the bedrock of spiritual order in the Godhead, which order cannot be broken or changed. It is connected with the truth spoken of in Romans two verses thirteen to fifteen as 'the work of the law written in the ir hearts'. It is a manifestation of that work in natural relationships, and is obligated by it.

The phrases 'do by nature' and 'doth not nature itself teach you?' used by Paul, refer to simple moral law, infused by God into the human race with the inspiration of His breath at the beginning. Both the Mosaic Law, and later the person and law of the life of Jesus Christ, are respectively codifications and personifications of that same moral law which we have referred to above as spirit/soul law affecting all human relationships.

The Head of the Woman is the Man

Whenever human beings live the highest form of moral life, a woman shorn for her sin is regarded as a pariah and is, as she deserves to be, an outcast from society. Unbridled sexual lust, which breaks all rules of chastity and defies the decency and dignity of proper marital relationships between male and female, is, before God, as the physical disease of leprosy. Paul here is not dealing with a temporary breakdown in relationships brought about by improper behaviour on the part of any man or woman. Regrettable as that is, upon true repentance there is forgiveness and cleansing for that, leading the penitent to restoration into pure spiritual life and reinstatement into proper moral behaviour. He is dealing with the permanent state of harlotry so obnoxious to God.

Only among peoples of total depravity or deliberate abandonment will it be found that harlotry is countenanced without punishment and accepted as normal behaviour. To this day women regard their hair as their glory, therefore to have it shorn from their heads is a shame, and done undeservedly this is an insult. It is a correct punishment for harlotry though, for by shearing a woman of her chiefest glory the heinousness of the sin of the inward soul is publicly revealed to her deserved shame. By shaving her, public justice was served. From that time she either continued a depraved, shameless woman before all or, repenting of her sin against God and crime against humanity, she was allowed to grow hair again as a sign of her restoration to public and moral behaviour.

It must also be borne in mind that when Paul states that 'the glory of a woman is her hair,' he is not referring to her hair as such. He is not commenting on the abundance, texture, colour or appearance of her hair; he is rather referring to the fact that she has it. Her glory does not lie in the artistry whereby she arranges her hair to suit her face or crown her beauty, for she may have none or very little of artistry or beauty.

In fact Paul is not concerned with outward beauty or appearance; he is dealing with moral and spiritual beauty. The glory of which he is speaking is glory of character: righteousness, holiness, meekness, obedience, uprightness, faithfulness. A woman's glory does not lie in that which strikes the eye, but in what appeals to the heart. In his day the fact that she had her hair meant that she was a good, true, moral woman. Therefore, whether she was daughter, sister, wife or mother, in the matter of sexual behaviour before God and man she was glorious. If it were not so with her she was to be shorn; she was a woman who had broken through the God-appointed veil of sexual restraint and decency; she was a pariah.

However it must not be thought that, because he thought and wrote in this strain, Paul was only harsh upon women of corrupt morals and not also strictly punitive against men of like behaviour. In an earlier chapter he firmly rules that for certain kinds of sexual sin a man was to be handed over to satan for the destruction of the flesh. Paul was quite impartial in all his handling of men and women; he did not favour his own sex against women but judged equally among all. Unbiased reading of his epistles shows that he considered men always had to bear the greatest responsibility; only seriously biased minds could think otherwise. Moreover, it can scarcely be thought that God would impose such treatment as this upon a woman unless He regarded the offence to be of the enormity that warranted such punishment.

Such stern measures reveal that greater things are involved than at first meet the eye. We see that to ignore or rebel against head-covering is regarded by God as a major offence. By coming to a clear understanding that the glory of a woman's morality in sexual relationships is shown in part by the fact that she retains her hair, we are prepared to be shown the greater spiritual truth that is involved in head-covering in the church.

The Head of Every Man is Christ

Paul commences this chapter with a most significant remark in which he claimed to be an imitator of Christ. Glancing up at the end of the preceding chapter we find that he classifies the human race thus: the Jews, the Gentiles, the Church. We are not to give offence to any of them, he says, but seek to please them that they might be saved. He is also specially concerned that we do nothing which causes our brother to stumble, or which in any way wounds the weakest conscience. 'Imitate me', he says, 'as I imitate Christ'. With this pointed statement he moves into his penetrating analysis and powerful instruction about head-covering in the church. 'The head of Christ is God; Christ acknowledged headship and so do I', he is saying; 'imitate me, acknowledge headship as I do'.

In the matter of human relationships the woman was originally given her hair from God to be unto her a glorious covering. Later, following the fall, this was vested with a special significance. One of the features of the outworking of sin in the race was the early breakdown of natural and moral order between the sexes. This involved the original issue of Adam's defiance of the headship of God over him. In turn this eventuated in forfeiture of his headship over all creation, including the woman.

Now however, with the coming of Christ who is the last Adam and the second man, that headship has been restored. Jesus is the unveiled Man in absolutely correct relationship with God; He is the direct image of God. He is the second man God made; He is the New Man. In the beginning Adam was made in the likeness and image of God who made both him and Eve his wife by Jesus Christ. Adam failing, it was only right, as well as the only possible thing to be done, that Jesus should come down here to restore and improve the situation, which thing He has fully accomplished.

Eve was not made directly by God from dust; she is God's handiwork and therefore of His glory, but she is not His chief glory. In the nature of things it must be acknowledged that it is a greater miracle to create from dust than to build from a rib. It therefore follows that, being made from Adam, she is made in the image and likeness of man for man and is man's chiefest glory in the realm of flesh.

It is only seemly then, and in perfect keeping with a racial principle, that when they are together in public worship of God, both she and man should gladly acknowledge and openly confess this in the way God desires. This should be especially commendable to their hearts, for God never does anything illegally or in conflict with propriety or out of harmony with eternal principle or simple acceptable ideas. If this be so in nature, how much more is it so within the Church which is Christ's body.

This may be plainly seen in both the other basic outward ordinances in the church with which Paul also deals in this epistle, namely the Lord's supper and baptism. By the former the Lord wished to exhibit His broken body and poured-out blood, so He

chose bread and wine as best suited to His purpose. By the latter the Lord wished to display the truth of Baptism in the Spirit, so He ordained water baptism. By the third ordinance here being investigated He wished to display headship, lordship and authority, so He chooses the figure of the woman's head-covering. All is of one and this ordination is established in a simplicity consistent with the whole. Nothing is strained; no foreign element or idea is introduced; everything is so very right.

Who did Hinder that Ye should not Obey?

Avoiding cynicism at all costs it is surely neither incorrect nor unkind to observe that if there be those who refuse to keep the Lord's supper and those who will not be baptised, it must not be thought strange that there are those also who will not accept head-covering, for observation confirms it to be so. Not that logic accepts the two former malpractices as the premise for the third, but reason assumes and observation proves that if two be flouted the third is imperilled. Almost certainly the same spirit abroad in the whole will not hesitate to break the third; as the apostle says earlier, 'a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump'. James also adds his stern wisdom to tell us that it is impossible to break one of the commandments without breaking the whole.

In reverse order of thought to this, though retaining the same principle, Jesus says, 'He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much'. Whatsoever the matter be, the spirit that is working and the principle involved are more important than the actual thing or specific area in which the spirit and principle are working. In fact, whatever, the outward results may appear to be to the observer, whether good or bad, mediocre or excellent, in the eye of God the real quality and merit of any act is only determined according to the spirit and principle by which they are produced.

What is most distressing in the Church is that dear people, who devotedly love the communion and baptism by immersion, for some mysterious reason contest the truth of head-covering and stoutly denounce it. Perhaps this is because they fail to see two things, which in the eyes of God the Father are of major importance, namely, in the church man represents Jesus Christ and woman does not; she fills another very important role which will be considered later. Being so privileged, men, when gathering in the churches, need not and indeed ought not to cover their heads. By being so forthright Paul is being very daring, but bold as he is, he is not a bit worried about this, for he is stating something of major importance and it represents a break with tradition of gargantuan proportions not immediately recognised in modern churches as it was in the beginning.

In Israel of old and among Jews of today men were, and still are, expected to cover their heads when they gather for worship in their synagogues. Their reason for the tradition is simply this: the Jews refused, and still refuse, to accept the fact that Jesus Christ is the Messiah. They think that their head has not yet come, therefore they wear a head-covering; secondly they do not pretend that their hair is their covering; they are not shaven under their hats! It should be noted also that muslims do not uncover their heads when going through their religious exercises - they too reject Christ as Saviour and Lord, and again it should be emphasised that these men do not regard their hair as their covering. Sad as these things are, it is even more sad that in certain sections of the Church men of supposed higher rank than their fellows also refuse to uncover their heads even when handling the bread (or wafers) and wine at their tables (or altars as they ignorantly call them) before God and the congregations. Thus they

deliberately reverse the commandment of God through Paul to men - by words they say their head has come, but by action and example they deny it.

Quite differently from men, the woman has a special role of equal importance to man's, a role befitting her natural state and calling as man befits his. Her part is to represent the bride of Christ. How great her privilege; it is one which all men of pure heart might envy. But there is no need; the bride of Christ is comprised of both sexes, so hers is a wonderful privilege indeed. Behold therefore the wisdom of God: when the woman covers her head she covers it for both male and female, for in respect of this relationship both await the coming of the bridegroom - He has not yet come. So here we have it: man uncovers his head because the head has come; the woman covers her head because the bride's Head and Lord and Husband has not yet come. Reasons for the order of things in the Church become clear as the mystery unfolds, and blessed indeed are the humble hearts that were willing to obey without any explanation as to why they should, even though things were still hidden from their eyes. Listen again to the further profound word of Paul as he seeks to add yet more understanding of the matter to our hearts: 'neither is the man without the woman, neither is the woman without the man'. That is perfectly understandable in the natural realm of course; there could have been no more men and women on this earth if there had never been a woman as well as a man in the beginning.

But Paul is not just appealing to common sense, he is carrying the truth observable in natural things over and up into spiritual things. When a man stands with head uncovered to worship and pray and prophesy in the midst of the church, the woman stands there as if uncovered too, and when the woman stands to worship and pray and prophesy in the church her head covered, the man stands as if covered with her also, for neither is the man without the woman neither is the woman without the man. Note, not covered by, meaning 'over', a phrase so popular in some circles, but covered with, a phrase meaning 'together with': togetherness is so dearly loved by the Lord. But there must neither be subterfuge nor substitution here; each, both man and woman, has his and her own role to fill. Ours to obey, His to order, and why should anyone wish to argue with Him?

Unfortunately, because the designs and desires God intended by the symbol of head-covering in the churches has never been fully grasped, many who would have practised it have either fully or partly, abandoned it. Such statements as, 'we do not insist on it but leave it to the individual concerned', abound everywhere, while in other churches men quite openly speak against it altogether and declare it to be bondage. Yet if this be bondage so also is water baptism a bondage, and the communion an even worse bondage, for head-covering is as much an ordinance as they are. Perhaps one of the most pitiful of all sights is a woman who sits in a meeting with her head uncovered until the time arrives for prayer and prophesying, when a head scarf or some form of covering is hastily pulled over her head. This kind of behaviour is based upon incomplete understanding of the Lord's purposes by head-covering. Why should we think that He only wishes the Church to bear witness to truth during prayer or prophecy? We should base our whole approach to this matter upon the words 'when ye come together', not on when we pray or prophesy.

Paul is not selecting praying and prophesying from among the many things we do when we come together and saying 'you only need to cover the head while these are going on'. He is appealing to our sense of propriety: do you really think it is seemly

that a woman should do these things with her head uncovered? It doesn't seem right does it? He is not saying 'it is all right for a woman to sing and say hallelujah and clap her hands without covering her head, but she ought not to pray and/or prophesy without it'. What if no woman ever prayed or prophesied in a meeting - and some never do - should that be a way out of the obligation for her? Should not this be seen for what it is - either grudging conformity by a heart that dislikes God's order and only submits to it under protest, or basic misunderstanding of truth, or just bad habit contracted by observation of the disobedience of others, or perhaps a mixture of all three?

The seriousness of the situation is this: if the woman refuses to cover her head she:

- (1) dishonours her own personal head by displaying the sad fact that she glories in herself and her own and man's flesh;
- (2) misrepresents every male present by showing that he dishonours Christ his Head, for she wears the covering for him as much as for herself;
- (3) shames and humiliates Christ Himself by displaying the fact that she and the whole church refuses to accept His Lordship. In all of these things the man is not without the woman, and the woman is not without the man; they are equally culpable and personally responsible to God in this matter.

Because of this, it is a glory to the woman to wear the sign in the church, for she wears it for the entire church. To do so is a far greater glory than having her hair upon her head, for were she to fall into grievous sin and her hair be shorn from her as a result, upon repentance and restoration she could again cover her still shaven head and gather with her brothers and sisters in Christ as before. She would then be as though she had never committed the sin, and her hair would soon grow again and she would dwell with her husband or father or her brothers in the home and in Christ - forgiven, restored and loved. The church would meanwhile be vindicated and Christ honoured as He should be.

A Bride All Pure and Holy

A woman's head-covering is to be worn as a testimony to truth and as a sign to her, and her husband or father, and to the Church and to all men, as well as to God and the angels and to the devil and his hosts also. It indicates that in much the same way as a body is unavoidably under its head when rightly related to it, she also joyfully confesses herself to be under her husband or father and Christ. It is the silent declaration ordained of God that the whole church gladly accepts God's order and will obey His orders; this is no hardship where love abounds. On the contrary, worn with understanding and with a perfect heart, it is a delight, for it shows the correctness of the relationship between male and female, and husband and wife, or, if she is unmarried, a daughter and her father and brothers. By this she declares to all men her personal chastity and faithfulness and the corporate chastity and faithfulness of the Church to Christ. More than all these, in this way that God has appointed, she shows to all and declares to Him that the mischief wrought in the human race by Eve's insubjection to Adam, and therefore to God, shall not be repeated in the Church.

A Sign of Authority

It is vital to our understanding of the mystery displayed by head-covering that we recognise that originally and ultimately all contest lies between God and satan. In the beginning of the natural order over which man was made the head the contest had

already commenced. Satan rebelled and declared war against God before He made Adam and Eve, and when she was finally made in order to help Adam, satan deliberately defied God and His order of creation by making approaches to Eve. It was a subtle tactic, for the man not the woman was the terminal point of the temptation. Having defiled the woman and achieved his first success, the devil waited for her to do the rest of his work for him, and she did: Eve defiled Adam for satan. His hidden purpose realised, satan gloated over his success, for by and beyond the conquest of Adam he was able to strike at his primary objective, God.

It was with deliberate defiance of God and in contempt for His order in creation that satan set aside all God's work and went for the woman and not for the man. What is more, it appears that he did this in Adam's presence, bypassing him and openly affronting both God and man. The woman succumbed to the advances of satan, giving him co-operation, passing on to the man the fruit of the devil's temptation. He apparently made no protest but foolishly accepted both the fruit and the affront to his primacy, weakly acquiescing to the devil's will. Through this disobedience Adam not only introduced sin into the human race but also set the pattern for the satan-introduced disorder. Rebellion and anarchy have since reigned among men, and especially so in the matter of proper relationships between the sexes.

God had to accept the fact of sin and its consequences, but He refused, and still refuses, to countenance the attempted reversal of the purpose revealed in the order of creation. That man is still the head, God makes quite plain by speaking of the old nature of man as Adam. The onus for the dread transaction in Eden was not laid upon the woman but on the man. Although the woman was the leading instrument in the fall, God still makes Man the primate, (including Eve in Adam, for she came from him and not directly from God) saying 'as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin'.

He did not blame Eve; Eve, we are told, was deceived, but Adam quite deliberately, and perhaps with some knowledge of the immediate issues at stake, chose to accept not only the fruit but also all he then understood to be involved in the act, namely both satan's and Eve's leadership to the point of domination. Their crime was twofold in effect: first it was against God; secondly it was against the as yet unborn generations of men. But in mitigation it must be stated that neither of them then knew all the long-term misery which would eventuate in the earth as a result of her insubordination and his abdication of authority. However it must also be understood that Christ, having had to suffer so terribly because of it all, is not going to allow it to be so in His own body the Church. As it was in the beginning, so it must be now.

Therefore the woman is under obligation to wear the head-covering as being under the law to Christ; it is an ordination in the New Covenant. She must do so with loving obedience and understanding, and not just as a concession to a Pauline idea. She must do so in conscious agreement with God, knowing why she does it and in no way feeling that because it is commanded her she is an inferior creature. She should rather accept it as a privilege and an honour, for it is the sign of both her own and the whole church's recognition of the original sin and of its expiation and her present right relationship with God.

On no account may man acquiesce to his woman or any womenfolk worshipping uncovered in the church, lest he be found guilty of perpetuating the devil's insult to

God. Adam stood by and allowed his woman to usurp his position, but no man is allowed of God to do such things in the church. Woman must not only show that she is under authority, but must also truly behave herself aright, even if her males are either too weak to act or too ignorant to know or too carnal to care what she does. Besides all this she has a responsibility to angelic beings in this matter, for by covering her head the woman also apparently shows the church's understanding of God's righteous concern for the angels.

Because of the Angels

In the beginning God created these heavenly creatures with a view to being first His own personal servants and secondly the servants of man. Then when the Church came into being, the angels were given special charge concerning each member of it. From scripture we learn that angels have a very keen sense of right and wrong and, among many other things, have a great desire to look into the mystery of Christ and His Church.

The Bible also reveals that, before the world was, proud Lucifer rose up against God and led a group of discontented, rebellious angels in a revolt against Him. The Lord immediately quelled it and dealt out summary judgement against the rebels. Upon some He passed terrible sentences, casting them out and dispatching them to age-abiding imprisonment under darkness, where they now await final sentence on the future day of universal judgement.

What then do the unfallen angels who retain their first estate think about openly-advertised world-wide rebellion on the part of the Church? When being sent forth by God to minister to the Church they observe uncovered women supposedly worshipping their Lord, yet flagrantly disobeying Him in the act, how do they feel about it? For disobedience many of their race were inflicted with great and sore punishments, why then should people in the Church, (who, while being members of a lower order, profess to be made higher than they) openly disobey God and not be judged for it? Was it for this that their Lord and creator instituted the age of grace. Is grace license for sin? Are men and women allowed to do as they please? By disregarding this commandment of God, the churches sin in a threefold manner:

(1) they perpetuate the disobedience to God which was begun in Eden;
(2) they compound the original sin by allowing personal disobedience in this matter;
(3) they shame Christ and His Church, for they act as though it does not matter; indeed in some quarters even preach against the truth. If only for the sake of the testimony to those angels who witnessed stern judgements and punishments of their fellows, all women should wear the sign. What is more, Man must insist that Woman is covered, because in the church Christ is his Head and his glory and not the woman.

The Joyous Submission of Love

Paul takes up this very point and uses it as a further reason for the injunction, stating clearly in the text that the woman is the glory of the man. When making woman God not only took of man's bone, He also took of his glory and made her of both. Making man He took of His own glory, infusing it into dust with the impartation of His Spirit; but not so with the woman; glory was given her by God, but indirectly, that is, as from Him via the man. She was the image of God imaged in the man, her beauty and glory was his beauty and glory enhanced; she must therefore be covered when gathering

with men in the church. Covering her head she (and they by common consent) hides both her own as well as man's glory. The Church is for the display of God's glory; no other glory but His alone may be sought or seen; all wrong glorying is sin. Christ is the glory of the Church. In no way and to no degree may woman or man seek to display themselves; it is wrong to do so. If man wishes to see Woman displayed in the Church it is for wrong reasons; equally, if women want to see men displayed in the church it is also for wrong reasons. When the Church gathers together, it does so for Christ, and all must agree together that as much as is humanly possible man's glory should not be on view at all.

In this matter of head-covering the Church must move in line with that which is natural, covering over what cannot be obliterated, doing so in wholehearted manner with willing obedience. Intelligent co-operation with God in this, so that the natural becomes spiritual, is the hallmark of submissive love. If this be not so, that which is thought to be natural (as the uncovered state) will always become sinful, that is carnal. In what Man does the Woman is included, yet each member of each sex must do his or her own part and one must not seek to usurp the position and glory of the other. There is nothing a man or a woman can possibly do which is more honouring to Christ than obeying Him. If we disobey Him in this least thing, how can we think that we can be obeying Him in the greater things?

The man is left uncovered to show that Christ the Head is uncovered; the woman is purposely covered to show that the Church, the Body of Christ, has its Head upon it and is covered by Christ. The covering is therefore seen to be the symbol of our oneness and union with Him and represents Christ, the power and wisdom of God. She represents the Bride, which includes both man and woman; her covering represents the Bridegroom of all. Behold therefore the wisdom and glory of God: Man and Woman joined in worship, the man representing the Bridegroom and she the Bride.

More wonderful still, by this all the spiritual anarchy of Lucifer and Adam, leading to ultimate annihilation, is exhibited as itself annihilated. Man and Woman are shown as one and equals, God being transcendent of all. It is now seen that what some women quite mistakenly regard as an outdated sign of Man's superiority over Woman is in reality the sign of something quite other and infinitely higher than that.

In the same way in which the humble, submissive Christ was equal with God, yet counted it a thing not to be grasped at, so should a woman understand that she is equal with men. She ought not to grasp at something as though she did not have it; let her humbly submit to God's loving dictates and she shall have all. By so doing she parades before all, that although she is equal in spirit with men as is Christ with God yet for God's purposes in the earth she is under the male in the same way as Christ was and still is under God His Father.

Let leaders, preachers, teachers and prophets be clear about this in their hearts and in their messages, and there will be understanding in the churches about it, then there will surely be no more open rebellion against God. Let the Woman be told, so that she will understand, that she has an honour denied Man and she will want to co-operate with God in this. Did she not co-operate with Him for the birth of Christ so that He became God's baby and hers? This being so, will she deny the honours of His body to Him now? By no means. She will gladly do His will, and praise Him that He closes

His eyes to times of ignorance, that we all obtain mercy when we do things ignorantly in unbelief.

If Any Man be in Christ

One of the greatest hindrances to the correct understanding of truth is confusion of thought arising oftentimes from misinterpretation of scripture. Sadly enough the subject under consideration here is an outstanding example of this. The scripture which is generally used to raise objections to all the foregoing is the Galatian text, 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus'. This is taken to mean that in the Church women are equal with men in all things, which is entirely correct. But to say that because this is so it is also true that women are the same as men in the churches is not correct.

Unfortunately this latter is an assumption made upon a wrong premise. The mistake is made because of failure to understand the difference between two important truths. Simply stated these are: 'I in Christ' and 'Christ in me'. The phrases are not actual scriptural quotations but the truths they contain have ample scriptural documentation. Textual settings of these two expressions may be seen in such passages as the following: 'if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature' and 'Christ in you, the hope of glory'. Both of these are true descriptions of everyone born of God; one cannot be true of a person's experience and yet not the other, but that does not mean that they are synonymous terms.

He is a New Creature

From the moment any person, whether male or female, is in Christ, he or she is a new spiritual creature and there is a new spiritual creation to discover. This has to be so, because the phrase 'in Christ' is identical in meaning with such phrases as 'in the Church' and 'in His Body'. It is quite impossible to be in such a position and company and not completely changed. Being in a new Spiritual experience all who are there are in an eternal spiritual body, which is to them an entirely new creation. This is nothing other than being in Christ in God: via His own death and resurrection Christ baptises us into Himself.

Now this is an entirely spiritual operation, and except in a marginal way it does not affect the human body, and certainly does not change the basic relationships of men and women. The Lord Jesus' death and resurrection were personal, literal and physical, having eternal spiritual effects. On the contrary, when we are baptised into His body the operation is entirely spiritual. Although this has physical effects they are limited; the body remains unredeemed. This experience places us in position in the body of Christ and therefore involves a life-changing regeneration of spirit, but it does not change the body.

Human spirits are neither male nor female. The spirit inside a female body is no different in kind from the spirit in a male body. For this reason it is better to think of individual spirits of men and women as 'it' rather than he or she. Although, while indwelling the bodies of either a male or a female, spirit cannot help being identified with the body in which it dwells, masculine and feminine genders have nothing to do with spirit. The Lord made this quite clear when He said, 'That which is born of the

flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' Masculine and feminine have to do with body only.

Upon departure from the body, the spirit, being neither male nor female, enters into a spiritual body given it by God; this is spoken of as being clothed upon with a 'house from heaven'. The new creature is then fully known and, according to Christ, neither marries nor is given in marriage. In this respect human spirits (that is the real persons) become as the angels but do not become part of the angelic creation or order. At that time all former human, bodily, natural relationships cease to be; there is no further need for them. Being of a 'kind' or 'order', bodies are unavoidably different and very partial, and in many ways represent inequality. For this reason, in that future state, they are to be disposed of, but until then they must of necessity remain and their differences must be fully accepted and acknowledged in the churches.

As well as the things already considered, head-covering is a testimony to this also. It is not at all a declaration of female spiritual inferiority; the devil has so cunningly twisted it to appear this (and he has found much fertile ground and many advocates). It is simply a clear testimony to the obvious fact that bodily we are not the same and can never be so while the earth standeth. Spiritually we are one and equal, but bodily we are not and can never be identical. Head-covering is enjoined upon us as a testimony to the fact that within the bounds of marriage there is proper bodily union and a special human relationship. More than that even, worn submissively and with spiritual intention, it can also become a declaration of a spiritual union within that marriage. Certain it is that it was never intended by God that it should become a point of debate.

Bearing these things in mind we see that when a person is spoken of as being 'in Christ', bodily states are not in view, but spiritual states only. 'I in Christ' means that I have undergone a complete change in spirit and in position, but 'Christ in me' does not mean that I have undergone a total change either in body or in bodily position. The redeemed and regenerate spirit is changed, and in men's view will develop by God's grace into a completely new soul, that is, a new person. The unredeemed body remains and, being now indwelt by a new person, will be controlled and correctly related to God and its contemporaries and environment to live among them according to God's original designs and ordinations. When Christ is in a man he remains a man; when Christ is in a woman she remains a woman; bodily, there is no change; the difference there has always been remains. She becomes a better woman though and he becomes a better man.

The Spirit Giveth Life

Carrying this one step further we note that Paul says to the Romans, 'if Christ be in you the body is dead because of sin'. All that he means to convey by this we cannot fully discuss here; the point needing reiteration is that by this the apostle is not saying that the body literally undergoes physical death. God says that death takes place but it is an entirely spiritual death. If he meant that physical death occurs it could be supposed that a change or neutralisation of gender takes place at that time. It does not; male and female we still are. When the Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead also quickens our mortal bodies they are still the same as they have been from the beginning. The quickening is out from the state of spiritual death into which all mankind was plunged because of Adam's sin in Eden. We see then that, although

head-covering in the churches is an acknowledgement of essential human relationships, it is not firstly so; only secondarily does it testify to those.

The practice of head-covering in a church does not of itself mean that a church is spiritual. No ordinance having symbolic, outward practice, such as breaking of bread or baptism or anointing with oil or head-covering, is proof that an individual or a church is spiritual. Of themselves these things have no more power to bestow spirituality than they have to proclaim it. Each is only a symbol of truth, an acknowledgement of things invisible and, except each is done in loving obedience as a declaration of the truth for which the symbol is employed, they are altogether only legalistic 'dry bones'. But done in the Spirit in a spirit of humility they proclaim that those who practise them are scripturally discerning and spiritually obedient. These are not bound by jots and tittles of legalism, but desirous in purest love and spiritual delight to obey their Lord down to the finest details. And why should this not be so?

All One in Christ Jesus

However, although these things do not prove spirituality, their non-practice displays ignorance, or worse still, parades disobedience. To defend their absence reveals theological confusion, spiritual disorder, scriptural misinterpretation and common abuse of privilege; continuance in the same is schismatic. So great has been the drift from truth that a woman regularly wearing a head-covering in church these days is often regarded as a schismatic; so has error become accepted as truth and truth has been condemned as error. It is a scandal.

We must firmly believe and state that Christ in a man and a woman will abide by what He has so specifically said in all the scriptures. Paul would not have been so foolish or so careless of souls as to contradict in effect something he has said to the Corinthians by something he says to the Galatians. If he did such things, how reliable would he be? Could he possibly expect others to take him seriously? Common sense, even if it is alone, cannot accept that to introduce a topic of no moment, having momentary local meaning only, and lay it down as law in a book to be preserved for the churches throughout time, is a rash and most immature thing to do. God has preserved Paul's writings for posterity. Do we seriously consider either of them to be in need of instruction and correction from us? Are we moderns Paul's superiors? Such proud attitudes lay at the root of the schism which rent the Corinthian church, hence the letter: what he wrote found universal acceptance. There is no record that any of his contemporaries, many of them men of equal spiritual insight and standing, thought it necessary to correct Paul's statements. Has twentieth century knowledge advanced so much that we now have no need of him and his ordinances?

Let Each One Hold the Head

This great saint and first apostle to the gentiles needs no man to defend him, and both what has been written as well as the following is not advanced for this purpose. It may however shed more light on the matter, and help us to better humble ourselves to accept the commandments given by God through him to us, if we consider a telling point he made on another subject closely related to our present study. When sending instructions to Timothy concerning pastoral matters, he gave him some important directions about offices and officers in the church. In the whole of scripture these are unexcelled. The only other passages of equal substance on the subject were also

written by Paul when giving commandment to Titus. These are parallel in teaching and should be read in conjunction with the letters to Timothy.

Speaking to each of them about elders, bishops and deacons, he uses this phrase, 'the husband of one wife'. There is not the slightest hint of a suggestion that the office may be occupied by the wife of one husband. Such a possibility never crossed his mind, for Christ has not ordained women to these offices. It did however cross the Lord's mind, so He had it written down so that twentieth century churches should not transgress His wishes.

Paul next goes on to speak to Titus of aged men and aged women, carefully drawing proper distinctions between the use of the words 'elder' and 'aged'. He used the word 'elder' to describe an office in the church only; on the other hand he only uses the word 'aged' when referring to both men and women who are obviously exactly what the word describes. The word 'elder' can be used of young men, for it does not describe the age of the person who fills the office but rather the office the person fills. On the other hand the word 'aged' has no definite connections with office at all but with length of life.

If it is true that male and female are in every way equal in the churches, why this distinction? Is it not made for at least two reasons?

(1) to draw our attention to the fact that, although in Christ there is no difference, in the churches there remains a very great deal of difference, and
(2) to fix for all time the order of precedence in the churches set out by God for His people. Every person in Christ has Christ directly for his or her own head. He is over each one individually and rules over and directs each by His Spirit. Therefore every child of God must be left free to move in co-operation with and in obedience to Him, without discrimination as to sex, age or office. If the whole body is to hold the head for himself or herself that is their prime and everlasting life and duty. Their grip is not to be on a lesser person or through a group of elected men as though they were the neck which joins the body to the head. At the same time, while each is doing this, he or she is to remember and also hold to the pattern of headship that He who is the head of the entire body has laid down for local companies.

No one taught of God would think of denying that the office of eldership denotes headship in the churches. In practice this is so firmly held among us that we submit to proper spiritual eldership without demur. Similarly everyone who treasures the scriptures holds dearly to the fact that eldership belongs exclusively to the male. In effect this is an acknowledgement of man's headship among a mixed company of worshippers in the local church. Head-covering is an open confession of this before angels and men; to break with it is to confess that the heart no longer accepts Christ's authority in the Church and over the churches.

Let a Man Learn to Rule

A further point emerges which is related to this matter, namely discipline by eldership in a local church. The Lord says that an elder should be the husband of one wife. Now this does not mean that an unmarried man cannot be an elder, or Paul himself (and Barnabas also) should not have been elders or apostles. But in relation to the truth above considered, in the case of a married man, a husband and father ought to act as an elder to his own wife and their children. An elder elected to a community ought not

to find need to discipline any woman, least of all a married one, over the wearing of a head-covering.

Every man should act as an elder and discipline his own household, so that the elected elders of the church should not need to be occupied in such matters. This is one of the obvious reasons for the instruction that no man may be an elder in the church if he has not the spiritual power and moral courage to apply discipline to his own flesh and blood, but it is deplorable if he is ignorant of the grounds upon which he should stand and the principle by which he should govern. Under such conditions how can he be expected to fulfil the role of elder? If he fails to let even nature teach him, how shall he be taught of God?

Let a man first learn to successfully rule in these things over his own family; otherwise, if he allows them to appear before others in the church uncovered, not only his womenfolk but also he himself will need to be disciplined. It is altogether as though they all were naked and the church dead because disconnected from its head, and the Lord's death (to which Paul proceeds next in order in this chapter) made ineffective.

One of the most common of the erroneous beliefs connected with this passage, hindering souls and preventing them from entering into truth, is the strange idea that when Paul uses the word 'covers' or 'covered' or 'uncovered' he is referring to hair, but this cannot be. Simply to read the section inserting the word hair with its correct prefix and in its correct sense for the word 'cover' in its various usages makes Paul sound ridiculous. A couple of verses may suffice to illustrate the error: verse four 'every man praying or prophesying without his head covered with hair dishonours his Head'; verse six 'if a woman has no hair on her head let her hair be shaved off' - which is impossible. By the word cover Paul obviously means something other than and extra to hair.

It is to be doubted that the contentions to which Paul refers in chapter one verse eleven included arguments about head-covering, but it is to our shame and greatly to be regretted that contention about it has sprung up in modern churches. Much of this, though not all, is due either to misunderstanding or misinterpretation. The word 'custom' used by the apostle in verse sixteen has specially suffered from this: 'we have no such custom', he says, and thereby seems to have cast doubt upon all the foregoing - what a pity, for that was not his intention. The proper understanding of what he is saying must be governed by what he has previously said in verse fourteen, 'Doth not even nature itself teach you?' Again he gathers point for spiritual truth from 'that which is natural'. The church had fallen so far from being taught by the Spirit that their spiritual father had to resort to nature as their teacher. Nature teaches us that if a woman has long hair it is a glory to her, and then adds that it is given her for a covering. From this it should not be assumed that the woman whose hair does not grow long and luxurious has no glory. On the other hand they that do have it have glory, but it is only a natural glory - it has nothing to do with spiritual glory; this can only be obtained by the obedience of faith.

To understand the message Paul is imparting, verses thirteen, fourteen and fifteen should be regarded as being a parenthesis. Read in this light the custom referred to in verse sixteen is seen to belong to verse twelve, which is all part of the message delivered to him by God about the obligation and significance of head-covering which

he has been repeating to them. Much of what Paul says in this epistle is a fresh and very necessary repetition of the doctrines he had formerly delivered to them at their foundation as a church, and this is no exception. Everywhere he went with the gospel he spent time teaching, and what he taught had become custom in all the churches; they were traditions, but being instituted by God they were not bondages as some, seeking to throw off all restraints, would have us believe. The fact that head-covering was customary among women in Paul's day, and not only for religious reasons either, has little or no bearing on what he had been teaching. Almost certainly head-covering was a cultural thing among the Corinthians, but this in no way influenced the spiritual teaching of Paul, but if any man thinks it does, then it must be conceded that if anything it supports it.

If this latter suggestion is true, then we are facing a threefold position: firstly the natural, secondly the cultural and thirdly the spiritual, each of them testifying to the fact that women should be covered. The first was created by God; the second was developed by men from the basic creation of God into national custom; the third, taking cognisance of the former two, was instituted by the Holy Spirit in the Church through Paul (and apparently all the apostles) as an ordinance to be kept as delivered until the Lord shall come. Consideration of these things leads to the conviction that, when Paul said 'we have no such custom', he was not saying 'we no longer teach or expect or want women to cover their heads. Such an idea smacks of modern so-called liberation theology, but not of Paul.

Under Our Glorious Head

Passing on to deal with disorders at the Lord's table, the apostle speaks in verse nineteen of heresies. He says that there must be heresy among a people who misbehave in the manner of which he speaks. We therefore see that if a woman appears or attempts to pray, or to prophesy in the church with her head uncovered it is a manifestation of heresy. The act itself implies flagrant disobedience; worse still the state from which it springs reveals heresy - wrong believing, leading to wrong living with a determination to change customs and promote error as truth in the name of the Lord. This was the state into which the Corinthians had fallen. The heresies of which they approved were manifest among them and not the least of these was their belief and attitude towards head-covering.

Finally it must be said that the woman is chosen to wear the head-covering and display to all the wondrous truth that our glorious Head is covering the Church. According to the natural order, it is correct that she should do so, for she best represents the bride. In doing this she also shows that she is under authority in her home, and that the order in the church gatherings, although of a higher spiritual meaning, is the same as that which prevails in private. This is a glorious thing and worthy of praise and she who obeys the Lord in this matter today deserves our heartfelt thanks.

03-SEPT-01

First published January 1976. Revised March 1978 & May 1989.
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**THE DOCTRINE OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT IN ROMANS**

G. W. North

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Romans

INTRODUCTION

This doctrine may not be the main theme of this epistle, nor yet the foremost purpose for its composition, nevertheless it is a very important one. It can be no other, for it is part of the whole scripture doctrine of the Holy Spirit. There is no attempt here to set down a theological treatise about the existence and being and person of the Holy Ghost, there is no need; that He is and that He is God and the third person of the trinity is taken for granted. The ignorant or the unbeliever may challenge that, but their opinions will be ignored here; in any case they will not be convinced by argument, though Gabriel himself should attempt it. Except it be for the worse, the state of unregenerate men has not changed one iota since Paul penned his famous description of them in the opening chapter of this epistle. As he says, men profess themselves to be wise, and know not that, by their very profession, they reveal themselves to be fools. However, before we have read thus far, Paul has already drawn our attention to the Holy Spirit and introduced our chosen theme.

Before addressing ourselves to this initial reference, it may be beneficial first to make one or two general observations. Even to the most casual reader of the epistle it must be obvious that the apostle has placed the bulk of his teaching about the Holy Spirit in the eighth chapter. The whole epistle is comprised of sixteen chapters, which makes this main section on the Holy Spirit central to the book; quite a significant decision as we shall see. It is generally agreed that the epistle is an exposition of the gospel, laying special emphasis on salvation by faith through the righteousness of God. Paul makes sure we know this by commencing in the first verse with the words, 'the gospel of God', and concluding the epistle with a paragraph which includes the words 'according to my gospel'.

Throughout his writings the apostle communicates many aspects of the gospel, and whatever his approach to the subject he always writes appropriately to it, passing on his own revelation to the churches. In this epistle he does not mention the Church as such, but speaks to 'all that be in Rome' instead. To them he declares himself to be 'separated unto the gospel of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ', and then proceeds to advance his reasons for that statement. It is not therefore surprising that in the central eighth chapter the Holy Spirit is revealed, or that the revelation and image of the Son of God, which lies central to his theme, is also unfolded as nowhere else in scripture. We thereby see that God wants us to understand that only by the Holy Spirit are the Son and His image brought forth in man. By its very composition the book manifests God's Son by the Holy Spirit, and in doing so tells us that without the Holy Spirit there is no Son.

This is true: (1) theologically, (2) scripturally, (3) historically, (4) experimentally.

1. Theologically each member of the trinity, though having life in Himself, depends on the others as much as on Himself for life. No one of them could exist without the others: without the Holy Spirit and the Son there could be no Father, without the Holy Spirit and the Father there could be no Son, without the Father and the Son there

could be no Holy Spirit. God is one being in three persons, each of whom is necessary to the whole Godhead.

2. Scripturally the opening verses of the Bible are clear enough evidence of this; the order revealed in them is as follows: (1) God (the Father); (2) the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit); (3) God said (the Son, the Word).

3. Historically the order of creation implies it; God the Father formed Adam His son, then breathed into his nostrils the breath (the spirit) of life, and man (the son) became a living soul: Father, Holy Spirit, Son. The incarnation further shows the same order: God sent the word, the Holy Spirit came on Mary, the Son was formed and born.

4. Experimentally the Father begets us by the Holy Spirit and calls us sons. The Father speaks the word, the Holy Spirit overshadows, the Son is formed. The Son cannot be formed in anyone who has not received the Holy Spirit from the Father. Relevant to this, we read in another place that we must be strengthened with all might by His Spirit in the inner man that Christ may dwell in our hearts: but more of this later. Let us start at the beginning. Paul's statements to the Romans about the Holy Spirit occur in this order:

Chapter 1 verse 4 — the Spirit of holiness — governing the nature of the resurrection of Christ, the Son of God.

Chapter 5 verse 5 — the Spirit of love — governing the nature of God's Sons.

Chapter 8 verse 2 — the Spirit of life — governing Christ-likeness, the development of the sons' nature.

Chapter 9 verse 1 — the Spirit of witness — governing intercession, the sphere of the sons' influence.

Chapter 15 verse 13 — the Spirit of power — governing works, the sphere of the sons' ministry.

Within the greater structure of this epistle this is the framework within which Paul presents his theme.

It ought always to be borne in mind by every expositor, teacher and preacher, whether he be apostle, prophet, evangelist or pastor, that the Bible is primarily about God. It was given by Him chiefly for the purpose of self-revelation, even though in some books of the Old Testament this may not be at once obvious; every other person or theme mentioned therein is quite secondary to that revelation. Therefore, whichever book of the sacred canon be read or analysed or expounded, it ought first to be regarded in that light. Not all the books are cast in the same mould; their combined beauty and total usefulness lies in part in their variety. Some may seem to have little theological importance or doctrinal content, but that does not detract from their spiritual value; each is necessary, and may not therefore be disregarded, or its revelation of God underestimated. That revelation may not be directly stated, or at first apparent, but such a book is as much a revelation from God about Himself as those books which are more easily recognised as such.

That which lies open upon the surface of a book is not always the best indication of its most valuable content; behind the story told and underneath the events recorded lies the real purpose of God for its inclusion — namely the revelation of Himself. This is especially true of the epistle to the Romans; there is no New Testament book more designedly written for this purpose. Twenty times the name God appears in the first

chapter; the Son is referred to by one or another name or title many times in the book, the comprehensive word 'Godhead' is also included, and as we have seen the Spirit is spoken of again and again.

Reviewing the order of revelation given above can, of itself, be a most instructive exercise; it moves from holiness through love to life and witness, and then to intercession, and lastly to power. Bearing this in mind, if we believe the book was inspired of God by the Holy Spirit we are bound to arrive at an unavoidable conclusion, namely, that the writer is moving from cause to effect. Mankind, because of its limitations, thinks from effect to cause, feeling back, or from ends through means to beginnings. Man is affected and impressed by phenomena; his heart loves them. The spectacle and the spectacular greatly appeal to him — he is made that way. The trouble with him is that, by his reason he is a slave to his observations. Men love power, and when they see it displayed and exhibited they are attracted to it; sometimes, tragically, the fascination is fatal. No less in the churches than throughout all society, men seek power; they want it for other reasons than their fellows, and for different ends, but in many the desire is ill-founded. Although not specifically written for this reason, this epistle is a corrective from God about this sad mistake. Properly understood and received in a spirit of humility, this epistle will direct our hearts into the way of truth. Its plain statements, as summarised in the outline suggested above, plus the whole tenor of its teachings, will, under God, lead us into everlasting blessedness.

I

THE SPIRIT OF HOLINESS

'... declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead'. Chapter 1 verse 4: this verse is part of an introductory section concerning the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Justified in the Spirit.

The reference to the Spirit is made in direct connection with Christ. He was 'declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead'. It is noticeable that the translators had difficulty with this verse; they thought the Greek word 'pneuma' should not be given a capital 'S' but a small one ('viz, spirit') Their reason for so thinking rests solely upon the fact that there is no direct mention of the person of the Holy Spirit in the verse. This is a most unfortunate position to adopt, for it could cause uncertainty to spread among the children of God, and perhaps make them suspect that, when writing the letter, Paul was not being led by the Spirit. It further confuses the issue by allowing the suggestion that Paul imputed spirit to abstract things as though they have living being. Holiness is a quality of life — it is abstract; of itself it has no life, and therefore cannot have a spirit. To suggest that Paul was being imprecise and was following poetical fancies instead of dealing in exactitudes on such important subjects is, to say the least, alarming. If this indeed be so, how then shall we be able to trust him on any matter?

It is not uncommon to hear or read of 'the spirit of something or other, (whatever it may be). By the phrase we understand the person to be referring to something intangible which cannot be explained or properly understood. When used in this manner it does not precisely mean spirit; in fact there is nothing of precision about the

word at all when used in such contexts. It can mean 'an air of' or 'an attitude of' or 'general pattern of' or 'likeness to' or 'inner workings of' or 'the drive or force of'; so unclear is its meaning, that in such cases it would be totally impossible to use it with exactitude. Should that have been Paul's intention here, we may well be in some doubt as to its meaning, and ask what is the spirit of holiness? Has holiness a hidden intangible meaning, a kind of inner life and power that may be referred to as spirit? Are virtues themselves a kind of outer clothing of an indwelling spirit? Do abstract virtues and characteristics have personalities of their own? The answer to that is a resounding 'NO'. To kindly say that we know what is meant by 'the spirit of the race' or 'the spirit of the thing' is no answer; these phrases can be interpreted in too many ways, they are far too general; we need to be specific. This whole matter will be discussed in another chapter later.

There is of course another interpretation of the phrase, which is felt to be more in keeping with the content of the chapter. The main emphasis of this paragraph is upon the person of the Son; as stated, the gospel of God concerns the Son. It could therefore be argued that Paul is speaking exclusively of Him, and is not making reference to the Holy Spirit at all. This position could be briefly presented in two statements as follows:

(1) God, as promised, brought His Son into the world through the royal line of David;
(2) He was a holy man in spirit, and was therefore raised from the dead because of His holiness. This position could be amply illustrated and reinforced by many scriptures testifying the same thing, and is perfectly acceptable to all. But somehow this interpretation does not quite seem to do justice to the phrase 'the spirit of holiness', so let us turn elsewhere to find help in interpreting his meaning. Speaking to Timothy of the great 'mystery of godliness', Paul says, 'God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit', and it seems to be agreed by all that he is here referring to the Holy Spirit. Actually there is no more grammatical ground for capitalising the letter S in this phrase than for printing 'spirit' with a small s in the other; it is simply a matter of opinion and interpretation. If the Holy Spirit is meant in Timothy's letter, then there is no reason for doubting that He is the one spoken of in the Roman epistle.

It is possible to understand, and correct to think, that in His personal spirit (that is in His human spirit), Jesus needed to be justified in the Holy Spirit. Justification in this sense, presumably, is not to be thought of as justification from sin, for He never had any, but of His birth and nature and calling. It means that, while in the flesh, He never once for a moment deviated from a clear life and perfect walk and faultless ministry in the Spirit. If we sought to refer to Jesus' humanity in this context we could speak of His human spirit; if on the other hand we were to speak of His essential self — that is of His Deity — we would speak of Him always as Spirit, for God is Spirit, pure original Spirit. But Jesus' human spirit and divine Spirit synthesized; in this case the lesser is included in the greater, so that human and divine become one; therefore His spirit was Spirit. We therefore think properly when we think of Him as Spirit, that is God the Spirit; in whatever person or form He is manifest, He is Spirit. It is therefore absolutely respectful, grammatically correct and doctrinally true, as well as theologically sound, to write 'Spirit of holiness'. To whichever person of the Godhead we are referring, He should be called or spoken of as God. There is no such thing as 'a' or 'the' spirit of holiness; holiness is a spiritual virtue, not a virtuous spirit; the virtuous One is the virtuous Spirit. We see then that, right at the beginning of his epistle, Paul has laid down one of the most fundamental truths of the gospel, namely

that the human spirit and the divine Spirit in Jesus remained undivided to the end. Throughout His life, and especially in His death, His spirit corresponded at all times in holiness to the holiness of the Holy Spirit, and therefore earned the right to be raised from the dead.

By the Resurrection from the Dead.

Paul was nominated the apostle to the gentiles. When writing to the Romans he was writing to a people without any Jewish traditions; his reference to Jesus' birth was therefore comparatively infinitesimal, certainly minimal: 'Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh' — that is all. Other than this there is no direct mention of the Lord's birth throughout the length of the whole epistle. One of the reasons, if not the greatest reason for this, is that these Romans had never felt the need to have anything proved to them from the Old Testament scriptures — they had none. This letter from Paul was possibly the very first manuscript of either Old or New Testament scriptures they had ever seen. When they read it they certainly did not know it was to become one of the most important of all New Testament documents. Paul had no need to write a Gospel to them or to anyone else; recording genealogies and seeking to establish claims that Jesus Christ was indeed the seed of David or of Abraham would have been entirely superfluous; to the gentile world those were not vital issues. Further, had they heard that He had been crucified, they would have been no more impressed either; it was quite usual to hear such news — but the resurrection — that was new.

The Roman method of capital punishment was practised wherever Roman law and justice was applied the world over; nation after nation knew its power, but only at Jerusalem had any of its victims risen from the dead; that became international news. The Romans had certainly heard of that. The Church knew the power and uniqueness of this, and seized on it; this was the most outstanding of all world events, and wherever its heralds went they preached it. From the day of Pentecost onwards the apostles majored on it with power, witnessing to the resurrection at every opportunity; so effective was their testimony that churches soon sprang up all over the middle east. Rome proved no exception to this; there too the gospel was preached, and many hearts responded to God's call. To them the message of the resurrection was good and effective news indeed; it was all the proof they needed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God with power; no-one else had ever risen from the dead. He was different; there was no other conclusion. For them everything commenced there, and for us, no less than for them, everything commences there also. It was only in retrospect that the power of the cross was seen. Paul himself said 'Jesus was crucified in weakness', and the other apostles themselves, who observed the event, sorrowed beyond measure because of it, and thought it was the end. We now know that, in respect of glory and power, the miracle of the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ is the greatest thing that He ever did; it far outshone the resurrection, for death was foreign to His nature. Resurrection was the most logical and natural of events; He was and is the Resurrection and the Life.

It just had to be of course; if there had been no resurrection there would have been no gospel, for there would have been no guarantee of the effectiveness of the cross, or proof that Christ had died, and therefore there would have been no Saviour. Other men besides Jesus have lived and done good things and spoken fine words and died and stayed dead — death had dominion over them. Jesus had to rise from the dead;

there was no other way of proving to men that He is the exclusive Son of God and also our Saviour. His birth did not prove it, neither did His life and work as a carpenter; neither did His unparalleled ministry among men, and neither did His death. There were a few that believed on Him in Jewry, to them He appeared to be the Son of God; some even confessed it, but not many. We know also that at least one Roman thought the events of Calvary proved Him to be the Son of God, that was all. All together they were only a mere handful of people; the world knew nothing of Him. He gained a little fame among His own people as a preacher; He was a great teacher and miracle worker, and He attracted a somewhat wider notoriety at the cross. But it was the resurrection that proved beyond doubt that he was the Son of God with power.

The resurrection was a world-startling miracle. There had been leaders and teachers and miracle workers among the Jews before; some of their number were always looking for a Messiah, someone who would champion their cause, a world conqueror who would deliver them from the Roman yoke. It had never happened though, so the might of Rome continued unchallenged and unchallengeable in all the earth. Much to the Jews' disappointment Jesus of Nazareth did not ever pose a threat to Rome; the 'powers that be' had never been seriously disturbed by Him. He was not an insurrectionist, far from it; He had always taught the people to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. He was the friend of government, the Romans had nothing to fear from Him. He was a pacifist, completely tolerant of Rome's dominance. Under examination Pilate could find no fault in Him at all, and for this reason was afraid of Him. None the less he acted contrary to justice, and in the end capitulated to the will of the Jews and delivered Him to them to be crucified to death. But Jesus rose from the dead — it was impossible for Him to be held by the grave; the resurrection proved everything. It also demonstrated that Rome's man was wrong, and that he was party to a Jewish murder-plot, and had been manipulated by unscrupulous men. It might not seem the judicious thing to do, but that is where Paul started with the Romans; it was perfect wisdom and utter fearlessness, but besides being brave logic for Romans, it was perfect righteousness for all men. It was also absolute truth and honesty on God's part; it proved God's trustworthiness — it was the gospel of God of which no sane man can possibly be ashamed.

The resurrection was God's absolute guarantee to all mankind that Jesus of Nazareth was His Son, the Christ of God. It was God's public testimony that, from the manger to the grave, He had kept the man Jesus under surveillance all His life and that beyond anything Pilate had said about His character and activities, He Himself had carefully scrutinized Jesus' person and life every minute of the day, and had found Him faultless. The greater judge than Pilate, and the greater king than either Herod or Caesar, and the greater priest than both Annas and Caiaphas had examined and found Jesus perfect on every charge on which He had been or could ever possibly be brought to trial. God had tried Him on counts and according to standards unknown to humans, and on every one of them had found Him faultless; men need have no fear, Jesus is God's Son, the gospel is true.

Holy and Righteous All the Days of His Life.

Jesus is declared by God to be the Son of God with power; He strove against sin, was thereby proved fit to bear it away, resisted unto blood, therefore made sin by God and finally died to it. Not only had He kept Himself unspotted from the world for thirty-

three years, He had remained unspotted from sin on the cross also; there He had no power but His own holiness to protect Him, and no foundation on which to stand but upon His own righteousness; all His great power lay within Himself in the life He had lived. The resurrection was a demonstration of the strength He had shown before and during his death. In a single stroke He shattered the power of all-conquering death, but that was as logical as it was inevitable. Death, not Rome, was the unchallengeable power that conquered and carried away all men, but when it came to the test, death was found to be unequal to His great power. The secret of this almighty power over death lay in Christ's righteousness; His holy life and undefeatable strength rose from that. Thirty-three years of perfect living had satisfied the Holy Spirit that He was worthy, and that He deserved to rise from the dead. There was never any doubt that He would break the bands of death if He was righteous enough to do so; the final test was the 'fitness' test; He had to be fit to die — that was the crucial point. Before He could become the Saviour of the world the man Christ Jesus had to satisfy God that He was the right person with the correct qualifications for the task.

The salvation of God for men is from sin and sinning into righteousness and holiness; this is God's greatest concern for us. He wants men to have His eternal life, a life not affected by or subject to death and corruption. For this, men must receive the Spirit of Holiness; the sacred work of reproducing in us the life of the Son of God is entrusted to the Holy Spirit. The life He produces in us must be powerful enough to exist without sin in all God's sons, as in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, or we shall not, cannot, be the sons of God. Jesus proved He was able to rise from the dead; He had power to do that; in the sight of God His Father His life was sufficient justification for it. With the coming of the Holy Spirit to a man comes the power to live this holy life of Jesus in flesh also, that God may be justified in raising us from the dead to live with Him too.

Referring back to the earlier discussion about the abstract element or neuter gender of the word spirit used here: if that interpretation of the word is rejected in favour of this personal and masculine definition we may arrive at a more certain conclusion about what Paul meant by his statement. He is surely saying that Christ's resurrection was part of the all-pervasive holiness of God; in this attitude of mind and condition of spirit the whole plan of redemption was conceived and carried through in its entirety. In this Peter would most heartily concur, for he begins his first letter with a declaration in kind. He opens his message to the elect strangers with the most wonderful news that, according to the foreknowledge of their God and Father, they were chosen in holiness of the Spirit. There is nothing abstract about that; Peter is speaking about the person of the Holy Spirit. Everything about the Spirit's person and activities is absolute holiness, and all He does may be said to be done in the spirit of holiness. The same is true about the Father and the Son; whether in conception or achievement, everything is holiness in every detail. So it is then, that if Paul is not directly speaking of the Spirit of holiness, that is, the Holy Spirit Himself, he is speaking of the holiness of the spirit which pervades all God's works. According to this spirit of holiness, Christ is the Son of God, and the power of the Son of God is also according to the spirit of holiness; the resurrection proved this.

There is also another factor about the resurrection of Christ, in consideration of which it is possible that Paul may have introduced the abstract form of speech about the Holy Spirit. The apostle had just made reference to the fact that Jesus Christ was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and we know that this seed was not

holy. The virgin Mary, though born of such exalted lineage, was nevertheless a fallen creature, yet when the Seed was born He was holy. This was because the spirit in which all was accomplished was most holy; it was holiness unto the Lord. He was born of the flesh, He had to be, but it was flesh uniquely sanctified unto the Lord. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary and touched the springs of human life in her flesh to generate the babe, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her whole being to protect the child as it was formed within her. It was a miracle most holy and most powerful, absolutely unique. When He was begotten in the flesh Jesus was most holy; when He was raised from the dead He was still most holy. Everything was carried out in the spirit of holiness; every detail had to be according to that spirit.

Grace and Apostleship from the Risen Christ

Something else emerges at this point also, which is very relevant to our study, namely this:— Paul, who wrote this epistle, claims that both he and others received grace and apostleship from the risen Christ. He does not name the others, but there can be little doubt that he intended his readers to understand that he meant all the apostles then living. This seems the more certain in view of the statement which he made to the Corinthians, in which he embraces all the apostles, including himself, in the all-inclusive word 'us', 'I think God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed unto death'. In the light of these texts Paul's statement to the Romans is very remarkable, for he is saying that all the apostles were given apostleship and the grace for it from the risen Christ. This can only mean that each one of those who were appointed apostles while Christ was on earth was re-appointed by Him when He rose from the dead.

This sets the whole matter of apostleship in a new light altogether. It suggests that there was a great difference between the state and status of apostles before Christ died and rose again, and their state and status afterwards. It also makes perfectly clear that no calling and installment in office by the Lord is beyond or impossible of forfeiture. A moment's reflection to consider the case of Judas is sufficient to confirm this. He was a chosen apostle with gifts and graces equal to all the other apostles, yet in the end he was demoted and rejected, and finally took his own life. Perhaps more to the point than this, according to John, when the Lord revealed Himself to His disciples (now called brethren by Him) in the room where they were hiding from the Jews in fear, He first of all very deliberately preached peace to them; He wanted them free from fear. Shortly also He breathed on them, telling them to receive the Holy Spirit, but before doing so He said, 'As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you'. Then, and not until then, did He breathe the Holy Spirit upon them and re-commission them.

This could justify the assumption that, for some reason, perhaps by forsaking the Lord, all those men had either: (1) forfeited their former calling; or (2) had been demoted from it by Him; or (3) had only been called on a temporary basis in the first place. They were never told so by the Lord, but neither at any point had Jesus led them to believe that their calling was permanent. However, when He arose the Lord went specially to them to send them out to the world as the Father had sent Him. He stood among them that day as one re-sent, His calling renewed, His mission expanded; to Him it was a second sending, a re-appointment to an apostleship of greater magnitude, with a new objective. This being so for Him, surely this must have been so for those men as well; their former apostleship had been so bound up with His own, and just as surely when that terminated so did theirs. Likewise, when the Lord's

apostleship recommenced so did theirs, only this time on a different footing by different means unto different ends.

By this time He had been declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead, and those men received their re-commissioning and re-sending from Him in the power and authority of the new position to which He had now attained. This time the vital factor missing from their first calling was available for them and was included in their appointment to fulfil the Lord's purpose. This was entirely new, the first precious anointing of the Holy Spirit from Him — they had neither received Him nor this anointing when they were first selected three years earlier. Their sending forth upon that occasion was of a quite different character. He sent them out mainly as heralds on a different errand with a far less potent gospel; their business was to prepare the way for the personal coming of Christ who was following in their footsteps. At that time everything was limited by God's intentions, by Christ's instructions, by territorial restrictions, by an incomplete gospel, and by the flesh. That is why the Lord groaned within Himself for the accomplishment of God's purposes with Him; until these were completed He could not go for those 'others' for whom He longed. In order to do this He came to those men in private to link them up with Himself again, and by them accomplish His Father's will. He re-established them that they should be His apostles indeed.

Apostleship is so distinctly personal; apostles are apostles of Jesus Christ, as each of them who speaks or writes of this in the New Testament so emphatically states; they are not apostles of the Church but of Him. They are set in the body to be members of it, but their devotion is primarily, if not only, to Him; they receive grace and apostleship from Him. It is also of note that, when the Lord breathed on the apostles, they were not baptized in the Spirit into His body (they still awaited that); they were anointed only. They were not yet empowered with the power or ability (*dunamis*) of the Spirit as Mary had been to bring forth the life of Jesus in their flesh; Christ was not yet formed in them to any degree or in any realm; the power they received in that room that day was the power of authority only. This was the reason why Christ so emphatically told them to wait for the power from on high; they were not to go rushing off to fulfil their commission until the great baptism of power and life — the power or ability of the highest — should come upon them. This was the promise of the Father which would clothe them, that is, clothe their spirits with the power of life, enabling them to live His life while still in the flesh of their mortal bodies.

With great skill and wisdom, as well as with deliberate intention, the Lord Jesus separated these two great occasions by fifty days. He had purposed in His heart that the Church He was going to build should be founded upon the apostles and the prophets, Himself being the chief corner stone, so before He commenced to build it He reinstated and marked out the apostles. There must be no room for mistake about this; what He did must not be assumed to be either His usual way of appointing apostles, or the established order of anointing servants or of baptizing sons. It must be understood that the whole New Testament period before Pentecost and the events thereof were preparation for that day when the baptism of life should be administered to them by Him from on high. Since Pentecost the natural order is first the life baptism or the power, then the anointing or the authorization to serve. But it must be understood that although this may be the apparent logical order, for His own purposes, God may vary it if He pleases, and sometimes He does.

There is no scriptural, spiritual, legal or logical reason why God should not do everything in one all-inclusive experience if He pleases, as in Paul's conversion for instance. There are no grounds for supposing that, following this experience, Paul needed or was granted any further major experience in order to equip him or qualify him for service, or to ordain Him a minister of Christ. Many assumptions have been made and theories advanced, such as the use of prepositions and tenses, or the citation of obscure texts about happenings in Arabia, in order to try to substantiate unprovable assertions, all to no profit, and better left unsaid if the purpose for saying them is to establish a system of doctrine in order to bind men's minds to it. What further purposes and possibilities may lie beyond that, and whatever may be the outcome, is not our concern here. What is certain is that the apostles of the first generation went out to preach 'the gospel of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ' whom He raised from the dead. Those apostles were sent out as sons enslaved, free to serve according to the same spirit of holiness by whom their Lord was conceived and brought to birth, to live and die and rise again. There must and will be then, about all our lives and our preaching, a spirit of holiness, holiness must pervade all.

II

THE SPIRIT OF LOVE

'... the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us'. Chapter 5 verse 5.

The Holy Spirit and the Nature of Sonship

In this verse Paul is informing us concerning the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the nature of sonship, and, as before, is still majoring on the fact of the resurrection. Chapter three has been given up to the great truth of justification, showing that it is: (1) by grace, (2) from sin, (3) free, (4) through redemption, (5) by faith in His blood, (6) to declare His righteousness. Having done this, he then writes a whole chapter illustrating faith from the lives of two patriarchs: Abraham, Israel's founding father, and David, Israel's greatest king. Paul knew the great importance of this, for where faith is lacking or weak breakdown always occurs. There is no weakness or shortcoming on God's side; He has done everything He could be expected to do and more besides for our salvation. Salvation is provided for men as a free gift from God upon the condition that they exercise faith to receive it; apart from faith no man can be saved. On God's side it is by grace entirely, on man's side it is by faith alone; it could not be simpler. We must 'believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification'.

This wonderful justification is entirely the work of God. It is the one and only way He can make and declare a man righteous in His holy presence before all the holy angels in heaven. Justification of sinners is a major event in heaven for many reasons; not the least of these is that a sinful man has believed God and through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ has been changed in disposition from sin to righteousness. Great as is this miracle of love, it could not have been brought to and wrought in any man apart from the person and work of the Holy Spirit. He is as vital to the work of experiential salvation as is the Lord Jesus Christ to the provision of it. It is utterly impossible to change a man's disposition without changing his nature, for man is always disposed to do the thing that is natural to him. Nature and behaviour are fundamental to all God's creatures; fundamentally behaviour is determined by nature and nature is determined

by species or family. God the Father created and named every family in heaven and earth, and set the behavioural patterns of each according to His will and according to the kind of life; the kind of life He predetermined is common to the species. Basically nature is decided by parentage, so also is form, and although habits and behavioural patterns may be developed or refined to some extent within the species, the species cannot be fundamentally changed thereby; everything is predetermined by nature.

In common with all other species, human beings need training; whether this training is voluntary or involuntary it is good and necessary for everybody. Whether or not we are aware of it, cultural disciplines affect us all to some extent, but none of these can change the nature of a species. This is specially true in spiritual things; spirits cannot be created, neither do they evolve — they are fathered; spiritually every one of us is born of a genitive father, and there is no crossing of species; all God's sons are born directly of Him. The gospel Paul preached to the Romans and everyone else was a gospel of sonship. Speaking of himself to the Romans he opened his epistle with these words, 'separated unto the gospel of God concerning His Son'. At the time of writing he was a son of God commissioned to preach that gospel to every creature under heaven that they may become sons of God too. The epistle is particularly about sonship. He therefore refers to the joint nature with Jesus Christ, which all the Sons of God share with Him.

Love — Shed Abroad in Our Hearts.

Without exception all the apostles believed and taught that God is love; Paul, no less than his contemporaries, proclaimed it consistently. His other declarations about it, especially to the Corinthians, leave us in no doubt about his beliefs; he regarded love to be supreme, and taught them so, virtually saying that without love no man even exists. Since God is love, all His children must be love; love must be nature, life and disposition to every child of God. It is not surprising then that, to the Romans, he should say, 'the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us'. This is a most direct statement about the purpose of the gift of the Holy Spirit by a man who had first proved it. He rejoices in it, linking it with the act of justification, and calling it 'this grace wherein we stand'. With this love shed abroad in our hearts we hope for and anticipate the glory of God. This hope 'maketh not ashamed', he said, because of the fulness of this love and joy and peace. It was flooding his heart as he spoke, and had been doing so from the moment he had received the gift of the Holy Spirit for regeneration in Damascus.

Ananias' visit to him in his blindness had been directed by God; that dear man had been the vital human factor in the events leading up to his regeneration. Ananias had come to him and called him 'brother', saying he had been sent by the Lord Jesus that he should receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. In obedience to that man's gentle persuasion, and as instructed by him, Saul's heart rose in faith to receive the word of God, and immediately things began to happen. In the space of a very few minutes he received his sight, his sins were washed away, he received the Holy Spirit, he had peace with God, his heart was flooded with love, he was filled with joy. He did not understand it all at once, but later he wrote of it as follows: 'faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God'. It had happened like that to him at the beginning. He could not have explained what happened, nor could he have taught the doctrine of it straight away, but the seeds of all he ever taught were sown in that experience. It was so comprehensive, amounting to a total change of nature whereby

everything within and about him suddenly changed, and from that moment continued to change. With the coming of the Holy Spirit he immediately became a lover of God and of his fellow men. This surely is the greatest personal evidence of the power of Christ that a man can have; what he gained later from his experience that day later became apostolic doctrine.

It is important to notice the juxtaposition of righteousness and love. Their relationship is beyond question; that no one can love with the love of God unless he is first made righteous with His righteousness is not only true, it is also an acceptable and agreeable concept to the mind. There is also a logical connection between the two which, though perhaps not evident at first glance, becomes more obvious upon consideration. It would not be righteous of God to expect us to be loving except He makes us righteous — the two must be as one. Hitherto in the epistle Paul has not spoken of love. Throughout his earlier masterly exposition of justification from sin we have been made aware of all-pervasive grace; it is this undeserved goodness of God alone which leads to repentance. He tells us also that all is based upon the redemption; justification would have been impossible without that. God first had to purchase us with the blood of His Son — only by that could He justify His actions; what He did He did righteously.

We are familiar with the principles and practice of purchase; they are common factors of life. Purchase is based upon ability, availability, need and desire. The latter two can be operative in any purchase; on the other hand we may need to purchase that which we do not desire and, conversely, desire to purchase what we do not need. It is also possible to desire and need something which is not available to us; this can lead to frustration or fantasy. Ability, that is, purchasing power (or, as we would generally think of it, money) is a necessity we all recognize; it is entirely useless to desire anything, however needful and available it may be, unless ability to purchase it is within our grasp — only purchasing power brings it within reach. Now, just as we have to weigh up all these things before deciding to purchase anything, so God had to take all these things into consideration before redeeming us.

The Desire of God - for Man.

Except for reasons within Himself, largely undisclosed — self-obligations because of plans He made or desires He felt — God had no need of us at all. We were not necessary to His eternal being or welfare; He was not, nor ever will be, dependent on man for anything. Neither is there any other being superior to or equal to Himself to whom He is responsible or answerable. Except God had willed it, man would never have existed. In the beginning He chose to create man of His own free will, and by that choice alone did man become necessary to God. But back behind that necessity lay desire; had He not desired us He would not have chosen to make us, and therefore to stand in need of us. God obligated Himself because of His desire. Desire is a most powerful motivating force, attracting and drawing to itself. Choice is a determinative, decisive force; will is the great driving force; but desire is the motivating force. These are all great and wonderful powers, capable of accomplishing much; but, great though they are, they are not the greatest of all forces, for all of them are conditioned by love. God's love is the greatest of all powers, for all His other forces and powers and principles spring from it, and by it are made entirely benevolent. Underlying God's desire for us is His great love. From love arose desire, leading to decision and choice and purpose and will, by all of which we are made necessary to God. Being conscious

of this necessity within Himself, the Lord also just had to provide purchasing power; He had to pay for what He wanted, and He could not find it anywhere else but in Himself, hence the redemption. What sheerest grace this is.

Having all these great powers within Himself, God found it comparatively simple to fulfil His own desires to create salvation for men because it only involved Himself. He required none other to help Him, so He thought through the situation, made plans, and went about His self-imposed task with deliberation. Between them, the members of the trinity speedily fixed aims and means, allocating roles and works to each person according to their natural eternal relationship. God fully realized what the cost of His decision would be; the decisions were not easy, but since the cost was to be borne by the three alone, they felt justified in what they were doing, and were fully prepared to meet their own demands. They therefore went ahead with the redemption they planned, and in the fullness of time fulfilled their joint will. There was no difficulty on that score; the only difficulty lay in availability; would people want to be purchased? Would fallen creatures wish to be redeemed? How could that be assured?

To human minds, even after they have been enlightened, the task God set Himself was vast beyond comprehension or compass, and the conviction grows that solutions and answers could not have been easy to find, even for Him. The further the mind enquires into it, the more the mysteries involved in it mount in number. Paul deals with some of them in the epistle, but by no means all; there are far too many. Those he does deal with are probably the easiest of them all and are answered from the standpoint of a fully persuaded man, as he confesses, which is an admission that he gave much thought to the problems before he was himself 'persuaded'. He also realized that not all the questions men could ask can be answered. At one point he asks, 'who art thou O man that repliest against God?' and openly rebukes the man who asks such questions as, 'why doth He yet find fault?' and, 'Why hast thou made me thus?' He leaves us in no doubt that he believes men ought not to ask some questions and later makes plain his reason for so saying — everyone needs mental renewal; he also points out the way we all may attain to that blessed state.

The Carnal Mind.

He is, of course, referring primarily to the kind of mind a man has, namely, either spiritual or carnal; he does not refer to the amount of knowledge acquired by formal education, although he himself had been through the best schools. The mind needs to be stored with the right kind of knowledge — that is one of the reasons for the epistle, but he is more concerned about the condition of the mind than the content of it. The condition of the mind is not changed by its content, but the content of the mind will be changed by its condition. Inevitably there is great interplay, interdependence and interaction between these, but, as with all He does, when dealing with the mind God starts with fundamental states rather than mental accomplishments. Always it is condition before function, for condition determines function. Mind, to be mind, must be functional though; if the mind ceases to function personality ceases to be, in which case there can be no life. It is therefore essential that if God would change a man He must change his mind; to do this a superior being, having a superior quality of mind, must enter and operate within, for unaided man cannot change his fundamental state of being and thinking.

There are those who blame God for everything; they see themselves as preconditioned creatures of a chance birth, and arguing from this position ask, why then should God find fault with them? They had had no say about their coming into the world: they did not choose to be born, their entrance into the world at a certain time was not planned by them; (sadly enough, in many instances it was completely unwanted). Their parents decided their life for them in advance, and in any case is it not true that God handed the human race over to sin? 'Why has He made me thus, and why doth He yet find fault?' seems a normal inquiry. 'I cannot help being who and what I am', says the fatalist, 'everything is predetermined, and basic conditions cannot be changed'.

But the apostle will have none of it, for way back beyond all that, before personal parentage or the development of family strains and traits, before the judgement of God, and His decision to abandon the race to sin, before the creation of Adam even, God made choices. In His wisdom He conformed and predestinated persons to be as His sons, and decided and fixed the nature of these to be as His own — God is love. There are mysteries in all this for which God has offered no explanation at all. What He did though, was to send His Son into the world and decree that His gospel should be preached to every creature. Men are baffled and embittered, they have been broken like potters' vessels, and discarded as unwanted pieces; the whole creation groans and travails in pain until now. What it hopes to bring forth who can guess? And what it will be in the end who is able to foretell? It is Paul himself, speaking in prophetic vein to the Thessalonians, who tells us who and what it shall be — the antichrist, the man of sin, the son of perdition, natural child of satan predestined to hell. He will be king of the majority of the race, and every one of his subjects will be like him, although at present few there are who think so; men generally are too preoccupied with today to think about the future.

This tragic world condition is further complicated by the mystery of Israel; it seems to affect everything. This nation of destiny, through which God brought salvation into the world, has failed both God and man but, and herein is love, God did not cast it off. Instead, by a new birth, He has brought forth and developed from it a new nation of people drawn from every nation under the sun, a people whose nature, kinship and characteristics are not physical but spiritual. This is God's major concern in this age; He has not entirely suspended operations with Israel, but is working for them in a different way. This has created an ever-present bone of contention to the nations and is a matter of constant speculation; to the carnal mind everything seems in a hopeless mix-up, defying both rationalisation and justification. How then is it possible to explain or justify prevailing universal conditions, or to rationalize national or personal moral states? That is the overriding question, but Paul does not make any attempt to answer it, neither does God. Therefore it ill becomes us to attempt the impossible: God cannot be justified by pointing to world conditions or human states; they are not as they were originally created. Noting all these anomalies, Paul rejects the temptation to speculate, and presents the Gospel of God concerning His Son.

Justification: of Grace by Faith.

There is no justifying God or man apart from faith, and there is no faith for man apart from the preaching of the word of God. We must take God's word for it. God's plain statements of truth and the preaching of that word alone can bring faith to men's hearts; explanations will not do it. Men's explanations may bring light to minds and, insofar as they are true to God's word, are good as far as they go; but in order to be

saved a man must go beyond that and with all his heart believe God's word and confess Jesus Christ publicly with his mouth. God's word must be answered by man's word — the two given words constitute the making of the bond — both must be confessions of truth; God's word certainly is truth, and so must man's word be. The saving power is not the repetition of true words by the mouth, but the confession of truth from the heart; justification is entirely of grace. On man's part it is entirely of faith; he has nothing to give, he must receive. Indeed man cannot contribute anything to his own salvation, for he is spiritually dead; he is also morally corrupt and mentally confused. Therefore God could not righteously expect man to make any contribution towards his own salvation at all; it would be morally wrong for Him to expect it anyway. In one splendid passage Paul is at pains to point out that work is work and earns its due reward and that grace is grace, and bestows everything freely as of special favour. God's part is grace, His mind towards us is grace, His attitude is grace, His work is grace; He has everything to give, and expects to do the entire work Himself. This is nothing other than sheer love and utmost generosity, it can be nothing else. We wonder at it but God is love — it is His nature. He can be nothing other and can do nothing other than this.

Paul testifies later that eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord is the gift of God. By this he means to tell us that, far more than that, we can have eternal life because of what Jesus has done. That is true of course; whether they be the pre-historical or the historical acts and facts of salvation, we are eternally indebted to the Lord Jesus for all of them; they are indispensable to us. But Paul is wanting to take us on beyond that into the present ministry of God through His Son. Eternal life is only presently possible to us because the Holy Spirit is being ministered to us by and through Him. No one can have eternal life except the Holy Spirit be given him. This is why He is called the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Paul gives much space later to developing truth associated with this aspect of the Holy Spirit's ministry, and we shall be considering that in due course.

The Mighty Love of God.

Our immediate concern is with this most fundamental work of the Holy Spirit in the human heart, without which no-one can be a son of God, namely, the shedding abroad of the love of God in the heart of man. It is by this alone, (according to the apostle John) that the true sons of God can be distinguished and known. To have made men righteous and holy and not loving would never have satisfied God. He would not have been able to justify Himself in the act of redemption unless thereby He could change the hearts of men from hatred and indifference to love. Men live and do things according to their nature; they form character and act characteristically, therefore if nature be not changed men are not changed. Sons of God are people who share God's nature and develop His character and do His works and show forth His ways as of natural habit; their whole character, disposition and personality is changed. Responsibility to accomplish this in a man is entrusted to the Holy Spirit; that is why He is given us; His special duty is to ensure that we become the Sons of God in the very image of Christ, so He floods us with God's own love; He could not sufficiently change us by any other means.

What a wonderful inward baptism this is; it is the immersion and saturation of the entire human nature in the divine. The joy of it is unspeakable and the experience indescribable, earth has nothing to compare with it; the like of it is not to be found.

This love of God is the love natural to the three persons of God, it is the basic state of life in which they abide together in perfect union and bliss; love is the almighty integrating force which makes this possible. Love seems to be so utterly powerless, yet it is the greatest power of all. Love is so vulnerable, it can be so easily abused or refused or denied, it can be resisted so firmly and constantly that it can be heart-broken, but it remains tender and enduring and unbreakable and everlasting. This love that is so natural in God is all-transforming when shed abroad in human hearts because it is not natural to them. It is not the love of humans for God, but of God for humans, and what is more it is the love of God for God, enabling a man to love God and man as each should be loved. This miracle of divine transformation is the beginning of wonderful eternal life in the soul of man. By this men can love God for ever with the love wherewith He loves them; it far exceeds the commandment He gave to Israel on the borders of the promised land centuries before, for it fulfils it. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength', God said; the love-filled heart cries a joyous, 'Yes, so I shall, I know I shall, I can now'.

Reconciled to God by Jesus Christ.

This same love is the love wherewith we can love one another too, thereby lifting earth's relationships into the heavenlies where all is divinely natural and ordinary. Paul cannot leave the theme: 'God commends His love toward us', he says, 'while we were yet without strength Christ died for the ungodly'. Herein lay our weakness — we were without holiness and love, therefore quite ungodly; we were loved but unloving in a world that needs love so much. We had no strength to love men and women as God loves them, and so often had no desire to; we were spiritually incapable of it, yet such is the strength and wonder of His love that He loved us even when we were too dead to know it. We were totally ungodly, yet in all our ungodliness He loved us and reconciled us to Himself, recreating in us something long since dead and non-existent between man and God. When Adam sinned, the communion between man and God died; God was inconsolable. From that moment man was irreconcilable to God until both natures were united in Jesus. In this perfection He lived all His days and despite every onslaught upon it maintained that unification without sin or rupture, so that He might bear His Godhead and Manhood whole to the cross and through the grave up to heaven. By Him God brought in the age of reconciliation; He could, for in Christ He has created and established it for man and restored him to Himself. God can now righteously do as He wills in man, since Christ has brought reconciliation into being and the Holy Spirit has brought it into human beings.

Reconciliation is man's restoration by God into the primal state of sinless love from which man fell at the beginning. That original love was the natural condition in which humans lived with God and each other at the first. It preceded the knowledge of righteousness; they were without consciousness of being righteous for they had no knowledge of sin; man and woman did not know personal sin any more than God did. Consequently they were not aware that they were righteous, for they had no means of comparison; they were aware of love though. Morality was nothing other than continuing to live in the state in which they were created, and walking and talking with God in perfect innocence, knowing that evil existed but being themselves unaffected by it.

That we might be made the Righteousness of God.

It is not surprising therefore that Paul commences his references to the Holy Spirit in this epistle by speaking of the Spirit of holiness; for that is how it was in the beginning. The Creator Spirit that brooded over Eden was the Spirit of holiness. Adam and Eve would not have been able to define their glorious feelings or to describe the wonderful atmosphere in which they lived, nor does the scripture precisely do so, but surely it could be no better described than living in the Spirit of holy love. What else could it have been? Holiness in human beings is the effect of living in total separation from known sin; it is the natural state of life revealed in personality, produced by the combination of love and righteousness. This was the miracle of Jesus; it was also the miracle of Calvary where the mystery of redemption was worked out. The Holy One was made sin there, yet remained so righteous and rendered such loving service to God that the place of the skull became unto Him the holiest spot on earth, even as the Holy of Holies itself. By what was accomplished there we could be made the righteousness of God in Him. Likewise the all-pervading sense of the resurrection is holiness also; it halted John's racing feet at the entrance of the sepulchre, stopping him dead; he could not enter, awe gripped him; it was a holy place. What lay within? His body? Graveclothes? Angels? Him? Was He there? John waited, wondering, sensing ahead, daring to grope through to belief.

Peter arrived and led the way into the dark cold shade — no one! Just the clothes. The winding-sheet lay collapsed, still vaguely outlining the shape of the form that had lately vacated it, in a place by itself. The head-cloth lay neatly folded — it had obviously been untied and placed in the spot where His head had so recently lain. What had actually taken place there? Had He been spirited away? Where was He? Peter was utterly confused. John, following after Peter, swept the place with his eyes, took it all in, and believed; wonder filled his soul; everything was so holy. He was being given evidence of the new creation, the Spirit of holiness was filling his mind with promise of newness of life. He needed no voice commanding him to put off his shoes — he knew he was on holy ground; mysterious holiness, glorious love, were in the air he breathed, illuminating his mind, thrilling his heart; he knew Jesus was alive.

Righteousness had triumphed. The Lord had not been carried out or spirited away, He had walked out of the tomb whole. He had not lived and loved in vain; but what love it was that He should endure such agony to achieve it. It had all been necessary, someone had to do it, and He had said all along that He would be crucified; but even with the resurrection in view it was more than duty or chivalry that made Jesus die. He loved: He loved His Father, He loved His own, He loved His enemies, He loved the world; He loved me, said Paul, and the Spirit of this love is pouring through Him still, to be given to us now. The Spirit of the unconquerable nature of Jesus the Lover, who was born to be the embodiment of the love of God, is given to us to make us lovers too. Being made instantly righteous in order to become immediately holy, we must be utterly loving and continue in that manner of life for ever.

Paul is very sure about this nature and personality of love. Even though his main doctrinal emphasis in this letter is regarded by many as being righteousness by faith, his great overall thrust is towards the love of God being shed abroad in the heart. He makes this the end of justification by faith, though it is easy to lose sight of his intention when first we read his famous statement in the opening verse of chapter five: 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have (or let us have) peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ'. The emphasis on justification by faith is very necessary and very much loved by all who know salvation by grace, especially as they have proved

that it brings peace with God. Peace is a most blessed state of life; very few people have it, though most seek it. Peace with God is the rarest condition of all. By Jesus Christ God created this condition for men by taking of His righteousness and giving it to them, thus making them righteous through faith. But, just as peace is not possible without righteousness, neither is it possible without love, for without love peace cannot exist. Peace with God is not just the absence of a state of war between man and God, it is living in a positive state of love with Him. Peace is one of the three foremost glorious delights of the fruit of the Spirit when He abides in a human heart.

The Reason for Justification — Love.

In another letter Paul says faith, hope and love abide, and unhesitatingly declares that the greatest of these three is love. If we want peace we must have love, for peace, being less than love, cannot exist apart from it, therefore we must have love. Now, although human beings must know and have this love, it is quite beyond the capability of any human being to create it, for it is not human but divine, and being God's own love it can only be imparted by God Himself; in Himself it is natural, but it must be created in us by personal gift from Him. Since He is all-powerful and such a wonderful giver, there is no reason at all why every one of us should not have God's love. We can have it, but having received it we must beware of thinking love is a once for all gift, it is not. Love is the natural radiation of the Holy Spirit; it is so important to spiritual life that it has to be constantly shed abroad within the heart of man so that he is permanently filled with God's love. Justification is for this reason; Love is the immediate end God had in view for men by justification.

Wonderful and desirable as this was to Him, He knew it was quite impossible for Him to achieve it apart from the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Before the heart of man could be kept flooded with His love, that heart must become the permanent home of the Holy Spirit; there was no other way for it. Justification is a state created by God for man and in man, so that He can justly come and live in man and love him there from within. Eternal life is not only a state of sinlessness, it is also a state of love; sinlessness cannot exist on its own. Justification had to be created for man by God, but love did not; love had always abounded in God, so had righteousness and holiness; like love, they are natural to God. Men fell from this blessed estate; they became neither righteous nor holy nor loving, but they never fell from being loved. So in love, by Christ, God recreated conditions of righteousness and holiness for man, and by the Holy Spirit has made this known to us. The restoration to original love is the greatest proof to a man that he is made righteous and holy — O the gratitude that fills the heart of every person who knows this in experience; he shouts for joy because the nature of God has come to the heart.

This is the grace in which we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. What grace this is — beyond grace of forgiveness and righteousness and holiness — this grace of God's love exceeds all — the glorious gospel is that man has been re-admitted to that knowledge of God's love which Adam and Eve left and recklessly threw away. Yea, and greater still we have been brought into the inter-communication and holy intercourse of that love as it is known and enjoyed by Father, Son and Holy Spirit between themselves. O how wonderful is our God's grace to us that we should share in this great love as being by nature born to it — sons of His love. Blessed be the name of the glorious Holy Spirit that He should be so willing to dwell in these hearts of ours, nor consider Himself to be demeaned thereby, that He should

graciously give us opportunity to know what it feels like to be a son of God. O praise Him, who is so meek and humble that He wants all the glory and praise for it to be given to the Son. It is the Holy One's good pleasure that He should be sent by the Father to follow on after Christ and come in the name of another and not His own to continue all Christ's work in His name. Let all we who benefit from this know and understand that it could never have been possible for us unless the Holy Spirit, as well as Christ, had been willing to humble Himself to dwell in human beings. True He was never incarnated, nor was He made sin or crucified, but He is even now indwelling men and women for the glory of God. God so loved the world that He gave both His only begotten Son and the Holy Spirit that we should have eternal life, Christ to procure it, the Holy Spirit to bring it. God knew when He gave His Son that He would have to give the Holy Ghost also, for we could not have God's eternal life unless He gave the Holy Spirit. Let us worship Him that all three of them were more than willing for this, and let us rejoice in such unparalleled and undeserved love.

III

THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS

'... the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death'. Chapter 8 verse 2.

No Condemnation — in Christ Jesus.

This text is the glorious introduction to a whole chapter of glorious truth about the Holy Spirit which has no parallel anywhere else in scripture. It would be altogether too great a task to undertake to attempt an exposition of the whole chapter, but we will touch on it here and there, finding the truth we seek for our purposes. Paul has just concluded a lengthy passage, in which he describes himself as he discovered himself to be under the law of Moses. What the law did for him was to show him the laws that controlled him; he discovered himself to be a slave of sin, bound by chains of habit to death. Even the laws of mind and memory, which brought him joy and delight in the law of God, could not liberate him from the law of sin which worked in his members. It overpowered his will. Strong determination of mind and fixity of purpose were together powerless to liberate him; although he loathed and lamented his sin, he could not rid himself of it. It was not so much what he did that troubled him, it was what was working in his members that distressed him so much. It was against him, against his desires, his mind, his will, his beliefs, his prayers, his better knowledge, against his God; it was sinful, exceedingly sinful, and he hated himself for it. At last the battle was too great for him and he cried out to God for deliverance and found it through Jesus Christ.

From that time onwards this was his testimony, 'there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus (who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit) for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death'. It is intensely personal. He was not setting down teaching, he was recounting his experience; 'this is what I have found', he is saying, and O how precious it was to him. We are told that the words in parenthesis above are not in the most ancient and more reliable manuscripts, from which we may infer that they were not in the original epistle. They are an exact copy of Paul's words in verse four, and so the scribes, whoever they were that copied out the sacred text, are not to be thought guilty of inserting thoughts of their own, even if it was their idea to put the phrase

higher up in the text. May we not infer that by doing so those people have revealed to us that they too had discovered the reason for Paul's rejoicing? He found he could walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh, and so had they.

How wonderful this experience is, and how glorious it is to every man who similarly discovers that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made him free from the law of sin and death. What light in darkness, especially when it is coupled, as it is here, with the fact that there is therefore no condemnation to him because he really and recognizably is in Christ Jesus. Whenever Paul's doctrine touches upon human experience of salvation it is always based on his own experience, and what glorious doctrine it is; because of this it is the gospel indeed, God's good news and man's good news in one. If the note of personal testimony is missing from gospel preaching it is a vain hope, for what at first is an enlightening message and liberating hope will die away into darkness and condemnation. That is why Paul spoke about walking not after the flesh but after the Spirit; unless a man can do that, he has no testimony that his beliefs are right, no proof that his doctrine is correct; he is just believing in unworkable theories. The walk in the Spirit is the sole proof that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has indeed set a person free from the law of sin and death. For if there is one thing that is absolutely certain, it is that dead men cannot walk; legs and feet they may have, but life they have not.

Therefore the copyists' gloss may not be a bad thing, for it emphasizes the important practical part, namely walking after the Spirit, without which all is theoretical belief. Because he was walking after the Spirit, Paul knew he was free from the law of sin and death; if this had not been so he would have walked after the flesh, because he could not have done otherwise; the walk is the test. It is entirely impossible to be free from sin and death unless the law governing it, by which it works, is nullified or countermanded in us. It is not possible to nullify or countermand spiritual and moral law unless it is replaced by another, which works in the very same elements and by the same principles as the one it replaces did. Only the working of the new law can prevent the old one from reasserting itself and regaining power over us; in the spirit as in nature there cannot be a vacuum. The new law does not break the power of the old one — that is not its function — but it does prevent it from reasserting itself. The power of the old law of sin is broken experimentally in every believer who knows the experience outlined in chapter six.

Essentially, originally and eventually man is spirit. He is not flesh, neither is he a body; he has a body of flesh in which he dwells on the earth in this world. All the time he dwells in his body man is both spirit and soul; man, by God's choice, is a spirit/soul. God is not spirit/soul, He is Spirit. God acquired a soul when the Son took a body. In God He is now the Spirit/Soul of God, the prototype and forerunner of every spirit/soul son of God by redemption and regeneration. The Lord Jesus became a soul when He was incarnated. Until then He was not a soul. To be a soul a person has to be born in a human body. He had appeared in bodily form prior to being incarnate, but He was not a soul then, for He had not been born man. He was spirit manifesting Himself in human or angelic form for the purpose in hand at that time only. Spirit was breathed into human form by God. God does not make spirits, He generates them. God is the father of spirits, not of bodies. He formed or made body, He did not generate it; He generated or gave birth to man when He breathed spirit into it. Until then the shapely dust was not man. God did not breathe spirit into man; He breathed it into a form of dust which He intended to be a man, and thus created man.

Man is a manifestation of God, as well as a creation of God. God made man in His own image after His own likeness. Animals and all the lower forms of being are not a manifestation of God, they are a creation of God only. They do not bear His image, they were not patterned upon God's being; their original breath was not directly from God, therefore they are not after His likeness; they were only the work of His hands made to breathe atmospheric air.

Man Became a Living Soul.

Original man was created by direct original breath from the Spirit of God. Animals' breath was gaseous, man's was spiritous. Man, to be man, must be spirit; to be human he must be soul; to have existence on the earth he must have body. Man is spiritual, sensual, physical in being; to be man he cannot be any other, for that is how God made him; God delighted in that original creation, but since then man has undergone a tragic change in spirit and soul. Physically he is the same, but in spirit and soul he is utterly different, so God, when communicating truth to us about ourselves, has found it necessary to change His form of address. When God created man he was spiritual, that is, his spirit was in a condition of pristine purity, without sin, so was his body; he was fully conscious of his originator, in all its senses the soul alive unto Him; His body also, in all its members and motions, its desires and appetites, its laws and functions, was of one accord with it. Man was entirely spiritual. In every realm of his being man was attuned to God. Nothing in him was out of touch or out of gear. The mind of his spirit, and the operation of the laws of his entire being, in accordance with it, were all directed to do God's will — he was spiritual. Man knew no other than that until he sinned, and when he did so he ceased to be spiritual. He was still basically spirit, but he was no longer spiritual, he was only spiritous, and because his sin was directed to the satisfying of his flesh in both its appetites and desires, its affections and attractions, he became a carnal soul — man was no longer spiritual but carnal, that is, dead. He was not alive with the life of God and therefore was not alive to God. Being no longer spiritual, that is, no longer able to live in the condition in which he was created, he was no longer allowed to live in the conditions which God had created for him — he was turned out of paradise.

This then is the background to Paul's approach to his teachings about man's life in the Spirit: man must be restored to his original native state. Adam fell from his native state, that is, the condition of his nature, what it was, how it was, where it was, and found himself in another condition, another nature. His native state of spirit had become death, his native condition of soul became sin, his native state of body became carnal. Paul found out all these things about himself and he was devastated. But he also found out that Christ Jesus lived a life that was exactly what God originally intended for man; He was spiritual. If a man wishes to be spiritual he must have and live the life of Jesus Christ. The section commences on that note, 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus'. The life that Jesus lived and the way He lived it are the law for all God's sons. He lived by the Spirit and developed His own spirit from and in that Spirit. His spirit and mind had control over all His being; He was spiritually-minded. He minded the Spirit and therefore His own spirit, and thereby had life and peace. There was no conflict in Him. There was no sin in Him, not in any realm or member of Him; nothing warred against the law of His mind; what He thought and willed He was able to do. He did not live in or walk after the flesh but in and after the Spirit. He was subject to the law of God, thoroughly dead to sin and alive unto God, therefore all the righteousness of the law was fulfilled in Him. It is

into this life that the baptism in the Spirit is designed to bring us. This baptism is obligatory because it is absolutely necessary, for only thereby are our spirits baptized into Jesus Christ. He is now as He was then in Spirit, and the purpose of God is that, by this baptism we shall receive and for ever have the spirit of Christ, the spiritual man.

It is quite impossible for any man to know the working of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus in himself unless he is in Christ Jesus. Life in Christ Jesus is exclusive to Him, and if we are to know His life we must be in Him; we cannot be without Him and expect to have His personal life in us. Therefore every person who would know the reality of Christ's own life within his or her own self must be in Him, otherwise there can be no end to the life of sin. Condemnation and frustration is the common state of all enlightened men who wish to live Christ's life and find themselves unable to do so. They truly desire to do His will and can never accomplish it. As Paul explains, he was in that state himself once; despite all his prayers and efforts he languished in defeat and wretchedness until the Spirit showed him the way and took him out of himself and his sin into Christ. There and then he discovered the law of the Spirit of life and how it worked. When he went this way he found the dominion of sin was broken in him, for like Christ he died to it.

Baptized into Christ.

It was a marvellous and totally unexpected thing, as undeserved as it was unexpected — he was baptized into Christ. No-one had told him what would happen to him and that is why so much of this man's teaching was so personal. He was not a product of the Church; he had persecuted it. He did not learn the way of salvation from it, nor from the apostles of Christ (he had hated them also); quite the opposite from that, the Church has learned from him. What happened to him, that is to say, what Christ did to him at Damascus first of all and then revealed to him afterwards, became the substance of all Paul's ministry. Quite simply, the Christ he had first met on the Damascus road baptized him in the Spirit in that city three days later. He baptized him into His death and into His resurrection, and via these into Himself, into His nature, His life and self.

That day Saul of Tarsus passed from death unto life for the first time, and from that moment he was conscious of being kept alive in Christ in whom the law of the Spirit of life is constantly in operation. This is how it must be with everyone. Eternal life is not possible to a man otherwise; it is no use a man trying to walk according to the Spirit unless he is first baptized into Christ. Until this happens to a man the law of sin and death continues to operate, working condemnation in him. No number or manner of assurances to the contrary will ever persuade him that it is not so. To be free from condemnation and guilt a man must be baptized into Christ. There and nowhere else does the law of the Spirit of life make a man free from the law of sin and death so that he can walk after the Spirit. Doing so he does not then need assuring that he is not under condemnation, because he has the assurance of the Spirit within himself and he knows he is not condemned. Moreover, by his walk he proves this both to himself and also to all other knowledgeable persons who observe him.

The life in Christ Jesus can only be known and lived by this law of the Spirit. Unless this baptism takes place and this spiritual law be realized in experience so that the whole personality is brought into obedience to it, no man can possibly live the eternal

life. We may observe how this law operates by reading the events that led up to the birth of Jesus. Unless the Holy Spirit had come upon Mary in the beginning there would have been no human Jesus Christ. His life came from the Holy Spirit and not from her; she only gave Him His human body. All the biological processes by which a human body is formed were taken over in Mary by the Holy Spirit, who activated and commenced and superintended their function. Thereby Jesus was made of a woman: (1) under the law of Moses (which law was the law of God and very strong against adultery); (2) according to biological law; (3) according to the law of faith; (4) according to the law of the Spirit of life. Biological processes are laws — God's laws — and when He sent His Son into the world He did not work apart from female biological law but through it. Jesus was born as a result of voluntary co-operation between God and a woman. Two laws co-operated and combined; one human and one divine — the law of the body of Mary and the law of the Spirit of God. The spirit of each co-operated by the law of faith to produce the human Son of Man.

Freedom from the law of Sin and Death

We therefore see that the unique life of Jesus of Bethlehem and Nazareth and Calvary was produced entirely by the law of the Spirit of life. This is the life which God means us to understand when we read the phrase 'the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus'. This life is not subject to the law of sin and death simply because it is the law of righteousness and life, and all the time we live by it we shall live free from sin as God intends us to. Other laws must operate too, all combining to this end. We must observe John's statement for instance — 'if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin'. We do not ordinarily think of that operation as law, but it is. When Paul says, 'ye are not under law but under grace', he does not mean that under grace all law is suspended or nullified; he means these two things: (1) we are not now under the Mosaic legal system of blood sacrifices for sin or thank offerings etc., (2) we are not now under the law of sin and death.

We are here being instructed into the law of being and personality; in all moral intelligences these co-exist. In fact, without moral intelligence, personality cannot be. There can be physical that is to say animal existence, but no one ever thinks of speaking of an animal as a person; it may have an intelligence of a sort, but it is not moral, it does not act morally but instinctively according to its nature. A higher will and intelligence may train it to respond to a certain name and to do certain things, but it will never be thought of as a being, a person. It will remain a creature, an animal; it has being, therefore existence, but without personality. On the other hand, man, in common with angels and God, has moral intelligence; all three have both being and personality. In God's being there is no sin, therefore there is no death in Him because sin is the cause of death. But beyond, far beyond this negative aspect of His being, God is positively righteous. Being always morally right and good He is eternally alive — He is life itself. His nature is love and His personality is grace — that is to say that in His attitude towards us God is always gracious. Apparently this graciousness was the quality of nature and personality which came through most strongly to people of Jesus' acquaintance; 'the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ' certainly made terrific and unforgettable impact on Paul.

Now exactly the same life that was in Christ is in the Holy Spirit, as it is in the Father also; although they share the same life, they embody and express it in three different

ways as three distinct yet related persons. We must express this life also, and for this reason must walk in the Spirit and after the Spirit. God has ordained it that way for us, but He did not do so for the sake of it, He did so because there is no other way. It was quite impossible on earth for men to walk in the life of Jesus of Nazareth the human being. They could walk after Him — that is, follow Him — with Him or away from Him, but not in Him. Men could not walk in what He was in the flesh. That was unique, but in the Spirit it is now possible (and O what grace this is) to walk in what Christ is in spirit. To this end the Holy Spirit is now in charge of all things to do with Christ. We must be in the Spirit and after the Spirit and be led by the Spirit or we cannot have and shall not know the life of Christ. We may have and enjoy some of His benefits, but that is not good enough for God's sons. Beyond all these He wants us to have the privileges of sonship, and enjoy all the benefits of a son and heir of God. Therefore the Spirit is made unto us the Spirit of adoption or sonship, and this He accomplishes by coming into us and witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God.

Made unto Us — All Things.

When Jesus Christ was made in flesh He was made the substance of all the virtuous things we read of in the Old Testament. The people of His day were able to see, hear and handle in a man, at least in part, what the eternal life really was. He was the personification to them of all spiritual virtues and graces and powers. Though sinless, He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh; He came for sin and to be made sin; this was His daring. Being so absolutely perfect He could be made the embodiment of sin and all human imperfection, and not be ruined by it. To that generation He was made everything perfect and glorious and needful and wonderful, then at the end of His life for that generation He was made everything imperfect and shameful and sinful and terrible. What He was made for that generation He was made for every generation before and since; He was made sin for us. Hallelujah! Just as truly as He was made the substance of everything virtuous to that generation, so to us also He is made the substance of all virtues and graces and powers. Paul lists some of them: 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption', we could add to this list almost ad infinitum if we had power to comprehend what no language can possibly express.

Now what we have seen to be true of Christ Jesus is also true of the Holy Spirit to the same degree, though not in the same manner. The Holy Spirit is made unto us all the many virtues of God which we so desperately need. Perhaps the simplest illustration of this is in that marvellous section of the Galatian letter wherein Paul speaks of the fruit of the Spirit. Each of the graces mentioned there is nothing other than one of the many precious virtues of Jesus; it is as though the writer had examined His person and had set down an analysis of His personality and personal qualities. Though not exhaustive, this group of characteristics put together by Paul is a description of the man Jesus, His manner and ways to God and to men - and wonderful He is. More wonderfully, this is what He is made to us by the Spirit so that we may enjoy and display His life. Still more wonderfully He is made that, through us, to God. The fruit of the Spirit is the spiritual substance of the life of Christ which made Him such indestructible Rock, even when He was made sin on the cross, with the result that the attack mounted upon Him there by the devil and his armies was broken upon Him. By the fruit of the same Spirit abiding in us as He did in Christ, the fact that Christ lives in us is proved. There is no other proof that this is so; the Spirit is given to us basically for this purpose.

One of the wonderful things discoverable in the New Testament about God is how greatly the persons of the Godhead love each other. So great is this love that they integrate and identify with each other almost to the point of loss of personal identity, if not of individuality; this they do purely for love's sake, that the overall purposes of God may be unitedly fulfilled. Quite irrespective of the need to preserve their own distinctive personalities and natural roles, they give all their energies to the project in hand, whatever it is, in order to maintain the unity and single-mindedness of the trinity. Paul shows us here how the Holy Spirit identifies with the Son in order to be the Spirit of sonship in us; 'Father', He cries, and in so doing fulfils His other purpose of identifying Himself with our spirits also. He does this by and through the urgent immediacy of need within us because of regeneration; first He creates it, then he fulfils it; it is this need which makes the Holy Spirit so indispensable to each of us. Just as Christ did this same thing over a period of time when He identified with humanity as a whole by incarnation, so the Holy Spirit does it with individuals in order to certify that they are regenerate. Christ did this so that He may identify with us humanly, that is, in human nature and form; the Holy Spirit does it so that we may identify with Christ spiritually, that is, in spiritual nature and manner. As we shall see, this is not the only way or the only reason for which He does it; another instance in this same section affords us a further insight into His versatility and activities. Paul speaks of 'the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead'; without question, the person who raised Him from the dead was the Father, for Paul says so in chapter six.

The Self-effacing Spirit.

Plainly the Holy Spirit is determined not to take to Himself any of the glory or credit which belongs to the Son or the Father; He intends that either the Son or the Father must have that. This characteristic humility is displayed almost unobtrusively throughout, as when He refers to Himself as the Spirit of God. This phrase is generally taken to mean the whole being of God under the headship of the Father, which is proper and natural, for the Father is the highest expression of authority in any family or society. Given His full title, the Holy Spirit should be spoken of as 'The God, The Holy, The Spirit'. This being recognized, He is at once seen to be a person most profound and august, totally beyond our powers of comprehension. Whether we call Him God the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, or just the Spirit, it is all the same (and all are quite proper expressions to use). He is quite happy with them. As long as He is fulfilling the work of the Father towards Jesus the Son, or fulfilling the role of the Son in us towards the Father, He is content. The Holy Spirit is a glorious person, adapting His own wonderful self to the wishes and requirements of God to us according to our need, and so magnifying Him. Whatever the office He must fill in order to do this, whether Comforter, Teacher, Leader, Empowerer or any of His other functionary offices, the blessed Holy Spirit is content as long as thereby the Father and the Son may be glorified; He is the ever-present self-sacrificing workman of God. What a wonderful person He is.

It is very noticeable that, in this lengthy passage about the person and work of the Holy Spirit, He is not called by His full name or given His full title. This is not a mark of disrespect; Paul would no more be disrespectful to the Blessed One than he would ignore or blaspheme Him. The apostle loved and honoured Him. This use of the shortened form of the name of the third person of God is not confined to references to the Holy spirit alone. In scripture the practice is more regularly used when referring to the Lord Jesus Christ than when speaking of the Holy Spirit. With either person, the

general reason for this is to draw attention to, or lay emphasis upon, the particular position which that person is then occupying or the specific work or the nature of the work He is doing. It is the apostle's purpose throughout this entire section to emphasize the intensely spiritual nature of all he is saying. From the commencement of chapter eight and throughout, he uses the word spirit in various ways and connections many times (once with reference to man) and the full title, the Holy Spirit, once only. The insistence here is that everything is of spirit, whether of the Spirit of God or the spirit of man. That it is absolutely holy also must be unconditionally accepted; that goes without saying. The apostle's unshakable resolve here though is to make sure that everybody understands that nothing of what he is saying is addressed to the flesh; it is not of the flesh, or for the flesh, or in the flesh; everything is of, in and by spirit. God is Spirit, man is spirit; Paul is teaching things of spirit, whether they be things of God or things of man. He deals with things, powers, works and desires of the flesh in chapter seven, and leaves the subject there, showing his determination to do so by switching from flesh to body when speaking of human physical being in this section. He does this so as to eliminate from our minds all thoughts (whether they be suppositions or calculations) that anything other than spirit can possibly engage in what he now has to say.

How full of precious instruction is this chapter. Paul wrote it to enlighten us as to some of the more basic offices and ministrations of the Spirit: in it He is called the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; the Spirit of Him (the Father) that raised up Christ from the dead: the Spirit of leadership: the Spirit of adoption: the Spirit of witness: the Spirit of fruitfulness: the Spirit of intercession. He comes to men to enable them to walk after Him and not after the flesh. He has created such a variety of possibilities, and opened up such prospects for us — joint-heirship with Christ, glory, love, power — that we are almost overwhelmed by them. So great are the blessings, that for evermore we are indebted to God to refuse to live after the flesh any more. It is true that this is a negative commitment, but it is a very necessary one indeed. This is a personal debt we owe Him, which, if we fail to discharge on this earth in this life, we can never discharge hereafter. We can only discharge this by living positively for Him; until we do this we shall not be able to have and enjoy our inheritance as we ought. By the law of the Spirit of God we have to live by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus to such effect that the spirit of Jesus shall be reproduced in us — then we shall not be held and motivated in any way by the law of sin and death.

The Holy Spirit has come for the whole man — spirit, soul and body; not for a third, or two thirds of him, but for all of him, and the direct purpose of His coming is the reproduction of the life of Christ in every man bought with His blood. But, although He is so powerful, He cannot do this without our co-operation, and this must be total. We must be very attentive to Him and obey Him willingly and lovingly, for He will not force us to do so. Firstly it is necessary for us to recognize what God has in mind, namely that we should be conformed to the image of His Son. Everything else, whatever it may be, is subordinate to that. All the Holy Spirit's energies are directed to this end in every man; He has it always in mind, and all the time He is thinking how best to accomplish it. He was there in conference with Father and Son when it was decided that all God's sons should be predestinated, having already, in God's heart, been conformed to the image of the Son. That was the original determination, and it must have first place in every man's thinking. God's design is not to make us equal to the Son; that could never be. He is God and in His sonship He is unique; but that

uniqueness apart, the Spirit is come to conform each one of us to Him in the likeness of His glorious humanity — the nature in which the Son subsisted as a man on earth.

This the Spirit cannot do unless He receives one hundred percent co-operation from us; He has to change and adjust spirit, mind and body totally and progressively to the end in view. Unless we allow the power of God to affect us in every realm of our being, His task is impossible; not even God can accomplish it. There is nothing else for it. Man is so utterly degenerate; his need so great and his case so hopeless, that apart from total re-making he is lost. Hope for man lies in God alone, and the Spirit of holiness and love has come to bring it. He is equipped with all the power of God, backed up by and enhanced with the redemption in Christ Jesus, with the fixed intention of re-making us entirely thereby. He (1) brings believing men the spirit of Christ to identify us with Himself; (2) imparts the mind of Christ that He may teach us; (3) develops (in us) the soul of Christ that He may fellowship with us; (4) quickens our mortal body that He may walk and work with us. The result is that our entire life, our whole human nature is renewed. This is the degree to which God will save men on this earth; Jesus came to justify us, Father comes to own us, the Holy Ghost comes to glorify us. God expects all our minds to be instinct with this and all our thoughts to be ablaze with it.

Let This Mind be in You.

The part the mind plays in it all is a very important one and this cannot be overlooked or neglected without dreadful loss. Paul sets out the mental position like this: 'they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; ... to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace ... the carnal mind is enmity against God'. The phrases 'carnally minded' and 'spiritually minded' may be thought of as 'the minding, or the mind of, the flesh' and 'the minding, or mind of, the Spirit'. Fleshly thinking or thinking only or generally for the satisfaction of the flesh with purpose to fulfil its desires apart from the will of God is sin and death. Thinking from the viewpoint of the promotion, comfort and advancement of life in and for the flesh is anti-God; He calls that carnal. By contrast, spiritual thinking, or thinking by the Spirit is to use the same mental powers and processes for the purpose of fulfilling the will of God, while in the body and with the same flesh. The Holy Spirit gives this enabling, which will be rewarded by the blessing of seeing things from the viewpoint of the Holy Spirit. This will enable Him to promote and advance the life of Christ in us for the glory of all concerned. This is not possible unless the mind of Christ, that is, His thinking and His way of thinking becomes ours. Only the Holy Spirit can bring Christ's power and process and practice of thinking into us. Unless this ability becomes ours He cannot make us what He wants; it cannot be done by external forces working upon us; they may do, but without a change of mind we cannot be changed people. If we were mindless, inanimate objects, His power could perform miracles on and with us, but could not reproduce the likeness of Christ in us, for that consists in and develops from changing states of thought. We are human beings, having reflexes which are not under the control of the conscious mind; we have wills capable of response or of rejection; we have imaginations also and memories, and can frame and speak words, formulate plans and decide actions. To do all this is part of life, a major part, and God is very concerned about it. He insists that we be Christ-like, and to be that we must think, and think with the right kind of mind, the spiritual mind. A person's mind is as important to him as his heart. It is exceedingly difficult to assess the relative importance of mind and heart in the life of man.

There can be little doubt that right from the very beginning, in the formation and development of a human body within the womb, the heart and the brain come into being simultaneously. This is of necessity, for between them heart and brain constitute the twin indispensable basic functional mechanisms of human beings; they are interdependent — one cannot be without the other. At that stage their functions and capacity are limited, though their potential is great. Each is so dependent upon the other, that to destroy either would be to destroy both. This is so at every stage of life, but for that which we seek it is only necessary to perceive life's beginnings, so that nature itself should teach us. In its earliest stages the natural impulses of the heart are received from the brain as they are to this day in the body of everyone now reading this. These messages that command the heart to beat are not consciously generated by the intellectual mind; they function from the brain by means not yet known, from a part not yet discovered. The function of the heart and the function of the brain are of equal importance; between them, together with the blood of the mother, they produce a living body. We must therefore take extreme care when pondering these verses lest we miss vital truth, which to ignore could mean spiritual death. We must have a spiritual mind or we cannot have a spiritual heart; if one is carnal so is the other. They are twinned by God and cannot be put asunder, nor can their state be made different from each other; they must both be life or both be death. This must inevitably lead to a similar and even more basic point than this; it concerns the cause or origins of life within us. None of this would be possible unless the Spirit of Christ were given us. The mind of the Spirit and the Spirit of Christ are as it were twins; we must have both. Without either there could be no life, they cannot exist apart from each other; they exist together as one. This also is the Holy One's ministry in man. It is His charge to quicken our spirits within us, raising each man's spirit from its death, regenerating it thereby into a spirit like Christ's, that is, like the spirit that was in the body of the man called Jesus. The Spirit of God has to come into us, and He does so in order to generate a Christ-like spirit in us. Not until this happens is Christ indwelling us.

Now this miracle besides being most wonderful is also most necessary. In order to sensibly believe we have the life of Christ, we must be living, thinking spirits; to think otherwise than this is plainly illogical. By command and provision of God, having been regenerated, we have so to live in these bodies of ours on this earth that the glorious image of the Son may be seen and unmistakably recognized in us in this world. The Spirit of the Lord is very aware of that. His commission from the Father is to complete the triumph of redemption in every realm of every human being who has received Him. This He does by bringing the salvation of God into us, causing it to work in our mortal body, as well as in our spirit and mind. In Paul's language this is how it happens, 'if Christ be in you the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you'. Though often misunderstood and all too frequently misinterpreted, these are nevertheless some of the most precious words in scripture. By some they are thought to be an assurance of the ultimate resurrection of the body, and doubtless they may have that meaning and be quoted in that connection. Others have applied them to physical healing, and interpreted them to mean that; but although both of these interpretations may be given to the text, it can only be done dubiously, for they are not what Paul meant by it.

The Death by which We Live.

When Paul introduces the bodily resurrection of Christ into his teaching he does not always do so in relation to our mortal bodies, nor is he always thinking of the resurrection at the end of the age. This text is a prime example of the use to which he puts the fact and power of the resurrection throughout the whole of this section, as also in the sixth chapter. What he is saying here is that the Spirit dwelling in our mortal bodies will quicken them here and now — the end of the age is not in view. Paul is not here saying God will raise our bodies from the dead at the last trump, but that He will quicken them at this moment while they are still alive on this earth. The message is that constant bodily quickening is definitely and graciously included in God's eternal life-plan for man. This is all part of the process which He perfected in Christ and demonstrated by His resurrection for us; apart from this it is not possible for any man to enjoy salvation in all its fulness. The death of which Paul is here speaking is not physical death. This is what he says, 'if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness'. Quite obviously this death is a death which takes place in the mortal flesh, but is not of the flesh; it does not to any degree destroy the body; it is a spiritual death, not a physical one. Paul is continuing the teaching he commenced when writing earlier with great penetration about his own experience prior to his deliverance by Christ. His contention is that by the death of Christ he was delivered: (1) from the unconscious spiritual death in which he was born and lived in until he was rejuvenated; (2) from the conscious death he died, when the law came to him personally, that is when it was applied to his condition and he realized what life was; (3) into the conscious death which reigned in him from the moment when Christ came into him. Not one of these deaths is a physical one.

Any confusion which may reign in any heart over this matter may have arisen because the death of Christ of which we speak is associated with His physical death. Christ's physical death was necessary for our salvation: that was entirely by choice of God. It was most natural and fitting that the greater spiritual death which Christ died to sin should coincide with His lesser physical death inflicted upon Him by the cross. His physical death was vital, but though absolutely necessary for our redemption, the greater death, that is, the death to sin, was not that of the body. 'He bore our sins in His body on the tree', this is the reason why a body was prepared for Him; He needed one so that He could live in it dead to sin, and then, while still in it, finally die to the sin, our sin, which was placed upon Him on the cross for our sakes. God did not will an eternity of physical sacrifice, He did not want bodies to be offered to Him for sin on altars constantly streaming with blood. He wanted someone, a man, perfectly sinless, and willing and able to take sin upon himself and be made sin, a God-man obviously, a person strong enough to bear it and bear it away and defeat it by dying to it in toto in a human body. When Christ was incarnated He became a true man, like all other men; His person and His body were not the same. He, the real person, that is, His soul, though resident in His body, must not be confused with His body.

Man is a living soul. God made him so originally; He inspirited with His own breath the body He had previously formed of dust. He made the body for the soul, not the soul for the body. So important is this that he called man Soul, not Body. The soul is of spirit, it is spiritous and could best be thought of jointly with spirit, thus spirit/soul. It is true that the spirit/soul can only have human identity by the body, but it must always be recognized as distinct from it. Before the Lord Jesus dismissed His spirit from His body on the cross, He shouted out 'it is finished'; this was the indication that He had met, accepted and been made sin, and had conquered and ended it before He

died. In the process of dying physically He had died to sin also, and this accomplished He was willing for expiry, but not until then. Christ had to deal with sin while in the flesh before He left His body; while bearing the world's sin He had to keep His spirit/soul pure from personal sin all the while His blood was being shed, or He could not have redeemed us. He had to be shown to be dead to sin before His death to sin could be, or there could have been no justification for God or sinners. He had to die to sin all the while He was dying for sin and because of sin, and He did this in order that God may be justified in all He had done, especially in taking this step. Because He did accomplish this greatest of miracles concurrently with the death He died to sin, He was able also to shed from His body the blood that should inevitably redeem us from sin. That perfect Man would not release His spirit from His body till all forms and powers of sin had been comprehensively dealt with.

This is the death Paul was talking about, this rigid refusal to become personally interested in and involved with sin, except as far as it was necessary to destroy its power over humanity and remove it. That this death was demonstrated and gloriously effected at the time of Christ's physical death was absolutely right according to the nature of things, making that death all the more wonderful and infinitely more powerful and effective. The subtlety of sin is that it has created in mankind a state of unconscious death, with the result that people physically alive are quite unaware that they are dead with a death more terrible than physical decease or the diseases that cause it. This death is existence in a state of death towards God, (of being unaware of Him, and not knowing Him or that He even exists), as being opposed to eternal life, which consists in knowing God. When God gave the law to Israel He did so in order to convince them of sin by making them aware of Himself and what He wanted and did not want and would not have. Paul says the law enhanced sin, that is, it focussed attention upon sin, lighting it up and making it appear what it was; with customary frankness he illustrated this from his own life and experience. Like us all, he was born fallen and dead by the sin of Adam. He was in sin, though not consciously; he did not know what sin was. Not understanding it, he was quite unaware of it, so he lived happily with it, and felt really alive. Then came the time when, by some means or other, (possibly at Bar-mitzvah when the law came to him, as to every boy) sin came to him; when that happened it was enhanced to him personally. He instanced this enhancement by referring to his inward struggle with sin in relation to the tenth commandment, 'thou shalt not covet'. He had coveted many a time without knowing that it was covetousness, or lust. Then one day he realized the meaning of the law, and it dawned on him what he was doing and had always been doing. He had been existing in sin, totally dead to God, very much alive to self, and he knew he was a sinner.

As every other 'normal' person, he had been living in the grip of lust, wanting this or that or him or her for one purpose or another. In total ignorance of true spiritual life, he had lived only to satisfy his own physical, mental, aesthetic, or religious desires; he had certainly not known this was sin. But when this realization dawned on him, and he recognized that all his behaviour and everything associated with it was sin, he died. All his enjoyment had been self-indulgence, and it turned sour on him; his former life passed away. In desperation he turned wholeheartedly to religion for help and became a Pharisee. He adamantly refused to do anything that broke the ten commandments, or in any way infringed the ordinances of God as the Jews interpreted them; he treasured the law and delighted in it in his mind. As touching the righteousness that was in the law he was blameless, excelling just about everybody in the country, but he was dead,

he could not live what he believed; he was one great mass of inward contradiction and corruption and he knew it. He found that nothing could halt or reverse what was going on in him; he discovered that sin was governed by law, that a spiritual process was at work in his members and he was its slave. Neither law nor will, nor religion, nor good works, nor circumcision, nor anything else could stop him from sinning, or take sin out of him. A power was dominating his mind so that he sinned as by law; it was inbred in him, he did it naturally. Sin, he discovered, was his nature, his lord, his custodian, his predestination. He was conformed by it and to it, an unwilling slave of a tyrant master. Sin had slain him, he was dead, in death; it was in him. First it had been a death he did not know, now it was a death he did know, or thought he did, but how to get rid of it or get out of it he did not know. O what a death.

In this conscious state of death he existed for many years, groaning over his wretchedness and crying out for a deliverer, thinking there was no way out and becoming harder and harder as time went on. When he met the Church he found a company of men and women who had discovered the secret that had eluded him, and he hated them for it. Brooding over his condition and refusing to believe the gospel, his zeal reached fanatical proportions, and he sinned yet more; breathing out threatenings and slaughter, full of bigotry, blasphemy and blood lust, he worked out a plan to destroy all the Christians and stamp out Christianity in his lifetime. Fanatically he threw himself into a frenzied extermination programme. He was so convinced he was right, that he actually achieved the remarkable distinction of living with a clear conscience towards God, at the same time being a murderer of men and a hater of Jesus Christ, so dead was he. But in various ways the Lord began to deal with him, gradually goading him along, till, in his wretchedness, he cried out within himself for deliverance from himself. Conflicts and contradictions raged within him, confusing all his thoughts, but all to no avail. He was the embodiment of sin and hated himself for it; but he had committed himself and, filled with pride, he went rushing blindly on in total ignorance of salvation and what it was about. But Christ loved him none the less, and one day came in mercy to him and shone upon him. He was blinded, the light was so intense. He fell to the ground, his body was laid in the dust, he could eat no food, he was incarcerated in darkness, he was brought to death. It was a terrible experience. Physically he was still alive, but he did not know what was happening to him or when it might end; all he could do was pray and cry out to God. His state was dreadful, unforgettable, so were his prayers; they were heart cries, that was all. He had no difficulty in recalling them, they were all much about the same, pitifully full of ignorance and despair. To him it seemed his body was full of death; he knew he was a dead man. 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' he cried; perhaps he was still saying it when the Lord delivered him.

Like Unto His Glorious Image

When Ananias laid his hands on him, all the raging turbulence within Paul ceased at once and for ever. He received into himself the Holy Spirit and, by Him, the spirit of Christ, which could not be imparted by Him in the days of His flesh. Thereby He brought His death, the complete works and effects of it, to Paul, to his whole spirit, soul and body. It was profound. Paul became a new man. The Lord did not bring His bodily death to him, He brought and applied the effects and accomplishments of it to him: the man Paul still lived. Christ brought in to him that death which He accomplished for him while yet breathing in the body of His flesh on the cross, His own personal death to sin on behalf of man. To Paul it was as final in the spirit/soul

realm as physical death is in the bodily realm, and more permanent. Short of physical death it was as the commencement of a new life to Paul. Christ's death was a great personal triumph, but not just for Himself, He died for others also: for everyone who was to be a partner with Him of His life and a member of His spiritual body. That death therefore had to be made available to them. For this, God sent the Holy Spirit, for He is the Spirit of the life which was in Christ Jesus while here in the flesh (as well as in eternity) enabling Him to live on earth dead to sin. He came because He had to, there was no other way we could be made members of the same body (in which He wrought the miracle) and live and walk in the same element in which He lived and walked. Jesus was the man of the Spirit, He lived entirely in the Spirit, physically and spiritually, and His physical body was the medium in which He wrought the miracle for His spiritual body of many human members. If any man saw the truth of identification and unification with Christ it was Paul. He saw the fundamental necessity of it, both for God and for man. He also fully realized that, apart from these things, the whole plan of redemption would not have been proposed, for it could not have worked; redemption is set upon and proceeds from identification and unification of Christ's people with Himself. The whole idea of substitution, necessary as it was, had to resolve itself into identification or all would fail. Substitution teaches 'instead of me', identification declares 'as me'. Paul saw, that as Christ had accomplished everything as a whole and at once, every basic thing had to be done in him as a whole and at once also — not piecemeal. He understood why human beings were made as they were, and fully grasped the deeper meanings and desires of God which underlay the words of God spoken in the beginning, 'let us make man in our image after our likeness'. Everyone, and everything to do with each one's salvation throughout the whole of life here and hereafter was proposed, conformed and predestinated by one person and one act in eternity and we all were justified into that pre-arranged and prepared position.

Paul's failure had lain in the fact that, being unregenerate, laws contrary to the law of his mind were working in his members, warring against him. He had thought and wished and willed good, but the members of his body did otherwise; they seemed to have a will of their own. Powers not under the control of his mind were working in him, in his mind, in his body, throughout his whole system, in his mind particularly; all nature was under sin's dominion. There was a law operating in all his members which he could neither change nor control; he was corrupt through lust. He realized that the body must be brought to a death. For this reason, and to do this thing, Christ comes into us. He broke the power of the law of sin and death, which would have dominated over his will in His own body, and because He wants our bodies to be conformed to His body He comes into us to bring all those contrary powers and activities in our members to death. In love and holiness He makes us partake of His essential death, the greater one, so that being planted together in the likeness of His death, we should be also of His resurrection.

The Great Man that He was, He had to become as mere man and be raised from the dead by the glory of the Father; the Spirit of life quickened His dead body because of His and the Father's righteousness. He had to be raised because He had conquered sin. It would have been sin if He had not been raised — He deserved it. In us the death of Christ and the quickening of the Spirit work together. Christ's death to sin must permanently abide and work in us; if that death did not operate in us sin would work in our members instead. In the same way, because of righteousness, the Spirit must abide in us also, for it is He who brings to us the Spirit of Christ who operates in us

this same law of liberty from sin and death. It is only right that all who will have the death to work in them should have the life too, otherwise it is impossible to be and to do righteousness. This is the only way a person can be kept free from sin; this is that death into which we are baptized and buried and planted. Like everything else of major significance in spiritual life it is a two-way experience — we are baptized into it and it is baptized into us.

IV

THE SPIRIT OF WITNESS

'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost'. Chapter 9 verse 1.

God is Spirit.

Paul continues 'that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren ...'. These are the words of a true intercessor. Paul was a man called to highest office, (walking in the Spirit and after the Spirit as he said) a man who had the spirit of Christ and was full of assurance. Earlier he had spoken of the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and O what a vital ministry of the Spirit this is; without it none can know that he or she is born again. But here he is speaking from the opposite point of view, that is, from the viewpoint of the Spirit. Life eternal for every individual derives from two positions, man's life in God and God's life in men. Every one must be able to speak in both terms — saying 'the Spirit is in me and I am in the Spirit'. Both these positions and consciousnesses are equally important, one is God's, the other is mine. A man's conscience must have witness in the Holy Spirit as well as the Spirit's conscience bearing witness in him. The conscience of the Spirit rings true when He cries 'Abba Father' in a man. He does so with clearest of conscience when that man is made a righteous and holy child of God, in other words regenerate. The Spirit's conscience is exercised in this matter; He has to be absolutely right and true about it in view of and in full knowledge of the standard demanded by the work and agony and sacrifice of Christ on the cross by the Father; the Spirit must be absolutely right. If His conscience is right He will witness with(in) a man's spirit that he is truly a son of God. Corresponding to that, a man's conscience must bear him witness with(in) the Holy Spirit on every matter. Unless a man's conscience is right his spirit is not right — something is wrong and unless corrected will go radically wrong.

At this point Paul is drawing attention to a ministry of the highest importance, though perhaps not always recognized as such. We are being presented here with the true relationship which exists between the Holy Spirit and the sons of God. The consciousness of the Spirit in me and the consciousness of I myself in the Spirit is another way of saying, 'in the mouth of two witnesses every word may be established'. Here Paul is facing us with it at highest levels of spiritual life and function. Here then is the position: The spirit crying in me bears witness to me that I am a son (and that is wonderful beyond words) and the Spirit groaning in me is preparing me to be an intercessor: if possible that is a more wonderful thing still. What a wonderful thing it would be if every man's conscience bore him witness in the Spirit that he was an intercessor. If this is so in any man he is a son of God in very truth, ministering in the very Spirit of God at the highest possible level of spiritual life and function. Half way through chapter eight Paul begins to prepare his readers for the introduction of these

things, revealing the reason why God makes us His sons, sending the Holy Spirit into our hearts crying out unto Him. The whole creation is groaning and travailling in pain together, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. Paul was groaning too. He realised that with all that he had, he had only the firstfruits of the Spirit and he groaned for that which he did not yet have; he wanted the full harvest. But he did not want only that — he was not so selfish, he wanted God to have His full harvest. Paul wanted the fulness of the gentiles to be brought in, he wanted his kinsmen according to the flesh to be saved — all Israel. He realised why he had been saved; he lived for this, worked for it, felt for it — crying out and groaning within himself to God he became an intercessor. He realised that both the Son and the Spirit are intercessors and he became one with them.

Intercession — the Most Vital Ministry.

It is most arresting that this passage on the person and work of the Spirit should end with this emphasis, but it is not strange. There is no mistaking the implications of all his teaching thus far; there is no escaping the feeling that all of it was with purpose to this end. The soul that has attained to this place has reached the highest peak of human possibility; this is none other than the very summit of spiritual life and ministry to which Christ Himself has attained. Surely it must be regarded by everyone who knows it that this is the most wonderful thing of all — that a human being's experience should be paralleled with the heavenly ministry of Christ. Can there be anything as great as this? Certainly there can be nothing greater: this is the zenith of Paul's revelations of God's will for us in Christ, and he exults at the prospect; 'If God be for us who can be against us?' He says. Here there are no possible enemies; there can be no opposition from anyone to the soul who enters into the ministry of an intercessor. Paul is utterly convinced of this, and goes on to say that, having not spared His own Son but having delivered Him up for us all, God cannot help but freely give us all things with Him. There is no reason why He should not do so, having justified us; no one can charge us with sin, nor can we be condemned, for Christ who died and rose again is even now at the right hand of God making intercession for us; moreover, He loves us with a love so strong and true that we cannot be separated from it. What wonderful news this is, and how reassuring. It not only assures our hearts of Christ's faithfulness; it also prepares us for this real business of life, viz. intercession. It is one thing to stand before God uncondemned without being charged with one single sin and to know what it is to be loved with such love and feel absolutely secure, it is quite another thing to possess all the things possible to men by God's generosity, and to seek to ensure that others possess them also.

Paul put it very finely when he wrote these words, 'that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God'. By virtue of our new birth we are heirs of God, which means that, to some degree, we cannot fail to have some sort of inheritance from Him; but we need to remind ourselves that we are not only heirs; we are joint-heirs with Christ, a far greater and more astonishing concept altogether. Surely this indicates God's free provision of all things for us in the same degree of love and fulness in which He gave them to His Son Jesus Christ. He being the firstborn of the family inherits the double portion, but, unlike the practice common to human families, in God's family the double portion is not allocated solely upon that condition; it cannot be. Among humans the double portion was given to the firstborn because he needed it: upon the decease of his father, to him fell the honour and responsibility of

providing for his mother and other dependants, hence the double portion. From his father therefore he received both his own portion and the portion of certain specified others; this constituted the double portion. However, if his mother was dead, or if there were no other dependants, he was that much more wealthy. But quite obviously this could not be so with Christ, for neither his father nor his mother died. Strangely enough to the human mind, and as if to deliberately break the human pattern, it was Christ who died, not the Father or the Holy Spirit, through whose ministry the Father begat the Son into humanity. The allocation of the double portion was therefore made upon different grounds from those that applied among men; it had to be.

Jesus Christ, God's heir, rose from the dead because He was perfect. It was absolutely impossible for death to hold Him; death could not have dominion over Him because He was sinless and righteous. When He died, He did so for mankind in order to destroy mankind's father — the devil. Having secured that for all God's family, He received the double portion from God His Father as a reward of merit. He was the firstborn of all His Father's children which were to be born from the dead in His wake. He therefore earned the double portion by the perfections of all He was and did, (chiefly because of the uniqueness of His combined manhood and Godhead); fittingly He received the portion of God and the portion of man — He is worthy. Already He has entered into the abundance into which we cannot enter until the great adoption takes place. Yet by grace, being glorified with Him, we are made joint-heirs with Him also.

Joint Heirs With Christ.

This joint heirship, shared by all the sons with Him, is not only by generosity of God, it is the portion as of right due to their birth. It cannot be overstressed that regeneration is the key factor in everything to do with man's relationship to God. All depends upon that; everything, absolutely everything, flows from it. To be born of God is the most critical, as well as the most wonderful event that can ever happen to a man; there is nothing else equal to it in all eternity, whether it be in the experience of God the begetter or of man the begotten.

A person's regeneration is the most poignant experience to God; whenever it takes place He is reminded of His own greatest heartbreak. It cannot fail to do this, because it is a reminder almost amounting to a re-enactment of the death and resurrection of His Son, and there has been nothing throughout the length of time or of eternity that has ever equalled the intensity of suffering God endured then. Both Father and Son found Golgotha almost beyond possibility. Because of sin, Jesus had to go so far out and away from His God and Father at Golgotha; He became so changed and estranged from Him that God had to beget Him again from the dead. Father had to raise Him by His own spirit; all His powers and energies, the almightiness of the Eternal, were all concentrated there; they had to be or it would have been the end; it was the crisis of the ages. Golgotha — all the events that surrounded it — cost God everything, but it bought for us the opportunity of personal redemption and regeneration, and for Him the ability to beget sons; that is why He did it: He commenced by begetting His own. When Christ was raised from the dead it was as if a mighty baptism of spirit had taken place. He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father; it was a mighty visitation and operation by the Spirit of God: He called it generation. It was by God's spirit and of God's spirit and in God's spirit; that is the only way spiritual generation can be achieved. Generation is not accomplished by God's wish or thought or desire

or will or power, it is accomplished according to all these and only in accordance with them, but not by them. Generation is actually achieved only by God's action; God Himself, all of Him, has to do it. All He is, all three persons, and all He has, must be engaged for the act of generation; it requires total involvement.

The inclusive pronoun used by God of Himself when about to generate man in the beginning is indicative of this all-inclusiveness: 'Let us make man'. No less for the generation of the Son of Golgotha, or the sons of Golgotha later — God in His entirety is involved and in this; joint-heirship with Christ begins. By the blessed baptism which baptizes men and women into Christ, into His death and burial and resurrection, they are constituted joint-heirs with Christ in that — by this and this alone — they share with Him in His dual nature. Like Christ, though to a much lesser degree, each one so baptized becomes a son of God, being born of God a dual spirit, he has the spirit of God and the spirit of man. Though distinct and distinguishable within him, those two spirits are fused into one, generating (in this case regenerating) him a new man from the dead. This is the spiritual baptism that makes a dead man a living man, a sinful man a holy man, a carnal man a spiritual man, a son of man a son of God, because it is the baptism in the Spirit of God. Such a man is both earthly and heavenly, of human nature and partaking of divine nature, because he is one spirit with God. It is by this duality of being, nature and person that he becomes a joint-heir with Christ. This is the beginning of his glorification. Just as Jesus, the Son of Man and of God, was glorified on earth, so is every other man who is born a son of God changed from glory to glory on the earth. Even so, we shall never have the measure of glory and honour that He has, nor do we wish to have it, for it is His alone; we are only very grateful that He should share it with us; we want Him to be honoured and glorified and magnified above all, and by all the determination of our hearts, as well as by the will of God, He shall be, for ever.

The Spirit of Adoption.

In anticipation of this we already have the Spirit of adoption in us, given to us by God, that we human beings may have a spirit of adoption, that is to say a spirit which is looking forward in an attitude of expectancy to being manifested as sons of God in the future. At that time the redemption of the body, which miracle we and the whole creation now groans for and awaits, will take place. The early Church had the opportunity of much clearer understanding of this than we have today, for the earliest followers of Christ had a very plain demonstration of it, namely the ascension of Christ. Faithfully those saints who witnessed this carried it forward with them and laid it in the foundation of faith for all the churches. The revelation of Jesus Christ to them, and all the truth they had learned, would have been incomplete without this; even as the crucifixion and burial of Christ would not have been sufficient unless there had been a resurrection, so the resurrection would have been incomplete without the ascension. The ascension completed that which God began with the annunciation to Mary of the Lord's birth. The human form He assumed then, He took back to heaven and God, from whence it originally came, having been formed from God's seed via the virgin by the Spirit. It was logical and right that Christ should do this, for that body was God's; it was the body of God the Son. Besides this, to a degree the observers of the event could not have imagined, it was basic in the plan of redemption that He should do so. Unless that body had been 'adopted' from earth to heaven, we could never have believed or have entertained any possibility of hope that the bodies of other men could be adopted.

The hearts of those disciples who watched Him ascend from the Mount of Olives into the clouds must have been filled with an amazement as unexpected as it was unpredicted. Nothing that they had previously witnessed led them to expect this. Would there ever be an end to the stream of wonders and miracles associated with Him? They knew His body had undergone an amazing change through death and resurrection, and was now capable of things previously impossible to Him, and certainly beyond the powers of ordinary mortals. But visible bodily ascension! What next? Upon reflection later, when understanding had dawned upon them, and being in possession of greater revelation, they saw much more wonderful and exciting truth associated with the miracle than they had been able to grasp that day. That body, which had been brought into the world and given up to God for sin and the redemption of mankind, had itself been redeemed by God. God did not allow His Holy One to see corruption; He raised that glorious man from the tomb and received ('adopted') Him, spirit, soul and body, back to Himself in heaven and enthroned Him there. He is the ever-living Man, established at God's right hand to make intercession for every other man who comes to God by Him. The salvation He mediates is uttermost. That which He has entered into is limitless in its fulness; it lies beyond the last veil. The Spirit of adoption within all God's children, witnessing with their spirits, crying Abba Father within each one, is the earnest of uttermost redemption. When the time has come and the trumpet blows and Jesus shall descend from heaven with a shout, the great adoption shall take place. Men and women of Christ's election will ascend from wherever they are on earth to heaven just as He did from the Mount of Olives. Their bodies will be changed to resurrection bodies and adopted straight to heaven without passing through the grave. Those saints whose bodies have passed into the grave or into the flames, or have been eaten by men or beasts or some other creature, or have vapourised, as the case may be, will be given new resurrection bodies, and immediately caught up in the air, but those who remain to the Lord's coming will know the wonder of adoption. They will not know resurrection, for they will not die, but their bodies will be changed into resurrection bodies as Christ's was, and they will be adopted as He was. All this is yet in the future for us, but as a bodily experience it is in the past for Him; spiritually though it is in the present, He is still the same Jesus, and it is in this spiritual truth and power and life that He now intercedes for us in heaven, ministering to His Father and to us on earth.

The Spirit Maketh Intercession.

The Lord wants us to enjoy to the full that degree of inheritance which is possible to us down here on earth; joint-heirship with Christ in heaven entitles us to it. The fulness of it lies beyond the adoption, but, having the Spirit of adoption, we enter into a great measure of it here and now. This is why He is now interceding. He intercedes for us so that He may mediate to us the things for which He intercedes. At the beginning of our new life these things may be entirely different from the things for which we ask, because we do not understand very much about spiritual life and are entirely ignorant of how to pray. We are frankly told here that we know not what we should pray for as we ought; we know we ought to pray, but for what or about what we should pray nothing is said. Many voices press in upon us, giving us much advice or showing us many duties in this realm, but these are not always correct — sometimes but not often. In view of obvious personal need, the tendency of beginners is to be self-centred in prayer, and the more so as realization of great discrepancies between ourselves and others, and what we are and what we ought to be, becomes apparent to us. This is why the kindly Lord tells us that, to them that love God and are

called according to His purpose, all things work together for good. This does not always appear to be true; so often prayers go unanswered, many of the things and situations and people about which folk pray seem not to alter, although much prayer-effort be expended upon them. It is wonderfully comforting then to be cast back upon the thought that we do love God, and be assured that all things do work together for good because of that. We all have to learn that our good does not depend upon our prayer success, but upon God's love and power and understanding and provision. This is not to suggest that God does not want us to be effective in prayer, He does; it really does matter that we pray, but in the Holy Spirit we must learn to pray according to the Spirit of intercession within.

Every child of God must believe and learn first of all that prayer is a spiritual exercise. Prayer must be of the spirit and mind of man in the Holy Spirit of God. When a man first prays he says prayers he has either learned from someone else or has made up himself. Such prayers, however good and beautiful, however nicely put together and reverently said and sincerely meant, are only words, they are not prayer. Everyone must learn prayer before they say prayers of any sort, whether these be extempore and spontaneous or ritualistic or repeated from a book, even if that book is the Bible; prayer does not consist in words, it is the engagement of the spirit of man with God. Prayer is communion, prayers are communication; that they may go together is both true and possible, even probable, but by no means certain. Prayer is exchange of feeling according to spiritual knowledge between man and God, it is based upon the relationship which exists between them and the sense of compulsion felt by that man — he knows he ought to pray. If a man spontaneously responds to that urge and sense of duty within him, he will soon learn prayer, for these twin feelings or sensings of the soul are the conscious recognition of needs and abilities generated by the Spirit in his spirit. This feeling in the soul of God's child is a spiritual awareness which is one of the firstfruits of the Spirit, an indication of His presence and working in the life; it must be treasured and allowed to develop. It must also be obeyed, that is, responded to, or else prayer will never be learned or properly exercised. Paul, in his usual masterly way, has the right word for this, 'yield', 'yield yourselves', 'yield your members'; prayer can only be learned by the person who is yielded.

Yieldedness in an intelligent human is an attitude arising from the correct spiritual condition of that man's spirit. Between man and God it is a fixed attitude of love and trust; it presupposes total response, utter given-ness and eager spontaneous co-operation with Him for the sheer delight of it. Only as this is recognized and welcomed will the Spirit believe He is wanted, and feel free to continue His work of conforming us to the image of Christ. Prayer is absolutely essential to this; just saying prayers can hinder it. Who among us can tell what are the right requests to make, or what form of address should be used or what particular details ought to be mentioned concerning conformity to God's Son? Not the educated mind, but the feeling, groaning inner self brought to spiritual awareness, is the only source of prayer recognized by God in the human being; God's Son, the greatest of all human beings, is the perfect example of this. In the greatest prayer-battle of His life He said very few words at all, and none of them were learned from the writings or teachings of men. He did not despise the words or literary works of others, He read them and learned them and sometimes quoted them, but never in prayer; prayer, to be prayer, must be original to the person who is praying at the time he is praying.

So it was with Jesus in Gethsemane; He had one thing on His heart, He was under compulsion and had no illusions about it. He expressed it in words, but it would not have mattered if He had not; His prayer was His entire involvement in and identity with the will of God. The proof of this was the total presentation and prostration of Himself to the Father, and His concentration of self without distraction upon the inward awareness of God's will for Him. The feelings of His soul, combining with that knowledge, culminated in groanings and agonisings that affected His whole body, so that sweat dropped from Him like blood falling to the ground; this was so exhausting that, at the end, angels had to come and minister to Him. His prayers were uttered with the barest minimum of words, thrice repeated into the ground. But He prayed! O how He prayed. His spirit prayed, His soul prayed, His body was taken over for prayer - HE prayed. God said that of Paul - 'Behold he prayeth'. Paul knew prayer right from the beginning of his spiritual life, and what he learned then became fundamental to everything in his life and ministry. When he wrote much later to those Ephesians who were faithful in Christ, he included two prayers in his epistle; both are gems. They are also almost the briefest examples of prayer possible to imagine: undoubtedly ensamples of his method, as well as marvellous utterances of truth. They could not be better described than by some of his own words to the Romans: 'My heart's desire and prayer ...'. They are certainly that. All his prayers are the desires of his earnest heart, mightily affected by and wrought upon by the Spirit.

Paul was such a mighty intercessor because he felt with God for men. To be a pray-er, the man must be the prayer. He, his whole self, must be in the Spirit waiting upon God, for prayer is God in a man praying to God in heaven. Surprising as this may seem, this is precisely true. Until this is understood, the right conditions of prayer have never been established in the life of a man, and he can never be an intercessor. Prayer, intercessory prayer, is intensely spiritual, it is wholly of spirit. The Spirit maketh intercession for us — that is, He intercedes as in our name as well as for our needs, and does so by identifying with our spirit. Christ completes the work by making intercession at the right hand of God for us. These two intercessors in the Godhead engage with each other in the joint business of making us true sons of God according to the pattern Son, that we may be presented at last to the Father, perfectly conformed to the image in His heart. That image He holds there is of ideal sons, dearly beloved and longed for, and it was for these that He sacrificed His only begotten and well beloved Son. Now these many sons are sons of His love, of His own Spirit begotten, and every one of them is born of the agonies of God in the Son, which actual agonies we cannot enter into — they were exclusively His. Yet, for the birth and perfecting of His other sons, it seems that God wishes to share something of His pains with those who will bear with Him.

Not every one who is born of God understands this, or believes this is possible; these further reaches of prayer are unknown to them. They want the joys of salvation, the pleasures and praises of grace; they enjoy being in the kingdom of heaven, and exult in the benefits and luxuries which abound in God's realm, but they do not enter into the more private experiences of God, or know the purposes and exercises of His Spirit. This is a great tragedy, and an utterly irreplaceable loss, both in the individual and to the Church. Such persons can never become intercessors unless they become aware of this and take steps to remedy their mistake. Every one must allow himself or herself to be led by the Spirit into this truth of intercession in the Spirit; they must discover what this is and what it is for. Before we examine this, it will be of great use, even if it is not an absolute necessity, to trace the steps whereby a man or a woman is

led to intercession, remembering that intercession is a purely voluntary ministry. No person will ever be forced into it. Even though it is the will of God for all His children, unless a person wholeheartedly co-operated with the Spirit of it, God cannot and does not make him an intercessor. Intercession has to be made, it does not automatically take place; it will spring up spontaneously though, in the heart of every one who will yield to God for the purpose. That settled, everything else will follow as of law; the important thing to remember is that we must be led by the Spirit, otherwise it is unattainable. He will lead us into intercession as truly as He led Christ all the way to the place of intercession, which place He has filled to this day.

The Way to a Life of Intercession.

The steps by which a man becomes an intercessor are these:

1. He must be born of God Himself. The proof that this has taken place is that he will have received into his heart the Spirit of adoption, crying 'Abba, Father' within him. This is very necessary and fundamental to all the Spirit's future works or ministries in a man.
2. He must have the spirit of Christ; the only proof of this is that the man has a Christ-like spirit. Other than that, the fundamental change of spirit necessary to sonship has not taken place, and except this has happened no man can live the life of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit will not cry 'Abba, Father' unless the Son of the Father has come, lest a man copy and repeat the cry, and it be false.
3. He must live by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus in order to be free from the law of sin and death. The new son of God has to live and walk in this world according to human / divine law, and he cannot do that if he is the victim of warring elements; it is not possible to live a divided life and be an intercessor. If a man is constantly struggling against his own bondage to sin he is not able to intercede for others, despite the fact that he may wish otherwise; he will be, because he must be, concerned about himself.
4. He must be after (Gr. 'down to') that is, concentrated upon, the Spirit. The walk in the Spirit requires all a man's attention; he must observe the Spirit's movings and ways; for this he must have the mind of the Spirit so that he may give his mind to this. No man can go after the Spirit if he is in two minds about it. The intercessor must be spiritually-minded and not carnally-minded. If a man minds his flesh and not the Spirit, his spirit will become concerned with and give its energies to the satisfying of his flesh; he cannot do otherwise.
5. He must know the effectiveness of the death of Christ in his mortal body so that it is brought to death; that is, rendered unresponsive to sin. Because of Christ's righteousness a man's spirit is alive, but it is not the source of that life; the Spirit of Christ in his spirit is the source of his life. He is not Christ, he has the spirit of Christ and in consequence is the image of Christ in spirit. By reason of this his body must be put to death; he must die very personally to the law and principles and workings of sin. The law of sin must be broken and replaced by the law of the life of Christ; the principle of sin must be neutralized and replaced by the principle of righteousness; the workings of sin must be stopped and expurgated from the body, and its members re-energized by the power of God. This is the mortal body's resurrection, called here quickening, which is to say, life-giving. This is the body's original purging, the initial

death and resurrection by which men are made sons of God. This is the way God makes men free from sin, free from its dominion, free from its law, free from its principle and free from its workings in spirit, soul and body. By this a man is initiated into the life that, in the heart of God, is begotten unto intercession. Each one granted this experience is a possible intercessor, and if he perpetuates his freedom he will speedily become one.

This regeneration is completely comprehensive; it encompasses the whole man throughout the whole of his life on this earth in his present human estate, for it is entirely of God. But a man must not rely upon an initial experience to keep him in the state to which that experience brought him. The death by which sin was brought to an end in him was the death of Christ; this must be followed up by his own dying to sin constantly. Christ was dead to sin in all states of His existence on earth. He did not die to end sin in Himself, He died to bring it to an end in others. He died to sin once; as far as He was concerned He did not need to keep on dying to sin as do others, for He was dead to it all the time. The death He died was the death of sin for us; on our behalf He rendered it powerless, that is, as dead, so that it should not have part with us or have dominion over us. Having appropriated this to himself, a man must then know the continuing death of Christ; he must, through the Spirit, mortify (that is bring into death) the deeds of the body. Unless this is done he cannot live the life into which he was brought. In order to live the life that God calls life, that is, to be alive unto God, a man must be alive in spirit and in mind and in body.

6. He must be led by the Spirit. Granted that these first five steps have been taken, this one should not be difficult. The phrasing of this verse surely indicates that the viewpoint here is chiefly retrospective. Although it implies following, this word is not used because its true emphasis is 'having followed' up till now, to this point. It embraces the past, 'having been led', it includes the present, 'being led', it indicates the future, 'being continually led'. In terms of the exposition so far, Paul is saying this is how the Spirit leads, by these steps, and if you have followed Him, this is the kind of life you have; in spirit, mind and body you are free from sin and the flesh; you are spiritual, not merely spiritous. With unmistakable voice and undeniable intention he is telling us that only he who is led by the Spirit in this way, with these results, is a son of God.

7. He must be led in the liberty of the nobility into which all God's sons are born, and be without fear. The Spirit leads by impulsion rather than by compulsion. For the sons of God the 'must' of God is within a man's spirit; it is 'I must', not 'you must'; each son must know glorious liberty, or he will never be an intercessor. Unless he has liberty to choose, he cannot be an intercessor as Christ is an intercessor; everything must be voluntary, even though at times to do God's will may cost him sweat like drops of blood. Being granted ability, a man must know liberty also; men who are slavish in mind, because they are bondslaves in spirit and habit-bound in body, cannot take position as intercessors. Although a man may know of it, and desire it, being aware of its fruits and rewards and coveting its power, no soul in bondage is free enough to intercede. Pray in hope it may and ought, but intercede it may not, because it cannot. A man must know he is neither in sin nor in death, nor in the flesh nor in debt to the flesh, nor in any way in bondage to the flesh, nor in fear about any of these things or their power — he is God's free man. This is what the advent of the Spirit of adoption into his heart testified unto when He came crying His cry, authorizing the spirit of the man into whose body He came to cry it also.

These are the seven steps of the way along which the Holy Spirit leads to that highest and most blessed ministry unto which He Himself has been sent from the Father. Like Christ, on whose heels He has followed and with whom He is one, He has come to this earth under commission from the Father; He is the great helper. Primarily His present work is that of co-operation. He is here to assist the Father to bring forth His sons; the Father begets them, the Spirit bears them. Everyone of God's children must know and be able to say, as Christ the Son knew and was able to say, that he has come from God and goes to God.

It is not the intention of God to debar His sons from having some share in the bringing forth of His children. They cannot take part in their own birth, nor can they have any part in the actual birth process of others; each one has to be born from on high directly from God, as Jesus said. Nevertheless God grants all His children who will accept the privilege, the honour of sharing in the exercises of His Spirit as the hour of another's birth approaches. There is no birth without travail; there must be labour pains or birth pangs; no child has ever been born without causing sorrow to its mother. Jesus said a woman when she is in travail has sorrow, and as it is in the flesh, so it is in the Spirit. This is law in nature, whether it be human or divine, and it is in association with this law that the ministry of intercession has come into being. Intercession, in its highest form, is travail, the labour pains which precede birth. To have this knowledge is vital and instructive to the would-be intercessor. It is most impressive for any man to enter into an understanding of why the Spirit of God has led him this way, and to realize that his own personal blessing was not the only thing God had in mind.

When the craving for self-benefit dies in a man, he has reached a place of usefulness to God which he may never have dreamed of, save in his moments of most daring hope. One of the most wonderful things and highest compliments ever spoken about Christ was said by someone standing by His cross, 'He saved others, Himself He cannot save'. Nothing truer was ever spoken of Him. Others: always He thought of others. Others must be saved; it did not matter about Himself. He didn't care what happened to Him in the immediate. He was safe, and in His security He spent Himself entirely for others. The Holy Spirit can never forget that. He came from the Father through Jesus Christ, bent upon doing the Father's will, with this same concern and purpose of the spirit of Jesus Christ about Him — others; and when He enters the spirits of men to be the Spirit of sonship in them, He speedily imbues them with this desire, and sets about educating and leading them on to the fulfilment of it within themselves.

All Creation Subject to the Yoke of Bondage

For a long, long time before He came to earth the Lord Jesus had looked upon the condition of creation and had heard the cries of God's creatures; He felt their pain and knew their travail. They did not know this, nor were they aware of Him or of the reason why they travailed, and when He came, and left, rejected, the condition continued, and does so to this day. The whole creation (those that have the firstfruits of the Spirit and those who do not) is in pain, travailing night and day, groaning to be delivered. The deliverance is different in each case; in that of the sons of God, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, the deliverance is bound up with the redemption of the body, the adoption timed by God to take place then. In the second case, the creation is set free from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. When the day of adoption arrives God will manifest His sons by

raising them from earth to heaven; the expectation of deliverance for which creation groans and travails lies beyond this.

All it will be and what it will mean for the creation we do not know. At present it is subject to vanity because Adam handed the authority over it to satan in the deadly transaction in Eden. Through the vanity of purpose for which he did it, the curse of God came on the whole creation and as a result satan's dominion over it became, and still is, vainglorious. The reason why God did this was to foil satan's purposes and make his victory hollow. Adam had been given dominion over the whole of the creation; God had made all His works with the purpose of putting everything under Adam's lordship, and had put everything under his feet as planned. It seems very likely that, after creating the first Adam, God's intention may have been to bring in the last Adam, though how He would have done this we do not know — perhaps by a miracle something like or analagous to the virgin birth, by which ultimately He had to be conceived and born.

All must be speculative at this point, but God had both a reason and a hope for subjecting the creation to Adam, and it is certain that His original intentions were frustrated by Adam's fall, but He stepped in with the declaration to satan that the woman's seed should bruise his head. That curse, spoken in the presence of Adam and Eve, though ominous to the serpent, became to them a promise which generated hope in their hearts. Although, by reason of sin, they and all that was subject to them became subject to satan because of Adam's abdication from office, God's determination to redeem the situation and restore everything to conformity to His original purpose remained unchanged — the second man was to be the redeemer, and all God's hopes were fixed on Him; eventually so were the hopes of every pious man and woman on the face of the earth.

Meanwhile sin and death passed to all men, and corruption upon all creation. Somewhere buried deep down in the unconscious realms of being, there lurk unknown, un-nameable powers, shadows of former glories, hopes not recognized as hopes, disappointments, frustrations, desires not known as such, pains, groans, travail for things not known, all of them comprehended and interpreted by God as longings for deliverance from the bondage of corruption, and as a cry for the manifestation of the sons of God. There is a mysterious link between those who are the new creatures of God and the creation. We who consciously recognize our hope wait for the redemption of our bodies according to the Spirit of adoption, who came into our hearts at birth crying to Father for that reason. Those who do not recognize it are waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, though they do not know that even, and cannot be told it. So it is that a great universal groan ascends to God, and the pain of His creation is in His ears continually as this old earth travails its way through to the regeneration and the restoration of all things spoken of by the prophets. The Lord God made this creation that it should be the place where the sons of God should be manifested.

We do not know all the reasons why God made the earth, but we do know that it was not made for the manifestation of the sons of satan. The great delay in God's plan to manifest His sons is for purposes of His own, but, until that day dawns, God has provided that His sons should, in some measure, hopefully in large measure, be in glorious liberty from the bondage of corruption with which the whole creation is held as by law. To be born or to be planted anywhere as anyone or anything in this whole

creation is to be subject at least to the bondage of corruption, or at worst to the law of sin and death, plus the bondage of corruption, which latter came into the creation through sin, and because of death. To some degree everything and everybody in creation is affected by this; everything physical or material is subject to it, including the sons of God, that is, they who are born of the Spirit of God having physical bodies.

All flesh is affected by sin (whether that flesh is human, animal, fish, fowl, vermin or reptile) but not all flesh is infected by sin, for not all animate things are moral intelligences. Those which are not, being amoral, and thus not infected by sin, could not be classified as 'sinners'. Nevertheless all these are affected by it and its results, and are subject to the bondage of corruption which passed upon all things as a logical consequence of Adam's sin. The whole creation, having been placed under the curse, is fallen into this and is subject to it. They did not will to sin, neither did they desire it, there is therefore no condemnation upon them or their activities, but, death having passed upon them, corruption is bound to happen to them. Throughout the centuries since Adam despised and left his sonship, these creatures have awaited the manifestation of the sons of God. They had no choice in their abasement, but if they had the ability to choose at present, these would prefer above all to be ruled over by God's sons and, though in ignorance still, groan for their manifestation and all the blessings that it will bring to them.

How wonderful it will be for them when the curse is lifted and the bondage of corruption shall be broken and death itself shall be banished and never-ending life be brought in. But what of those who are presently the sons of God on earth? Is it possible to distinguish them here and now? Is it plainly manifest now who these persons are, and that they truly are the sons of God, and if so, by what means? These are important questions, needing plain answers. Many things, all of them true and good, could be advanced as being answers or part answers to these questions, but we will not concern ourselves with these, (sound though they may be theologically, doctrinally and evangelically). Instead we will look for the answer which alone might be acceptable to an inquiring universe, if its multitude of voices could only ask us in language we could understand. Although they cannot do that, the substance of the matter over which they are concerned, and which would almost certainly be posed as a question if it were possible, is written down for everyone to read — corruption. Seeing that all want to be free from the bondage of corruption the question would undoubtedly be, 'is anyone in this universe free from the bondage of corruption?'

That is the ultimate test, and to pass it successfully would satisfy every inquiry that could be made from any quarter. To declare justification by faith in the ears or before the eyes or in the presence of things that have no moral faculties and no intelligence is of no use whatsoever; likewise to speak of sanctification or regeneration or the witness of the Spirit would be as fruitless; but to demonstrate liberty from the yoke of bondage would be most convincing. Indeed, if this could be manifested to everyone's and everything's satisfaction, it would be proof to them that all the other things had been achieved for them in this world — the only valid proof. When the bondage of corruption has been broken in a man, and its spread has been stopped in him, he can testify that he is a son of God and expect his testimony to be accepted. When he has been set free from sin and is no longer under its dominion, and sin's deceitful workings have come to an end in him, he is no longer under the bondage of corruption, nor subject to old Adam or his master the devil.

That would be about the only proof this groaning, travailing creation would accept; all creatures would accept that as the final answer; it is as far beyond doubt as is possible to be, for corruption is the one thing that all other intelligent beings share in common with humankind. The state of freedom from sin in a man is not beyond challenge by any other man, but it is not beyond manifestation for all to see and hear and taste and feel and know; and to all who know God it is very wonderful. Freedom from sin and death and corruption is a glorious liberty. But glorious liberty that it is, it is not of equal power or effect in every realm of a man's being. In himself as a whole, that is in spirit, soul and 'moral body', a man can be free from sin and death and corruption, but in his mortal body he cannot be free from the presence and process of death and corruption all the time he is in this world.

Every part, realm or member of the new spiritual being a man becomes by new birth is likened in scripture to its physical counterpart, but should not be thought of too rigidly as only being that. Mind is a member and may be thought of as a part of the inward spiritous or spiritual man (as the case may be) but must not be mistaken for the brain, which is a part of the physical man. Mind operates with spirit in being in a human body to develop soul or personality, having as many members as the body itself, each of them capable of behaving in similar manner spiritually as the bodily counterpart does physically, but without its limitations. This is why the spiritual and mental sins of the human soul are so much more terrible and infinitely worse than anything a man may do in his mortal body.

The Glorious Liberty of the Sons of God.

It is with this in view that the term 'moral body' is here used. In that realm of being, as well as in both spirit and soul, and altogether as being an integrated whole, a man can be free from sin and death and corruption, but not in his physical body. For the total spiritual body there is perfect redemption, but for the mortal flesh itself redemption has not yet been put into effect; for that, we, in common with all creatures, must wait. To those lower orders of being or existence the sons of God are not manifest at all; they cannot enjoy the firstfruits of the Spirit which incorporate freedom from sin and its effects in the soul of man; but before God and among men they should be both manifest and enjoyed to the full. This is the liberty of the glory of the sons of God, whom He glorified as being part of the process of our predestiny, and is clearly pointed out to us as being part of the wonder and fulness of the provision of God's love for us. While still on this earth among all the creatures and things of His creation, even if these are now only a shadow of what they originally were, though they are all ill-conducive to this or actually hostile to us and His purpose in us, we must know and live in this liberty of glory, because this liberty is utterly glorious, and this glory is liberating to the uttermost.

This glory and liberty cannot be known in all its fulness to any earthborn and earthbound man until the mortal body or body of our mortality is redeemed; then we shall be glorified together with Christ, and be given the spiritual bodies it pleases God to bestow upon His sons. Until then, and even after then, we must walk in the likeness of the newness of life with which Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. This glory was the end which God had in view when He purposed and planned and predestinated His Sons long before He set in motion on earth the process by which He should regenerate them. Because He did this through the nature and life and person and blood and death and resurrection of His Son, and by the same Spirit as that

by which the Son was born, all those regenerated are regenerated into sonship; it cannot be any other, they are and have to be sons, the very image of Him. It is because of all these things that the Spirit of intercession has come.

The Spirit leads all God's sons this way, and those who will go with Him shall become intercessors. It must surely be that those first churches of Christ knew and moved in far greater knowledge and understanding of truth and God's will than is commonly found in the churches today. 'We know', says Paul, thereby asserting that what he has to say is not knowledge peculiar to him alone — 'we know'. They all knew of the groaning and travail of the whole creation, but how many individuals, to say nothing of whole churches, really know this, or have any understanding of its meaning? No wonder there is so little intercession going on, and therefore so few sons being born to God. Who can bear them, save those who know travail? The Spirit is the Spirit of travail; He is the one who came on Mary with power that she may both originally conceive and finally travail to bring forth God's Son. Her spirit conceived and her body travailed; she conceived with joy, she travailed with sorrow and pain, and the Son was born; it was a miracle.

The Spirit has come to prepare us all for this, and does so by making us aware of the state of creation. It is absolutely essential that we let the Spirit of God get hold of our spirits for this, for, unless He does so, we shall live in the world in this age and pass from it having been dead and insensitive to its need. O how essential it is that we should be men of the Spirit, having the spirit of Christ, being spiritually alive, and living in the Spirit, that Spirit having borne us and being in us, within our spirit, so that we are in the Spirit and the Spirit is in us. Everything is of and in and by the Spirit, that we thereby should be able to enter into the spirit of things. We must be alive unto God and alive unto the things of spirit. Behind and permeating all this vast creation of visible, material things there is a spirit. It is not a personal spirit as with man, but as surely as all substance has (a) nature, so it has (a) spirit, not individual, not having personality as with spirits of men, but nevertheless real and, en masse, has (a) spiritual impact. Men who speak of the call of the sea, or have sensed that 'something' of the great mountains which defies explanation but is nevertheless very real to them, are aware of spirit-power, though they may not know what it is that affects them. Basically everything is spirit, as shall one day be shown when everything material of this creation, and the elements also, shall be destroyed, and God shall create new heavens and new earth, starting from Spirit again as in the beginning. There must be an identifying of spirit with the Spirit as scripture says; joined to God men become one Spirit with Him, and when the Spirit comes to join with our spirit He becomes one spirit with us and bears witness with our spirit about our sonship.

The Predicament of Translators

Sometimes when reading the scripture and the word spirit is being used, as in this section, it is very difficult to decide to which spirit the text is referring. For this reason the translators of the Authorised Version, though very reliable, obviously found it difficult to interpret the text aright in all cases. Sometimes, where they could not be sure, they drew their own conclusions, in which instances we are left in a measure of uncertainty. In verse sixteen the distinction between the two uses of the word spirit is clear, so the first is correctly given a capital and the second a diminutive first letter, for the first is the Spirit of God and the second is the spirit of man. But in verse ten

the word spirit is wrongly given a capital. The translators, and evidently the publishers and printers, all thought that the word referred to the Spirit of God, and therefore capitalized it; but the word surely refers to the spirit of man made righteous, and therefore alive. As the incoming of Christ by the Spirit renders the body of a man dead in the sense of being freed from the dominion of sinful compulsions and habits, so the spirit of that man is made life or alive from the spirit of death which it formerly was by reason of sin.

Another instance occurs in verse eleven, where the word spirit is capitalized upon both occasions, whereas it is dubious whether it should be rendered so in either. The first refers to him who raised up Jesus from the dead, and that person is the Father, as is made clear in chapter six. It might therefore be more proper or deferential to capitalize the pronoun thus: 'Him', and not the word referring to His spirit. By the same principle, if the word Christ be capitalized, then the pronoun referring to Christ later in the verse should be capitalized also - 'His' - and the word referring to that which is His, written with the diminutive, thus: 'spirit'. This may be a matter of opinion, but it finely illustrates the difficulty facing translators when the word 'pneuma' recurring in the text refers to different individuals, or perhaps even things. Sometimes it plainly refers to the different persons of God, and should therefore be given the capital; sometimes it does not, and occasionally it is difficult to decide to which person or thing it refers, or how to interpret Paul's thinking at that point.

A typical instance of this latter occurs in verse fifteen: 'the spirit of bondage'. In verse fourteen the word pneuma obviously refers to 'the Spirit of God', which is none other than He who is 'the Holy Spirit'; there is no difficulty about that; but turning to the next verse the interpretation of the word is not so clearly arrived at. Twice it is used in the verse; upon the second occasion it is undoubtedly capitalized correctly, but what of the first? It seems easily resolvable that the word does not refer to the Holy Spirit, and should be given the diminutive, but in the light of its use in verse ten, where it indicates the spirit of a man.

From the beginning of the section he has moved into the realm of spirit, God's Spirit and man's spirit; more, he is speaking of the conjoining of these live spirits so that they become one. It is precisely here that grammar fails us, for we have no word to describe this union other than spirit, but whether or not the word should be capitalized, who can say? Should that union be called Spirit or spirit? If it were a union only, the difficulty might more easily be overcome, but more than joining or unifying, this union is unto oneness, 'he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit'. Spirit has power of combination, mixing and integrating and impregnating spirit with spirit — in this case Spirit with spirit. It is this precious unification of spirit so that we can be in and move in the realm of spirit for purposes of intercession.

The Whole Creation Groans.

Intercession is beyond the power of any man who is not in the Spirit; he must be (a) holy spirit in (the) Holy Spirit, and in that holy spiritual union in the Spirit true intercession is made. This spiritual life brings an awareness of things of spirit, a sense of things not in themselves material or physical, yet associated with these things as though they are the spirit of them, so that we speak of the spirit of the world or the spirit of the age. Such expressions as 'the team spirit' are well known among us and mean that, in some cases, the individual spirits of eleven men seem to blend into one

for a common purpose. Yet it is not possible for eleven personal spirits to become one personal spirit; there is no such individual person as the spirit of that team. Undoubtedly though, it is possible to sense the spirit of a team, and become aware, not only of its presence but also of its features and manifestations. Whatever they may be, we become impressed by them because they appeal to our thoughts and feelings and imaginations. We are in, as being part of, this creation, and even though we are in it as new spirit-creatures, aware of a new spiritual creation and part of it, we cannot but be aware of the spirit of this creation; it is inescapable. The importance of this to the son of God cannot be exaggerated; it is crucial to the would-be intercessor, but what is of greater importance is the impression which this spirit makes upon us, and how we interpret it to ourselves. What do we hear, and if we hear, how do we feel about what we hear? Do we hear creation's pain as God hears it? Do we know that it is in travail, and that it is paining to be delivered to this day? It seems we can never be intercessors until we do, for how shall any man intercede for that of which he knows nothing?

Stripped of its glamour, the world of men is striving to produce super-men, a race of godlike men who shall live in peace and luxury on an earth from which war and famine and disease and poverty are banished, one world in which all men are equal. This seems admirable enough, and man's many efforts towards that end — the setbacks they endure, the problems they overcome, the pains they feel, the travails of scientists, politicians, whole countries, the cries of the oppressed and the exploited — to many seem to be hopeful signs of the birth of the new society, so badly needed, shortly to be created by an educated race of new and enlightened men. This, if it came into existence, would be an entirely humanist society, peopled by fools who say that there is no God, sons of men but not sons of God, for He would have been banished from the planet. Men who are given over to this idea hear the groanings of the world, and strive for the golden era, and look for the manifestation of these godlike sons of men; it is the product of the evolution theory they hold so dear.

But the creation, being a creation, cannot groan and travail for an evolutionary myth; it is groaning for the manifestation of the sons of God, not the sons of men. Would that the sons of God heard the cry and interpreted it aright. The cry of the Spirit within, and the cry of the creation without, should be matched by the groans of the new creature in the new creation within himself, so that from the grounds of knowledge and feeling, though not at first with understanding, intercession may spring forth. The new intercessor must learn his art. He must know that intercession is not a matter primarily of words; words may be used, but only as accompanying and expressing spirit. A saying of Jesus will greatly help to enlighten us at this point — 'The words that I speak (unto you), they are spirit, and they are life'. The parenthesis is not in the scripture, but is here inserted to emphasize the truth we need to know. Words, when used in prayer of any description, but especially with intercession, must be with the power of the spirit and the feelings of the soul of the person using them.

It must never be forgotten that, in man, intercession is made by the Spirit of God, with the spirit of man. The Spirit is aware of the groans of the creation, and is in tune with its aims, but before intercession can be made about these in a man, that man's spirit must also be aware of, and in tune with, these groans and aims. Intercession is a joint ministry — firstly between the Spirit and Christ, secondly between the Spirit and Christ's men, that is, men who have the spirit of Christ. As the Spirit of God is the Spirit of intercession, so must the spirit of men be a spirit of intercession, or they shall

never be properly joined in one. When the feelings of God and the feelings of man about the cries of the creation are the same, even though understanding may be at different levels, the main qualification has been gained. So essentially is this a ministry of spirit, that the groanings of this travail are never heard, for they cannot be uttered. There are pains of all kinds in the earth, and groans because of them, but the groans for sons are only audible in heaven. They are beyond the grasp of the mind, being more instinctive than intellectual, and known only by the mind of a man's spirit and not understood by the mind of his intellect, that is, the soul-mind, which is educatable by man.

Intercession - According to the Will of God.

There is another factor which, if not quite so fundamental to this ministry, is also of great importance: all intercession must be made according to the will of God and the mind of the Spirit of God. The Spirit only makes intercession for man according to God, that is, He does not make intercession according to man's ideas or concepts of himself, even if these be in relation to himself and God; these may be far from correct, and totally unrelated to reality. Of himself, a man cannot know what to pray for; that he ought to pray he is fully aware, but for what? There are vast things outside a man's consciousness of which he has no knowledge; he does not even know that they exist, therefore he has no intellectual grasp of them at all. In his own universe man is a babe; he does not know from whence he came and whither he is going. The Spirit has come forth from God with the knowledge he ought to know, that, being taught of God, man should not spend his time, or waste his life, on eternally useless objects and vain and unattainable objectives.

The Spirit knows that the important thing for every man is to be concerned with God's purpose to conform him to the image of His Son. We are to be saints according to God, not according to anything or anyone else, and it is to this objective that the Spirit has come to inspire and conform us. He knows the end in view; He also knows the beginning from which God commenced, from which beginning and end God has never moved. The intercessor must know this too, and move with the Spirit to this end. Man's regeneration is nothing other than the means whereby he is born into this; he must learn that he was predestinated to this by Father, who knew him before he had conscious being or power of choice. Before man knew himself, or what he wanted to be; before he knew God, or to what he was being called, and what God wanted him to be, God decided what he should be, conformed him to it and predestinated him to that end.

This is why God created the earth and formed the universe around it. Whether or not the earth was placed central to it originally, and has been moved off centre now by the will of God because of sin, we do not know. What is certain is that it is at the centre of God's plan for a new creation; it is also the sphere of the Spirit's present operation and activities to bring forth sons of God in this age of its existence. With this purpose God has called men, both to justify them and glorify them, so that His Son should be the firstborn of many sons. When this has been finally accomplished to His satisfaction, His purposes with this earth will be finished. What God did by His own power and will before He called us He did according to His foreknowledge. When He began He already had the end before Him; He needed neither time nor events to instruct Him or force Him to make decisions, or to alter His plans. He was able to plan with full knowledge of everything that would happen, so that nothing should thwart His

original purpose. That mysterious conforming power, so little understood by God's sons, became pre-destiny in them when it began to work in them by the Spirit making them first cry 'Abba, Father', and later groan and travail in intercession.

The intercessor must be cast utterly upon the will of God the Father as was God the Son when here on earth. When facing arrest and the death He knew would so quickly follow, the Lord went to the garden with His remaining disciples to teach them the way of sonship. We do not know whether His prayer was heard by the select three who accompanied Him to the point where He left them and went furthest out to the place from which there was no return, but it is recorded for us by the Spirit, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt'. In His heart Abba, Father, and Father's will were linked — He was a true son. 'Being in an agony He prayed the more earnestly'. The word agony used to describe the Lord's terrible pains, which caused His sweat to drop from Him like spots of blood, is better translated 'the agonies', which could hardly be better interpreted than as being pains, groans, travail, birth-pangs. So, by our great Exemplar Himself, the pattern is set — the cry — the will — the groans. He who searched His Son's heart knew the mind of the Spirit, as well as His own will according to the eternal purpose set from the beginning. There can be no changing the pattern — it was not only fixed in eternity in God, it was also set in humanity when God became flesh.

Intercession is costly. Sons of God cannot be brought forth without pain and groans of the same order, though not of the same intensity as those which the Lord bore and uttered. So great were the Lord's agonies that our spiritual exercises are not worthy, indeed cannot and ought not, to be compared with them; but God, having graciously allowed us, in measure, to partake of these things, draws us on to this most excellent ministry, the highest degree of fellowship of sonship. Intercession is a privilege, it is the handing over of self in co-operation with God for the achievement of His purpose in the begetting and perfecting of sons.

This is the greatest confirmation and highest degree of God's love towards us and our love towards Him, the fulfilment of the marriage spoken of so wonderfully by Paul earlier. By the body of Christ the sons of God have been made dead to the 'body' of law and the body of sin and the body of the flesh and the body of death, so that we should be married to Him who was raised from the dead. The purpose of this marriage is for the fulfilment of love in bringing forth fruit unto God, in the realm of personal holiness, and personal reproduction. Every one thus joined to Him will bring forth after his own kind and in His own image by the same Spirit. This is consummation, personal consummation in this life, leading on and contributing to the consummation of God's purposes at the consummation of the age. Christ wants us to enter into and enjoy all God has to give us in Himself, mediating to us all He has Himself entered into and presently enjoys, that we may share in it with Him. That is the purpose of intercession.

The Spirit Maketh Intercession with Groanings.

Having already mediated to men the Holy Spirit, that by Him He may dwell in us, the Lord Jesus is also able to minister to us all the fruits of His indwelling. Although only the firstfruits of that abundant harvest which we shall later reap, they are ours, and providing we allow the two intercessors to have their way with us, they will be very

wonderful. Both Christ and the Holy Spirit are intercessors by nature and appointment, Christ in heaven and the Holy Spirit in our hearts. All intercession is carried on between these two; apart from them intercession is quite impossible. The Spirit has been given us so that we may be brought into God's purposes in the Church and in the world through intercession. These purposes lie beyond and are in addition to the glorious things wrought by the Spirit in us when He first came to our hearts. These first things the Spirit has to do in us are to create within us the right conditions for intercession, that He may initiate us into the ministry. Besides the basic things already considered, He does this by creating great longings within us for total Christ-likeness. The Holy Spirit cannot be content with having given birth to a Christ-like spirit in us, wonderful as that is; He must develop this into an individual soul in whom God can see and recognize His Son — the very image of Him. This is God's great initial and overall purpose to which we have been called; it can be ours if we walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. Even then it cannot be accomplished unless He who first cried 'Abba, Father' in us, commences also to groan in us.

These inward groanings are as much the result of our ignorance as of our knowledge, they are the living spring of all prayer. By the Spirit's working and crying within we know that we are children of God, and although we may not know it we have been introduced to the prayer-life — it has commenced. This we know, but our knowledge is very limited. Despite all that He has done in us we do not know what we should pray for as we ought. The Spirit's work within us is to create a sense of need and of obligation. We know we can pray and that we both need and ought to pray, but what to pray for specifically we have no knowledge. By this method the Spirit deliberately teaches us that prayer is not words but basic, heartfelt power. Becoming scripturally informed, we learn what God wants us to know, namely that we were both conformed and predestinated by Him before time was, to be born at a certain point in time and formed in the image of the Son. The realization that this is why we were born of His Spirit, and that this is why He cried His first birth-cry in our hearts, is a marvellous thing. However, although this general knowledge is common to all the sons, we do not generally know that this is related to the future ministry of intercession to which we are predestined, and which is based upon it.

Intercession can only become vital in us as the substance of these things is revealed to us step by step as we walk on in the Spirit. The fact that He groans over intercession proves that it is of great importance to Him, as it also must be to us. Groans are a confession, an expression of things baffling to the mind; of feelings that arise from deep concern and inward mental pain for which we can find no words — there are none. Even the blessed Spirit, who knows the glorious Son and the ultimate image of the Son which He hopes to reproduce in each one of us, cannot put it into words. Jesus is glorified, and because the Son is glorified, God has glorified all His sons; it is this wonder of glory in our lives that the blessed Spirit concerns Himself with. The glorious sons are a people liberated from the bondage of corruption which grips the whole creation; it is the privilege of every son of God to be free from it. But being delivered from that does not mean that we have no weaknesses; we have. Many of them are legacies from the past, all of which must be eliminated, so the blessed Spirit applies Himself to the task to which He has been called and sent to accomplish.

The Spirit knows every one of our weaknesses, and to what degree they prevent our lives from being full of glory; step by step He leads us on, progressively dealing with everything, until the ultimate glory be reached. He also protects us from the potential

destruction relating to the particular weakness the next step will expose in us; He makes us face up to what that step may uncover, dealing with it thoroughly as we trust Him to do so. What relief and joy it is to remember at all times that there is no condemnation in Christ, and that there is no need to groan on that account, but simply to rest in the assurance that he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit who groans in us. We do not know what the Spirit thinks about the various weaknesses we have; we just have to trust Him as He makes intercession for us according to His knowledge of us and of the will of God for us, which is complete Christ-conformity. He in heaven and the Spirit in our hearts are joint intercessors, and both are concerned with the same thing, namely perfecting us in the image of God. Jesus left heaven to become conformed to the likeness and image of man; to do this completely He went to the cross and, having accomplished it, He finally dismissed His spirit into His Father's hands. In a way similar to this, we who have the spirit of Christ must now be conformed to the image of God, and must in heart leave this world and be conformed to the revelation of that image as revealed in the man Christ Jesus.

The glory and the groans in our hearts are akin to the glory and the groans of Jesus' heart as He lay on His face in the garden before His Father, and are evidence that the two intercessors are moving and working together to achieve God's ends in us. Prostrating Himself at God's throne that night He groaned His way through His agony to do God's will, and rose to hang on the cross finally for its perfect accomplishment. His own dreadful agonies apart, as it was with Him so it must be with us, and He intercedes for us because we are so ignorant of the way our perfecting shall be accomplished. It is planned on our behalf that, if we will go on with the Spirit and allow Him to work out this purpose of God in us, all things will work together for good in our lives; for this reason we have been called, and this is the way it must work out, for there is no alternative.

Ever Living to Make Intercession.

This constant ministry of intercession in us on God's behalf is for our own personal blessing; parallel with it there is also another branch of ministry to which the Spirit is committed and which ought to be fully functional in each of us, namely intercession for others. This ministry will develop in scope and strength in each of God's children alongside and in accordance with that person's development in conformity to the Son. We may all be sure of one thing, namely that this power of intercession is the surest indication of Christlike-ness; it is the result of growth into His image, 'He ever liveth to make intercession', and because this is so with Him it must be so with us. What a reason for living! Intercession is among the chiefest, if not the very chiefest and most indispensable of the everlasting ministries to which the sons of God are committed. There are many reasons given in scripture (some plainly stated, some obviously implied and others not even referred to at all) why Christ is now living in glory; each of these is vital and necessary, but of them all none is more important than this. We are privileged to be incorporated into it, for it is a highly secret ministry, maintained solely between Jesus Himself with the Father and the Spirit and us. It is absolutely certain that no-one can be conformed to Christ's image if he or she refuses to conform to His present desires by engaging in the ministry for which He lives and to which He is dedicated. He ascended to heaven for this; everything He did on earth prior to His ascension, and His ascension itself also, led Him to this place; intercession is the logical end-time occupation and function to which all His previous work led.

We must be gripped afresh with the knowledge of this: salvation is no more possible apart from His intercession than it is possible without His death and resurrection. Everything He did led to what He is doing, and everything He is doing depends upon what He did; they are a whole. Every function of His, and all His work, is of vital importance to God's overall purpose; each step was carefully planned and executed, and in all of them He was without fault or weakness. How important then is intercession for us as well as for Him; we must not be found at fault or weak in this area. If we stop short of this we fail to conform to His image. Conformity is not cosmetic; we must not seek false beauty by trying to look like Him outwardly. Christ-likeness is not a mask or an outfit (how can we know what He looks like outwardly?); it is by first being as He is and then doing what He is doing, because, with Him, we share God's identical love for others.

The power of the Spirit to resurrect the spirit of man into holiness, and the love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus are the indispensable means of intercession in any man; they prepare and qualify the heart for intercession; let these depart from the heart and life, and intercession, if it had ever begun, will soon cease. Without holiness a man is disqualified from intercession, and without love he has no disposition for it. Love which feels for others with the love and feelings wherewith God loves and feels for them, love which understands and knows that there is little or nothing else that can be done, and realizes that, unless someone intervenes, souls will go to hell, drives many to intercede. Intercession is the outcome of spiritual tuition and intuition, it owes little or nothing to formal education, being less of mind and letter than of heart and love and knowledge of God's will. Contemplation of ultimate alternative destinies is sufficient to fill the heart of sensitive persons with fear or wonder; hell and heaven are inescapable realities to the intercessor. He knows that God commends His love to men and women because they are sinners, and he knows also that, while we were yet sinners and without strength to do anything for ourselves, Christ died for us.

Love is intense feeling, the sovereign virtuous feeling of the heart that makes a person commit the whole being to someone else for that person's good. It is nothing other than the nature and spirit of the God whose heart-feelings for others pour out of Him ceaselessly, evoking words like these, 'He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?' Love can hold nothing back; 'God is for us', all of God is for us, God is all for us, He is for us; what unqualified wonder grips the soul that knows this! No charges can be brought against the soul for whom intercession is made, accusation and intercession cannot live together. Intercession is made for the elect in the purposes of God who has both justified and glorified them; how then can they be condemned? Christ intercedes for them, He died for them, He loves them; love to the death is the love that intercedes. O God give us all that love. When that love grips the heart it becomes the reason for all intercession; the life that is gladly given over to it, opening up to God for all that it means, shall indeed reign in life with Christ.

As in all the precious things he preached and sought to impart to others, Paul was an example of all he taught about intercession. He never sought to impress others with his knowledge, nor did he constantly boast of his experiences, great as they were; he simply lived the life of Christ, and sought to impart that (life) to everybody. So truly did he enter into the Spirit and live in Christ there, that he could speak all those things about which his conscience bore him witness in the Holy Spirit, whether on this

matter or that; specially about the great ministry of intercession. How tremendously great it would be if every one of us could, in all honesty, do the same thing. The immensity of need in the world is so great, all around us the creation is groaning in pain, waiting for this manifestation of sonship. Things would change so radically if only the sons of God grew up to become intercessors after the image and example of Christ. But to those not in the Spirit this is quite impossible. Intercession is an entirely spiritual ministry, it cannot be engaged in outside of Him for it only exists in that realm. Although it may affect both bodily and material conditions (as for instance when it is accompanied by fastings) it only functions in the spirit of a man abiding in the Spirit of God. Seeing that it consists basically in the groanings of the Spirit, they who engage in it must live in the same state of spiritual holiness and love and power as He, and share like feelings of heart with Him.

Intercession — God's High Calling.

Paul, an experienced intercessor, mentions some of these here: great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart; so powerful and real were these to him that he was able to enter into the sense of terror that would grip souls when, perhaps too late, they realized that they were being cut off for ever from God. This man found himself bordering on a wish to be accursed from Christ for the sake of those for whom he prayed. He completely identified with these people, many of them dear to him, and he prayed for them knowing their needs, and feeling pain to which, most likely, they were dead; feeling God's pains for them too. He knew heart desire, not for himself but for others. To intercede properly the heart of the intercessor must understand, that is to say it must be brought into this state of realization of the heart-needs of others; it must be quite unconcerned about itself to the point of self-forgetfulness. Being assured of his own eternal security in God's love and that he cannot be separated from it, the intercessor can venture out into the further reaches of Gethsemane and Golgotha, where it seems that he himself is threatened with eternal loss.

What greater privilege can be granted a man than this? And what more sure ground can he stand upon? Christ, the heavenly intercessor, was elected for this, and trod this way Himself. Although it would be more than foolish to judge with any degree of finality on this matter, it would seem that in these things Paul went further than any other man. Two of the three men who, at a later date, Paul regarded as pillars of the church at Jerusalem, were chosen to accompany their Lord to Gethsemane's place of prayer, but could go no further than they could drive their weak flesh that day. Jesus went there to become accursed from God for their sakes, while they went to sleep. They did not know of course, nor did He tell them, He only complimented them; their spirit was willing. Perhaps in the great afterwards, of which He had earlier spoken to them, they reached the place of intercession — almost certainly they did — but Paul is the only one who speaks of intercession in the language of one who understood and entered into it. This is the reason why he took such pains to set down the details of the way of life in the Spirit, and to explain the truth. We must come to grips with it. Every man must perfectly understand this, and clearly see the reason why Christ in God, and the Spirit in us, ceaselessly intercede.

How wisely are we led up to this by the Spirit of God. The man who enters into the death and resurrection of Christ by the Spirit of holiness, and is flooded with the love of God, is led by the Spirit to this place of intercession. The heart that knows the constant miracle of death and resurrection working in him becomes aware of a sense

of indebtedness to God for this; the Spirit creates it in him. The very working of the law of the Spirit of life within him is the greatest contributory factor to and the surest guarantee of reaching this high calling, for this law sets a man free from tyrant self and base self-interest, liberating us for the ministry. Except this should be so, no man can exercise an intercessory ministry. Intercession is as far removed from thought of self and self-benefit as is east from west. Intercession arises from identification with the redemptive purposes of God and the need of His creatures around us, ruined by sin and groaning under it. These seem so far removed from each other that it is almost impossible to think that there could ever be any relationship between them. However, the person who has been brought from the groanings of the sin-cursed world into the glorious liberty of the sons of God knows that the relationship between them is a very real one. The suffering, groaning Christ bridged the gulf between God and man, and man and man, with His redeeming blood. God loves His creation, and cries out for those who will love it with Him enough to give themselves over to intercession for it, entering into its sufferings and groans. But let all His sons know that no man can enter into this ministry with God unless he is prepared to suffer for it with Christ.

Glory — the Result of Intercession

The great glory to which Christ is now exalted for this ministry awaits the yet further, greater fulness of glory resulting from the ministry. This may at first seem impossible, for He is now glorified with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was; but although this is so, yet further glories are laid up in store for Him. This exceeding great and eternal weight of glory, which shall be upon Him when He comes to be glorified in the saints, will then be seen to be the fruit of His intercession. When the saints are presented in His presence at the throne of His glory what exceeding great and eternal joy will flood all the universe, glory upon glory extending on and on into the ages to come. What will the creatures presently groaning under the bondage of corruption think then? Much that is now thought to be and preached by some as the manifestation of the sons of God may appear far from the truth and utterly irrelevant to their situation; they still have no relief. Yet for their sakes there does need to be a present manifestation of the sons of God, as well as a future one — when Jesus was on earth there was. John was one who saw the earthly manifestation of sonship and said, 'We beheld His glory, the glory as of an only begotten (son) with a father, full of grace and truth'. It was a wonderful manifestation, but it was so limited; the Lord confined Himself to Palestine only. Nevertheless God's creation, in part, saw and felt that manifestation, and men witnessed and attested to that glory, even though at the time few recognized it for what it was and that it meant that He was the Son of God. As it was with Him in His day, so it ought to be with us in measure in our day. Although we may be unrecognized by the world as the sons of God, His creatures ought to be able to see and feel the glory already in us through grace.

God has said that He is willing to make His power known, but unless we identify with the agonies of the creatures that fill the whole creation with groans, we shall never get close enough to their heart-need to be able to help. If we wish to help men and women we must feel with their feelings and groan with their groans. When God of old came down at last to deliver Israel from Egypt it was as much because He was moved by their cries and groans as by His determination to keep His promise to their father Abraham. His was a given heart, as well as a given word; He loved the people, and pitied them and came to their rescue.

The nature of the ministry demands that the intercessor must be, in himself, a very secure person in Christ. It is essential that he be fully persuaded that nothing and no-one can separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus his Lord; this assured he is a free man. This freedom from fear concerning his own present and future standing is essential for the intercessor, for intercession can only spring from spiritual identification with a world of afflictions. Intercession must be answered by God on behalf of others, not the intercessor, and it must be successful; for this it must be upon very sure ground. Fixed in that, a heart can be reckless with regard to itself, so that it no longer seeks to retain its own well-being and comfort, but seeks these blessings for others. The assured heart does not desire lightness and happiness, but is willing for heaviness and sorrow. These are very sobering thoughts, for such feelings are not generally wanted, rather they are shunned, perhaps even denied.

The Cry of the Intercessor — Abba Father.

The introduction of 'Abba, Father', into the passage ought to have alerted us to what was to come. It is a rare phrase in the New Testament, associated exclusively with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. This association is very distinctive because it is peculiar to Jesus and the Spirit in two extremes of emotion in the experience of God. By the first cry the mind is carried back to that awful moment in Gethsemane when the Lord began to be sore amazed and very heavy, saying, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death'. With that statement He left His three apostles and went away to lie before His Father alone, wrestling with the problem of sin and the cup of wrath He must drink because of it. It was one of the most dreadful, if not the most dreadful of all decisions He ever had to make. From that time onwards the cry 'Abba, Father' could not but be associated in the minds of the apostles with great wrestlings, agony, bloody sweat, darkness, heaviness and profound sorrow. Jesus the Son of God cried that cry when He was departing from this world, and the Holy Spirit cries it when He comes into the heart of a man to bear witness that he is a son of God. So the cry is placed at two extremes, the first one at departure, the second one at arrival; the first with sorrow and the second with joy, the first at death, the second at birth; both ending and beginning is in the cry; it is the cry of God.

Is intercession associated with Gethsemane? Is it a garden of sorrows under the shade of olive trees, the place where fruit is gathered to be beaten and bruised and crushed, until at last the oil runs out? Is it the place where finally the will of the Father is agreed to and done with the heart first, before the body is yielded for its accomplishment? Abba, Father, lies at the heart of the relationship between Jesus and the Father. It is not strange then that intercession should be so powerful; it is firmly linked with both Gethsemane and Generation; what is more, by Paul's heart-wish, it is closely linked with Calvary also. It surely is a most dreadful cry that a man should wish almost to be cut off from Christ if only other people could be saved. It is wonderful also, for that is precisely the place that the Lord Himself had to reach before He could save us. Intercession has to do with needs that cannot be met by anointed preaching or gifted touch; it has to do with destinies and destinations, heaven and hell; it hears the cries of the doomed and the damned, and of God. It enters into God's heart for the sake of the souls of men, wanting their salvation at whatever cost to itself. It is understanding of God to a degree not otherwise attainable, it is fellowship with Christ, union with the Spirit and oneness with the Father. The Spirit of intercession makes

intercessors of sons who want nothing other or more than to be conformed to the image of the Son in the likeness of His present ministry.

V

THE SPIRIT OF POWER

'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost'. Chapter 15 verse 13.

Power and Sanctification.

In this final reference to the Holy Spirit in the epistle, Paul wishes us to think of power. The phrases he uses are 'the power of the Holy Ghost' and 'the power of the Spirit of God'. Probably in some people's minds this word power is mostly, if not exclusively, thought of in terms of the baptism of the Spirit, as in the texts, 'ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you:' and 'tarry ye in ... Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high'. Usually this power is connected exclusively with miraculous demonstration by the gifts of the Spirit. It is a mistake to think this way, as Paul makes clear to the Roman church: in this passage he uses the word power once with reference to works and once with reference to condition of life. These two quotations are not the only allusions to the Holy Spirit at this point either: His name appears again also. This time, in course of a pungent statement relating to his own apostleship and ministry, Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit in connection with sanctification — 'the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ ... ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost'. So the apostle takes us back to the beginning, where, as we know, he started his epistle on this very note, 'Jesus Christ our Lord ... declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead'.

Although in this fifteenth chapter Paul does not use the word power in connection with sanctification as he did in the first chapter, it would have been quite correct if he had done so. Without in any way infringing God's commandments or interfering with truth, we may make the insertion, and could read the text thus: 'being sanctified by the (power of) the Holy Ghost'. Even better though, we could read it: 'being sanctified by (the presence of) the Holy Ghost'. Perhaps best of all we could link all three insertions together and think of this phrase, 'being sanctified by (the person and the presence and the power of) the Holy Ghost'. If we did this it would be perfectly right and proper, for that is exactly how we are sanctified — by the person and presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The blessed Holy Spirit sent to us by God is more concerned about sanctifying our lives than about giving us power to do special works, yet sanctification is not the Holy Spirit's exclusive speciality, as we have seen. Paul therefore draws attention to other things and speaks of mighty signs and wonders done by the power of the Spirit of God. Lest over-emphasis brings about our own undoing it is vital to keep all truth in perspective. This statement leaves all honest people with no doubt in the mind that the gospel is not being fully presented unless signs and wonders are taking place. The apostle is quite clear that, in order to make the gentiles obedient to God, the gospel is to be declared by both word and deed. He does not mean that every preacher of the gospel is to be a Paul, or should expect to accomplish all he accomplished, but he does mean that someone ought to be showing the signs and doing wonders.

Signs and Wonders

Long before the invention of cursive writing or ethnic script in this world, and long before formal education was given or print was known, when men could not read or write, they communicated with each other by spoken word or signs. There was no alphabet and no written language, so certain signs which had set meanings were invented, and by these messages were recorded. These signs were called hieroglyphics or cuneiform. To people of those days signs held great meaning, perhaps greater meaning than words do for us today; they were primitive but they were precise, and they exercised great power. Evidence of this is with us to this day. The ancient sign-language of the Chinese people is still being used, and it is most expressive. It is not surprising therefore, but utterly consistent with God's loving care and complete understanding of men, that he should grant signs and wonders to be done by the power of the Spirit throughout the age. Miracles are God's sign-language to men who exist in ignorance of His grace and love, and therefore do not understand Him. He wants to speak to the spiritually uneducated by signs and wonders, for these indicate to their minds power associated with a supernatural being who must be God. The logic of it is that if: (1) a thing is wonderful it must have been done by a wonderful person, and (2) a given sign must be proof that someone is wishing to communicate with them.

The second of these assumptions is certainly true, but the first is by no means to be taken for granted. Signs and wonders are not the sole prerogative of good persons. Great care should be exercised when miraculous power is at work. Because the end result is beneficial, it does not necessarily mean that the person operating the power is God or of God. The test is not the work (has he or she power to do miracles?), nor is it the result of it (is it beneficial to the person upon whom the work is wrought?), nor does the decision rest upon whether or not the person is considered to be nice. The test is this, is the power being shown and the work done as being an integral part of the gospel of the Son of God? If a man is a servant of Jesus Christ, and speaks the kind of things that Paul speaks in this letter, the work is good and the person is good. This is one of the reasons why Paul placed signs and wonders last and not first in this epistle. To the ignorant the miracles may need to be shown first; (it may be the only way to reach him) but in the order of exposition, power to perform miracles comes last. It is hard to escape the conviction that this is done so that readers may understand the ground from which power operates and works are done, and to ensure that all miracle-workers must be tested by the truth. Given this, two other reasonable facts emerge: (1) to be able to do such amazing things, that person must be very powerful, and (2) since those things are good and beneficial, that person must be good also, and a benefactor of the race. Miracles performed by the power of God may be said to be through grace, even though people may not understand grace and mercy, and may know nothing of righteousness. In some cases they may never have heard of Christ and the cross or listened to the gospel, but they can interpret signs and wonders with a certain amount of accuracy.

Signs and wonders are most arresting and sensational, and God uses them to impart His wondrous grace to mankind; but to be genuine they must be gospel works. Through no fault of their own the vast majority of men have no knowledge of God beyond what is available to them through nature, but that is sufficient to reveal Him. Heathen and pagan, civilized and uncivilized, educated and uneducated, all alike have equal access to sources of knowledge which uniformly testify that there is a God, and

that He is good and powerful. Paul very strongly insists upon this; quoting from David he says that the sound of God's heavenly creation goes into all the earth, and that the words of those heavenly bodies are carried to the ends of the world. 'There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard', says the psalmist. Men 'hear' things that the ear does not hear; they 'see' things beyond the power of human sight, and 'know' more than the mind can tell them. As shown before, man is a spiritual being; he is far greater than the combined 'machinery' of his body and the faculties of his soul and the possibilities of his mind; because this is so, before God he is also a responsible being. He cannot exist without accumulating knowledge, and is capable of response according to that knowledge; God holds him accountable to Himself for this. In chapter one Paul makes it unmistakably clear that all mankind is without excuse before God on at least two counts: (1) the eternal power of God; (2) the eternal Godhead of God. In other words God holds that men know He is and that He is God. Although at this present time much of the world is unevangelized, all mankind is being held responsible by God for its present state in relationship to its degree of knowledge on these two points. But whatever the amount of opportunity or knowledge men may have, all must know this, 'the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold (down) the truth in unrighteousness'. Whether men choose to be religious or irreligious is immaterial; whether they have heard the gospel or not makes no difference; primitive or civilized, who or whatever a man may be, to repress or deny truth for the sake of sin is to incur God's wrath.

'God commends His love toward us', says Paul; to complete the sentence as written would be to add 'in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us'. But that is not all; God would also commend His love to mankind in that while they are yet sinners He would perform signs and wonders for them to see and hear and experience. This is all part of His grace, and Paul sought always to preach the gospel this way; anything other than this he would have regarded as being less than the full truth, and he had no intention of repressing the truth; he very much regarded himself as being accountable to God for the gospel. When he said he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ and that he gloried in it, among the many reasons he gave for this was the fact that God gave him power to perform signs and wonders. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation; it is not words about the facts of salvation, though we need that information. The gospel is the power revealed in the person of Christ and of what God did by Christ in the past reaching men now in the present: if the power be absent, preaching is in vain; Paul is very definite about the power. That power is now being both willed and brought to men by the Spirit of God through the person of Christ; that is why He must be formed in us. We, having His Spirit, must develop in His life to the point where we can minister in His name by the power of the Spirit of God as He Himself did.

The ministry of Jesus Christ is, without question, a ministry of power to men, which includes signs and wonders as well as preaching. Even a cursory reading of the Gospels is sufficient to convince the mind that wherever Jesus Christ went to preach, signs and wonders accompanied all He said. Only occasionally did He give people the bare word and leave it at that; all powerful as it was, He generally accompanied His word with actions. Even on the occasion when He said 'except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe', He did not refuse to give a sign, but went on to perform the miracle. He did not think He was endangering true faith in the man by giving the sign, but healed the servant as requested. However, the miracles He performed were

never done as an end in themselves — they were always intended by Him to lead men on to salvation. Paul takes this line also. Signs and wonders are important; the Holy Spirit who worked them through Jesus will work them today. They are vital; but, although so important, Paul only ever saw them as means to an end, namely 'that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost'.

The High Calling — Priesthood.

All he meant by these words is not easy to assess. Did he mean that he was offering up people of gentile origin to God? Did he mean that gentiles were offering up themselves to God? Or was he just saying that gentiles were making offerings to God? Perhaps he wants us to believe that all three things were happening; or perhaps, after all, he was only referring to the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. There is no doubt that this truth was very dear to him, for he had referred to it (though not directly) earlier in his famous plea, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world'. Quite plainly the gentiles were being exhorted to offer themselves to God rather than to bring an offering to Him. It is quite important to notice that, although the sacrifice is mentioned, the word altar is not in the text. He is not saying come and lay yourselves on the altar for God, as though thinking of some act of sacrifice akin to the typical sacrifices of the Old Testament. That surely is a noble thought, but he was not meaning that; he was thinking of something far greater than that, something which logically precedes it, namely the self-presentation of a man for the priesthood. It is a prayer directed to men, exhorting them to fulfil grace, realize their birthright and respond to the calling of God.

Although God commanded all Israel to bring sacrifices to Him, no man among them could offer even one sacrifice on God's altar unless he was a priest. Everybody could bring his offerings to God; there was no restriction on that; indeed each man was expected to do so: on the appropriate occasion everyone had to present himself with his offering at the entrance of the tabernacle before God. All men were accepted thus far, but no man could go any further or do more than that; he could approach with his gift to the altar, but there he must stop; from that point onwards he and his gift were entirely in the hands of others. At the entrance every other man but a Levite had to hand his sacrifice to a man of that tribe, but even he could not make the sacrifice if he was not of the house of Aaron; nobody but a priest made contact with the altar. In his turn therefore the Levite had to bring the sacrifice to a priest, who then finally offered it to God; sacrifice and offering was the priests' exclusive ministry.

It is to this placing and function as a priest that the apostle is calling us. In Israel when a young man of the Aaronic family attained to the age of twenty he was eligible for the ministry; his responsibility then was to present himself to the high priest for examination. If he was found to be a fit man he was then prepared by the high priest for consecration to God and instalment into office. He was not allowed to make the final decision about personal fitness; the high priest, who in the case of Aaron's own sons was their own father, did that. Although by birthright he was predestined from the moment of his birth to become a priest, when the time came he could only actually be a priest if he was acceptable to God and his father. The grounds of acceptability were carefully laid down by God for all, without prejudice or favour; the standard was nothing less than physical perfection. That proved, he also had to be made holy, and

thereby acceptable to God for service. Every son of Aaron was born for this elect office; he was chosen for it in Aaron before he was born; it was a high honour. Although he did not know it until he was acquainted with the fact, he was born to fulfil this calling and purpose (perhaps from the foundation of the world. Who can tell?) For twenty years he lived, first as an ordinary baby, then as a boy and a youth, doubtless doing the same sorts of things as his companions; but as soon as he came of age he had to enter into joint-heirship with his father and older brothers who had preceded him in office. Everything else had to be left behind so that he could be made in the new likeness and be conformed to the new image; priests were not allowed any eccentricities or choices or fashions of their own; with little difference all priests had to look alike. Except for the high priest, his father and brother in office, no-one wore outstanding clothes; Aaron alone was different. For the rest, except facially and in stature and peculiarity of bearing or something distinctive in their walk, all the priests looked and did exactly the same. It was considered by everybody in Israel that this was the reasonable service of the sons of Aaron; they were expected to do it. So it was that, when the time came, these men presented their bodies a living sacrifice to God with this understanding. From that time forward they became a body of men under one head, with whom they lived and functioned in the tabernacle for God and the people.

In a very meaningful way, from the moment those priests offered themselves to God in this manner they ceased to walk after the flesh and began to walk after the Spirit. Even though beforehand they had kept the commandments and had loved the Lord their God with all their heart, if they had refused to present themselves to God at the right time they could not have fulfilled their birthright and lived according to their predestination. They would have grown fruit and vegetables and corn and made wine and raised flocks and herds like everybody else, but they would have missed their calling, prejudiced the future of Israel and earned the wrath of God besides. For the same kind of reasons Paul first pleaded with the Romans to present themselves to God, and later spoke of the offering up of the gentiles being acceptable. As far as he was concerned his duty in the matter was clear, and so was his intention: if he could get his hands on them they were going on the altar. He saw everyone as a potential voluntary sacrifice to God, that he in turn should offer as living sacrifices to God also. Paul first offered them to Him that they in turn should offer themselves to Him. In Paul's view anything less than this was world-conformity, but conformity to this would result in transformation by mental renewal; then sacrifice and offering would become the habit of life.

The priest is the living sacrifice; he is the vital link between man and God. In his office he is the intercessor; he lives to make intercession for men and women. All priests are intercessors and mediators, just as our Lord Jesus is High Priest, Mediator and Intercessor. Priests are established in their order and position to live in it to maintain the link between God and man; in their measure they must ever live to make intercession. This is the sacrifice they must make, and, having made it, they must live it out continuously all the rest of their days. Having made this initial sacrifice they can then make all other kinds of offerings to God as Paul did, for they are sanctified to God for that purpose.

This is how the apostle viewed his ministry. He saw it as Jesus Christ saw His ministry on earth. By the power of the Spirit of God He went about showing all the signs and doing wonders for three or so years, and people were healed and blessed

and amazed by it all. But in His heart it was all for one purpose, namely that the people so blessed should in the end be sanctified to God. This is why the cross came at the close of His life; the Holy Ghost has no other or greater power than the power to sanctify souls. Speaking comparatively, it is far easier to show a wonder which is but for a moment than to sanctify a soul for all eternity. One is an event, albeit spectacular, but the other is a constant work, a ministry. This is what Paul was so quick to show when he began his epistle, 'Jesus Christ our Lord ... declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead'. He finishes in the same elements as he begins — power and holiness; only at the beginning it is rather holiness and power, and all by the Spirit.

This is that Holy One who is now come forth from the Father in Jesus' name; He lives and works in holiness and power in the Church, that everything in the Church may be done in power according to the spirit of holiness. He has come to create and sustain a spirit of holiness among us, that is to impart a constant, continuing inner power, an energy promoting a life and attitude of holiness in us. This is to be the dynamic of the Church, the spirit in which all is done; it is the air and atmosphere of all our living and working; it is the result of being in the Spirit, it is having the spirit of Christ. When this is so, the life moves on the same lines in exactly the same way as His. This Holy Spirit governs everything in the church, directing all things for the glory of God in Jesus' name; but He needs our co-operation. If we respond to the call we shall be declared sons of God with power according to the spirit of holiness, and the love of God will be shed abroad in our hearts. The Spirit and our spirit will be one, so that men will be hard put to distinguish the difference, and that is just how God wants it. He in us and we in Him will manifest such unification and likeness that whether to speak of the Spirit or of the spirit we shall not know; in fact at times it will be almost impossible, for they shall be the same, identified for the purpose of God.

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THE ANOINTING

I — BACKGROUND AND FOUNDATION

Chapter 1 — Social and Cultural Significance

Throughout the centuries the subject of the Anointing has never failed to engage the minds and intrigue the hearts of all serious people of God. Children of God in any age who wish to live to His glory and win His approval know this to be a most important matter. The Anointing is one of the most precious of all God-given experiences, and is absolutely vital to life and service. All Christians ought faithfully to appropriate the fulness of the blessings of the gospel and receive the Anointing to do God's will in the earth. Inspired writers of both Old and New Testaments speak of it with clarity and authority; their combined statements must be received as the only true foundation for all thinking and speaking on the subject.

The primary purpose of this book is to encourage personal investigation of the scriptures with a view to discovering the New Testament position on the subject; in course of doing so it will be necessary to take a fairly long look at what Old Testament writers say about it — this is unavoidable. If we would rightly assess the relative meanings and purposes associated with anointing in the mind of God we can do no other.

Of the two testaments, the old has far more to say about the Anointing than the new. A glance at a good concordance reveals that the New Testament has hardly anything to say about it at all; there are seven or eight times as many references to anointing in the Old Testament as there are in the New. The reasons for this lie far beyond the comparative lengths of the two books, and are of vital importance to every member of the Church of Jesus Christ. These reasons must be sought out, that correct conclusions may be reached and carefully weighed, and the results fearlessly accepted and applied to our own lives. It is critically important that the mind of the Lord should be

clearly known among us. Understanding of truth and honest convictions will lead to pure doctrine from which alone will emerge powerful ministry which cannot be gainsaid.

From time immemorial anointing has been a common custom in the Middle East. Long before Moses' day it was practised among people of all nations for both profane and sacred reasons. Whether for personal, social, medical or religious purposes, from cradle to grave anointing has held a recognised and often a prominent place in the cultures of these lands. For various reasons, oil has been widely used for pouring or smearing on persons and things, sometimes for perfume, sometimes for healing, sometimes for embalming, sometimes for sanctification. It has other uses too, such as for cooking, garnishing, minimising friction, lighting and many other things too numerous and not important enough to be mentioned. Most of these were in no sense connected with anointing, and were not thought of in that way. Some, however, were most definitely referred to as anointings, even though they had no reference to things religious. Perfumes, for instance, were concocted from fragrant spices, mixed in oil and smeared upon the person for cosmetic purposes; these were referred to as anointings.

An Anointing of Love

Jesus once reproved a Pharisee named Simon for not anointing Him, 'My head with oil thou didst not anoint', He said, and drew attention to a woman who had washed and anointed and kissed His feet ceaselessly. Neither Simon's anointing, which was denied Him, nor the anointing so lavishly bestowed upon Him by the woman, held any spiritual significance or bestowed any particular authority — they were not intended to do so. They held no innate ability to elevate Him to a great height or position or ministry in the household. Had it been bestowed by Simon it would have been but a common courtesy, a gesture of acceptance, showing Jesus to be an honoured guest, that is all. That kind of anointing was a national custom in Israel, it was part of social practice, a cultural nicety to which all decent people subscribed; there was nothing special about it. The particularly significant thing about the incident is that the friendly gesture was

purposely withheld from the Lord by Simon.

Anointing oil itself upon the head was probably fragrant and comforting to a certain degree, but the innate properties of the mixture, though pleasurable when administered, were not the chief reason for its bestowal. The beauty and blessing of this kind of anointing lay in the fact that it was an expression of the host's loving welcome to his guest, not in the anointing itself. Although the various ministrations — the cleansing, the anointing, the kiss — meant acceptance, welcome, honour, comfort, love; all was a token. The fresh, comfortable feeling of being made clean from the defilement of the way in order to walk in the purity of the house; the perfume of acceptance into and unification with the fragrance of the home; the memory of the imprint of the kiss of friendship and love welcoming the guest into the family, were intended to show the warm friendship of the host. By withholding these, the Pharisee publicly insulted the Lord, openly snubbing Him before the assembled guests; it was scandalous treatment for Cod.

But the woman, 'woman of the city' though she was, shed tears over it all, weeping upon His feet, her inward waters supplying what Simon's well could not. Cleansing away the defilement of the treacherous household from Him, she laid her head at His feet in worship, and wiped them dry with her hair, proclaiming Him to be the Lord of all there. None of the others received such astonishing treatment; their reception was not to be compared with His. In the act she confessed all her glory to be His. He was her Lord and King, and she His willing slave; more, He was her head and she His body. Lifting her head, she laid her lips against His feet for a moment., and with a kiss bestowed all her grateful love upon Him, then she crowned the occasion with glory and honour by anointing Him with the oil she had brought.

Compared with this, anything Simon could have bestowed upon Him would have been worthless. What a marvellous display of devotion it was: at once an open declaration of preference, an attestation of love, an act of defiance, an indignant protest and an avowal of purpose. It meant utter commitment full of pointed meaning. He was the only one Simon would not anoint, and the only one she did anoint. Many

profitable lessons could be gained from meditation upon the incident, but wonderful though they may be, that kind of anointing was nothing more than a social practice. It was a time-honoured custom among the people, practised without any deep spiritual intent; it was not ordained of God.

Social customs originate from recognised need, sometimes due to climatic or geographic conditions. Not surprisingly, by repetition these later become customary, developing into gestures of human politeness, expected courtesies bearing social significance deeply rooted in everyday habits. Expectation, duty, pride, all play their part in building a nation's culture into the expression of a people's will until, as well as being the aggregate of people's accomplishments, it becomes their heredity.

Foot-washing and the Laver

We see then that in men's cultures, means applied to necessity, and allied to desire become national custom. In somewhat similar manner also, many of the practices found in Israel with spiritual connotations were rooted in the necessities in which the patriarchs found themselves. These things and customs were later made obligatory, first in Israel and then in the Church. Although in some cases these were somewhat similar to the traditions of men, they have been adapted to spiritual usages and given a completely different and higher meaning. As an instance of this we may cite the habit of foot-washing: the Lord took up this common practice, lifted it out of the cultural pattern, slightly changed it and incorporated it into the law of His house, where it took on a new and more exalted meaning altogether.

Basically it was the same as that which was commonly done in every home in Israel. There it meant cleansing from outer defilement, that by the good offices of the host all may walk in sweet accord with the cleanliness of the house; every guest gladly submitted to the ministration. Without any special spiritual emphasis it stood for sanctification; it may not have been thought of in those terms, but nevertheless that is what it plainly implied. It bore the twin ideas of cleanliness and separation; cleanliness from the world outside, and

separation unto the state of the house. However, when the Lord took up foot-washing it became something far more than this. In the Lord's house it still retained its common meaning, but this was given a higher meaning and more rigidly applied, that by its constancy a far deeper lesson may be learned.

At the base of the altar the priests of the Lord attended the ground was always saturated in blood. In the course of their duties the bare-footed priests had perforce to tread upon this blood- stained earth. This unavoidably meant that the blood of past sacrifices continuously stained their feet. This is why the Lord insisted that His servants wash their feet before entering the holy place. The blood they handled must be fresh from an immediate sacrifice, their experience must be always 'now'; new. Every past sacrifice paved the way for the present; it must be regarded only as doing that, though.

Past and present mingled on the altar, constituting the abiding and continuous sacrifice; the way into the holy place commenced from the place of that one offering and one blood. But no man must appear in the presence of the Lord having trampled on the blood wherewith he was sanctified as though it were an unholy thing. Therefore, upon his constant journeyings through the Lord's courts into His house, the priest must wash his feet again and again in the layer of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost. This same kind of dissimilarity could be demonstrated in connection with nearly everything in the Lord's house adapted from common usage, and particularly so of the Anointing; here the difference is most marked. However, it is not our plan to pursue an investigation into social anointings, but to look into the place, purpose and meaning of anointing in spiritual life.

Bethel's Anointed Pillar

Perhaps it is of some importance that the first occasion of anointing recorded in scripture is connected with a religious, if not a spiritual experience. It occurred during the course of Jacob's flight from his brother's wrath into Chaldea. The first night out from home, alone in the wilderness, he lay down to sleep, his body on the hard ground and his head upon a harder stone for a pillow; it is not surprising that as he

slept he dreamed. His dream was very remarkable though: he saw a ladder set up from earth to heaven, with the Lord standing above it and angels ascending and descending upon it; he was terrified. Identifying Himself to the frightened man as the God of his father, the Lord promised to be with him, to keep him in all places whither soever he went, and finally to bring him back again to his native land. To Jacob the experience was awe-inspiring, 'how dreadful. is this place' he said. Nevertheless he was full of gratitude and in turn responded to God's promises by making certain vows to Him. Having done so and before continuing his journey, Jacob stooped to raise up his pillow on the spot where he had lain. Then for some reason not explained he anointed the pillar with oil and said 'this is none other than the house of God', and named it 'Bethel'.

All Jacob's motives and meaning by the action are not revealed, but we do know that the pillar standing there was the pillow upon which his head had lain. So in this strange way the initial anointing mentioned in scripture in connection with spiritual and religious phenomena was associated with the head. The patriarch did not pour oil on the place where his body lay, but on the headstone, which fact cannot be without significance. There can be no doubt that the act of anointing resulted from his encounter with God; it may have been done in lieu of making a blood sacrifice and directly as a token of the same, for he had none to offer. Almost certainly he was filled with relief that he had met God and was still alive.

Jacob's alarm at the meeting was most real; he was terrified of God. Guilt flooded him; he was a cheat, a liar, a deceiver and a thief. To have travelled all this way into the land of forgetfulness, only to find himself in God's house, was frightening in the extreme. Was he not fleeing as a result of his sins? And then to meet God! His conscience stabbed him wide awake to his guilt in the presence of God and His angels. Without any means of atonement or propitiation his soul stood bare in God's house, at the gateway and ladder to heaven, too frightened to attempt the ascent. He could not even put his foot upon the first rung; he lay there in dread, uninvited and overwhelmingly convicted. O what wonder to learn at that moment from the mouth of

the Lord that all his roguery and subtleties and lies had been overruled; he was not going to be punished for conspiring to deceive his blind father, but would be undeservedly blessed instead. Despite all his fears, and contrary to his deserts, Jacob was loved of the Lord.

With what real joy he must have reared up his pillow and anointed it that morning of discovery. If it was to be as an altar bearing up to God all he had and all he had been promised, then the oil upon the stone was indeed as an offering to the Lord. If in his absence it was to remain there as representing him for ever before the Lord, it showed that he knew he could not abide nor stand unanointed, in God's house. If it was the token of his response to God, and if his word was to mean anything to God, then it must be his anointed word. If it was to be as himself, all he was and ever should be and have; if it was to be Jacob for ever steadfast, immovable, unchangeable, given wholly to God, then the pillar must be anointed.

What it actually said to God, who can tell? We do not know; but from this beginning we trace the seeds of eventual meanings, roots of later plants, buds of future flowers, foreshadowings of spiritual realities. All these are later worked out to greatest measure in scripture, and finally presented in fullest meaning in the person of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 2 — An Important Distinction

In order to understand the purpose of the Anointing it is necessary to distinguish between it and the Baptism of the Spirit. The child of God has need of both these blessings, and must know the very distinct difference between them. Great misunderstanding abounds everywhere on this matter. This is at once discovered when it is insisted that it is quite impossible to have been made a child of God and not at the same time to have been anointed also. Despite the fact that the scripture plainly states this fact, to many this is an unacceptable doctrine. This may be because it is not generally known and taught that the regenerating process includes the act of anointing. Apart from the anointing the state of regeneration cannot exist, nor the life it brings be maintained.

New birth is accomplished for God the Father when, in His name, God the Son baptises a person in God the Holy Ghost for the gift of eternal life. At that moment the person being born is completely immersed in the Spirit, that the full power and virtues of the redemption and Being of Christ should be applied to him or her. This Baptism: (1) destroys the seed of satan within and changes the paternity of the believer, utterly separating the life from his fatherhood; (2) breaks the authority and power of Satan over the being; (3) crucifies the old man; (4) cleanses away the spirit and nature of sin. At the same time the indispensable Anointing of the Spirit is bestowed; it is all done as one operation. John makes absolutely clear that not only do 'fathers' and 'young men' have this Anointing, but the new born 'babes' in Christ have it too.

For the sake of clarity it will be best to distinguish this Anointing from all the others mentioned in scripture by using the distinctive name given to it by the translators of the 'King James' version of the Bible — namely 'The Unction'. This distinction is as deserved as it is necessary, for it is superior to all; there is none other like it. Maybe those godly men used this word for the Anointing quite deliberately because they knew that what John speaks of here as 'an unction from the Holy One' is the most essential of all the many anointings referred to in either testament. Be that as it may, let all be assured that no-one must consider himself born of God unless he has received this Unction, for none of God's children are born without it. It is not something to be acquired subsequent to new birth, as being extra to it; it is absolutely essential to it, and is indeed part of that experience.

This was well known to many of our spiritual forbears, who spoke of it with reverence and gratitude as 'Christing with Christ'. In those days the term was used of the true Baptism as opposed to the rite called 'Christening', which in turn gave rise to the distasteful term 'Christendom'. The concept of Christening is based upon the supposed 'baptism' of infants at a font, which for the purpose is symbolically regarded as the fount of eternal life. This idea is totally foreign to the whole tenor of the New Testament and the practice of the early

Church, and therefore cannot be correct.

Rightly understood, however, baptism in water primarily sets forth the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was not so when it was first introduced in Israel by John Baptist. At that time Jesus Christ had not died and risen again, so that was impossible. It did, however, signify the washing away of sins as the result of repentance. At that time, in common with every rite of Old Testament practice, baptism looked forward to the death and resurrection of Christ. It was prophetic and parabolic; it enfolded the mystery of redemption yet to be unfolded at Calvary. Because it did so, it could also symbolise forgiveness and cleansing; this was its first use to men at Jordan. We may understand this more clearly if, when regarding the symbolism of water baptism, we in thought replace water with Spirit. When we do this, it at once becomes obvious that immersion in the Spirit is into the reality and power of Christ crucified, dead and buried, and all that means. The soul, passing through all this accumulated virtue and meaning, rises as from the dead in newness of life.

The ordinance implies: (1) the act of death by crucifixion; (2) the point of death as a result of it; (3) resurrection from death; (4) the state of death in which resurrection life subsists and continues. These four are of an entirely spiritual nature and are vital to our life. Water baptism must certainly accentuate the eternal effectiveness of the age-abiding death and burial of our death in the grave of Christ.

The Real Baptism: Death — the Means of Regeneration

The real death into which Jesus baptised Himself on the cross is nothing other than man himself. Apart from Christ men exist altogether in an eternal state of death. They are completely insensitive in that death, and therefore unable to recognise and know their state. We could not feel or understand that we were dead, so we were unable to do anything about it; but He did know. He also knew He was the only one who could do anything about it. He knew exactly what was necessary and what it would mean for Him to expire into death, for He was alive, and except He knew He could go through with it He would not have endured it, nor entertained the thought of it. Knowing all this,

He broke His heart for us — we who were too insensitive to know how it felt to Him that He should be as the sinner to His Father.

His heart did not break because of our lack of love to Him who loved us so much. He felt it of course; it counted and it was of great grief to Him, but the real cause of His heartbreak was what He had to become to the Father whom He loved. He was made and treated as the embodiment of all who did not know or love God, and what was worse, the representation of all who hated and blasphemed and rebelled against and undeified Him. So great was His love to His Father and us, that on behalf of each of us who did not even know enough to care, He completely submitted His whole being to God for eternity, and for a time submitted His body to the wishes of devils and men.

Surely we shall never fully understand all that was involved in Jesus' terrible time on the cross. Right from His birth the grim foreshadowings of the deadly tree progressively cast ever-deepening horrors over Him, threatening to engulf Him in unspeakable terrors. As eternity's most awful moment drew on He said, 'I have a baptism to be baptised with', and ever moved on toward the time when He must take the plunge. After all other considerations are taken into account, there is only one baptism worth experiencing and knowing and talking about — it is His. Apart from Him we are in death — dead; but He was and is Life — alive.

The Lord's Baptism was not physical but spiritual. True it took place during the time He suffered physically at the hands of men, but the bodily suffering, important though it was in the whole redemptive plan, was not the Baptism wherewith He was baptised. His soul suffered agonies beyond words also, but unavoidable and necessary as that was, it was not the Baptism — such suffering was no new thing to Him — He had endured much mental torture over the years. In whomsoever it takes place, true baptism can only be spiritual; it is the spirit, the essential immaterial being of a person, that is baptised. This cannot be effected in water for man any more than it could be for Jesus. That it may coincide with water baptism is very possible, but it must not be confused with it. The Lord's Baptism took place as He, the life-giving

Spirit, was plunged into the state of the dead spirit — Man. To achieve this position so foreign to Him required an experience entirely new to Him; He called that experience baptism.

In Adam Man(kind) died; when born of flesh and blood, every man is born an already dead-Adam spirit. When the Lord Jesus was born, He was born the new living, or live-Adam spirit; life-giving. At the point of His physical death He was baptised into the composite dead-Adam state. This was accomplished in order to render it for ever powerless and unable to hold and motivate any who afterwards should be baptised by Him in (the) Spirit. By doing so He created a new death into which every believing man has need to be baptised. Jesus created this for man on behalf of God. At His Baptism, on behalf of man He destroyed the state of death in sin, negated physical death (renaming it sleep), and obviated the second death — spiritual Gehennah. Every person so baptised is born of God, and enters immediately into this newness of life. Being brought thereby into all possible benefit of Christ's greatest miracle, he commences an earthly pilgrimage, with prospects of enjoyment with fuller understanding in the next world.

This Baptism is entirely spiritual; it is the baptism of man's believing spirit by Jesus in the Holy Spirit into Jesus' death and through that into Himself. By this, man is brought immediately out of his death state into the life of Christ. It totally instates into Christ's body, which is resurrection and life.

Unto this baptism-birth of the Lord Jesus we all must be baptised, for it was precisely for this reason He underwent it. Upon His physical death He was baptised into our spiritual death, and through it into physical resurrection to complete the cycle. By it He created and inaugurated for us entire spiritual regeneration unto a complete, continuous and progressive mental and emotional experience of renewal here, and ultimate physical redemption. Having voluntarily consented to be made sin and to take the sinner's place, He died as though He were the unregenerate sinner and rose from the dead as though He were the regenerate saint. That remains the greatest miracle and act of love for mankind God has ever manifested. On that day of resurrection God

said to Him, 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee'; at the same time He triumphantly visualised and prophetically spoke also to a whole host of sons, each of whom is a member of His great family begotten unto Him from the dead with Jesus.

Jesus created this baptismal regeneration in the Spirit for us upon completion of His life on earth; it was the great objective towards which He had always moved from all eternity. To achieve this required, what were in the eyes of men, two outstanding miracles, one of which occurred at the commencement and the other at the fulfilment of the plan. The first of these was His conception, the second was His resurrection; both were inaugural for us, as well as necessary for Him. Contrary to popular thought, Jesus' birth was not miraculous; it was entirely natural and normal. The real miracle about His birth was that it happened, not how it took place; apart from the unusual birthplace, the actual birth was quite ordinary. It was His physical conception which was miraculous — the birth just logically followed as with every other baby. This being so, to complete the miraculous cycle He had to undergo a miraculous birth also, for the two must go together. Although separated from His conception by a period of over thirty years, the miraculous birth took place when He rose from the dead. He accomplished all for us, and it is marvellous in our eyes. We cannot, as He, be sons of God by natural birth, but we can and must enter into His life as a son of God by spiritual birth. We can only do this through that miracle which took place in course of His crucifixion and resurrection, for there is no other way.

By the miraculous conception and death and resurrection of Jesus, God disclosed to the world His chosen method of regeneration. In order to become sons of God — all human beings must be spiritually born by the same means as those by which the greatest Human Being was naturally born. A kind of spiritual transaction of the same order as that which took place between God and Mary before Jesus was conceived by her must also take place between God and everyone desiring to be born of God. So real was the agreement between God and Mary, and so great was the miracle wrought in her as the result of it, that she became the mother of Jesus' humanity. The dialogue between the angel

and Mary preceding the miracle is a perfect specimen of the kind of exchanges which must take place between God and every individual before regeneration; total agreement with God is indispensable to any spiritual birth. In addition to this we must understand that God only begets His children by means of death and resurrection. The two outstanding miracles that embrace the earthly life-span of the Lord Jesus must combine in the Spirit for our regeneration.

It is not planned, nor is it possible for us to undergo all that happened to Jesus on the cross. We have nothing to do with sin-bearing and punishment; the work of redemption and reconciliation was entirely the Lord's, but some of the main things that happened to Him at Calvary must take place in us too. We must: (1) be begotten of the Word and power of God as in Jesus' conception; (2) be born through His cross and death and resurrection. The first is how God achieves this objectively in us; the second is how God accomplished it subjectively in Himself for us. The first is how we by faith may experience it subjectively in ourselves; the second is how we enter into it eternally in God. We should think of His birth, life, death and resurrection in relation to ourselves as follows: (1) miraculous conception, naturally resulting in birth and supernatural life; (2) miraculous death, naturally resulting in resurrection; we must see the two miraculous events as one.

Viewing these things on human levels, it is easy to arrive at wrong conclusions, for Jesus' death was really the greatest of all miracles. For Him the resurrection was a foregone conclusion, a logical process and quite natural to Him; for as He said, He was and is the Resurrection and the Life. He was never death; death had to happen to Him as a miracle. It was the greatest miracle of all. His birth at Bethlehem logically and naturally followed that miraculous conception at Nazareth; so also did His resurrection naturally and logically follow that miraculous death at Calvary. Resurrection is therefore rightly seen to be birth and was rightly called so by His Father when, on Easter day He said to His Son 'this day have I begotten thee'. So by placing the two miraculous events together we see the two basic elements of the one true New Birth for Man. Thereby alone can we receive His

supernatural life.

When He was born on earth, or as we may speak of it, in His 'first birth', Jesus' conception was exemplary to us — a pattern which God invariably follows; so also is His 'second birth' from death. In much the same way as Jesus was conceived for birth, the Holy Ghost is continuously using the word and the power from on high to bring forth children of God. God instituted something new and eternal at Nazareth; at that point in history He inaugurated among men a method of eternal birth. He has never departed from it; He is always repeating the miracle of specific conception for the birth by His word.

At Calvary also God moved constitutionally, validating Nazareth. Nazareth made Calvary possible, Calvary made Nazareth reasonable and necessary. On the cross, once for all, the God-Man was made sin; He remains the unrepeatable sacrifice; God is marked with it for ever. His eternity of Being is founded upon irrevocable truth. He adapted and applied this to men's salvation and regeneration.

However, the terrible marks of crucifixion upon His body are not the greatest of the wounds inflicted upon our precious Saviour then. The spear-thrust into His side after death revealed the greater anguish; whilst still hanging on the cross His blood and water gushed out, disclosing the power and agony of the unbearable torture which broke His heart. What unnameable terror did this? His God and Father who loved Him, actually made Him to be sin for us. He bore all our sin, but He bore up under it and bore it away. His breaking had to do with that, but it never broke Him; it was not sin that broke Him. All the principalities and powers of the unredeemable spirits under the leadership of satan concentrated all their hatred and fury upon Him and attacked Him on the cross, but they couldn't break Him either. Then why did He die broken-hearted? Who or what had such power over Him to cause this? The secret of His breaking is of a threefold nature: (1) although He would have rather died than become old Adam yet He had to be made the personification of that Old Man His Father so hated; (2) He had to represent all those who hated and rebelled against His Father; (3) He knew that to expiate Adam's crime against God and

mankind He must be forsaken by God as God had been forsaken by Adam in the beginning.

By pre-arrangement, all the wrong that man had wrought against God, undeserved, must be concentrated into the unprecedented and unrepeatable hours of agony He endured in the garden and on the cross. Beyond physical death, He must feel and know the unspeakable agony and anger of both God and righteous Man. He must be forsaken and utterly abandoned by everyone, even Himself. He had to bear His own righteous indignation against the Man He had to become; but this did not deter Him. With redemptive purpose He steadily moved toward and finally entered the state of God-forsakenness, that most dreadful of all conditions fundamental to the state of eternal death from which He must rescue Man.

That was the sentence He faced; He knew that for Man He must bear all the sin brought in by satan through Adam, and all the righteous exactions of God against the results and consequences of it. All had to be included at the cross in order to be excluded from us. But, O the wonder of it, praise Him, He did it, breaking His heart in the process. The heart-rending 'Why?' which broke from His innermost being at the point of death was not for Himself alone, or for just one other individual, but for Man. It was rent from Him as though rising from the hearts of the whole company of the as yet unborn sons of God. It was as a cry of shocked realisation from a vast multitude of men, who, though sons of Adam, could not, should not, and therefore would not, must not know or suffer for Adam's crime against God and them.

Satan hated Him — O how he hated Him — but that could not hurt Him; He was dead to him. Men hated Him, joining with satan to hurt Him, hurt Him and hurt Him again, but He was dead to them and that too. Sin lay upon Him and hurt Him; from the moment He took it, its loathsome newness pained and hurt Him through His hours of anguish to the latest point of shuddering release, but He died to it; it did not harm Him. He bore God's righteous judgement and suffered the capital punishment against all that should be punished, and accepted that without demur; that did not break Him either. He overcame all of that

whilst still alive, groaning upon the shameful cross of His chosen death for the sake of God and man. But finally God left Him. God forsook Him in the darkness; there, for man, He suffered Father's rejection of man — because He loved man so — and it broke Him in heart. What terrible love is this? Wonderful! Fearful in praises; who is like unto Thee O God, who is like unto Thee?

This then is the sacred Baptism wherewith He was baptised, and beside this there is no other baptism worthy of mention. This is that one all-powerful Baptism by which Father begets every one of His sons; all who are born of Him have to come to birth through this one baptism; now as then it is accomplished on His behalf only by Jesus who created it. In that one all-inclusive Baptism He accomplished the baptism of every son. He effects it today by immersing each one in Holy Spirit, that each in his own order may be joined with Him. It is Christ's personal baptism, and privileged indeed are all who are included in it. Though sinners, being so favoured, we enter into our own death by His virtues as He entered into, it, and passing through it, enter into life eternal. As He said, He is the way, and the truth, and the life, and through Him we come to the Father. Jesus put away sin, destroyed the old man, bore our curse and took all our punishment in order to make available to us a new birth into His own state of life.

The Lord underwent this at and as the end of His earthly life, and no different from Him, we can only undergo it at and as the end of our life of sin, otherwise we cannot enter into His Life. He was born sinless, He did not need the Baptism in the Spirit to enable Him to live and work in the Spirit; but by Satan's and Adam's predestinating act in the garden we were born sinners, therefore we need it. Baptism in the Spirit was designed by God to be the vital counter-predestinating factor which should negate and offset the predestinating factor of sin in us; we certainly need it. He came into the world in order to prepare and institute Baptism in the Spirit for the regeneration of men, that by it He should deal with man's most basic need.

It is absolutely important that we understand how, when, where and for what purpose regeneration is granted to mankind; this would be a

project altogether too great to undertake here. The importance of it to us now lies in the fact that, apart from the experience, no-one can receive the essential life-anointing called Unction. Except a man has this, it is absolutely impossible to have or live the spiritual life.

The Holy Ghost — the Unction

The Unction is one of the functional forms of the Holy Ghost. It is a way and work by which both naturally and officially He expresses His presence within the believer. It is the Holy Ghost being Himself and applying Himself in His most gracious form to us. The Spirit should be thought of in connection with the Unction in the same way as we think of the Lord Jesus when we read 1 Corinthians 1:50, 'Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption'. As in salvation Jesus is made these things to us, so also in regeneration the Holy Ghost is of God made unto us Unction.

Now we know that Jesus is not abstract or neuter; He is the person of God through Whom we receive the gift of eternal life. Being analysed, this eternal life consists of the nature and manifold virtues of Jesus Christ, and we may quite properly speak of these in abstract terms without demeaning Him at all. We would not ordinarily think of describing Jesus in abstract terms, but because we need righteousness in order to be saved, God gives it to us; He gives us Original Righteousness, and He does so by a Person, God the Son, through whom all righteousness proceeds to us from God the Father. David saw this in measure and said, 'God is become my salvation'; he is drawing attention to Someone — God Himself, not something God does.

We normally think of salvation as something God does for men, but primarily salvation is God applied to man. He is all man needs for salvation; He applied Himself to be man's Saviour. In God's overall plan of salvation there is that which the Father is to us, that which Christ is made to us and that which the Holy Ghost is made to us. Between them, Father, Son and Holy Spirit become everything to us. The man who says 'Christ (is) my Righteousness', must also be able to say 'the Holy Ghost (is) my Unction'. The children of God have the

Righteousness of Christ and the Unction of the Spirit; both are of God.

Paul speaks of this Unction in a different way from John, saying 'He that is spiritual judgeth (discerneth) all things'. He is speaking of both Unction and function; the Unction makes us 'spiritual'. The 'knowing' we have is by the Spirit. By that Unctional 'knowing' we discern all things. To read the sixth chapter of I Corinthians is to discover how great in scope is the informative power of this 'knowledge', and how it works and should affect our conduct. The child of God, growing in Christ and learning from scripture, discovers that, according to their particular role and function, each of the persons of the blessed trinity is of God made to us all we shall ever need.

The Holy Ghost is not merely an unction, nor does He give us an unction, He is the Unction; He is a person. The Holy One, that is God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, decided that in the overall plan of total redemption, the Holy Ghost should be given unto men in order to be their inward means of knowledge. This was done in order to ensure their continued safety and growth. The Unction we have is the perceptive faculty of omniscient God the Holy Ghost within man. When creating man originally, God adapted His personal abilities to Adam's need, giving him five sensory powers — sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell. Had He not done so, it would have been quite pointless to have given him a brain. Without these five, humanity would be nothing but a useless hulk of flesh and blood and bone and tissue, and could scarcely be thought to be alive. When, by grace, man becomes a new creature, to these natural five is added the divine Unction. It is superior to them and is as vitally necessary to full spiritual life as are the five senses to full human life. The Unction is the new faculty of perception. Its function is to divinely detect, distinguish, evaluate and assess everything. So comprehensive is its power that by it a person will know all things; it can almost be described as the 'brain' of the spiritual man.

Care must be taken at this point to distinguish between the five normal sensory powers, the Unction and the extra-sensory powers which some people have. Extra-sensory powers in man are inexplicable; they

appear to be developments of or from the five basic senses common to normal humans. In spiritual circles extra-sensory powers have caused great confusion, for they are the human counterpart of the extraordinary powers of the Holy Ghost called the gifts of the Spirit, which are the miraculous powers of the body of Christ. Extra-sensory powers are for, the most part being used by satan to counterfeit spiritual gifts, and are carnal, sensual and devilish.

The gifts of the Spirit are bestowed according to God's will freely within the body of Christ, which is formed exclusively by Him, and comprises Spirit-baptised men and women only. The gifts of the Spirit must not be mistaken for the Unction. Each of these functions differently from the Unction; though working in conjunction with it, they are extra to it. Not one of them is necessary to life; they are vital to fully developed function though, and in all realms of God's kingdom proper worship and effective service cannot be achieved without them.

According to scripture numerology, five is the number of grace. By being the Unction in man, the Holy Spirit in a particular way is fulfilling His calling as the Spirit of Grace. How gracious is God that He should become the basic power of the new life He gives us. What a perfect plan He has devised; how necessary it is, and how safe are His children who learn to live by this Unction. Beyond reasons of grace and security, if God wished us to be His children, and not just a company of forgiven sinners, it was absolutely vital that He should do this thing — that is why He did it. The Unction is no lie, it is infallible. This does not mean that everything a regenerate person does or says or thinks is infallibly right; the new sensory power within must be used aright. We have only been born again in order to learn to live to God's glory; to do this we must live by the Unction daily.

The Unction must be believed, completely trusted and fully obeyed, or else our lives will be no different from others who do not have it. This necessitates at least two other basic requirements, each of them equally of God: (1) faith, (2) fulness. The power which brings the Unction into complete operational benefit and utmost effect in the life of Man is faith; without this the Unction will soon lose its leading role and cease

to influence the life. Fulness of the Spirit is also absolutely necessary, for it is the only condition in which faith can operate properly in any man. Unless a child of God continues in the fulness of the Spirit who indwells him, he cannot attain to the fulness of life for which he has been equipped by the Uncction. We must all live by the faith of the Son of God, the Christ (who) 'liveth in me'. The Uncction is the 'Christ-ing'; by it we cry 'Abba, Father,' as did Jesus. By it we know (that is we perceive) that we are the sons of God, and by trusting and obeying it we all can develop unto full maturity as did Jesus of Nazareth, becoming men of God in His image, after His likeness.

The Anointing for Service

In order to attain unto this fully developed state, an Anointing other than, and in addition to, the Uncction must be bestowed upon the child of God. This further Anointing is fundamentally of the same nature as the Uncction, but is secondary to it; it must not be confused with the primary one; it is distinct from it and is not bestowed for the same purposes. This Anointing is linked with the Uncction, and as naturally functions with it as does speech with voice, and seeing with sight, and hearing with the auditory sense, and all of these with being and personality. But as the five perceptive and acquisitive senses are necessary to the life and development of the soul and personality of a human being, so also to the child of God is this additional or further Anointing absolutely necessary. Without it no person can reach fullest manhood, or grow to greatest stature after Christ. The child of God cannot develop the latent powers of the new man and attain to greatest usefulness in the service and ministry of the gospel without it.

As previously stated, the Uncction is there at birth; every child of God has it by virtue of his Baptism in the Spirit, and the further Anointing mentioned above is incipient in it. Thus the Uncction may be regarded as the promise of this Anointing and the preparation for it. Anointing is properly included in, and must be regarded as part of, the inheritance to which we are born of God. It is not fundamentally part of the birth experience, but is generally bestowed at a later time. It is a grace in its own right, distinct from the Uncction, and should always be thought of

and spoken of as such.

Nevertheless, we need not infer that there must be a gap or delay between the experience of the Baptism of the Spirit and the anointing of the life for ministry. There appears to be no reason (except any which may be found in the specific will of God or the particular condition of a man), why both may not take place together in the experience of anyone. God's will is sovereign in these matters, and although He never works contrary to eternal principles of life and order of truth, He does at times fuse into one many things normally separated in experience by time.

II — IN THE OLD COVENANT

Chapter 3 — Priesthood — The Supreme Anointing

The knowledge so far gained enables us to clarify the difference between Unction and Anointing, and to understand the order of truth. As distinct from the Unction, the Anointing is the mark of an election, the sign of an elevation, and often a token of God's evaluation of a man. Without exception therefore, under the Old Covenant, everyone so anointed either immediately entered an altogether new public functional life, or became known as one marked out for some work requiring special power or grace. Miraculous new abilities to serve were in some cases bestowed upon those anointed, as in the case of Elisha, but this was not so in all cases.

Among the latter, upon whom no such miraculous power came, was the whole company of priests. These men did not thereby receive power to perform miracles, but following their anointing were granted privileges, authority and enlargement above all their fellows. They became house servants of the Lord, working in His courts to do His will, waiting daily upon Him and His family of people, their 'brethren'. The priests were not called to do occasional miraculous things as did prophets and kings. Instead they became altogether miraculous persons — a far greater thing.

Even Life for Evermore

At his ordination every priest expected to be anointed; all Israel knew what a prominent part anointing played in the priests' installation ceremony. No man became a priest solely because of it, but he could not be a priest without it. Poured upon him as the final ministration from God, it crowned the ceremony, preparing and permitting him to function for and before the Lord. It denoted total acceptance and entire sanctification; by it the priest was wholly set apart. No priest would have dared enter the holy courts of the Lord without it. But far deeper and more important to the priests than these outward honours, the anointing was the symbolic seal of their personal purity in the Lord's eyes.

They attained to this by a series of simple ministrations full of symbolic meaning, each of which imputed spiritual purification to them, and led up to the crown of the anointing. Without this crown no man was fit to be a priest; he could not handle the sacrifices of God or in any way serve Him in the office. The anointing was his coronation, his accession to royal priesthood; by it the commoner became a king. In the same sense in which we understand the phrase, 'Gentleman's gentleman', we must also understand that they were the 'King's kings'; God was the great King, they were anointed kings among their fellows.

When the Lord spoke to Moses at Sinai about the Children of Israel, He said they were to be unto Him a kingdom of priests. This was to be their privilege and function. Peter puts it this way, 'a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people to show forth the virtues (things deserving of our praises) of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light'. The priests were a family specially selected to manifest royalty in a peculiar way for the whole nation. Crowned with the anointing, they each, as though a king, could serve the King of heaven in the heavenlies upon His earthly throne. Jehovah was thus shown to be the King of kings. David reveals that this anointing was both a crown and a saturation. It flowed down over each priest's mitre and off his beard on to his robes and down to the ground; he was encased in the anointing, 'clothed with power from on high'. When the

crowning was completed upon Aaron, the High Priest, 'the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore'.

This was life for the nation; the people were alive from the death of Egypt and the death of the Red Sea — both these were ways of escape from death. But the anointing was an appointment into everlasting life. Because of it life was constantly commanded by God for the whole nation. For them this lay in the personal accession to God granted to every man by means of the priesthood. This was immediately and specifically demonstrated to them upon the occasion of the first great anointing, for as soon as Aaron was anointed, his own sons were made priests too. With Aaron they were granted access to God also. Before the eyes of the whole nation another four men were symbolically born again and installed into office, and this was for all the people. The royal priesthood meant that the chosen generation was a holy nation also.

This priestly anointing was superior to all other anointings; it was: (1) a special 'creation' of God; (2) created for use in His house alone. It was created for the few — the hidden priestly office had far less functional members in it than the more spectacular public prophetic office. God's instructions were that this anointing may only be poured upon priests when fully dressed in their clothes; it had to be their final layer of clothing, their habit — they lived in it. These men became partakers of the common anointing of God's house; for the Tabernacle itself, with all its pieces of furniture, its instruments and soft furnishings, had also been anointed with the identical oil. Theirs was an inclusive anointing, they shared it in common with the house; but it was as exclusive as it was inclusive, for nothing and no-one else was included within its scope and use.

It is salutary to reflect on the fact that neither prophet nor king was in view at that time. The latter office did not then exist in Israel, and when it was later introduced the sacred anointing oil was not used for it. The reason for this is that both these offices were inferior to the priesthood. The proof of this is the very fact that they were not allowed to share in the glory of the sacred anointing. God prohibited its use for anything and anyone not directly connected with His Tabernacle; the priesthood

was the higher service. Only death awaited the person who presumed to use the sacred anointing for anything else, for by God's decision everything else was classed as profane. Although later God commanded others than priests to be anointed, it was understood by all that theirs was a different anointing. The significance of this realisation may best be expressed in this way: the anointing bestowed upon priests was the anointing; the anointing bestowed upon others was an anointing.

In the New Testament the superiority of the priestly anointing over that of kings and prophets is most distinctly revealed. The writer of the Hebrews letter exhorts his readers to 'consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus', telling us also that He is 'as a Son over His own house', and that we are that house if we hold fast 'the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end'. Further to that, being members of His house, we are graciously included among the holy brethren who are partakers of the heavenly calling.

The priestly Anointing was in itself most holy unto the Lord, and was of an entirely different nature from that which was used when men were anointed unto any other office. God dictated its contents and composition to Moses and gave him careful directions for its blending. He had it made precious and holy for Himself, to be kept in His house and handled exclusively by priests. It was unique in Israel; it was preserved in the holy place out of reach of the ordinary man. Moses never received, nor did he give any directions about anointing for any office other than that of priest. It appears that what was used for anointing prophets and kings could be just plain olive oil, taken up as it came to hand and used as the need arose.

The Crown of the Anointing

By the Lord's command the apothecary created the holy Anointing for the priesthood by adding to the olive oil five 'principal spices'; these he compounded together and suspended in olive oil, entirely changing its nature. When used ceremoniously, olive oil used alone stood for the person of the Holy Ghost; but when it was united with the spices in this

manner it represented Christ after the Spirit, or, in other words, the Spirit of Christ. The phrase, 'Spirit of Christ' refers to the entire inner, eternal life of the person known on earth as Jesus of Nazareth. It implies the concentrated essence of His nature, His disposition, temperament, attitude and whole self. It was the secret determinative spring from which His outward life derived and was displayed in His humanity; it is specially connected with the will. This will be considered in greater detail later in the chapter.

Poured upon a man, the Anointing was the highest honour he could possibly have; so great was the meaning of this ministration that it is spoken of as 'the crown of the Anointing'. Bestowed upon the man as the final act of the rite of ordination, it was intended to be his divine coronation. Compared with it, earthly crowns and crownings have no worth; it was so holy that to act in any way contrary to it meant certain death. Before this coronation, the man was only a priest-presumptive, but being crowned he was entirely sanctified into office as a royal priest unto God and the people. Thereafter he was fully consecrated to the work and his hands were filled with the sacrifices of God immediately. This priestly Anointing is the Old Testament counterpart of the Uncion spoken of by John, and is bestowed by God upon all those who are baptised into the body of the Lord Jesus Christ; it is shared alike by Jesus the High priestly Head and the entire membership of His priestly body.

We see then that before God elected and installed the priests, He had already prepared for them this special Anointing which incorporated in it something extra from Himself. That extra something was a compound of five things; five is the number of grace, so on whomsoever it was poured it represented an impartation of the personal grace of the Lord Jesus to that person. This grace must be carefully distinguished from the grace of forgiveness, or any act in which He engages, or any work or gift He bestows — charismatic or otherwise. It has to do with the character of the Lord, His deportment — His spirit as delineated above [*on the previous page*] — rather than His words and deeds; they are a result, this is their cause.

Whenever in scripture the act of pouring on or anointing with oil is involved, it always symbolises some kind of spiritual enduement by God. This is basic in every God-ordained anointing for any office, but by super-adding those powdered ingredients to the oil of priestly Unction, God was meaning far more. For the priesthood He deliberately changed the character of the oil. So greatly was it changed, that in Psalm 133 it is called an ointment; the additives had given it 'body'.

Of the House of Aaron

There was neither human advantage nor spiritual virtue in being born of the Aaronic line. The baby Levite had no inherent spiritual qualities imparted to him by natural birth; he was not a better man because of it. This is clearly shown in the story of the terrible presumption and dreadful end of Nadab and Abihu. Both these were natural Sons of Aaron, and therefore by all normal expectations were greatly privileged beyond others. In common with their father and brothers, the right of priesthood was theirs, and at their ordination the Anointing was poured upon them. Nadab, being Aaron's firstborn, was next in line for the high-priesthood upon his father's decease; but these two brothers' hearts were defiled and evil with pride and jealousy.

Envious of their father, one fatal day they deliberately trespassed into the forbidden inner sanctuary of God to offer strange fire before the Lord, and for their sin and folly they died right there before the Lord. They died because they broke the repeatedly stated rules governing their priesthood, and presumed beyond their calling; it was entirely their own fault. The Anointing brought them into God's service and as far as the veil, but not beyond it. Self-will drove them to sin and folly, and for it they forfeited both their life and their ministry. However, despite failure, the priests, as no other company in the Old Testament, displayed with some degree of precision the greater fulness of blessing there is in the gospel of Jesus Christ for us.

There are several fairly lengthy portions of the Bible devoted to setting forth the details of the elevation of the Aaronic family to the priesthood. In these, and especially in the chapter dealing with the original

inaugural ceremony, we find that what took place with these men anointed to a kind of new birth. This is exactly what it was meant to symbolise. Four easily discernible stages should be noted; they were: (1) stripped of their former clothes; (2) bathed entirely in or at the Laver; (3) clothed in priestly robes; (4) anointed. All these things were done to them that they may minister unto the Lord. The ordination was administered entirely by Moses, the Mediator of the Covenant, at one time and place as one transaction, complete in four simple parts. The symbolism is as follows — these men were: (1) completely stripped of their old habit of life (in order to enter a new); (2) washed entirely clean (not a stitch or a stain or even a smell of the former manner of life must remain); (3) dressed in their new clothes, (with them they put on the new life); (4) anointed (at once crowned, clad, called and commissioned in the Spirit).

This is a marvellous prefiguration of the glories of New Covenant regeneration. By God's grace we all may experience the reality of death to the old man, and resurrection into meaningful life by personal identification with Christ on the cross and in the tomb. Each priest of the New Testament must, under the instructions and personal ministrations of Christ, altogether put off the old man with his former manner of life; this must be done so completely that as a consequence he may enter into an entirely new ministerial life. God does not anoint the old man and his manner of life; He told Moses expressly that the anointing was not to be poured on man's flesh. The new vestments of the priests were made and worn expressly to exhibit their new spirits and receive the anointing; figuratively their garments displayed their regenerate soul life; symbolically by the ceremony they were turned inside out.

For the purposes of God and our instruction the whole episode, though enacted in the flesh, was intended to be understood and interpreted as being entirely spiritual. The Anointing flowed over their bonnets and ran down on to their clothes as though it was being poured upon their spirits. Their outer clothing became soaked and impregnated with it, indicating God's intention and ability to saturate the spirits of men with the Spirit of Christ. Other things also took place at that time, but these

four were fundamental to them all and vital to their initiation into the ministry.

Aaron and his sons were washed, clothed with heavenly (in the sense that they were designed by God) garments, anointed with the Anointing and installed in office all on the same day. Their initiation ceremony was integrated with and incorporated into the greater ceremony with which the Tabernacle was erected and the system of national worship was inaugurated; it was a great day in Israel. Beside being the logical thing to do, it was a vitally important thing to do, for this shows all was one. It was done this way that the importance of the Anointing may be put into true perspective and assume its true proportions in our eyes. It is absolutely vital we see this, for the sacrifices which granted Israel continued existence and standing and favour with God could not be made without the priests. In the Pentecost of the New Testament, when God established His Tabernacle / Temple / Church on earth, the hundred and twenty were simultaneously baptised in the Spirit, clothed with power and anointed with the Anointing from on high.

God, as always when fulfilling a type, does everything meticulously, having regard to all details. The Unction has to do with the gift and function of eternal life; it is implanted at regeneration and abides with every child of God for ever. It is the proof of his election by God, the seal of his elevation to priesthood, and the authorisation and directive of his energies for the service this entails.

Anointing has to do with other offices and lesser functions than this also; it may be given for a temporary operation or unto partial or limited objectives according to the mind of God. In the Old Testament too it could be repeated and often needed to be, but there is no need for anointing to be less than permanent in the New Covenant. Once imparted by God, only disobedience to Him will forfeit it. God never withdraws it because He has no further use for His anointed. He may elect to lay aside a vessel for a while, but He does not thereby withdraw the anointing. Paul knew the combined truth and abiding power of both these classes of anointing. He rejoiced that he was a son,

unctionised by his Father and endued with power, and he also knew he was an apostle, endowed with gifts and ministries, and anointed for that office and function.

A Precious Ointment

It is a remarkable fact that nowhere in the New Testament are we exhorted to obtain or experience the anointing of the Spirit. Such a thing is never mentioned. The only direct references to the Unction and the children of God are in 1 John 2:20-27 and 2 Corinthians 1:21, where it is asserted by both apostles that we all have it. Similarly Luke records in the Acts of the Apostles that the only persons who referred to anointing are Peter, who once uses it in 10:38, and the whole company that prayed with him in one accord in 4:27; on both occasions it was used concerning the person of our Lord Jesus Christ only. Beside these and a verse in Hebrews 1, the New Testament scriptures are devoid of reference to the subject, and there is a very good reason for this.

The New Testament plainly sets forth the Person who in the Old Testament was but obscurely alluded to in constructions or drapes or concoctions or odours. The oils, lights, shapes, suggestions, positions, feasts, buildings, promises, prophecies, hints, types and shadows of the Old Testament, all combine to point to the Christ who was then completely unknown. Among these things they so devoutly revered and wholeheartedly believed and religiously practised, the Anointing held very great meaning. It was one of those things which, together with all the others, presented to the senses the unknown Christ. It is doubtful whether either the apothecary who compounded the ointment or the priest who was anointed with it, or perhaps even Moses who received from God the prescription for it and first used it, knew all that it represented of the nature and character and ministry of Christ. But even though it may not have meant all this to them, it certainly did to God, and that is why He so carefully gave instructions for its composition and insisted on its controlled use.

So we see that in this matter of the Anointing one of the major differences between the Old and New Testaments is clearly pointed out

and illustrated for us. The Old Testament dealt in things, bits, pieces; it was evanescent and transient, at best it was partial; but the New Testament presents the whole, real, eternal person of Christ. Perhaps one of the major differences between the old and new testaments is most vividly highlighted by this very subject of the anointing. The Old Testament occasionally uses such phrases as 'the Lord's Anointed' or 'Thine Anointed'; nevertheless it may be spoken of as generally pointing to the Anointing and occasions of anointing, but not to the Anointed. On the other hand the New Testament almost exclusively points to the Anointed One, seldom to the Anointing, and, Jesus' excepted, never to occasions of anointing. The reason for this should be too obvious for explanation.

Of old it was the Anointing that marked out the man upon whom it was poured, for only its bestowal privileged him to be what he was and to do what he did. Without it he was unauthorised, and to attempt special service apart from it could warrant death. However men in spiritual decline may regard it, God did not allow it, only His Son may serve Him, and the Anointing oil itself was one of the most wonderful Old Testament types of the blessed person of Christ. Within the all-embracing Anointing which soaked the robes and enveloped the priest there stood a mere human being, but what covered him was the Son of God. Before God's eyes every man was Christ, had to be Christ; wasn't he living, moving, serving in Christ, the Tabernacle?

The composition of the Anointing was unique by God's commandment. Its actual creation was an art. God gave to Moses an exact list of the ingredients He required, together with the correct amounts to be used and a divine apothecary to create it. The end product was a revelation of His heart; it was to be most precious. We need only gather together some of the words He used when giving His instructions to Moses to realise this. The very first words on the subject were 'take unto thee principal spices'.

That was the note He started on; this Anointing was to be of major importance. Nothing of a secondary nature was to be considered; the principal spices only were to be used; the finest quality and the first

order. He was going to create something of highest worth because it **was** to represent an indispensable principle and a principality of supreme rank. Secondly, scattered throughout the text we discover the words 'pure' and 'sweet', both of which are used to describe either the quality or nature or flavour or odour of the particular spices to be used. Thirdly, the Lord carefully insisted that the standard by which the spices were to be weighed or valued was the standard of God. Secular and commercial standards must not be introduced; the standard of evaluation and weight was to be the shekel of the sanctuary.

The Shekel of the Sanctuary

By its very name the shekel of the sanctuary was not of this world but of God; it was a special shekel which had to do with redemption money. It was related to the lamb and sacrifice and blood and deliverance; it was the holy price set by God indicating the value of the souls of men. Being mere money, it bore no real relationship to their eternal worth, it was simply the nominal sum set by Him within the system of atonements then because of necessity according to His gracious purposes. Redemption money had strictly to do with ongoing redemption; it speaks of the Redeemer and the quality of life in His blood.

On leaving Egypt and before reaching Canaan, upon God's orders, Moses conducted a census of all the men of Israel. Following His instructions carefully, he first separated the tribe of Levi from the twelve. Of them he numbered every living male from birth upwards; of the rest of the tribes he only numbered those of twenty years of age and upward. As may be expected there was a great disparity between the two totals, for the ratio was eleven to one; the number of grown males of the eleven tribes greatly exceeded the number of males of Levi. Following this, Moses counted the firstborn males of the eleven tribes and then, by a complicated manoeuvre of subtraction, balanced out the firstborn against the sum of the Levites. Again there were many more men of the eleven tribes than there were Levites; they could not be equated man for man. God therefore ordered the difference to be adjusted by down-payments of money. For every man above the

number of Levites a sum of five shekels of silver had to be given into the treasury. By this the Lord was showing that all Israel had been redeemed by grace, for silver stands for redemption and five is the number of grace.

He was also keeping clear among them the memory of the Passover — the Levites represented the firstborn. The fact that all firstborn males above the total number of Levites had to pay this sum reveals that God had set the value of every man at five shekels. Not that this is a man's true worth; but by setting a figure which represented redeeming grace, God showed all Israel that the Levites were valued no more by Him than they all — every man was equally valued at five shekels apiece. The Levites understood quite clearly from the beginning that they were selected by grace alone and were worth no more to God than any of their brethren.

Thus it came about that the Lord spoke of the shekel of the sanctuary as distinct from the shekel of the market place. This specification ensured exactitude. Silver is a soft metal, and by constant use in course of time it wears away. Therefore, should a shekel other than the redemption money have been used, the weights of the spices would have varied, with the result that the precision of the Anointing would have been lost. In that case it would have been valueless to God for His purposes.

The weight and volume of the Anointing when complete were as important to the Lord as was the principality of the spices; precision as well as principality was necessary to the end product. The reasons for this were: (1) the compound had to represent to a degree of perfection the unchanging grace of the Lord Jesus, which is utterly consistent, constant and invariable; (2) it represents therefore the unvarying nature of the life-anointing or Unction of all the children of God. This is further underlined by the fact that it had to be made in exact quantities too. It could not be made in smaller or greater quantities as occasion may be thought to demand. Multiplicities of the exact quality and quantity could be produced, but not parts of it. Every individual anointing must be applied from the one Anointing.

The Tabernacle of the Congregation

When the Lord gave commandment about the use of the Anointing, He was most definite concerning the order of application; it was to be twofold. Its prime use was to 'anoint the tabernacle of the congregation', and its second use was to anoint the priests. Now when the Lord referred to the Tabernacle, He spoke of it by several names. Each of these held special significance in relationship to its purpose and use; it emphasised the particular matters of which He was speaking, or the circumstances and context of His remarks. However, by whatever name He called it at any particular time, the Tabernacle was at all times the aggregate of the meaning of all the names. It never varied; if the Lord called it His tabernacle, or 'the tabernacle', or referred to it as 'the tabernacle of witness', it was still 'the tabernacle of the congregation' as well. The change in form of speech only referred to a particular function or purpose of the Tabernacle to which the Lord wished to draw attention at that time. In the scripture under consideration the Lord specifically calls it 'the tabernacle of the congregation', that is, it was the tent of the people.

The Tabernacle was constructed purposely to be the largest and most distinctive tent in the camp; it was to be God's dwelling-place among men. In other words it represented Jesus of Bethlehem and Nazareth and Galilee and Israel and Golgotha, the Son of God manifest in the flesh, The Mystery of God and godliness. As John puts it, 'the Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of an only-begotten with a father, full of grace and truth'.

In many ways, far too numerous to mention now, the Tabernacle was absolutely different from all other tents. Not the least of these differences lay in the fact that it was the anointed tent. Not only so, it was also the tent in which the Anointing was kept; it was always retained there. Now it is just conceivable that some or even all the children of Israel anointed their tents too, but (and here is the whole point) upon pain of death they were forbidden to make any anointing oil like the Anointing of the Lord. The Tabernacle, like Jesus in His day, was indeed the tabernacle of the congregation, and like Him also it

was the Tabernacle of God. Jesus was the Christ, the Anointed of the Lord, unique among men.

The Lord named a number of things He wished to be placed within His courts and anointed — it is a unique catalogue; there were seven; seven is the number of mystical perfection. These all were to stand within the outer fabric of the Tabernacle, some within the actual tent itself, and with it partake of the same sacred ministration. The Anointing itself, added to these seven, brings the aggregate to eight, the number of newness of life; this perfectly accords with Jesus' words, 'I am the resurrection and the life'.

The Tabernacle, standing at the centre of the camp in the midst of the people was the testimony that while living among men, yet uncrucified, Jesus was the resurrection and the life, anointed within and without, entirely sanctified by and unto the Father to do His will. What a wonderful testimony this is to the person and life of Jesus Christ; He was perfect and peerless among men, Emmanuel. Tabernacling among men, He was the sum of the virtues of God, compounded into pure, sweet manhood. The 'Apothecary' who compounded His Godhead and Manhood in the Oil of the Spirit was the Father; His art made Jesus by the Holy Ghost.

The second use of the Anointing was its application to the priests upon the day of their ordination. These men had to live and function in the anointed Tabernacle, or to put it another way, they had to minister and serve within the Anointed. It is most natural then, as well as most necessary, that God should say of the anointed articles, 'whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy'. Those priests were the servants of the Lord God of the whole earth in a peculiar way. In order to minister to Him, they had to handle the various pieces of equipment within His house, and those things were as the holies of holies.

An Holy Anointing Oil

God can only accept and be satisfied with that which is of the very holiest quality of all. Somehow then He had to find a way to make His servants holy, for unless He did so they could not touch and handle the

holiest things. Therefore to finalise their ordination, the Lord commanded that the priests also should be anointed with the identical oil of Christ, thus becoming one with the Tabernacle. With this they were entirely sanctified unto the Lord and officially consecrated unto Him for the ministry.

It was the Lord who had the oil created. He chose the spices for it and treasured it. He said, 'this shall be an holy anointing oil unto me'. The Lord was as emphatic about this latter as He was about the composition of it. Earlier He had referred to it as 'an oil of holy ointment' and 'an ointment compound'; finally with divine emphasis He gives it its official name — HOLY ANOINTING OIL.

Hereby the Lord is drawing attention to the third person of the Trinity, the blessed Holy Ghost; oil always refers distinctively to Him. When the apothecary made the Anointing, he first compounded and blended the spices together, then he took ordinary olive oil and mixed them in it; from that moment it became holy unto the Lord, something much more than oil. In a unique way it represented the compound virtues of the soul of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God. It typified Jesus Christ after the Spirit; that is, what He was by virtue of His virgin birth through being generated into humanity by the Father through the Holy Spirit. He was 'the tabernacle the Lord pitched and not men', 'the holy thing' that was born of Mary, the 'Saviour which is Christ the Lord'.

When the Lord used the three adjectives — pure, sweet and holy — to describe the priestly Anointing, He was surely describing the incomparable beauty of Jesus' essential manhood. Truly He was pure and sweet and holy among men, a king by nature, disposition and character. Perhaps nothing affords us a surer insight into His perfect righteousness and innate fitness than these spices in combination. The first adjective, 'pure', by which Myrrh is described is derived from a root meaning 'free-flowing'. It is of utmost significance that when choosing a word to best describe His Son, God first thought of 'pure'. First and basically the Anointing must be pure. The Myrrh must be fresh, as new, and in its original state, free from hardness or staleness; warm, melted, free-flowing. Jesus must be seen to be unimpeded

within Himself — available.

The word also means wild, and in this connection indicates that the Myrrh had to be gathered from the tree in its natural state, uncultivated. Jesus was not a product of His age or of civilization. He was naturally and purely Son of God and Son of Man, free, open, flowing, unprocessed. Who among men flowed so naturally and freely toward His fellows as He? Bowels of compassion and sympathetic tears constantly flowed out to the people and their needs; He was always available and so easily moved by the sufferings of others. Jesus is purest love.

Free-flowing as He was, He was always sweet and holy too. Sweetness of soul bestowed abundantly upon others does not always achieve its sweetening ends though. Inevitably it meets rebuffs also, but under such conditions Jesus never grew bitter, nor allowed His open-heartedness and bowels of compassion to be affected. Even to Judas, who betrayed Him, He remained sweet. To Peter also, who denied Him, and to Pilate who condemned Him to death, the Lord remained sweetly pure. He could not be soured by others, but has sweetened the lives of so many.

His holiness was recognised by all. Even devils proclaimed it, so also did the thief on the cross. Peter felt it in his boat, and begged the Lord to depart from him; His presence was unbearable to the man then — He was so holy. And on the cross itself, hanging in abandonment and shame in the dark with all sin upon Him, His holiness overcame the iniquity of us all. All this and so much more was in the Anointing itself, for these things are only suggested by the adjectives which do but precede the nouns, describing its substance.

Myrrh

If order of priority is indicated in God's choice of ingredients, it is easy to see why Myrrh is given first place among the four chief spices. Firstly it is a natural exudation from a shrub-like tree; while all the others come from plants of lesser strength and stature. Secondly, throughout the East, it had a far wider range of uses than any of the

other spices. Thirdly, it is one of the most, if not the most, aromatic of substances; certainly it was the most pungent of the four. Fourthly, it was used as a purifying agent. Fifthly, it has beautifying properties. Sixthly, it has pain-killing, and therefore comforting and restorative power. Seventhly, it is a preservative.

None of the others have quite the same number of uses, so it may be for this reason they do not occupy the first place. Perhaps another reason may lie in the fact that Myrrh was gathered from a living source, whereas in order to obtain each of the other ingredients, the plant from which it was taken must die. Myrrh drops down naturally from the growing tree, hardening into gum upon the outer bark or the ground. Therefore, to be used, the gum either needed to be heated and caused to flow again, or else caught as it flowed freshly from the tree; it had to be moving, flowing, living in this sense.

It cannot be by accident that Myrrh was one of the three gifts presented so early in life by the Magi to Him who was born King. Throughout the whole of His earthly life from birth to death we may trace many reasons why it was included in the Anointing — the pungent aroma of His humanity permeates the Gospels, the power of His presence brings Him into notice everywhere. He just could not be hid. His beauty of character and inner purity earned Him the right to call Himself the good shepherd, and enabled Him to move in every stratum of society untouched by sin, purifying those who joined themselves to Him. Pilate, who sentenced Him to death, declared that he found no fault in Him; He was perfect.

On the cross He was offered the opportunity to take advantage of the well known pain-killing properties of Myrrh. It would have allayed the suffering, restoring false comforts to His soul, so He refused it. If He could drink to the dregs the cup His Father gave Him to drink, He would be able to pay to the full the price demanded for redemption, and He wished to do it in absolute command of His senses, fully conscious of what He was doing. He brought all His undimmed and undiminished powers to bear upon the task of removing sin. For Him Myrrh was for outward use only; it was not to be taken for peace of

mind or comfort of soul, or to allay pain; He did not receive it; He provided it entirely for the Anointing.

The Lord, by Myrrh, is shown to be the 'man of sorrows and acquainted with grief', who fixed His heart, set His marred visage, and stayed clearheaded to the end. He approached death as a conqueror and banished it, suffusing its bitterness with the sweetness of His Life. Hallelujah! Following His death, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, determined to preserve His sacred body, brought a hastily mixed preparation of myrrh and aloes, and begged His remains from Pilate that they might inter Him in some sort of dignity. Wrapping the spices in the grave clothes round the body, they laid Him in the tomb, intending after the weekend to come and embalm Him properly. Aloes, a more bitter preservative than Myrrh, also played a part in God's plan to preserve the body of Jesus incorruptible until His resurrection. So it was that God chose Myrrh as the first of the principal spices of the Anointing.

Cinnamon and Calamus

The weight of the Myrrh was balanced in the mixture by equal weights of Cinnamon and Calamus. Each of these by nature smelled and tasted sweet. The purpose for their inclusion was that they should together offset the bitterness of Myrrh, and add sweetness to the whole.

Cinnamon is a perfume made from the inner bark of the plant from which it is taken; it speaks of that which lies as a protective cushion between the hard, rough outer bark and the inner sap wood.

Functionally it both prevents the sweet juices of the inward life from escaping and wasting, and feeds the outer bark with life-giving sap, enabling it to maintain its vital protective role. Obviously then, except the plant die, it is unable to give its tender inner sweetness to the apothecary for his ointment. Cinnamon indicates the gentle, lamb-like nature of Jesus and tells us that greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

Calamus is a root; it represents the means of sustenance and life. It also refers to strength and stability, and is directly connected with our Lord Jesus 'as a root out of a dry ground'. Primarily it speaks of His sure

unchanging manhood, and points to His virgin birth, proclaiming that His roots are in God. Again, by connecting together His Godhead and manhood, it speaks of royalty, 'I am the root and offspring of David', He said. He is both the root from which David sprang and also the offspring from that root. But chiefly Calamus directs us to Jesus' hidden beginning and the source and means of life. This combination of sweet root and sweet inner bark is intended to show us that His whole life from lowest hidden root to topmost visible branch was sweet. Therefore all the free-flowing sorrows of His life were pure; they were never bitter within Him — nothing embittered Him.

Not the compulsory renunciation of all things in order to be born made Him bitter, neither did the self-denials of His earthly life, nor the contradiction of sinners against Him. He was not made sour by the dreadfulness of being forsaken by His God, or by the bearing of sin or by being made the scapegoat, or by being rejected by men, undeserved as that was. Malice and calumny and brutality and hatred were rained continuously upon Him, but He never drank in any bitterness therefrom; He remained sweet. His root was not a root of bitterness, but a root of sweetness; God was His heavenly Father and sweet Mary was His earthly mother. His sorrow was always godly sorrow, sweetened with utmost love. Sympathy and understanding, with compassionate regard for others, filled His life; it was utterly redemptive, both in daily practice and final achievement.

Cassia

However, a man cannot be all inward; he must be outward as well; the inward life-state developing from such a sweet root must have an outer covering. This is why Cassia is next introduced. It was to be equal in weight to the Myrrh, and equal also to the combined weight of Cinnamon and Calamus. Cassia is an outer bark, the natural covering and discernible appearance of the whole plant; it is also the immediate point of contact that we feel and touch. It reveals that what Jesus was within He also was without; with Him there was no contradiction between the inward and the outward man.

Observing His life and ministry we see that sometimes outwardly He

appeared hard, as when He refused to heal Lazarus' sickness; or rough, as in His handling of the Pharisees; or ruthless as when He whipped the money changers in the Temple. He cured Lazarus' sickness in an entirely original way, after letting it run its course in the man. He dealt with the Pharisees harshly in order to shock them into realisation of their sin. He whipped the money changers and cattle handlers out of the Temple because they were making merchandise of souls.

Whenever He behaved that way it was because those situations demanded it. Unfortunately to some people such attitudes and actions were at times inexplicable and seemingly uncharacteristic; they therefrom felt resentful or disappointed, but all these should be regarded as the necessary outer bark of the tree of life.

Jesus was very tough as well as very gentle, as all His persecutors and judges were to discover. He never broke, or gave in, or deviated one iota from His purpose. He died as He lived, a green tree. But all these things were but the necessary bark, the outer manifestation of His well-rounded and fully developed life. Dr Young derives Cassia from a word meaning Amber; mixed into the Anointing it added colour to the whole. This is the colour Ezekiel mentions when he had a vision of God's throne with the likeness of a man above upon it. Amber glowed with the living fire of God's glory. The prophet was trying to describe the indescribable; overcome, he fell down upon his face as though dead. Small wonder!

Cassia, like Calamus, alludes to Christ's royalty. He looked a king, He behaved like a king, He is a king. These spices were royal in meaning, and most excellent in combination. Outwardly Jesus appeared among men as the lion of the tribe of Judah, king of beasts, amber in colour, royal in stature. Inwardly He was the Lamb of God, sweet in nature and life, and gentle in disposition. Deeply He was God, root of David's royalty and glory, King of kings, Lord of lords; plainly He was Man, tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin, a man of sorrows acquainted with grief of God and man.

Now the beauty of the anointing oil was the way in which all these spices were compounded together by the apothecary's art. The oil was

an artistic creation by God through a man. First the spices had to be pounded to dust with pestle and mortar; then, according to a formula not revealed, they were mixed into and blended with pure olive oil. This oil itself was extracted from ripe fruit gathered from the olive tree and crushed until the precious golden oil flowed from its bruised and broken flesh.

Surely there is hardly anything God could have done more plainly to show us by the Spirit the whole life of the Man Christ Jesus, and to reveal Him as the Man of Sorrows. This oil had all — root, life, inward and outward manhood, sweetness and purity, fruit and colour, strength and primacy. The Anointing sets forth Christ Jesus the Lord, in all the excellent glory of His person as the resurrection and the life, Son of God and Son of Man.

Chapter 4 — Prophets, Judges and Kings

It will be of value at this point to note something of singular interest in scripture concerning the order of institution of the various lesser offices mentioned above. In doing so, we shall observe that this order is quite natural, for beside partaking of the very nature of things, it is woven into the fabric of the Book.

Reading the whole, we discover that firstly, in Genesis, God gives us His story of the dynamic beginnings of all things necessary for His purposes. This information is followed by the Exodus, with its account of the provision of a Mediator, the story of the dual Passovers and the nation born in that great 'day of redemption'. Here also we are acquainted with the giving of the Law, and the establishing of the house of God, with its priestly ministry of service and sacrificial-atonement-salvation system.

Together with other related topics essential to the national life, worship, conduct and personal holiness, this same theme continues right through the book of Leviticus. Then Numbers furnishes us with numerous details and incidents in connection with the nation and its journeyings through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein God tried them, to know what was in their hearts and whether or not they would walk in

His laws.

After this comes Deuteronomy, which reveals how Moses prepared the people for entrance into the long-promised land, by applying the Law a second time to their hearts. During the whole of this period, extending right from the foundation of the world, anointing had not been mentioned in connection with any individual other than a member of the Aaronic family.

Now there comes a change of national leadership. There is no outward ceremony of anointing involved in it though, only the unseen transition of authority from Moses to Joshua, who is nominated by God to replace Moses in office. In the book of Joshua, we are introduced to another of the great functions of the Lord Jesus in course of His mediatorial office and ministry, namely that of prophet. Working in conjunction with the heavenly man, Joshua led Israel into the land wherein all the promises of God should be fulfilled unto them. His victorious ministry was accompanied by unique miracles, unparalleled in all the Old Testament.

Leaving the book of Joshua, we come immediately upon the record of the Judges, occasionally called saviours. These Judges were raised up of God and fulfilled their ministry to the Children of Israel during the very difficult days when every man was doing 'that which was right in his own eyes'. Throughout this whole time Israel had been and was still a theocracy, like Moses and Joshua before them, the Judges were given a 'power from on high' to judge and lead the people in the name of Jehovah their king. They represented to Israel the important magisterial aspect of God's being and function.

About this period, during a time of judgement upon the land, and because of the prevailing famine, a man named Elimelech left his inheritance and took his family over to the land of Moab. It is about this incident that the idyllic little book of Ruth was written and is included in scripture. Passing through its four chapters, we are introduced to the fourth great mediatorial function of the Messianic office of our Lord Jesus Christ — Kingship.

This commences with the books of Samuel, otherwise called the first and second books of the Kings. In them we see how Samuel, the Prophet / Judge, was instructed of God to anoint Israel's first two kings. Doing so, he inaugurated in Israel this further manifestation of the glories and fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus in the revelation given in the Bible, the four major offices of the Lord Jesus are introduced to us in this order: Priest, Prophet, Judge, King. By this fourfold ministry, the Lord administers salvation in His kingdom.

In connection with the foregoing, we should note that the real purpose behind the practice of anointing was appointment into an office which could not be held apart from it. The act implied sanctification in both its senses, namely: (1) actual separation from a former manner of life and works into something entirely new, and (2) installation and symbolic conditioning of the person into it. In the New Testament the Greek word 'exousia', meaning 'authority, privilege', might best represent the idea behind the truth of anointing. Whenever it is used of a servant of God, the idea of sanctification is being strongly presented to the mind.

In the Old Testament, when a man functioned in God's earthly kingdom under the anointing, in a shadowy, unsubstantial way he prophetically projected to his generation something which spoke of the Lord Jesus' present heavenly life and work. Of course, service and work were involved, but the anointing was only required for these in so far as they were included and intended in the course of duties involved in the particular office being filled. It is very necessary to bear mmmnd that it was precisely for the discharge of these privileged duties that the office was created. Vital and actual though each was, they were carnal and not spiritual, for all of them were only types of the real and eternal things they represented; 'figures of the true', as we are told.

Among the four offices mentioned above is that of Judge. This is an office as onerous as it is necessary; to discharge the duties of a judge involves much hard and conscientious work. Yet, although it is of such an indispensable and invaluable service to God and man, in connection with this appointment there is no word in scripture concerning anointing. The reason for this may lie in the fact that the office of Judge

was often combined with another office, as in the case of Samuel, or David, or Solomon. Perhaps the anointing involved in the appointment to the greater included authorisation for the lesser also, but this is neither clearly discernible nor actually stated in the text. However that may be, it is readily seen that by the act of anointing, someone was set aside unto sacred office. To that person it was a sovereign act of God, a mark of approval, a badge of honour, a bestowal of authority. Beside this, it was a prefiguring of a more glorious age to follow, when that which was then foreshadowed should emerge in its true spiritual and eternal substance.

Qualifications for Office

Viewing the truth of the anointing panoramically within the Book, something further of significance is noticeable, namely this: originally, before appointing any persons to office, God required of them one or both of the two following conditions: (1) birth qualification, (2) personal fitness. The first of these is very prominently brought out in the matter of the Priesthood, and to a lesser degree in Kingship also, although in the latter, owing to the confusion caused by usurpation, this is not quite so clear. Nevertheless it is there, and it is emphasised to us in the New Testament through such statements as 'Jesus, Thou Son of David'.

It is still less defined in the office of Prophet; phrases such as 'the sons of the prophets' are used in scripture with a great degree of ambiguity. For instance the intimate phrase 'my father, my father', was upon the lips of Elisha who had no family or blood relationship whatsoever with Elijah. There was also a man who, although he said he was not a prophet or the son of a prophet, was nevertheless a prophet to the nation. Presumably, beside the fact that he had no birth qualification, there had been no formal recognition of him, and no public or private ceremony of anointing either, yet prophet he was.

Other instances could be added to make the point that, although literal sonship was not a qualifying factor for election to the prophetic office, neither was its absence a disqualifying factor. Nevertheless, the father-son relationship was vitally alive and present in the whole concept,

ideology and language of the prophets. This is an important discovery, for by it the following truth emerges, namely that guarantee of continuity of office in Israel eventually passed from the natural to the spiritual realm. By this God revealed that spiritual relationship and fitness was far more important than mere natural family connections. This fact powerfully points the greater and more important truth of the superiority of spiritual heredity over natural heredity. Beside this, it also unmistakably emphasises all that underlay God's original intention, and graduates into the whole concept of ministry as it is revealed in the New Testament.

The second qualification for the anointing is personal fitness. This is specially emphasised in connection with the priesthood. In Leviticus 21 a whole section of scripture is devoted to listing the many things which were regarded by God as disqualifications from ministry in the priests' office. Some of these were of a serious nature, others were seemingly trivial; all were of a physical order. Spiritual heredity and life and condition, although typified here, were not then under consideration. At the time of the inauguration of the national priesthood there was no question of spiritual worthiness; priesthood was then by natural birthright, plus personal fitness, plus ordination. Providing the men were: (1) Aaron's sons, (2) of the correct age, (5) perfectly whole and healthy, they were installed into office. This, of course, was over and above moral and social blamelessness as required by the Law, but those things applied to everybody else in the nation, as well as the priests.

Considering these things in relationship to the monarchy, a further instructive lesson in the truth of heredity emerges. Samuel, the last great prophet of God in the era of the Judges, was commanded by God to anoint Saul to be captain over His inheritance — that is of God's people. Saul was literally a giant of a man; he towered head and shoulders above the rest of the people; so great was he that his armour was later discovered to be altogether too big for David, his successor. Eventually, however, he proved to be a complete spiritual failure, and was removed from office.

The demotion and death of Saul and the promotion of David in his place reveals that, although in the beginning of kingship the Lord laid emphasis on physical superiority, He only did so in order that He might lead the people's concepts of royalty from the lower to a higher principle of majesty. By this He established the incontestable superiority of spiritual worth over physical stature in this realm, and broke right away from the accepted procedure of natural heredity and royal succession. Removing Saul and replacing the Benjamite with a man of Judah, the Lord wrested kingship from one tribe and family and gave it to another tribe and family. Quite deliberately God placed spiritual heredity before physical fitness and natural birthright. He found David a man after His own heart, who would fulfil all His will, and installed him in the throne, that sovereignty should pass from David to Solomon and thence onward by birthright to succeeding generations.

This action of God was violated in the reign of Rehoboam, causing division in Israel, and the emergence of two nations. But although succession to the throne thereafter continued along the line of natural relationship, it is obvious that the Lord's regard for each succeeding king turned entirely on his spiritual and not his natural heredity.

Whoever recorded the books of Kings and Chronicles comments somewhat cryptically at times that so-and-so walked, or did not walk, as did David his 'father'. Little more need be said; David set such a standard of life and behaviour for the monarchy that every succeeding king was judged by it. Therefore, although it seemed that natural birthright had precedence over spiritual heredity, this was not so.

Looking into the prophetic office, we find that in this ministry there was no recognition of natural heredity at all. A man became a prophet by spiritual gift and enduement alone. There is scarcely a more obvious demonstration (amounting to proof) of this than the manner and results of God's choice when the first seventy elders of Israel were elected to office. From whatever background, tribe or family they were selected, they all prophesied. It is obvious that, where prophets are concerned, the idea of personal or physical fitness for office does not exist at all. In them function has been transferred by God from the natural and

physical realm to the spiritual realm, and the idea of physical fitness or natural birthright has disappeared altogether. By all this, the Lord has illustrated the immutable truth spoken epigrammatically by Paul, 'First that which is natural, afterwards that which is spiritual'. However, for truest life in Christ and all the offices of the New Covenant the two should become one, the natural becoming entirely spiritual, as with Jesus Christ.

Chapter 5 — Two Anointed Shepherds

Cyrus

The whole concept of anointing in relationship to regeneration raises points of view which may be new to many, and to some at first unacceptable. It is generally thought that only the regenerate may be anointed of God, but that conclusion is unsupportable from scripture. In fact in many places scripture reveals the exact opposite to be true, the experience of Cyrus the Persian king being a case in point.

In the short section extending from chapter 44 verse 28 to chapter 45 verse 13 of his book, Isaiah says some revealing things about this man, all turning around this very thing. It is a highly prophetic statement, in which the Lord goes to the unusual length of naming an as yet unborn person, and also gives details of the work he would do for Him and His people. This is quite an exceptional procedure, even for God; throughout the entire Bible there is not another instance of it. Even when His own Son was born, He waited until the annunciation of His birth before disclosing His name, but Cyrus was named by God about a hundred and fifty years before he was born.

Peter was a man surnamed by the Lord, but this happened during his lifetime; in his case the change of name indicated God's intention to convert his life. This same kind of thing also happened to Abraham; by inserting the letters 'ha' into Abram, his original name, God declared his exaltation among men, and, greater than that, his incorporation into God's purposes for the world. In some senses these two men earned their fame, for each in his measure had made some kind of prior response to God, but this was not so with Cyrus. He is unique in

scripture, and holds a very distinctive position among the men whose names and lives contribute to the overall message of the book. He is an outstanding example of a man anointed of the Lord; second to Jesus, perhaps no better illustration of the power of anointing could be found.

Cyrus was a heathen king. It seems that throughout the whole of his life he had no personal contact with or clear knowledge of God whatsoever, yet despite this he served God in a most remarkable way, unparalleled at any time in this world. God actually called him 'My shepherd', a title which unavoidably switches the mind immediately on to His Son. Amazingly, just as though He was talking to His Son, God promised to hold his hand, go before him, gird him and direct all his ways. He also said that Cyrus would perform all His pleasure, that he would freely let go captive Israel, build Jerusalem and restore the Temple. For this purpose God raised him up, saying He would subdue nations before him, loose the loins of kings, open and keep open the two-leaved gates and give him treasures and riches. Beside all this, in a wealth of detail, the Lord committed Himself so to bless this man, that through him the whole earth from east to west may know the one true God.

All this was being spoken of a heathen man to a nation claiming to be the only people on earth that mattered, those who professed to have the one true God for their own. Whatever the treasures of darkness meant to Cyrus we do not know, but to Israel they meant the wealth of the redeeming blood, the miracle of the Red Sea crossing, the ten commandments. To them the hidden riches of secret places were the most precious and glorious things they had, kept secret even from them in the Holy of Holies.

Until their captivity they had been the custodians of earth's greatest treasures. How then could they be given to idolatrous Cyrus? They belonged to the Israelites, not the Persians, yet here is God promising all these things to a complete heathen. More, as if to crown all these seemingly preposterous notions, the man Isaiah, who on God's behalf said Cyrus was the Lord's anointed, was himself the Lord's anointed. It all seemed so topsy turvy, a complete paradox, yet it was absolutely

true, and worked out exactly as the Lord said.

The great benefit of this section of scripture is the insight it affords us into the supreme power and special purpose of anointing. We shall benefit from it more fully though, if we take into consideration two or three further points implicit in the book. Firstly, in chapter 61, Isaiah claims to be a man living and speaking under the Spirit of the Lord because he is anointed. It is a very important passage, for these are the exact words the Lord applied to Himself with remarkable results on the occasion when He stood up to read in the synagogue in Nazareth.

The prophet was speaking with prophetic foresight of no less a person than the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, through the prophetic word, there is a very remarkable link between Cyrus and Jesus. Isaiah was the anointed of the Lord, Cyrus was the anointed of the Lord, Jesus is the Anointed of the Lord. All three were the Lord's anointed; in this, in measure, they were alike, yet the utter world of difference between Jesus and Cyrus is so great that it can hardly be imagined.

There is of course a greater degree of similarity between Jesus and Isaiah. In fact in his relationship to God, in at least one instance, Isaiah was privileged to represent the very Father Himself. In his office and ministry to the nation this man was blessed beyond most to speak for God as though he was God — His very mouth; he was the Lord's anointed indeed. But O how far inferior he was to the Lord Jesus. The prophet was greater than Cyrus, but so much less than the Lord. On the one hand Isaiah was a man of unclean lips, who needed his sin purging from him, on the other he was exalted to receive the needed heavenly vision, and to hear the voice from the throne. But all was natural to Jesus; He was humbled to receive the heavenly vision and to hear the voice. The disparity between these three persons is vast beyond comprehension; the only link was the anointing.

Secondly, throughout the last half of the book, commencing at chapter 40, there is a strong emphasis on service. Again and again the phrases 'My servant' and 'My servants' appear in the text, God going so far as to give a description of 'My servant whom I uphold'. He also protests with passion to Israel, 'ye are my witnesses and my servant whom I

have chosen', so linking witness and service together. By this, two things become outstandingly obvious — only witnesses can serve, and only those who serve can witness. It is impossible to be a true witness to the Lord apart from being His servant; the prime purpose of service is witness. Neither Cyrus nor Isaiah, nor even Jesus Himself, attempted to serve God before they were anointed — they couldn't. It is utterly impossible to render God the service He requires apart from the Anointing.

Thirdly, the whole of this prophecy is addressed to a people in captivity. To their sorrow and shame the people to whom this message was addressed were in bondage in heathendom. The famous passage makes this very clear, 'the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the meek ... the opening of the prison to them that are bound.' The people of Israel were poverty-stricken, brokenhearted captives, bound in prison, mournful of heart, heavy in spirit, mean of soul. They needed healing, release, liberating, comforting, uplifting, beautifying, complete deliverance and restoration to the promised land. Only an anointed servant of the Lord, moved by the Spirit, could do that. This is exactly what the Lord raised up Cyrus to do, 'he shall let go my captives', He said, 'not for price or reward', and He knew that to accomplish this task in face of such insuperable difficulties He would need to endue him with unusual power. It would have to be clearly from above, a heavenly authorisation, in fact the Anointing.

Fourthly, the tragedy of it all lay in Israel's complete inability to understand spiritual truth; they most certainly did not fully comprehend the vital difference between the Baptism in the Spirit and the Anointing of the Spirit. They should have understood it, and possibly did grasp the doctrinal ideas relating to the difference between the two, but of spiritual perception they seemed to have little or none. One of God's complaints against them was their refusal to expect Him to do a new thing.

Among the captives in Babylon the favourite topics of conversation were the redemption from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea.

Many spoke of and entertained present hopes of past glories, indulging man's chronic habit of dwelling in the past without any hope for the present. 'Stop talking, thinking, dreaming; desist from it — this endless repetition of stories of past glories is leading nowhere,' said God, 'I will do a new thing'; but they didn't listen — possibly from anguish of heart. But for whatever reason, it is fatal to live in the past; men in bondage ought only to dwell upon the past works of God for the purpose of building up their faith for the present. We must hear God's word for today, and although we may expect Him to repeat His former mercies, we must also believe He can and will work in different ways. But Israel in captivity could not think God would do something new.

Their fathers had been the same in their day when Moses, the man sent of God, came to them in Egypt with the word of deliverance. The Passover, the redemption, the baptism, the deliverance were all new ideas to that generation; but now all the Lord then accomplished was only a former thing, the tradition of the nation. It was all true as true can be, but past history, and they were just talking, talking, talking about it. Israel were in captivity because they failed to see they were a redeemed and baptised people in order to become the anointed people.

Perhaps the root of the trouble lay in the shortcomings of the Old Covenant. In those days all was outward; the baptism they experienced was neither in water, nor in Holy Spirit; all was done symbolically. They were only figuratively born from above; the inward man of the soul never died and rose again within them, nor did each individual receive a personal unction from the Holy One. Instead they had the general cloud to guide them, and the anointing was only given to the few chosen priests. They were surely led in infallible truth, but all was completely exterior; they did not each inwardly know, nor did their children, nor their children's children. Therefore, by many sins, failures, defeats and backslidings, they eventually finished in captivity, back in the same condition from whence they had started. They failed to live by the anointing, so they lost the benefits of their baptism.

Israel needed the Anointing. They needed anointed men like Isaiah; they needed an Elijah, or an Elisha or a Gideon; O for a David — 'I

looked for a man', said God. There wasn't one; not an Israelite who could be called 'the anointed of the Lord'. They were roaring like bears, mourning like doves, groping like the blind, recounting traditional beliefs, striving with their Maker, blaming their fathers and mothers, arguing with God, accusing Him of hiding Himself. Their sons lay on street corners like bulls caught in a net; all were unfit and ignorant. God therefore looked for a man among the heathen! He found a complete outsider, a person who didn't even belong to the elect race, and having done so, anointed him to do His will and serve Him! And this Cyrus did without complaint or argument, in humble obedience, and pleased Him.

The Lord did not pour oil on Cyrus, neither did priest or prophet rub ointment on him; if it was done by anyone at all approaching human being it must have been Melchizedek himself. God simply and sovereignly put His Spirit upon the man, that by him He should accomplish His purposes for His people; that is what anointing with oil stands for anyway. It is for things of this nature that authority and power are granted from God to men. Israel had finished up with oil and no Spirit; Cyrus had the Spirit and no oil.

This may at first seem contradictory, or at least paradoxical, but God owns all the earth. Aren't all souls His? Didn't His angels say in Isaiah's hearing, 'the whole earth is full of Thy glory'? Isn't all kingship His? Wasn't it a Babylonish king who learned that God alone rules in the heavens, putting down one and raising up another? God who uses symbols is by no means tied to them; Cyrus was raised up of God to be His shepherd to Israel and to show us all what a man can do by the Anointing, even if he is not a son, and has never been anointed with oil.

It may seem strange that God should anoint a man to be His servant who did not know Him, but He did; He still does so. Realisation of this clarifies many things, some of which are so basic that it is vital we should know them, namely: The Anointing (1) enables a person to do some things and act in some ways similar to the Lord Jesus Christ; (2) is of God, and at all times is bestowed sovereignty by Him; (3) is a

dispensing of authority from God for spiritual or profane purposes or ends as the case may be; (4) is given directly from God, although at times He avails Himself of human mediation; (5) does not necessarily mean or in any way imply that God thereby declares the person anointed to be or to have been or in the future shall be a son of God; (6) is ideally granted to God's children as an enabling, an empowering and an authorisation from on high extra to the Unction. N.B. All ceremonial anointing with oil can only ever be symbolic; without the impartation of the Holy Spirit it is valueless, an empty religious or ceremonial rite.

Obviously Cyrus' anointing was not sacred but profane. The word profane comes from a root meaning 'without', or 'outside the temple'; in other words it refers to that which is civil; it is the complete opposite of sacred, although not necessarily anti-religious. When Cyrus gave authority to Israel to return to their land, they had long been captive in Babylon. Former kings of Babylon had raided and plundered Israel. They had captured the people, ransacked the treasure houses, destroyed the cities, pillaged and profaned the city and temple of Jerusalem; only desolate ruins remained.

See then what the anointing of the Lord enabled Cyrus to do. He moved against national and international opinion, did the completely unexpected thing, gave orders and supplies for Jerusalem and the temple to be rebuilt, and became God's shepherd to His people. Israel's sons had fainted; there wasn't a son to anoint, so God anointed a stranger, a foreigner, a heathen. It was galling, but providential and very gratifying.

It also affords an opportunity to understand the power and scope of the Anointing, and to observe that a servant can, by the Anointing, do more than a firstborn son without it. Israel had been called by God 'His firstborn son', but at the time of Isaiah's prophecy and Cyrus' reign they were far from being anointed — why even the specially anointed priesthood no longer existed; death reigned. The only thing that could reach that state was the Anointing, and the only person who could move in the situation was an anointed man. Therefore God anointed

him; in other words He personally chose, empowered and authorised an unsaved man to serve Him. It was a specific anointing unto certain ends; how long it remained upon Cyrus we do not know; it certainly was not an eternal anointing, for it had nothing to do with eternal life.

The kind of authorisation given by God to Cyrus is of a variable nature. Bestowed unto specific ends for limited purposes or periods, it is possible of expansion, withdrawal or renewal. Because of these elements, as well as the fact that it is an authorisation for service, it can only be of secondary importance to the life-anointing of sonship. This was most clearly shown during the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus. Although the chosen twelve and the favoured seventy were authorised to heal and preach and baptise, none of them at that time knew the Anointing of sonship. During the whole of the ministerial period preceding Calvary the Lord alone knew that.

Comparison of the lives of the apostles before and after Pentecost leaves us in no doubt as to which is the greater. Prior to Pentecost everybody who served the Lord in His kingdom on earth was a servant only. Although mostly they were sons-elect, they were not yet born of God. We need only contrast these men with the Lord Himself to see the enormous difference between the two anointings. For the ministry to which He appointed them, the Lord only shared with them the Anointing He received at His water baptism, for that was all that was necessary. Later, at Pentecost, the 120 received and shared with Him the Unction they never had while labouring in His kingdom of heaven on earth.

David

This whole episode concerning Cyrus and the part he played in the restoration of Israel raises yet another aspect of truth having bearing on anointing. It concerns David, Israel's greatest king, and one of Jesus' most illustrious forbears. This man was probably most loved of all kings and was unique among the nation's monarchs in many ways, not the least in that he was anointed for kingship three times. Each of these occasions was of major importance to him personally, and was

undoubtedly of great significance in the life of the nation.

Now this repeated anointing of David is sometimes presented as being of vital importance to the Church also, as though something of a similar nature should be sought after by us all. Indeed it would appear that in the opinion of some we all ought to be newly anointed every time we preach or prophesy or pray. But none of the New Testament writers know anything of this; although so popular, it is entirely foreign to scripture. Neither Samuel, who anointed David to be God's king over Israel, nor any other recorder of Holy Writ said or implied that David's subsequent anointings were to be regarded as a precedent, either for Israel's later kings or the Church. On the contrary it is quite certain that the exact opposite is true, and that for God's part one anointing is sufficient, and unless repudiated, rejected and disobeyed, is all that is necessary.

The well known story of David's selection for kingship commenced with God sending Samuel to pour oil on one of Jesse's sons. The prophet did not know who the Lord wished to anoint king over His people; no-one was more surprised than he that it should be David, the youngest of the family. Samuel was all for anointing the first of Jesse's sons — it was the expected course to take; Eliab was the elder brother, the natural choice, but God rejected Samuel's and Jesse's and Eliab's opinions outright. Therefore, according to custom, the prophet and the father turned to the next in line, only to discover that God had not chosen him either. Undaunted, Samuel continued the procedure with each son in turn, but all to no avail; God had chosen none of them.

As a last resort the astonished father sent for David, the youngest son, who returned home from caring for the flock to find the mystified family gathered in expectation. He had not been there when Samuel had sanctified the family unto God's purposes, but that did not disqualify him, for God told Samuel to anoint him. 'Man looketh on the outward appearance', He said, 'but God looketh on the heart'. Later He added, 'I have found David a man after my own heart'. David was therefore anointed with oil, and right there in the presence of his family the Spirit came on him. From that day forward He remained with him

and never departed — David was the anointed of the Lord, and this Anointing was permanent.

Although, following this, David was twice more anointed king, God never anointed him again. The second and third anointings were ceremonially administered by man, not by God. The people thereby signified their choice in recognition of God's original anointing, but theirs was by oil alone; the Lord's was by the Spirit. During Saul's reign the nation had been torn and rent by civil war; some were saying 'I am of Saul', others were chanting 'I am of David'; it was a hideous mockery of God's intention by the Anointing. But by the Anointing upon David the schism was healed; following Saul's death the kingdom was united again. This was one of the prime reasons for the Anointing; in keeping with its own fundamental nature, the Anointing promotes unification of hearts.

David saw this truth quite clearly, and later said, 'O how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, it is like the precious ointment which flowed'. He was speaking specifically then of Aaron's Anointing. As it flowed upon him it united his own family into the priestly brotherhood, and the whole nation as a family to God. In a bond far superior to the natural ties that already bound them all by one blood, the Anointing united them to their God who gave it. But it had to be flowing, running, dripping, distilling; living, moving, not static. David perceived the truth, and by poetic and prophetic inspiration, with spiritual insight he sang of the brotherhood of the Anointing.

At Hebron, by the second public anointing, the whole nation became a family again — 'O how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity' sang his heart. He realised that the Anointing God gave him was not only for personal elevation and power, it was for the whole nation. Men's anointings of oil were simply acknowledgements that he was the anointed of the Lord, and that they wished to submit to that fact. Possibly neither he nor they at the time realised all the spiritual implications of the ceremony, but they all wanted to be one.

Oil twice more applied, though with full ceremony and best intentions and sincerest religious implications, did not mean that God had

withdrawn the first. The original Anointing had not lost its power, it did not need renewing; the other two in no degree invalidated or added to it. The truth is that of all three anointings by men, the only one that was really valid and counted spiritually was the one David received at the hands of Samuel. That gave him authority, the others were only sectional acknowledgements of it. That they widened his sphere of authority in a practical manner among men may appear to be true, but it is certain David did not think in that way, and neither did God. David thought and spoke of himself as the Lord's anointed — that is what his heart said.

David was anointed by God to be king over His inheritance because he was fit to be anointed. Long before he was anointed he was chosen to be king, because he had lived as a good shepherd. The Lord's selection of him was fully vindicated, for when he was elected to office he continued to be a good shepherd. When Samuel first performed the ceremony, the young man felt no need to testify to his experience or seek to establish any claims to office. David was no pretender to the throne or contender for office, vainglory was not one of his sins. God anointed him, God would promote him. 'The Lord is my shepherd' he sang, 'I shall not want'.

Often in later life, meditating on the Lord's gracious dealings with him on that unforgettable day, it all came over him afresh: 'Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over'. It was just as though time and events passed away, having no meaning, and the sacred Anointing of the Spirit was all. Whether in the midst of his wondering family at Bethlehem, or dwelling at large among the tribe of Judah at Hebron, or surrounded by all Israel acclaiming his lordship, he lived in the glory of the Lord's Anointing. United first with God for His purposes in the earth, he lived to see the unity spread out to cover and include all God's people; the blessing was commanded from on high.

Years ago there was a story circulating among God's people about George Jeffreys whose praise was in a multitude of churches. This man was a richly endued servant of God who in his day moved with power and authority throughout the length and breadth of Great Britain. It was

said that on a certain day when travelling on a train carrying many wounded ex-soldiers, it was involved in a serious accident. Great damage was caused to many of the men, adding terribly to their already grievous injuries. The man of God was shocked by the accident, but being himself unhurt, he arose and with infinite compassion moved among the injured, laying his hands on the broken company, bringing healing and restoration to the ill and dying. Great miracles took place that day by the gift and Anointing of the Spirit, and His servant's fame spread throughout the land.

It is said that news of the miracles came to the ears of the authorities in London, who asked him to go to the capital for an interview. When he arrived he was treated most courteously and offered money as a reward for his services, because not only had the injuries due to the accident been healed, but many long-standing war injuries had been healed also. This would save the nation the outlay of so much pension money that at best an honorarium was thought to be in order. He refused the offer. Upon this he was asked to receive it in another form, or accept a donation toward his work, but he again refused and replied, 'God did not give me this gift to make myself rich, but to bring this nation to repentance'. A man of God knows his gifts are not for self but for all.

A further illustration from the life of David will be invaluable to us at this point. Following his anointing by Samuel, and before his elevation to the monarchy, the young shepherd was summoned by king Saul to become one of his courtiers and ministers. David's particular ministry to the troubled king was one of music and song; his inspired singing and playing often brought respite and comfort to Saul's heart, and his psalms have become famous the world over. He loved his master and served him faithfully; notwithstanding this, jealousy often rose up in Saul's heart against David; he hated the young king-elect. Several times he attempted to kill him, and would have done so but for David's agility and the hand of God upon him. In the end Saul succeeded in driving him finally from his courts. As a result the whole country was divided over the matter of kingship, and civil war ensued.

The particular incident with which we are concerned occurred during

one of Saul's many campaigns against David at this time. The young man, ever reluctant to fight against his king, upon this occasion evaded him and took refuge with some of his men in a cave. Imagine his surprise, therefore, when Saul, all unaware of David's' presence, came in to spend the night in the very same cavern in which David and his men were hidden. This must have been a most breathtaking experience for the younger man; it was almost certain he would be discovered and there was nowhere to flee, but God protected him. Instead of being captured, it proved to be a situation engineered by God to test his faithfulness.

Eventually Saul settled down for the night and was soon asleep, and so were his guards; but not so David and his men. Alert to every opportunity, the watchful eyes of David's bodyguard saw what they mistakenly thought to be a God-given chance to deal once and for all with treacherous Saul. Seeing every justification for the act, indeed believing that beyond providence or coincidence God had delivered David's enemy into his hands, they counselled David to kill Saul. But David would none of it. He would neither lift up his voice, nor raise a hand, nor speak a word against the king, and the reason for his refusal was precisely this — Saul was the Lord's anointed. To David that was the end of it. Under no circumstances could he entertain the idea that the Anointing could contend with the Anointing.

Saul had no such scruples, though. Quite contrary to David, Saul was acting completely out of character with the anointing at that very moment; he was actually bent upon destroying another of the Lord's anointed. He was not moving from the Anointing, or the Spirit which came upon him with it, but totally against the will of God. He was completely under the power of an evil spirit seeking to hound the king-elect to death. Arguably he deserved to be cut off; why then did not David destroy him? Would he not have been absolutely justified and acting within his rights had he done so?

Even if his men thought like that, David did not think so. On the contrary, because Saul had been anointed of the Lord, David utterly refused to do anything against him. David had fully grasped the fact

that anointing, and election to office thereby, is sacred and permanent. He would not in any degree usurp God's authority, nor would he suffer anyone else to do so. But beyond that, he knew that to destroy the Lord's anointed is to imply intention to destroy God also, beside which he loved his king.

Years later, when Saul was slain at Beth-Shan, David without hesitation slew those who had dared to kill the anointed of the Lord, and uttered his famous lament. In David's eyes, from the day of his elevation to kingship to the day of his death, Saul retained the position to which he had been elevated by the Anointing. The man did many things contrary to it and was utterly wrong in God's sight, and in consequence the kingdom was taken from him, but David knew that although the man lose all, he was still the anointed of the Lord; the Anointing is permanent. This is because the offices to which anointing appoints a man are offices which God holds Himself supreme, whether prophet, priest, king, elder — all are offices God holds. When a man is elected to hold one or more of these, or any other position, in that degree or capacity he is representative of God. Anointing is bestowed with this in mind.

As Paul said, 'the powers that be are ordained of God'; whether within the Church or in the world, all are of Him, and for this reason carry a degree of permanence. The person who fills the office may be benefactor or tyrant, but whoever or whatever he be, the power or authority is of God. Everyone so honoured is answerable to Him, and in the end shall render account for the way he behaves and uses or abuses his power and the office.

Taking the whole matter further and giving it wider application, it may be of benefit to all to relate the truth already stated to the whole sphere of operations of the Spirit of God among us. All too frequently such prayers as 'Lord anoint thy servant', are found upon sincere lips, and are often followed by some further pious requests or statements relating to the particular meeting or service. This is all well-meaning enough, and persons using the expressions may appear to have good scriptural ground for such prayers, but the whole concept is entirely human and

the practice totally misguided. Not once does this kind of petition, or anything equivalent to it, occur in the New Testament, although anointings (literal) were more frequent then than now. The whole idea rises from a mistaken belief that the Anointing only lasts for a meeting, or is used up in one spell of service, or has been dissipated by sin, or some such notion as that.

When David used the expression, 'I shall be anointed with fresh oil', he did not mean his former anointing had become stale or old. To be properly understood this scripture must be read in conjunction with the word in Ecclesiastes, 'let thy head lack no ointment'. Neither of these statements were written with reference to anointing for sacred office. In the latter scripture the wise man was giving advice to people to pay attention to their appearances before men and to keep themselves smelling sweet. General impressions count a great deal; his words had to do with toiletry. David also was thinking in the same vein, relating spiritual desires to earthly pleasantries connected with habits of personal anointing. Neither of the writers was speaking of a special anointing of an official nature for renewal of authority. David was really saying, 'God habitually keeps me anointed. Anointing is a habitual part of spiritual life, it is continual, I regard it as normal'.

As another example of this, when he said, 'thou anointest my head with oil', he was referring to a shepherd's duties performed daily in course of shepherding his sheep. When need arose, a good shepherd would first remove all offensive and hurtful matter causing disease or discomfort to a sheep, and having cleansed the wound, would finally anoint it with ointment. It was thereby crowned with anointing for healing and complete restoration to health and comfort; consequently 'its cup ran over'. This, David knew, would continue all the days of his life, it was general procedure among shepherds. In Psalm 23 David is speaking of God's faithfulness to the end. A good shepherd does not constantly pour oil upon his charges, and neither does our excellent Lord. If need should arise He will most certainly repeat His anointings, but where there is no need He will not do so.

The whole concept of anointing must be thought of in terms of David's

words in Psalm 133 — flowing, running, dripping for evermore. In the earlier psalm God's ministrations are presented as a kind of predestination parabolically taught in terms of sheep and shepherd. It was the prelude to and preparation for dwelling in God's house for ever. In Israel special anointing with oil unto spiritual office was only one of its many uses. The idea of permanence is brought out in the Old Testament by constancy. By constant repetition, the Lord implied the truth of everlastingness, making it permanent.

III — IN THE NEW COVENANT

Chapter 6 — The Eternally Anointed One

The complete truth concerning the anointing has been set out in greatest clarity of all in the life and person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Beside the two miracles formerly considered, within which His life-span on earth was comprehended, Jesus also underwent another major experience, namely water baptism / spiritual anointing. These three events were widely separated experiences in His life. Thirty years intervened between His birth and His anointing, and three years or so separated His anointing from His Calvary. Being spaced out by these intervals of time, each event permits of proper evaluation, and can be placed in true perspective. It is very necessary to do this, for each must have its place in our own lives and experiences also.

These time-gaps set forth in the life of Jesus are both logical and right; in His case they were necessary, but in our thinking may rightly be 'lept'. In Him the truth is perforce shown us within self-imposed restrictions, worked out in the limitations He set Himself whilst in the physical body. During that restricted period of 33 years, God revealed in Him: (1) the perfect life; (2) the means of that life. Having accomplished this in the flesh for us, He returned to heaven and poured out the Spirit that the same life quality may be placed in any man born of Him. The passage of time observable in Jesus' life now gives way to the purpose and grace of God, and the exercise of faith in a man.

Born Anointed

When Jesus was born, the angelic herald announced His birth to the shepherds in very specific terms: 'Unto you is born this day — a Saviour who is Christ the Lord'. When the Magi came to visit Him many months later, they enquired of Herod, 'Where is He who is born king of the Jews?' Whether spoken by angel or Magi, both these forms of speech were couched in positive terms; the angel said the new-born babe was Christ; the Magi said the young child was King. Neither said He was born to be Christ, or that He was born to be King, as though He was neither Christ nor King yet, but would ultimately attain to those positions or titles; He was Christ and King at birth. The titles were already His; that is why angels and men worshipped Him.

Now the title 'Christ' is really a description meaning 'the Anointed': it carries the idea of election; the foremost thought presented to the mind is that of choice; the Christ is someone's Chosen One — that Someone is God. Obviously, since Jesus was born Christ and King He most certainly was not a man chosen at random by God from among men. He was the elect person of the three members of the Godhead, specially authorized and sanctified to come to earth; it was a privilege and an honour. Father chose Him, the Holy Ghost chose Him, He Himself chose to come. He was the elect of God before He came, and when He came. Consideration of this enables us to see the truth of anointing for what it is, and brings the whole matter into proper perspective.

At first sight anointing may appear to be a bestowal of power, an impartation of something extra to the nature of a person. This is due to an association of ideas, for among men anointing is an outward act involving pouring on of oil, which act obviously implies an impartation. In the more important ceremonies for which anointing is used, such as elevation to priesthood or kingship, it is understood among men to be a token of bestowal of power. It is regarded as a great honour, an authorisation to function fully in the position intended. Beside this, implicit in the act lies the idea of sanctification; from that moment the person is set aside from ordinary people and duties and is expected by them to separate himself unto the office and its works. These aspects of anointing are so commonly accepted among us, that

however great a person may be, until anointing takes place he is not considered to be a priest or a king as the case may be; without the anointing he is an impostor or a pretender.

The middle person of the Godhead was not anointed with oil in order to be Christ though — neither in heaven nor on earth. By this we see that all spiritual anointing was originally derived from, and in principle modelled upon the will of God in choosing Jesus to be the elect person of the Godhead to come to earth. Anointing, as a practice authorised by God among men, was developed from what originally happened without outward ceremony in God in eternity. We see then how it was that Jesus was already the Christ when He was born. He was not outwardly anointed at that time, the spiritual Unction was already within Him; the Son was born anointed — the Anointed. Before, at, and after His birth Jesus was always the Anointed One.

The reason for this was partly that, precisely as He, other sons may be born anointed of God also. This is that anointing earlier distinguished as the Unction, which is as much part of our new nature and being as it is part of God's nature and being. The well known word in John 1:11,12 puts it clearly — 'to as many as received Him, to them gave He the power (authority) to become sons of God'. When born of God, a man's spiritual being is fundamentally reconstructed, re-orientated and renewed in the act to be as His — God being God in man, and man being man in God. This can only take place as and when a man is immersed in the Spirit. This is why God devised Baptism in Spirit, for only by Baptism in (the) Spirit can man enter into (the) Spirit, be in (the) Spirit and live in (the) Spirit. Only by becoming one Spirit with God can the spirit of man be made alive and continue to live.

Although it is stating the obvious, it needs to be emphasised that the birth of Jesus Christ was for life, not for works and service. With the exception of one remarkable event, the early thirty-year period of His life and works receives no attention from the Gospel writers at all, although this period comprised the greater part of His earthly life. Undoubtedly His life at that time was filled with doing good works for necessary uses, maintained with unflagging zeal, and quite natural to

God incarnate, but in doing them, Jesus was doing no more than being a good Jew, so they are not even mentioned. As may be expected, He would have performed everything with a natural grace and perfection above all His contemporaries or forbears, but faultless as they were, we are not told anything about them. To do them He had to be born, but needed not to be specially anointed.

The purpose of this class of works is to display the fact that righteousness and love and self-sacrifice are the basic qualities of spiritual life; they do not indicate the amount of power for miraculous service a man has. There is no record in scripture that Jesus did anything of a miraculous or outstanding nature before the public anointing by which He was proclaimed Messiah to Israel. But from that time onward He moved ever-increasingly into a new ministerial life of service, full of miraculous works. These all blossomed forth following the experience at Jordan, which consummated the hidden life He had lived before God and a few men at Nazareth.

The reason why birth and anointing are set out for us as two widely separated experiences in the life of our Lord Jesus is that we may see them as two distinct events. Everything was being worked out by Him in an orderly manner. By the things that happened to Him God wanted us to know what He has prepared for us. How we ought to thank our all-wise God for being so simple to us. We are so finite, and ignorant and complicated; we need much loving, and many powerful demonstrations and simple illustrations before we distinguish the things that differ, or can understand what God is showing us.

The Anointing of the Anointed

At thirty years of age Jesus underwent water baptism in order to fulfil all righteousness. He also did it purposely to conform to a basic plan formerly agreed in heaven as a necessity for man. It was expected of Him to accord with the symbolic pattern of spiritual life unfolded in the Hebrew scriptures, but water baptism was something extra to that and was nowhere spoken of in their scriptures. It was administered to the obedient Jesus to mark an epoch in His life; for Him it signified the end of obscurity and carpentry and the beginning of a public ministerial life.

This was the chosen moment for His anointing unto the nation and into His real life-work. It was publicly done so that no-one should miss the emphasis; God has shown us the absolute necessity of the Anointing for service. So pointed is it that we all should ask 'if this was so necessary for Jesus, is it not also very necessary for us?'

To gain fullest benefit from the event, we must take careful note of the two quite distinct things which took place at Jordan: (1) His water baptism; (2) His spiritual anointing. The first was physical, the second was spiritual; each part contained an element of symbolism. The former was almost entirely a symbolic exercise for all to behold. The spiritual element lay in the obedience wherewith Jesus fulfilled all righteousness in the act. The latter was almost entirely a spiritual experience. The symbolic element lay in the appearance of the dove, which apparently only John and Jesus saw descending upon the Christ. Water baptism imparted nothing to Jesus, but His anointing was very necessary to Him; by it the Spirit was imparted to Him in a new way.

We see then that the Anointed was anointed; Jesus was the doubly Anointed. The Jordan anointing added nothing to His Godhead, it was conferred upon His manhood. No-one but God saw the first or eternal anointing, but everybody gathered at Jordan was made aware of the second. Because this is so, it logically follows that, since the Lord Jesus needed this anointing in addition to His own sinless birth and inherent Unction, so also do we need it following our New Birth. The reason for this is that although our New Birth brings us into a state of life similar to that which He enjoyed from His natural birth onward, it seldom if ever confers full ministerial power upon us immediately.

When Jesus was conceived by Mary for His birth she was told that He should be called the Son of God, but it is significant that He was not publicly called that by anyone until His Father did so at His anointing. Before His birth both Mary and Joseph were separately and privately instructed by His Father to call Him Jesus, and Mary was informed also that 'the holy thing ... should be called the Son of God', but that was private also. It is as though at Jordan God was saying, 'This is My Son, this is the kind of man I send unto you'.

Of course He was no more God's Son following or because of the anointing at Jordan than He was before or without it — He always had been His Son; He was and is and ever will be the eternally only-begotten Son, but in order to manifest the facts and implications of Sonship fully and move with power and authority, among men He had to undergo the experience. Before He came to the earth this was the way planned for Him to take, therefore it was necessary for Him as the Son of God. Although the Anointing did not confer sonship upon Him, it did confirm it to Him and to John Baptist, and later to others. Viewed properly, it was the Father's clearest indication that this was the Son He wished people to see; Jesus of Nazareth was now to be revealed as Christ Jesus.

The Jesus babe and man was as dear to Jehovah His Father before this event as ever He was after it, but Jehovah did not wish the world to see His Son before His Anointing. It was as though everything before was but preparatory and leading up to this — as indeed it was. Even the next three years of His life were but introductory; they too led on to the mighty Baptism prefigured at Jordan for which He was being prepared by the Anointing. By this we see that in every person's life, the birth Baptism is greater than the Anointing. All these things which took place in the life of the Lord Jesus were as absolutely necessary to Him personally as they are to us.

In the Fulness of Power

The above is made quite clear as we read of the difference the Anointing made to Him. Following the Messianic presentation to the nation at Jordan, Luke informs us that 'Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, was led of the Spirit ... and returned in the power of the Spirit'. He 'went' and 'came' in the Spirit. This is not to imply that formerly this was not the case; with Him we may assume that, to some degree at any rate, it was so, but now our attention is being drawn to it that the true emphasis may be laid by God where it is needed.

It was in this fulness of power that Jesus stood up in the synagogue that day in Nazareth to read, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He hath anointed me'. He had never said that before. Now He was

conscious, not only that He was the Son of God, but also that He was going as the Sent One of God to the nation, their Christ-King. The authority this Anointing added to Him and the sphere of service which opened up to Him following it was above and beyond what He moved in by reason of His original birth Anointing. It enabled Him to minister to men and to God His Father in a new way.

So we see that it was the Jordan Anointing, not the birth Anointing, which was the Anointing for service. He that was born the Anointed, so that He knew that He was the Son of God, had also to be anointed so that men should know that He was the Sent One authorised of God. It was by this that all those glorious powers which were constitutionally in Him as the Anointed, were released unto the world in which He lived. The public anointing no more conferred those powers upon Him, nor placed that ability within Him, than it conferred Sonship upon Him. To the degree He was born a Son, He was also born a Servant. The anointing released and manifested all the ministry which was there from birth. The incident which occurred in the Temple when He was but twelve years of age plainly showed this, but despite His eagerness, He had to wait for authorisation to use His latent powers; He did not have this until He gained it at His Anointing.

It was not that Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God manifest in flesh, was in any way inferior in Godhead to the Father and the Holy Spirit; He was as much their fellow and equal all the time He was on earth as when He had been with them in heaven. Therefore, in the eyes of men and angels, the glory and genius of the Lord Jesus will for ever lie in the voluntary self-humbling and continuous humility with which He came and lived His life in this world. 'He humbled Himself ... Made Himself of no reputation' is an endearing commendation in our eyes. But in giving Him the well-deserved worship and adoration of our hearts, we must beware of doing it in a comparative manner.

The Lord Jesus is not any more humble than the Father or the Holy Ghost. Jesus did not volunteer to do what His Father and the Holy Ghost refused to do, neither did He become a man as an emergency measure. The elective and predestinating aspect of Redemption is very

real. Being wise after the event, we see that it was inevitable that Jesus should become the sacrifice. The logical order of the persons of the Godhead practically precluded the possibility of either of the other persons becoming man and dying for us.

The Servant of Jehovah

We who cannot probe into all — indeed very few — of the secrets of God, look upon the Lord's humility with awe and wonder. His glory lay in His self-abasement unto becoming the Servant of Jehovah for the purposes of God in redemption. He became a slave so that He should be totally dependent upon the Father and the Holy Ghost, and in no degree sufficient as of Himself. In the whole realm of the works His Father gave Him to do, Jesus determined to be nothing, know nothing and do nothing, as, by, for, or unto Himself. It was this self-abasement as much as anything else that caused His Father's heart to overflow to Him at Jordan with the commendation, 'Thou art My Beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased. How well He deserved the tribute.

By being a Nazarene nobody for thirty years He proved that He sought nothing but His Father's good pleasure. The preaching, ministry, miracles — in short all the works which followed — were done for that same reason; they arose and flowed from selfless motives unto God's glory alone. Not the least part of the glory of Jesus' service to His Father lay in the absolutely perfect humanity and manhood He maintained for God in this world. Because of this the vital pattern-life, so necessary for us, could be displayed in this world and the Anointing fully exhibited.

By His own confession, while on earth Jesus was a straitened soul; His flesh was a veil, we are told; He said at one point that He longed for the glory He had with His Father before the world was. His humble spirit, obedient mind and disciplined flesh were the perfect media for the display of absolute truth though; without contradiction He could say 'I AM THE TRUTH'. There is nothing higher, and we ourselves could wish for nothing better; He is the ultimate. Yet although thirty years separated His birth and His Anointing, what He worked out in stages in His flesh then is now available to us in the Spirit at once.

Because it is in this realm the time-factor can be eliminated if both God's will ordains it and man's state justifies it.

It is unto this position and privilege that we are baptised with His Baptism. Born into His life, we may, in our proper order and measure be partakers of this ministry also, for by His Baptism we are baptised into His life, and by His Anointing we are anointed unto His ministry. In our new birth we, as He, are born anointed ones. Wherever or in whomsoever the Christ Spirit is, it is the Anointed spirit, and can be no other. Paul very emphatically says that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His, whilst John tells us unequivocally that we have within us an Unction from the Holy One, and that this Unction has come to abide there. As has already been pointed out, this is the life-Anointing, a very vital and indispensable element of our new nature. It is spoken of as an Anointing in order that we may keep the whole truth in proper perspective; He is the Anointed One; each of us is an anointed one. As the scripture does not say there is one Anointing, but does say there is one baptism, the two things are set in proper perspective.

Lesser Anointings of the Anointed

Like His royal ancestor, David, following His one official anointing, the Lord Jesus was twice anointed with oil in the course of His life; the first time was by 'a woman of the city', and the second by Mary of Bethany. Both these ministrations were precious to Him, but by neither was He elevated to some new office, or renewed in the original one. Although the oil was very costly, and the occasions fragrant with devotion, they conferred nothing upon Him from God. They were sacred times of holy love, but they did not specifically confirm to Him God's election or selection; they were a confession of human appreciation and a recognition of His person. By them He was made to smell sweet and feel comfortable and special above all the company, the elect among the elect, that is all.

Reference has already been made to the first of these occasions in chapter 1. Each anointing was a symbol of spiritual love, poured out as from a slave's heart upon her compassionate Lord of glory. The latter

incident had reference to His oncoming death and burial, and bore meaning in that context; but except for their typical meanings by the niceties of interpretation, neither occasion bestowed any special authoritative power or virtue upon Jesus.

There is true spiritual affinity between these two subsequent anointings of Jesus and the two further anointings bestowed upon David though. Each was officially and spiritually anointed of the Lord on the first occasion. As with His 'father' David, Jesus' first and official anointing was accomplished through the ministry of a prophet of the Lord. But unlike Samuel with David, John Baptist did not personally anoint Jesus; that was beyond his power, for as the scripture says 'the lesser is blessed of the greater', not the greater of the lesser.

John at first declined and openly confessed his need to be baptised of Jesus. Only at Jesus' insistent request did he proceed with the ceremony. Beside this, public anointing was not then God's purpose for His Son. He had not come to set up the Kingdom of God on earth yet. Nevertheless it was under the outward ministry of the prophet that the Lord was anointed with the Spirit to take up His spiritual office in Israel. Similarly, although Samuel anointed David with oil unto kingship, it was the Lord who gave him the Spirit. In both cases it was God who did it, not the prophet.

As a general procedure, when God wished to pour the Spirit upon anyone during the Old Covenant dispensation, He commanded His action to be accompanied by anointing with oil. These were historic and sometimes dynastic occasions when God wished the initial and initiating experience to be visibly manifested: by this God made His will known, certifying His election and ratifying the office. Having once been done, the outward action was never repeated. Even though at times, following their original anointing, the Spirit came afresh upon men in various ways for different purposes, the initial act was unique in every man's life. Repetitions of outward symbolic on-pouring of oil were totally irrelevant to that which took place inwardly when God ordered the occasion. This is quite easily demonstrated by what happened when the original seventy elders were elected of God. Not

one of them was anointed with oil, but they were truly anointed of God; no-one doubted that, and following the occasion there were no subsequent anointings.

It is of importance that we take notice of a scriptural fact having bearing upon this whole truth. In the case of Jesus, the two subsequent anointings were applied by women. Recognition of the great difference which lay between masculine and feminine participation in spiritual things in those days will help us to understand the significance of these women's actions. During His lifetime on earth the Lord was a minister of the circumcision (that is of the Old Covenant) for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers. Although He is the New Covenant Man, He was born into and lived under Old Covenant conditions. In that dispensation the masculine always represented or implied the major factor and the feminine the lesser or diminutive meaning.

It follows then that the anointings which were ministered to Him in the homes of the two Simons by the two women were of lesser meaning, and, although rendered in true sincerity, were of inferior significance. There can be little doubt that the women who anointed the Lord displayed heartfelt recognition of Him and His love, quite equal, if not superior, to any man. In that no difference is implied, but in view of the order of creation and the original choice of God, the lead then was always taken by the male; he represents the purpose of God in election.

In Jewry the feminine always indicated the weaker position, but that in no way implies that the female is inferior to the male. God's choices are not to be construed into a commentary on any imaginary parity or relative merits of the sexes; they are simply fixed symbolic indications of eternal truth, bearing spiritual meaning according to His own will. Female, as well as male, has a part to fulfil in the revelation of God's person, and contributes equally with the male to God's plan for redemption on the earth. In this particular matter of anointing she fulfilled a noble ministry indeed.

John tells us in his Gospel that before Jesus was anointed in the Bethany home, Martha, Mary's sister, had confessed her belief that

Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God which should come into the world. That they both believed this is indicated by Mary's later gesture; it was a well calculated, precisely timed testimony to their love for Jesus, and it confirmed their joint total faith in Him and His testimony. Between them the Bethany family said and showed that He was the Anointed. Lazarus, the male, had the most important part; alive from the dead, he sat and ate with Him. Martha, who declared the most important thing, served them both, and Mary publicly anointed Him into His most important work. This was His anointing unto the One Baptism into and through death into resurrection. But in this last anointing, as in the second, there was no bestowal of the Spirit involved in the act; nothing was added to Him personally. Both these were acknowledgements of the first.

Altogether too much has been made of the practice of Old Testament anointing with oil. We must recognise and value the importance of the ministration, but we must also correctly evaluate its symbolism in the larger context of the New Covenant or we shall fail rightly to understand its worth.

Chapter 7 — With the King in His Kingdom on Earth

The fact that the Baptism is indeed far more important than the Anointing is most unmistakably shown in the lives of the Apostles of the Lamb. These men, chosen by Jesus to be with Him whilst He was on earth, were authorised and sent out to function under Him with power. By that authority they did many wonderful things, but at that time not one of them was baptised in the Spirit, nor could they be until Jesus had left the earth. At first glance that may seem a very improbable thing, but it was quite unavoidable, beside which it was most gracious of the Lord to do this. Those disciples who were so privileged to be with Him on the earth were given no advantage over us in this matter. At that time in history Baptism in Spirit had not been prepared and provided for men. Christ could not baptise them in Spirit until He Himself had undergone His own spiritual baptism at Calvary. He could not give them the permanent inborn Unction, for that depended upon New Birth, which none of them could know until He

had risen from the dead.

Servants under His Authority

Jesus did not, however, allow the unavoidable absence of the latter to impede Him in regard to the imperative need for the former. He therefore sent them out to do His works under the authority of His own Anointing. This was perfectly correct, for at that time the Lord Himself had as yet to be baptised with His Baptism, therefore it was neither inconsistent with truth, nor irregular of procedure, that in this respect they should function as He. His intention at that time was to substantiate scripture and His own statement that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. They were with the King in His kingdom on earth, and worked with and for Him, but they were not yet with the King in His Kingdom in Spirit. Plainly put, they were servants but not yet sons; but no man, whether son or servant, can serve in the Kingdom without the Anointing.

Jesus was born King among men, a sovereign over a kingdom which is not of this world, and He was truly desirous of bringing the Kingdom of Heaven on earth for men. It was His stated purpose, and He had come partly for that reason. Everything He did was in context of God's overall plan for the ages, perfectly consistent with eternal truth and grace, and within His office and commission He could do as He wished. Nevertheless, it should be noted that He did not attempt to call and appoint men to office until He had spent the preceding night in prayer with God.

From His anointing onwards He moved as a king in his kingdom. In keeping with this, He called whom He would to Him and elected from them an exclusive band, and later vested power and authority in them that He might send them to do His bidding and perform His works until the new order should be established. This, in practical terms of service, is what Anointing bestows; it is Christ's authorisation to work Kingdom of Heaven works among men. The Baptism with which He was to be baptised was secret to Him then, and it was unto this He was 'straitened' all His life; it was His earthly goal. But prior to this being accomplished, and in anticipation of it, by virtue of His own Anointing,

He authorised whom He would to work in His kingdom as servants. For this they needed neither a dove nor a voice, nor did they require oil, only His word and will and direction; these men were being trained for greater things in a higher kingdom still. They were born into the Kingdom of God at Pentecost.

A Kingdom not of this World

This Anointing has chiefly to do with Jesus — Christ the King. As already mentioned, in the Gospel accounts it was the Magi who first introduced the note of royalty into the story of Christ's birth. The annunciation of it to the shepherds at Bethlehem had included a reference to His Davidic lineage. Indeed He was born at Bethlehem for this very reason, but the angel did not refer to Him directly as King. The Jews were looking for their Messiah, the Magi were not; to them the child was born King; they had no scriptures, no traditional beliefs in a coming Messiah, they just knew He was King. His kingship however did not develop and materialise as they might have expected had they been informed.

It was known unto Him that He would not be accepted by His people though, the terms of His Messianic kingdom were too stringent. He knew when He came He would be rejected by men and that His earthly reign was to be deferred to a later date. Yet He did not cease to be King, nor did He renounce His claims to sovereignty. His kingdom was of another order primarily, it was spiritual before being terrestrial, so at His first advent He refrained from pressing earthly claims or contending for territorial gain. He did not seek to overthrow Herod or Caesar. Instead the Lord moved in sovereign spiritual power in the kingdom of God, creating a kingdom of heaven for men on earth. This was quite beyond the powers of a Herod or a Caesar, and in no way interfered with either of their kingdoms nor challenged their positions; neither of them made any pretence to rule in that realm.

It was concerning his lord Caesar's kingdom that Pilate finally asked Jesus under examination in Jerusalem — 'art thou a king?' Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world', and so saying revealed its heavenly and spiritual nature. His plain statement put Pilate's heart at

rest about matters causing him great concern. He had no doubt as to Jesus' royalty though, and had his beliefs nailed to the cross, perhaps with mockery and contempt, but nevertheless in truth, 'This is Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews'. It was a sealing of the pact newly forged with Herod, a gesture of friendship to him; he had exterminated the threat to Herod's kingdom and throne, so they thought. Poor Pilate, poor Herod, they need not have worried, Jesus was not seeking Herod's domain any more than Caesar's; to Him they meant nothing. He is King, neither of them was. No man on this earth has ever been King but Jesus. At best earthly monarchs can only be a king or a queen, they are not King; Jesus is; He is Lord and King. Hallelujah!

Satan knew in what realm Jesus was and is King, and as soon as He was anointed with the Holy Ghost and power, the devil sought issue with Him. This was welcomed by Jesus. The wilderness was fixed for the field of battle, and the Spirit led Him into it. There, after forty days of fasting, the contest began. During its course the devil took Jesus up into an exceeding high mountain where he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. 'Fall down and worship me' he said, 'and all shall be thine'. But Jesus had not come into the world to strike bargains with satan; He had come to defeat him and take his kingdom by force. The devil knew very well that Jesus had not come to take Caesar's kingdom and sovereignty, but his.

Deferring all claims to territorial sovereignty, the Lord Christ of God detected satan's temptation and defeated him in it. Proving Himself to be King, He set out with vigour to prosecute His campaign against the devil and all his hosts and to overthrow his kingdom in that country. He went unto the task crying out, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand', and soon sicknesses and crippling diseases disappeared, bondages were broken and hearts were healed. Miracles took place on every hand — deliverances, exorcisms, various social ministrations all followed as of nature. Everywhere He demonstrated His power from on high, and light shone in the darkness of Jewry. Joy and gladness, hope and praise abounded everywhere; the devil and his hosts were being defeated and cast out, and his kingdom destroyed.

So great was His success, that following the feeding of the multitudes, the blessed people tried to take Jesus by force and make Him a king, but He would not permit that. He could not allow people to think they could make Him a king when He is already King, so He first sent His disciples away across the lake lest they should be affected by the idea, and then dismissed the crowd. Having nipped in the bud the brewing insurrection, the Lord repaired to a mountain alone to talk it over with God His Father. At the conclusion of this heavenly conference He descended to the sea and strode across the waves to join His disciples, who were struggling against contrary conditions, still trying to reach the other shore.

The whole series of miracles and conversations which took place at that time marked a turning point in the life of Jesus. He had managed the affair very skilfully; the position had been most delicate. It is one of the highlights of His fame among men. Its importance is so great that each of His biographers mentions the occasion. Matthew sets it in the context of the parables of the kingdom, Herod's murder of John Baptist and the crossing of the sea. Mark precedes it with the account of the commissioning of the twelve and the story of John Baptist's death, following it with the story of the sea crossing. Luke opens in the same way, but omits to record the sea crossing following the miracle; instead he passes on to Peter's declaration of Jesus' Christhood, the first revelation of the cross and the transfiguration. John sets it in perspective of time — the passover. Telling the story of the miracle, he continues with the sea-crossing, but omits the episode of Peter's walk on the sea to Jesus. Instead he proceeds with the exposition Jesus gave of the miracle with a view to establishing truth and destroying false popularity. This drew out Peter's first declaration of His Christhood, which in turn led to the first announcement that there was a devil among the twelve.

All this is of major significance. Briefly condensed it may be stated thus: everything was done with the purpose of revealing the unseen battle between the two spiritual kingdoms, now set in open conflict. The Lord reveals to them the secret workings and aspects of the kingdom of heaven, then follows the strategy and character of the battle

and the disposition of His army of ministers. After this He exposes Herod's alliance with satan to destroy John Baptist and his enquiry after Jesus. Then we see that satan, as well as Jesus, is laying plans. But the overall superiority of the Lord's plans and strategy over the devil's becomes apparent again by the reference to the passover.

It was at the original passover and Israel's consequent crossing of that sea that the devil and his puppet, Pharaoh, suffered total defeat. So great was God's victory that day that it became a byword throughout the middle east. Against this background of gathering forces in the spiritual world, thousands sat down to their miraculous meal, all unaware of its portents and the part they played in it. They said Jesus was the prophet that should come into the world, and were partly right. Jesus said, 'except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood ye have no life in you' — surely this meant He was to be defeated and slain and the battle lost to the devil! Nevertheless they sought to take Jesus by force and make Him king.

Perhaps they had visions of an immediate uprising against Herod, leading to the overthrow of Caesar and ultimate world dominion. But purging Himself of mere sensation-seekers and those who fed their stomachs on bread and fish and their souls on miracles, He draws from Peter the confession of His kingship — 'Thou art the Christ', and discloses His awareness of the devil's agent and spy in the midst — Judas. Having done so, He dismisses the remaining crowd, and ascends the mountain to be alone with God, while the apostles labour to cross the sea, battling against contrary winds and waves. Finishing His vigil with God, and descending to the sea, the Lord walks unimpeded on the water to His tired disciples, now full of fear at what they think is an apparition of a spirit.

Landed on the other side, Jesus begins a series of references to the cross, for although unimaginable to the disciples, the Lord is preparing them for the final battleground. He had avoided all possibility of appearing to have aspirations for an earthly throne, but He makes no attempt to hide the fact that He was after a spiritual one. Finally He ascends the Mount of Transfiguration with three of His apostles, and in

transfiguration discusses His exodus with Moses and Elijah — a radiant, triumphant King. Had they but known it, the apostles had been given a survey of policy, a lesson in strategy and an exercise in tactics.

At a later period the Lord acquainted His disciples with the fact that they were not to be overjoyed because devils were subject to them in His name — they were prosecuting war with spirit powers — but nothing should by any means hurt them. Another time He told critics that by casting out devils He had brought the Kingdom of God upon them. Never did He speak against Caesar; instead He told people to render to Caesar the things that were Caesar's, but He continued His battle against satan to the end. Moreover He did not expect this warfare to cease with His departure from this world, but said this 'gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world for a witness, and then the end shall come'.

For this reason He carried the warfare right on to the cross, where He died, having no kingdom in this world — not so much as a stitch of clothing or a sure place in which to be buried. He fought for nothing of this world, for He possessed nothing in it, yet on the cross He waged warfare as never before in His life. Hanging there, seemingly helpless, hated by men and a bait to devils, He set the scene for the final conflict. Attracting the whole host of satanic powers and principalities to Himself, He entered into the last decisive battle for mankind, and won it. At last, shouting the victory, He gave up His Spirit to God His Father and His body slept triumphant in death. Meanwhile He descended into the place of departed spirits, and from there led out a multitude of captives, in part fulfilling His mission of deliverance to Israel and thereby completing a major part of His grand exodus.

This was only a beginning though — He was the king of Israel. He had told His disciples they would not die until they had seen the kingdom of God come with power, so waiting only for the day of Pentecost to fully come, He poured forth the Holy Spirit. Already some had been prepared by Him for their special ministry in the coming kingdom following His departure. Risen from the dead, He had breathed on them in the upper room, commissioning them, giving them

powers, placing upon them responsibilities, charging them with duties in readiness for the future onslaught on the devil's kingdom. So it was that, following in its Lord's tradition, from its natal day the Church of God moved onward into battle with the powers of darkness in the kingdoms of this world.

Authority over all the Power of the Enemy

During His last statements to His apostles before leaving the earth, the Lord said they were to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and that they would receive power from on high to do so. They did not understand all that was implied in the command, and asked if the kingdom would at that time be restored to Israel. They anticipated a victorious campaign of restoration, whereby the nation would be reinstalled in its former glories — but Jesus said the purpose of the Baptism was to make them witnesses unto Him. He had not fought Caesar and Herod, but satan. He had not even tried to make Israel internationally great, but had lived and moved in the Kingdom of God and ministered the Kingdom of Heaven to men, and if they were to witness to Him they had to do the same.

This was the purpose of the Anointing they received. It imparted kingly authority and sovereign power in the spiritual world. Jesus expressed it like this: 'I give you authority over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall by any means hurt you'. Happy indeed is the person to whom the Lord grants such privilege, for by it He not only gives authority to work against the kingdom of satan, but also assures us that there is no power or authority greater than His, and that nothing can in any way harm the person moving in that authority.

This is a wonderful promise; it was originally given the twelve special apostles and the seventy others whom the Lord commissioned to serve in His Kingdom on earth, and to no-one else. Nevertheless the invariable elements of truth included in it apply to every member of the Church of Jesus Christ without exception. Even so it seems that to some the Lord gives special authority associated with His own Messianic Anointing and not to others. All whose names are in the book of life have authority to become sons of God, but not all have

authority to perform special miracles; this is amply borne out in scripture.

The Old Testament teems with the names and exploits of great men specially chosen for specific tasks and raised up of God above their contemporaries for the purpose. There is little doubt also that in the New Testament the same procedure is followed. First the twelve, above all men; then from among them Peter, James and John, and later Paul. These four can undoubtedly be called the chief among the apostles. There is also the plain teaching of the Lord, who by parable stated clearly that there are those to whom are given more talents than others; all lies in the sovereignty of His will. He chooses, He decides, He distributes according to His will and wisdom; all is done out of love and consideration for the persons with whom He is dealing.

It would be as foolish as it would be unloving to overload persons with talents and gifts which would only be a burden to them if they had not the ability to use them to their best advantage in the kingdom, as well as to their own personal good. God is very practical as well as very loving. Nevertheless, by virtue of the very fact that a person's name is in the book of life, he or she has some degree of authority to serve the Lord, if not to be an apostle or a prophet or any of the chief ministers of the Church. The greater aspect of anointing is theirs already, namely the Unction, which in itself bestows an authority not otherwise obtainable to man, that is 'the authority to become sons of God'. In order to exercise this authority innate in regeneration, all men and women born of God have to do is to grow and develop properly as they should.

As we have seen, this is perfectly illustrated for us in the person of Jesus. When He was only twelve years old He was speaking in the temple with an authority and knowledge far above His seniors, simply because He was born King, the Anointed. In our measure and order this same Anointing is inborn in each of us at new birth, and it is the greatest authority a person can have. In the Church it is intended to be basic to all authority which, according to God's will, may later be bestowed upon some members for special ministries to which they may

be called.

Function and Service

On the day of Pentecost all present in the Upper Room were baptised in the Holy Spirit, and thereby became the founder members of the Church; at the same time many, probably most of them were also anointed with the Spirit. There is little reason for supposing that the three thousand who were added to the Church later the same day were brought into anything other than a basic experience similar to that of the first hundred and twenty. Perhaps also the same may be said of Cornelius and his household following their Baptism in Spirit, for they immediately commenced to function in the gifts of the Spirit. The twelve men of Ephesus also began to operate in the gifts of the Spirit as soon as they received the gift of the Holy Ghost, who came upon them through Paul's ministrations. As soon as they were baptised into the body of Jesus Christ, the gifts and ministries of the Spirit became immediately functional among them. By these things the Lord is seeking to show us that the prime reason for the anointing of the Spirit is not powerful service but proper function.

Now although all function must be unto service, and is in some sense a form of service, the difference between the terms is very real — it is one of relationship. When we consider the Church as a body, of which Jesus Christ is the Head and we the members, the relationship of each to the other is clearly seen to be of life and function. We do not normally think of one member of a body serving another, but of all functioning together as a whole. On the other hand, if we think of Jesus as our Lord and Master, our relationship to Him is that of servants; the obvious purpose of this relationship is service. Both these ideas are correct, but it is vital to keep the whole truth in view, and know which is relatively the greater of the two.

Before Calvary and Pentecost none of the disciples enjoyed a Head and Member relationship with the Lord, nor a member to member relationship with each other — they only served Him as servants. The truth of body function was quite unknown to them at that time; it was kept as much a secret from them then as it had been from their fathers.

The Church which is His body and the truth concerning it was not revealed in the world until the Holy Ghost had come.

Nevertheless, the idea of function was associated with anointing in Old Testament ordinations and offices. Indeed in all of them the thought of service is quite secondary to that of function — but function as a member of a body is vastly different from function in a government or in an order. In course of their official function all those men of old served God in a special capacity in His kingdom on earth. Before that they had served the Lord in the same way as did their neighbours, but following their anointing, each immediately started to function in an entirely new way. Their anointing was an appointing.

Chapter 8 — Head Over All Things to the Church

Most of the troubles which have arisen over Bible interpretation in relation to spiritual life are the result of men's well-meant efforts to get souls saved with the object of preventing them from being eternally lost and going to hell. But desire to prevent men from going to hell is not the supreme factor in God's move to save souls, or He would have saved everybody unconditionally. Instead, quite deliberately, God has imposed upon men certain conditions for salvation, without which He is not prepared to accept them into His family and heaven. However, any man who fulfils these simple conditions may expect to receive full gospel salvation as a free gift from God without reserve.

This gospel was nowhere more simply and basically presented than in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Peter was the preacher, and in full flow of prophetic ministry he set forth Jesus, focal point of all prophecy, a man, crucified, slain, risen, exalted, glorified, enthroned, Lord and Christ. With Peter, always it was Christ; he could never resist the opportunity to present Him and press home His claims upon his hearers. He had set out to answer the people's question, 'What meaneth this?' 'This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel', he said, and proceeded further to speak of Him from whom 'that' of which they enquired came. His word took immediate hold on his audience, and drew forth the further enquiry, 'What shall we do'? To this he replied, 'Repent, every one of you and be baptised in the name of Jesus

Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost'.

The Gift of the Holy Ghost

It is distinctly noticeable that when answering the question 'What meaneth this?' referring to the phenomenon of tongues, Peter deliberately inserted a word into his statement which profoundly altered the meaning of Joel's prophecy. He did this in order to distinguish between the operation of a gift of the Spirit and the gift of the person of the Holy Spirit Himself. Through Joel God had said, 'I will pour out my Spirit', Peter changed that to 'I will pour out of my Spirit', a very different thing indeed. Any operation, administration, demonstration or manifestation of one or many gifts, whether in general effusion as at Pentecost, or in a particular or singular instance, is something the Spirit does, not who the Spirit is. Therefore the manifestation is rightly referred to as being of the Spirit; it is not the Spirit Himself. If the demonstration be widespread, it may be spoken of as an outpouring of, that is from, the Spirit, in which case we may expect our sons and daughters to prophesy.

Peter was the apostle of Christ specially raised up to teach the Jews and interpret to them the meaning of their historical and prophetical scriptures, and at Pentecost he inserted the word 'of' when drawing attention to the effusion of a gift, (the glossalalia) as distinct from the Spirit Himself. But later, when instructing them to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost as a person in His own right, the apostle says 'the gift is unto you', because he was not then referring to tongues but to their Author. That people might speak in tongues as a result of receiving the Holy Ghost is quite possible, perhaps even probable — many do so; certainly it is normal, but it is not essential.

Peter was concerned about them receiving the Gift of the Holy Ghost Himself, not one of His gifts. They were attracted by the effusion of tongues, but that was only a sign. Peter wanted them to have the Holy Ghost that He may be made to them Unction rather than they should be satisfied with a gift of another order. Who the Holy Ghost is and what He is made to us is of far greater fundamental importance than any of

the spiritual gifts He gives us. Peter was speaking under authority from God to make sure that these people became sons; they must enjoy 'Christing' with the Head for sonship before they knew membership in His body for service.

It is also clear from Peter's preaching recorded in Acts 10 that he regarded all true New Testament ministry to be utterly dependent upon the Anointing, saying it began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached. He then proceeded to describe how it happened — 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power'; that was the beginning of it all.

A Man Approved of God

Thirty years earlier the Word (Logos) had been made flesh, and following the events surrounding His birth remained in Nazareth, Joseph's and Mary's home, learning and practising carpentry. Then He was sent by God, preaching peace to the Children of Israel. For carpentry the Lord did not need this Anointing, but He did for the ministry to which by the Anointing He was set aside at Jordan. Peter summarised the task as including preaching, doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil. For this He needed God to be with Him in a special way, enabling Him to move in power, so He was anointed with the Holy Ghost; from that time God was with Him in the degree He needed for His new calling and ministry.

In chapter 2 verse 22 Peter lays particular emphasis on the manhood of Jesus: 'Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs'. And then, as though purposely to emphasise Jesus' humanity, he continues 'which God did by Him in the midst of you as ye yourselves also know'. There is no mistaking the apostle's insistence on the unmentioned Anointing — it all began from Jordan. Jesus is here presented as a man of whom God approved and by whom He worked. Linking this with Peter's words in chapter 10, we arrive at this composite statement — a man named Jesus of Nazareth was so approved of God that in order to show His approval of Him God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and power. As a result of this, God was with Him doing miracles and wonders and signs and

good deeds and healing among the people, in short conducting a planned nationwide programme of deliverance from the devil.

From this emerges the fact that the Anointing is bestowed as a mark of approval as well as a pledge of authority and power. If any person baptised in the Spirit so lives by the Uncction that he continues to be filled with the Spirit, he will be approved unto God and God will anoint him in order to show him to the people, saying of him, as of Jesus, 'this is the person I wish men to see'. All extraordinary works done thereafter will be proof of God's approval of a man's life, and are intended partly to draw attention to that fact.

The Anointing is specially connected with Jesus on earth bearing the name Emmanuel — 'God with us'. When the Lord moved out among the people in ministry, God was with Him, working by Him that all should behold God with them in that Man, and call Him Emmanuel. It is a name especially associated with the Kingdom of Heaven — that is God being and working on the earth, turning hellish states of men into heavenly ones. Satan's reign on earth had created conditions of conflict, distress, suffering, disease, pain, misery and death. Jesus brought in a superior kingdom; He went about doing good, opening up for men a new kingdom in which to live free from these things. For conflict He gave peace, for distress joy, for suffering alleviation, for disease health, for pain relief, for misery gladness, for death life — the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The name Emmanuel was given Him to be used specifically in association with this ministry. He attained unto it by obedience — He achieved it by the Anointing.

The Multitude of them that Believed

By the Anointing men are enabled by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to obtain 'part of the ministry from which Judas by transgression fell'. By and large modern churches have also fallen away from their ministry, but God has not therefore withdrawn from the true New Testament position so clearly set forth by Peter. This ministry is made clear in his own life; it is even more clearly shown by those called 'his own company' in Jerusalem (4:23). It is obvious that if ever there has been an anointed company on this earth, it was that company.

Proof of this is shown by the spontaneity with which they all prayed together, using the same words with the same purpose for exactly the same amount of time.

The entire Church on earth at that time comprised several companies such as this, and is described as 'the multitude of them that believed' — they shared one heart, had one soul, claimed no possessions as their own, had all things common — what a church! It was the firstborn Church on earth, as we may say, the direct descendant of God. They lived in the midst of hostility and persecution, facing threatened extermination every day of their lives. One great work wrought by God through the Anointing had already resulted in uproar in the temple and imprisonment for Peter and John; the authorities were antagonised, hatching up mischief against them, waiting to pounce.

It may have been considered prudent by some to have refrained from vexing 'the powers that be', but not this company — they had a revelation of the living Christ as God's Servant anointed for ministry. They never prayed that God would anoint Him, or that God would anoint them — they knew that neither was necessary. God's 'holy child Jesus' had been anointed publicly in the presence of some of them over three years before, and they knew no reason why He or they now needed any further anointing: Jesus' one Anointing was for ever. Neither did they reason, 'Jesus needed to be anointed, therefore we need anointing too', but 'Jesus is anointed, therefore we are too'. They knew they needed the Anointing, not an anointing. They also realised they were part of the Anointed One, that being on the Head the Anointing was already on the body.

The context reveals that it happened exactly as they prayed: God heartily approved of them and was very pleased with their understanding prayers. He shook the place and filled them all with the Holy Ghost. Resultantly faith, love and power abounded everywhere. Unity of heart and soul bound them together, and generosity and selflessness graced the whole congregation. Apparently the Anointing needs not to be obtained but retained. A Spirit-filled church is an Anointed church. God's response to their prayer proves that all they

needed to do was to keep filled with the Spirit and the Anointing would abide upon every one of them.

Although as yet Paul had not been saved, and the revelation he imparted to the Corinthian church not yet written, (indeed that church was not yet in existence) the church at Jerusalem lived in the experimental knowledge of that which the later apostle was yet to preach and teach. The Spirit inspiring their prayer one day also inspired Paul to write, 'ye are the body of Christ and members in particular', and 'as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many are one body, so also is Christ', and also 'the eye cannot say unto the hand I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you'. The Spirit of revelation, understanding and inspiration moved universally through the Church and still does in those who are spiritual.

That Jerusalem company needed no Paul to teach them their position in the heavenlies, or their membership in the body of Christ; they knew these things by experience. They were young Christians, but they knew the Church and Christ are one being, as body and head are one body. Sons as He, they functioned in His likeness, priestlike as He, offering themselves and each other to God as living sacrifices. They also moved on earth as though being the person of Christ ministering in His heavenly kingdom, kingly as He, creating heavenly states into which men and women could enter by faith. Christ was in them. Later it was to be said 'these that have turned the world upside down have come here also' (presumably to turn that place upside down) saying 'there is another king — Jesus', which is perfectly true.

Chosen to be with Him

The method the Lord adopted when selecting the twelve from among the rest of His disciples should be closely observed for it is most instructive. After spending the night in prayer, 'He called whom He would' to be His disciples; following that, He deliberately selected twelve from among them 'to be with Him' and 'that they might have power'. These did not immediately receive power; that was not granted them then, neither were they yet sent forth; the call must be heard and

clear response be made first. It may be some while before power and authority for ministry are given. The call is always unto the Lord first, not to a ministry.

He called them to Himself, intending to send them out in ministry, but not until later. He did not immediately tell them they were to be apostles neither did He mention anything about receiving power and authority — that was kept secret from them in His heart. The wisdom of this is beyond dispute. We must respond to the call of Jesus entirely and only in order to be with Him and for no other reason. Too easily we forget that the unregenerate hearts of men seek power and authority for self-glory. Unsaved as well as saved men want to be commissioned and sent on important missions, but the Lord does not feed the carnal urges in man. All too often these masquerade as spiritual desires, and are frequently mistaken for them, for they come from the spirit of man — but the Lord offers nothing but death to carnal wishes; these all must be crucified and slain. He was too wise to attempt to dazzle men with promises of power and great ministries.

Uncrucified spirits of men reach out and grasp for prizes in lust, which is all too often confused with faith; but all in vain. The Lord proceeds step by step to His predetermined ends with man in the Kingdom of God, sometimes withholding from them knowledge which, if released too soon, would destroy instead of edify. So whether a person is called to be an 'ordinary' member of the Church, or to be an 'extraordinarily gifted' member makes no difference. Each one is basically anointed to serve the Lord to some degree and measure as the Lord shall choose.

The Body is One

The early Church saw this very clearly. On the day of Peter's and John's release from prison the whole church, having received them back into their bosom, unitedly prayed that God would grant each one of them all boldness to preach His word. As we have seen, not one of the company asked to be anointed personally, nor did they pray for a new anointing, either for themselves or for their apostles; they only sought boldness, that is all. This can only mean one thing, namely they fully realised that the Anointing of Jesus Christ for service, once

bestowed, was permanent upon Him, and that He would do the same works through His spiritual body, the Church, as He did through His natural body, the Nazarene; all He needed was their boldness.

However, although the whole Church is anointed with Jesus its Head, as far as we know the only one among them who performed miracles was Peter, one of the chief apostles. It seems that none of the rest did the works at that time, even though there must have been other apostles (certainly John) among them. Later Stephen the deacon comes into prominence in Jerusalem as a miracle-worker, but at this early juncture only Peter is nominated as the instrument of power.

Attention is hereby being drawn to the fact that Jesus the Head is anointed to work as He pleases through any member of His body, though perhaps chiefly through those He selects to positions of headship in the body. This in turn emphasises an important point, namely that although one man may do the work, it is not to be thought that it is he who does it but the whole church of which he is a part. The particular worker being used is only one of a membership of many in that body, and as a hand or a foot cannot claim to do anything as of itself, neither can he as apart from or distinct from the whole. Further also, the truth is brought to notice that it is no more the church than the particular member chosen which does it, but the Head, Jesus, whose name and Anointing and power and authority it bears. It was not Peter or the church who did the miracles, but Jesus.

Their form of prayer reveals how sensitive they were to truth: 'grant to thy servants that with all boldness they may preach thy word by stretching forth thy hand to heal and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus'. Whether they meant they could and would stretch forth God's hand, or were asking Him to do so, they were conscious it was Him and His hand, not theirs. This conforms to nature, for if any person lays claim to doing anything it is never the hand or the foot that makes the claim, but the head. It is the person living in the body who does it, not the particular member he or she uses, and the claim is made from the head, out of the mouth.

There is neither cause nor reason for jealousy among the members of

Christ's body functioning properly as a local church, neither is there need for disappointment or despair. It is not the fault of the rest of the members that one or two do the miraculous works. These are associated with his or their callings and commissions, and ultimately the members' full function, power and authority will depend on the state of the whole church. The people who do the works are no greater than others who do not, and cannot be as great as they should be unless and until the whole company moves under the same anointing as its head. When it does it will be able to accomplish all the latent potential in the gift(s) or talent(s) bestowed upon certain members of the church. When Paul states 'if one member be honoured all the members rejoice with it', he has this in mind. Every member is honoured if one be used to perform a miracle, or if God does something wonderful for him or her. Therefore envy or jealousy or despondency need not affect anyone, nor indeed must pride or vainglory or love of power or money fly to the head of anyone being so used.

The authority and power are not bestowed so much upon the person as upon the church, therefore not he only but also the whole church is credited in God's eyes as functioning properly as a body. We must together recognise and acknowledge what we profess, that the body with all its members is one, and in this respect is for use only; it is Christ's body, and He alone indwells and uses it. Let us then, with full understanding of truth, regain the boldness of our forbears, who did great works because they knew the secret of the Anointing, and how to retain its power and effectiveness.

Boldness to Preach

If there is one word above another which fitly describes the general attitude and public manifestation of the early churches in Jerusalem and Judea, it is boldness. The lesson we must learn is at once clear: instead of praying for anointings, churches ought to be praying for boldness. Boldness is part of the power imparted to a person when baptised in the Spirit; this Baptism makes the coward spirit brave, and nerves the feeble arm for fight. According to Paul, whose daring bravery led many a church into glory, the spirit given to a man is the spirit of love

and power and of a sound mind. This spirit is imparted at new birth to be for ever his own; a man cannot be a witness to Christ if he is a coward; only the bold can obtain and retain the Anointing. It is written of Peter and John that men perceived their boldness, and anyone reading the record can as easily see it as they who originally thought or said it. And not only the apostles had it; the whole company of believers were as bold as their leaders.

Power from on high is always given to the bold, but it will soon be lost if churches cease to be bold in preaching and witness. Fear is a crippling curse, a debilitating disease, frustrating the purposes of God. But it was not so with the churches in the early days. When Peter was released from prison he was only given conditional discharge, but instead of accepting the strictures laid upon him he acted completely contrary to the commandments of the authorities and continued doing exactly as he had done before. Imprisonment and punishment only made him the bolder, and boldness made him the more powerful. He defied the authorities and, as may be expected, was soon back in prison again, and this time God did an even greater miracle than before. He delivered Peter from prison by an angel who told him 'to go and stand in the temple and declare all the words of this life' — and Peter did so.

For this he and those with him were publicly harangued, and openly beaten and officially commanded to cease from their ministry, so in sheer defiance of 'the powers that be' and in simple obedience to God they went and did it again. They were absolutely unafraid and quite prepared to shed blood, provided it was their own. They kept the Anointing though, because they acted in accordance with it and were bold — as bold as Jesus their Head was to shed His blood, and as anointed as He.

In these days the Anointing is so often associated with works of power, that it is perhaps necessary to restate the fact that the Anointing is as necessary for preaching and teaching as for the operation of more spectacular gifts. In fact it is more important for churches to be concerned to have the 'anointed word' than to perform the anointed miracle. It was only when the church prayed for boldness to preach the

word that they asked for signs and wonders; they carefully linked them together, giving precedence to preaching as being the most important. They had it in the same order as the Lord Himself. Mark states it perfectly — they went forth and preached everywhere ... the Lord working with and confirming the word with signs following'. The two may be regarded as head and body — the works giving substance to the words as the body to the head. A man must first speak as one having authority, and then, according to his gifts, authenticate his words by his works.

These Signs shall Follow

In its mission to the world of men the Church's preachers must be the mouthpieces of the whole Church. The preacher must not only wait upon his ministry to speak the word of God; he must also be the 'official' mouth and speak the word of the entire Church. An example of this kind of preaching is to be found in the remarkable happenings first at Samaria and then at Caesarea in Cornelius' household when Peter preached in those places. Having been sent to Samaria, Peter preached as representing the entire church at Jerusalem. He was sent because they knew what he would preach and he preached what he knew they would say.

When he went to Caesarea Peter preached as being sent by God. He knew what Peter would say and Peter knew what God wanted him to say — 'while Peter spoke these words the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word'. Place the two events together and the truth emerges; Peter spoke both the word of God and the word of the Church — it was one. It should always be exactly the same; if the churches remain anointed it will be so — anointed churches should produce and send out anointed preachers. The gifted preacher depends as much upon the church anointing as personal anointing. We need to recapture the vision of our glorious Head for preaching as for works — the body of Christ is an anointed body.

Anointed churches are probably the greatest phenomena of our age. It is the rarest thing to find a whole company of people constantly moving under the anointing of the Spirit. So few realise the absolute

importance of 'church' anointing. This may be the result of the modern sin which exalts men or office far beyond what God intends. Coupled with this, there is often much misunderstanding about the purpose of the anointing. Too often members of churches pray for their leaders to be anointed without realising that they themselves need as much to be anointed as their 'great' men. If a person has the gift of healing or prophecy, or of some other acknowledged ministry, his fellow-members pray and expect him to be anointed for the sake of the gift and its powerful use. Few realise that for fullest benefit of the church and all mankind it is as essential for every member of the church to be anointed as the one who operates the gift.

It is of God's wisdom and goodness that, although the gifts of the Spirit may operate in course of true worship, they are not essential to it; the Anointing is, though. Similarly gifts are not necessary to prayer either, but the Anointing is. It is as vital to praise as to worship and prayer. Praise can no more be given to God apart from the Anointing than can prayer and worship, though gifts may not operate at all during the exercise. Prayer, praise and worship are the most vital of all the exercises of the Spirit-filled life — all other activity must rise and proceed from these as does a river from its source. For this every member of the church must be anointed of the Lord; to be anointed in this realm is greatest of all, for it is the sphere of priesthood to which all are called in one body, and in which everyone must function as of nature.

This wholly consistent anointed life of the church is of far greater value and importance than any amount of anointed works of a desultory nature done by any member. To live daily offering up spiritual sacrifices to God is essential to all. This does not require of a man that he does spectacular miraculous works; these do not gain us acceptance with Him, but except a man be anointed he cannot make these offerings so vital to the Church's life. Although the Church does not exist because of its own spiritual sacrifices, its life does consist in them. The value of the Lord's physical sacrifice was exactly the worth of the spiritual sacrifice He offered unto God at that time. His blood was redemptive to us because His life was satisfying to God; all He ever did

was only acceptable upon that same basis. Because He lived making spiritual offerings to His Father, He could also die making one — so also must we live, and if necessary die. The kingdom subsists in this priesthood — for this every man and woman must be anointed of the Lord.

In the same way a church must have the Anointing, that all the gifts of the Spirit essential to their full life may function properly among them. Except they be used under the Anointing, the oral gifts become nothing other than man's word. They may sound good and unctious, be couched in recognisable scriptural terms and spoken in tones appropriate to the matter, but unless the church be moving by the Anointing, neither speaker nor hearers will benefit. Except by the Anointing there is nothing coming through from the Head; there is no message because there is no power, and there is no power because there is no authority and there is no authority because there is no Anointing.

Chapter 9 — The Anointed in the Midst

It is possible to think of power as distinct from authority, and indeed the scriptures very clearly differentiate between them. In the last analysis however power and authority cannot be separated. This is so because in the Spirit of God they are one; however it is possible to think of them separately, and for the purpose of clearer understanding very necessary too.

The Power of Authority

New Testament writers use different words to distinguish between the power of ability and the power of authority, and they direct our attention to Jesus Christ doing the same. Thus in one passage we read of Him giving to His apostles both power and authority, that by these they may be fitted for the ministry to which He was sending them. By the fact that the Lord never gave one without the other, we see that both are necessary for the Spirit-filled servant of the Lord. While niceties of analytical thought demand careful grammatical distinction, in the last analysis this power and authority from on high cannot be

separated. Being one in God, they are also one in His Spirit and intention; to us who are His sons and servants He bestows them together.

It is impossible to separate this power and authority in the realm of practical logic, for how shall a man prevail over satan with power alone? Unless he has authority to use the power it is useless. In the field of service it is as impossible and impractical to give power without authority as authority without power, so God does not do so. At whatever stage of spiritual development a man may be, the authority and power of God are working together as one on his behalf. As the prime example of this we will select John's word in his Gospel 1:11 & 12, and Jesus' statement in Acts 1:8. In each case the subject is new birth, the most basic of all experiences related to eternal life. John says, 'to as many as received Him, to them gave He authority to become children of God', and Jesus says, 'ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto Me'. We are given authority and receive power to become a child and be a witness unto Jesus simultaneously.

Another example of this same thing is revealed in Luke 4:32 and Acts 10:38. Both these should be read in conjunction with Luke 4:18, for they have to do with the coming of the Spirit of the Lord upon Jesus for ministry / service, and this time the subject is the Anointing. 'His word was in authority', says Luke; 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power', says Peter. Jesus the Son received authority and power simultaneously to become a minister and be a servant, and His is the pattern life for all God's children.

Following the events of Pentecost, we notice that Peter, one of the chief apostles, becomes a pattern also. Like his Lord, he moves and ministers in the Anointing of the Spirit, with all authority and power, prophesying and preaching and performing miracles in exactly the same manner as Jesus had done. On the day of Pentecost he stood up with the eleven and in full authority interpreted to the Jews their own scriptures; this he did to such purpose and effect that thousands of men hung upon his word, asked him what they must do and then did what

he said. The word authority does not occur in the text, but if there was ever an example of spiritual authority that was it.

In chapter 3 authority and power combine to produce the miracle of healing at the temple gate. Questioned about it, Peter claimed that it was done by power and in the name of Jesus; God had glorified His Son and His power. Peter had not done it, he had no power of his own to do such things; he had to do it in Jesus' name — that is one of the basic principles of the function of authority. Peter was granted the privilege of using the power of another; because he was given the right to use His name, he could use His power too. As a young man without much understanding of truth, one of the greatest impressions ever made on me was as a result of reading the account of this miracle. I was amazed at Peter's supreme confidence — he claimed to be speaking in Jesus' name, reached out his hand as though it was Jesus' hand, and without hesitation performed a miracle just as Jesus had done. As he later said, Jesus is anointed. Peter realised his relationship to the Lord, he was as the Head's hand; Jesus did it. Such is the truth and power of the Anointing and the force of authority.

The Anointing carries with it a mysterious power at once apparent to all, but understood by few. It makes no boasts or pretences, seeks no advertisement, conforms to no pattern but the Man of Galilee, yet it cannot be hidden or covered, nor can it be ignored. It may not be immediately recognised, and although it be at last acknowledged, until it be known it may at first be misunderstood. It betokens the presence of God in a special way, distilling like dew, filling the atmosphere, charging it with heaven, clothing words with power, unifying hearts. It is the crown of ministry, the sceptre of the kingdom, the throne of God in the midst of the Church, the cloak of royalty and majesty wherein all God's true children are wrapped and enrapt when in corporate worship.

Since this is so, we ought never to think of power and authority as though they are abstract qualities. They are two of God's personal attributes, best demonstrated to us by the Anointed person of our Lord Jesus Christ. So great was the change wrought in Him by the Anointing, that He seemed to become a different person. Until Jordan

He was a Nazarene carpenter, but following His water baptism and spiritual anointing He was a carpenter no longer. The change was amazing and so great that it cannot rightly be assessed or properly described; the unknown woodworker suddenly became famous. He went into the desert, declared war on satan, returned to Nazareth, announced Himself to those who knew Him there, evaded their murderous intentions, and moved off into a life of heavenly ministry among His nation. He had been anointed with authority and power.

There can be no doubt that the baptism Jesus underwent at Jordan has been set in scripture as a parabolic revelation of truth for the entire Church. The significant steps highlighted in the type for the children of God are these: (1) forgiveness and cleansing; (2) death and burial; (3) resurrection and anointing; (4) annunciation of sonship. Jesus did not need, nor did He undergo forgiveness, cleansing, burial and resurrection at Jordan. He only exhibited the steps that lead up to anointing and annunciation of sonship and service. For our sakes He carried out in type the blessed possibilities that lie in the baptism in the Spirit.

For men forgiveness and cleansing, death and burial, resurrection and anointing lie in this glorious baptism. Jesus was not baptised in the Spirit at Jordan or anywhere else in earth or heaven because He did not need to be. He is, was and always will be the Son of God. The baptism in the Spirit makes sons of men sons of God. However He did need to be, and actually was, anointed at Jordan. So if we join the typical with the actual, the truth emerges, namely this: it is in the provisions of God, and therefore possible to us, that baptism in the Spirit and the anointing of the Spirit can take place as near simultaneously, as is shown by the experience of the Lord Jesus at Jordan. Coming up out of the waters, as though raised from the dead, and standing praying He was instantly anointed and proclaimed by His Father: 'This is my beloved Son'.

It should happen likewise to every born again son — God grant it to be so. It is entirely due to shortcomings on our part, not on God's, that it does not so happen. The apostles chosen by Jesus were an exceptional company. No modern man can hope to have the exact experiences they

had. The twelve were privileged above all men to be with Jesus and to work with Him in His kingdom while He was here on earth as a humble man. They were endued with power and given authority from the Lord years before they were baptised in the Spirit, so it is difficult to take them as precise examples to those who came into the kingdom of God following Pentecost.

However, we may perhaps, with more than a little justification, see in the apostles something akin to our own experiences along this line. It seems that although they were empowered and authorised by the Lord to go out at His command in ministry, which took them far from His physical presence, this was only for a period. It also appears that, having accomplished His purposes thereby, the Lord never repeated the missionary enterprise. He did, however, recruit another seventy, and similarly equipped them for service, sending them forth as well. All these, as the twelve before them, fulfilled their mission and returned to receive still greater promises and powers; it was all very wonderful. Yet beyond their initiation and initial sending forth, there is no record that any of them were re-commissioned and sent out again.

If the silence of scripture on the matter is any indication we must conclude that not one of them performed a miracle again while the Lord was with them on earth. Indeed, it would appear almost certain that the apostles' original power had been withdrawn, for they were not able to heal the epileptic boy at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration. We cannot be too sure about it, but perhaps it may be regarded as true that the power and authority given to them by Jesus was also withdrawn from them by Him. At that point of His programme the king equipped His servants temporarily with limited powers, for His own purposes. It must not be assumed that the powers evaporated, or that the Lord was displeased with His servants. In fact nothing must be read into the facts; the Lord is Lord, and acts according to His good pleasure as well as according to righteousness and truth.

Perhaps the absence of reference to any repeated apostolic ministry following their original labours indicates nothing more than the Lord's

desire to emphasise His intentions, and the possibilities as well as the importance of the baptism in the Spirit. Certainly, upon the coming of the Spirit and their entrance into life at Pentecost, the apostles moved into a richness of ministry unequalled by them at any time before that. The Spirit came into them for life and upon them for service, which is exactly the way the Lord had said it should be. In the first of His several references to Pentecost during the last week of His public life with His apostles, Jesus said it would be the occasion when His Father would give them the Holy Ghost. He then went on to speak of the results to be expected from the Spirit indwelling their lives — knowledge, education, fruit, guidance, glory — all the things which would make them true witnesses to Himself.

After His resurrection He told them to tarry in Jerusalem for the clothing of power from on high. Later still He affirmed that they were shortly to be baptised in the Holy Ghost, and being questioned about it said they should receive power as a result of the Holy Ghost coming upon them. In this connection the Lord again said that the object of this Baptism was that they should be worldwide witnesses unto Him. All these statements were made well within the compass of forty-five days which embraced Calvary and His ascension.

The reference to the purpose for the Baptism — namely to make them witnesses — links the last statement to the first, and is basically connected with the Spirit indwelling, or new birth. It has to do with life-power — the Spirit coming within to empower and enable us to live. The clothing with power is for service. To be and bear truest witness to the Lord we must not only represent His life before men, but also His works; for this we all need both the Baptism and the Anointing. It is the Lord's intention we should know both, and as He did not mention anointing for service in connection with the Spirit when speaking of Pentecost, we must presume He meant it should be included in the Baptism.

What we observe from Pentecost onwards in the lives of the apostles is a revival and an increase of the miraculous ministry they had exercised when Jesus had sent them out earlier. If they had indeed lost or been

relieved of the authority and power of former years, all was restored to them on the day of Pentecost. There can be little doubt that it was the power of the newborn Church that most impressed everybody who observed its activities. Within the compass of the first four chapters of the Acts of the Apostles the power at first bestowed upon the Church had become great power. In fact it was so great that a man's word could either slay people or his shadow heal them. This is the kind of power that is still available to the Church. In the hands of the wrong person it could be extremely dangerous and the prospect frightening, so the Lord has safeguarded His power by His authority.

God gives or withholds authority according to His own will and wisdom and foreknowledge. Jesus made this very clear to His apostles before Pentecost. In answer to a question about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel He said, 'it is not for you to know the times or seasons God hath put in His own authority, but ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you'. So saying the Lord put the whole matter in proper perspective. They were to receive power, but only within certain limits. All authority belongs to God alone, and it is His pleasure to grant some of it to those He chooses, but never all of it. To some He grants some authority, but to none does He grant all. When He grants more authority to anyone, with it He also grants further access to power.

All who receive Christ are given authority to become Sons of God, and all Spirit-baptised persons receive power to be witnesses to Jesus. To this degree authority and power are necessary to all. Spiritual life is dependent upon them and cannot be gained or lived without them. However, although both be granted together, authority is the greater. This is clearly shown in the recorded exchange which took place between Jesus and His enemies over casting out devils; the Lord's enemies said 'He casteth out devils by the prince of the devils', and they called Him Beelzebub. They were not so much speaking of the amount or content of His power, but the source of it — who or what was the authorising person or power? The Lord's answer gives great point to this: 'whence do your sons cast them out?' He asked; and again, 'if satan cast out satan, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you'.

Satan does not authorise anyone to cast himself out. The superior authority of the Lord was in operation, therefore greater power was at work. That is where the contest lies; the question being answered is whether satan or God is the greater. Jesus demonstrated that God's authority is above satan's.

Upon another occasion, when in open conflict with the religious 'powers that be' over the state of the nation and temple practices, He was again challenged on the point of authority; they said, 'tell us by what authority thou doest these things or who is he that gave thee this authority?' for they saw what He was doing and knew His power was great; He was irresistible. They could not stem the flow of works of power, so they had to try and stop them by stopping Him. If they could provoke Him into disclosing the source of His authority by confessing His sonship, they would have no difficulty in disposing of Him, and thereby (so they thought) stopping His work.

But the Lord was not yet ready to go to the cross. He had to finish the work His Father had given Him to do. He also wished them to know that He could see through their subterfuges, so in return the Lord asked them from whence John Baptist got his authority. Like his Lord, John had the power they envied, the mysterious power of authority. They knew John's power was not of men — either by heredity or by ordination — and they did not want to admit its heavenly origin, so they said they did not know, whereupon Jesus refused to disclose the source of His authority. Both John's and Jesus' power came by authorisation or anointing from heaven — it consisted in a state of unabated fulness of the Holy Ghost.

John was a burning, shining light like Elijah in Israel; he was a great man and a tremendous personality; but dynamic person though he was, that was not the source of his power. His ministry was not of men; he did not get it from self, he received it from God; authority gained by the Anointing is not a development of personality. A man's personality may develop and his personal stature increase because of it, but God's power in men does not operate from thence, neither does it operate by religious ordination, but only from the Anointing. John became a great

power in his country because he moved and spoke and acted with complete authority from God alone. This is indeed good news to all God's children, for as Jesus said, 'He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he' by a better covenant than John knew.

Because God is greater than satan, His is absolute authority. His power is almighty and His kingdom is the greatest of all kingdoms. Therefore to some degree according to His will all His children have authority to use power in this kingdom. Every child of God, however recently new-born, is given authority to overcome all evil spirits and administer rebuke to satan himself. Each one can speak to the devil and command him to depart because Jesus has conquered him; he knows he is defeated. He has been defeated upon three outstanding occasions: (1) before the foundation of the world, Jesus overcame and cast satan down from heaven; (2) as a man He overcame and cast satan from Him in the wilderness; (3) while still a man Jesus further defeated him on the cross. Because of this, the Lord gives to every one of His brethren power to overcome satan and cast him away from them. Quite irrespective of sex, age or position in the churches He authorises all God's children to do so. Apart from this, spiritual life could not be maintained.

A simple example, familiar to all, will illustrate this authority clearly: every time a policeman steps into the middle of the road to direct and control traffic a demonstration of power takes place. At the point of duty he holds up his hand and all oncoming traffic stops, he waves his free arm and other traffic moves on, he points his finger and people cross the road or vehicles turn a corner, and all without him saying a word. Everybody obeys his silent gestures and accepts his authority, yet he is no different from any of us. Nobody obeys his commands because he is stronger or bigger or has more personality than others, but simply because of the uniform he wears. His clothing shows him to be a representative of governmental power. He has right to control and direct or warn or restrain or even to arrest a person, but not by his own power or strength; far beyond innate ability, he has a delegated authority which everyone recognises. Of himself he has no power, yet during the course of one day, with a finger, he can hold or move

multiplied powers of machines and men almost beyond calculation. He holds an official position; he has an authority not his own, and can do things an ordinary person is not allowed to do. The devil is afraid of The Authority in a man; The Anointing is The Authority against which he is powerless.

Perhaps the difference between the purpose of the Unction and the purpose of the Anointing may be best set forth as the difference between Authenticity and Authority. Unction gives authenticity — no-one is an authentic child of God without it. Anointing gives authority — no-one can serve God with power apart from it. Unction authorises people to become sons of God; the Anointing authorises servants and sons to serve God in some special capacity. Unction is the seal of election and has to do with the kingdom / priest ministry — an office each child of God without exception must hold. Anointing is the sign of selection and has to do with the kingdom / prophet ministry and its offices to which some, but not all, are called.

A person anointed into any office other than priesthood must understand that his office is not superior to priesthood, nor can it be exercised at the expense of it. Each of these offices must be regarded as extra to it; persons can only function properly in these offices if priesthood first be fulfilled. The three great necessities in the Kingdom of God which the Holy Ghost is made to us are Baptism, Unction and Anointing — in that order. The greatest is the Baptism, wherein, by His incoming, we are made children of God; the next greatest is the Unction, whereby inner witness of His indwelling is given us as a seal that we are sons of God. The third is the Anointing accomplished by His oncoming, whereby we are authorised to work and serve or hold office in Jesus' name. It is scripturally true that these three may be bestowed together, as in the case of Paul, which is ideal; it is also true that Anointing may precede both Baptism and Unction as in the case of the disciples; it is also possible that as Cyrus some may be anointed only, but that is unusual.

Jesus Himself underwent His Baptism last of all, years after His anointing in Jordan; but that was unique to Him. He was creating the

state into which all believers may be plunged, namely death and resurrection. The general intention of God for the Church is Baptism, Uncction, Anointing; this is the logical sequence of experiences whereby He transforms persons into sons and servants in the image and likeness of Jesus. By the Birth / Baptism the nature of Jesus is imparted and the Uncction is implanted, that by these sonship may be achieved as from that nature, as likeness to the personality of Jesus progressively develops. Full Christ-likeness may then be attained as we grow into full stature in ministry; only disobedience and unfaithfulness will prevent it.

Great Plainness of Speech

It would be of great benefit to all children of God in this matter if the entire Church moved away from mystical terminology to the true New Testament position. As already pointed out, the word 'anointing' does not appear many times in the Book. Properly viewed the anointing is seen to be fulfilled and its purposes consummated by the appearing of the Anointed. Because the New Testament nowhere tells us what it is, it is very difficult to define exactly what is meant by the term.

Of old it was a simple matter to show what the Anointing was. The word is self-explanatory, and as shown in the case of the priesthood is described very exactly. But because there is precious little talk of anointing in the New Testament, the whole topic is wrapped up in mysticism. Persons speaking of it are hard put to it to give an easily understandable definition of what they mean by anointing. People are supposed to 'know' what is meant, as though there is an elitism among us — those who 'know' as opposed to those who do not.

In his second epistle to the Corinthians, Paul, when dealing with the New Testament ministry of the Holy Ghost, says 'we use great plainness of speech'. By this he implies that the Old Testament, with its foreshadowing types and figures, is couched in much more complicated words than the New. He substantiates this by referring to the necessity for Moses to veil his face when speaking to the children of Israel, and uses the occasion as an illustration of unclear truth. Presumably Moses' veil covered his mouth, somewhat muffling his voice and words, making them indistinct; certainly at least all his facial

expressions were hidden.

In the first chapter Paul says clearly that all the Corinthians, as well as he and his co-workers in Christ, were stablished, anointed, sealed and given the earnest of the Spirit by God. That is very plain speaking, there is no deviousness or mysticism about it. It is a straightforward statement of New Testament truth, which being plainly understood means that without exception God anoints everyone in Christ. The apostle is not, by this, inciting the Corinthians to believe that everybody among them was a Paul or a Sylvanus or a Timothy, or in any way 'great' above their contemporaries; he was simply telling them plain truth. It is truth we all need to know.

We should all have been alerted to the spuriousness of the implications of the use of the term anointing in some connotations by the very fact of the unaccountable mysteriousness which shrouds it. This is seen even more clearly when we remember how easily the children of God understand what is meant by other terms to do with our spiritual life: to name a few — conversion, salvation, sanctification, Baptism in the Spirit. There is no mystery shrouding those terms — given twelve months, any normal regenerate person who gives time to God's word can give a simple explanation of them to any who ask.

However, to explain what is meant by the Anointing in the New Testament defies nearly everybody's ingenuity, be they most able with words. This inability is symptomatic of an even worse condition at present afflicting the body spiritual and spreading confusion everywhere. We are all suffering and have suffered as a result of one of the most chronic mental disorders that has ever scourged the churches, namely almost total inability to distinguish between the covenants.

The New Covenant is in Christ. To be in Him we must all compulsorily be baptised by Him into His body. He is the Anointed; therefore being baptised into Him we are baptised into the Anointing. This is the plain simplicity of it all. Paul makes this very clear to the Galatians — 'as many as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ' — and goes on to work out the implications of that in relation to the particular truth he is bringing to the Galatians (and, thank God, to

us). But to the Corinthians he expands it in relation to the anointing and the sealing and the earnest of the Spirit.

The fact is that whatever is in Christ, or was and is given to Christ, is also ours; therefore because He is the Anointed and was anointed, so also is everyone in Him. That conclusion is completely unavoidable — it is logical, it is spiritual, it is truth. There is nothing mysterious about it — everybody in Christ is anointed in the fullest sense of the word for all the purposes for which the Holy Spirit is given.

The Measureless Spirit

In the third chapter of his Gospel, John declares a most marvellous truth which has direct bearing on this matter — 'He giveth not the Spirit by measure'. The words 'to Him', included by the translators in the text, are not in the Greek. This addition to God's words slightly alters His meaning, and although well-intended, is only true to a degree. The inclusion of these words obscures the widest scope of the revelation God intended, and sadly limits John's testimony. In relation to Jesus they are absolutely true; God did not give the Spirit unto Him by measure, but they are equally true in relation to every other son of God also. God does not give the Spirit by measure to them either; He cannot, for the Spirit is immeasurable.

When the Holy Spirit comes to a person, He comes to be all He is, to bring all He has, and to do all the work for which He is commissioned and sent. Given to us, He is also made to us all God will ever require of us, fitting each one for service and ministry. He imparts talents and gifts according to God's will, enabling as well as equipping us for the work of the ministry. And since it is true that every Spirit-baptised person is anointed of God, it only remains for us to discover what God has imparted to us, and what it is God wants us to do. For this we need no new or fresh anointing extra to or different from what is already given. That is why the New Testament does not instruct us to seek any such thing.

The fact that authority takes the place of anointing in the New Testament is amply illustrated to us in the persons and activities of the

Lord Jesus and His disciples. As the anointed King, at a certain point of His ministry He carefully chose the men He wished to work with Him on earth, but although all were workers in His kingdom, the Lord did not anoint any of them. Not a drop of oil was poured upon them, nor was there any kind of public ceremony performed which by any stretch of the imagination could be associated with ceremonial anointing. As far as we can see, He did not even lay His hands on them, whether for prayer or for impartation of any kind; instead, simply by word of mouth, He gave them power and authority to act in His name. Had they but known it, they were given this power with both God and men, as being part of their inheritance in Jacob.

This direct method is the New Testament reality for which the partial and many anointings of the Old Testament were the substitute or symbol. We are informed by Paul that the law 'came in by the way'. Its many symbols, including that of anointing, were not employed by the Lord either before or after its institution. None of the patriarchs were anointed; neither Abraham, Isaac nor Jacob had oil poured on them, nor did their antediluvian predecessors. Joseph was not spoken of as the anointed of the Lord, although he became as king in Egypt; similarly Moses was unanointed, although he was king in Jeshurun. God did all He did through these without any mention of anointing.

Pre-Law anointing for position and power was unknown, and except for sickness it has no place in this post-Law era. God directly empowered and authorised the patriarchs without any actual anointing, nor did He refer in any way to spiritual anointing. The anointing of the Mosaic era of Law was not a pattern to follow, either in deed or word; in fact it was itself but a symbol of the real. In their day the patriarchs knew the real and now Christ has come, both the symbol and the symbolic language have been removed in favour of the real.

The Lord Himself did away with the old for ever. Direct authorisation from the Lord Himself for service according to His will has taken the place of indirect anointing by a man. Authority — sovereign empowering to act in the name and as the person of Jesus — has displaced the oily concoction and ostentatious ceremony of anointing.

Except in the way and with the meaning that the word anointing is used in the New Testament, it ought never to be used among us. Out of its proper context the word is of no more than poetic meaning, and can be misleading; if persisted in it will gender to a bondage we can well do without. We must discontinue its common use, as for instance when a meeting is fraught with the presence and power of God and is spoken of as being an 'anointed' meeting. Jesus Himself taught us to believe that such gatherings are the outcome of His presence in the midst. He did not speak of the Anointing being there — the Anointed is there — 'I AM in the midst'.

For the same reason we ought also to refrain from speaking of 'an anointed message or messenger'. Rather let us say, 'he speaks with authority', or we had a precious meeting and 'God spoke to us'. This is language in keeping with the whole tone of revelation given in the New Testament — such words were used to describe Jesus and His ministry. They have an authenticity about them and if persisted in will help purge us from unrealistic jargon; our feet will be kept well down on the earth and our speech free from dangerous mysticism and our souls be less liable to damage. It could be argued that if Jesus is in the midst and He is the Anointed, then the Anointing must be present also, and therefore the phrases mean the same and we need not quibble about words and terms.

That is exactly the point; if the Anointed One is present we ought, as the early Church, to recognise Him, honour and magnify Him, seeking only His glory and exaltation, and nothing for ourselves. No-one needs a special anointing when the Lord is in the midst — He only comes into the midst of His anointed ones; they are His body. When He uses any one of them to perform a miracle or speak His word, He does not anoint that member to do so; He just extends His hand or raises His voice and uses His tongue. He does it quite naturally, and the person so honoured is no more anointed while in use than he was before or after the exercise. To think and speak about it this way is not to quibble over words, but to see and express the truth properly and scripturally in accordance with New Testament revelation.

The Emergence of the Churches

It is clear that with the development of the Church, the more highly gifted men fade from view, and in their places emerge the churches for whom they gave their lives. The Acts of the Apostles, as its name indicates, is largely taken up with accounts of the exploits of a handful of men called apostles. Following that book come the epistles wherein the churches emerge into full view.

The books of the New Testament could be simply divided into four, displaying: (1) Jesus, (2) the apostles, (3) the churches, (4) the New Creation. Neither of these divisions deals with its subject to the exclusion of the others, but the above most naturally presents the main emphasis of each. Of the three, the second is the one which could most easily be changed. It has sometimes been called 'The further Acts of the Lord Jesus Christ', for it commences with the words 'The former treatise have I written unto thee O Theophilus of all that Jesus began both to do and teach'. This could be taken to mean that Luke wrote this book as a record of things Jesus continued to do and teach.

If this be conceded, it is equally certain the Lord was doing His works through the apostles. However, with the founding, multiplication and edification of the churches, the first apostles completed their tasks and departed: thereafter the office passes into a less prominent position. In the scripture the names and exploits of apostles pointedly give way to names of churches, and in the opening chapter of the final book of the sacred canon, the Lord directly connects angels — not apostles — with the churches. In the closing section apostles appear again as foundation stones of New Jerusalem, but apart from this are mentioned nowhere else except in chapter two. There the church tries some who claim the position and finds them to be false apostles; other than this the office does not find mention. With their Lord the apostles sought to build the Church; having done so, they depart the scene, leaving that Church, not themselves, on view.

Thereby the truth is again emphasised that the Lord wants anointed churches rather than a few anointed men. In the true Church of Jesus Christ every man is anointed equally as befits a member of the Lord

Christ's body. The unity, as well as the singularity and authority, of the Anointing needs to be understood. The Anointing is one and only one, it is His, and of necessity it is shared by all His members. As with every other provision of Christ, some seem to have a larger proportion than others, but this is simply because they are more bold and obedient.

The man who walks daily in communion with His Lord, witnessing for Him and gathering with Him, will always be filled and overflowing with the Spirit. He will have an abundance of authority, and within his calling will have power to serve His Lord according to His will. But for this he receives no increase of anointing above his fellows, nor does he need any. He may have more talents and use more gifts than his contemporaries, and in stature appear greater than his brethren, but he is no more anointed than they. He is more gifted, more talented and more industrious than they perhaps, but although it may be said he is more anointed than they, it is a false assumption and is not so.

In a properly functioning church every member is of equal standing and importance with the others. Apostles and prophets are not above their brethren, neither are pastors and teachers, or evangelists, or elders and deacons. Officers in Christ's Church are called and equipped of God to serve in churches among their equals. No man is to be blamed if Christ does not call him into a position other than church member; it is as great a privilege and as honourable as any, and no position or office in the church is to be regarded as being any higher.

Apostle or prophet or elder or any other officer though he be, a man is not thereby placed above his fellow-members; he is not greater than they; he is only called to fill an office, not to become a great man. Therefore let every regenerate person recognise the Lord's call and walk in it, and in the gatherings let none be regarded as above another. Let none be taught to believe that certain people are greater than others because of greater gifts or talents; that is entirely of Christ's choosing — everyone is equally anointed. Nevertheless, by the same Anointing, leadership is conferred on some, but this will speedily be recognised and followed whenever it is properly exercised.

Every person requires authority and power to function in the Church.

The person who speaks in a tongue or interprets or prophesies needs as much authority and power to use these gifts as does the person through whom the gift of miracles or healing operates; there is no difference, none at all. Authority and power are given for ministry, that is, for the use of talent(s) and gift(s) possessed by the member. Ministry is nothing other than the direction and application of power to certain ends. In common with talents(s) or gift(s), it is a means to an end. All these are bestowed on a person or persons by Christ, and are given entirely for His purposes, ministry is Christ working through His people by His own personal powers and gifts. Not the possession of gifts, but the ministry of the Spirit flowing from the Head of the body through them is the important thing.

One Mediator

The Anointed Head is both the Mediator and Minister of the Holy Spirit from the Father to men. The ministry of the Spirit through His members on earth is simply the extension to men of the mediatorial office and ministry of Christ in heaven. Authority and power for this are granted by Him to all His members. All who have been baptised in the Spirit by Him are indwelt by Him by the Spirit and are made one body in Christ for the ministry of the Spirit. This ministry is far greater than the persons and gifts through which it operates, even as water is above the channel through which it flows or fire than the grate in which it burns. As the channel and grate are to the water and the fire, so are gifts to the ministry. There are many names and descriptions given to ministry, such as apostolic or preaching, or prophesying, or healing, or prayer, or tongues, or interpretation, or helps and many others. Because this is so, the tendency is to speak of ministries instead of the ministry. By so doing we draw attention to the human minister and means of the ministry instead of to the ministry itself, and thereby confuse the point.

When men speak of ministries, it is often not so much for the want of a better word as through ignorance. Ministry is of a person, from a person through a person by means of personal abilities granted by Christ. The person ministered is the Holy Ghost, the person who

mediates Him is Jesus Christ, the person through whom He is ministered is the member of Christ, and the particular ability through which the ministry flows is one of the gifts of the Spirit. What men call ministries are nothing other than aspects of the one ministry. Everything in the New Testament is one and of one. We have all been called into one. The Anointing is one and the ministry is one; it is Christ's, and if a man be called a minister he is only being called a servant. All service is one, and lies either in ministering to the Lord or ministering from the Lord; in either case a man ministers for the Lord. That men may be served thereby, though essential, is quite beside the point.

When Jesus went to the cross He ministered the sacrifice to God first. His words to the apostles in the upper room make this very clear, 'that the world may know that I love the Father, arise let us go hence'. This was both the prime reason for His sacrifice and His primary urge in making it, and He did so as the High Priest of our profession. His mediatorial office depended entirely upon that. The two offices of High Priest and Mediator are bound up in one with all His other offices, but in order of thought, mediation from God must be seen as secondary to mediation to God. Every servant of the Lord is in the ministry if the ministry is first in him.

When referring in the Galatian letter to his visit to the apostles at Jerusalem, Paul does not speak of Peter's ministry and anointing, nor of his own, but of 'the grace that was given unto me'. He says Christ 'wrought effectually in Peter' and 'was mighty in me'. He does not talk of gifts or talents or authority or anointing, but of a person and grace. This is the true New Testament way of speaking of the ministry. None of those men who knew the authority and power of Christ in them, and who lived so close in time and spirit to the Lord, spoke much of any thing or person other than Him. Necessity for instruction caused them to refer to things in course of writing, but they never confused issues by using dubious terms or indistinct ideas. To speak of anointing instead of ministry, or grace, or authority and power leads directly to wrong conceptions of truth in the mind of the hearer, even if it does not arise from them in the mind of the speaker. Instances of this common

mistake are so numerous that they hardly need citing.

Few there be who would use the phrase 'the ministry' in regard to prayer, yet many would unhesitatingly use it for preaching or healing. But in order of importance prayer has precedence over all. The apostles knew it and gave prayer first place in their lives following Pentecost, Acts 3:1, 4:24, 6:4, 9:11, 10:9, 12:5, and 13:2,3 being prime examples of their understanding, preferences and faithfulness. The ministry of the Spirit in and by prayer is probably the greatest of all. It requires no special gift or talent, but is open to all, and the person engaging in it is as anointed as those who minister in more prominent places by more spectacular gifts.

Paul, the one who could perhaps above any other have used the term 'anointing' when speaking of himself, says he was 'called' an apostle. Nowhere does he say he was anointed to be this or do that; always he uses simpler language, avoiding the mystique implied by the Old Testament term. If the Anointed means the Christ and the Christ means the Chosen, then every saint is anointed, for Paul tells us we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Let us abide in truth plainly stated, and avoid mystification, lest confusion rob us of present joy and set us striving for what we already have in Christ. He who is the Lord's is already anointed.

IV — IN THE EVERLASTING COVENANT

Chapter 10 — The Order of Melchizedek

When the Lord Jesus finally left this earth and returned to heaven, He did so in order to continue in the priesthood over which He eternally presides as High Priest. How He had upheld such an office whilst here on earth is one of the mysteries surrounding the incarnation. But He no more abdicated His priesthood when He came to earth than He abdicated His Godhead. Hebrews 1:1-3 tells us 'He upheld all things by the word of His power' whilst purging our sins; He was and did all at the same time.

In the same way and by the same power by which He was the

sacrifice, He was also still Melchizedek, High Priest of the eternal priesthood. Following His ascension, He presented Himself to His Father and God for this service. Whilst on earth with His physical body intact and His blood still flowing in His veins, He was always offering Himself as a spiritual sacrifice without spot to God. His death as the Lamb of expiation and reconciliation crowned a life of living sacrifice and now He is appearing in heaven forever perfected and given to God for us.

When here among men He had come as sent by God particularly to be the Apostle of our profession. In this capacity He preached His gospel, and did all His works, all the while moving toward the time when He could and would found and build His Church. His ministry meanwhile was fully authenticated among men by signs and wonders and divers miracles which God did by Him over a period of three to four years, until the time when all had to be finalised by the sacrifice of Himself. In order to fulfil His role as High Priest 'taken from among men' and to function properly in the presence of God in our behalf, Melchizedek had to provide Himself a Lamb.

It is not easy to utter all that should be said about our heavenly Melchizedek, and here is not the place to attempt to do so. It is important however to recognise that while fulfilling His apostleship on earth He was being prepared for the sacrifice upon which His heavenly priesthood and our salvation depended. He only appeared before men as an apostle for a few months — His priesthood in heaven is unchangeable. Understanding this, we are surely able to grasp the relative importance of the two offices. His apostleship was localised to His own land; His priesthood is universal. His apostleship was to His own flesh and blood; His priesthood, like His gospel, is for all mankind. On earth He was 'veiled in flesh', in heaven He has entered into that which is within the veil. The many differences between the two offices could easily be demonstrated more fully, but refraining from this, we will come directly to one of the more important reasons why the ministry of priesthood is superior to all other.

While on earth, the Lord Jesus could not outpour the Spirit upon all

flesh, for the sacrifice and offering that warranted it had not been made. He said He was a straitened man — He felt confined, restricted. His greatest concern was to return to heaven to receive from the Father on man's behalf the long-promised Holy Ghost. It was God's eternal plan that He should give this precious gift of the Spirit to men, but He could only do so through a perfect man, someone who could be a proper mediator between Himself and mankind. So sacrificing Himself in all His perfection for all those who were wrong, the Man Christ Jesus presented Himself in heaven for that purpose.

Combining in Himself the offices of High Priest and Mediator, He ascended to the right hand of the Father. In this He acted as High Priest, offering Himself to God as the ultimate sacrifice and offering for the sin of man. Being the perfect man, at the same time and in the same act He presented Himself to God as the Mediator also. He is Man as God wants him to be; perfect Man with His perfect offering is now permanently represented and accepted in heaven. The Offering is everlastingly ministered to, and is therefore eternally with God, and Man is eternally mediated to the Father and is thereby eternally with Him. Not only in the God / Man Jesus in Himself, but also by that wondrous sacrifice He offered acceptably to God, God and man are one. As the direct result of this, the Holy Ghost was given to Jesus the Man who mediated Him to men to reside in them as He does in the Godhead.

This is the main substance of the reason for the superiority of the ministry of the heavenly priesthood over all other ministries. Under the Aaronic order, the Children of Israel received the Law and the promised land; under the priesthood of Melchizedek we receive the promised God — the Holy Spirit, and the inward law for righteous being. This mediatorial ministry of the Holy Ghost from heaven to men by Jesus is linked in almost identical ways with His present ministry on earth in and through us. Whatever form that ministry takes through a person, in order to be the ministry of the New Covenant it must be ministry of the Spirit. Only by this can we be identified with the ministry of the Lord Jesus. He mediates the Holy Ghost, who applies to men the virtue and value of that offering now received with satisfaction

in heaven by God. The object of His ministry is twofold: (1) to reproduce in us the personal eternal life of the perfect Man with the Father; (2) to bring us into His ministry.

The Holy Ghost is the Spirit by whom, through Christ, man has access to the Father; through Him also the Father has access to man. Apart from this mediation, man cannot reach the person and personal things of God, but only has access to and contact with external things of God; in this lies the great contrast between the old and the new. When the High Priest of old went into the Holiest of all, except for the personal experience involved in the act, he came out again exactly as He went in. Also everything about him was as it had been before; the people were the same; no great change had come over them; all things remained the same as they had been and continued the same thereafter. But not so in the new order: the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon men dramatically changed them, and from that time everything else began to change too. This was unavoidably so, for being baptised in the Holy Ghost, they were embraced into the one body of eternal life accepted in heaven — Christ's body, the Church. Doing this, God accomplished His eternal purpose. We see then the utter supremacy of the kingly / priestly ministry over all others.

Into this priestly mediatorial ministry we all have been called. Christ Jesus is before the Father as a Son over His own house of priests, and we are that house. With our Lord Jesus, priesthood is also our profession and heavenly calling. He who called His Son a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek, has called us into the same order of priesthood. It is the highest calling to the highest ministry with the highest privileges and is of the greatest importance, for upon it depends the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. Our High Priest was faithful to Him that appointed Him, and so we must be faithful to Him who has appointed us. According to Hebrews 2:4, the seal of God's approval upon our faithfulness is 'distributions of the Holy Ghost'. This is the life-giving ministry — the priestly anointing is upon us for this purpose.

As has already been pointed out, the priestly anointing was unique in

composition and exclusive in use. God referred to it as 'the crown of the anointing'; bestowed upon men it fulfilled His promise, 'ye shall be a kingdom of priests unto Me'; it was a royal coronet, creating him who wore it a prince of a priest and a servant of God. David speaks of it as running and flowing, dripping from Aaron all sweet and holy in golden glory, from the bells and pomegranates around the hem of the High Priestly robes. It is like brethren dwelling together in unity, he says, and how right he is, for all God's priests are brethren. Of old they were all members of the Aaronic family — they were united by blood-ties, and beyond that by ceremonial and spiritual ties too.

There has been no departure from this principle; it is still in operation today, though not in quite the same way. The birthright has passed entirely from physical to spiritual generation, and the Lord Jesus is not ashamed to call us who are born of the Spirit His brethren. Those priests were united by the anointing oil. Though of different ages and with different names and of different sizes and stature, they all bore the identical anointing. The oil never varied. It was the same upon each. It was the unifying factor. This is a singularly astonishing fact when viewed in the context of the whole ceremony of their inauguration. Although each of them went through the same basic experience of stripping, washing, clothing and anointing, only in the latter was the ceremony identical. In all the other parts of the initiation they each had a similar experience, but the anointing was identical as well as similar. We see then how important is this matter of the anointing.

What a privilege is ours that we should share the Anointing of our Melchizedek; this being so, the Lord commands the blessing, even life for ever more; regeneration. Ultimately, therefore, the objective behind God's move in outpouring the Spirit is for this blessing — He wants sons. Each must be born again and brought to glory, entering into that which is within the veil of His flesh now rent for us. This is what the Lord Jesus wants most to happen. Appearing once on earth in flesh, He did so with the purpose of leading us into what was within His flesh, the real God, whom nobody knew. The mystery of godliness is great, says Paul. God was manifest in the flesh. He veiled Himself in order to rend that veil in the sight of men and angels and devils. Now He brings

many sons through Himself into the Spirit, which was within that flesh, the real eternal life — Himself; The Anointed.

The Oil of Gladness

The final reference to anointing in the Bible occurs in a wonderful passage quoted in Hebrews 1 from Psalm 45. God is speaking to His Son, 'Thy throne O God is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom; thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows'. The psalmist says he is indicting a good matter and that he is speaking of the thing he has made touching the king.

David was himself the anointed of the Lord unto kingship, and in so many ways he typifies to us the Lord Jesus. The Spirit that came on him at his anointing had taught him so much; like Abraham he saw Jesus' day and was glad and wrote of it in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. He saw that kingship was of God, that He is the King of kings and that the kingship he enjoyed was part of God's sovereignty. God had shown him that Christ would be raised up to sit on His throne, for His throne is the throne of thrones because He is the King of kings. He called his psalm 'A Song of Loves', and he saw the kingdom and throne and King and queen of love. Moreover he saw that all the enemies of the kingdom or state of Love and the heavenly and earthly Lovers living in that state, would be destroyed.

How wonderful it is to be the anointed of the Lord. The man so honoured, who will live according to God's election, and count the honour above all, shall prove it to be his exaltation to Christ-like glories. He shares in similar, though lowlier, blessings with Christ, and on earth finds joys and pleasures parallel to his Lord's. In that which falleth to him he sees the planned experiences of his Lord, and enjoys it as such. In his day he enters into his Lord's day yet future, so that his life is both a parable and a prophecy; he typifies his Lord, setting Him forth, and he foretells and foreshows His coming and eternal Kingdom.

This great privilege was granted David who wrote this psalm in exalted

frame and inspired spirit. His heart was bubbling with inward revelation, rising with power in his spirit, and coursing through his soul like a flowing spring until it poured out of his tongue and through his fingers as from a divine source. He saw his own feelings and experiences — loves, hates, majesty, throne, kingdom, battles, marriage — as reflections of Christ's; all were transmuted with glory. He saw and recognised the beauty of earthly life and love as demonstrations and illustrations of the Lord's. When he thought of his own kingdom and kingship and throne he found no difficulty in associating them with Christ's and in seeing his own desires as being the same as the Lord's.

David knew that because he loved righteousness and hated iniquity the Lord did too, and that, because his anointing had made him glad, so had the Lord's anointing made Him glad. It was Samuel who anointed David. God had spoken to David through him. When he anointed David king, the act spoke volumes to the young man; it was one of the sundry times and divers manners in which God in times past 'spoke unto the fathers by the prophets'. To the young shepherd, Samuel's vial was the oil of gladness, and he was anointed with it above his fellows. Real as it was to him, it was also pictorial of the Lord's anointing.

In another psalm David had spoken of Christ's assurance as he approached His death and burial. His heart rejoiced, says David, 'my tongue was glad, moreover my flesh shall rest in hope because Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life, Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance'. Like Abraham, David was a patriarch; as Abraham was the father of the faithful, so he was the father of the joyful.

Part of the joy set before the Lord Jesus in view of Calvary was the anointing to which He was moving, when He should sit once more on the throne He had vacated for the manger, and be anointed once more with the oil of gladness. Throughout His ordeal He foresaw the Lord always before His face; 'He was on His right hand that He should not be moved'. David had experienced it himself during his own trials, and he knew he spoke of his Lord. 'The Lord said unto my Lord sit thou on

my right hand till I make thy foes thy footstool'. In measure in his day, according to his need, David enjoyed these things, but he knew that at the time he spoke prophetically of the Lord Jesus his Messiah. Transcending anything David knew, the Lord experienced it all.

How gladly did God the Father welcome home His Son from the cross and the grave and Hades. 'Sit on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool' He said, and anointed Him with the oil of His gladness. So the Lord Jesus sat down on His throne crowned with glory and honour, His head anointed with glad oil and the sceptre of righteousness in His hand to rule over His kingdom. It was a wonderful moment for God. It cannot be with joy that the Lord contemplates the dissolution of all the things He created; they are the works of His hands. That they must perish brings Him no pleasure. 'In Him we live and move and have our being', and we should seek the Lord; we should all feel after Him and find Him. He is not far from every one of us; so wonderful are all His works, but still He must fold them up and put them from Him. Everything must go and shall be removed till nothing of the former creation remains, only Himself, its creator. He shall remain for ever the same, unchanged, eternal, God the everlasting King, glad Ruler of a new universe that shall never be moved.

His fellows shall be anointed with the same oil, but He shall be enthroned and anointed above them all. Everyone shall be glad with the gladness of God, rejoicing with Him in His everlasting kingdom of righteousness. Each shall be righteous as He is righteous, that is, innately; the new heavens and the new earth shall never pass away, for they shall be the home of righteousness and Christ shall reign over all. And how God's joy shall abound everywhere, that His will shall be done under the sceptre of Melchizedek, king of righteousness and peace. In His kingdom everyone is without father or mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but is made like unto the Son of God and abideth a priest continually.

The holy anointing oil is the oil of gladness too, the priesthood is royal and joyful. In God's kingdom there shall be no more offering for sin. All shall be sinlessly righteous; there shall be no need for sin-offerings

— they never did bring God any pleasure and they were powerless to remove sin from people and make them righteous. The Lord's people shall themselves be the offerings, like the Lamb who was slain at the world's founding and rose to lay its foundations. He was slain then in anticipation with full knowledge of what would be the outcome and where it would all end. He was slain also to justify the era of lesser sacrifices for atonement which would follow, to make their acceptance valid and God's action righteous. He was also slain to be the end of the law for righteousness, at the founding of the new creation, that He might again rise, this time to lay the foundations of the new universe and build His Church.

Offerings of pure love, sacrifices of sheer righteousness, givings from holy desire, thank offerings of sanctified self, God's creation given to God continuously, these are the pre-occupations of the priestly ministry. We who shall feed on the righteousness and love of the new creation will offer no animals or birds or fruits of that earth to the Lord, but ourselves. There will be no altar of stones or earth on which to make sacrifice, no tented place of worship. We shall hear the whole universe singing, praising Him who sits on the throne and we shall join with them salted with fire, worshipping God and the Lamb. So it is that the Lord declares the name of God to His brethren, and sings praises to Him in the midst of the Church. Sacrifices of praises shall ever be rendered to the Lord, eternal thanksgiving will always fill our hearts; with Him, our blessed Lord and leader we shall be forever glad and join in the joy of God.

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03-AUGUST-03

The Generation of Jesus Christ

G. W. North

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First printed as a booklet 1971 by Sherborne Road Church Trust.

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The Generation of Jesus Christ

Genesis

The title of this book is part of the opening verse of the New Testament; Matthew says that the gospel that bears his name is 'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ.' Perhaps he wrote more than he knew, though when he wrote he knew much of the wondrous Person concerning Whom the Holy Spirit urged and inspired him to write. But it is always thus when God moves a man to speak or write of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is always a vast amount more in it than just that which meets the ear or eye. Deep below deep lies under the surface of the mighty ocean, that at first strikes the eye with its greys or greens or blues of reflected light, or tosses its foamy whiteness on the head of some curling wave tumbling into a sandy cove — and so it is with the precious Book. More than at first meets the eye is hidden within the phrase, 'the generation of Jesus Christ'; and the purpose of this book is to attempt a fuller understanding of it as it is set there upon the threshold of the New Testament, which is the most precious and important document ever given to man.

The Bible in its entirety is the most wonderful book in the world. Its inexhaustible treasures constantly yield eternal riches of wisdom and knowledge that centuries of ceaseless investigation seem only to enhance and magnify. Every precious discovery is the earnest of a yet greater revelation, for its truth can never be fully mastered. Its realisation does but enslave the discoverer, alluring and leading him out unto the ultimate — God Himself — who is wanting to be known and understood of men. It is to this end that we take up these words of Matthew's; obviously the generation of Jesus Christ is a most vital, if not the most vital topic of all subjects a man could choose from the entire Bible for a theme of study. For full as the Bible is of facts and records not otherwise available to man, there are none within it so important as those given by God of Himself. These He has chosen to give us in simple terms readily understandable to any who even cursorily read the accounts, yet which yield fuller delights to those who would bring their whole being to that knowledge, unto which faith alone can attain.

It may at first sound unusual that the Bible should be called the

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Book of generations, but such it is. It is not only that, but it is truly that, and importantly that too, for in it we find the wholly accurate and solely inspired accounts of all generations, from the first to the last. The first of these is to be found in Genesis 1:2 to 2:4, and the last in Revelation chapters 21 and 22. These cover the whole work and range of creation, human existence and eternal life. This is altogether too vast a field for man to comprehend or presume to write about. Our theme is chosen from among them as being the most important of them all.

The accounts referred to above are of the generations of the heavens and the earth; the former being given in some detail and the latter but briefly mentioned as the writer sweeps on to reveal the greater truth of God's city, the glorious bride of Christ, as he sees her descending in splendour into the new creation of God. These things are recorded for us by God as facts that He wants us to know rather than scientific data He wishes us to analyse. Indeed we cannot adequately investigate either of these generations, for the first creation is even now but slowly, almost reluctantly, yielding up its secrets to those seeking to probe its hidden mysteries. Man's mind cannot of itself properly relate the scraps of knowledge it laboriously gathers from an inscrutable universe. The new creation, which as yet has its existence only in the mind and will of God, more slowly still yields up its secrets unto the humble heart that with prophetic insight sees into and by faith lives in a foretaste of the heavenly things it shall 'after receive for an inheritance.' The truth is that all such things are only of consequence and, therefore, have been made known unto us by the Lord, as they have relationship with, and bearing upon, the more important spiritual things revealed to us concerning man's origin and destiny; these themselves, illuminating as they are, are only significant as they in turn are related to the generation of Jesus Christ. All this knowledge is bound up with the manifestation and activities of God Himself on the earth at various and notable times in history, whereby throughout the centuries He appeared for and unto man on the earth, foreshadowing and leading up to the great miracle of the incarnation wherein He became Man amongst men in the generation of Jesus Christ.

These things being so, it is not surprising to find that His delight

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is with the sons of men rather than with the multiplicity of inanimate things He created. Therefore, scattered throughout the length of the Bible we find records of the generations and genealogies of men, commencing with Adam and concluding with Jesus Christ.

Following God's account of creation in Genesis chapters 1 and 2, and the story of the entry of sin into the world with its immediate consequences in chapters 3 and 4, we are told in chapter 5 verse 1 that this is the book of the births (Hebrew) of Adam. Thus beyond recording the facts He wishes us to know, the Holy Spirit aptly and succinctly names the Old Testament; it is the book of the generations (note plural) of Adam. Likewise, as our title reminds us, upon opening the New Testament our eyes fall upon the statement that this is the book of the generation (singular) of Jesus Christ. The importance of the difference between the plural and the singular as pointed out is of major proportions. Over and over again in the Bible this distinction, seemingly so small, is in fact the whole point which God wishes to make clear, as in Galatians 3:16, 1 John 1: 8, 9, 1 Timothy 2: 5, and 1 Corinthians 8 : 5, 6. We shall find in this instance no less than in those others, that the distinction between Adam's generations and Jesus' generation is, beyond the grammatical point, God's method of introducing us to one of the most amazing revelations in His book.

Further, in thus mounting the sentence 'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ' at the head of the New Testament canon, the compilers unwittingly perhaps gave us an alternative name for the latter half of the Bible, for God's book is truly the Book of the generation. This seems to be the real reason why God writes books, for in heaven's library the most important book is called 'The Lamb's book of life.'

The main purpose of the two testaments that comprise the whole Bible is to set forth the differences between two men: Adam of the many generations and Jesus Christ of one generation. Jesus is both the last Adam and God's second man. Unlike Adam, Jesus never had a wife; Adam begot children, Jesus begot none. He was the first of a new family, each one to be directly begotten of His Father. The first Adam was created by God and by inspiration was made a living

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soul; the last Adam was begotten by God a quickening or life-giving Spirit. As by first birth all men are traceable back to that first creation / generation of Adam, even so men must be able to trace themselves back by second birth to the new generation of Jesus Christ.

In the first, or Old Testament, the account of the generations of the heavens and earth naturally precedes the records of the generations of Adam, but in the New Testament the order is reversed: the announcement of the new generation, the generation of Jesus Christ, precedes that of the new heaven (singular) and earth. The reversal of the order is logical and significant. The present heavens are quite adequate and perfectly suited to the race now inhabiting the earth. For such a people there need be no replacement. The new heaven and earth God has in mind are quite superfluous unless He has a people to dwell therein. If God is to populate a new earth it must be with a new people. But not as of old is He going to create a new man out of the new earth's dust; instead He begot a New Man on this earth, that beginning from Him He might bring forth a whole new race of men — for whom He has planned and promised and will provide the new universe. This new man, Jesus, was born onto this earth that through Him God might set forth:—

1. His intention for and example of the whole new race.
2. His method of generating every single member of it.
3. His means of accomplishing His ends.

The first is by the life of Jesus; the second by the birth of Jesus; the third by the death and resurrection of Jesus. These things we will examine more fully later, noticing only here that by the birth of His Son Jesus, God broke into the ever-increasing generations of Adam in a new and true Genesis. Adam's generations could not be allowed to continue for ever, for each is a propagation and expression and expansion of sin. Every one naturally born since Adam has been born of his nature and in his likeness, fallen and bound to sin. Adam's act of obedience to Eve in acquiescing to her disobedience to God predetermined it. Adam was not deceived as was Eve. He chose a woman instead of God and set a pattern of behaviour which

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many have since followed to their own destruction. Responsibility is laid at Adam's door because of this act. She was deceived; he was not. Had he remained faithful God could easily have given him another wife, but he preferred Eve to God, displaying his choice by obeying her word instead of God's. For this he forfeited his right to the headship of the chosen race, and God showed His eternal disapproval by refusing to be called the God of Adam. Though He was Adam's creator, He was not his God; as we are later told, 'his servants we are to whom we obey.' Becoming Satan's servant Adam was precluded from the privileges for which he was created, and thus God calls Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but never the God of Adam. So God's disapproval of Adam's act is signally written into the fabric of the whole book.

Following the creation of Adam and his subsequent fall, God suspended all such creative activity. He never created another man until He created man anew in Christ. Instead, He allowed Adam's sin to work itself out in the human race, which it commenced to do immediately and continues to do until this day, and shall till the end of the world. We recognise its immediate results in this tragic family. Of Adam's first two children his firstborn became a murderer in slaying his own brother Abel. In doing so Cain enacted in the flesh what had previously taken place in the spirit in Adam. Cain became the embodiment, the direct result of Adam's obedience and subservience to the devil. Adam, by Cain, is revealed to be a death-dealing spirit, even as Satan, by Adam, is revealed to be the spirit of death now working in all the children of disobedience, which we all are by nature as a result of the original disobedience of Adam. Seeing that the Lord Jesus is a quickening or life-giving Spirit, Adam's disobedience to God and its tragic results are shown to have brought about the absolute reversal of all God intended. Adam and Eve's preference for the word of Satan, as against the word of God, has set a predisposition to sin in the human race which has alienated us all from God. Because of this every person since born of woman is by spiritual heredity a child of the devil and not of God. The only exception to this is Jesus, the son of Mary, whom God fathered into the human race to break the deadly cycle set in motion by Adam. This miracle procured for man a way of escape and salvation from

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the inescapable end to which the genetic and hereditary laws that govern his life predestined him, which end is sin and death and hell. God accomplished this by the outstanding biological and spiritual miracle of all time — a virgin birth.

The birth of the Son

This unique birth of Jesus is such a wonderful and amazing miracle that the very Greek word used by God concerning it has equally amazingly been taken up and mounted at the head of all inspired writing: Genesis. This is the word translated 'generation' in Matthew 1: 1, and only once so in the whole of the New Testament writings. Being thus placed at the beginning of the entire Bible, it concentrates the reader's attention straightway upon the greatest miracle of the Godhead both in heaven and on earth: Birth. Birth is both in the Godhead in heaven and in manhood on earth. It is in the Divine nature and being, and because it is there it is also in the human nature and being. God ordained and reproduced a modification of it from Himself unto us.

The uniqueness of this new birth does not only lie in the fact that it was a virgin birth, remarkable as that surely is. Jesus was not the result of a freak birth. He was not spontaneously and inexplicably produced by some organic malfunction of a Jewish maid. Had it been so it would to that degree have been a virgin birth, being unique and new among women on earth. But it would not have been acceptable as such among the Persons of the Godhead. To be acceptable in heaven this birth must be a greater miracle than that, as the scripture shows. Perfectly satisfying to the paternal longings of God's heart, it must also be absolutely consistent with His holiness, as well as effectual in power. In terms of execution, New Birth on earth in flesh among men must be as flawless a reproduction of the eternal begetting in the Godhead in heaven as the frail human media could permit. Therefore its uniqueness must lie in its entire newness both with God and with man. So the Lord introduced the virgin birth, the new birth. This is that birth, unique in flesh and inaugural in the Spirit, by which God became incarnate.

The Generation of Jesus Christ

God could not really make Himself known to men until Jesus was born. Until then He had been a hidden mystery. The incarnation enabled God to be manifest in the flesh so that He could reveal Himself to men personally. Even so it was not a complete unveiling and revelation of God; that is reserved for a future day spoken of in scripture. Whilst in the flesh Jesus was Emmanuel — God with them in person in a new way. Occasionally in the past He had come down onto the earth and walked and talked with men, and to some at certain times He had revealed Himself in very special ways, but to the vast majority He was there but unseen and unknown. Even when He had dwelt in the midst of the children of Israel in His tabernacle He was veiled and hidden; but when Jesus was born of the Father and Mary at Bethlehem, God was quite openly manifest in the flesh. He was still a mystery; it was all a mystery, but no longer a hidden mystery. And so through this amazing birth we are privileged to see a little into God, and this is the purpose of it. Birth was the great secret mystery of and in God that He never could reveal to men until Jesus came. Hinted at, foreshadowed, even prophesied in scripture, it was completely unexplainable in type or words; but when Jesus was born, the first and greatest step towards the clarification of the mystery of God to man was taken. It was the new birth on earth amongst men, and that birth is linked with His eternal birth amidst the three Persons of the Godhead. That is why the new birth is so vastly important.

The most vitally important thing a man must know about himself is that he needs to be born again. Someone must tell him that he needs to be regenerate, so Jesus Christ was born and, being born, He was able both to show it to men and to tell them all about it. No-one else had ever been able to do so, but Jesus came for that purpose. Not once did He ever say, 'You must have your sins forgiven' — others have said that and rightly so, but not He: He says, 'Ye must be born again — something so much, much more. So much more because the forgiveness of sins, tremendous and necessary though it is, is but a favour from God; whereas new birth, supreme favour as it is, is a fusion with God in the person and life of His Son. The former is grace, the fixed attitude of God toward man throughout this age;

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the latter is the exceeding riches of His grace, involving the eternal nature and being of God.

So to show the New Man to men, the eternal only begotten Son in the Godhead became, by a new birth, Mary's firstborn among men. Manifest in the flesh, He was both God's only begotten Son of a woman, and Mary's only begotten son from God. Though Mary brought forth other children after Jesus her firstborn, He only was begotten of God; Joseph was the father of her other children in the normal way. God never before or since has begotten a Son in the flesh. He has one Son, His unique and well-beloved Jesus.

Now miraculous birth was not an unknown thing among the children of Israel — they were quite familiar with it. In fact, the nation owed its existence to one such birth, and they were wont even in Jesus' day to trace their ancestry back to Abraham by such means, for they were the descendants of Abraham through the miraculously born Isaac, and they love the thought of it. Unless there had been a miracle birth the nation could never have been and they knew it; but over and above that first miracle, the pages of their history in the Old Testament writings reveal this kind of thing happening again and again. Sarah, Rachel, Hannah, each had brought forth children by the grace of God alone, for as we read we discover that none of them could have borne children except by a miracle. In each case the miracle lay in that the barrenness of each of these women had been turned into fruitfulness. But not so with Mary, for she was a virgin, unmarried. Whereas throughout Israel's history it had been Abraham and Sarah, Jacob and Rachel, Elkanah and Hannah, it was not Joseph and Mary — neither was it God and Mary, but God by Mary. God made His Son of a woman; it was all God as we shall see. In His wisdom God has set these two kinds of miraculous birth side by side in the New Testament. In the first two chapters of Luke's gospel the accounts of the births of John Baptist and Jesus Christ are set side by side. Though written in the New, the birth of John Baptist belongs properly to the Old Testament and is the last great miracle birth of that order. As it had been with Abraham and Sarah, so it was also with Zacharias and Elisabeth — they were childless after years of marriage because of Elisabeth's barrenness. Thus by God's skill, in the simple reading of the scriptures we see the vast difference

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between the two Covenants, and what appears to be similarity is really complete dissimilarity.

The miracle of Jesus' birth does not lie in the fact that it took place, for God had eternally planned, and long prophesied, and solemnly promised that it should be. Both in the nature and order of the Godhead, and also in fulfilment of scripture, it must be God the Son who should be born on earth as the Son of God, and that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, and that the virgin's son should be called Emmanuel — 'God with us.' The real miracle, the great surprise, lay in how it took place; not so much His birth as His conception was the miracle; His actual birth was perfectly natural like anybody else's. It is perfectly in order to suppose that other babes have been born in stables or even worse places than He, but no other has ever been conceived directly and miraculously from God Himself, so that in spirit, soul and body He could say, 'God is My Father.' It was the conception that was the miracle; the birth was as perfectly normal as any other.

Marvellous as were the creation of Adam and the births of Isaac, Samuel, and John Baptist, Jesus' generation was far more marvellous, being entirely new. Uniquely incomparable. The greatest of all. Its greatness does not lie just in the miracle itself; greater than that is the sure sight it affords us into the being of God and the order of the glorious Godhead. Beside all this, as though the miracle is unending, Jesus' incarnation set the pattern for a whole generation. The entire family of God throughout the present age of grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ must be born in a similar way to Him. The means of His personal generation in and into man's physical human nature are exactly the same as those by which man must be generated into God's spiritual divine nature. As Adam's personal creation/generation began the human race, so Jesus' personal generation/creation began the divine race.

This is one of the reasons why the Lord Jesus Christ is called the last Adam, and not the last Isaac or the last Samuel, or the last any other particular person. None of these others had a personal generation from God. Adam in scripture is called the son of God; so is Jesus Christ, but not one other was personally so called. This is

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because Adam and Jesus are the heads of two different kinds and natures of men. In Adam all died; in Christ shall all be made alive.

Beloved, now can we all be called the sons of God, and for this same reason, for we also may experience a definite and personal generation from God. This is the only way it is possible to become a child of God. God must definitely and deliberately beget me or I am not His child. That He should do this is His dearest wish, for He is a Father and desires a great family all like His first and greatest Son Jesus, Who Himself being in the form of God was deliberately made in the likeness of man through Mary's womb by the Father, that by His birth God might perfectly and eternally reveal the only method of new birth for man. The Father wants many, many more sons like Jesus, as also does the Holy Ghost.

You see, God had never had a family. He created flaming spirits and called them seraphim and cherubim, and looked upon them as sons of God; and they were the nearest to Him of all His creatures, but not quite what He wanted. The deepest desires of His Father-heart were never truly fulfilled in them, for they could not quite fill the place of sons. So He created the universe, and taking a handful of dust one day He made of this earth a man to be His son. He breathed His own breath into his nostrils and set him in Eden in paradise, and came down and walked and talked with him in the garden in the cool of the day as a Father with a son. How long that may have continued had not the sin of one of the Father's earlier 'Sons' been planted in Adam's heart, who can tell? But it was all ruined; God lost His son to Satan. So immediately the determination in His heart to have a true son finds expression on His lips as He says, 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head,' and His great Father-heart moved forward to the future.

Centuries later He called Abram with his wife Sarai and took them out from their own home into a new land. Changing their names, and making great promises to them, He miraculously gave them a son whom He might claim as His own. To this end He worked a miracle in Sarah's womb, and Isaac was eventually born. Therefore He took the child, and provided for him and wrought with him as though he was actually His own. Nevertheless, Isaac was not

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quite His own, not really; Isaac was really Abraham's son, not God's; God could only look upon him and treat him as a son by a sort of adoption, that was all.

From this seed adopted from Abraham God later, through Jacob, Isaac's son, made Himself a nation. He worked miracle upon miracle in order that this should be, and deliberately called Israel His son. It was very real and precious to Him, so much so that a prophet once cried out, 'Thou art our Father,' and He never denied it. But not a single one of them was born as Jesus was born, personally, of God's own seed; all were born of man. They had man to their father; indeed some of them once said, 'We have Abraham to our father.' They never had God to their father. The best they had ever known and the greatest that God had given them was adoption. The Father had adopted the entire nation. The scripture says so quite plainly, 'To them belongeth the adoption,' and because it does it will yet work its way out right to the end and we shall see it.

God in His Fatherly love sought most earnestly to treat the entire nation as His sons, seeking to draw from them the true filial love that should answer His own paternal love for them, but rarely did He achieve His desire. Here and there He found a man or a woman who loved Him as He sought, and when He did, it was wonderfully gratifying to Him.

One such was David, of whom He said, 'I have found David.' It was so precious to Him to find one after His own heart. He was like a father to him, and David became to God as a son. Indeed, at one point he said that the Lord had said unto him, 'Thou art My son, this day have I begotten thee.' He did not know then that he was crying out prophetically what God the Father was going to say to Jesus, the true Messiah, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies. It was really spoken of Jesus, but David was granted such blessing as he was allowed from it. It was wonderful and precious to him, and so also was the promise God made him concerning Solomon, saying, 'I will be his father and he shall be My son.' But to God it was not, nor could be, all He was seeking. Not yet was the Father-heart being fulfilled. His Fatherly love and instincts were always acting, moving among men,

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instigating, adopting and adapting, but never finding fulfilment until, in the fullness of time, He could generate Jesus as His own dear Son into the world of men.

The life of the Son

It was a marvellous day when Jesus was born, for it was a new day. The Jewish day began with night; it started at sundown with darkness and moved from darkness to light, which fact in itself bears a great spiritual lesson. The shepherds keeping night-watch saw the glory of the Lord shining round about them, and in that glory a multitude of the first-created sons of God, all praising God, and an angel voice speaking to them of the Son of God that was born to them at Bethlehem. Angel-sons could come to the shepherds in the skies of glory, but Jesus the Son was born to them in a manger — what a world of difference lies here! Those angel eyes had never beheld such things, nor had their hearts known such inspiration for praise. They had been created by the very God now born man of Mary, a little lower than themselves, and they praised and praised at the wonder of the miracle, but the greater wonder they never knew. Only the Father and the Holy Ghost with the Son knew.

Scripture records that when the Son came into the world He said, 'A body hast thou prepared me lo, I come to do thy will, O God.' At that moment, He took away the first covenant in order to establish the second. This was the moment for which the Father was waiting. Jesus was God's Son in reality, just what the Father wanted. He was not born miraculously naturally, that is, in the natural order, but miraculously supernaturally, that is, in the completely divine order; God used Mary's womb to bring forth a human Son of the divine order and in the divine manner. He was not adopted by God after someone else had begotten Him by a miracle performed within his wife. He was actually begotten on earth of Him who is the Father in the triune Godhead in heaven, through the agency of the Holy Ghost. He was God's very own Son on earth.

Over and over again throughout the pages of scripture we come

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across momentary flashes of this great desire of God to have a Son through whom He could beget sons. Perhaps at no time in the history of Israel was this desire more manifest than when shining through the lives of their patriarchs, and in none of these was it more clearly shown than in the life of God's friend, Abraham. The particular incident commenced when, one night some two thousand years earlier than Jesus was born, God woke Abraham with the words, 'Take now thy son, thy only son Isaac whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.' So many are the lessons we may learn from this statement and what resulted from it that perhaps a whole volume might be written about them. But one thing is outstandingly clear: at the last moment, when Abraham had come through this unparalleled test of faith without stumbling or faltering, or murmuring, and was found faultless before God and all principalities and powers, the Lord restrained him from his purpose. Among the many reasons foreshadowed by this act of restraint lies the fact that God did not want a son by such means. He did not want someone else's son given to Him, not even Abraham's — He wanted His own.

This all-consuming desire is later defined strongly on the negative side as adamant refusal to accept any human sacrifice at all. As a sacrifice for sin humans have no value at all, nor any power of atonement, and as an offering to God are totally unacceptable. God does not especially want sons by sacrifice, but by birth. That is why later the adopted nation of sons, being by birth children of Israel and not of God, could not offer themselves upon the altar. Instead they had to bring an animal which for the time being should represent Jesus the Son of God. So their whole sacrificial system, typical as it was, had to be enacted and adhered to with solemn meaning just as though it was themselves they were offering, but it was not really so. What was as it were mimed with Isaac was typified in the animal sacrifices of Israel. By this method of substitution God was telling them how very dear they were to Him. In type they were offering Jesus instead of themselves without spot to God, but unless they saw that thereby they were offering themselves to God, the whole point of the sacrifice was lost. In substituting them the Lord in type

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represented them. Jesus could be offered and accepted for them as them — He is God's very own Son.

This particular aspect of God's own heart's desire finds expression through the life of Isaac. At the end of this man's life the blind patriarch is found in scripture reaching out his hands to feel the son he could not see. He had the blessing to bestow and must be sure that it rested upon the head of his chosen. To him Jacob was not his very son. He was his son, but not his very son as was Esau; so Isaac asks him the vital question, 'Art thou my very son?' His heart groped with stronger power than his frail hands for the answer he wanted. Esau always did the things that pleased his father and for this reason he was to Isaac the 'very son'.

In the life of the Lord Jesus this is most powerfully brought out at His baptism in Jordan. Opening heaven to Him, the Father sent down the Holy Ghost to rest upon and abide with Him for ever in the sacred anointing of Messiahship, and at the same time cried out, 'Thou art My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' Thus was John Baptist assured and Jesus commissioned, for John now knew that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God, and Jesus the Son of God knew He was sealed for service. Under the power of this authorisation He stepped out into His life's work; the Son among a nation of adopted sons now far removed from the ideal in Father's heart.

During the course of His ministry the Lord lost no opportunity to show and teach His disciples the truth of sonship. Right at the beginning He went to the temple where the bodies of animals were offered to God, and called it His Father's house and purged it of the things they were practising therein. They were all so foreign to His Father's intentions and could not possibly portray what He meant. When they challenged His actions He said, 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it again.' He was really speaking of offering Himself wholly, bodily back to His Father; they thought He was speaking about the building, whilst His disciples thought of a text about the zeal of God's house eating someone up. None of them understood what had really been done and said. It was not until Jesus

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had died and risen again and ascended to heaven that they understood.

As He moved in and out in His ministry, disciples joined and followed Him by the score, multitudes of them; from them He chose twelve, naming them and calling them apostles. These left all and followed Him whithersoever He went, and He taught and trained them, some very intensively, for His service. But when the time came that He should offer Himself back to His Father on their behalf, they fled. What they could not do for themselves because they were only adopted Sons He was going to do for them, paying the price of their sin as He did so. But their relationship to Him was so insubstantial that they could not be true even within their privileged form of adoption / sonship; it was totally inadequate. Privileged they were beyond all who before them had been called sons. They were the adopted of the adopted, and in them was set forth in contrast to Him, the great gulf of difference there lies between adoption and sonship, for He was the Son of sons.

On one occasion when they had all been gathered together with Him, someone told Jesus that His mother and His brethren were standing outside wanting to speak to Him, and the answer He gave them made these men realise with joy how completely Jesus had adopted them. He as good as said, 'These disciples of mine are My mother and sister and brother.' When they heard Him say such things as, 'Except a man leave his father and mother and sister and brother and all he hath, he cannot be My disciple,' they knew they were His, for that is just what they had done. It seemed the adoption was complete.

On another occasion He taught them a prayer saying, 'Our Father which art in heaven,' and right from the beginning of their relationship He had occasionally referred to God as 'Your heavenly Father'. It was all so wonderful and they believed it, but, though He taught them thus, they could never bring themselves to use the familiar name so often upon His lips, and the Lord never tried to force them to use that sacred title — they just could not do it and that was that. He virtually told them once to ask their heavenly Father for the Holy Ghost, but they did not even do that; they were

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so dead to their real requirements, and underneath their apparent belief and activities lay a hard core of heedless, resistant unbelief. Jesus knew all about it and left it at that, for as yet He could not bring them into true sonship, though He had introduced the fact of it to them.

It was in the last week of His life that it all came to a head. Following the supper together in the upper room, when He had washed their feet and then sent Judas away on a mysterious mission, He talked to them about coming to the Father. 'I am the way,' He said, 'the truth and the life,' but they could not understand Him at all. So Philip said, 'Show us the Father and it sufficeth us.' 'Please Lord, show us this Father of yours that you so often talk about, for we don't know Him; He is so real to you, but so unreal to us; if you do so we will be satisfied; just to know Him will be quite sufficient for us.' Self-confessedly they did not know the Father, though they wanted to so very much; neither did they know the Son, though they had been with Him so long.

They did not belong to the same family after all; their parentage and therefore their nature was quite different. Leaving their own parents and families to follow Him did not automatically give them true new parents, His parents. Adopted they were, but not reborn. It needed more than He had yet said or done to them to make them sons of God. In their present state they were really just like orphans and He told them so. But He said He would not leave them like that and it comforted them when He said He would come to them, although it mystified them more than ever that He said He would go away and then come to them. They just could not understand Him; it seemed to them that He was talking in riddles, and indeed it would have been utterly ridiculous had it not been Jesus Who had said it. But it was all so true. What was all mystery to them was so plain to Him. He knew before He came what He had to do when He did come into the world.

It was written of Him in the Psalms by David, 'Lo, I come to do Thy will O God.' It was His Father's will to beget sons, and He had come to make it possible for His Father to do so, but ever so many more preliminary works had to be done before He could get down to

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this major task for which He was born. All these were either plainly stated, hinted at, or materially typified in the Hebrew scriptures and practice, and all agreed in heaven before even they were written or ordained.

This was that great work which could only be accomplished as His life on the earth drew to its close. It was all very carefully planned and would happen exactly as it had been prearranged, so He gathered His chosen apostles unto Him and led them forth from that supper chamber that they might together take their last walk with Him. Gethsemane was a favourite garden where He had often walked with His disciples, but they knew something strange was to happen that night, for just before they had left upon this journey He had washed their feet. They did not know why or what it meant, they only knew it was because He loved them. But Jesus knew what it meant and why He had done it; that night they were to be privileged to walk with Jesus where none other had ever been allowed to walk, so their feet had to be clean.

When Moses and Joshua in their day had been privileged to meet their God they were bidden to remove their shoes from their feet that they might tread upon holy ground, but Jesus had actually washed these dear ones' feet. They were going to walk on holy ground, and gaze upon such holy scenes, and listen to such holy prayers and cries as had never before been granted to mortal man to see and hear. They were those blessed men who were going to walk in the counsel of the Godly (one), and stand in the way of the Righteous (one). They had sat in the seat of the adoring and worshipping ones and had delighted in the law of the Lord they loved; He was a wonderful man to them; all was holy ground, the holiest of all. They did not know what lay ahead of them. In fact, they were to discover that they knew nothing as they ought to know — even about Him. Jesus was always doing new things; somehow it seemed that newness originated with Him, and the discovery of His own self to their hearts that night was amazing beyond words.

As they walked with their Lord that night, somewhere between the Supper room and the garden He prayed the prayer of His life. It was indescribably lovely to them: without a pause in the way in

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order to adopt a different attitude, or strike a new pose, save that of an uplifted eye, He poured out His heart to His Father in a flood of soul-moving phrases that left them speechless at the realisation of His wondrous love for them. They did not understand one little bit of what it was all about, but they heard Him say, 'Father I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do and now come I to Thee. Holy Father keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me. Thine they were (Father) and Thou gayest them Me, now keep them whilst I go on unencumbered to do Thy will.' Thus He was left a free agent to decide whether or not He would fulfil His Father's wishes, and His feet never wavered from the path of His sheer determination to go right on to the end.

In the garden His Father gave Him a cup to drink, which caused Him great mental and spiritual anguish, but He drank it and it passed from Him. It was an ordeal terrible beyond description. It was His final agreement to be made sin. No-one and nothing had ever been able to make Him to sin, but God His Father made Him into sin. It was awful, but it was unavoidable. He had been born in order that He might be everything to us — everything, and that included sin. If He was going to be made sin for us, then He must be made sin to us, in order that He might be all in all to us. But even that was a preliminary. It was the greatest thing He ever did. He sacrificed Himself in order to do it, but He took sin away from before God. Jesus took away the thing that was preventing His Father from begetting sons. God could not have the family of sons He wanted until this was done, so the Son came and did it.

Sin was the reason why, before this, God had only been able to adopt and adapt other people's sons, and the reason also why Jesus' own disciples could only ever be orphans (comfortless) unless He went away and came to them again anew. The seed of Satan is in the very human seed from which all men's lives develop, infecting and perverting and regularising the whole nature to sin so that no man, however devout or sincerely God-fearing, or genuinely religious, or most self-sacrificing, can possibly by these be, or because of these become, a son of God. Nothing that is of man, or has passed through the hands of man, can make a man a son of God. Religion, scriptures, education, civilisation, politics, art, science, philosophy,

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or any of these in combination are man's way of accomplishing his purposes. Whether it be church building, or erecting chambers of law or commerce, or college or charnel-houses, whether in order to achieve the highest and best or to sink to the lowest and worst, all are in vain to accomplish God's work. Conversions, indoctrinations, persuasions, proselytisings, coercions from one state of 'faith' or way of life to another, are of man. Regeneration is of God. He begets sons! Any conversion that is not unto total regeneration is not the genuine one God intends. It may have some points of value and benefit in it, but only as it is related unto new birth can it bring the eternal blessing it ought.

In order to accomplish this He had to go so far away, so very far away from them — farther than they knew. Even though what they thought He might mean made them very sad, He was going farther away than that, farther perhaps than He knew Himself, farther than any man had ever been, farther away than Adam was from God in the garden on the day that He had called out to him, 'Where art thou?' Jesus had known, of course, that Adam was only just hiding his body fearfully away behind a tree, but in spirit he was in sin, in death — everlastingly and irretrievably so, Satan hoped — and God was calling to him across the gulf. It was awful. He had only known then as from God's side how far Adam had gone away, but He also knew that on Adam's side it was farther than He had ever known or could know experimentally. That is why He had become a man.

He wanted to live where man lived, sit where man sat, walk where man walked, be cursed with the curse of men, hang where men hung, die where men die, and lie where men lie; and to know and do that was all new to Him. Head knowledge, even God's head-knowledge by foreknowledge, could not give Him that. Isaiah had prophesied it all earlier. 'By His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many,' God had said; and to gain such knowledge He who had never known sin had to leave the adopted sons and set forth on His last greatest work to make them true Sons as He was Himself. 'Who shall declare His generation?' asked the prophet. Isaiah did not know, neither did he know that centuries later men would write of it, but Jesus knew; and He knew also that He had come to bring others into it by His own generation. So committing

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the orphans to His Father's care and responsibility, He led them over the brook into Gethsemane.

In the garden Jesus again chose the three men who had accompanied Him previously on some specially selected occasions, and bidding the others wait, took Peter, James and John with Him a bit further on that they might watch with Him through the dreadful hour that lay ahead. Even though the others should fall asleep, these He hoped would stay awake with Him until the agony of God was past. But it all proved to be a vain hope; they failed Him; in the critical hour His three mighty men failed Him. He brought them forth from the others to a point of vantage and, leaving them there to watch while He went on alone a little further, He fell down on His face on the ground. Right in their full view He lay, just about a stone's throw away — not too far — so that they could see and hear Him — but not too clearly. Only dimly might they see and distantly hear His wrestlings and groanings as he accepted responsibility from His Father for the generation of the sons. It all took place in a garden, but it was no Eden for Him.

Perhaps He was as far away from the chosen three as was the first Adam from the Holy Three when he hid himself from Them — just a stone's throw away. The difference was that then the blessed Trinity had been wide awake, calling out, agonisingly concerned about Adam's fall, but now when the last Adam fell on His face, agonising openly before His chosen three, they went to sleep. His servant David's three mighty men never failed him, but His mightiest ones could not watch with Him one hour. Even Peter, who like the 'Tachmonite who sat in the seat' (2 Sam. 23 8) was the mightiest of them all, went to sleep. There was no-one to see Him, none heard, no-one cared. So much for the adoption. It just could not work; it was an utter failure.

It was an almost unbelievable repetition in reverse of all that took place in the beginning. The three elected ones were Adam's offspring and representatives lying there asleep on the ground. It was a deep, deep sleep, but God had not caused it to fall upon them, He could not take from them a bridal rib and from it form a bride. Oh, how He pitied them; their spirit was willing but the flesh — ah, that

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is it — the flesh was weak. That is why He had been born. The law was weak through the flesh; the spirit was weak through the flesh; these men were dead to Him through the flesh; and so He had taken flesh and blood because they were partakers of flesh and blood. Out there alone it was as though He had gone back through milleniums of years. Quite deliberately the Lord Jesus was repeating and rearranging all that took place in the first garden, in order to reverse the original transaction whereby adoption had to take the place of true sonship.

The dissimilarity of the similarity between those two men and those two gardens, and the two great trials that took place in them, is well-nigh indescribable. The enormity of what took place is almost beyond comprehension. In Eden, Adam, God's first created son, was tempted by and succumbed to Satan: in Gethsemane, God's only begotten Son, the second man and last Adam, was asked by His Father to take and drink the cup and He agreed. It was as though the years had never been, that Father's heart had never been broken, and that it had never become necessary for Him to substitute adoption in the place of direct first birth from Himself, and that first birth had never become a sin-birth necessitating a second birth in order that thereby men might become true sons of God. It was as though the first man had been immediately followed by the second man, Who was to restore what the first had taken away. Adam stole and ate the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil under the direction of Satan, but the last Adam was offered a cup He would not take until it was given Him by God His Father. He shrank from it, wrestling and groaning in His agony until sweat rolled from Him like great drops of blood falling to the ground. It was the greatest battle He ever fought, and He won it!

No-one will ever fully understand the conflict that caused Him such great agony, for it lay in a realm that must for ever be a mystery to man — it was that realm into which Satan sought to enter so decisively in the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry, and had he done so there could have been no salvation for man. It would have meant the defeat of God. But to defeat Satan then had cost Jesus no sweat, no agony, and indeed no noticeable conflict either. There had been no human audience to watch the spectacle as the prince of

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devils hurtled to defeat at the hands of the God-Man. Wretched devil; how little he knew Jesus of heaven and earth; how finite is fallen Lucifer's boasted wisdom and how ignorant he is of God. He tempted Jesus along the line of His deity, seeking to drive a wedge between His Godhead and His manhood, 'If thou art the Son of God

But Jesus ever refused the bait to pride and, as always, answered from the level of His manhood, 'Man shall not live

Satan then was defeated by Jesus without tears and sweat and blood, and wrestlings and anguish. The wilderness had held no terrors for Him; it was no Gethsemane, even though it was not an Eden.

There in Gethsemane it was in the same realm of the mystery of Himself, who and what He was, that the battle was fought. Not between Himself and His Father, nor yet between Himself and the devil, but within His own being. What was He to do? He could not wish to be sin! How could He desire to be the loathsome thing He hated and yet retain His own inward holiness? How could He entertain the thought of separation from His Father and still remain the faithful Son? He must desire this cup to pass from Him — and the sweat rolled off Him as within Himself He resolved the conflict of the ages. Out there where all men lay asleep in darkness and oblivion He settled it in one great oft-repeated heart-cry. He sacrificed Himself with strong crying and tears to His Father's will — and His Father sacrificed Him on Golgotha for the sin of the world.

Earlier, when He had gathered His disciples into an upper room and given them a cup to drink when He had supped it, He said, 'This cup is the New Testament in My blood, drink ye all of it.' They did not grasp what He meant, nor could He tell them the unspeakable blessings that were in it. All love, all righteousness, all peace and joy were in it; the whole of God's testament was therein, all of God's glory and virtue and grace, all life, and good, and heaven, and eternity, and God Himself was in it. Everything, absolutely and simply everything God is or was, or ever shall be. That was the cup Jesus said men could share with Him. But this was the cup that God had kept saved up for Him alone; they could not drink it nor even sip it. It was His alone to drink Gethsemane's cup. It was at once His highest joy and greatest sorrow, for all shame and lowest

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debasement were in it. It was paradoxical, inexplicable, impossible. In it was all hate, all sin, all warring and conflict and tragedy; the whole of the devil's testament was in it, all his pride and shame and renown; all death and evil and hell and everlasting torment, and the devil himself were in it. Everything, absolutely and simply everything; all the devil in man was, or had ever been beside. Oh, who can tell what was in it? What mixture of sin and death in the blood of man; what distillation from the matured hatred and rebellion and pride and original sin of Lucifer come to full fruition in human life and being! What grief and wrath of God because of and against it all! Who among us can tell? When the wrath of God is poured out without mixture on the earth, who can measure or explain or abide it? But what worth the cup that beside this contained so much more? And who should or could drink it but Jesus?

Jesus went a lot further away than they knew whilst they slept that day, and when later they gathered ingloriously, some near, some farther from His cross, they watched until they could no longer see for the darkness, whilst He went further still. What He had accepted in the garden was all working out now. It was happening as He knew it would, and He wanted it to. It was a preliminary, the end of an age, and in enduring it He would be able to commence a new, new day of joy and glory for His Father; the age of adoption would be over and the generation of sons could begin.

It was far more than the dispensation of law that was ending that day. What an age God had waited between creating His first man and begetting His second. Even when He had done that at Bethlehem, He had to wait still further whilst Jesus proved Himself to be the Man from whom God could truly beget the race of men He wanted. And so there, so very far out where no-one else had ever been, Jesus hung in the dark until He had watched the long night through. It had seemed as though all eternity was in it, but it only lasted three hours. It was the blackest darkness the world had ever known, but it was all so perfectly right and in order, for it was from black primeval darkness lying upon the deep that He, with His Father and the Spirit, had started in the beginning of creation to generate the heaven and the earth. He had gone back beyond

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recorded time now; He had to; it was absolutely necessary; all must be finished. The effects and ravages of centuries of sin had to be blotted out, and they were; there He did it. All evil was dealt with, all time was redeemed, and in the Spirit all things were restored so that God could make a righteous new beginning. And as the last shades disappeared and the day returned to its strength, with all power and assurance Jesus greeted the dawn of the new era with a shout of joy and victory: 'Finished!' All the preliminaries were over; now the real reason for all else He had said, and borne, and done, was about to be fulfilled. He need suffer no longer nor lose one more moment of time, so with a quick word of dismissal He returned His Spirit to His Father and bowed His head and died.

It seemed to be all over to John who was watching Him. John had slept in the darkness of Gethsemane, but this time he had not slept. He had waited, straining through the dark hours, listening and looking toward the sacred spot where he had last seen his Lord. By his side was Mary, Jesus' mother, standing silently beside her newly adopted son. John held on to her for Jesus had ordained the adoption and she was precious for that reason. So together they watched with Him through His night of victory, though then, with unimaginable sorrow, they thought it to be His last tragic hour of defeat.

Seeing Him hanging dead upon a tree stabbed them to the heart, but still sadder things were yet to follow, for standing there in mute sorrow they were witnesses of saddest indignities heaped contemptuously upon His helpless body. A soldier, doing his duty no doubt, came and thrust a spear into His side just under His heart. To John's astonishment (he knew somehow it held tremendous meaning), 'Forthwith came there out blood and water.' He did not know its significance nor what was happening, nor that Jesus was still doing something even in death, but he knew something was happening. What it was John did not know, but Jesus did, and John had been posted and held there by God in order that the record of the truth might be given to us.

One of the most remarkable features of John's gospel is that he never recorded the facts of Jesus' birth. Jesus had given Mary to him and him to Mary, but with the unique opportunity thus afforded him

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to learn all the sacred details at first hand, John never wrote them in his account. Instead, he was stationed by God so near to the cross that he could record for all time this most important detail connected with New Birth — the blood and the water flowing from Jesus' side. This was the great new beginning. Jesus had done all else that this moment might arrive. He offered Himself without spot to God for this that God was now displaying before his eyes.

In the order and nature of Deity it had been impossible for God to give birth to human beings; create them, yes; adopt them, yes; but beget them, no. That which is flesh is flesh; that which is Spirit is Spirit. So first He created a man and from him made a woman, and then in the fullness of time selected a virgin that through her flesh He might beget a man — His Son. It was quite simple for God to do this, He only had to violate one principle of the biological law governing reproduction in order to beget a human Son. The birth was quite ordinary; only the method of conception was changed. But it was quite impossible for Him to beget children from human beings already existing in sin, of the seed of the devil in the image of Satan. So God undertook in Jesus to make the impossible possible, thus fulfilling the word spoken at His conception, 'With God nothing is impossible.'

Beyond the great miracle then taking place, this word found its greater fulfilment in the miracle now taking place before John's very eyes. For what he witnessed there caused him later to exclaim, 'Jesus is the Son of God; this is He that came by water and blood — Jesus Christ.' What he saw happening to and through the Lord Jesus had at the time filled him with horror and awful wonder. It had appeared to be the last broken-hearted farewell of the dead Messiah, the shattering of all hopes, the final pathetic response of a gentle man to the savagery of hate-filled men wildly lusting for His last drop of blood. But not so, it was something far, far greater; Jesus had indeed said He would go away, but He had also said, 'I will come to you,' and thus He did. He was preordained to be the first that should rise from the dead, and thus became the first born from among them. By His own water and blood He eventually came forth as from the womb of God, a new-born man upon the earth, later to be received back up into heaven, the first of a long line of many sons — the new

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generation. Sons of God could not be born naturally to God, so a Saviour was born to man in order that man might be supernaturally born to God. He must be both their Father and 'Mother', and this the Son came to reveal.

Thinking back over the events of those last few days it all appears so plain in its wondrous simplicity. Yet it is positively marvellous how the Lord Jesus fills the picture and as it were fulfils the function of the 'Mother'. Right at the beginning of His ministry He had said to Mary, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' He cut Himself off from her then, and confirmed it later by saying, 'Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven the same is . . . My mother,' and finally concluded His natural association with her at the cross by bequeathing her to John, 'Mother, behold thy son.' She wanted still to look upon Him as her son and herself as His mother, but it could not be — dear Mary had to learn, even at the cost of the great sorrow of her crippled heart, that privilege must not lead to presumption. In the great plan of God and the nature of Deity, and in that which God was doing she could not — just could not be — it was impossible for her to be the 'Mother'. She could, and blessedly did bear Jesus, God's Son in the flesh in the likeness of man, but that was in order that He might be fashioned into the Servant that should do for God and man spiritually what she as the handmaid of the Lord had done physically. He must fulfil the role of 'Mother', and how gloriously, right to the last detail, the Lord Jesus did it.

Both male and female are of God. In God there is a relationship that could only be expressed humanly in and as the father-mother-child triumvirate, and this is quite plainly revealed in scripture. The self-revelation of the Trinity is generally accepted to be Father, Son and Holy Ghost in that order, but in the beginning of the Bible it is not so set forth. Genesis 1 :1-3 has it thus: (1) God, (2) the Spirit of God, (3) the Word of God. The order revealed here as God commences generation is undoubtedly Father, Holy Ghost and Son; and this is exactly what we discover in the generation of Jesus Christ. (1) God the Father speaking the seed-word, (2) the Holy Ghost coming on Mary for the mother function, and (3) the Son being born. Again we see this order (modified and adapted) in the actual creation of man. (1) God formed the male first and from him

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derived (2) the female, and then eventually (3) the sons. Thus it was that the great Male, Jesus, the new Adam, disconnects Himself from Mary and assumes and fulfils the female part, and then again finally emerges from the dead to be the son, to complete the family three. He is made all things to us. He fills all parts, fulfils all orders, functions perfectly in all roles. Gracing everything He does, beautifying and supplying the hidden meaning of every role He fills, outraging nothing, sanctifying everything: Perfect Jesus, how lovely Thou art!

So we trace His ways as the great female, 'Mother' aspect of God as derived from the Male. Having sought to instil the important fact of the Fatherhood of God into the minds of the disciples by showing and declaring Himself to be His Son, and also teaching them concerning their own relationship through Himself to the Father, Jesus begins to unfold the hidden truth of true Motherhood.

Gethsemane was the chosen spot to begin; there the great travailing pains first came upon Him. As the hour of God's great eternal delivery drew near He began to be amazed and very heavy; His soul became exceeding sorrowful even unto death as the agonies gripped Him. From the commencement of the unspeakable travail in Gethsemane there followed the recurring pains of His awful ordeal at the trial, speeding up now as the time drew nearer still, until the final end in the actual 'birth pangs' of death itself (Acts 2: 24, Greek). Then the spear-thrust of the 'Caesarean' operation for the opening of the 'womb', the breaking forth of the water and the blood, and then the laying in the tomb. It was all done so thoroughly, so rightly, so conclusively. He had completely fulfilled His distinctive role as 'Mother'; and now He becomes the first born Son. Not Mary's this time, but exclusively God's.

On earth He had only been the adopted son of His earthly father; Joseph adopted Him; but being raised from the tomb by the glory of the Father, Jesus became God's first-born from among the dead and He knew He was to have many, many brethren of Whom He is the first-born. The Father begot Him as the first of a long line of sons whom He should afterwards bring to glory. So it was that Jesus was born of the Virgin — Himself being that Virgin. This is precisely the

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reason why Mary, the maid of Nazareth chosen to be His mother on earth, had to be virgin — because she was going to give birth to the eternally virgin Son. The great Virgin God came upon her and was found within her and was born of her, so she just had to be a virgin in order for that to be. And this great virgin God was born of her that He might both take and take away sin.

A virginal, sinless soul must be created within a spotlessly perfect body in order that God's eternal purposes with men might be achieved; and that soul must be poured out unto death and in His body He must bear our sins on the tree. During His life on earth sin was without Him and He kept it there, and the wrestling in the garden of Gethsemane was with the fact that although He had never known sin, He must be made sin for us. Yielding with agony to the inevitable, He gave up His body to bear that sin, resisting unto blood, striving lest in its nearer proximity as He made it His own He should sully the virginity of His being and thus destroy all hopes of new birth for man. And He succeeded. His resurrection proves it. Oh, Hallelujah!

So, in His hardly won yet eternally assured position as the first born from the dead, He is still the virgin Son. He was Virgin in eternity, Virgin in conception on earth, Virgin in His life, Virgin in His death, Virgin in His birth from the dead (resurrection) and Virgin for ever more. AMEN.

The birth of the Sons

In the eternal life and order of God the Lord Jesus became for us a man, that He might bring us by His own birth into the family of God. For by His grace we too may know a similar kind of birth, a new birth entirely. A birth from sin to sanctity, from self to God, from vileness to spotless virginity, for Jesus is plainly spoken of as the 'First-born among many brethren' who all must bear His image and grow up into the very same likeness. For God chose each one of them in Christ before the foundation of the world, and predestined them to this through Jesus Christ to Himself that they should be holy

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and without blame before Him in love. This they shall be if they will believe and entrust themselves to Him as He Himself also did to that blessed virgin of whom God took hold in the Beginning. We shall ever call her blessed who yielded herself to God beyond what she knew, who, when the realisation of what 'He that is mighty' had done dawned on her, said that we all who afterward understood would know how blessed she was. And how rightly she spoke, for we see most clearly that God wrought in her physical frame that which He would most dearly love to do within our own, though in a different way, should we let Him.

Mary is a type, a picture, a promise to us of the Lord's power and purposes in this age. As we so often see in scripture, the natural is an analogy of the spiritual, and fulfils the Bible dictum 'First that which is natural and then that which is spiritual.' Even so it must be, for these are eternal in God, for with Him both natural and spiritual are one. God is Spirit and naturally so (Galatians 4: 8). This is how and why the Holy Spirit could so tenderly inscribe within the scripture His sacred story of Jesus' conception and birth, wherein both the Spiritual and the natural by a supernatural act could and did become one in the Son. Because this is so, we will examine the account of the sacred story of Jesus' birth under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, confessing that any such examination must be conducted in lowliest reverence and deepest humility, for its holiness is as the holiness of heaven, even the 'holiest of all', and its intimacy is unspeakable unto tears. It is a mountain that burns with fire, the womb of the morning whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, primeval, untouchable, believable only. Set forth in unguarded and unguardable light, in plainest language for all to approach unto, its solitary grandeur prohibits and precludes all but those who would die to live the holy life of God on the earth. It needs no flaming sword to keep the way; the angel came and went. God needs no protector, just a messenger, so that all who hear may believe and enter in. His Nazareth, Bethlehem, and Calvary need no more protection than His eternal throne.

So unbelievable was it that Joseph himself, who later learned of his fiancée's condition, just could not accept it to be true until reassured personally by God. He need not have worried about his

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espoused bride; she had not been unfaithful nor played the harlot, but had given herself wholly to God regardless of all that Joseph or any one else thought or said or did. It was just as though Mary had 'married' God; throwing away all her earthly prospects of marriage, her response to God's desires was complete. Borrowing the language of Hebrews 11 it could be written of her, 'By faith, Mary, when she was approached by the angel yielded to God, reckoning the reproach of Christ greater than all earthly pleasures that she might bring forth the Son of God, and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.' So through Mary, the seed the devil had sired into the human race via Eve was counteracted, his headship superseded, and the way prepared for the Seed that God fathered into the race to overcome and destroy the devil.

Thus in our Head from heaven did the Godhead become man-head, even the Head of the Church which is His body, that whole company of Sons which is the generation of Jesus Christ. And so the saying of Jesus which He spake in the guest chamber prior to His crucifixion is explainable and its meaning understood: 'I am; the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.' He did not say, 'No man goeth to heaven when he dies except by what I accomplish at Calvary' — true as that is — but, 'No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.' 'I am the way, the truth and the life. I am a man; I was born; I came forth unto the Father through Mary from Bethlehem' (Micah 5 : 2). From days of eternity He had been going forth in His Father's name doing His Father's work, but never before had He been born as a man in order to do so.

And then His Father had chosen to beget Him as a man, first through Mary in the flesh that He might come forth unto the Father, and then through Himself in His own death by resurrection; so now must we also come forth from God unto God by a new birth. Jesus is the way, and the way He became the man Jesus is the only way for every one who would know Him as the Way. If this is not our own experience we can never be truth and life unto God and man, but only read about it and talk and believe about it. We cannot, of course, be made The Way to any man; Jesus our Lord alone can and must be that to every single person seeking eternal life. But we can

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be an example of the Way before man, and thus fulfil the scripture which says, 'Ye shall be witnesses unto Me.' If it be true that Jesus' will and the Father's good pleasure is that we should be with Him where He is, it is equally true that we should be what and as He is also. Into this perfect relationship and blessed life Jesus was born and lived and died and rose again to bring us.

As in His life and works the Lord Jesus perfectly sets forth the pattern of life for us, so we find also that in His birth is set forth a similar kind of pattern. Jesus Christ is all. He is made everything to us. As His death must be mine because He has graciously made my death His, and His life must be mine as He powerfully makes my life His, so also is His birth mine as He tenderly makes my birth His. This is why He said to Nicodemus, 'Ye must be born again' (or anew, from above). It is absolutely unavoidable. Every man must, just simply must be born again. If he is at all going to become what God wants him to be — a son of God — there is no other way. It is quite impossible to enter into life except by birth, for this is that one and only strait gate. To enter into man's life Jesus had to be born of a woman, and to enter into God's life every man must be born of God. So when Jesus said, 'Ye must be born again,' He was not advancing some highly questionable idea; nor was He introducing a new set of terms for some long-established, well-known and perfectly understood dogmas; neither was He being merely authoritarian; He was simply telling the truth.

It was an amazingly new truth, but then Jesus was an amazingly new person. No-one like Him had ever been on the earth before; the method by which He came here was entirely new even for Him. When He was born, and before that, when He was being formed within Mary, He embarked upon an entirely new experience; He had never before been born. But of course, if God wanted a completely new type of man on the earth something like this had to be done; only He could create Him, no-one else could — so create Him He did. His plan had been long maturing, but bringing events and time to fulfilment, and finding the right person in Mary, God at last, as an age was ending, sent His angel Gabriel to visit the virgin of Nazareth with the good news. God was about to be born in order to create the

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new Man by developing, working out and maturing the Life of the Eternal Spirit in a human body as a perfect Soul.

God is an artist. His work is perfect. Imaginative conception, delicate perception, eternal perspective, historical harmony, emotional balance, superlative execution, everything is there in the wondrous virgin birth of Jesus Christ. We cannot compliment God but we can worship Him, inadequate as our praises are. The whole was carried out in a perfection of which we glimpse but little, yet it is sufficient to lift our marvelling minds to a new plane of love, seeking only to be led into all truth. A comparison at this point will serve to strengthen our wondering adoration.

There are many women named Mary in the scriptures, and for our purpose we shall select one from the Old Testament. At first glance it does not appear that she does bear the name, for Mary is the Greek form of the Hebrew Miriam. Miriam was the sister of Moses and Aaron, and the record of an incident of which she was the central figure shows to perfection the difference between the two Marys in the day of their visitation. They were both virgins in the sight of man, and Miriam in a much more exalted and privileged position among her people than Mary, but because of Miriam's dreadful presumption, God likened His conduct towards her to that of a father spitting in his daughter's face because he was ashamed of her. Because of this she became a leper and was shut out from the camp for seven days, white as snow with leprosy because of God's anger toward her. Virgin of body, she was ruined in soul through pride.

But the Father did not send the angel of His presence to spit in Mary's face; on the contrary, it was to plant the Seed of God in her womb. For this she was found willing to be mistaken for a spiritual leper; to use scriptural language that she never knew (all the faithful fulfil one spiritual truth), this woman was prepared to 'go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach.' Thirty or more long years later, that which God did to her that day still lay upon her as a stigma which never died out of men's evil hearts; they never allowed her to forget what to their perverted minds was her great blasphemy. Derisively and reproachfully they said to Jesus, 'We be not born of fornication,' and thus openly accused her of sin whilst sneering at her

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son. Mary had conceived Him out of wedlock, and it was her chiefest joy and greatest faith. They did not believe He was God's only begotten Son of woman — but He was.

Mary co-operated with God to allow Him to be the Father of her son. She sought nothing for herself, but just believingly yielded herself only to Him. She consented to allow the Holy Ghost to be the real Mother in her motherhood, even as God was the Father of her son. She let God, the blessed triune God, take her right over for His own use and purposes. It all happened so beautifully, just as Luke simply records it for us in his Gospel.

The story he relates in the first chapter is wondrous in its classic realism. No sentiment, and little of human emotion is revealed. Not a word of professional journalism is to be found, just the honest statements of the plain truth. Analysed, the account reveals these facts:

1. vvs. 28 and 30 — She was 'highly favoured,' she had 'found favour with God.'
2. vvs. 27 and 34 — She was virgin; she did not 'know' any man.
3. vvs. 29 and 34 — She was troubled and fearful and completely baffled in mind as to how it could all be true and possible.
4. vs. 31 — She sought no thrills or satisfaction for the flesh; the angel said she would conceive in her womb only.
5. vs. 35 — The Holy Ghost came upon her and the power (Gk. *Dunamis*) of the Highest overshadowed her.
6. vvs. 38 and 45 — She believed and conceived the word of God which was spoken directly to her.

In these six points we have set forth for us the perfect pattern of God's ways with men in new birth, for this was the new birth in very truth. No-one else had ever been conceived in this manner before. She had conceived God's Seed by faith; Elisabeth later told her so (Luke 1: 45).

At the same time as this was taking place Gabriel also broke the news to Mary that her cousin was now expecting her first child.

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Such exciting news sent Mary hastening off to share with Elisabeth in the mutual joy, but enquiry soon established the fact that although the dumb Zacharias and the abashed Elisabeth were indeed looking forward to the arrival of their firstborn, everything about its conception and expected birth was absolutely normal. Although it was a miracle and most exciting, it was not a new one. There was nothing unique about it, nothing that God had not done before. The history of Israel practically began with such wonderful happenings. God had done it with Abraham and Sarah, and Jacob and Rachel, and Samuel, the mighty prophet born and destined to restore Israel and anoint their first kings, was just such another child. Now it was Zacharias and Elisabeth who were enjoying a similar favour of God.

History was repeating itself and, of course, John would be a special child and a great man as were Isaac and the sons of Rachel, and Samuel. God had always done it like this. Through someone He would produce a son in a miraculous way, through whom He would change the established order of things and alter the whole course of history. The miracle every time was that ever they were born, because barrenness and/or age had rendered it quite impossible naturally. The miracle of Jesus' birth, however, was an entirely new one. This was not repetition, but reproduction. God was introducing Himself into human flesh. Made in the likeness of men, Jesus was the image of God — God's Son.

Zacharias and Elisabeth and John, their son, were a representative family. In them God finalised and headed up His 'birth' dealings under the Old Covenant, and showed them to be inferior and preparatory to the New. The great miracle man John ushered and heralded in the greater miracle man Jesus. For, taking hold of Mary, God bridged the gap between the Old and New Covenants, and in doing so typified in natural flesh the pattern of His birth dealings throughout the entire length of the new order.

What took place between Mary and God in order that Jesus could be formed in and born through her flesh must also take place in our spirits or we shall never know new birth. Apart from the fact that she had angelic ministry and we have human, there can be no difference in the pattern. Angels are only heavenly men, and though we hear

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the gospel from men who by their first birth are of the earth, earthy, they are nevertheless by their second birth completely heavenly. Such are sent from God to us to preach the gospel word that we might be born of God. God begot Jesus Christ by the Word. Mary conceived that in her womb and thereby Jesus was the Word made flesh. We too are born again of that same incorruptible seed, through the word, after we have 'conceived' it within us by the same means as she. As soon as the angel procured her consent the transaction was completed. Her words, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word,' expressed her humble, grateful acquiescence to and willing co-operation with God, so he departed. He had spoken the word of faith to her and she received it, thus allowing the law of faith to operate in her.

It was done; she had conceived Jesus by faith alone on her part. The Holy Ghost had come upon her in Highest power to overshadow and enable her to do the will of God, and it is always like this throughout the length of the entire age. We cannot become the Sons of God by the will of man or the will of the flesh; man and flesh are right out of this. Mary in her ignorance thought that what God said was impossible of accomplishment because she did not 'know' any man. On the contrary, it was the only way it could possibly happen. Until men are prepared to become absolutely virgin to God, so that they look not to anything a man can do and least of all to their own fleshly manhood for help, they never can be born of God. Mary's 'How?' was answered by God's 'The Holy Ghost.' The Holy Ghost is God's 'How'. He always has been, still is, and ever shall be God's 'How'. He is how God does everything — God's means. In this connection the blessed Trinity may be respectfully related thus: the Father is the doer, the Holy Ghost is how He does it, and the Son is the thing done. It was thus in the beginning of creation: God the Father spoke the word, the Holy Ghost fluttering over the deep upon the face of the waters in the dark heard and received it, and light was. Jesus, the Lamb, is the Light.

Because this is the only order God knows and the law upon which He works, Jesus told Nicodemus he must be born of water and of the Spirit. Hearing this Nicodemus was completely baffled, and as Mary had earlier said to the angel so he also said to Jesus, 'How can this

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thing be?' Mary's difficulty was concerning (a) man — 'I know not a man'; Nicodemus' problem was bound up with (a) woman — 'Can a man enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?' But neither are needed for this great new birth. We have to be born from above to be born again of God, for this second birth is not of man and woman at all. If we wish our spirits to be born we must be born of the Holy Spirit, for that which is born of the flesh is only flesh. The spirit of man died to God in the 'faith' transaction between Satan and Adam via Eve in Eden. Since that occasion every individual person has become dead to God. And though in natural birth flesh is alive by reason of spirit indwelling it, that spirit is nevertheless dead to God. It neither knows Him, nor communes with Him, nor serves Him, nor loves Him, nor worships Him, nor acknowledges Him to be the Lord. It is not alive as Jesus was alive, but quite dead, and until it undergoes an experience from above whereby it is born it will remain dead; and this death is everlasting unless 'these things' take place within us.

This life which we receive at new birth is eternal, that is, it is exactly the same quality of life that is in Christ Jesus. He expressed it thus many times, 'I am the life'; 'I am come that ye might have life more abundantly'; 'Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood ye have no life in you'; 'I am the resurrection and the life'; 'Behold I am alive for ever more.' He has therefore made careful provision that we might have His life. Such provision is it, and so readily available to us all, that no man can live a life different in nature and quality and manifestation from His and yet claim to have eternal life, for it is His life in us. The only thing you can do with life is live it; what and how you live is your life. Christianity is not a religion, it is a life. Indeed, it is THE life — life itself; in this world men are either dead or alive according to whether or not they have received and live this life, and not according to whether or not they accept and believe certain beliefs or practise a certain religion. It is quite as possible to be dead holding all known Christian beliefs, as holding Buddhist or Brahmin or Islamic beliefs. To be sure, it is better to believe the Bible than the Koran, or any other so called sacred writings, but doing so does not bring life. 'Ye must be born again' — Jesus says so.

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The life of the Sons

In this new birth many vital spiritual and psychological changes take place in a man. In fact, all the fundamental alterations required by God to make a man acceptable to Him as an eternal being are made at that time. Laws of spiritual being are changed. God puts His laws into our minds and writes them in our hearts so that we all (can) know Him and not our (old) selves, as the originators of humanistic philosophy vainly advise us. This inward change is an absolute necessity, for apart from this taking place it is quite impossible to be a new person. The only long term proof a man can have that he is born again is that he is becoming an entirely new person, and that the new personality being developed and revealed in him is none other than Jesus Christ's. There are, however, certain immediate and immediately recognisable features of new birth that every man must expect to find within himself when he is born again.

Speaking to His ancient people, Israel, through Ezekiel chapter 36: 26, 27, God sets forth some salient features of the new birth which some time in the future was to happen to them as a nation, when they were to be 'born in a day'. When that takes place these three things will happen within each individual. God will give to each one: (1) a new heart, (2) a new spirit, (3) His Spirit. They will happen spontaneously and synchronously so that they appear to be but one thing. Other things must happen prior to and as a consequence of these three major things, but these three must take place in every new birth at whatever time in history the miracle happens.

In these days of advanced medical knowledge ante-natal investigations of any natural birth always include, indeed major upon, the discovery of the heart beat. No heart beat — no life. Ante-natal life has begun when a heart starts to beat. So in new birth, God starts with the renewal of the heart. There can be no new life from an old heart. God says that it is impossible to get a clean thing out of an unclean thing, and it is equally impossible to get an unclean out of a clean. Born of unclean flesh it is not possible for any man to have a clean heart and live a pure life: born of the Holy Spirit it is impossible to have an unclean heart and life. In order to live a new

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clean life we must have a new clean heart and spirit. God says He gives new hearts for old, hearts of flesh for hearts of stone, as of course only He can and must, if He would have us for His children.

The Old Covenant was written upon stone. This in itself, as in everything God does, was of symbolic significance, for it typified exactly what was taking place; the hearts to which God was giving the law were as hard as stone, and the Covenant was a superimposition upon cold, resistant, unresponsive flint, a law enforcement to which the carnal mind must bow but which the heart could never receive. The New Covenant must be written within by the Spirit of God on the fleshy tables of the heart and put (given) into the mind, so that the law of being may supersede the law of doing. Thus the law of commandments becomes the law of life, not so much in the first instance by willing obedience, as by natural function which gives rise to the willing obedience. The law of God's being must become the law of my being — mind and heart law by which my life is governed naturally and develops normally into a life of simple obedience to God.

In this act of God I am reconstituted in the nature of God that I may grow as a person and develop a personality like Jesus in the image of God. I am reconstituted righteous, made the righteousness of God in new birth. Constitutional law is greater than institutional law. What God is constitutionally, that is, those qualities by which He is naturally God, so that because of them we recognise and acknowledge and confess Him to be God, He in measure adapted and projected from Himself as a law, instituting and commanding it under the hand of Moses as a code of life for His people. Even Moses himself saw and said that though this was so, God had not given the people a new heart. They had to keep the law for righteousness, but God had not reconstituted them so that they were functionally righteous within, and confession can not be made unto salvation until the heart has believed unto this righteousness. A man's heart has to be reconstituted righteous, made entirely new within, before he can live a new life, for the life must be basically righteous to be called life at all. The law of righteousness and life must take the place of the law of sin and death ere a man can live.

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The heart is the most vital, basic and powerful piece of 'machinery' in the whole human being, and as it is in the natural so is it in the spiritual being. The reconstituted heart is the 'machinery' for living the new life, but even so, important as it is, it is not the whole new man, but only his heart. The new man himself is the new spirit God puts within him. As in the first creation God made everything in perfect functional order before He created the man, so in the new spiritual order: the heart first, then the spirit (man) to use it. It was like this in the beginning. God formed man out of the dust of the ground in perfect working order and then breathed spirit into him so that man could be a living soul. Now God says, 'A new spirit will I give you,' and oh, how vital this is, for this is that inward man who is told, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,' and hearing it, with joy he now cries, 'Of course, I shall!' It is no longer conceived or imagined to be a commandment of authority to be understood despairingly as 'I must love God because He says so,' but an empowering from His will — 'I shall, of course I shall, because He has enabled me.' 'Thou shalt' is thus shown to be an utterance from supreme knowledge rather than from a superior power, though bearing that power in mind, and intending to act from it. Hence God is not so much commanding obedience as commanding life.

This inward man, being spirit, is either old or new according to whether it has been born from above, and being by first birth born dead, the inward man is not able to recognise himself or know his state, nor does he know how to act responsively and responsibly in this matter of new birth. That is why the gospel must be preached to us with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, for unless this is so there can be no all-powerful generation. Dead spirits remain unresponsive, totally unable to act, unconscious of need, and ignorant of how to enter into life. Aware of self and sin, unregenerate man is dead toward God. Loving sin, he engages in and practises it as in his natural element, so that he believes such a state to be his only possible way of life.

Yet it is to this part of man, the real I, that God appeals. His gospel is addressed to it and His new birth is for it. This is that part that has to be born again, the spirit; and it only can be born again when it rises up within and responds wholeheartedly to God's word.

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Just as a man has lusted after, gone after, engaged in and practised many abominable things within himself, though outwardly he has never done them, so, exactly so must he reach out and desire after Jesus as the word of God is spoken to him. He must not remain passively believing, but must actively receive. His whole self must be in it. He must engage in a personal transaction with Jesus Christ just as really as when, perhaps lying bodily passive in bed or sitting totally inactive in a chair, without moving a muscle outwardly, yet with unbridled passion, he inwardly engages with some other absent person or persons in some form of sin. Such sin does not require the bodily presence of another person; the imagination and desires and emotions of the man are quite sufficient to make others very, very real to him indeed. Such sins, though often never actually committed by the outward man are, nevertheless, the most real of things a person ever does.

Because this is so, God requires that in regeneration, the greatest thing that can happen to a man on this earth, that same part must act in the transaction of new birth. With affection, and emotion, and desire, and intellect, and imagination, and will, the whole inward man must believe and receive. Then he will become a new spirit-man. It cannot be too strongly urged upon a man that he must so believe God that he arises with all his manhood, and transacts with Jesus Christ earnestly and personally. Such an act no more requires the actual physical presence of Jesus Christ than do the sins spoken of above — it is the spirit that commits the sin or comes to Christ in either case.

The third thing specified in this one great birth is, 'I will put My Spirit within him.' A man must consciously receive the Holy Spirit when he believes, so that should an apostle of Jesus Christ ask him the vital question Paul asked of the Ephesians, he could answer unequivocally, 'Yes.' In our concern to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ in order that we shall be saved, we must not neglect to receive the Holy Spirit also. The Lord Jesus who said, 'Come unto Me I will give you rest,' also said, 'Come unto Me and drink this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive.' Just because He said these two things upon two different occasions, He did not mean or say that He was speaking of two different 'comings'

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or experiences. It was clearly impossible for Him to say everything all at once or every time He opened His mouth, so it was as the occasion warranted, or the conditions afforded, or the needs demanded, or the media required that He spoke of different effects resulting from coming to Him. Each was related to the purpose in His mind when He spoke, therefore whilst what the Lord said was amply suited to each particular situation, it was nevertheless but partial in expression, and could not be otherwise. When this is clearly understood, many things mistakenly said to be different are at once seen to be distinctions only and not differences at all.

The gospel is now completely revealed as it never was whilst Jesus yet spake on the earth, for even He lived on the Old Testament side of Calvary and Pentecost. The New Covenant was then in His unshed blood; this had yet to be both shed and presented in heaven before the New Covenant could commence. But the redemptive offering being now complete and His precious blood presented in heaven, no heart need believe restrictively for partial things. Men today must believe on Jesus Christ unto the reception of the Holy Ghost. We must come to Jesus drinking and God will put His Spirit within us. The Holy Spirit must dwell forever within my spirit in my new heart. It will then keep new and I shall be the living soul God intends me to be — a thing entirely impossible apart from the miracle taking place as outlined above. This then is what basically takes place in every new birth, and in such a way that a man is unmistakably aware of the tremendous and eternal change that has taken place in him.

We have used the Old Covenant scriptures as a basis of analysis of the miracle of the New Birth which is, as yet, a future experience for the nation of Israel. Written prophetically, it could not then be testified to experimentally by any man. For a further fuller and additional exposition of the truth we will now examine the New Covenant scriptures, whose authors were all men who had been born again. These all could write from experience of that new birth which had taken place in them, as well as from the Holy Ghost. Inspiration flowing through experience speaks the most powerful word of all. Among these authors the apostle John was singled out to be the last contributor to the sacred canon and, as one who could look back

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over a long life filled with evidence of the things which he wrote, he was well qualified for the task. His first epistle is a blessed and vital statement of things he knew from God and from life. Spokesman for all the apostles as well as the whole unnamed company designated 'the sons of God', he sets forth for all time, for God and for us, the things commonly recognised as the marks of the new birth.

Examining his epistle we find the phrase he most often uses is the simple, positive affirmation 'We know'; this expression is doubled unto us in one place and with the triumph of complete assurance it becomes uttermost conviction, 'We do know that we know.' Such knowledge is rest, unassailable and profound; it is language such as the blessed Trinity themselves could be expected to use; it is life beyond doubt; as it is in God, so it is in us. Indeed, we find this very thing written into the letter, 'Which thing is true in Him and in us.' Into such a state of life the new birth is designed immediately to bring us, and it is testified to and declared so plainly that only sheerest unbelief could possibly deny it.

Taking the simple words 'born of God', or 'of God' as our ground of unerring truth, we will gather from this letter what God says are the unchanging marks or indications of whether or not a man is His child. There are seven proof signs:

1. ch. 2, vs. 29 — He practises righteousness.
2. ch. 3, vs. 9 — He does not commit sin.
3. ch. 4, vs. 2 — He confesses that Jesus Christ is (now) come in flesh.
4. ch. 4, vs. 4 — He overcomes them (that are in the world) because greater is He that is in him than he that is in the world.
5. ch. 4, vs. 7; ch. 5, vs. 1 — He loves, and thereby proves that he loves God.
6. ch. 5, vs. 4 — He overcomes the world and the victory is his faith.
7. ch. 5, vs. 18 — He keeps himself and the devil does not touch him.

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In these seven things the Spirit through John speaks most plainly and powerfully to our hearts concerning His eternal life. Moreover, the letter is specifically written to the sons of God whom He classifies thus: dear (little) children (2 :12), fathers (2 :13), young men (2 :13), young (little) children (2: 13), brethren (2 : 7), beloved (4:1). The whole is written to them as God's sons, each one of them a dear child; some are young children, others are young men, while yet others are fathers — but all are brethren and His beloved. Whilst all need to know everything their Father has to say, some need particular instruction directed specially to their individual state so that each may know His will and yet all together love and live.

The whole reason for new birth is that by it we all may live the life of God. Therefore, as long as we live our lives on this earth, we must expect the proof signs as listed to appear clearly in all that we are and say and do. This is why John, as He begins the letter, so emphatically draws our attention to the life: 'That which was from the beginning.' It is intriguingly startling how he couches his language so as to avoid a name — that is, Jesus — and to emphasise life, 'the life was manifested.' Of course it was Jesus the apostles saw and heard and looked upon and handled, but John says it was the 'Word of life', and it is the same in whomsoever it is found. That is the purpose for the writing of the book — the insistence is on the life of God manifest in the flesh; whether in the Son or in the Sons it is identical, recognisable, unmistakable, provable. This was the amazing thing to those men who followed Jesus — the state of being in which the Father and the Son eternally existed was manifested on the earth. God's life; eternal life; Life; just that, the Life. There is no other, nor can be. Other states of existence there are and shall be for ever, but these are not the Life. That Life was manifested on earth in order that we by a new miracle birth might have it; and when we have it, it is eternal; and having it we may with those for whom John writes, who first experienced it in succession to Jesus Christ, enter into the fellowship of the Father and the Son. It is utterly ludicrous to say we have eternal life if we do not live this life for it is the only one there is.

To John, God in trinity is a Fellowship, seeing, hearing and handling each other in perfect love, and this is Light. God is (the)

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Light, there is no darkness at all in Him. The motives of each member in the Fellowship are absolutely pure, therefore is God Holy. Each member of that Trinity is holy, and so all around Him is light. Because God is Light there is light, light to walk in and be — and we have to walk in this light exactly as He is. As He is Light so must we be; then shall we consciously be in the true eternal Fellowship, with the Father and with His Son. Only as this is so shall we be able to walk in the light and have fellowship one with another also.

Fellowship can only exist in the family of the Father, and it can exist in no other than these three basic things: (1) being, (2) relationship, (3) progression. It is only therein that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, continues its work of consistent cleansing which is one of the chief purposes for which it was shed. It was never conceived, nor intended, neither was it promised by God, that the blood of His Son should initially cleanse, and go on cleansing anybody who would not come to the Light, and in that light believe in the Light, and become a child of Light, and go on walking in the light; and neither does it, nor can it do, all-powerful though it is. Everyone who chooses to remain in the darkness of his own death-existence can never be forgiven or cleansed. But whosoever comes to Jesus, the Light, commences at that moment to move into the light and shall soon believe in and know the Light Himself whose grace forgives, and whose blood cleanses from all sin whatsoever.

Seeing then that it is into this Fellowship we are called as one family with the Father and the Son, it is most important that we be able openly to trace those seven signs of the eternal life of Jesus within us and about our lives and upon our works. We must be able fully and openly to confess Jesus Christ come in flesh. The perfect participle 'come' used here reveals a fullness of truth which often at first reading we easily miss, believing devoutly that it refers back to the incarnation only, whereas it means 'Jesus Christ having come and now coming in the flesh.' God is here telling our hearts that one of the major purposes of His Son's birth on earth whereby the Word was made flesh, was that He may also come into flesh today — our flesh. This is what we are told so clearly in the Hebrews' letter; the writer says that Jesus partook of flesh and blood precisely because

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the children (of God) are partakers of it — just for that reason. And if we are born of God the Spirit of God will make our spirit confess that Jesus Christ is come in(to) our flesh also. This being so, we see immediately why he that is born of God doth not commit sin. Why, with God's seed abiding in him so that Jesus Christ is come in(to) his flesh, he cannot do that!

Mary, during the incarnation, only had God's seed within her for a few months, but we receive it to abide within us for ever. God's purpose in taking flesh from (or through) Mary was in order that He might exist on the earth distinct and apart from her; but in regeneration Jesus takes our flesh as His own, to dwell in it on the earth and be identified with us in it. How then can we go on to sin? A man does not go on sinning when he is born of God, for sinning is the devil's life and work, not God's. Satan has sinned unbrokenly from the beginning, and being our spiritual father by our first or natural birth, he continues to do exactly the same in every one born of man.

But Jesus is not a sinner, nor can be; He has not sinned from all eternity and will not do so in any one who is born of God, for the purpose of the new birth is that the life and works of Jesus should be reproduced in us. God intends that, as a result of this birth, the sin and sinfulness of Satan's usurpation of God's headship of the human race should be eliminated, and that men should be restored to a sonship above that from which Adam fell. For his sonship was in innocence, but ours is to be in righteousness and true holiness. Therefore in us the Lord Jesus will do righteousness, the absolute opposite from sin; and we know that it is he that doeth righteousness who is righteous, and he alone. A man cannot live and do sin and be righteous at the same time. Since sin is neither the nature nor the habit of the Seed within, it cannot characterise the life of the person in whom that Seed is now come. Not that by this a man is rendered incapable of sinning, for if a man loses power to sin he also loses power to do anything else, with the result that he would become an automaton and salvation would be a farce. On the contrary, it is that he now has power not to sin, or to sin not. Therefore, he does not go on sinning; he chooses not to, and being born of God he is no longer irresistibly forced to do so against his will. One of the most powerful

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elements of the new birth is its complete elimination of the compulsive power to sin from the heart of the 'born one'. The reconstituted heart has the law for/of righteousness written in it, and its genius and power lies in its irresistible drawings to holiness, so that a man may live free from sin whereas once he was its slave. This is because the change of paternity has robbed the devil of his power to dominate the will, and sin cannot therefore be the habit of the new nature — it can only occur as an accident', an irregularity in the life, and not recur inevitably according to law, as the norm of experience. The old law of sin and death has given way to the new law of righteousness and life, and so glorious is the enjoyment of the fellowship of God, and so great and many are the privileges of sonship, and so wondrous the holiness and purity of the new life, that to sin is unthinkable. When the temptation to do so comes, as it surely does — the suggestion made, the offer given, the allurement unavoidably there — and the pressure is on, a man says, 'I cannot sin because I am born of God; I cannot do it.' That is how deeply the blood is cleansing him. He knows he must not and he is not bound to, and does not want to, and feels he cannot sin and grieve his Father. As a man born of God stands firm on this ground, fully believing the plainly written truth, refusing to give in to the strong urge and great pressure of the temptation, he will not sin but taste the sweets of the victory which overcometh the world. Moreover, and greater still, he will soon joyfully discover that what appears still to be rising within him as latent sin is none other than a temptation skilfully disguised and subtly presented from without, and this is one of the most blessed moments of his life. Sin, we are told, is a deceitful thing, but even more deceitful is the deceiver, the devil, who tries by all means to deceive the son of God into believing the lie. To realise that one is able to detect the subtlety of the serpent in the temptation is one of the sweetest of realisations, as is to know that God does not expect His people to sin. But He is not unmindful that they may do so, and has graciously and logically made provision so that if they do there can be immediate forgiveness and cleansing and restoration to His life. But not the absence of sin — nothing so negative — but the presence and practice of righteousness is a more positive sign of new life from God, for this is the basic quality which marks it out as new and different.

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The righteousness of God is that He acts consistently with His moral nature, and it can be no different with us. If a man acts out of character with his morality he is unmoral, unrighteous, not right but wrong. Because this is so in God it is an unbreakable law, a moral principle of first magnitude. So primal is it that John says, 'Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doeth righteousness is righteous even as He is righteous.' We know the difference between the children of God and the children of the devil not by whether or not a man believes in imputed or even imparted righteousness, but by whether or not a man practises, commits, does righteousness. If he does not, he is not of God, whatever his claims or beliefs may be.

Further, and because it is of great importance at this point, let us distinguish between good works and doing righteousness. There are so many works a man may do which are easily recognised as being good as opposed to evil, but it is utterly impossible to classify righteous works because they partake of moral and inward states, not seen by any eye but God's. Anyone may think he can see whether or not I love my brother by the works I do, but fail utterly in assessing the righteousness of those same acts simply because he cannot weigh my motives. In all his works a man must know his own heart before God.

The man that is born of God must be as God, and he will be so in all the normal everyday acts of his whole life, which will be consistent with the acts of God, that is, they will have the same moral quality and spiritual power about them. Of course, all the works that God does are infinitely and incomparably greater in power and scope and number than ours can ever be, even as He is incomparably greater than we are or ever shall be, but the righteousness is the same. Whether in the providential acts of every day to everyone without respect of persons, or in the special deeds of grace to the few — as He is, so are we in this world. If a man 'does sin,' that is, practises it as the normal conduct of life, it is because he has a nature of, and disposition to, sin; similarly, if a man 'does righteousness,' that is, practises it as the normal conduct of life, it is because he has that nature and disposition. Apart from having this nature he cannot do it; he must act consistently with his nature or ultimately become a hypocrite.

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Hypocrisy does not lie in trying to be what you are not, neither does it lie in an occasional failure to act according to what you are; it lies in deliberately deceiving people into believing you are what you are not. Unfortunately most of us at some time or another try to be what we are not. Not that by this we attempt to deceive people — though at times we may deceive ourselves in the process. It usually only occurs as we see a higher goal and seek to attain unto it. Alas in Christian circles this is the result of ignorance of God's ways and/or wrong teaching resulting from such ignorance. But such action only becomes hypocrisy when, being recognised as wrong, it is persisted in with a view to masking an underlying condition of unrighteousness.

Still further and because of the foregoing, he that is of God will both overcome the world and also all the other antichrist spirits that are in it. These spirits are not necessarily demons, but human. Careful reading will substantiate the fact that these verses are not there primarily to be used as 'demon detectors' but were written for a higher purpose. They may have another use but their true function is to inform us of the sure ways of the Spirit of God in establishing the bona fides of His own children. Every spirit of man that cannot confess Jesus Christ come in flesh is an antichrist spirit. It is against Him and not of Him; without exception every un-born-again spirit is an antichrist spirit; it is of the world and of him that is in the world, says John. Anyone purporting to be, or who is thought to be a prophet, and yet is not able to make the great confession that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is false. Here again let us pause to note the importance of this word confession. Actually it is a word rather more to do with morality than intellect, and must in this connection be consistent with the whole life. A man may talk about anything, but he can only confess what he knows. Knowledge in this sense largely comes to us from without by the means John mentions in the beginning of his letter, by seeing and hearing and handling. To this is added later another faculty, the unction or anointing by which we know all things, and John speaks so conclusively about this latter that we are bound to admit its infallibility. Given these abilities, correct conclusions leading to true confession can be made about all things. No-one and nothing is exempt.

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As we have seen that every man not yet believing on Jesus Christ is an antichrist spirit, that is, he is against God's purpose(s) through Christ for him in this world, so must we also see that everyone who is born of God is a Christ-spirit. He is indwelt by Christ, and has already partially fulfilled God's ultimate purpose for him in this world, which is that he should grow and mature into the perfect image of Jesus Christ as time and opportunity allow.

Among those who are naturally children of Satan and not permanently indwelt by Jesus Christ, there are those who are specially indwelt for the devil by an evil spirit. Such are capable of substituting false claims for true confessions, but God is not deceived by them, and His children are not long in doubt either. Greater is He that is in us than he that is in them, and He has overcome them and laid the foundation for all to be overcomers who can make the great confession that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. He is the great and true Prophet and has overcome the false prophet, even Satan who deceived our first parents Adam and Eve in the garden, saying, 'Ye shall be as gods.' Now with full assurance we confess by the Spirit this true confession of the sons of God, and know that 'as He is so are we in this world'; we are not as gods, but as He. The true Prophet has overcome the false, the Seed in us has overcome the seed in them, 'We are of God little children.' Even the youngest babe of God has in him this victory that overcometh the world; this very thing is our faith that is born of God.

In almost heavenly conditions on earth in Eden long ago Satan, with prophetic power, lied a false confession into the heart and mind of mankind using God as his authority, 'God doth know . . . ye shall be as gods.' Now, in the near hell-like state of the world because of sin's maturing development on the earth under the curse of God, the true Prophet by His Spirit causes all God's sons to know and confess the only perfect God-like condition possible to man — 'As He is.' This is the only true faith that is born of God. It overcometh the present evil state of the world at this stage of its history, as well as all spirits in it; and it enables the true life to be lived and the true confession to be made, and wonderful and thrilling indeed it is.

In commencing His ministry to Israel of old, Jesus came from

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Jordan to them by water only. John Baptist was specially prepared and sent by God with his watery baptism to call all men to him, that he might present Jesus by that same watery baptism to the nation. Jesus Himself came up out of the water to see the heavens open to Him, and to feel the dove alight upon Him, and to hear the voice announcing Him. He had come to them by water as the people's Messiah. But at the conclusion of His life on the earth, whilst hanging on the cross in death and in response to the spear-thrust into His side, the water and the blood flowed out that by these He might come to us by the Spirit. Miracle of miracles, victory of victories — by and with this He comes to us that we all may be God's true sons.

Moreover, we know that he that is born of God keepeth himself and that wicked devil toucheth him not. The child of God, not now bound to commit sin nor even to fall into it, keepeth himself from it, and consequently the devil cannot touch him. Not that he would not like to; he would, but he cannot. Not that he does not attempt to; he does, but he cannot touch him. Not that he does not tempt him; he does but he cannot touch him. All the while a man keeps himself from sin the devil is powerless to touch him. The devil does not want us to believe that, but God does. Satan wants us to believe that he is almighty, but he is not — God is! It is important for us to know that Satan cannot have any more power over and in our lives than what we allow him by believing in him. Satan must not be believed in but believed about. That is, a man must believe about him but not believe in him — he must believe in Christ.

A man may always keep himself from the wicked one. Even at the worst times, when the greatest weights are upon him and he feels least like it, he can still preserve his total purity. The Lord Jesus is the prime example of this. Just before He left the guest chamber with His disciples for the garden of Gethsemane the Lord said, 'The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me.' He knew the devil was coming but He also knew he could not touch Him because He had no sin in Him. Not even when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree and was made sin for us, could the devil touch Him. It was God who made Him to be sin for us — to do so was beyond the devil's power. Even in His great extremity, resisting unto blood and striving against the sin He was bearing, He kept His spirit so

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pure that He could send it winging home to His Father as spotless, and clear, and perfect and free from sin as in the beginning, so that His Father may in turn give it to all the sons He should afterwards beget. The devil could not touch Him, He had kept Himself. The wicked one had attacked Him, hurt Him, tortured Him, crucified Him, but he had not touched Him. As with Him, so with us. Tempted, attacked, hurt, maligned, brutalised, anything, everything except sin, and the devil cannot touch us. Hallelujah! While we sin not but walk in the light in the Fellowship of the Three who are Light, with all those who are the children of light, we are untouchable. Nor shall we need the many panaceas or theories being proffered these days on every hand as 'guaranteed' ways to defeat the devil. The victory God gives us is the victory over the devil, and if we keep ourselves as God instructs and intends us to keep ourselves, we are safe.

A man is indeed happy if all these marks of the new life are in him, but he cannot afford to rest even in such a state, for beyond all this the best is yet to be made known to him. 'Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.' Deliverance from sin and darkness and the world and the devil and all else of evil would be in vain if a man could not or did not love. God's purpose has achieved its ultimate in us when He has made us lovers as He is a Lover, for His love must be perfected in us. Because He loves us, God sees and hears and handles us into the place and condition where we can see and hear and handle Him in spirit. Indeed, this is the fellowship into which we are invited and exhorted by the apostle John and the Holy Ghost — the real and stated reason why the epistle was written. John, speaking for an unspecified group, states the means of the fellowship he and they enjoyed with that Life, and openly invites us into it that our joy may be full. And oh, how full it can be as we enter into and abide in this love, this fellowship with the Father and the Son, by this means of communion and communication.

To be in love is the greatest, simplest and most normal condition of life as it is in God; and the promise commanded into us to be the substance and law for life is, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all ' — and this we do. But God wants us to understand that included in loving Him is the command to love one another also,

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and this is in order that we should by the latter prove the former. Nothing is genuine apart from this. It is quite impossible to love God unless we love one another also; likewise it is impossible to love God and no-one else. We must love Him exclusively as God and worship Him as no other, but doing that we must also love the brethren inclusively — though as individuals — 'one another' is the command, not 'en masse'. In response to His first love He must have our first love, and the brethren must have our first quality love. To Him it is quality plus degree, to others it is the same quality but with less degree.

God says we are to dwell, live all the time, in love; that is, we are to be in love with one another all the time, and this is to be shown along unmistakable and well defined lines immediately recognised by all. Perhaps the greatest discovery a man ever makes is that God loves him individually, and then from that knowledge graduates to know that God is Love. The phrase 'God is love' occurs twice in this epistle. The first time it is a statement of fact — information given us by the Holy Ghost — albeit through a man who has lived to prove it. The second time it is the confession of one who as a result, and in the ways set forth in the intervening verses, has discovered it for himself and confesses that God is love. We are virtually told we cannot be God's children if we do not know this. We must see and testify and know and believe the love God has to us. It is a wonderful thing when 'God is love' is a testimony upon a man's lips, the confession of a discovery and not the repetition of an inspired quotation.

John was not just quoting it; he had never heard anyone say it. In the whole of the Hebrew scriptures with which he was familiar, it was never found upon anyone's lips. Even upon the memorable occasion in the guest chamber when he, together with the other apostles, had been Jesus' guest, it had come to him rather differently — 'I have loved you.' Their Lord and Master had invited them to this last supper, and it was a love feast if ever there was one, for Jesus' heart was brimming over with endless love to them — they could feel it, and John's heart just craved to become one with it. But there was no-one there equal to the love in Jesus' heart. He wanted to wash their feet in preparation for the meal and journey ahead, but

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there was no slave of God's love there with Him to do it so He got down and washed their feet Himself. They were absolutely bewildered; humbled and chastened. The unspeakable honour He did them utterly confused them, but it was by such things that John made both the greatest discovery and the great confession. It had always been like that since he had first seen, and then met and followed and heard this Man. John found God's love in a man. At the time he did not know He was the God-Man, but he knew this Man loved him, aye, and loved him in deed and in truth. Jesus never told him He loved him, yet John just knew He did, and he loved to think of himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved — not more than anyone else, only as much as everyone else of course — but he knew Jesus to be Love. Jesus loves in deed — not just one or two deeds, not an isolated act, or gesture, or occasional look, for that would not have been in truth; Jesus loved him in life, all of it.

The truth of a thing is the consistency of it; that alone gives substance to honesty and correctness, making them reality. This Man was the same all through, all the time — love in deed and in truth. It was the Light He was that first attracted John, but it was the Love he discovered Him to be that held him. Light drew him, love held him — held him so tightly and so closely that he lay on His breast feeling it was heaven, until one morning he received the Holy Ghost in the dawn of a new day, and the love of God was shed abroad in his own heart, and he became all one with that love and knew God within himself as all Love.

In the end a man must become love; in himself he must be love as God is Love. He cannot know God is Love until he himself is love; he can hear it, believe it, calculate it from scripture or because he has partaken of it in some providential or special manner, and all these are essential prerequisites unto the end in view, but he must be love as God is Love ere he can know God's state of love and confess it. This is but the beginning of a life which in development is love perfected in him, so that fellow men may know it by the power of apprehension placed within them for this very thing, viz., seeing, hearing, handling. It is of no use expecting a man to believe he is loved just because he is told so. God did not expect it. He did not merely announce His love from heaven. He did not invent and send

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a wireless or television set, or a printing press; He sent His Son to see and hear and handle people, and that man may see and hear and handle Him and know what eternal life really is. As it was with the Father, so it was among men — and this because He loved us so — and thus it must be with us also.

John says, 'We know we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.' Lovelessness is death, the state of complete inability; and the thing over which God grieves most is not a man's inability to walk or work or to do His will, but his utter inability to love. God lives the eternal life of love, and reading John's words it could almost be that we are overhearing the conversation of the blessed Father, Son and Holy Ghost in fellowship saying, 'Beloved, let us love one another for love is.' Perfect love uses words but needs none; its language is attitudes, disposition, deeds, looks, deportment, patience, long-suffering, compassion, tenderness, and all the host of other indescribable and unnameable virtues, great and small, that support its claim or express its fullness. These each appear singly or in needful combination momentarily as an opportunity arises or a situation requires, and then disappear from recognition to lose themselves again in the whole virtuous nature of which they are but a part. Of itself each has no glory save as an expression of all, gathering up and focussing for a while the beauty of the whole, and then subsiding to blend into the composite glory that must shine out eternally as, and in, and through each with equal power as it is in turn revealed.

Seldom, if at all, do we hear of one of the precious Three directly telling the other He loved Him, or Them. Father and Son each wanted the other to know they were conscious of the other's love and that they loved each other, but they never descended to romantic or sentimental expressions; to them it was the deep, abiding, eternal security of Life. It is surely one of the most wonderful facts of scripture that it shows most clearly that only from human lips did Jesus seek to extract the confession of love: 'Lovest thou Me?'

As He is

These then are some of the basic proofs of a man's sonship with Jesus. They are not set forth as an end in view, or as a mark for the

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prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, but as simple 'first principles' of divine life to be found in any man who calls himself a son of God. If any man sins, or at any time acts unrighteously, or fails at some point to overcome the world, or finds himself not loving his brother as he should, or in some way or measure ceases to be light as and in the fellowship of Light, he does not automatically thereby lose his sonship. The true son, however, will speedily repent of and rectify the condition, and then restoration to all the former divine favours and fellowship will be surely granted by his Father. But let a man believe and abide and walk in the truth as here set, forth and he need never sin, nor fall short, nor stumble in the way. God has generated him with and into the generation of Jesus Christ, and it is not a generation in or unto sin but in and unto righteousness and love, so that we may say with confidence, 'As He is so are we in this world.'

The veriest babe in God's family must know this. He may not know the scriptural statements about it, having yet to learn them; but he must know it within himself, even though he cannot analyse it. That is why God has given to us of His own Spirit, because it is by the Spirit that we know. This knowledge is inward certainty of truth, not intellectual grasp of fact. All God's children have it without exception, for this constitutes part of the new spiritual life, of being as He is. God's children may never be nor can be who He is, but all must be as He is. Every human babe is as much a human being as the parents who begot the child. So we by divine promise and workmanship are made partakers of the divine nature. This was perfectly outworked in the birth of Jesus Christ — He was born of the divine promise. So are we — 'Repent and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost for the promise is unto you and as many as the Lord our God shall call.' So they on the day of Pentecost were, and so now may we be made partakers of the new divine nature.

Having thus been born of God, and finding this same nature within us, we now belong to the generation of Jesus Christ. Being now made sons by regeneration, we must in all things also be made like unto the Son. This must be our sole reason for living, for no lesser reason is acceptable to our Father. The Holy Ghost, Who has come forth from the Father through the Son, is under command to

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accomplish this very thing. His work is to glorify Jesus by reproducing His nature and personality in each of God's other sons. Jesus Christ is the Seed accepted for a generation, and each one of that generation is demonstrably of Him — clearly and firmly, marked out of God as belonging to the generation of Jesus Christ.

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WATER BAPTISM

G.W.NORTH

First Published Autumn 1976.
Revised April 1978.
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WATER BAPTISM

(A Figure of the True)

One of the most rewarding of all pursuits to the student of scripture is to trace the way in which the commands and ordinances of the Lord were applied and outworked in the lives and ministries of those to whom they were given. By doing this, it is possible, with a measure of certainty, to arrive at some fairly accurate conclusions about them, and to assess how they were received and understood by those to whom they were given in trust.

Any who undertake to do this may rest assured in heart that the men to whom the Lord committed His orders sought only to obey and practise without deviation what they were told from the Lord. Having this assurance, it may be expected that the result of any such investigation will furnish the student with all the factual data upon which correct judgements may be formed. This assurance is ascertained to us by the fact that the Lord Jesus was as much concerned as the apostles that what He commanded them at first should be interpreted, applied and communicated aright, so that in process of time it may be understood correctly by us. The more so since He knew that what was ordained would remain and what was commanded would be written down to become the handbook of the Church, affecting its growth and development throughout the entire age.

This kind of painstaking care shown by the Lord Jesus, the Holy Ghost and the early Church guarantees that any investigation of scripture such as we now undertake, may be conducted with safety in absolute assurance that all knowledge thereby gained has been preserved unto us by the Lord Himself. He who originally gave the truth now guards it, and the men who received it directly from Him faithfully transmitted it, first to their own generation by word and practice, and then to us by pen, that we might proceed with certainty upon just such an investigation as we now undertake.

I - THE FORERUNNER - THE PREPARATION

The Herald of the Christ

The importance of baptism could not be more strongly emphasised to us than by the discovery we make upon opening the pages of the four Gospels. Before we have read very far into each of them, we are introduced by all four to the person of John the Baptist, who, they say, was sent from God to Israel as the official herald and forerunner of Jesus Christ. In the course of his ministry John authoritatively announced the imminent coming of Christ, who, he said, was above him, and was to be preferred before him.

Having stated this, he officially presented the Lord Jesus to Israel, saying clearly that this was the main reason for his baptism, and making plain that all other things accomplished by it only had any value as they were related to this. John was a Spirit-filled man, a great saint, a burning and a shining light and a mighty preacher. He came

to Israel in the spirit and power of Elijah to fulfil scripture with a ministry of conversion to the Christ whom they did not know.

Baptism an Innovation

John's call to repentance and baptism in water unto the remission of sins was an innovation indeed to them, for they were a people who had been reared in the Mosaic tradition of bloodshed and sacrifice for the remission of sins. In the synagogues they left behind them, the book of the law was still being read, prayers spoken and psalms sung with time-honoured regularity of religious obedience, but all to no avail apparently, for the people were flocking in multitudes to hear and obey the new messenger with the new message. Although they did not know it they were witnessing the death of an era; God was ushering in a new age wherein the old order should pass away for ever. He it was who sent John into the borders of the desert to commence the operation by crying out in the wilderness that all men should come to his baptism of repentance and be ready to meet their God.

Baptism Extra-legal

Perhaps it was not strange to them that they needed to repent, but it was certainly new that they needed to be baptised, for the law said nothing about it. Nowhere was it recorded that God had spoken by any former prophet, saying that men should be baptised for the remission of sins. At the very beginning of their national history, when Moses had meticulously recorded what he had received from God concerning atonement and forgiveness of sins, he had said nothing about a baptism such as this that John was talking about. It was definitely extra-legal.

This man's ministry and method were unmentioned, unprecedented and unpredicted in the whole of scripture. Even in the prophetic passage which John quoted as his authority for this ministry there is neither direct reference nor indirect hint of this new method, nor anything that could be quoted to his inquisitors as justification for it. Why then this baptism which he so confidently ministered?

Baptism God's New Method

Baptism? Whence came it? Is it of heaven or of men? Well might Jesus later pose the question and challenge the Pharisees, for baptism is absolutely vital — there is no mistaking the implication of it. It is either right or wrong. The Lord Jesus knew, as only He could, that John was right. Baptism is of heaven, and although it was an entirely new departure, it was not entirely un-foreshadowed. John was sent from God to innovate among men on earth a method which has never since been erased from the practice of Christian religion. By his watery baptism, John was introducing into the world and typifying unto men the method, though not the means, by which God intended later to bring many Sons unto His heavenly kingdom and glory.

God begins to Reveal His Eternal Plan

By the Mosaic propitiatory system the Lord Jesus was chiefly set forth as both sacrifice and priest; but differing from His illustrious predecessor Moses, John's ministry unmistakably revealed Jesus to be both Sacrifice and Baptizer. John never led anyone to an altar; he called them to a river, where later He who was the Lamb of God and the Baptizer in the Spirit was to be presented. Whether or not John knew what his actions and preaching would effect among men we do not know, but by his

light we see that baptism has now replaced the practice of that former sacrificial system.

History reveals that by John's day the Mosaic system had already ceased to be anything more than mere ritualism. Behind the Temple veil in Jerusalem there was no Ark of the Covenant, no tables of stone, no Mercy Seat, no blood, no glory, no Holy of Holies, no God. But this was not the only reason why God was making moves to replace that old system. He was revealing the greater and more wondrous fact that the onus which had lain upon people under Moses' law to provide themselves with their own sacrifices for sin was not God's original and eternal purpose for man.

For those who had eyes to see it, He had revealed to Abraham long before Moses' day that He Himself would provide the Lamb. Through John He was giving men a glimpse of the fact that His method for mankind is gracious engulfment in love, which is by floods of Holy Spirit in which to baptise dead men into life, regenerating their spirits and saving their souls. Of necessity God had imposed upon His people the historic sacrificial system, but He did so reluctantly and then only until the time when according to His original purpose, the symbols should be swept away in the reformation brought in by His Son.

Behold the Lamb of God

By introducing John's baptism, God was announcing to that generation the imminent dissolution of the Mosaic doctrine of man's personal sacrifice for personal sin. He was saying that He was going to do it all Himself, indeed had already accepted the responsibility for it — 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world'. By analysis John is found to be saying, 'all that you need to produce is fruit meet for repentance. Don't bring anything else; let me do the rest, come and let me baptise you'. He is also found saying of Jesus, 'He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and fire; let Him do that'.

By God's ordination and commandment through John, baptism as a method as well as a practice had been introduced to men. Having been divinely instituted, water baptism has come to stay as the official picture of what takes place in the real baptism it represents. It is a visual aid to the understanding of the Baptism in the Spirit, which is the Lord's method of giving eternal life to men and women throughout this era. Established first as a type under John by water during the last days of the passing Covenant, baptism was finally established in reality under Jesus by the Spirit on the first day of the New Covenant, namely the day of Pentecost. The new superseded the old.

That taketh away the Sin of the World

Examining the opening chapters of the Gospels more closely, we discover the amazing fact that John Baptist only once mentioned the Lord Jesus in connection with sin — 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world'. It is nothing less than astonishing and completely beyond expectation to the devout mind that such an immeasurably important event as Calvary should be referred to by God's official messenger but once. To people reared in fundamental evangelical traditions it is hardly acceptable that this outstanding herald from God should come with an authentic message and only once speak of the focal point of redemption, and in such

an oblique manner too! However it is true, and the significance of this fact is quite unmistakable to those who have a heart to recognise all that is implied thereby.

Later the apostolic authors were to write comparatively voluminously about this, but John Baptist hardly mentions it. With the simplicity of inspired brevity he includes in one masterly sentence the enormity of the vast sacrificial work to which his Lord was committed. This was not due to any slip on John's part, nor because he thought it was unimportant; the omission was quite deliberate; it was all part of the revelation of God's great plan to shift the responsibility of sin-offering and sacrifice from man to Himself.

In Jesus Christ, by one deliberate act, God fully comprehended and finished all His past demands upon men. He wound up and abolished for ever the partial system He had formerly instituted, because it involved unending offerings, each incomplete and of itself quite unable to take away sin. At the same time, however, men had to be acquainted with all the facts concerning the new response which was expected of them in view of God's grace in absolving them from their former responsibility.

So it is that following Calvary the complete and repetitive insistence of the majority of the New Testament writers is about baptism and life in the Spirit to be accomplished in men by God upon their repentance and faith. (As an illustration and example of this, note Peter's response to his enquirers' question on the day of Pentecost.)

He shall Baptise You with the Holy Ghost

Three other facts ought to be noted here also: (1) three of the four Gospel writers, when speaking of John Baptist, made no reference to the statement by him [mentioned on the previous page]; (2) they did not in any other way, at that time, refer to the Lord's death on the cross; (3) all four of them published the fact that the Baptist proclaimed Jesus Christ as the Baptizer in the Spirit. There must be some special reason for this; seeing that the Holy Ghost is the inspirer of these great truths of scripture, this ratio of three to one points a lesson that we do ill to neglect.

Pursuing our examination further, it emerges that although John commanded his hearers to come to himself and his baptism for forgiveness, he never once gave anyone directions to go to Christ for it. It seemed natural common sense to him that Jesus was going to do a far vaster thing than forgive people. He had come to take away the sin of the world; to remove it utterly. Jesus, John said, was going to thoroughly purge His floor and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. That is a most challenging and important fact which should be of great significance to us all. Coupled with that, he never once spoke directly of the cross, or mentioned the blood, or salvation or justification, or the many other similar connected doctrines, but referred almost exclusively to the baptism that Jesus Would administer to men.

A Burning and a Shining Light

In order to properly understand all this, we must grasp the fact that John was the last of a great line of Old Testament prophets who saw and spoke only in terms of the Kingdom of Heaven — the reign of God on earth — which he said was at hand. Although he prophesied of the Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God, and foreshadowed the

introduction of the great age of grace, he never saw or understood the cross; he was the herald of the King, His forerunner and friend.

Being filled with the Spirit, John burned and shone in the cold dark to warm men and light them into the highway he was commissioned to prepare for the coming of the Son of God. It was a task of great magnitude, but he faithfully accomplished it. Immersing his converts in the tangible element of water, John symbolised to them what the King should later do to their spirits in the eternal Spirit of God.

The Ultimate Baptism

Although, like those of old, men may not recognise this, it is absolutely necessary that Jesus should baptise everyone in the Holy Ghost. Holy Spirit is that basic intangible elemental Spirit in which the eternal life of Jesus Christ still subsists. John's baptism came to pass; Jesus' baptism has come to stay throughout this entire age as being from heaven and not of man. It is the real baptism, being in Spirit and not water. It is eternal, being of spirits and not of bodies. It is actual and not symbolic, because it is administered by Christ and not by man. Such powerful insistence as this must surely be regarded among us as of major importance.

He must Increase

John was sent deliberately by God as no-one else before him. In many respects none of those who were regarded as the great men of the Patriarchal or Israelitish eras was as great as he. On the human side he was cousin to the Lord Jesus and was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. Though he represented the law and the prophets, in his ministry he superseded both it and them — and their combined messages.

John was the first man sent to preach the Kingdom of Heaven and officially inaugurate baptism among men. He embodied the spirit and power of Elijah and was the forerunner of the Christ, in which capacity he came with a ministry of Annunciation, Preparation and Restoration. These three emphases run concurrently throughout his entire ministry, which was heraldic in nature and symbolic in demonstration. Baptism was the focal point, the all-important feature; everything led up to, centred around and depended upon BAPTISM. By baptism:

- (1) the annunciation was made: 'This is my beloved Son', 'This is the Son of God';
- (2) the preparation was effected: 'I baptise you', 'He shall baptise you';
- (3) Restoration was demonstrated: 'I with water', 'He with the Holy Ghost and fire'.

As it was in the Beginning

All is to be as it was in the beginning. The original intentions of God have never been relinquished by Him, and through this man in his day the Lord sought to prepare mankind for the One who would restore all to His eternal purposes and first ways. In accordance with this, when giving their records of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, three of the Gospel writers go right back in time, authenticating their writings by rooting their accounts in history. Mark goes back as far as the Prophets; Matthew goes further back to the Patriarchs; Luke goes still further back to Adam, the first man; but in writing his account of the Son of God, John goes back furthest of the four — to God, the very beginning of all.

It is not surprising then that in this last Gospel, John furnishes us with the one statement from John Baptist which in any way connects Jesus Christ with sacrifice, 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world'. In doing this he takes us right back beyond earth time to that which was in the beginning with God. The phrase 'in the beginning' brings us into mystery. In it the eternity of unmeasured and immeasurable events meets the measured and measurable succession of time. We do not know when, neither can we know how nor where, we only know that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. It is as though on one hand time had not been, for here on the threshold of history we are introduced to God and the Lamb. Yet, as though all history was concluded, anticipating all time, the Lamb was slain.

Then again, reading Genesis, we see that right there in the beginning when He was proceeding to bring forth creation God started with water. Everything that God made on this planet would have had no being except He had first brought forth the earth out of the waters. The deep waters, it seems, were original and fundamental to all. The earth was brought forth, came into light and became recognisably known only as emerging from a mighty baptism — it certainly did not break off the sun.

Pondering this, we should have no difficulty in seeing and accepting the fact that John Baptist was sent of God to bring to our notice and acceptance the twin eternal principles upon which God founded both the material earth and the spiritual Kingdom of Heaven, namely the Lamb and the Baptism. Everything of spiritual import and meaning, whether it be of sin and sacrifice or animal blood and altar or temple and service, all that has of necessity intervened at God's direct command or consent from the beginning of the world was bridged by John in his day. By launching his ministry out in the formless void of the wilderness, John brought everything back to 'as it was in the beginning' ; his was a ministry of Restoration; not now lambs, blood, sacrifices, atonements, Tabernacle, Temple, Law — but Baptism.

Out of the Water and in the Water

Peter, speaking in his second epistle of the original creation, says, 'the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of the water and in the water'. That is how it was in the beginning and that is just where God began again. John Baptist presents Jesus to us, standing out of the water and in the water under the open heavens on the edge of the wilderness, with God's voice ringing out, 'this is my beloved Son'. And crowning all, he tells us that he also beheld the Spirit of God descending in bodily shape like a dove, not now as in the beginning to move upon the face of the water, but specifically to rest upon Him. In Genesis the earth is seen to be God's new creation; now it is Jesus who is revealed from heaven as the true new creation. Here then is the great new demonstration of God's determination to make all men return to and begin at the beginning; baptism, not sacrifice, is the way for men now.

All was but preparation however, for John could not move in true spiritual elements; he only ministered in the figures of the true. One of the reasons for the descent of the dove after the baptism was to show that John could not baptise in the Spirit. He could only use water; the Spirit was not at his disposal, so He came down afterwards; it was very distinctly noticeable. John was but a man, so he could only symbolise; he was not God who moves in realities.

By Water and the Spirit

Let us take note that in the beginning when God created the heaven and the earth there was no such thing as 'baptism' in water first, to be followed later by a second experience of Baptism in Spirit — the whole happened synchronously. One word was spoken, one will expressed, one power was demonstrated with one result; water and Spirit were combined in one act of baptism.

Moses tells us that when God spoke His creative word, the Spirit of God was already moving (fluttering, brooding) upon the face of the water. It was utterly impossible for the earth to appear from out of the water without it also at that exact moment being in the Spirit. We see then that Creation was by water and Spirit. So also, Jesus says, is New Birth. It is plain to behold that as in the beginning that 'new creation' was brought into being by a kind of baptismal generation, so is it also now. In the present, eternal New Creation, all is and can only be by the true baptismal regeneration. Whether it be Birth or New Birth, Creation or New Creation, all is by Baptismal Generation. The outward, material and physical is but the visible demonstration, parable, or picture of the inward, spiritual and real; God Himself has not changed, nor has He changed His method. However, because by the Gospel we are brought out of the old into the New, we speak of God's present work as Baptismal Regeneration. The prefix 're' distinguishes the eternal condition from the temporal, the new birth from the first birth, spiritual life from natural life and the holy from the sinful which all men by first birth inherit.

By Power from on High

Having seen that the original creation came up from the deeps beneath the surface of the water, let us also notice just as clearly that it only emerged by reason of the spoken word and by power being present by reason of the Person of the Spirit hovering over the waters. Like the dawning of original light, the realisation comes to us that the birth/ creation/ generation of the earth was from above; it was as surely by power from on high as was the conception of Jesus by Mary and the birth of the Church at Pentecost. Just as truly as Jesus' earthly generation was by power from on high, so also the new birth for men is from above by the Baptism in the Spirit which endues with power from on high. All is accomplished by the Baptism.

Baptism — Totality

We are given to understand that the word 'baptism' means to dip or to immerse. This being so, it is at once seen that strictly speaking the original creation did not come into being by an act of baptism as we now know it, for it was not dipped or immersed in water as though from above, as being first without and/or above it. Instead God reveals that He brought forth dry land from the waters. He chose to do it this way. The generation of the world was from and through water, and it was accomplished by the Spirit responding to the Word, corresponding and conforming all to it. That was how God did it in material, natural generation. In the same way also re-generation is associated with baptism, which exercise, though it carries the thought of dipping, is only accomplished by immersion into, with a view to remaining and establishing in.

Thus the combination of all the ideas relevant to the whole truth is seen to be very felicitous and most instructive. In the act of baptism the Lord is enforcing His original design; man must go back again to eternal realities and unchanging principles. He must go down in, be dipped into, totally immersed (who would begrudge totality at this point?), he must remain and be in the Spirit, thereby becoming wholly new. Thus

the prefix 're' is grammatically, logically, scientifically, ethically and spiritually right, for by its use generation becomes re-generation, whereby man is powerfully realigned with God's eternal principles and powers.

An Altogether New Creation

Man, the end-product of God's original creation and His crowning glory fell from the condition in which God created him and thereby forfeited the position he held. Almost immediately from the beginning he broke with the God-given means and principles of life, Being now fallen and quite ignorant of what he is doing, he readily improvises means of his own creating, or else accepts substitutes for reality which are totally inadequate for his needs. But God in His eternal love has given us grace to return to the original truth. By the operation of those same unchanging and eternal powers, man is brought back into line with God and His principles of working in the original generation/creation.

As we know, when being baptised by man a person is baptised into the water as from without and/or above the water and rises from it again. By the whole symbolism it is as though he comes up then a new creation. This is because by Christ's baptism, of which water baptism is a picture, he has been brought up into the Spirit a new-born spirit, and this being so, everything is as it was in the beginning. For this is how it was also with Adam — he was both created and born. His body was formed and shaped from dust, but he himself was created a living soul as (a) spirit was engendered within that earth by the direct inspiration of spirit into dust by God; the man Adam was begotten.

Baptism the Method of the Kingdom

John had to say, 'I baptise with water; He shall baptise with the Holy Ghost'. Saying so, he pronounced the reason for his departure; he had to go in order to give place to his better. 'I, (who stand for water baptism) must decrease; He (who stands for Spirit Baptism) must increase, said John. 'What do you John?' 'I baptise with water and depart'. 'What do You Jesus?' 'I abide and baptise with the Spirit'. That is the method of the man with the message of the Kingdom — BAPTISM.

Note:

By this appraisal of biblical truth we discover many things, one of which is that the whole idea of sprinkling for baptism is wrong, for it has no philosophical foundation in the scriptural revelation of the creative methods of God. This being so, the practice of sprinkling, whether it be applied to infant or adult, must also surely be wrong.

II - THIS IS MY BELOVED SON — THE PRESENTATION

The ANOINTING

The Baptist's mission to Israel was twofold: (1) to prepare the way of the Lord, (2) to present the Lord. It was primarily for the fulfilment of the second part of His forerunner's ministry that Jesus came to Jordan. So there in the river Jesus was presented to Israel and it is recorded that standing in the watery element as being true substance within it, He was seen by John to receive the Holy Ghost under the Father's approving eye.

It is perfectly reasonable to assume that in keeping with all modern practice of water baptism the persons John baptised went into and out of the river, having been immersed by him in one swift operation. But when Jesus was baptised He went into the water for immersion, and rising stood there praying, waiting for His anointing and identification. One of the reasons for this was that the abiding substance of baptism might be revealed.

Fulfilling all Righteousness

When the Lord Jesus went down into Jordan and came out again, He did so with the full intention of setting forth entirely new and much fuller truth than that which had hitherto been known. In doing so He utterly fulfilled all righteousness and became the perfect example for us. This accomplished, He came up out of the waters as though He was the one for whom all righteousness had been fulfilled. In His own marvellous way He combined two opposites, for rising from Jordan He stood up as it were from death as though He was a Spirit-baptized regenerate. In doing so He symbolically vested both the act and the waters of baptism with age-abiding newness of meaning; He added to its symbolism the as yet unrevealed fact of Calvary.

The waters were granted the sacred privilege of representing the Holy Spirit, in whom the fact and power of redemption is now permanently held for us. He came forth from baptism as though He were a crucified, risen man, (having been slain, dead, buried and raised again) born again of the Spirit of God and anointed for service. Baptism symbolised both the tomb of Christ and the womb of God and the issues from them both, none of which can be by water or blood, but only by Spirit Baptism.

Jesus Christ was not actually baptised in the Spirit at Jordan; figuratively as the representative man, He fulfilled all righteousness in a way far beyond the comprehension of even a John Baptist. Figuratively baptised, actually anointed, the Lord sets forth for all men for all time and in all perfection the difference between these, as well as the necessity for both. That which was so delightfully pictured by the Lord at Jordan had to await the coming of the Spirit ere it could be finally adapted to the needs of all men and put to its fullest use in the Kingdom of God.

What Jesus did then was anticipatory, the events He had symbolised had to be enacted in reality; it was all a foreshadowing of what yet had to be established and become the real substance of the type. The Lord had to die and be buried and rise again, and return to heaven. Promises had to be kept, and the Holy Ghost must be shed forth — that could not be until the historic Calvary should be permanently established in the spiritual world as age-abiding reality.

Into His Name

So far as was possible at that time, John had succeeded in presenting Jesus, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, in baptism; more than he knew, he had presented the triune God and His method; the reality of his mission had in measure been achieved. John Baptist had used water only for the fulfilment of his baptism, and when he had baptised people his basic ministry was completed by that act. He baptised in Jordan only; he just baptised unto remission of sins, that is all. He did not baptise in his own name; he did not baptise in any name, he certainly did not baptise in Jesus' name, for confessedly he did not know Him. But Christian baptism is

ministered in Jesus' name, which is to say that, whereas John baptised into water, the apostles baptised into Jesus' name.

To understand this let us in thought substitute the Holy Ghost for Jordan and Jesus standing in the Spirit as He did in Jordan and the picture becomes clear. This all means that people are really to be baptised into a bodily person, for that is the sole common-sense and comprehensive reason for baptising them in and into the name of that person. Had we eyes to see it, nothing could have been more clearly shown us by God than what took place at Jordan under John.

The Transition

At this point we can scarcely do better than seek to arrive at a correct understanding of the emphatic words spoken so clearly by the Lord Jesus and recorded in Matthew 28:19,20. Until that moment the apostles had only baptised people in the name of the Lord Jesus because that is all they had been able to do. That is to say, when the apostles had gone out preaching and had converted men and women to discipleship of Jesus, they had naturally enough baptised them in Jesus' name. We are told in John 4: 1,2 that although Jesus made and baptised more disciples than John, 'Jesus Himself baptised not, but His disciples'.

No reasonable conclusion may be drawn from these words other than that the disciples baptised in Jesus' name, that is in His presence, and in His stead with His approval, and undoubtedly at His command. When later those same men were sent out to preach, they did so in a heraldic capacity in much the same manner as John before them had done. At that time they, as he, had only limited knowledge, for they did not know the full gospel, and could therefore only preach a limited evangel according to their limited revelation. They were the chosen apostles of the Lord, but at that time Jesus Himself was 'straitened', so He said; consequently neither He nor they could preach the gospel as it is now preached.

As far as baptism is concerned, the Lord stepped in and took over from John Baptist, deliberately continuing the ministry which the prophet received from heaven. Starting where John left off, the Lord took up and enlarged upon his message, administering water baptism for the remission of sins, but remaining significantly quiet about Baptism in the Spirit.

He of Whom John Spoke

From that time onward, John's baptising ministry was gradually phased out until it ceased altogether, while Jesus, having retained and incorporated it into His ministry, went on to fulfil it. Later He changed and enlarged it in many ways too numerous to mention now. But this He could not fully do until He underwent His own personal baptism into death, for although this was not in the least understood by those who were partakers of John's baptism, it is most certainly implied by it, being as it were just below the surface of the water. It is therefore plainly to be seen that the vast and most important part of Jesus' ministry was not revealed while He was as yet standing on the earth, but awaited His own personally administered baptism into death and consequent resurrection.

During Jesus' earthly life, water baptism was the only one known and practised because the real baptism was not then known, nor could be. It is for this reason He

handed over water baptism to His disciples. It was not only policy that He did so, it was necessary also if He did not wish to confuse people. John had said of Jesus, 'He who cometh after me is the Christ, the Son of God, He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and fire'. Jesus therefore did not allow people any ground to imagine that water baptism, whether practised at that time by Himself or administered by His disciples in His name, was in some mysterious way to be construed or mystically substituted for the greater, real Baptism. Water baptism as such is not Jesus' baptism; (His Baptism cannot be administered by man, nor in that element, but by Himself alone) being administered by water, it can safely be left to men.

Into the Name — I AM

Returning to Jesus' last command to His disciples in Matthew 28, it ought to be noted that He neither told them then, nor has told anyone since to say anything during the course of baptism. He did not supply us with a baptismal formula, as though He was teaching the science of baptism; He told us to do it, that is all, and in doing so, to administer it with the purpose of baptising people 'into the name of' the triune God, It is therefore quite in order for someone who is totally dumb to baptise someone who is stone deaf into that name. The repetition of words is not the important point of the matter; providing Jesus is there, such a baptism would be quite as valid as any other.

What the Lord actually said in Matthew 28 was 'Go ye therefore and make disciples of every nation, baptising them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost'. It is important to note that He did not say 'into the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost', as though to imply that the three should be grouped together in one personal name, for that is not the same thing, To mistakenly think that both forms of expression mean the same thing is to lay the foundation of the subtle error which has now become so prevalent among men. According to all known rules of grammar, the words the Lord spoke were really a shortened form of 'baptising them into the name of the Father and into the name of the Son and into the name of the Holy Ghost', which is a very different and perfectly consistent thing. Further, He did not say 'baptising them into the names of etc.', as though He commanded that all of the many names which each person of the Trinity bears must be stated. That would be altogether too great a task.

There is a name which each person of the blessed Trinity bears in His own right, whether He be the Father or the Son or the Holy Ghost; each one jointly shares this name with the others. Seeing this is so, without doubt it is into this name that all must be baptised. This simple yet profound name is stated quite clearly in verse 20, 'I AM with you always, even unto the consummation of the age'. The name and person into which all must be baptised is 'I AM'; it is the one name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Milleniums before Matthew wrote his Gospel, God had said that He would be known by this name to every generation. It is therefore exactly right to baptise into that name and not into the name of any one person. I AM is the first expression of self-recognition, the eternal consciousness of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. This age is the age of generation into I AM by I AM for I AM in I AM, that is God.

In Lieu of Jesus

In the closing days of the age preceding this present one, that is following John's baptism, people were baptised in the name of Jesus only, because then the disciples

did not know the Father and the Holy Ghost. But during this age of greater revelation, people must be baptised into the name of the triune God; Jesus is but one person of the triune Being of God. Therefore to baptise people in the name of Jesus only, with or without the deliberate intention of excluding the Father and the Holy Ghost, is reprehensible to say the least. If the omission is deliberate it is sin. If it is unintentional or has been practised without full knowledge, it is a mistake which should be rectified. If on the other hand it has been done with full intention to include the Father and the Holy Ghost, then the whole practice is meaningless, for why exclude all reference to them if they are meant to be included? And if it all means the same, why are the Father and the Holy Ghost so dishonoured?

The whole thing has become farcical if not done with sincere intention. What it could be made to mean at the most is unthinkable. 'In the name of Jesus' only is pre-Calvary and pre-Pentecost; it was the way people were baptised during the period between the decline of John's baptism and the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; an interim period only; it was right then, it is wrong now. Since Pentecost, the administrant, when baptising, is to be understood as doing the work in lieu of the Lord, that is, as though it were the Lord Himself doing it. That is the true purpose of and reason for doing it in Jesus' name.

In Christ's Stead

For a proper grasp of the true import and great responsibility of using the phrase 'in Jesus' name', we must deeply understand and enter into the meaning of 2 Corinthians 5.20 — 'we ... in Christ's stead'. When a man says, 'in Jesus' name', he must mean that he is himself there 'in Jesus' stead'. This is the only thing that makes sense of 'in Jesus' name'. If it be insisted, as it may be upon certain grounds, that it should be 'into Jesus' name', the above is still true; for only Jesus Himself can baptise into Himself. Only if he is in Jesus' name can anyone claim to be baptising into Jesus' name, and for this he must stand upon Jesus' name as his authority to do so. He must realise and seriously comprehend that phraseology aside, or even if he uses no words at all, he always baptises as Jesus into Christ, in the Spirit unto the Father. The whole trinity is always involved in any true baptism; they engage and combine to bring men by the Son in the Spirit unto the Father.

III - THE TESTIMONY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS CONCERNING WATER BAPTISM

With all this in mind, we will search the Acts of the Apostles in order to find out how those original apostles and their contemporaries applied the command of the Lord concerning water baptism, recorded for us by Matthew in 28:19, and by Mark in 16:15. We will do this especially looking in the context for those occasions when the bestowal of the Holy Spirit was in any way connected with the rite they administered. Doing so, we find that there are eight such occasions: Acts 2.38 — Jerusalem; 8,12 — Samaria; 8,38 — the Gaza desert; 9,18 — Damascus; 10.47 — Caesarea; 16.15 & 33 — Philippi; 18.8 — Corinth; 19.5 — Ephesus.

Pursuing our search we discover that upon five of these instances the Holy Ghost is definitely linked in the text with the event taking place. Seeing this is so, and that there is no other inspired source of information, we may expect that upon examination

these scriptures will enable us to arrive at certain conclusions concerning the truth we ought to know about baptism in water and Spirit.

1. The Day of Pentecost — Jerusalem (Acts 2)

The Lord's Baptism

There is no mistaking what Peter meant on the day of Pentecost. When people responded to the gospel, he commanded them to repent and be baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Reading this account of the first administration of water baptism in the Christian era, we discover that although Peter did not plainly say so, he meant that consequent upon their obedience to his command to be baptised and as a direct result of it, they could expect to receive the Holy Ghost. Whether some received the Spirit before water baptism or none received until afterwards is not clear, nor at this point does it much matter. What Peter is doing here is moving out into the glory of the New Covenant and boldly making promises in a way not possible before; he is pioneering.

Excluding the Lord Jesus Christ, not a man in Israel, including Peter himself, received the Holy Spirit at Jordan; John had made no such promise as Peter was then making. Reception of the Holy Ghost was not made dependent upon being baptised then, and neither did the apostle make it so in his day. Neither John Baptist nor Christ nor any of the apostles made water baptism the condition for reception of the Spirit. Water baptism is always to be found in scripture as a response and confession of faith, as here, never as a means to the end of Spirit Baptism. Suffice it for us to observe that Peter did not definitely say 'Repent ... be baptised ... in order that ye may receive'. The cardinal fact that emerges is that although this baptism incorporated into it, all the blessing which was available by John's baptism, namely remission of sins, it certainly is not John's baptism.

Figure of the True

When the three thousand were baptised on the day of Pentecost, they were baptised with Jesus Christ's baptism. Though invisible, He was there baptising together with His apostles just as He had been on earth earlier. The difference lay in the fact that during that time He had not baptised; they alone had baptised and had done so in His name exclusively. There is no question of morality involved here. It was neither morally, ethically nor spiritually wrong for Jesus to allow baptism exclusively in His name at that time. He said that all His were the Father's and that His Father had given them to Him.

Wisdom and love restrained God from thrusting upon men things they could not possibly understand. Jesus kept the men Father gave Him during His earthly life, then at the end handed them over to His Father so that they should be Father's responsibility while He underwent death. In resurrection the Lord came again to His own and reformed the idea of baptism, placing it in its eternal context, elevating the water to be a visible picture of the invisible Spirit in which people were being baptised into His own personal baptism. Before Calvary this was entirely unknown and could only at best be implied (and perhaps also in a measure imputed) but now it is a picture of an actual experience. Peter and those who we may reasonably assume, even though we cannot be sure, were co-opted with him into the vast operation of

baptising all those people, knew that their own action was the least part of the transaction then taking place.

A New Name

Baptism now is really the occasion when the person being baptised is renamed. This is so, because at that time, if rightly administered, he or she has by God's intention been changed into another person by being baptised into Jesus Christ via His death and resurrection. Now such a thing could only be possible and hold any real meaning upon the condition that the person into whom the other is being baptised is truly there within that name. It is not sufficient even though it be devoutly held, that in an official sense the administrant be there in Jesus' name, that is in His stead, representing Him 'in absentia' only; the Lord Himself must be present also, or else the baptiser is only being officious; he is baptising in vain as well as in vanity.

In the Holy Ghost

Now it was for this reason that the Lord had to ensure unto men that the Father would send the Holy Ghost in Jesus' name. Ever since procuring this gift for men, the person of the Holy Ghost has been and is in (within) the name of Jesus. He has come in that name and will not do anything except in that name. Therefore when a person is baptised in the name of Jesus, that person is baptised in the Holy Ghost who has come from heaven and is now here in Jesus' name. This being so, any person being baptised will be baptised into Jesus, because he has been immersed in(to) the Spirit of the Life in (of) Christ Jesus, He will at that time also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and as a direct consequence will immediately be regenerate. This then is what God intends us to understand by the ordinance being administered in Jesus' name.

The True Element

As has been previously said, Peter upon this occasion really told them to ... be baptised upon the name of Jesus, that is he was deliberately stating the ground or authority for baptism, which is into Jesus' person and into Jesus Christ's body. But even so, it must be thoroughly understood that whatever form of words is used, or if none are used at all, the whole is implied and intended. Therefore to bandy with words or forms of expression is of no moment. Baptism must be ministered: (1) in His stead, so that it shall be as though He Himself personally is the person officiating in the administration: (2) as into the Holy Spirit, who is now come in the name of Jesus (to be the element instead of water): (3) through Jesus' death and resurrection as it now is in the Spirit, into (unto, with a view to) His person and self, that is His nature and life and body.

All must be ministered with full understanding that what is being done is being done by the Lord Jesus, who is Himself present, that by this means He should add to His Church by baptising in the Spirit into Himself, The entirety therefore is in Jesus' name; they did it as and unto the Lord Jesus Christ in the same way some of them had done whilst the Lord was with them on earth.

From a frank reading of Acts 2, it cannot honestly be doubted that with deliberate intention Peter both openly stated and also seriously implied to them all that they were to equate the gift of the Holy Ghost with the Baptism in and of that same Spirit. To believe or assert otherwise is specious pleading and makes nonsense of the context.

More than that, it destroys truth and puts asunder what God has joined together, for the gift and the Baptism are two parts of one whole which was accomplished in one operation.

This is That

Peter quite clearly told the enquirers, 'the promise is unto you', and this promise cannot be any other than that promise which he had mentioned in verse 33, and Jesus had made in chapter 1 verse 5. Upon reception by himself and his companions this promise had found such fulfilment that it produced in them 'this which ye now see and hear'. 'This' phenomenon, so Peter and the Holy Ghost claimed, was also the result of the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy concerning which they had yet earlier said, 'This is That' — verse 16.

Note: It is probably right to assume that because such vast numbers were involved in the operation, Peter co-opted some of his colleagues unto the work of baptising. This is most reasonable, for by the time events had run their course the day was far spent already, so it is therefore highly improbable that Peter and the eleven handled all the 3000 applicants twice, once for baptism in water and once again for Baptism in the Spirit. If the still more improbable position be held that Peter did it all himself, the absurdity of a double handling is at once apparent. However, in the absence of literal proof it is better not to be dogmatic about it, but simply allow the improbability of double handling, acknowledging meanwhile that it is only tradition which prevents men from believing the possibility of water and Spirit baptism being synchronous, the former being the visual aid to the latter.

Signs Shall Follow

It is commonly considered among Bible teachers that Mark wrote his Gospel at Peter's dictation, so we will examine a statement made by him in chapter 16 verse 16. There is some degree of uncertainty and may be even some controversy about what the Lord intended us to understand by His use of the word 'baptised' here. Although the text does not certainly say so, except water baptism be given unwarrantable powers, reason would have it that the Lord who is Reason can only be meaning Baptism in Spirit, whereas unbelievers have been baptised in water. Certain it is that the signs and ministry which follow believing, spoken of in verses 17-20, do not follow from mere water baptism. The only baptism from which signs follow is Jesus' baptism in the Spirit. Therefore since the Lord only spoke of one baptism, and only one is referred to in verse 16, it is a possible deduction and almost certainly follows that water baptism and Spirit Baptism were regarded by Him and the apostles as synchronous. No-one is unsaved because they are not baptised in water, but no-one is born again unless baptised in Spirit.

There is One Baptism

There can be no doubt that the baptism which Peter commanded unto the people on the day of Pentecost was in water. And since there is no further reference to, or use of the phrase 'the Baptism in the Spirit' (as a result of which all the apostles were fairly agog, glowing and flowing and bursting with Life), it can fairly be assumed that all the new converts were baptised in the Spirit when they were baptised in water. Certain it is that this is exactly what Peter meant to convey to them when he said, 'ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost'.

This concept of truth is entirely consistent with the scripture in 1 Corinthians 10, wherein we are told that the Children of Israel were all baptised unto Moses. This took place in one baptism in the cloud and in the sea. The whole stated purpose behind the commandment to be baptised was that they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. The very way in which Peter phrased his instructions leaves little possible doubt that Peter intended and expected them to be baptised in the Spirit and who can deny that it happened synchronously?

The Promise is unto YOU

What Peter had said was that he and those with him were in the present and manifest experience of that which Joel the prophet had spoken, God the Father had promised, and Jesus the Lord Christ had shed forth. The Holy Ghost had come as they could see and hear. Those who responded with 'men and brethren, what shall we do?' plainly expected an experience comparable with that which they witnessed, didn't they? The man speaking to them was claiming to be indwelt by the Holy Ghost who had inspired the utterance they had heard, and he was obviously under some great power other than his own.

They firmly believed their scriptures to be inspired of God, and here was a man interpreting them to their hearts as no-one else had ever done. He said that Joel's prophetic promises were being fulfilled in himself and his companions; but these were all millennial, weren't they? Or so they had been taught. But this Jesus whom they had crucified was the Messiah, they heard Peter say, and He had been raised up from the dead to receive the promise of the Father and shed forth this, and this was that of which Joel had spoken. This being so, they wanted it. So when the apostle said that they would receive the promise of Jesus' Father who had faithfully kept His word to Jesus that He would raise Him from the dead, they believed in that kind of God; consequently they expected to receive all they saw and heard. If what they witnessed was the result of receiving the promise, and that same promise was unto them, then nothing short of an identical experience could possibly satisfy them.

The True Baptism

There is no reason to doubt that they received what they expected. Anything short of that would have seemed to them an imposture — a miserable deception — and indeed they would have been justified in thinking this, for from their history they knew that God had always proved His integrity by fulfilling His promises. Faithfulness is God's righteousness. He loves to fulfil His word bountifully in a manner which is in keeping with His own fullness, so when conditions are right He just does it.

Unless Peter's personal experience, prophetic ministry and public exhortation on the day of Pentecost were wilfully misleading, and/or woefully inadequate, he himself knew that he was instructing men unto the one and only true Baptism in the Spirit. No present day minister of the New Testament speaking from Acts 2, and making reference to receiving the promise of the Holy Ghost, would so grossly betray the trust of the men and women to whom he may be speaking as to suggest or mean anything other than that people should be baptised with the Holy Ghost.

Ye Shall Receive

Although we know that on the day of Pentecost about 3120 people were baptised in the Spirit, only in the experience of the 3000 who were added to the original 120 is the correct relationship between water and Spirit properly set forth. John records in his Gospel that Jesus says we must be born from on high of water and the Spirit. This is admirably demonstrated to us by the happenings on that day, for the 3000 were baptised in water and the Holy Ghost. If a period of time elapsed between immersion in water and the reception of the Spirit, it was so minimal that the point can only be raised as an objectionable quibble. In any case water is but the symbol of the Spirit; thereby they were added to the Church — all became one, for the baptism is one, only one.

That in order of thought and analysis of truth a logical procession may be discoverable in the foregoing does not mean that a series of disjointed steps or widely separated events is implied by God. It should never be preached as though by spiritual law He intended it to be so in personal experience. In fact it cannot be so; all is synchronous. It ought also to be noticed that no such word as 'afterwards' occurs in the text, neither is there a hint of any kindred idea as though Peter intended them to understand that some length of time would or should properly intervene between water and Spirit baptism — 'be baptised and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost'. The wording implies one operation.

Into Newness of Life

The age of the Baptism commenced dramatically on the day of Pentecost, with Jesus baptising the 120 in the Spirit. Each of these had been previously baptised in water, but not having been baptised in Spirit were not born again. Their water baptism had been an individual experience. Almost certainly it had been administered to each at different times, but on the day of Pentecost by one act in one moment of time they were collectively baptised into and through the Lord's death into newness of life and were born from above. When they had been previously baptised in water, all they were taught to expect was forgiveness or the remission of sins, and that is all they received. But when they immersed the 3000, baptism had changed its meaning and use, and the apostles knew it. Calvary, because of which the Old Testament sacrificial system, as well as baptism, had been ordained, was now history.

Blood sacrifices and Temple worship were abolished by what took place at the cross, but not baptism. Baptism had come to remain, for its symbolism speaks of so much more than the death of birds and beasts could possibly portray. So because of its serious weaknesses and limitations, the Old Testament had to be done away; but because baptism shows forth death, burial, resurrection and life in the Spirit, it may properly remain.

How right God is in all He does. What God wrought in Christ was established by Christ in the Spirit, and because all was wrought in Him, into Him must all be baptised who would know life and function in the body of Christ. Pentecost is as obviously vital to Calvary as the Holy Ghost is to Christ. The things of Christ's person can only be known by immersion into Him and then in the Spirit. So on the day of Pentecost the new Church era dawned as men and women were baptised in the Holy Spirit out-poured from on high. In one great comprehensive work of God, by total inward immersion in the Spirit they were both given and filled with the Spirit and they visibly and audibly demonstrated that fact.

2. Samaria — Acts 8.

Passing to the next occasion when baptism is mentioned in scripture following chapter 2, we find that through Philip's preaching in Samaria, men and women responded there to the word of God, and came into great blessing. He preached the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ to such effect that God honoured and sealed the word with miraculous signs; the result was that many believed and received the word and were also baptised in water. But although this was so, and great joy abounded in many hearts, the greatest blessing of the gospel was not yet theirs, for they had not received the Holy Ghost.

A Limited Gospel

The Samaritan believers were in a peculiar state at that time. Their position was not greatly unlike that of many to whom perhaps this same Philip had preached with like results whilst the Lord Jesus was yet on earth. Referring back to that period, we find that much the same kind of things were happening to people under the limited gospel the apostles and disciples were ministering then.

During those days not very long past people had received and believed the word of God, either from the lips of the Lord Jesus Himself or from the chosen twelve or from the other seventy He later sent forth. Consequently they had entered into the kingdom benefits which were then available to faith. It really made no difference who was preaching; miracles were wrought, demons were cast out, the sick and the diseased and the palsied were healed, people believed, repented and were baptised in water in Jesus' name.

The Holy Ghost was not yet Given

Although the scripture does not say so, it can hardly be doubted that during the Lord's life on earth, all who were then baptised unto Him underwent the rite in Jesus' name. In fact if baptism had been granted to them as apart from the distinguishing name great confusion would have been spread among the people, for they had already been baptised of John. How then could a distinction be noted and difference be made between the two baptisms unless a distinguishing name and authority be introduced? The rite would have become a mere meaningless repetition of no moment, a religious observance practised just for the sake of it.

Undoubtedly upon hearing the new message they had believed the things concerning the Kingdom of Heaven and the name of Jesus Christ and had consequently been blessed, healed, delivered, forgiven and baptised, and all without receiving the Holy Ghost. Therefore, in common with everyone else at that time, including the disciples themselves, although they were believers they were as yet unregenerate.

The reason for this is quite plainly told us in John 7:39 — 'the Holy Ghost was not yet given' (to the Jews). Just as plainly we are informed in Acts 8:15 & 16 that until Peter and John went unto them, the Samaritans had not received the Holy Ghost either, for He had not yet been given to that particular group. Despite the fact that Philip had faithfully proclaimed Christ to them, and they had believed his message and had gone as far as they could in faithful response to what they heard, as yet they were spiritually unborn.

The Keys of the Kingdom

The reason for this is not far to seek. Years before this event, the Lord Jesus in the course of His ministry had, by promise, bestowed on Peter an honour which was to belong to him alone. By reason of this, Peter was given a functional position in the kingdom and gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ which no-one else could fill.

The Lord makes His choices and distributes His gifts among us according to His will, with absolute justice. Everything He does is in love and we must with humility accept that it is quite impossible to alter the decision of our Saviour-King. During His personal appearance and brief reign on earth, all the apostles He sent out did much the same things as each other. Occasionally the Lord would select a group of three from among the chosen twelve, and for reasons then hidden from their understanding, would take these with Him to certain places for purposes He did not always explain. From these three Peter was eventually singled out by the Lord and given a particular ministry; 'thou art Peter', He said, 'I give unto thee the keys of the kingdom', and that was final.

On the day of Pentecost, while fulfilling His promise to send the Holy Ghost to all His disciples, the Lord also kept His personal promise to Peter. That day the apostle received power and authority to use the keys to the Kingdom. From that time forward, to him alone belonged the privilege of opening the Kingdom of God to the whole world of men.

.... and in Samaria

Reading carefully through this book, we find that from the very day the Lord inaugurated the Church, this is exactly what Peter did. Because in him personally was vested this great authority, upon him also lay great responsibility. He alone had been given the keys so he must discharge his duty. With faithfulness he opened the Kingdom of God to the peoples of Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria respectively, and finally also to the Gentile nations.

Therefore, having already been the key man in Jerusalem and Judea, upon hearing of the Samaritans' response, by common consent of the Apostolate, Peter accompanied by John is sent to Samaria that he might be the key man there also. Just because the Holy Ghost had not been poured out upon the Samaritans during Philip's ministry, they must not be denied their blood-bought right to be born from above.

These men had been chosen by God to be the foundation upon which He would build the Church. To them it was anomalous that people should believe and not receive the Spirit, or be dipped in water and not be baptised in Spirit also. Beside this, because the kingdom had not been opened to them, the Samaritan believers were neither in life nor in the Kingdom, and the fault was not theirs; it was simply because Peter, with his initiating ministry had not yet gone there. Therefore, upon hearing of the results of Philip's visit to Samaria, Peter was immediately sent from Jerusalem and promptly went to fulfil his ministry to the Samaritans.

A Permitted Divergence

By this we see how incongruous it was to the apostles that people should believe God's word and be baptised in water, and not at the same time, or during the same period, be baptised in Holy Spirit. We also see that they did not hesitate to set about

rectifying the contradictory situation. This they did lest a permanent breach be made between two things that God has joined together, and irreparable doctrinal harm be done to truth and the Church. Nevertheless we may be thankful that this thing happened so soon in the history of the Church, for through this unintended divergence from God's new pattern, an opportunity is granted us to observe the major difference between water baptism and Baptism in the Spirit.

It is as though by this the Holy Ghost has for our sakes sharply distinguished between things that differ. He is showing us that although the fundamental experience of the Baptism in (with, by) the Holy Spirit is graphically portrayed unto us by the action entailed in baptism in water, it is not to be confused with it. It must not be thought that because a person is baptised in water, he or she is therefore baptised in Spirit. Not ten thousand immersions in water could give a person the Holy Ghost, as though it were then and only then or thereby that a person is or can be baptised in Spirit.

So here the two events are kept distinctly apart, lest that which took place at Jerusalem should cause confusion, and by false emphasis spread error for ever upon this earth where error more readily finds acceptance than truth. What God did at Samaria was for the benefit of the whole Church; perhaps not the least part of His reason for keeping these two things separate then, was for the sake of spiritual clarity.

For our Sakes

In 1 Corinthians 9.7-10, Paul sets out another aspect of the operation of this same principle telling us that what God did of old and caused to be written then, was written for our sakes. It was all historically true and beneficial for those people, but he was quite clear that it was recorded for our benefit also. But besides this there were other factors which, when taken into consideration, may explain why God dealt with the Samaritans in this particular way. We will not here investigate all the scriptural grounds with which we have been supplied, but remark only that there were certain ethnic reasons which provided God with both a righteous ground and good opportunity to break down and set forth in an analytical manner this one Baptism He has instituted for both Jew and Gentile.

The Samaritans were not a pure race, but were a kind of 'in-between' people. Originating from Gentile stock, with decadent Jewish religious and cultural habits superimposed upon them, they were consequently neither Jew nor Gentile, but had developed into quite a different race. The Lord therefore took advantage of the opportunity presented by the situation created by Philip's preaching among them, and used it to teach the Church some very important truth. In doing so He in no way deprived them of fullness of blessing, nor jeopardised their faith; they were brought partially into truth by Philip and fully into it by Peter, and all by God.

Baptism in Holy Spirit is the important thing though, for apart from it, baptism in water in this dispensation has lost its chief meaning. Although other meanings it may still have, if it loses this, its greatest meaning, then all other meanings must ultimately vanish also. If it does not mean the Baptism in the Spirit, then soon it will cease to mean remission of sins and crucifixion with Christ, for these have only been made constant and of permanent value to us by the Christ in the Spirit.

An Insufficient Ministry

From Samaria Philip was directed by the Spirit to go down to Gaza where he ministered to a Gentile. There again we observe something somewhat similar to that which took place earlier at Samaria. From the scripture which the eunuch was reading Philip 'preached unto him Jesus', with the result that the eunuch believed and sought water baptism at a convenient wayside pool. Naming but one condition as his ground for the administration of baptism to the eunuch, Philip immersed him in water, and having done so, was caught away of the Spirit to continue his itinerant ministry of the word elsewhere.

There is no mention of the Holy Spirit in connection with the eunuch at all, although like those who earlier believed on Jesus in Samaria under Philip's preaching, he was filled with joy. There was nothing wrong with Philip; he was obeying God and fulfilling his ministry as directed of the Spirit, but something was missing, for lack of which those to whom he ministered came short of the fullest blessing of God. Philip was not to be blamed for that; God had not given him the keys to the Kingdom. He did his work thoroughly; there was no character deficiency in him; he ministered to the full extent of his gifts and calling within the will of God. But the eunuch was a Gentile, and God's will for the Gentiles as a whole is revealed in chapters 9 & 10. Philip's ministry was insufficient for this, even though his heart was willing to serve God to the utmost of his ability.

Peter was the man chosen and equipped to initially minister the person of the Holy Ghost as a gift to the Gentile world and open the Kingdom to them. The Kingdom is the Lord's and He had ordained it thus, and He abode by His ordination. What the limits of Philip's ministry were, or the extent of the eunuch's experience of grace under it cannot be precisely stated, but in His all-wise, all-loving, all-righteous, all-gracious will the Lord both kept His promise to Peter and fulfilled His purposes for men also.

He came to Caesarea

It is an interesting piece of information that Philip eventually came to Caesarea, the very place chosen by God for the first revelation of what His purposes for the Gentile world really were. It was at Caesarea under Peter's ministry that God chose to open the door of faith to the Gentiles, to which fact Paul, the great apostle of Jesus Christ to all nations, faithfully and lovingly testified (Acts 14:27). So we see again that although the ministry of Philip the evangelist was signally blessed of God, it was nevertheless, at least at times, heraldic in nature, preparatory rather than consummatory.

The Gentiles Also

Upon arrival at Caesarea, Philip found that through the ministry of Peter, the Gentiles had received the Holy Ghost, which provides us with much food for thought. But there was no jealousy among those early men of God; they all knew that a man can receive nothing except it be given him from God. They did not strive about the qualities and differences of ministries, but simply got on with their work according to their calling and measure. They knew that when a man receives a gift from God it does not automatically make him a greater man than he who has not received the identical or even a greater gift.

Gifts are entrustments; they are also guides to and gauges of men's spirit(s), for by their use they greatly test and prove the quality of the man who receives them. Of all the many things given by God to men, none test and reveal him more than do the gifts of the Spirit. They are given to a man together with the office he may hold in the Church, and are his equipment and qualification for his calling. It must therefore be solemnly acknowledged that the establishing and recognition of that office, as well as his effectiveness among men, will depend largely upon the spirit and authority he displays in the employment of the gift(s) he possesses.

Towards the Ultimate Pattern

Whatever Philip's soliloquies or prayers may have been at that time (if we may presume to think that he engaged in one or the other or both) it is vital to a true understanding of his Lord's intentions for the entire age that we recognise the significance of what He did at Caesarea. What happened at Jerusalem and Samaria is not set forth in scripture as the pattern to which we must adhere, or at which we must aim, for neither of those events is to be regarded as the norm.

The most fundamental age-abiding elements of truth are to be found in both, but because the setting of the first was purely Jewish and the second Samaritan, neither constitutes the ideal God-given, age-lasting order for the Baptism. They were partial, purposeful and limited. Quite deliberately God moved in prescribed ways upon those occasions. They only filled a little, even though it was a vital part, of God's universal provisions for men, for Jews and Samaritans only represent a tiny part of the human race. God dealt with them according to His righteousness and wisdom and then moved on to the greater world of the Gentiles. To observe His ways with these we must turn to chapter 10. However, before we examine the Caesarean outpouring, we will pause awhile in chapter 9 to see what happened to Saul of Tarsus when God called and specially commissioned him to be the apostle to the Gentiles.

3. Damascus — Acts 9.

A Prepared Vessel

It is a precious thought that before God opened the door of faith to the whole wide world of men, He selected and started to prepare a man to send through it. Saul's conversion on the Damascus road was accomplished entirely apart from any human agency. In its elements it is an outstanding example of God's ways from the foundation of the world. As in the beginning of creation it was accomplished by the light and word of the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

Reading the story, it becomes clear that although Paul certainly received light and instruction from above at that point, he did not receive sight and life from above until he was baptised in the Holy Ghost through the ministry of Ananias in the city of Damascus some days later. Using these words in a strictly literal sense, he was converted on the Damascus road, but was regenerated three days later in the city. This latter, we observe, took place in a house in a street called Straight, which fact cannot be without some kind of spiritual significance. Certainly it is a straightforward enough fact that he was baptised in Spirit well before he was baptised in water. What great preparations God made in the man when fitting him for his world-wide task.

4. Caesarea — Acts 10.

The True Pattern Emerges

Startlingly enough, upon turning to chapter 10, we find that this is precisely what happened when Peter initially preached (or rather commenced to preach) the gospel to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. Like Paul, their apostle chosen of God before them, all they who gathered to hear the things commanded them of God upon that occasion were baptised in the Holy Ghost some little time before they were baptised in water. According to Peter's later testimony at Jerusalem to the apostles, what took place in Cornelius' household was exactly the same as that which had happened at his and their own baptism in the Spirit at the beginning at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Beside being surprising, this new departure from the original order is also a most absorbingly interesting fact of eternal importance as Peter and his companions well knew.

However, the great point of discovery for us now is that both with the apostle to the Gentiles and the first Gentile believers themselves, the order known to the earlier believers of Jewish and Samaritan origin was changed. Moreover, it was changed in such a way that we can do no other but believe that it was deliberately done by God.

The original practice was begun among the Jews as baptism in water as faith's response to God with a view to receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost (perhaps a synchronous event). This received form and accepted practice was continued among the Samaritans as first baptism in water, to be followed some time later by Baptism in Spirit as a separate experience. But for some reason, which can no more be ignored than it can be denied, this order was reversed among the Gentiles to first Baptism in Spirit, followed by baptism in water. What a significant progression of truth as well as a reversal of order is revealed by these two events.

My Two Witnesses

Students of the Bible have discovered that numbers are used in scripture with special care and mathematical precision. The number two, for instance, bears relationship to witness, so we read that 'in the mouth of two witnesses every word shall be established'. Of old, at least two persons were required as witnesses to an event before anyone's word or allegations became acceptable as proper testimony, or could be established as legal evidence. By this means also a thing is established and bears spiritual authority. As an illustration of this we only need to read Joseph's words in Genesis 41:32 'it is doubled unto Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God and God will shortly bring it to pass'.

We find then that concerning this matter of baptism the scriptures surely reveal a change of order tantamount to a change of method being introduced into the life of the Church by God Himself. It seems that in breaking out of the narrows of Jerusalem and Judea into the largeness of the uttermost parts of the earth, the Lord also broke with much that had already become traditionalism in the earliest days of the new-born Church. It can be neither accident nor coincidence that both the apostle to the Gentiles and all the members of the original Church established under Gentile authority were baptised in Spirit before they were baptised in water.

Be not Entangled Again

Begging the question that may be asked, we observe that by doing this, God was evidently breaking with the limiting traditionalism and doctrine which had already grown up about the practice of water baptism. What He did at Damascus and Caesarea firmly placed it back in its true position, laying the emphasis where it should be laid and putting things into proper perspective. Water baptism had its beginnings and first became established in Judaism under an Old Testament prophet who could not minister the Spirit. This man's practice and limited doctrines had, without any discredit to him, become a precedent among believers and necessarily so, for they were right for the time. Why, even the Lord Jesus Himself followed John's method, for it was of God.

The whole sprang from the fact that during that entire period the Holy Ghost was not available for man, either before or during or following water baptism. Therefore it can readily be grasped that the ideas in human minds governing the understanding and practice of baptism in the Church needed to be rearranged. They certainly needed to be taught of God about it, for among Church leaders the lesser had already become established as a necessary step toward the greater baptism. And this is not entirely surprising, for all those leaders were Jews by nature, with a most ready tendency to become traditionalised in their beliefs. But God would have none of it; He therefore struck out in a definite, if not a contradictory manner to rescue His Church. He would no more have John's baptism than Moses' law or Abraham's circumcision made necessary or obligatory upon His people.

5. Ephesus — Acts 19.

Did Ye Receive the Holy Ghost?

The last reference of all to the Holy Spirit in connection with baptism in the Acts is in chapter 19. Again it concerns the founding of a Gentile church. It all commenced when Paul came to Ephesus and asked some twelve disciples that he found there whether they had received the Holy Ghost when they believed. Their answer was plain enough — they knew nothing of Him at all, not even that there was such a person. These men were John's disciples. They had been discipled to John Baptist by the fervent eloquence and ministrations of a man called Apollos.

This great man, as his master John before him, was a zealous missionary of the Lord, but not of the Lord Jesus Christ; he knew the word but not THE WORD. Whatever else Apollos had believed and consequently preached to these twelve at Ephesus, he had not at that time believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ. Consequently the dozen Ephesians who had been baptised in water by Apollos did not believe in the name of the Lord Jesus, therefore they had not been baptised in His name. By this we see that at that time Apollos was nothing more than an Old Testament revivalist, and being himself unregenerate, could not bring men into regeneration. He had only converted men unto the improved form of Judaism which was at first introduced and preached to Israel by John Baptist.

Sadly enough Apollos had zealously achieved the doubtful distinction of accomplishing two things:

- (1) he had pushed the Gentiles into a revised form of Jewish traditionalism, now long discarded by God, binding them up in dead ritualism, and
- (2) he had reversed the new order which God had established for the Church among

the Gentiles. The result of this was the creation of a condition which, despite its Ephesian setting, is really Jewish. Indeed perhaps these men were of Jewish birth; most certainly they were proselytes to Judaism in its reformed character under John Baptist. They were not Christians at all, and the thing which proved that fact so outstandingly to Paul was that they had not received the Holy Ghost. The apostle therefore speedily set about rectifying the position.

Into What were YE Baptised?

Paul's question in verse 2 is most revealing, and seems to provide a definite confirmation of the remarks made earlier about the Lord's statement in Mark 15.16. Whichever translation may be preferred, it is outstandingly clear that Paul expected men to receive the Holy Spirit more or less immediately upon first believing. The apostle's second question is perhaps more revealing still: 'Unto (or Into) what then were ye baptised?' These questions are deliberate and unmistakable.

It is impossible to believe that in his thinking, preaching and ministry Paul allowed any divorce between believing, baptism, and receiving the Spirit. It was obvious and logical to him that a man believes and is consequently baptised into and unto something. If under John's ministry no allowance was made for believing unto repentance apart from baptism in water, then equally under the ministry of Jesus Christ's gospel there is no provision made for receiving eternal life apart from believing unto Baptism in and reception of Holy Spirit.

Looking more closely into the literal Greek, we find that Paul said, 'John verily baptised baptism of repentance'. The primitive power of what Paul said is rather blunted by the words 'with the', which are introduced here for easier reading. We ought to allow the forceful language to reach our hearts without flinching; following his inspired style, we may say, 'Jesus Christ verily baptises baptism of Holy Spirit'. Paul was saying very plainly that if people believed sufficiently in or on John Baptist to let him baptise them in water in the course of his ministry, they should as wholeheartedly believe in the Lord Jesus and let Him baptise them in Holy Spirit in the course of His ministry. So also should we.

Baptism is with a purpose, it is an instrument by means of which the Lord accomplishes His present ministry to us. Certain it is that none of these Ephesians were baptised in the Holy Ghost until Paul laid hands on them. Comparison of the records reveals that what had taken place previously when Peter preached at Caesarea also took place under Paul's ministry at Ephesus. Almost identical terms were used to convey identical ideas — the Holy Ghost came upon them, they received the Holy Ghost and spoke with tongues and prophesied, all because they believed in Him of Whom John Baptist spoke, and were baptised in Christ's name into Christ's baptism.

One Baptism

Treating these Ephesians as Jews or proselytes to Judaism, Paul dealt with them in the matter of baptism in the manner formerly shown in chapters 2 & 8. This was quite correct procedure, indeed he could do no other. At Jerusalem Jews and proselytes had been baptised in water, and at Samaria also people who had been anciently proselytised were also baptised in water.

Responding to the apostles' doctrine the Ephesians were re-baptised in water as a confession of their faith in Jesus' name, who in response to that faith baptised them in the Holy Ghost. As has already been suggested about the earliest administration of baptism on the day of Pentecost, perhaps immersion in water and in the Spirit were simultaneous in this case also. The record of it, when read in the original, reveals that there is no reason why we should believe otherwise.

Note: When viewed in the light of the new place that the administration of baptism in water held at this juncture of the Church's history, this truth is as deeply significant as anything yet revealed. An examination of Acts 19:5 & 6, shows that since the day of Pentecost there is no scriptural ground for believing that water baptism and Spirit Baptism need ever be separate experiences, nor yet that the order must be first baptism in water and then Baptism in Spirit.

The Visible and the Invisible

We read that when Paul had laid his hands upon them 'the Holy Ghost came on them'. The use of the aorist participle with the word 'when' purposely gives it a sense of reference to a past act, 'having done'. There is no grammatical reason to believe that it was other than an immediately past act such as would be necessary for the administration of water baptism.

Paul's act of immersing these Ephesians in water could have been synchronous with the Lord's action in immersing them in Holy Spirit. By this the One Baptism would have been both received and demonstrated at the same time, the water being the medium in which it was demonstrated before men, and the Holy Ghost being the member of the Trinity in Whom it was accomplished before (for) God by Jesus Christ. If this was indeed so, then upon this final occasion at Ephesus the intention of God is plainly seen. In the cases of Paul the apostle to the Gentiles, and Cornelius' household — the first distinctly Gentile gathering the Lord had put the priorities right by baptising them in the Spirit before they were baptised in water.

Now we see the possibility that moving on yet further still, at Ephesus He put the two together that they may be seen as the one they really are. Truly they are one, being two parts of one whole (this is precisely what he wrote later to these same people, namely — 'there is one baptism') the one part visible and the other invisible, the invisible being the important experience.

The Gift — a Person

Reaching out to the Gentiles, the Lord brought together two things which had hitherto been apart — often widely apart — and placed them in proper order and perspective. In the lives of the first apostles for instance, baptism in water and Baptism in Spirit were three or four years apart. In the case of the Samaritans we may rightly suppose that at least a few days, perhaps weeks, intervened between their Baptism in Spirit and their baptism in water, the latter preceding the former.

As we have seen, after the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost these men, following Peter's leadership, still maintained the only order they then knew. They preached baptism in water as an immediate step of faith, to be followed later by Baptism in Spirit, as though this was the proper and only order. Moreover, as may be expected, this belief and practice has been incorporated into the teaching of vast sections of the

Church, as though this is the only and inspired order. The result has been that these two are still propagated as though they are intended by God to be two different baptisms, often widely apart in experience. A worse tragedy still is that in many cases the unimportant, or at best the least important part — water baptism — is thought to be the only baptism there is. Investigation proves that with the majority it is the only baptism that is known or believed in.

Thus conformity to what is genuinely believed to be the true pattern, combined with ignorance of what fullness lies behind the enactment, experience and exhibition of water baptism in this world has led multitudes to rest in that ordination. To this day many are totally unaware that water baptism is intended to declare unto men on their behalf that having been inwardly baptised into the crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, they have thereby and therefore received the gift of the person of the Holy Ghost.

An Interim Provision

Throughout all this, it must be thoroughly understood that when these apostles baptised people upon the name of Jesus for the remission of sins, they did so in a special way. They had previously been given uncommon authority by Jesus to do so. When He came unto them in resurrection, He breathed on them saying, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose so ever sins ye retain they are retained'. No man may now baptise in this same manner, nor make the act of baptism so meaningful, for no man has the same authority.

It would be a completely unwarrantable assumption for any man to believe that apostolic succession carries with it any power or authority not included in the Baptism in the Spirit. The commission to remit or retain sins was given only to those men upon whom Christ breathed in resurrection in the exclusive interview granted to them before Pentecost for that purpose. They were special men — the apostles of the Lamb, who in the regeneration shall sit upon thrones judging the tribes of Israel. The Lord purposely did not include this ability in the Baptism in the Spirit because it was to operate for an interim period only, that is during the lifetime of those apostles. Since Pentecost — now the gospel can be preached in all its fullness — this is fulfilled in another way by whosoever the Lord has promoted to the ministry.

6. Conclusion — Jesus the Baptist

A Synchronous Baptism

We have been looking at scripture records of original activities during the early apostolic era, gathering facts and possibilities or probabilities from the five accounts of baptism wherein the Baptism of the Spirit is also referred to in the context. Our discoveries may be summarised in the following manner: it is factual that upon two occasions, namely in the cases of Paul and the household of Cornelius, Baptism in the Spirit preceded baptism in water. It is also a fact that at Samaria baptism in water preceded Baptism in the Spirit. It is a distinct possibility that on the day of Pentecost and also at Ephesus Baptism in Spirit was co-incidental with baptism in water.

In the first instance the probability of this synchronous baptism is inferred in two ways:

(1) from the gargantuan proportions of the undertaking; it would have been superhuman indeed to have handled three thousand persons twice, making a total of six thousand handlings in one day, which had fully come at the time of the original outpouring, and was already passing swiftly to its close with the setting of the sun:
(2) by the absence of any hint on Peter's part that a period of time should elapse between water baptism and reception of the Spirit.

In the second instance, as we have seen, the possibility as distinct from the probability may be inferred from the actual grammatical construction of the text. Having had all these under consideration in the preceding pages, we will endeavour to draw some conclusions, doing so in a spirit of meekness, lest the puffiness of mere Bible knowledge take the place of and destroy the edifying ministry of love.

The Permanent Immersion

From our examination of these five instances when Baptism in Spirit is spoken of in close association with baptism in water, it emerges that the one is intended to be a picture of the other; the visible of the invisible; the physical of the spiritual. We observe also that because the water is a type of the Spirit, the baptiser, beside being a representative of the Lord Jesus, must also be a type or representation of Him. Indeed, if the baptiser does not baptise in the name of the Lord Jesus with full consciousness of the wonderful Person and things he represents to the one he baptises, he gravely errs and does more harm than good to that person.

Water baptism is no substitute for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit, but is meant to represent it, for as the person's body is put into the water by the one baptising him, so does the Lord Jesus put that person's spirit into the Holy Spirit. The difference between the two is that in the former the body should be dipped in and out of the water, but in the latter the spirit should be in the Spirit permanently. Paul saw this very clearly. Although he was a Jew like Peter, unlike his predecessor in the faith, he never placed the great emphasis on water baptism that his colleague did. Unless he personally baptised Lydia and the gaoler at Philippi, there is no certain proof to be found in scripture that Paul baptised any, save those mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:14-17 and Acts 19. Paul was no great water-baptiser, but he was certainly insistent upon the Baptism in the Holy Ghost.

Two Chosen Vessels

It is profoundly true that if a man be promoted to public preaching, his own personal experience will affect his whole ministry of the things of God to others. Peter, the apostle to the Circumcision, came to Christ in a totally different way from Paul, and entered into understanding of the things of Christ in the reverse order from Paul, the apostle to the Uncircumcision. These men were complete opposites, each destined to play a vital role in the founding and raising up of the early Church.

From a reading of the New Testament it seems that Peter could never quite break free from his Jewish heredity and traditional background. On the other hand Paul instantly saw and counted all Jewish traditionalism to be but loss. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why God, in His foreknowledge, chose Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles; his more liberal background of training in Tarsus was better preparation for his later ministry than the fishing grounds of orthodox Galilee, where Peter had spent his days.

This indeed could quite easily have been the reason, and if so it is not without precedent in the history of the Jews. The patriarch Joseph, for instance, spent years of preparatory training in a foreign land before he was allowed of God to minister to His people in Egypt. But however true that may be, it is at least observable from scripture that upon occasions Paul refrained from baptising people in water, but evidently insisted that everyone to whom he ministered must experience the reality of which it is but a representation.

The Purpose of God

Accepting the indisputable truth of the evidence as facts, it emerges that:

- (1) it is God's greatest desire to baptise people in the Holy Ghost, and
- (2) if the ratio be adhered to, then obviously God regards speedy Baptism in the Spirit to be of far more importance than hasty baptism in water, for the differential is markedly two to one in favour of Baptism in the Spirit;
- (3) since God means what He records in scripture, then the important baptism for the Church age is that which immerses the spirits of men in the Spirit of God.

An Everlasting Covenant

The end of the preceding age was bound up with the appearing of Jesus Christ on earth for the purpose of putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Coming into the world, He spoke words which virtually ended the first covenant in order that He should establish the second (Hebrews 10:1-9). His life-span on earth marked the period of time which lay between the removal of the first covenant and the establishing of the second; during that period He finished all the work which remained to be done, finalising all by death and resurrection. Following this, He ascended to heaven and presented Himself in perfection to His Father in preparation for the commencement of the second or the new and everlasting covenant.

As the former age was drawing to its close, God sent John Baptist into the world to be the forerunner of His Son Jesus. John brought in baptism with water as a means of forgiveness by remission of sins upon the condition of repentance. So we find the documents of the last days of the Old Covenant commencing with the introduction of water baptism. These documents are each one called a Gospel, for they set forth primarily the good news of Jesus Christ. At the end of His life, that is at the very end of the interim period, through death and resurrection He accomplished, brought in and established the true Baptism, later called by Paul (the) One Baptism.

Having accomplished this, Christ returned to heaven and inaugurated the new age by pouring forth the Holy Spirit. This was absolutely necessary, for it was in the Spirit that His own true, personal baptism had been accomplished and is now for ever established for men.

Unto Newness of Life

Nothing is established in water as of itself. But if water be allowed its proper place and be given its true spiritual meaning, when used in baptism it will speak to us of greater things from God than those of which it speaks in ordinary use:

- (1) By John's word the water represented the stream of remission of sins by which a soul may find forgiveness.

(2) By Paul's word it represents the immeasurable and unplumbable ocean of Christ's death and burial from which the person who is baptised rises to newness of life.

(3) (The whole spiritual meaning and content of which Paul writes and which could not be typified in the baptism which John ministered, was put into baptism by Jesus, namely His own personal baptism into death, followed by His resurrection from it). By His work and ministry the water represents the Holy Spirit, into whom we all must be baptised in order that we may live in the eternal life of the Son. This He accomplishes in us by immersing us with definiteness and total despatch into all the particular work He accomplished for us when He was personally baptised into death and rose again from it, as being singularly and solely God-unique there.

Beside these things, water baptism carries other meanings as well, such as discipleship or personal allegiance to Jesus Christ, but these which we have considered are by far the greatest of them all.

Ye shall be Baptised

Jesus' own simple references to baptism should be regarded as of chiefest importance to every man. There are seven in all. Set out in order of statement they appear as follows:

- (1) 'I have a baptism wherewith I must be baptised.' Luke 12:50.
- (2) 'Are ye able to be baptised with the baptism wherewith I am baptised?' Mark 10:38.
- (3) 'Ye shall indeed be baptised with the baptism wherewith I am baptised.' Mark 10:39.
- (4) 'The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?' Luke 20:4.
- (5) 'Go ye into all the world and (preach the gospel to) teach all nations, baptising them in(to) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo I AM with you always, even unto the end of the age.' Matt. 28:19 & 20, (Mark 16:15.)
- (6) 'He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.' Mark 16:16.
- (7) 'Ye shall be baptised in the Holy Ghost not many days hence.' Acts 1:5.

Selecting some relevant phrases from this list, we arrive at the following:

- (1) 'I must be baptised.'
- (2) 'Are ye able to be baptised?'
- (3) 'Ye shall indeed be baptised.'
- (4) 'Ye shall be baptised in the Holy Ghost.'

Let us leave the other three words for the enjoyment of this moment of blessed realisation of what the Lord is saying with utmost simplicity. Jesus is telling us that He had to be baptised, and that the medium, element or means of baptism is the Holy Ghost. Could anything be more plainly, honestly and simply stated? Primarily and therefore important above all else, the Baptism in the Holy Ghost is nothing other than being baptised with the baptism wherewith He was baptised.

Re-reading the phrases above, it is clear that what was uniquely to Him 'a baptism', became when He underwent it 'the Baptism'. First spoken with the indefinite article, baptism is afterwards referred to by Him with the definite article, thus: 'a baptism' — 'the Baptism'. What part of that baptism was exclusively His remains so for ever; that

apart, the Baptism is now available to all believers, for He created it precisely so that it should become their (our) Baptism. It is an open door, an entrance, an experience by which we are carried away into God, an immersion into a state of being not otherwise possible to us.

A Created Baptism

We see then how the scripture itself by its very language, bears witness to and sets forth what alone is 'the Baptism' and can do no other. Until it was created by God, this Baptism could not exist, for, except in the mind and will of God, it had no being at all until the Lord brought it into being. Although there are some outstanding typical illustrations of it in the Old Testament, no direct reference had ever been made therein to such a thing.

John Baptist, the man sent from God to minister water baptism, was the first one to make mention of Baptism in Spirit. He himself did not know what it meant, for he had no experience of it. He knew it existed and said he needed it, but it was Jesus alone who spoke of this baptism with complete knowledge of it. At the time He did so, He could not speak of it as 'the Baptism' as when referring to John's baptism, for all knew John's, and perhaps all His followers had been baptised with it, but none knew His. He Himself had been baptised in water by John, but quite distinct from everyone else, He had not been baptised with John's baptism. He had no need of it, neither had He need of John in the role he filled to the rest of Israel. John's baptism to them was unto remission of sins upon repentance, but Jesus, having no sins, had no need of repentance; therefore He had no need of John's baptism in that respect.

John's mission to Jesus was in the capacity of forerunner and friend. Jesus only needed John's baptism as a means of identification and presentation to Israel as: (1) Son of God, (2) Lamb of God, and (3) Baptizer in the Holy Ghost. His baptism at the hands of John was entirely different from everyone else's. That is why He said, 'I have a baptism wherewith I must be baptised'. He knew the real baptism had to be created by Him in order for it to exist as 'the Baptism' for us throughout this age.

The True Baptist

As John's ministry developed in Israel, he had become known as John Baptist. Following His baptism by John and before Calvary Jesus became a baptist too (though only in the capacity John speaks of in chapter 4 of his Gospel). At that time John was the Baptist, Jesus was a baptist. Now the positions are reversed, John was only a baptist, Jesus is THE BAPTIST. Just as John in his day was the Baptist, so Jesus Christ is now THE BAPTIST and John is not a baptist at all. Nevertheless, although his ministry has ceased, what was true under John's preaching is also true now under Christ's preaching — baptism is the way in. In the same way as John's baptism was quite useless unless there was true faith in the hearts of those he baptised, so Jesus' baptism is equally quite impossible unless hearts truly believe unto it. Just as John responded to faith by baptism, so also does Jesus Christ respond by baptism to simple faith.

Lo I AM with YOU Always

Just prior to His ascension to the throne, the Lord commanded His apostles to go and teach all nations, baptising them into that one name which is borne by each member-

person of the triune Godhead — I AM. 'Lo I AM with you always, even unto the end of the ages', He said; they only had to tarry until the age commenced. It was to be the age of the Baptism, so they must await the element or means in which alone it could be accomplished, the blessed Spirit. It is plain that the Lord intended to be with them in the Baptism He had commanded them to administer, so they entered into their ministry highly conscious of His presence with them. They were to use the only element they could use, namely water, and He would use the element He alone could and had chosen to use, namely Spirit. This is why, given the correct conditions, there is no reason why both should not take place together as one.

This is the real reason why baptism was administered by the apostles in Jesus name. It must not be thought that because in discharge of the commandment they baptised in Jesus' name, they neglected to do it as He had so explicitly told them earlier. Their action does not imply gross refusal to do His will — rather their words and actions meant that doing it in Jesus' name they were actually standing on His promise. They believed that He was there with them and they became workers together with Him; they baptised into the name of all three persons of God, and He into His body and life. Which brings the whole into line with the truth as revealed in verses like Ephesians 2:18, 'through Him we (both) have access by (Gk.'in') one Spirit unto the Father.' Through Jesus' person and ministrations this is exactly both what it accomplished and how it happens.

Whom to Know is Life Eternal

These men had baptised in Jesus' name and presence whilst He was with them in the flesh during the course of His earthly ministry, but not until He had made baptism 'the Baptism' could they baptise in the New Order. From that time onward they did not, as before, baptise in the name of Jesus alone, for that would have excluded the other two members of the being of God; with superior knowledge they baptised in the name of Jesus who was now able to baptise in Spirit into the triune God.

When they had baptised in His name earlier, He had not been able to do so, but now He could, so He commanded them to go beyond their former limitations and baptise into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. They were to do so now because they represented Him in a new way; His new ability became new ability to them also. Being born of the Spirit, they could bear the name which formerly they only used, and bearing it could act in a capacity until then impossible to them. They could represent Him now more fully as they understood Him to be a Person and representative of the entire Godhead of which He is Jesus, but they all One God.

This is what He had definitely said to them: 'Lo, I AM with you'. In those simple words He had spoken out His conscious knowledge of His own personal eternal existence, and also the 'family name' of God unto all generations — the name which is the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. The name of the eternal, conscious existence of the unique, original Being who is and was and is to come: ETERNAL LIFE. Into Him, into that, are we baptised when Jesus baptises us in Holy Spirit. As many as believe and are baptised shall be saved, He said, and He alone knows.

We therefore conclude that the baptism of John was indeed from heaven, for by it Jesus, the Son of God, came unto men as 'the Lamb of God that beareth away the sin of the world', 'He that baptiseth with the Holy Ghost'. And if this be so, how much

more is the Baptism of Jesus, the Lamb, the Son of God, from heaven also! We are informed that upon the occasion recorded in Acts 2, it was from heaven. What had until then been His unique Baptism became the unique inaugural Baptism of the New Covenant.

The last view we have of the whole subject of baptism as faithfully recorded in scripture is true to Paul's later statement to the Ephesians — there is ONE BAPTISM. All combines and is embraced in one; the lesser is absorbed in the greater and made an illustration of it, which is as it should be. The age of Baptism is upon us!

05-SEPT-01

First Published Autumn 1976.

Revised April 1978.

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SPIRITUAL LIFE and SPIRITUAL GIFTS

(I Corinthians)

Part 1

I would not have You Ignorant

In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul authoritatively sets out much truth about the Spiritual Man. Although it is a letter of rebuke and correction, wherein he criticises, condemns and passes sentence upon sin and wrong behaviour, it also contains much edifying instruction. The apostle's finest treatise upon the gifts of the Spirit and their function in the Church is written here, lovingly spoken of in chapters 12, 13 and 14, and related to worship and Church order.

Reading this section with the phrase, 'now concerning (the) spirituals brethren I would not have you ignorant', he ends it with, 'let all things be done decently and in order'. Challenging them to test their spirituality by their response to these commandments of the Lord (14:37) he leaves the Corinthians no alternative but to believe that they were absolutely ignorant if they did not acknowledge divine authorship and authority for the statements they were reading. This strong approach and outright challenge was necessary at that time because the church was no longer spiritual, but carnal.

The Corinthians had been spiritual for a time, but allowing sin to intrude and be openly practised among them, they became unspiritual: as a result they speedily lost their appetite for truth, and eventually all fundamental matters of spiritual life failed.

By the grace of God and at the request of some person or persons at Corinth, Paul wrote this letter to the church there in order to rectify the position. That he succeeded in his aim is clearly shown by the nature and tone of the second letter he wrote to them some time later. Spiritual men everywhere will mourn that the need ever arose for such stern warnings and firm correction, but we may be grateful to our all-wise God that He ever moved the apostle to write the epistle. By His overruling it has come into our hands, bringing a vast treasury of needful truth, which we would not otherwise have known, and yet which we have need to assimilate. In no realm is this more so than in relationship to the gifts of the Spirit.

Concerning the Spirituals

Originally Paul called these 'the Spirituals', a fact which should be of great significance to us. Many other things spoken of in scripture are of equal importance with these, and some of far greater importance both to God and man, but only these are especially called Spirituals. Upon thought it is indeed most curious that Paul should speak of things without life or personality as being Spirituals. That the Holy Spirit should take up an adjective and seemingly turn it into a noun when speaking of things which are abstract is strange indeed, and rightly understood must be of great significance. We ought therefore to seek out the reason for this, that we might the better enter into all truth.

In order to arrive at some understanding of God's design, and come nearer to the meaning of original apostolic thought, it would perhaps be better if instead of the word 'gifts' in verse 1, we allowed the insertion of some other word such as 'ministries' or 'functions' or 'operations', and noted also that the word 'spiritual', although written in singular form here, is numerically plural in its Greek form as above shown.

If this suggestion be allowed, and we substitute one of the above alternative words for the word 'gifts', we could arrive at 'spiritual ministries' or 'spiritual operations'. This would result in the emphasis being shifted from the impersonal ability, referred to by the word 'gift', and placed upon the human element necessary to the use of the gift, which is where it rightly belongs. To do this will in no way impair truth but only enhance it, as

we shall see.

Upon examination, this slightly different emphasis will be found to be entirely in keeping with the spirit of the whole passage, which is more a treatise on the body of Christ than a mere listing of the gifts of the Spirit. Of itself a gift is neutral and inanimate, having no power either to be or to do evil or good. When the gifts were originally bestowed by God they were pure, and intended by Him to be instruments for good. Rightly held and used, any gift of God is a means of applying or implementing the power or word of God according to His will.

God meant it unto Good

As an illustration of this we may refer to the natural Creation. In the beginning God created all things after the counsel of His own will. At the conclusion of each day of creative energy, He saw and said with approval that 'it was good'. However, as we all know only too well, much of what was created originally good is now fallen into such wrong and sinful usage, that it is now an instrument unto evil. All could still be good if still used as God designed, but history has proved that use determines effects. Because of sin and the human element involved, that which was created originally perfect and powerful for good only, is now potentially instrumental for either good or evil.

When God finally made Man, and placed him over all creation, it was complete and pronounced by Him to be 'very good'. But when man by sin became fleshly instead of spiritual, he became less than 'very good'; on the contrary he became very evil. In consequence, as may be expected, the gifts he possessed also became less than 'good' in use also, and were soon employed for evil, fleshly purposes.

So it is also with the Spirituals now. Once bestowed, what matters most about a gift is the life of the person possessing it and the way it is used. Its power and effectiveness will depend entirely upon the quality of the person. It will be discovered that ultimately only the proper use of the gift will warrant the literal description 'spiritual'. Because in the beginning it was bestowed by the Holy Ghost, its classification may be 'Spiritual', but sadly enough, in common with many other things also originally given by Him, its function may be quite carnal. In this case both the benign intent of the Giver and the good effects its user may hope to achieve are nullified.

The Man is the Gift

Upon consideration it may therefore be better to omit from the translation all additional words, and read as follows: 'Now concerning the spiritual, brethren, I would not have you ignorant'. Because the masculine or feminine gender is absent from the Greek text, it may not be strictly correct to imply this meaning, but inferentially the whole epistle supports this view. If this be allowed, it will be found to place the emphasis upon brethren, where it ought to be, and not on gifts, however gifted those brethren may be.

This may well be the better way, for such a rendering is in harmony with the wording of the challenge laid down at the end of chapter 14, which reads 'if any man think himself to be spiritual', and not 'if any man is sufficiently spiritually gifted'; in the final analysis the man is the gift, not the gifts the man has. Be that as it may, we must understand that spiritual gifts are provided by God to be used by spiritual persons only. But although this is so, we must not think that gifts make a person spiritual: on the contrary it is rather to be understood that it is the person who makes the gift spiritual. The gift

is given to him to be: (1) an instrument of God's power, (2) a declaration of the spiritual quality of his own life, and (3) for the extension of his ministerial usefulness,

Years that the Locusts have Eaten

It is a regrettable fact that some people do not appear to receive or function in spiritual gifts until a long time after they are baptised in the Holy Spirit. This condition may be thought to have much to recommend it, because it allows time for development and maturity in other important areas of spiritual life. However, it is really a great pity, for had these dear people but known or been desirous of it, God's design was that they should have received the gifts at the time of regeneration, or at least very shortly after. There can be little doubt that such is God's intention, for although nowhere in their writings do the New Testament authors actually say that this is so, it is the plainly revealed scriptural pattern, beside which it is also most

commendable, both to reason and observation. The truth is that God gives gifts unto babes.

However, the New Testament writers, except in a few notable verses, speak rather more of receiving the gift of the person of the Holy Spirit than about receiving the gifts of the Spirit. They refer to the gifts as they ought, but evidently have them in true perspective. As a whole the New Testament scriptures reveal a Church baptised in the Holy Spirit, emerging from the death and resurrection of Christ, full of faith, overflowing with love, perfecting (their) holiness, replete with spiritual gifts, moving in power under the anointing of Christ their Head, complete in Him.

It is a distinct pity that so many dear brethren, of varying degrees of spiritual growth and stature, either do not receive and function in any spiritual gifts at all, or receive them very late in life. Worse still, it amounts to a shame that, with so many, this happens after years of complete indifference to them. This being so, a whole glorious realm of further spiritual usefulness and fuller development has been lost to them.

It is so sad and so altogether needless that such a state should be; indeed it is tragic, even paradoxical. However great may have been their holiness of life, love of truth and zeal for Christ throughout the years, these people have nevertheless forfeited what God has provided for them. By this willing ignorance or deliberate unbelief they have lost so much that ought to have been theirs. Without exception all who have done this have withdrawn from and irretrievably lost vast realms of understanding, power and usefulness to God and man.

This has all been because of such needless neglect on their part, for contrary to what they may have believed, he who has gifts does not thereby forfeit holiness. The gifts are instruments of applied love, and by them a man gains opportunity to perfect holiness to a fuller degree in wider realms of responsibility, as Paul points out in the second epistle he wrote to the Corinthians. Perhaps even more pitiable than the loss in functional usefulness, is the fact that all such have lost the opportunity, given only in this life, of helping to build up a local church in the way intended by God, and revealed to us by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles and by Paul in his epistles.

The Incomparable Church

As we know, Luke was a Gentile converted to Christ, and Paul was a Romanised Jew, brought up amid Gentile culture. In their writings both present a Church emergent from Jewish beginnings into Gentile fullness, moving unto its consummation as the whole Israel of God in the New Creation. In process of this they reveal its growth through and out of the form of neo-Judaism into which it early developed, and for a while remained in perilous uncertainty. Paul especially tells us what the true Church should be; Luke shows us what it then was. Through them we see what it should now be, and continue to be, throughout the entire age 'until the fullness of the Gentiles be brought in'.

So it is that in this Corinthian letter Paul sets out a form of worship and function which must surely be acknowledged as the only officially inspired form of Church worship and order on record. Therefore, however spiritual one may be, to have spent one's life establishing or building up a church to function in any form or order other than this must surely have been misspent labour. In many respects the Church is like God, and partakes of His nature, so that the same kind of things that are said of God may be said also of the Church. For instance, concerning Himself, God says that there is none other God but He, nor was there any before Him, nor any like Him, nor is there any beside Him. All this may be said also of the Church, for like its Creator it is unique; there is none other like it, nor beside it, even as there was none before it.

Taking up the point that there is none like it, it must be conceded that any attempt to create a Church which is anything other in manifestation than what God instituted is unwarrantably human, and totally misguided. How can any other way be other than man's way if it be not according to God's way? It cannot be better than this, so if it be different from it, it certainly cannot be equal to it either. However faint a representation of the original it may be, any church which at least attempts to function according to this revelation must surely be of the right order, even if for some reason it be not quite of the same Spirit or of equal power.

Ye are Yet Carnal

When Paul wrote to the Corinthian church it was yet carnal. To take a censorious view, we may say that the

general spirit within it was wrong. It was functioning wrongly; its behaviour was wrong; its power had gone, so had its purity and unity; in fact almost everything seemed somehow to have gone awry. But although its original order had at that stage become disorder, at least its way or method of worship was more or less right. Paul had to rebuke and eradicate many things from it, but not all; some things only needed correcting, reshaping and regulating. These included this form of gathering and worship, which had sprung into being under his leadership.

The apostle does not plainly say that this is the only form and function of church gathering and worship acceptable to God, but this is obviously the one laid down by the Lord, or else why the challenge in 14:37? It cannot be demonstrated from scripture that any other than this is disapproved of God, but even so it is surely unsafe to presume that anything other than this most natural order is commended of God. Paul must have written this for the purpose of setting before all hearts God's highest and best.

Man's aesthetic preferences or traditional forms or any of his likes or dislikes are not the criteria upon which choices may be made and church systems or forms of worship developed. To persist in one's own choices upon the flimsy grounds of personal preferences, when they are so plainly contrary to this inspired pattern, must surely bring God's disapproval. What God has set forth about any matter is always the ultimate perfection. Beside this, what is written here is the command of an apostle who for himself counted all things but dung that he may win Christ.

In order to accomplish this ambition, Paul was specially harsh against the things which were either religiously, racially or aesthetically gain to him (Philippians 3). He ever pressed toward the mark for the high calling of God, and being so with him, it must also be the standard of life for the entire Church. He knew that the things he wrote were, and still are, the only way, the only right way for the Church.

The Church — His Body

We may be sure then that Paul delivered to us the correct forms of Church worship and gathering and function. Whatever may be assumed otherwise is neither of inspiration nor of apostolic instruction. Therefore to be both biblical and spiritual a church must function according to the form of gathering, worship and ministry outlined in chapter 14. In any locality the church, whenever it gathers, must be a true expression, if not the fullest replica, of the person of Christ. It is precisely for this reason that the Holy Spirit has outlined this order for us.

Christ still wishes to function in His Body the Church on earth in this same gloriously simple way, but this is totally impossible except by means of the gifts faithfully recorded by Paul for our information in chapter 12. There can be no doubt that the Lord intends every one of these gifts to operate today. The same perfect love in which He ever abode and worked among men still fills His heart. It is no surprise then that in chapter 13 He majors upon this love, for the gifts are meant to be the expression of that love. Being properly held and used, they are the highest form of worship, the greatest means of service and the most patent expression of self-sacrifice of which the Church is capable, apart from martyrdom.

Diversities of Gifts — One Spirit

Now the phrase 'gifts of the Spirit' is nowhere to be found in the Bible. That this is so in no way invalidates its use; but knowledge of this fact should serve as a spur to us, making us diligently search the scriptures to find out exactly what is said about the gifts by God, Who is the Source of both gifts and scriptures.

Approaching this particular section, we are introduced to the subject in verse 4, 'there are diversities of gifts but the same Spirit'. Regretfully it must be said that although in every other realm this is manifestly true, upon entering the churches, the men spoken of in 12:23 may remain unconvinced that in things spiritual this is really so. All too often in many churches where the gifts are in use, any diversion from monotony is in volume of noise and not in variety of manifestation. Oh, when shall we learn that noise is not power?

Following on from this introduction, we are told in the next two verses that there are differences of administrations and diversities of operations. Then in verse 7 we are brought back from the plurality of diversities, differences, gifts, administrations and operations, to the singular 'manifestation of the Spirit', which we are told is given to every man for mutual profit. Proceeding to the following verses, we come upon a detail

of nine things which can only be described in the abstract as 'gifts of the Spirit'. Going still further, we find that this list is immediately backed up by a verse telling us that the Spirit who gives these gifts is the selfsame Spirit who divides them as He will between members of the body, and further still, having done so, personally works them through each member.

The truth we need to recognise here is brought out grammatically by the use of the singular and the plural: the one and selfsame Spirit is the person who works the many gifts. We thereby learn that persons who have received gifts must not work them themselves, but recognise that they are to be held as direct enablers only. They are special and precious and have been gratuitously distributed by the Spirit to members of Christ whose body we are. This He does so that by these the Lord can at any time He chooses work just as He will, through whom He will, by whatever gift He will.

(We are) Baptised into Him

Viewed in the light of information supplied in verses 12 and 13, this all seems natural and quite normal. The Church is seen to be nothing less or other than the manifestation on earth of the spiritual counterpart of the body of Jesus of Nazareth. At present it is being indwelt and used by Him in the same way as that past body of flesh and blood was indwelt and used by Him then. Though not in a literal, identical manner, nevertheless in the same sense as His physical body was but one and yet was a unity of many easily distinguishable members, so also is the spiritual body of the person of Christ.

Membership in His body is synchronous with our initiation into His life and takes place when we are baptised in Holy Spirit. For this reason baptism in the Spirit is absolutely necessary for each one of us. In that Spirit we are immersed by Jesus Christ into actual membership of His spiritual body, with a distinct individual function readily understood by all.

However, far more importantly than this aspect of the Baptism, at the same time we are each one individually baptised into the spiritual person of Jesus Christ. This is accomplished in us only because when baptising us, He also causes us to drink into one Spirit. Seeing that the body is His body, it follows that the Spirit we drink into can be no other than His Spirit. It certainly cannot be anyone else's, for there is only one spirit per person and body: that is why a body can only be one person's body.

As upon being baptised into the body of Christ a person becomes a member of that body, so it is also that upon being baptised into the person of Christ, a person becomes alive with the Spirit of Christ. By such means and only by them can a person become a functional, living or life-member of Christ. At our spiritual baptism we go into the person of Christ for life and into the body of Christ for function. Obviously it is at this time that a person becomes Spiritual, for all is of and in and by and for and from the Spirit. Because this is so, it must be the actual time of spiritual birth, for how can it be anything other?

One Body — Many Members

Now at the time of birth a babe, having been perfectly formed in the womb, is born complete. Every member of its body is in its correct place, precisely shaped and fitted for its later use in relationship to the whole body according to the need or will of the person to whom it belongs. As an illustration of this we will speak about one member of the body — the hand — and will do so as an example of what might be said of each according to its own particular place and function in the body.

By its very position, structure and function, the hand, with its many joints, palm, fingers and thumb is admirably fashioned and perfectly suited to the multiple use to which it may properly be put later in life. In so far as its form is concerned, it is already perfect, nothing needs to be added to it: it is perfectly shaped to do all that ought ever to be required of it. All it needs to do in order to meet every contingency that life may demand of it is to grow and develop. The only things that are missing at birth are strength, size and skill to accomplish general and special(ised) works. These (as we know) depend upon growth and training, which in turn are determined by many other factors which need not here be mentioned.

So also it is with us at the time of our Baptism into the body of Jesus Christ. Being at that time born members of His spiritual body, we are each one as particularly fitted to be a member of that body as is a hand to the physical body. Every born member is as a gift of the Spirit to that body, so that both the member and the body

should function aright. When the gift of eternal life by spiritual regeneration is given, quite often also, together with that birth, at least one gift of the Spirit is bestowed. If any member does not find this so, in simple faith, yet without strain, he should seek unto the Lord. No spiritual effort should be regarded as too great in order to secure one, so that meaningful, functional membership may be acquired. For as the hand is a gift from God to the physical body, enabling it to function aright, so also is a member with (a) gift of the Spirit a gift from God to the whole spiritual body of Christ.

The Cross is the Power

Now, as before stated, any gift given by the Spirit is in itself spiritual in origin, but having been once bestowed, for its permanent spirituality in use it depends very much upon the person to whom it is given. It must ever be remembered that the person so privileged must bear the responsibility for its use. If the individual remains spiritual, the gift will continue as spiritual as the Spirit who first gave it, but should that individual become carnal, the gift will also unavoidably become carnalized in use.

The only way an individual can preserve his gift in its original spiritual condition is by maintaining his own spirit in holiness and power, and always allowing the Holy Spirit Himself to work the gift. In the case of an oral gift, this means that the Holy Spirit must be the sole initiator and inspirer of each particular message. He must be both the beginning and the ending upon each occasion. If it be one of the other gifts, he must use it as from and by the power of the cross, or else the power that works it will be carnal soul power. Should this latter state become so with any member, the ultimate function can only be misleading, and its power destructive. Each of the gifts must only ever be a means of manifestation of the Spirit.

The Gifts are His

Having first understood this, it must also be realised that a gift is bestowed for the purpose of the manifestation of the Spirit. The gift itself is not that manifestation, it is only a particular form or means through which the Spirit manifests Himself. True it is that the gift at that time becomes obvious — that is unavoidable — but it is only an inanimate, abstract form, a means through which some spirit person or another is able to manifest himself. That is why in this section God is not just discussing spiritual means, but spiritual persons.

The gift does not spiritualise the person, but the person the gift, that is to say that as he co-operates with the Spirit for its function it is enhanced. The Holy Spirit does not normally work through a member/person of the body of Christ beyond the spiritual condition of that person. The Lord wishes to speak and work increasingly, and more powerfully and all the time; this will be quite possible to every member as the person keeps permanently filled with and alert to the Holy Spirit. Spiritual condition, spiritual power and spiritual achievement are interdependent. In order to manifest the Spirit, the gift of the Spirit, of whatsoever kind it may be, must be worked exclusively by the Spirit through the member. It may then be said to be used of the Spirit, so that although the gift is in operation, He is being manifest. The gift is being used, but not being displayed; then and then only is the gift spiritual in use.

The Holy Ghost must not be robbed of His gifts. They are, and always will be, His personal property. Persons who receive them must fully grasp this, for it is a basic principle, and the understanding upon which they are distributed. All must know that:

- 1) gifts do not belong to the gifted member;
- 2) no person must expropriate his gift;
- 3) he must not take over its working from the Spirit of God.

Should this latter take place, it is an evidence that Old Adam is again active, as in the beginning, robbing God of His rightful possessions.

Outwardly a person will be seen, heard, thought and said to be in possession of a gift, but inwardly he must know to whom it belongs and be used of God in it. He must not attempt to use it himself; if he does so it will be as of himself, and will only manifest himself, not the Spirit of the body. What each man must understand is that his functional gift is not really the gift to the body, but that he himself is that gift. In order for this to be, he must become utterly identified with the gift, so that to the members of the body he is identifiable and his position known. To a certain extent also, he himself will be evaluated by it. This can be quite easily

understood by us as when for instance a man becomes so known by his use of the gift of prophecy that he is called a prophet.

He is the Head of the Body

However, having come to the realisation that he himself is of more importance than the gift, a person must also know the importance of the gift with which he has been honoured. We have been made members of the body in order that the gift(s) we each have received may be used for the glory of the Christ and the edification and mutual benefit of every member of the body. Gifts of the Spirit are not only enablings, they are also entrustments, and because this is so, it at once becomes apparent that they must also be necessities.

The lifelong ministry of the saints is to build up the body, and the gifts are given for this fundamental purpose. The overall power and mastermind working through all this is in Jesus, the Head of the Body, and the Spirit animating the body is His Spirit, into which every member has been made to drink. Having thus become members of His body, each has to submit to Him in order to develop the mind of the Spirit of the body. Each member is a gift; what are called the gifts are means of function, enablings distributed to make the body fully operational among men now in the same way and by the same powers as the Lord Himself operated among men of old.

Discern the Body

Bearing the import of all this in mind, it is most significant that before speaking about these things, the apostle first censures two other grave irregularities which were common features of the general decadence and carnality of the Corinthian church at that time. When understood, it is entirely to be expected that he should do so. In the first of these he applies correction and instruction concerning Headship in the Church, and in the second he tells us about the spiritual communion of the body. Both have to do with relationships; the first that of the Head with the whole body, and the second that of each member with the others. Each is implied in the other, for they are interwoven. In each case he makes his main points quite plainly in verses 3 and 27.

The important subject of Head-covering in the Church has been very fully discussed in a pamphlet entitled *** 'A Sign of Authority', so for this reason it will not be examined here. Therefore we pass on to the second irregularity mentioned in this chapter, namely the Corinthians' wrong behaviour at what is called the Lord's Supper. This description of the meal immediately brings to our minds the ideas of Lordship and finality — it was a supper.

Dealing with, and hopefully clearing away, the absurd and distasteful practices into which the Corinthians had lapsed, the apostle takes them back in thought to that guest-chamber where the Lord entertained His chosen ones to their final meal in His presence. Their Lord supplied bread and wine, simple twin interdependent elements representing His body and His blood, man's true spiritual food. 'Do this in remembrance of Me', He said. 'Take, eat, this is My Body which is broken for you this cup is the New Testament in My Blood drink it'. Eat and drink it worthily, says the apostle; it is for your health and strength; discern the Lord's Body and keep alive and well, strong and healthy. Come to self-judgement and spiritual renewal; come to discern the Lord's body and to wholeness and health, come to Christ, your food and drink, eat Him, drink Him, live by Him and Him alone.

So saying the apostle prepares us for what he has to say in chapters 12 to 14. By these things we see more plainly still how that God's emphasis is truly upon the man rather than upon his gifts. God grant that, seeing this, we may realise in what attitude the spirituals must be held and used by spiritual men. Truly the word 'spiritual' has first to do with persons and only afterwards with power and performance.

A Foundation of Righteousness

The Spirit of God is clear; before any attempt be made at setting right the function and order of the gifts, the body must first of all be clear about the nature and principles of eternal righteousness. The body of Christ must be right, simply because it is His body; obedience is more precious in His eyes than gift or sacrifice or miracle. We must get this matter of headship and authority right before we pass on to power and performance.

Whether to past happenings or future events or present truth, in His spiritual body He must be perfectly correct in all His relationships. He was right in His body of flesh, and He must be right in His spiritual body. He is the

embodiment of Truth proceeding from the Father.

This is why Paul delays dealing with the spirituals until this late point of the epistle. He has approached the subject through eleven other chapters devoted to establishing fundamental principles and values, each of far greater import than the 'modus operandi' of the spirituals. Except he had done so he would have created an entirely wrong impression about the place and function of the gifts, and would have left the Corinthian situation basically unchanged. Had he done that, except by some later gracious intervention, the gifts would not have been, nor could have functioned ever again as spiritual means among them. They would have remained entirely devoid of the life and power and meaning of God, totally ineffectual, and incapable of achieving His objectives among men. The Word of Wisdom would have become man's wisdom, which is foolishness; the Word of Knowledge a demonstration of psychic prognostication by means of Extra Sensory Perception; Discernment of spirits an exercise in clairvoyant powers; Faith a hypnotic co-operation with powers of evil; Healing and Miracles satanic deceptions; Prophecy, Tongues and Interpretation would be utterances of men and devils, human at best and devilish at worst. Instead of gatherings together unto the praise and worship of God, meetings would have been sinful demonstrations of carnal powers to the accompaniment of sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. Everything would have been to the glory of man, the delight of satan and the dishonouring of God.

The Fellowship of His Son

How great is our joy then to discover Paul's approach to the whole Corinthian situation. He tells them that, although they come behind in no gift, primarily they have been called by God that they should enter into the fellowship of His Son (1:1-9). To understand these opening verses aright is to possess the key to all that follows, whether it be of life or worship or work or witness, or even the world to come.

In this matter of the spirituals, the gifts can only be spiritual if and as they are operated in the fellowship of the Son. If a man is out of fellowship with Him, that man's gifts are Carnals, or what is worse, Psychicals, or at the very worst Demoniacals. Whatever be the power of them, if a man is out of the fellowship of the Son it will certainly not be that power of God of which Paul speaks in verses 18 and 24. Plainly, if a man is to be spiritual, he must see and know What is his Calling, Who it is calling him, verse 9, to Where he is called, verse 9, Why he is called, and God's choice and purposes in calling him or the Wisdom of the Call, verses 26-29, the Work implied by the Call, verse 2 and verse 1, Why he is called into the fellowship, verse 18 (the Cross), or the Wonder of the Call.

The Head is Jesus

Returning to chapter 12 and looking with understanding at Paul's construction of this section on Spirituals, the observer may discover a testimony to the truth of the foregoing. The few introductory verses draw our attention to the Headship of Christ. In order to be a living body, everybody must have a head, even as every head, to be a living head, must have a body; the two are as interdependent as they are indivisible. They comprise one whole and share one life. As it is so surprisingly yet matter-of-factly said in verse 21, 'the head cannot say to the feet, I have no need of you', even though the Head is Jesus.

Although this is a most unexpected remark in this connection, it is also most obviously true and sane. How can any person's head go where it wishes except it has a body, or how can the head move the body from one place to another except it has feet with which to do so? It is no remarkable thing then that in the next verse our attention is drawn to necessities. When we assimilate the fact that this is our Head speaking of His dependence upon us, surprise gives way to awe. He is plainly telling us about our necessity to Him, and if this be so with Him, how much more should we feel our dependence upon Him? The body cannot say to the Head, 'I have no need of Thee'.

The Wonderful Works of God

However, before proceeding further with this particular line of investigation, we will follow Paul's thoughts and first examine the necessity of the Head to the body. In connection with the function of the Spirituals, he first reminds the Corinthians of a basic principle of which they must not be ignorant, 'ye were carried away ... ye were led'. In the past when they were idolaters, they had been quite content to abandon themselves to their leaders without question. They knew quite well that in order to exercise themselves fully in their heathen

worship and to extract from it the satisfaction that they sought in the past, it had been necessary for them to allow themselves to be carried away by some evil power.

Paul and they knew by experience that worship is an exercise which lies beyond self. It is only possible to those who abandon themselves to a power other and greater than their own. Men must be carried away into realms where worship is properly known and exercised in outpourings of the spirit upon the object of worship in sensible adoration. Worship does not consist of, nor can it exist in cool, calm, withdrawn self-containment. Truest worship is extravagance; it is the spending of self upon someone other, greater, higher than self, (see Luke 7:36-38 and 47; John 12:3; Rev. 4:6-11 and 5:11-14, as examples of true worship). It requires abandonment to the degree where the whole inward self is now subjected to and controlled by the indwelling Spirit to the point where it is borne up, strengthened and carried away, and is poured out in pure ecstatic realisation of glory in union with the life of Christ before the Father, where it is sustained in self-bestowal to the point of self-forgetfulness.

This worship, though not a demonstration of emotionalism, is nevertheless emotive loving in the Spirit of purity and holiness; it is the height of spirituality. Once known it enlightens us forever as to the reason for the use of the word Spirituals. For the accomplishment and enjoyment of this highest human glory, the entire self must co-operate with the Holy Spirit's leading, for it cannot otherwise be achieved.

When this blessed state is reached, as with those on the day of Pentecost, though not necessarily in an unknown tongue nor yet for the same purpose, the blessed Spirit will give utterance to the being, so that we speak unto Jesus, saying as here recorded, 'Jesus, Lord' (lit.). The Greek word translated 'utterance' in Acts 2:4, really means 'to utter in short pithy sentences' — weighty, meaty statements which express the essence of truth in power: in short, the felt appreciation of the Lord's working in the life, or the Church, or the universe. Whatever be the theme or subject of worship, the worshippers' hearts are poured out of their lips. 'They heard them speak ... the wonderful works of God'. That is when and where and how and why it all begins.

Jesus IS Lord

Right at the threshold of this section wherein we are introduced to the only scriptural revelation of a church at worship, the Headship and Lordship of Jesus is set exactly where it ought to be — first, or at the top. 'Jesus, Lord', upon the lips of human beings uttering their pure life — meaning with heart — adoration to Him is not just a mere acknowledgement of correct order, although it reveals it, nor is it an acquiescence to truth, although it is certainly that, nor is it an agreement to conform to Him in His body. 'Jesus, Lord', (who can speak the words of love?) is a transcendent, iridescent uprising and outflow of spirit in public confession of that sublime relationship which is the ground and glory of the mystery of the Christ of many members, verse 12.

We do well to note that it is strictly from this exquisite love-relationship with the Lord that Paul moves on to the diversity and differences of the gifts and their administration and operation, for otherwise none of them have any eternal meaning. The first manifestation of the Spirit is worship, and worship is a demonstration just as each one of the gifts. By linking together the twin exercises of worship and demonstration, he tells us that the same Spirit which leads and carries us away unto Jesus (the) Lord, is the same one who works the gifts. Therefore and thereby alone are they 'the Spirituals'; this alone is the reason why God is justified in so naming them. Truly He shows us that indeed 'modus vivendi' is greater than 'modus operandi'.

The Spirit is the Power

Commencing thus, the apostle yet delays from listing the gifts, choosing rather in verses 4-6 to draw our attention to the diversities of ways God works in and through them. Again he is emphasising that we have to learn and recognise that differences of application are of far greater importance than the great variety of the gifts themselves. It is as if he is saying 'now, before you seek any of these powers, know that in Christ and unto Christ your Head, the way a thing is spoken or done is of far greater importance than the thing which is being said or done. I am about to categorise the gifts or enablings of the Spirit, but I want you to understand that all these are really only means of application and communication: my brethren, tones, attitudes, approaches, manner(s) convey more than any of these words or works. Understand that the way these gifts or powers are administered and operated will count more in the long run than the immediate ends you hope to

achieve by their use

Quite simply Paul is continuing his theme of the Lordship and Headship of Jesus, carrying over the truth of relationship to which he has earlier referred and applying it in a still more particular way. It is absolutely 'not done', or to use his own words, 'we have no such custom among us' to display a certain attitude in worship and adopt a different one in works. A man's attitude must be the same upon every occasion, for there can be no difference in the Spirit which engages in them. God does not allow that it is possible to be one person to Him and another person to men; and the assumption that because a person's gift seems to operate smoothly, what is said must be right in the sight of God is a pitfall to be avoided at all times.

The same Spirit that gives utterance to our one Head must also give us utterance to all men, whether they are fellow-members of the body or not. The Spirit that governs attitude must also govern administration and operation. These verses clearly set forth that the 'same Spirit' is also the same Lord, and the same God, and the very next verse says that it is the manifestation of that same Spirit which is of the greatest importance of all. The most important thing is not what is being administered, operated, or manifested, but Who is being manifest, and how and in what manner all is being done.

The Manifestation of the Spirit

It is in this spirit, with this knowledge, and in this relationship that we are introduced to the gifts. Each of them is given to some member of the body to be a means of manifestation and application of that Spirit; indeed they are all given by God solely for that purpose. Moreover, according to that purpose each one is also intended to contribute to the growth and development of the body of Christ, to which end all are ideally suited and perfectly adaptable. Quite obviously, being spiritual gifts, they are supernatural, and are bestowed as additions to the already existing natural powers which human beings possess, for human powers are totally inadequate to do what He requires.

When God originally created man, He made him with these things in mind; however, whatever powers that great man Adam naturally had when God originally created him, we do not now have the gifts until they are bestowed upon us by the Holy Spirit. Man nevertheless is quite capable of operating them, being as perfectly made and designed for their function as is the lamp-holder for the lamp. As the lamp is designed for the lamp stand so that together they are one, so also the Church and the gifts of the Spirit are one. There can be no separating them except in theory or unto death; as the body with its members is one and the head and the body are one, so are the Church and the gifts. Analytically it is possible to distinguish between all these, but they cannot be separated in life.

Verse 11 says that all these gifts are worked by the selfsame Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will, and verse 7 says that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to 'every man'. In scripture no member of the body is allowed any ground to think that he is excluded; there can be no mistaking the all-inclusiveness of the words 'every man'. As if to reinforce this position, the phrasing of verse 28 plainly implies the same thing; there Paul noticeably changes from persons to operations, leaving the distinct impression that whoever holds and operates the gifts mentioned must become so identified with them that the gifts become known rather than the person. Surely all this must mean that each member is intended by God to receive and operate a gift, becoming so one with it that functionally he may give himself fully unto its use for the mutual benefit of all. Doing so with all his heart, he is helping to build up the body of Christ.

Christ is His Body

Returning to and re-reading the first half of the chapter, we find that this same thing is borne out by the use of the word 'for' in verses 8,12,13 and 14; it is amazing how much truth God packs into so few words as these. Everything here is of the Spirit and cannot be otherwise, for we have all been baptised in one Spirit into one Body, and in process have all been made to drink into one Spirit. One of the most remarkable features of this short section is the non-appearance in the text of the word 'head'. At first this may appear surprising, but close reading reveals that this is so because Head and Body are so one that God regards it as superfluous here to mention them separately. To have done so would have been inconsistent with the fact He was wanting to impress upon us, namely (verse 12), 'the body is one, many members ... one body ... Christ'.

That is the life God wants us to see, believe, receive and live in operationally with joy. We are not being

shown Christ and His body, but that Christ is His body; in God's view there is no difference, for truly considered they are inseparable. Analytically they could exist separately, but not in life. What is being said here is pinpointed in verse 14. Grammatically it is the ultimate goal which has been reached by the continued use of the word 'for', by which he links the verses.

The Same Spirit

Because Christ's spiritual body is compounded of many members, it is absolutely necessary that each of them should be filled with one Spirit only. Working back or upwards from this verse, we may state our conclusions as follows: by this means God ensured that each would not exist separately from, nor operate adversely to His purposes and each other. For this it was not sufficient just to immerse them in Spirit; for God's purposes the Spirit must be in each as much as each is in Him.

Further, because all the members together with the Head are one body, and that one body is Christ, the selfsame Spirit must work in every one of them together; each individual must know that it is happening in them. The will as well as the working of the Spirit must be known by all, for He is the Spirit of the mind (thinking, planning and purposing) of Christ in every member. In this capacity He gives to one member to do one thing and to another to do something else; He does not merely give, He gives to do. He has operation as well as possession in mind for us. Too readily and shortly we rest in an incomplete experience because of incomplete conception of what the Lord is wanting to do; too often we come short of the glory of God through ignorance.

We must realise that we only have eternal life in Christ as being a member of Him; this being so, we must also recognise that consequently we have a functional capacity in and for Him. We must also understand that whatever is bestowed upon us cannot be allowed to be our own, for it is in Him and is therefore His. Therefore no functional action may be taken as from ourselves, but only by Him through us. By this we see that the Spirit distributes His gifts with the sole object in view that He should be the one who exclusively operates and administers them. This is clearly shown by the repeated use of the phrase 'the same Spirit', 'to one is given by the same Spirit the word of wisdom, to another by the same Spirit ... the same Spirit'. This is so because God wants the Spirit of the Body as well as the function of the Body manifest to all.

What Spirit are Ye of?

Recalling an incident from the history of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus as recorded in Luke 9.51-56, will suffice us for an illustration of this great truth. It occurred during the course of the Lord's final journey up to Jerusalem and His ultimate victory there. The apostles, incensed by the attitude of some Samaritans towards the Lord, said to Him, 'shall we call down fire from heaven and consume them as Elijah did?' To this the Lord answered, 'ye know not what spirit ye are of ...', which shows that although greatly privileged at that time, the apostles did not have nor could they function in the same Spirit as the Lord.

His Spirit is the spirit of salvation, preservation, grace, love, forgiveness, but theirs was not, so He restrained and reproved them. What they wanted to do was quite foreign to His Spirit, but then they were not members of His body at that time. Therefore they were not of Him, nor could they be, for they had not as yet been baptised into Him and it. They were of His company, but not of His Spirit. We may safely assume that they had either the gift of faith or of miracles, perhaps even both, for they were quite certain that they could actually call down fire, and perform the destructive miracle. Seemingly they had the gift which enabled them to do so, but the Spirit of the Body, and therefore of Christ, would not have been manifested by such an act. And no wonder either, for these men were seeking to model themselves upon Elijah, it was he who had performed the miracle which the apostles wanted to emulate.

His Body — His Spirit

Consideration of all this immediately raises a problem which we will do best to face at this point, namely is it possible to have and be used in a gift of the Spirit and not be a member of the Body of Christ? If this can be so, what then was the spirit which animated the apostles at that time if it was not the Holy Spirit, which animates the Body of Christ? Taken in order, an answer to each question may be set out as follows:

(1) firstly a plain 'yes'; the abilities and functions now known as the gifts of the Spirit are really the natural

powers of Jesus Christ; they are the means by which He accomplished His works. While here on earth He authorised some of His disciples to go out with and preach the gospel they then knew, and also do some of His works. For this He equipped them to a limited extent with some of His abilities, and delegated to them the power and authority which was His by reason of His Sonship and Anointing:

(2) the real power which animates the Body of Christ is without doubt the Spirit of Christ.

The Body, beside being His own, must just as truly be indwelt by His own Spirit, for only by his own spirit can any person be alive — that is have being and move and think and speak and work in his own body. During the whole of the Lord's earthly ministry, and even following His resurrection, the apostles were not of His Spirit, but were of the spirit of the Old Covenant. All miracles wrought by prophets and saints of the Old Covenant were achieved by the Holy Spirit coming upon them. At that time the Holy Spirit did not dwell within men in the same way and for the same purposes as He did from Pentecost onwards. Until Pentecost the apostles, in common with their forebears, did not know the Spirit's indwelling (John 14:15 and 16) but only Christ's special enabling for service.

It is not therefore greatly difficult for us to understand that the Spirit into which we are made to drink while being baptised in the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, whose same body it is into which we are baptised. Therefore the gifts of the Spirit which members of the body receive may only be thought of as the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and as being bestowed distinct from the Spirit of Christ, because it is by means of the baptism in the Holy Spirit that we receive ability to possess and function in them. They are each one bestowed by Christ from His fullness upon His members, and are named in a definitive manner as equipage unto specific ends. His abundance is thereby fully distributed among the members of His Body as their immediate heritage in order to enable each to function as He in specially defined ways, each of which is indicated by the name of the gift.

Wisdom and Knowledge

Thus what was displayed in Him naturally as marvellous Wisdom, became, when bestowed upon a member of His Body, a gift of the Spirit, when it became the Word of Wisdom. So also is it with His profound Knowledge; in bestowal it becomes the Word of Knowledge. In fact, with the exception of the last two, some such thing could be said of all the gifts. All divine wisdom and knowledge are not granted as permanent gifts to any man, although all God's wisdom and knowledge are behind their limited expression or defined application in the form of a gift. The Word of Wisdom or of Knowledge is given in grace as a temporary and limited bestowal from that eternal fullness in sufficient measure to meet the internal or external functional needs of the body at that time. If functioning properly, it will operate continuously during the lifetime of the member whose gift it is. But although in certain conditions the gift as a means can be residual, the function is only ever conditional and occasional.

This may be quite easily grasped when it is remembered that a hand and its function will depend entirely upon power under direction and control from the head, Although its existence and position are continuous and its power is constantly implied, its function is only of an intermittent nature. Although all the whole fullness and content of the powers referred to by each gift are not bestowed with the gift, when the gift is functioning, all the fullness of all the power is concentrated upon that member/gift for its operation.

King in His Kingdom

There is a further lesson to be learned from Luke 9 concerning the true function of the gifts, and it is this: although the two apostles apparently had the means and power to call down fire from heaven, they dare not attempt to do so without permission from the Lord; they said, 'Lord, wilt Thou?' In His day apparently, except it be His will, the gifts could not function; His will must be sought and permission granted before they could operate. He was at that time recognised by His disciples as absolute King in His own kingdom. Now that He is glorified, the Lord is not less King in His own kingdom than He was previously. To this day in His kingdom nothing other than His will may be done. It must therefore be true that the gifts of the Spirit to be spirituals can only function by His power, and may only operate and be administered according to His will.

Further to this, we find that when in the beginning of the gospel Peter was given the keys of the kingdom, he opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. This was accomplished through the outpouring of the Spirit in Cornelius' house at Caesarea, the Jewish province with the gentile name. Ever since then, given the right

conditions under all true gospel ministry of the Spirit, Gentiles may enter directly into the kingdom. Some time later, following Peter's ministry, Paul visited Corinth and at that time also many entered the kingdom, for under his ministry, as well as Peter's, they were baptised in the Spirit into the Body of Christ. Drinking into His Spirit, they first received and then functioned in all the gifts He gave them, and following the departure of the apostle they had reigned as kings. But although this had been so with them then, at the time when Paul wrote to the church, many of them were weak and sickly, and many slept.

With all their blessings and privileges, the Corinthian church was a failure. They had aspired to kingly authority (Paul said 'would to God ye did reign, that we might reign with you') and with carnal audacity many of the members had expropriated the gifts of the Spirit, making what were originally the priceless gifts of God the worthless possessions of men. The result was that the oral gifts when in use became nothing more than sounding brass and tinkling cymbal; likewise all the other gifts had become devoid of power. They were just mere human attempts at trying to make something work. The Spirituals had sunk to psychicals and had become Carnal(s), man's abilities and not God's. The Church's misappropriation of God's properties can only result in mishandling and misapplication to man's needs, whether to the Church or to the world of men outside it.

Lord of His Body

Instead of Christ, the Corinthians had reigned. They ought to have sought to do the King's will and to obtain His permission. Instead they had presumed that since they had the gifts, they were at liberty to use them as and when they liked, whatever their state of life was at the time. Now the fact of the matter is that, although upon the surface it may appear that the gifts function in this manner, God does not give them upon such humanistic conditions; He did not do so in those days and neither does He do so now. On the contrary, to this day they will only work properly upon the same principle as they did during the days when the King was in His physical body on the earth, namely by direct bestowal from the Lord (Luke 9:1 and 2) and in close co-operation with Him, both as to timing and objective, as has already been instanced in verses 54 and 55.

To be sure the relationship which exists between Master and disciples is of a quite different nature from that of Head and Body/member, but the principle of function by divine authority remains the same. It is illogical to reason and therefore to believe that because a gift is spiritual in origin and was bestowed during or following upon Baptism in the Spirit, it is infallibly Spiritual in use. It is also false for persons to assume that because they have been baptised in the Spirit, they are therefore and thereby henceforth always in the Spirit and may use their gifts as and when they please, or whenever they attend meetings, and that being so used the gift will be Spiritual in operation and effect. On the other hand, although this must not be assumed, it is to be expected that the body of gifts should function as naturally and smoothly as a body ought.

A healthy body ordinarily functions so naturally and the particular action of each member is so beautifully controlled and synchronised each with each for the common good, that all can quite easily move as one. But although we know that much which happens in a body is of a reflex nature, we also know that nothing is either autonomous or automatic. No member decides to do something itself as though it has a mind of its own. Every detail of action is under the command of the common brain, even though often that action is too spontaneous in movement for conscious thought to control. This is because some actions must be taken in faster time than conscious thought can be stimulated or decisions taken and the necessary action or procession of actions voluntarily initiated under control of the conscious mind. This is as possible as it is necessary by reason of a vast and complex nervous system originally devised by God, and fully developed within the babe before birth.

This highly sensitive inner network was created by an all-wise, benevolent Creator for the proper function and protection of His creatures. The blinking of an eyelid, for instance, can be done voluntarily and deliberately by any person, but usually it happens quite involuntarily, often without the person being at all aware of it. In fact the most important functions of the human body are almost all, if not entirely without exception, executed apart from the prior conscious consent of the person. All of which leads to the realisation that behind the conscious mind of the race lies a great predestinating mind that originally fixed basic human bodily reactions according to the good pleasure of His will.

The Carnal Mind

There are also many other factors which should be taken into account if a full study of these things were to be undertaken, but except to mention one of these we will continue with our main theme. Deeper than the above-mentioned system, which has been ineradicably rooted in the mind by God far below conscious thought levels, lies an inborn mentally-operated process which controls the nature and quality of thought. This is spirit-based and was first governed by its Creator, who thereby made man a creature capable of total response to Him and His will.

However, by the fall of Man in Eden, the human being came under the power and headship of satan the usurper, who took over control from God by a cleverly disguised ruse through which he trapped Adam into sin. This, though unspecified at the time, was nonetheless inevitable, for the purpose in satan's heart, which lay behind the temptation, was that the man should react against the will and spoken word of God. By making the voluntary agreement with the serpent Adam went to death, choosing the prideful position of being able to know and discern between good and evil rather than obey God. He did this without knowing or properly considering that from that moment he would or might be without power to do the good.

Perhaps if he had known the immediate effect and fullest consequences of his choice he may have acted differently; but speculation is profitless. What we do know is that from that moment Lucifer's original decision to choose the opposite to God's desires was implanted by him into the father of the human race. Since then it has continued within man as a fixed disposition to defy and disobey God — the sin nature, variously called by Paul 'the carnal mind' or 'the law of sin which worketh in my members'. In all natural men it is all-powerful, irresistible, unalterable, subconscious and all-pervading. Its base is in the spirit of the mind rather than in the mind itself. Being the unknown, undetectable mind behind the dead spirit of man, it controls the spirit of the mind of every man, deciding the quality of each thought, word and action, permanently fixing it as rebellious, and making it the enemy of all righteousness.

Through this mind of the evil spirit which is controlling him, man's mind is no longer linked with God's but satan's. Worse still, this spiritual mind has about it a predestinating quality, so that nothing a man does voluntarily or involuntarily can be intrinsically good. We see therefore that because he controls the spirit and mind of man, satan also governs the inception and quality and condition and outworkings of all things human. This being so, he overrules all man's best intentions and efforts, with the result that nothing he does or says can be to the glory of God.

Man therefore in and of himself cannot please God sufficiently to save himself, nor can he, unaided by the Lord, even commend himself to God. But upon being baptised by Christ in the Spirit into His own Body, two things take place in man:

(1) his own carnal mind (or the manifestation of the law of sin, by which satan mentally controls him through his dead spirit) is removed: (2) by drinking into the Spirit of the Body of Christ, that is Christ's Spirit, he is now placed under the control of the mind of Christ.

The Indwelling Lord

Now the mind of Christ is the only one which works in His Body; no-one else's can function or control there. Because this is so, it ought reasonably to be expected by all the members that to some extent the gift(s) they have do function according to His direction and power, and not their own. We are not now, as those of old, serving a Master without, but a Lord within; we are within His Body, serving Him and not ourselves by means of these gifts He has so freely bestowed upon us. Whereas formerly He had to command men as from without, His power is now working and moving us from within. This being so, we may be sure that if we maintain and foster the union and communion between ourselves and Him, the gifts with which we have been entrusted will indeed truly be His alone, used by Him exclusively.

Part 2

The Word of Wisdom

The Wisdom of Love

Possessing this knowledge and proceeding to an examination of His gifts to us, we may perhaps agree that it is of great significance that the first gift through which the Spirit of the body manifests itself is stated to be the Word of Wisdom.

In the light of all that we have so far gathered, we may at this point summarise what we have learned thus: we are baptised in the Spirit; we have drunk into one Spirit; we say 'Jesus, Lord' by the Spirit; we realise that the same Spirit functions through a variety of different gifts; we know that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man for profit to all, and we now see also that He manifests Himself chiefly as the Spirit that speaks wisdom. Such knowledge is most precious and comforting. What a blessing it is to know that the Holy Ghost, the Spirit in which the entire body lives and by which it always functions, is the Spirit of Wisdom.

But great as all this is upon the sacred page, the sad fact is that, like Adam of old, in practice the church at Corinth had ceased to be wise. This is brought out most clearly in the second epistle, chapter 11, where Paul implies that they had been beguiled and corrupted as Eve was by the serpent. Under the circumstances then, what other could Paul do than write to them concerning their folly and give them plain instruction about the nature of Wisdom, this most precious grace and gift? To no other church did Paul speak of wisdom to the same extent as he did to these people. So great is the urge within him as he writes to them, that before he has reached a third of the way through this letter, he uses the word 'wisdom' fifteen times; seven times in the first chapter and six times in the second. So also is it with the word 'wise'; in chapter one he uses it five times (once as wiser) and in chapter three five times more, ten times in all.

From all of this we can see how great was his concern over their inexcusable folly. Not that absence of wisdom was their greatest folly; way back behind that lay their chiefest crime — lack of love. Lack of wisdom is folly, but lack of love is sin. Simple foolishness is no crime against God; unavoidable ignorance is no sin, but not to love (see chapter 13) is indeed sin, and therefore finally must be of greatest folly. Nevertheless, when compiling the list of Christ's virtues in chapter 1, he shows the supremacy of wisdom by placing it at the head; 'Christ ... is made unto us Wisdom ...' he says.

According to His Will

According to verse 31, this is in order that all glorying should be in the Lord. Glorying must not be in men (verse 12), nor in whoever it was that baptised us in water (verses 13-17), nor in the wisdom of men (verses 18-25), nor in anything we inherited by reason of, or that was imposed upon us from, our first birth, God has deliberately chosen to do everything in the Church according to His own will, so that no flesh should be able to glory in His presence (verse 29).

It would appear that among the Corinthians there were those who had ceased to regard this wisdom as being characteristic of God. Not that the Word of Wisdom as a gift was not highly regarded among them; quite possibly it was still being faithfully spoken among them through some person or other, for verses 5-7 declare plainly that they were enriched in all utterance and knowledge. The testimony of Christ was so confirmed among them, that all the gifts were present and functional in the church.

But wisdom does not reside in utterances of wise words; it lies in loving acceptance and faithful obedience to them. Wisdom is in life and deed, not in gift and word; as it is written in 4:20, 'the kingdom of God is not in word but in power'. God, who is Wisdom, rules by power not by words. This fact is confirmed by John when speaking of love in his first epistle, chapter 3, verse 18, 'let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth'. The fundamental and enduring principle governing all life and words and work in God's kingdom is that life and work are greater than gift and word. This is true, both in the elementary matters of the outward Kingdom of Heaven, or in the more advanced spiritual elements and developments of life within the inner Kingdom of God.

Paul brings to our notice the most fundamental exhibition of this in 1:17-25; 'the word of the Cross' is God's greatest 'word of wisdom'. While man seeks after wisdom, thinking that wise words proclaim the presence of an Oracle whom they may admire, we preach 'Christ crucified ... the power of God and (therefore) the wisdom of God'. All the wisdom and understanding of man must be destroyed, and not the least reason for this is that for the major part it is contained in sayings and writings. Wisdom is not a collection of wise words,

although they may have been spoken by the wisest men of the ages. True Wisdom is accounted to be foolishness by men; there is no wisdom in them, for they despise the Christ of the Cross, who is made unto us wisdom.

A Pearl of Great Price

The tragedy of the Corinthians was that they too were 'walking as men' (3:3). Seeking after wisdom, they almost certainly adored and used the gift, but only for their own carnal ends: 'the Greeks (Hellenists, Gentiles) seek after wisdom' Paul says. But as soon as this attitude is adopted toward any of the gifts, although they may seem to be powerful in operation and appear to hold their original God-given content in utterance, they are nevertheless empty shards; clouds without water; deceptions which in the end are sure to demonise and not spiritualise people. All such practice is really misuse, it is abuse of privilege, showmanship.

That such a thing should be is no less than tragic, for this most excellent pearl of wisdom, when set among the other 'precious stones' with which God adorns His temple, is at once seen to be absolutely unique. Wisdom is universally valued among men as the most precious pearl of all. How then could it be so debased? Perhaps we may allow ourselves to be taught a lesson from this. Certainly if we neglect what God here sets forth, we have little hope of pleasing Him, or of attaining to that manhood in Christ for which He pleads in 14:20 and 13:11, but instead must fail and, as the Corinthians were at that time, remain carnal, unspiritual babes (3:1-3).

Let us learn that because God, by Paul, says that the crucified Christ is His own power and wisdom, He is surely teaching us that our most powerful wisdom is to be crucified Christians. Let no man reject this truth through misunderstanding: a crucified man is not a dead man, he is eternally alive, living for ever as a crucified man. A man ceases to be a man if he be crucified and dead; he becomes by crucifixion a dead corpse, not a dead person. A crucified man is a living person who has gone through death, and behold he is alive for evermore! In truth there is no such person at all as an uncrucified Christian; to be a Christian, a person must have been personally crucified.

Beside this, God is also laying down a principle of truth for the operation of all the gifts, namely this: there is no power for good, nor is the wisdom of God in any of them either in themselves or in their use except it be the power and wisdom of Christ crucified. Wisdom of words makes the cross of Christ of none effect, so He says; flesh and not the Spirit is glorying if the cross be ineffective when the word of wisdom is in operation among us. It may achieve results in certain areas to limited degrees, but it cannot be of infinite value in the Spirit nor be to the glory of God.

The Logos of the Cross

This is the reason why Paul in writing to them, is very careful to use the distinctive word 'Logos' in 1:18 and 12:8. The former verse should be read, 'for the Word (Logos) of the Cross ... is the power of God', and set in contrast to 'the wisdom of words which makes the cross of none effect', in verse 17. The Spirit which operates the gifts in the body of Christ must make the cross of Christ effective in His members, or He cannot hope to achieve His purposes in operating the gift. By the language of Paul 'the Word (Logos) of the Cross' and 'the Word (Logos) of Wisdom' are definitely linked, with the result that the cross is shown to be the real power of the Word of Wisdom. For the Church the Logos which was made flesh (John 1:14) had to become the Logos of the Cross before He could be the Logos of Wisdom.

Obviously, in God's order, being and deed precede words. The Word can only be the Word of Wisdom if it is the Word of the Cross, for the Word and the Cross are one, Christ crucified. Whatsoever gift there be in the Body of Christ can only be in the Body of Christ crucified. Therefore to function properly it must partake of the power of the cross. The real power of the gifts in the Church is the cross of the Christ of the Cross, for it is by this power that sin and self are permanently excluded from them; then and not until then are they really spirituals. An uncrucified man is a carnal man, for he has forsaken God's wisdom and power. The Man of the Spirit is the crucified Man. Even Christ cannot now be known after the flesh, He is the spiritual MAN — we are His BODY.

The Supremacy of Understanding Love.

Adam's Irretrievable Loss * In Understanding be Men * That Ye may Know

At the head of the nine gifts listed in I Corinthians 12, God has placed the Word of Wisdom. This gift is placed at the head of the body of gifts in this chapter in close association with Knowledge — though above it. Thus God has shown His own great wisdom, for in the following verses it is said that all the rest of the other great variety of gifts are worked by the one and selfsame Spirit which works this one. It follows therefore that all the gifts which we shall now examine must be used in the Spirit of Wisdom, for each is a part and proof of that Wisdom and can only properly be used as an application of it.

Perhaps this has not been sufficiently understood among us. Certainly it was precisely because the Corinthians of old failed to grasp this that Paul needed to correct their behaviour. Their general state and their worship of God and the manner in which they operated the gifts was so bad that he had to redirect them completely; they had gone sadly astray. Ignorance and abuse so abounded, that it is plain why Wisdom is given the premier position. There are many reasons for this, any one of which is sufficient justification for the choice; however we will examine just one of these.

Adam's Irretrievable Loss

Going back to the book of Genesis, we discover that Adam followed Eve's example and lead. He responded to satan's temptation by partaking of the forbidden fruit, with the result that he sold out the whole of the as yet unborn race to satan. By this act Adam not only proved guilty of unbelief, disobedience and pride, but before God he was guilty of crass folly also. Greedily reaching out after and stealing the promise of certainty of knowledge, this man revealed that he was either too ignorant to distinguish the difference between wisdom and knowledge, or else that he deemed knowledge to be greater than wisdom; as may be expected the result was that he became an absolute fool.

At that time Adam was the head of all creation, the wise man of the earth who God had placed over all other creatures, but in order to gain forbidden knowledge he forsook his wisdom and deliberately chose to disobey God. Whatever vain thoughts or fond imaginings went through his mind then, all were folly, for by his act he revealed his willingness, if not his eagerness, to abandon all wisdom for the attainment of knowledge, and in doing so became vain. The trespass he committed was not just an act whereby he temporarily reversed the order of wisdom and knowledge, making knowledge to be first and wisdom second; he rejected wisdom altogether.

What Adam really did was to declare that, by increasing his knowledge in forbidden spheres, man becomes wiser, which is an absolute lie. By His act Adam deliberately rejected the truth and denied the fact that man's wisdom is revealed only by obedience to God in order to grow in knowledge of his Creator and Lord. Adam's wisdom was to know God, and by refusing to acknowledge what real wisdom is, he ceased to know God.. Worse than that, he set in motion the foolish train of human ideas upon which Paul later makes certain comments, such as 'the world by wisdom knew not God', 'God hath made foolish the wisdom of this world'. By these, and many other like sentences, all designed to set forth the wickedness of Adam's act and its consequences, the apostle showed that all 'the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God', for all is derived from carnal knowledge.

The deadliness of this original act of dethronement of true wisdom lay in its predestinating power to bring man to total degeneracy — instanced for us historically by Moses when he reveals the prevailing condition of all flesh just preceding the flood. But so great was the effect of Adam's sin that it outlasted the flood, persisting in Noah's family, and despite God's grace, causing all spirit(ual) manifestation which followed thereafter to be evil of origin. By the first man's sin, knowledge became nothing but natural intimate knowledge of evil, operating solely upon human levels unto soulish ends.

Just as inevitably all the other powers mentioned or unmentioned in this list of gifts also fell; without exception they all became carnal effusions, which, although they at first sight or hearing or feeling may seem right and good and beneficial, are in reality evil both in beginning and ending. Mankind, having become fallen, sinful and evil in nature, powers and works, had no hope apart from intervention by God; there was no possibility of him retrieving his lost estate or regaining his original position. This God undertook to do by sending His Son to restore the situation by the cross.

In Understanding be Men

In this whole section of scripture under consideration, Paul is most concerned to make plain to us what are 'the principal thing(s)', this is why wisdom is accorded the primary position in the list of gifts. But even so, from an overall reading it becomes clear that in doing this he is actually presenting wisdom as part of something greater still, namely Understanding. Over all the blessings of possessing spiritual gifts, God desires each of His children to be in enjoyment of this most blessed state of spiritual excellence. 'I give you to understand', he says: and again, in understanding be men'.

It is no less than wonderful (even though upon reflection we may agree that it is only to be expected) that the three principal mental attributes of God, namely Understanding, Wisdom and Knowledge, should be grouped together in this connection, for in no other place do we find it so. This mighty trilogy of excellencies is the chiefest glory of Love, which is here placed central to the whole passage, and extolled above all. Without question and by unchallengeable law, Love is at the heart of this whole body of truth. Love is the nature of the person who indwells the Body; our God whose Spirit manifests itself through the gifts is Love, all-wise, all-knowing and all-understanding.

Although it is not included in the list of Spirituals, Understanding is indivisibly linked with Wisdom and Knowledge, and shall be throughout all ages, for by its very nature it is fundamental to both. Although, like Wisdom, it can only be spoken of in an abstract manner, it cannot possibly be of merely academic meaning or interest, because for its very existence it requires the warm personality of Love. Understanding is the result of Love tried, tested and found strong in all heights and lengths and breadths and depths, infinitely immense and utterly profound. Understanding is Love's flexibility and adaptability: it has that quality of compassionate sympathy which has been wrought out of living and suffering like things with others, enduring the same temptations and persecutions as its fellows. It is the result of application, the fruit of experience, true wealth from the storehouse of consecrated life; Understanding issues into the perfect flower of Wisdom, borne of it from the same root of Love. Being like it, and allied to it, Wisdom appears almost its twin, for Wisdom is a form of Understanding, its distillation, as indeed also is each one of these precious gifts. Each is a particular demonstration of the spiritual understanding stored up in the sweet personality of the Christ Jesus of Love, to be manifested by the Spirit at His will.

Understanding is the stem upon which Wisdom flowers from Love's long-suffering from whence all understanding is gained. Love suffering long without envy, in utter humility in all things, meekly subjecting itself without reserve, issues in experience, which sooner or later finds expression and becomes known as Understanding. As the flower reveals the glorious nature of the root and is the most beautiful expression of its life, so also Wisdom blossoms forth as the beauty of understanding love.

That Ye may Know

In turn, and as its direct result, wisdom must become correct knowledge, for although blossom is sweet and wonderful, it must realise its end in fruit, or else it flowers in vain. God has caused some flowers to bloom just for their beauty and scent, but these are momentary things, flourishing for a few days and then passing away for ever. But there are blossoms which are promises of greater things, for lying in their hearts are the fruits they herald and for which they bloom and with whose existence they are bound up. Such is Wisdom.

As far as we are aware there was no tree of Wisdom in Paradise, but there was a tree of Knowledge (of Good and Evil), and it was a tree of fruit. Understanding and Wisdom in Adam had caused him to leave it alone until by temptation he fell into the sin of disobeying God. Knowledge gained by sin is loss of wisdom, for it is gained at the price of life; Knowledge must always be the fruit of Wisdom. Wisdom must flower for this, for Wisdom cannot exist as Wisdom alone; it is of Understanding unto Knowledge.

Flawless, factual and fragrant as it is, Wisdom exists for nothing if it does not ultimately issue in proper behaviour and actions and words which show its power. True Knowledge is gained from Understanding by Wisdom. Though Knowledge may be instructed from what it sees and hears and handles, and may be informed by the senses, to be spiritual it must be an accumulation from Wisdom, for it is the store of its virtues in the same way as Learning is the store of the mind.

The Word of Knowledge.

The Counterfeit 'Knowledge' * The Jewel of Rare Worth

The true Knowledge spoken of in scripture is certainty of assurance and most basic to life; it is a result of that exclusive understanding which itself is only gained as from intimate relationship. Jesus defined it best, saying 'this is life eternal, that they may know Thee'. The Word of Knowledge may only be spoken from that union. When it is uttered, it is the expression of spiritual familiarity with God, and whenever and upon whatever subject it speaks, the Word of Knowledge is the final word of wisdom and understanding upon that subject. Therefore it must always be received by every person in meekness of spirit and godly fear, for it is the testimony and application of Love. It is also a statement of His will, full of purpose and assurance, and should be embraced without questioning or hesitation.

The Counterfeit 'Knowledge'

This gift, however, is not to be confused with knowledge gained by reason of a man's spirit becoming familiar with the spirits of other men, for all such knowledge and every statement from it is but the psychic utterance of mediumistic souls. Instead of being the means whereby God's knowledge is imparted to men, the familiar spirit picks up, transmits and inflicts the possessor with the conflicts, bondages and afflictions of fellow humans. Such a person may quite correctly diagnose and pronounce upon the state or feelings of a fellow human, and often does so with the best intentions, but this in no way alters the fact that the source of the power is human and not divine. Consequently, whether ignorantly or deliberately, in operation it makes pronouncements which are either merely based upon its own feelings, or culled from its store of acquired knowledge, or else it makes statements which are deliberately imparted by deceiving spirits as superimpositions upon the human ability.

Such statements or prognostications are not Words of Knowledge, although they may be mistakenly made and often accepted as such, and in some instances may prove to be correct. Of old the Lord spoke with fine scorn about such practices, linking the monthly prognostications with stargazers and astrologers. This kind of psychic manifestation was rife among the Children of Israel in their carnal state; it substituted the genuine gift with the result that it practically deceived the whole nation. This disconcertingly dangerous power is most prevalent among persons who, by reason of extrasensory perception, are naturally aware of other people's states. It is rife in the churches today and is the direct result of man having become other than spiritual.

God's gift of the Word of Knowledge to any person is not to be confused with any kind of highly developed human soul-power. It is most often spoken by an individual quite apart from his knowledge of having spoken it. It is certainly at its best when spoken from such ignorance — 'I know nothing of myself' is the great understanding from which to commence in this gift.

The Jewel of Rare Worth

Let us once again recall the truth that no spiritual ability or power retains its original spirituality unless the spiritual life of the member to whom it was given is maintained in quality and developed in scope beyond the measure of his stature when the gift was first bestowed. With regard to the function of this gift, this is a most important thing to bear in mind, for if Wisdom is the Pearl, then Knowledge is the Diamond. Now the diamond is a most precious stone. Cut and polished expertly it reflects the sparkling wonders of light in unrivalled brilliance. It is a jewel of rare worth, highly prized among men. How careful then must we be with this Knowledge, for unless it is held in fondest love, and used with grace, it puffs up the possessor and pierces and wounds and cuts down the hearer and grinds him to powder.

The Gift of Discernment.

To this supreme trio of God's mental attributes which are first openly revealed in scripture and then shown in full development in the person of Jesus Christ, the Lord has added to the Church the gift of Discernment. This power is a similar kind of gift to Knowledge. In function it is somewhat like it and is sometimes confused with it. This is quite an easy mistake to make, for in a sense it is knowledge gained as a result of 'sight', which is why it is called Discernment. This gift is specially conferred upon the Church for the purpose of discerning spirits, and must be distinguished from the grace of spiritual discernment which to some degree is commonly

the property of every member of Christ's Body.

Paul speaks of this grace in 2:15, telling us that it is part of the spiritual life which all the children of God inherit, and is bestowed so that we all may discern all things. Here let us again note that none but the spiritual retain the ability. The obvious distinction between the different functions of the grace and the gift is nicely brought out by a comparison of 'things' with 'spirits'. Recognising this, and acknowledging God's great wisdom in bestowing the grace, we can also see His reason for bestowing this further ability upon the Church as a special gift added to the grace.

The main functional difference between this gift and the Word of Knowledge lies in this: the latter is the means granted by the Lord to some members of His Body so that they may pronounce with His knowledge upon any subject, object, need or state; the specific function of Discernment is to recognise the presence of any spirits foreign to the spirit of the Body, and more particularly of evil spirits. According to scripture its function is limited to this definite end and does not cover the whole field of knowledge of subjects about which the Church may need to have definite, divine information.

Added to the trio mentioned above, this gift of Discernment helps to form with them an invincible quartet of advanced powers, and when these four are held and used together in spiritual life as God intends, their combined force makes the Church a body of unrivalled ability in the world of men.

Contemplating the three which are called gifts, namely Wisdom, Knowledge and Discernment, it becomes obvious why the Church should be the most understanding company on the earth. These wonderful abilities lie chiefly in the mental realm, which is to say that, although they are spiritual gifts, they operate from the mind of the head and in a particular way are associated with the glories of that mind.

However, beyond these, the Body has also been endowed with gifts which in thought are associated with the body rather than the head. In order to be demonstrated as attributes of Love, all this Wisdom, Knowledge and Discernment must be applied in wealth of Understanding to human need, else they will do nothing but puff up. There would be no wisdom in having knowledge and discernment without ability to meet the ignorance and need they expose, else these gifts would not be of Love. Instead they would only be highly developed means of self-applied agony, instruments of curse and torture instead of powers to impart blessing to those who possess them.

Faith, Healing and Miracles.

For the above reason the Lord has also given to His Church some other gifts which are to be received and held as powers complementary to the foregoing, for He has designed and given them to that end. These particular gifts are listed as Faith, Healing and Miracles, each of which may be specifically thought of as one of the major working powers of the Body. These three, wherever they are revealed in scripture, are for the most part, if not entirely, associated with action of some sort. In this they are distinct from the former three, even though each of those are spoken of in an active form — Word of Wisdom, Word of Knowledge and Discernment of spirits. All three require either the action of speech or the action of discernment by the inward man, but we do not ordinarily think of these mental or spiritual exercises as action.

On the other hand, from a reading of Hebrews 11, it is at once obvious that, although Faith is first introduced to us therein in terms of understanding, most of the chapter is devoted to showing us its association with various activities. Working, walking, building, offering, and other things involving work or expenditure of energy in some way are presented as being by Faith. This is also borne out by other scriptures, such as Luke 5, where we are plainly told that when four men let down a friend on his bed through the roof to the feet of Jesus, 'He saw their faith'. In all these cases to which we refer, faith is shown to be action involving physical work.

Again this can be said of Healing. Often such phrases as 'He laid His hands on them and healed them', link the resultant healings with His or some other person's activity. We find it the same also with Miracles. The New Testament records that when Jesus turned water into wine, it was only possible because in association with His power and at His direction the servants engaged in much activity, filling, bearing in and pouring out the wine, and so the glorious miracle was brought into effect. Again the miracle of sight-giving to the man born blind was only accomplished by Jesus through the means of spittle and clay and the ultimate washing in

the pool following an arduous journey to Siloam.

If we think of the miracles of the feeding of the multitudes it is the same; these works of power were only accomplished by the Lord taking and breaking, and the apostles distributing the bread and fish. We could go on in this vein to establish the grounds upon which we rightly associate Faith, Healing and Miracles with application of power accompanied by physical effort: in fact the very word 'Miracles' is really a translation of the Greek word 'Powers'. Although all the spirituals are operable by power from on high, only this one is called by this name.

The Supremacy of Faith

Now as in the former trilogy of Spirituals, Wisdom held the premier position, so also Faith holds first place in this group. The reason for this is not far to seek, for it is only by the first that the other two operate. It is of course true that in common with everything to do with salvation, all the gifts operate by faith, but not in such a specific way as these. Both Healing and Miracles are a particular demonstration of faith. If we recall the Lord's words after He had calmed the storm on the lake, we shall at once acknowledge the truth of this. Having miraculously hushed the wind and stilled the waves, the Master said to His apostles, 'where is your faith?' 'How is it that you have no faith?' as though to say, 'I did this miracle by faith, so could you have done it if you had any or sufficient faith'.

We may also see the significance of faith by what the Lord said to His disciples when they asked Him why they could not cast out the devil from the epileptic boy, 'because of your unbelief', He said. Pondering upon this miracle, we find a rich combination of spirituals in operation here — Discernment, Faith, Miracles, Healing — all join together in one glorious demonstration of Wisdom, Knowledge, Love and Power in perfect Understanding: yet the one selected by the Lord for special mention was Faith.

Faith.

Here again we must be careful to differentiate between the grace of faith and the gift of Faith. Every true child of God has the former, for by it we are saved and have become spiritual, but the latter is a special spiritual impartation whereby selected people may have supernatural ability at certain times to accomplish otherwise impossible things. Some of these kinds of things are catalogued in Hebrews 11, as has been mentioned, but not all are there. It was just such a special bestowal which enabled Peter in his day to walk on the sea; that it was only transitory in effect is a pointed illustration of the position earlier spoken of: the gift itself was spiritual, but Peter at that time was not; he was carnal; he doubted and started to sink and would have drowned but for the Lord.

Let us from this incident learn the lesson which is as obvious as the storm: it is spiritual to respond immediately to the Lord's word in face of the impossible, but once having committed to it, it is carnal to calculate possibilities of achievement by relating our chances of success or failure to outward circumstances, whether they be favourable or disadvantageous. Peter lost his overwhelming sense of the Lord's presence and noticed the outer elements; that is, the elements of his own soul-life related to the elements of nature without him and not to the Spiritual Jesus. That is carnality. In its operation and outworking a gift only ever remains as spiritual as the person to whom it is given.

We may truly praise God that, following Pentecost, Peter hardly ever approached near to faithlessness again. One occasion when he did so was when he argued with the Lord upon the housetop at Joppa, which is by the seaside. However, that only happened through lack of understanding of God's ways, a common enough shortcoming for which no-one would criticise him, for 'who hath known the mind of the Lord, and who hath been His counsellor?' But to recognise the fact only grants us the opportunity of beholding the unchallengeable supremacy of Understanding.

Healings and Miracles.

What has been said of Faith may be said also of both the other gifts which with it forms the second group of three within the nine. Whether it be Healing or Miracles, every born-again child of God has some real knowledge and experience of each in grace. Who has not known the healing power and comfort of peace which passeth understanding, or of love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit when baptised by Jesus

into His death and resurrection? And who among us that are saved cannot testify to miracles of some sort having taken place in our lives, whether in spirit, soul or body? Answers to prayer, openings of doors, supplyings of needs, all testify to the reality of the miraculous life in which God, having brought us, also now sustains us; and this is just how it should be with us all. But none of these must be mistaken for the particular gifts of which they are the grace.

For Mutual Benefit to the Glory of God

The spirituals are gifts superadded to the grace, extending the ordinary to the extraordinary, and that which is common to us all to that which is entrusted only to the few. Now although this is the case, it is so by God's will, and must be understood by us aright, for although given to the few, they are not to be regarded as specially for them so much as entrustments to the whole Body unto the benefit of all mankind and the glory of God thereby. They are worked by the selfsame Spirit that indwells all, and none need feel envious or jealous of another, for in bestowal and operation each is for mutual benefit so that while credit must be given to the member who faithfully uses the gift, the glory surely goes to Him whose Body we all are.

Prophecy, Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues.

Leaving our study of this second group of gifts, we complete our examination of the nine by examining the last three that Paul mentions here, namely Prophecy, Tongues and Interpretation of tongues. But before doing so in any categorical manner as above, it may be well at this point to attempt to dispel some errors which have arisen over the years as a result of misunderstanding, and also to dispose of the mistaken notion that man has an inalienable right, as though he were God, to pronounce his judgements upon God's ways.

It is quite impossible to understand the divine mind and become God's tutor or mentor. Carnal intellect cannot in any degree grasp spiritual truth. This is not to say that men should not make enquiries about many baffling things spoken of in the Bible; on the contrary this is exactly what they should do. But always their approach should be with reverent humility, and their search conducted in meekness, having first accepted both the genuineness of the fact, and also the good and useful purpose of the thing(s) about which they ask. Instead of doing this however, quite unwarrantably in respect of these particular gifts, so many of men's investigations are conducted upon the basis of preconceived ideas, and in the spirit of rejection. Upon enquiry it is regrettably discovered that quite often many who discuss or write about this trio either do not possess them and / or have no personal experience of their proper function.

Surely it ought to be clearly understood among us that whatever the spiritual point men may debate or argue, no-one is in a position to speak with correctness or expound with authority upon it unless he himself has a living experience of it. Too often a matter is examined theologically or from an academic viewpoint, which totally rejects certain portions of scripture incompatible with a particular interpretation. The result is that with no experience of the truth being examined, people say 'it cannot be', or, with some other equally unfair remark, cloud the issue and shirk moral responsibility. That the Bible refers to a matter and a man may collate all the relevant facts both in and out of scripture about it, is not sufficient grounds for any man to make dogmatic pronouncements about it. By God's estimate he is still in ignorance of the matter.

We Speak that we do Know

As an illustration of this simple fact, we need only refer to the hundreds of theories of and interpretations about prophetic scriptures concerning times and events to do with the second coming of the Lord Jesus. These have been heaped up and handed on over centuries and perhaps multiplied by the modern Church, but although they are so time-honoured, the Church has had to reject many of them, and rightly so. The simple reason for all this confusion of thought is that no-one has yet experienced the Second Coming. However, after the Lord has returned for His Church and we are all gathered home, every one of us will know the exact details and be authorities upon the event; by which we see that it is experience which makes a man an authoritative commentator.

No born-again child of God doubts the scriptures that speak of the Second Coming; instead he refers with joy to the certainty of it. But that is an entirely different thing from presuming to speak as though he knows with absolute certainty all about the actual fulfilment of it. If he should do so, no-one except those who indulge in fantasies would give him credence. This being so, why should a man be given credence if he presumes to

speaking dogmatically about a gift of the Spirit of which he has no personal functional experience?

This question may be quite correctly answered by saying that the illustration does not present a true analogy, for there is no present demonstration of the Second Coming in the Church, but that there is a present demonstration of these gifts (say of tongues for example) in the churches today. But is it not also true that there is a present demonstration of the dreaded disease of cancer in the world today; and does the most highly-trained scientist, whether he be pathologist or surgeon, believe that because he is a specialist he knows cancer? He certainly does not unless he has cancer. And is a victim of the dreaded disease discredited because he does not know all the theories about it? The specialist may with some precision speak about the correct ways to try to alleviate the condition, cut it out, burn it up, contain it, or whatever other treatment it may require, but he knows nothing of it within himself: in that realm he is thankfully ignorant.

Lamentably, ignorance in the realm of experience of Tongues is often similarly, perhaps cynically, regarded among some as a thing to be thankful for. Reprehensible as such an attitude is, worse than this, Paul's guidance is presumably regarded as knowledge enough upon which to attempt a campaign aimed at total elimination of the gift. We do not accept such illogical procedure on the part of scientists. Indeed they would not think of speaking and acting so senselessly; then why in the name of common sense should we accept such unethical behaviour on the part of Christians? As Jesus says, 'the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light'.

No child of God's regeneration ought to act or speak as though any gift of the Spirit is other than entirely spiritual. Even though he may know nothing of its working in personal experience, he should bear in mind the righteous principle underlying the apostle's words in another context, 'every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused.'

The Gift of Tongues.

Perhaps one further thing ought to be considered here; many such statements as the following have been made by those who oppose themselves in this matter, 'Tongues is the least important of the gifts because it appears at the bottom of the list'. This kind of saying, though perhaps sincerely thought, is as absurd as it is also untrue. It is untrue because although it occurs low down on the list it is not at the bottom. Interpretation of tongues comes last. It is absurd also because upon the second occasion when the gifts are mentioned in this chapter, Interpretation fails to appear anywhere in the list. So if this kind of illogical reasoning be used, Interpretation is in one place less than the least, and in the other non-existent.

In defence of truth it may be asked which of the things mentioned in the short list in I Corinthians 1:30, is of the least worth; Redemption, which is accorded the last place? Are not all these of equal worth, and would not many hearts perhaps say that the last is the greatest of all? This same kind of thing occurs again in verse eleven of chapter six, where of the three things mentioned, 'Justified' is spoken of last. Would it be highly improper or totally unreasonable to argue (if argue we must) that perhaps both 'Redemption' and 'Justified' occur at the bottom of their respective lists because above all others, each is the most fundamentally important truth being then mentioned?

It may not be so necessary to press the postulation as to expose the absurdity of the false reasoning from which so many objections are formed, therefore just one more illustration may suffice to reveal the folly of such thinking. The commonest vegetation upon the earth is grass, but because it is so universally common, is it therefore the least important? May it not after all be one of the greatest, if not the greatest of all? We commonly use the expression 'getting down to the grass roots', meaning penetrating down to the bottom of things, facing the real issues and finding out fundamental reasons and causes and how everything came about.

There can be little doubt that the commonest gift among us is Tongues, or that following the initial Baptism in the Spirit on the day of Pentecost it was also the first to be used, therefore, if it be reasoned that grass is more prolific and universal than any other form of vegetation because it is the most vitally necessary to animals and man, then Tongues, by the same token, is most vitally necessary to the Church. However, the point need not be pressed unto absurdity, lest the gift be done further unjustifiable harm; nevertheless we shall return to it later.

There can be no doubt that in one form or another Prophecy, Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues are the

most commonly used gifts in the churches today. This being so, as may be expected they have the greatest influence over our lives and in the end produce the most far-reaching effect upon us. Therefore we need to understand their place and function in a church as well as in the whole Body.

The Gift of Prophecy.

[Prophecy — the Mainstream](#) * [With the Spirit and Understanding](#) * [Things that Differ](#) * [... into all the World](#) * [That which is Perfect](#) * [The Chief Cornerstone](#) * [He sent Them - two by two.](#) * [The Foolishness of God is Wiser than Men](#) * [Covet the Best Gifts](#)

Following former procedure, we note the indisputable position held by Prophecy, for, as we observe, the gift heads this third and last section. Prophecy is spoken of in terms which seem unquestionably to set it above its fellows; 'follow after Love and desire spirituals, but rather that ye may prophesy', Paul says at the conclusion of the thirteenth chapter and the commencement of the fourteenth. Having already preceded the thirteenth chapter with the words 'covet earnestly the best (highest) gifts', the apostle seems to leave us with no alternative than to believe that Prophecy is the highest of 'the higher gifts', the best of the best.

Prophecy as naturally heads this section as do Wisdom and Faith their respective sections, and it holds this position for the same reasons and upon the same principle as they hold theirs. Quite certainly the apostle extols the virtues of this gift, deliberately taking up much space to set it in contrast with Tongues as being the major internal means of building up the Church. Being set in such a prominent position it appears to be greater than either Wisdom or Knowledge, which hold first and second place in the list.

This may be yet another testimony to the fact that to be last is not necessarily to be least, as well as bearing witness to the principle that the last shall be first. Or it may be just a plain indication that these nine are not set out in a strict order of merit at all, and that we ought not to look for some order of importance or value whereby to calculate the worth of one over another. That there is some plan behind the order of mention is practically certain, but we will investigate the possibility of this later.

Prophecy — the Mainstream

Prophecy is the basic gift of supernatural utterance in the mother tongue. It is the 'main stream' in which all the other oral gifts flow, for whether they be words of Wisdom or Knowledge or Interpretation, to be 'oracles of God' (1 Peter 4:11) all must be prophetic in substance, nature and manner of utterance. It would be as impossible for any man to have and function in the Word of Wisdom, apart from having the gift of Prophecy as it is impossible for a hand to exist without an arm. Although unlikely, it may be true that a member of the Body obviously operates in the Word of Wisdom, but is never known to give ordinary prophecies, but this in no way invalidates the fact that his gift only operates on the main stream of prophetic utterance. And if the function of Prophecy is edification, can it possibly be imagined that anything is more able to build up the Church than Wisdom spoken in love?

We are told in the book of Proverbs that 'Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars', a clear enough testimony to her powers of edification. And who would say that the book of Proverbs which is itself a compilation of Words of Wisdom is not wholly conceived and delivered as Prophetic utterance? Words of Wisdom or of Knowledge are special utterances within the main scheme of prophetic ministry and conferred upon selected members who as a general rule hold or are being prepared by God to hold leading offices in the churches.

In chapter 14 Paul says, 'ye all may prophesy one by one', plainly implying that all the members may have and use the gift of Prophecy. It appears from this that in the gatherings Prophecy should be quite common, in fact the basic form of utterance among the children of God when gathered together for worship or ministry. Seeing that the main purpose in gathering is edification, the Church needs more than occasional utterances of rare pearls of wisdom and treasures of knowledge, great and wonderful and invaluable as they are. Therefore, beside these, the Lord has placed in the Church a whole array of commoner, though not less spiritual words of blessing, comfort, love, help, guidance, instruction and such like; these are all absolutely necessary and must be ministered by the members one to another, either through the gift of Prophecy proper or in prophetic vein.

With the Spirit and Understanding

Having acquainted ourselves of these things, we must note that the real purpose for Paul's emphasis upon the superiority of Prophecy enables a man to speak in the Church with both his spirit and his understanding, and is set here in contrast with speaking with Tongues. This is because when speaking with Tongues only the spirit of a man is engaged, his understanding remains entirely inoperative and unfruitful. Considering this, it is at once obvious why Tongues is inferior to Prophecy. Tongues is only a specific demonstration of prophetic utterance, but Prophecy is the overall gift, capable of universal adaptability to any situation needing divine thought and pronouncement, and is profitable to the intelligence of both speaker and hearer alike.

Herein lies the superiority of the latter over the former. Both these gifts are given by God to be the basic media of all unprepared, unpremeditated utterances spoken directly in the churches by Him throughout the length of this age. There are also other forms of speech which are sanctified and used by God, such as preaching, teaching, counselling etc., which are for use both in and out of church gatherings, and to be effective for God all of these must to some degree have a prophetic quality about them. But none of them is to be confused in thought with the special gift of Prophecy, any more than they are ever imagined to be the gift of Tongues.

It is as manifestly unwarrantable to think or say that God intends us to believe that the gift of Prophecy is really nothing other than preaching, as it is wholly improper and incredibly stupid to say that the gift of Tongues is only Preaching in other languages. Although Prophecy and Tongues (with Interpretation) are most often expressed in the form of preaching, that is as declarations unto men, they are no more Preaching than Preaching is Prophesying, even though in course of utterance at times preaching partakes of a prophetic nature.

Things that Differ

The student of scripture requires no more to convince him that Prophesying and Preaching are two different ministries than to observe the specific use of carefully chosen words by the New Testament writers when speaking of the two ministries. By inspiration of the Holy Ghost, words of entirely different root and meaning were used for Prophecy and Preaching. Preaching covers such a vast field of expression that in order to show the fullness of the meaning of the ministry a great variety of words are used by God, but the word for Prophecy stands unchanged throughout. Words translated Preaching can mean 'to evangelise' or 'to announce as a herald', or to speak in normal conversation, such as to gossip or engage in small talk, but not so Prophecy; this word partakes of none of those meanings, but remains uniformly 'Prophecy' whenever it is found in the New Testament. It is quite proper to translate either of the words meaning 'to announce as a herald' or 'to evangelise' as 'preaching' or 'to preach', but totally wrong to translate them as 'prophesying' or 'to prophesy'. Having taken such care to distinguish between these things, God rightfully expects His people to take note of His carefulness and not confuse things that differ.

.... into all the World

Here we will pause to recollect the fact that the early Church never had the Bible as we have it today, and that this is especially true of the Gentile churches. Being cut off from the Hebrew scriptures which were kept and read in the synagogues and as yet being without possession of any New Testament writings, the saints had no canonical book to which to turn or from which to preach or expound. It may therefore at once be seen why the oral gifts were of such importance to them.

In the beginning the Church accepted in earnest its God-given task of world evangelisation and the result was rapid expansion. Churches sprang up and multiplied, so that although other apostles in addition to the original twelve were raised up, these proved altogether too few to meet the requirements created by such speedy and powerful developments. Therefore letters were written, biographies were made and history recorded; but although these were precious, they were just rare fragmentary scraps. So in order to preserve them before they were lost, the majority were copied out and eventually collected and put together. Finally these were joined with the Old Testament and together became our present Bible. But all this took centuries of time during which there was no common inspired record to which to turn and a decreasing number of apostles of original calibre to preach with reliable authority or authentic revelation.

Small wonder then that the powers of speech and works which were originally ministered by the Lord, and

then by His apostles, were after His departure distributed by the Lord among the members of His Body. To these He later added the whole Bible so that being fully equipped we should be able in these latter days to stand and represent Him on the earth with power and authority and understanding. But because this is so, it must not be imagined that as we now have the Bible we have no need of the gifts of the Spirit.

That which is Perfect

Some have erroneously thought that when God gave to the Church the completed canon of scripture He did so with a view to the withdrawal of His spiritual gifts, making one the substitute for the other. Going farther, some have said that this is what is intended to be understood from the word 'perfect' in verse 10 of chapter 13, 'when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away'. But this is obviously not so, because:

- (a) it presupposes that God only gave the gifts as a substitute for the Bible, which just is not true;
- (b) it assumes that the Bible is 'that which is perfect', whereas we know from internal evidence that the Bible is incomplete. There are at least three letters of Paul's missing, beside some works by prophets of the Old Testament. The Bible is not in that sense 'perfect' although it is perfect enough for God's purposes by it among men in this age;
- (c) by inference it brands all present-day operations of the gifts as false, a notion which is so shudderingly near to blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, that except Peter's generous words 'I wot that through ignorance ye did it, brethren' avail today for men who say such things, all hope would be lost, for it is the Holy Ghost who works these gifts in the Body of Christ;
- (d) it loses sight of the truth that the Church is His many-membered Body and His Body cannot lose its innate natural abilities;
- (e) it totally ignores the words of the apostle in I Corinthians 1:7, where he says that while waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus, the Church is to come behind in no gift, plainly implying that the gifts shall remain in the Church which is His Body until the second coming of Christ. When this event takes place 'that which is perfect will come', for it will mark the consummation of the age;
- (f) it fails to accept the statement in 12:28, that without any time note or limit God hath set men with their gifts in the Church.

We see then that the Bible as we know it was added to the Church and owes its existence to the Church. This is because partly it came through the Church and exists in its present format and wholeness by the design and labours of the Church. It is well also to remember that the Church is greater than the Bible, and when the Bible shall cease to be, the Church shall still be. It will then have no need of the special gifts nor of the temporary gifts, such as Tongues and Interpretation and Prophecy and Discerning of spirits and Healing and Miracles and the Bible. These all being partial, shall be done away, and the perfect and complete Church shall abide eternally.

The Chief Cornerstone

In the text last mentioned, Paul in various ways categorically numbers and classifies men and gifts and functions into five divisions. In the first he groups all the apostles; in the second the prophets; in the third the teachers; in the fourth miracles; but in the fifth he groups together gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Much may be said about the reasons for this grouping, but refraining for the present from doing that, we note that Paul hereby reveals the high esteem in which the gift of Prophecy was held by the early Church. He places prophets second only to apostles and before teachers and everyone else holding office in the Church, thereby showing not only their respective value, but also their true position.

We are also made aware of this by scriptures which tell us that the Church is 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone'. The grouping here is First: Jesus Christ, Second: apostles, Third: prophets, and shows that next to the Lord are the apostles and next to, though with the apostles, the prophets — 'the apostles and prophets'. This is the mind of the Lord. Reading scripture, it becomes apparent that the prophet in his office was a person who could do, and often did, more than make prophetic utterances.

However, the importance of the gift of Prophecy over all others is indicated by the fact that the office did not take its name from any of the other gifts or ministries which the prophet may have or operate, but from this one. He may have healed people, but he was not called Healer. He may have given words of wisdom, but he did not take any name associated with wisdom, nor was he called by a name which had for its root or ground

any other gift but this particular one, Prophecy. He was called a Prophet because he held the office and functioned in the ministry of a prophet administering the gift of Prophecy. In other words, as indicated by the name of the office, Prophecy was considered to be greater than any of the other gifts or any combination of those gifts.

Thinking of the great man Elijah, we take the point that although he performed miracles and spoke words of wisdom and had great knowledge, he was not spoken of as the healer, or the miracle-worker, or power-man, but as the prophet Elijah. On the other hand we discover that others who were not men of God accepted the title Magi, which name is the word for Wise-man. A man of God knows that the greatest gift he can receive from God is power to speak the word of God direct from God, so in order to be equipped for this he covets the gift of Prophecy, for it is exactly for this reason that the gift is given.

He sent Them - two by two.

It is an outstanding feature of Paul's missionary journeys that he mostly travelled with a prophet as a companion. By this means wherever they went the whole complement of gifts and ministries normally to be found in a local church were always available. Between them these two offices comprise the fullness of all that is needed to bring churches into being and establish them according to the will of God. That is why they are spoken of as foundations.

Reading scripture we notice in the Gospels that the Lord originally instituted the practice of sending out His apostles two by two, but in the early Church this soon gave way to the practice of combining prophet with apostle. In fact it seems that the last occasion when two of the original apostles travelled together was for the founding of the church in Samaria. This original formation was subsequently varied when, after the apostles Barnabas and Saul had teamed up for their first missionary enterprise, Paul later exchanged his companion for Silas, a prophet. There is no reason to suppose that although this practice became customary with these men, it became law in the Church, but it is an indication of the Church's estimation of the place and power of the prophet among them.

The Foolishness of God is Wiser than Men

There can be no doubt of the superiority of and preference for Prophecy above Tongues in founding, building and upbuilding churches, but because this is true, prophecy by no means outweighs or displaces its kindred gift. Paul indicates that Tongues with Interpretation can be of equal effectiveness with Prophecy in the Church. If we understand scripture aright, Tongues is not to be disparaged or slighted. Paul did not write against the gift, but against its abuse — a very different thing.

It was only that because of sin the Corinthians were behaving themselves childishly with the gifts, and for this reason he wrote as he did. The reason why he laid down his strictures upon the misuse of Tongues is because of all the gifts, Tongues can most easily be a cover for undetected sin and the flesh and the devil. Therein lies the greatest danger attached to the gift. Tongues can be an expression of childish nonsense or foolish pride; in fact they can be a manifestation and exhibition of almost anything or everything that dishonours God. Wrongly held and used the gift militates against the very reason for which God called us all in the beginning, which Paul plainly states in chapter 1 verse 29 — 'That no flesh should glory in His presence'.

Tongues is one of the 'foolish things of this world'; like the Lord who gave it, it is despised and rejected of men and has been placed in the Church by God for the purpose of destroying the wisdom of the wise. It is intended to accentuate the cross in the Body of Christ, and rightly used this is exactly what it accomplishes. Tongues requires the cross to make it spiritual in nature and powerful in effect. When used in the power of the cross, this gift, perhaps more than any other, reveals that the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption of God are wholly contrary to man and his pompous wisdom, which is just what God wishes to accomplish.

Covet the Best Gifts

Consider the words of Paul in chapter 14 — 'I would that ye all spoke with tongues'. Although he goes on to say 'but rather that ye prophesied', and gives his reasons for so saying, this further statement does not invalidate or in any way diminish the power of the opening words. He was not saying, nor must he be

misinterpreted to mean, 'do not speak with tongues; prophesy'. He said 'I would that ye all spoke with tongues', and he meant it. Lower down he says, 'I thank God that I speak with tongues more than ye all', and considering the fact that he was correcting a church of multiple and undisciplined tongues-speakers, that really is a tremendous claim.

In both these instances he uses the word 'rather'; in the first it comes as 'but rather that ye prophesied', and in the second as 'yet in the Church I would rather speak five words with my understanding ... than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue'. Now 'rather' is part of an adverbial phrase referring to preference; it has nothing to do with prohibition. Indeed he finishes the section with the instruction 'forbid not to speak with tongues', leaving that as his final commandment from God to them about it. Instead of barring the gift, he is here stating his preferences both for himself and them in ministry in the Church, and all he says is entirely consistent with the spirit in which he earlier urged them to 'covet earnestly the best gifts'.

But contrary to the manner of some, in order to exalt the highest and best, he does not falsely demean or discount that which may have a lesser function or be more common in use. He does not say, 'I refuse to speak in Tongues', neither does he say 'you should not speak with Tongues', in fact he says exactly the opposite, 'I want you all to speak with Tongues'. We also understand him as saying, 'I want to teach and edify others, so I would rather speak with my understanding'. He is desirous that the wealth of accumulated knowledge he possesses may be applied with understanding to his brothers and sisters, so he wishes to speak to them in his mother tongue with words easy to be understood.

This classic passage on teaching is unquestionably a reference to prophetic ministry and not to preaching or Bible teaching. He is dealing with the gifts of the Spirit, each of which when truly used is by divine inspiration springing spontaneously within the spirit of the person, coming through direct from God, unpremeditated both in inception and delivery. Such ministry is plainly understood both by the speaker and the hearer, but although given in understanding, it does not spring from the speaker's knowledge, although in course of delivery it at times takes up, mixes in, uses and applies that knowledge. At such times the minister is conscious that his stored-up knowledge is being used and spoken forth, but he is also aware that it is not by his own powers of mental selection.

What generally happens upon such occasions is that the Spirit takes of what He has formerly revealed, adds more, and pours it forth at will through that member. The man is not doing this as from himself; the Spirit is drawing upon the local reserves of knowledge which He has previously stored up in a man's heart ready for use as He desires. His is the revelation, His the knowledge, His the power, His the selection and application and His the responsibility for the utterance. It would be quite foreign to His method, as well as to the rest of the chapter if, without warning, the apostle should suddenly have changed from his exposition of what is all of God, to something which is mostly of man. Normal teaching results from stores of knowledge laboriously acquired by man, carefully checked and researched and stated in an orderly manner, but Paul was not referring to that when he spoke of teaching in this passage.

Rather he means and intends us to understand the kind and quality of ministry of which we have an example in Acts 2 — sheer prophetic statement, informative and revelatory, spontaneously flowing from God. By his inspired knowledge Peter certainly taught others also that day, and while speaking prophetically to them in his own mother tongue, he, as well as they, gathered fruit in his own understanding. Although earlier, together with all the others, he had been given utterance in one or some of the other tongues distributed among them, for the purposes of teaching others, he leaves his newly-acquired gift and moves back into his native Aramaic tongue that by his understanding he should teach others also.

However, although this is a factual account of a historic event, Paul when writing to the Corinthians later does not intend to imply that Prophecy has any superiority over Tongues in respect of quality of gift, as though we should infer from his remarks that Tongues are well-nigh valueless in the Church. All too often it is willingly assumed from a misunderstanding of 14:19, that Tongues has no value, purpose, sense or scriptural place in teaching or edifying the Church. But Paul plainly intimates in verse 6 that speaking with tongues (with interpretation: verse 5) in the Church can be as good a media of revelation, knowledge, prophetic power and doctrine as Prophecy. If a man with Tongues adds Interpretation to his gift, he thereby brings Tongues on to a par with Prophecy; doing so he will then excel to the edifying of the church, verse 12.

The inferiority of the gift (compared) to Prophecy lies purely in the realm of personal understanding; it does

not lie in any imagined inferiority of quality or nature of the gift. When God gives the gifts He does not deceive people by giving stone for bread, or serpents for fish or scorpions for eggs. 'Tongues' is not of the nature of the devil (the serpent), or demons (scorpions), or man (stone), it is as pure and holy and spiritual as the Word of Wisdom or any of the higher functions. In common with all the other gifts it may be used by the devil, or demons or man, and so also may preaching and teaching; in fact everything. If we are men of understanding we shall recognise the fact that God can as easily give a word of wisdom by Tongues and Interpretation as by Prophecy.

How important then it is to see that God has based the whole construction of gifts for the body upon this foundation. By Tongues and Interpretation the prophet learns that upon occasions his gift is not indispensable; the apostle himself thanks God that he has the ability to speak with tongues more than all.

Tongues is a gift of God, totally in keeping with the humbling, debasing powers of the cross and His deliberate intentions in and through the Body of Christ in a world full of the wisdom and pride of men. Perhaps a further illustration of this may not be without value here. Paul speaks with peculiar insistence about 'our uncomely parts', reminding us that upon these we all bestow more abundant honour than we do upon the comely parts. Without putting too fine a point on it, we all realise the undeniable and indispensable importance of the function of the uncomely parts of the body and would freely admit that if these did not function aright there could be no comely parts. Carrying the analogy over to the gifts, we find no difficulty in identifying the 'uncomely' one among them — Tongues.

Comeliness, by reason of its own intrinsic inner fitness, is a prepossessing quality appealing to our powers of perception and appreciation. Used here, it is an acknowledgement of cosmic beauty, of the rightness and correctness of something in fitting relationship to the whole. It is just here that Tongues seems to be all wrong. To the natural man (2:24), it is uncomely; it just does not seem to fit in with the whole; it sounds foreign, so it is an offence to his aesthetic sense, for there seems to be no reason for it. But Paul says it is upon the uncomely part that the more abundant honour is bestowed. Here then we may find one of the reasons for its abundance and honour in the Church.

It is noteworthy that the one occasion recorded in scripture when the Lord spoke unintelligible words which were misunderstood and misinterpreted by those who heard Him was when He hung upon the cross. We may be sure that John, who records them, did not understand them any more than the educated Roman Centurion who stood there with his soldiers at the time. When, later, the interpretation was given, and inscribed in scripture, everybody understood, but at the time when Jesus spoke, no-one knew what He was saying. Of course the words that Jesus spoke were a known language to Him, but without interpretation it was as totally unknown to those around Him then as to us for whose sake the interpretation was added.

The idea of Tongues is therefore seen to be associated with Jesus upon the cross, when He hung there an uncomely 'thing', a spectacle to God, men, devils and angels. Aesthetically the crucifixion is nauseating, artistically it is obnoxious, culturally it is barbaric, yet who will say that Calvary is spiritually uncomely or that cosmically it is not absolutely right, or that it is not intrinsically perfect? We, with God, bestow upon Calvary the most abundant honour, even though all the most bestial horrors were perpetrated there upon the man who then appeared to be less than the least of all — a worm and no man. Even so with Tongues. It is only uncomely to those who have hid as it were their faces from it and for some excuse or another wholly unacceptable in heaven, have despised, denigrated or denied it.

Sadly enough some people refuse to have anything to do with the gift simply because those who defend its genuineness often do so upon the wrong grounds. This is unfortunate and we sympathise with all those who have had to endure these dogmatic outpourings, but none must think that he may be excused because of this. To insist upon giving Tongues a position or meaning other than the scriptures anywhere directly state is a sure way to bring the gift into disrepute. For instance by calling Tongues the initial evidence of the Baptism in the Spirit, zealots have harmed their cause. But any man who upon such flimsy excuses refuses God's gift is not less reprehensible than he who sometimes because of ignorance repeats the error and harangues the listener with the spurious claims being advanced.

To be sure the protagonists for initial evidence are wrong, but are they who allow themselves to be 'put off' by such extravagant claims any the less wrong? Suffice it to say that nowhere in the Book does any man say that a person must speak with tongues before he can claim to be baptised in the Spirit, and that ought to be

accepted by all men; we must not allow preference to colour assumption about it. The scriptures neither state in words, nor do they support the idea, nor do they in any way imply, that Tongues is the initial evidence of Baptism in the Spirit (see [***link pamphlet on the theory of Initial Evidence](#)).

A very real and simple reason why Tongues is so widely distributed among people baptised in Spirit is because fundamentally it has such a useful function to the individual. Paul states that he who speaks in an unknown tongue edifieth himself, and who will deny that this is of vital necessity to each one of us? It is such a pity that all too often people have misconstrued the apostle's words of correction in chapter 14 to mean that the possession and use of Tongues is at best a mistake on God's part.

Although Paul strongly reproved the abuse of Tongues, he never once said anything which allows the suggestion that any of God's precious gifts are other than most beneficial when received and used with understanding and love. Understood aright the gift of Tongues must be confessed to be of great blessing both to the individual who has it and also to the Church privileged to have that person as one of its members. Behold the wisdom and love of God in this. Tongues is given by Him to be an instrument of edification to the person to whom it is entrusted. It is a personal love gift, an entrustment to understanding, and it is to a person's understanding that the whole of this epistle is directed.

Understanding persons easily recognise that Tongues are not a sign to the insider but are only to be used in this capacity to the outsider. They therefore hold and use the gift with restraint in the presence of the outsider, and for this reason: the outsider knows that speech in an unknown tongue to a group of men of one nation gathered together for worship is normally incomprehensible. If therefore he sees and hears all or even most of such a congregation speaking in languages unknown to each other, he will think such people must be without sense. For 'why', he will reason, 'do people speak in unknown languages when their purpose for coming together is to inform, teach, build up and communicate with each other? There must be something wrong with these people', he will say. If it be said to him that Tongues are intended to be a sign of God's presence and power, he will think 'how is it that they who talk about being baptised into God need signs to prove the presence of God to each other? They are mad!'

Without controversy such a common sense attitude would be quite correct. Why give signs when signs are not needed? Why do people who know and are already God's children revert to signs when plain language is understood? Lack of understanding is a serious handicap among God's children, marring many meetings and bringing precious things into disrepute. What is worse is that such misbehaviour is only a symptom of deeper trouble, much more serious than the resulting nauseous manifestation. That is why Paul starts at the beginning with the cross: all the sin which gave rise to the dreadful abuse of the gifts is dealt with there, and can be dealt with by no other means.

It is true that Tongues are for a sign, but they must not be used as a sign to the instructed who have no need of signs. They have a precious ministry to the Church providing they are used with understanding in a controlled and limited manner, and, together with Interpretation, can prove to be most beneficial in building up the people. The most fundamental thing to grasp about Tongues is that the gift is imparted to be the means of self-edification. Contrary to what is sometimes implied by well-meaning folk, God is most desirous that men should possess this means of building up their own spiritual strength. He has planned it this way so that by building up himself, each individual may in turn make the fullest possible contribution to the whole.

A homely, common enough illustration may not come amiss here. What mother would be considered wrong and out of order if she was discovered to be eating food? Should she be reprimanded if she eats food like the rest of the family to whom she has devoted herself in love? Surely the greatest contribution she can possibly make to the rest of the family which comprises her body of love is to stay alive and well and strong so that she may constantly attend upon her acknowledged ministry of love. If she does not feed and build up herself, will she long be able to feed others? Would not all the family lovingly reprove her for neglecting herself should she mistakenly refrain from eating? Even so, the gift of Tongues is given as a special love-gift to the children of God that by its proper use each one who receives it may build up himself for the greater ministry of love and devotion to the whole body of love.

Interpretation of Tongues.

Having for the purposes stated dealt fairly fully, though not exhaustively, with the gift of Tongues, we will

turn to a consideration of Interpretation. Perhaps little more need be said about it than has already been said, for by its very nature it is linked with Tongues and owes its existence to it. Without its much despised 'twin' gift, there would be no need for it in the body. Behold the loving wisdom and perfect understanding of God intended by this gift. It is a tender reminder of the selflessness of the Christ's body, for it is given that members may pass on to others the blessing which has been peculiarly their own and could not be ministered to others' conscious understandings apart from the gift. Like its fellows, Interpretation is a most loving and tender gesture from the Lord.

Interpretation is not a gift which is peculiar to the New Testament Church. In the Old Testament we discover that such men as Daniel had the ability to interpret dreams, visions and languages (tongues). Indeed this man had such a variety of abilities that it is not surprising that he was raised to Premiership. Joseph also had the gift of Interpretation, though apparently he did not, as Daniel, have the ability to interpret languages (tongues). Nevertheless there is difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and this difference is indicated in the special title given to the New Testament gift, namely Interpretation of Tongues.

The hand which wrote on the wall in the palace of Babylon spelled out the king's doom in a language other than his own. It was written in a tongue which was unknown to everybody including Daniel himself, but the Hebrew Prophet both spelled out the faded words and also interpreted their meaning to the king in full and miraculous detail. This however was an incident without precedent or repetition in the Old Testament scriptures, and appears upon its pages in marked isolation, whereas dreams and visions are not strange to the record.

With the advent of the New Covenant on the day of Pentecost, God revealed His hitherto unknown intention to distribute Tongues with liberality throughout the whole Church during the entire Church age. By doing this He also created a need, so in fulfilment of this specific need the Lord also bestowed with it the gift of Interpretation of Tongues.

Paul is very specific about this gift, he does not speak of Interpretation apart from adding 'of Tongues'. He did this lest the gift should be mistaken for prophecy. Interpretation of languages is a common enough ability among men. There are many people who have a natural 'flair' for languages and are brilliant at translating or interpreting one language or dialect into another, having great linguistic abilities and a well-trained mind. But this is not what Paul is speaking of. By Interpretation of Tongues he means an ability complete in itself, given from God and owing nothing to education. People with this gift have no need of training, although in some degree it will improve with use.

The difference between these two kinds of interpretation is best seen by observing the methods each uses. Normal interpretation depends upon clear understanding of the words being spoken and is given sentence by sentence as the speaker proceeds. The gift of God is entirely opposite to that: the interpreter has no knowledge of the 'Tongue' being spoken, he waits until the speaker has completed the whole message and then gives the interpretation as an utterance complete in itself. Neither the speaker in Tongues nor the interpreter of the Tongue understands the words spoken in Tongue.

In common with all the oral gifts, Interpretation of Tongues functions by direct inspiration from God; it is a 'Spiritual'. As to its operational method, that is, how it works within him, the interpreter does not know, 'Tongues' as revealed in scripture is Spirit (God) to spirit (man) by (Holy) Spirit through (a) man's spirit to Spirit (God), and is quite intelligible to Him. Interpretation of Tongues is from Spirit via, man's spirit to man's spirit and understanding. Finally understanding must be reached and edified, so God has given Interpretation of Tongues in a language understandable to others.

It will be seen then that of all the Spirituals, Tongues is the one gift which on man's side is most exclusively spiritual in operation. Except upon the rare occasion of which the day of Pentecost is an example, when Tongues are spoken nothing of what is said is understandable to man. In general all that men know of the gift in operation is that something has been spoken, that is all. This ability must be operated by spirit alone, and because this is so, in the last analysis by this gift every church must be judged.

Although this may at first appear strange to the mind, it is by the presence, practice and power of Tongues that the true state of any company is made apparent and must be adjudged spiritual or carnal. It is not that of all the Spirituals Tongues is the greatest, but because it is the simplest in operation, requiring nothing of man but his

spirit and tongue, with obedience and faith. All God requires is the simple, intelligent co-operation of which every new-born babe is capable; once this is known to a heart, to deny that to God is almost unpardonable. No gift is more entirely spiritual in function, nor more easily operated than this, therefore if carnality is entertained in a church, this is the gift which suffers first and most, for it is the most directly expressive of the spiritual state of man. It is a spirit exercise, a spirit utterance, more it is a spirit expression, and to the discerning spirit nothing is more clearly indicative of the state of the person(s) speaking. Therefore ultimately either by its use, abuse or non-use the true condition of any church is revealed.

We have already noted some of the more serious sins which worked among the Corinthians like leaven in dough. Because of their blatant defiance of God's ordinances and their consequent criminal disregard for each other, all discernment had ceased from the majority, so that, despite the liberal distribution of the higher gifts among them, many were weak and sickly and many slept. Healing, Miracles, Discernment of spirits, Faith, had all been given in possession to this church, but all were insufficient to meet the crying need that Paul knew to be there. Their former spirituality had been dethroned by carnality because the cross had been made of none effect, so impotence mocked their possessions and ministries, and emptiness their utterances. They had reigned as kings, but not now, and all because they had failed to accept, even if they recognised, the plain signs displayed by the abuse of Tongues in their midst.

This declension was all so needless, and Paul, with all his genius for using simple, homely illustrations, shows us this in chapter 14. In one of his most easily understood passages he draws our attention here to sounds and voices. Things without life can make noises, he says, and the instruments from which the sounds proceed are immediately recognisable; no intelligent grown person confuses a wind instrument with a stringed or a percussion instrument. From this basic idea he proceeds to draw a simple analogy and to apply some important lessons for us all to learn, namely these: when the oral gifts are in operation, the first thing to listen for is: (1) the voice, not the words; (2) the tone of the voice; (3) the volume of sound, and (4) what is being said. By this simple practice recommended by the apostle, priority is accorded to the voice first and to the message last. As will be seen, by this means the messenger is tested before his message is received. What a safety device this is.

Whatever be the speech of the man, whoever he be, the voice of that man is the surest indication of his spirit. A man's voice and tones reveal who and what he is. Although the Tongue is not known, the voice must without fail be immediately classified and understood. Whose and what spirit is being manifested, not what is being said, is of the first and utmost importance to the Church. In applying the test, certain invariable things must always be watched for, namely: (1) is it the one and selfsame Spirit spoken of in chapter 12? (2) is it the one and selfsame Love revealed in chapter 13? (3) is the tone of the selfsame quality as that which so adoringly worships Jesus, saying 'Jesus, Lord'?

Everyone must distinguish whether the voice which purports to speak from the Head on the throne is the same as that which speaks from the Body on the cross. Whether it be in the selfless pleading tones of 'Father forgive them' or the authoritative assurance of 'Today thou shalt be with me in paradise', or the tender compassion of 'Mother, behold thy Son', and 'son behold thy mother', or the heartbreaking misery and breathtaking mystery of 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' or the victorious 'It is finished', or the earth-shattering, rock-rending, grave-opening, gentle yieldedness of 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit'. If it be so, it is genuine, and its message acceptable; it is spiritual; whether it be whisper or shout, it is God.

This is true of all the gifts, but these things are ignored only at peril where Tongues are concerned, for they cannot be judged upon any other basis. Be sure that though a carnal person may know these things, when expressing himself among spiritual people, he cannot long disguise the condition of his spirit, nor for ever deceive the elect in this realm.

In relation to this, it is unavoidable at times that in the most spiritual of assemblies the kind of situation mentioned below may develop: a person may operate one of the commoner gifts completely in and from the soul(ish) realm, with the result that spiritual men are nauseated and saddened, yet at the same time some person may claim to have been greatly blessed by the demonstration. This kind of situation can cause great confusion and perplexity, but the difficulty is resolved when it is clearly understood that what comes from (a) soul can, and quite frequently does bless and minister to (a) soul, but only that which comes from the Holy Spirit will reach and bless the spiritual man.

The unsanctified human soul normally gratifies itself upon religious promises, ideas, suggestions, explanations and pleasurable feelings ministered to it from and by other souls. It will feed on and enjoy pseudo-spiritual exercises, quite oblivious to what is going on, and totally blinded to the spirit-source from whence it all comes. This is quite normal and totally unavoidable in the unregenerate state which precedes New Birth in every man, or the state of carnality to which a man may afterwards sink. In effect carnality in the Church is nothing other than soulishness, which, although it be now religious, is nothing other than a reversion to and continuance in that from which it was originally saved. It is a spiritual death during which the soul sleeps (Ephesians 5:14) so deeply that it is quite unable to recognise or receive the things of the Spirit. It can and does however receive that which comes from the soul, delighting in and professing blessing from it. Once this is understood, much that puzzles many hearts is immediately explainable.

It is quite impossible to overemphasise the necessity to excise from the Church the soulish, unspiritual use of Tongues, for its undisciplined use genders even worse troubles. For example: A speaks in tongue, but not from the Spirit, B has the gift of Interpretation of Tongues; because A has spoken, pressure is immediately brought to bear upon B to give an interpretation. Should he be a carnal man, or not sufficiently taught of God, he may attempt to use his gift; if he does so, he also will be out of the Spirit, and all will be in the soulish realm, carnal; dead and death-dealing.

By such devilish devices whole congregations are brought under falsehood and much confusion arises, making what was at first bad thoroughly evil in portent. Moreover, once allowed and accepted, such practices will become habitual in a church, and if continued in will forge around unsuspecting hearts a yoke of bondage almost impossible to break. Worse than that, the practice will furnish just the correct grounds for ever-watchful evil spirits to come in undetected and work their deceptions with destructive power among the saints. Sooner or later such a state of affairs will without fail result in men becoming demon-possessed; what is worse, passing for Spirit-filled believers, these persons will set odd or unbecoming patterns of behaviour in the churches which will ultimately be accepted as the only genuine manifestation of the Baptism in the Spirit among that company.

However, although this is all tragically possible, and too frequently true, it is no reason for wholesale rejection of the Spirituals, nor for the denial of this particular gift, for the same may be said of other gifts, whether charismatic or otherwise. Together with its 'twin' or 'other half', namely Interpretation, Tongues forms a good foundation for the operation of the higher gifts.

Viewing the gifts as a whole, and remembering that with the exception of the latter two they are an analysis or itemising of the composite powers whereby the Lord Himself, in His day, worked among men, it is possible to almost descry in them the outline of the image of Jesus, a kind of structure of the powers upon which the whole frame of His working or ministry-life was built. His nature is revealed in chapter 13, and compared with it all the gifts or powers are as naught, having no meaning or worth except as they are manifestations of that Love-nature. Nevertheless the Lord is as much revealed in His works as in His nature, for His works are:

- (1) an expression of His nature:
- (2) a manifestation of His spirit:
- (3) a demonstration of His power.

In the order of mention here we may see an outline somewhat analogous to a body-shape, having Wisdom as its head, Knowledge as its neck, Faith its chest, Healing and Miracles its two arms, Prophecy its heart, Discernment its trunk or torso, and Tongues with Interpretation its two legs and feet. To the seven powers by which He continuously worked during His earthly ministry, the Lord added two more and gave all to His bodily Church through which He still works among men to this day. The latter two are too widely spread among us to be overlooked, and may well merit the description accorded them above, namely the two legs and feet upon which the whole body stands.

If this privilege be granted these particular gifts, their acceptance and use among us in this capacity must be upon the understanding that they also betoken and carry the presence of the whole. Feet and legs of themselves, important as they are in their place and function, are surely not the most important members of the body. After all, it is quite possible for a person to exist without legs, but it is not possible for legs to exist apart from being members of a personal body. The whole must exist together as one, for that is the will and provision of God. Although it is graciously stated that the head cannot say to the feet, 'I have no need of thee', God is only speaking to the Body about itself from the standpoint of the ethics of life eternal. He has planned

and created the body so, and therefore all must be as He wills.

If therefore we may accept the above-suggested analogy we observe that Tongues and Interpretation do have an importance which must be regarded as necessary and fundamental to the Body for its proper function, and that being so, they are without question of the correct spiritual order. Looking and listening around in these days, it might be sadly concluded that instead of the head saying to the feet, 'I have no need of thee', it appears to be true that the feet are saying to the head, 'I have no need of thee'. Of course no-one would think of saying such a blasphemous thing, but that is how it seems to be working out, for in the majority of churches where the gifts are given expression, the higher gifts are markedly lacking in evidence.

In such churches it seems that it is generally believed that the correct approach to corporate worship is public engagement in free exercise of Tongues on the part of every member, to be followed later by an Interpretation of a more specific 'message' in Tongues. By such means it would appear that the assembly is trying to establish the belief that the feet are more important than the Head, which of course cannot be true, nor do such assemblies intend to convey this idea, but ultimately this is the inevitable impression which is unavoidably given. This is so obviously different from the order which is clearly set forth in this list of gifts. Therein it appears that the Spirit of the Body would rather manifest itself as it were from the Head downwards than from the feet upwards.

It is logical to assume and therefore may be presumed that if the feet and legs of a person are in the midst of an assembly, then so must the rest of that person be there also, even though nothing more of that person's presence and powers ever finds expression upon that or any other occasion. But would it not be more wonderful if churches could 'see' the Head more often than the feet and legs? Oh, for the expression of words of Wisdom and Knowledge among us, more than just the repetitious use of worshipping or communicating Tongues so widespread in the churches. Not that we would eliminate the gift, indeed we must not do so, but following Paul's instructions, we ought to control it.

It would seem that in three ways the apostle sought to promote the healthy growth of the Body by:

- 1) controlling the use of the less important gifts,
- 2) exhorting us to 'covet earnestly the higher gifts,
- 3) pointing out what should be our purpose in possessing and using whatever gift(s) we have.

When commanding decency and order among us he does so in two different realms. The first is to set limits to public use of Tongues whereby also he limits Interpretation of Tongues, and the second is to draw attention to the way he has deliberately arranged the order and manner in which the Spirit of the Body would minister the powers of the Lord. By means of the greater gifts, the Spirit of the Body expresses to the Body as from and within the Body, that our glorious Head is speaking.

It must surely be for this reason that Paul instructs us all that we are to hold the Head. All speech is expressed through the Head. No member of the body is endowed with power of speech save the head. Therefore it must be assumed that whatsoever the body would say is spoken by the lips of the body which are in the head. The body itself cannot speak, it is the person, the spirit within or of the body which speaks. Therefore it ought to be properly understood by each member of the Body that when he functions in a gift he is implying that it is the Head who is speaking or acting.

This is why Peter when speaking of judgement commencing at the house of God, says 'if any man speak, let him speak as the oracle of God'. Plainly he is saying that God's judgement is that unless anyone is speaking as the Head, he ought not to speak at all in the church. When it is recalled that the apostle was not thinking in terms of modern church function, but was pronouncing upon church conduct in his day, when expression through the gifts was normal church order, his forthright statement becomes the more powerful. These men lived in clear understanding of truth. They perfectly understood the mystery of the Body.

Matthew records that the first word which Jesus spoke about the Church was 'I will build my Church', and Paul, to whom was entrusted the revelation that the Church is Christ's Body, tells us in many different ways that we are to build up the Body. So we have before us a scripture which informs us that it is Christ who builds the Church and a sample of many others which plainly show that the members also build the Church.

This then is the high calling of every member of the Body, and this is the real reason for the gifts, otherwise called Spirituals. They are the chosen means of co-operation with Christ for the unification and consolidation

of the whole Church. It is He who is building the universal Church. He is the overall Head. We in our limited capacity and local settings build up the visible expression of the Church in these places, but only when we do so by these means are we a true church. Building up a local church we are also building the universal Church, for whether it be He or we, it is the same. He is the builder if when we speak we 'speak as the oracles of God', and when we act, 'we do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

In the Church all must be done with the purpose of building it up a spiritual body unto the full stature of Christ. The Church is His Body in its entirety, from head to feet it is Him. It exists for the presence and manifestation of His Spirit in the world, and the gifts or Spirituals are given to His members that they may be used for:

- 1) demonstrations of His power to man outside of the Church, and
- 2) edification of the Body itself.

The Body is not to be content with more or less representing Him, or generally being in His likeness, it must be in His image, that is, spiritual.

G.W.N.