

The Very Best of
A. W. Tozer



Contents

FORWARD	3
EXCERPT(S) FROM:	
The Pursuit of God	8
Born After Midnight.....	19
God Tells the Man Who Cares.....	33
That Incredible Christian.....	53
The Root of the Righteous	64
Of God and Men.....	77
Man: the Dwelling Place of God.....	90
How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit	114
Worship, the Missing Jewel	118
Who Put Jesus on the Cross?	121
Paths to Power	128
Let My People Go	131
The Knowledge of the Holy	134
The Divine Conquest.....	147
Born After Midnight.....	170
The Pursuit After God.....	176
The Root of the Righteous	174
That Incredible Christian.....	191
Of God and Men.....	201
Man, The Dwelling Place of God	208
I Call It Heresy	218
Who Put Jesus on the Cross?	241
God Tells the Man Who Cares.....	254
I Talk Back to the Devil!.....	262
Worship: The Missing Jewel.....	268
How to be Filled with the Holy Spirit.....	272

Forward

“The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness”

Whenever I read A. W. Tozer, two verses always come to mind: Isaiah 40:3 and Matthew 3:3, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness.” Like Charles Spurgeon during the Down-Grade Controversy in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Tozer said and wrote much about what was going on in contemporary Christianity. He said so much, in fact, that he was once quoted as saying to David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, that great expositor and 30-year pastor of Westminster Chapel in London, “I have preached myself off every Bible conference platform in the country” [Cited in *A Treasury of A. W. Tozer* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), p. 8]. While he never desired to offend, he knew that the Word of God does offend (Matt. 15:12-13), and that when you tell people the truth, they often become your enemy (Gal. 4:16).

I view Tozer, as well as Spurgeon and others, as “the voice of one crying in the wilderness” because people seem to consider such men to be crackpots, troublemakers, or simply opinionated critics whom we can easily dismiss. It greatly distresses me when even those who love Tozer seem to dismiss many of the things he said as being mere opinion and therefore unworthy of serious consideration. One author, for example, writes about Tozer:

I heard him preach many times (always with profit) and waited for his books to be published as impatiently as a detective-story addict waits for the next installment of the current serial. I still reread his books regularly and always find in them something new to think about. This does not mean I always agree with Tozer. There were times when I felt he was leading a parade of one down a dead-end street, such as when he vigorously opposed Christian movies. His sometimes acid criticisms of new Bible translations and of churches that “majored in counting noses” were but small defects in an otherwise straight and sturdy wall. [Warren Wiersbe, *Walking With the Giants* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 163.]

While I certainly do not agree with Tozer in every area, I must take issue with the listed observations being labeled “defects.” There are, indeed, legitimate points to challenge in all three of those (especially the third one), and, quite frankly, anyone who does not see it is not being very discerning. As we’ll see, Tozer was committed to the authority of the Word and quickly (and rightly) condemned that which did not conform to It.

It is this very dismissal of much of Tozer’s contemporary comment that reminds me of John the Baptist (Is. 40:3; Matt. 3:3). Seven hundred years before John preached, Isaiah foretold of the herald’s coming to “prepare the way” for Christ. When the herald arrived, he announced (or “heralded”) the arrival of the King. Such heralding was a common practice in ancient times. The herald would travel far ahead of the monarch and prepare the way. He, along with a group of servants, would repair the roadway and make sure it was as neat as possible. The herald would then arrive and proclaim the coming of the monarch to everyone he met.

With this in mind, I would like to offer a brief biography of Tozer, while at the same time drawing a few comparisons between him and John the Baptist. (For a more thorough biography of Tozer, see James L. Snyder, *In Pursuit of God: The Life of A. W. Tozer* [Camp Hill, PA:

Christian Publications], 1991). I'm sure that Tozer's humility would not have permitted him to approve of this comparison, but I am respectfully going to do it anyway. (I also hope he would forgive me for using alliteration, for it was something he avoided, viewing it as being artificial.) While expositing the Gospel of Matthew, I was deeply struck by John the Baptist, and while reading *about* Tozer and reading Tozer *himself*, I discovered several similarities.

The Man

Much of what A. W. Tozer wrote and preached has been overlooked at best and ignored at worst. This is strikingly similar to John the Baptist. As Henry Morris observes:

. . .for some strange reason, John is almost ignored by modern believers. In a very real sense, he was the first Christian, the first Christian witness, the first Christian preacher, the first Christian prophet, and, finally, the first Christian martyr. He was the first to baptize converts and could have even started the first local church since the disciples of Christ were already largely organized and ministering together under John before they were instructed to follow Christ (John 1:35-37; Acts 1:15-26) [Henry Morris, *The Defender's Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: World Publishing, Inc., 1995), p. 1009.]

John the Baptist was truly an outstanding and unparalleled individual. Our Lord Himself said that John the Baptist was the greatest man who had ever lived up to that time (Matt. 11:11). That is a truly astounding statement in light of men such as Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others.

What about A. W. Tozer, then? Well, while his conception was not miraculous, while he was not filled with the Holy Spirit before he was born, and while he was not the greatest man who ever lived up to that time, he was nonetheless a true herald and modern day prophet of Christ.

Aiden Wilson Tozer was born on April 21, 1897 in Newburg (known then as La Jose), Pennsylvania. The family moved to Akron, Ohio in 1912 where Tozer came to Christ in 1915. From 1919 to 1924, Tozer had three brief pastorates: the Stonewood Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Nutter Fort, West Virginia, the Morgantown, West Virginia Alliance Church, and the Eastside Chapel Alliance Church in Toledo, Ohio. It was in 1924 that his ministry changed when he began a four-year pastorate in the Indianapolis, Indiana Alliance Church (my hometown). In his previous pastorates, his work was mostly evangelistic, but Indianapolis marked the change to the Bible teaching ministry for which he is now famous.

Tozer had little formal education, leaving high school after one day because "he felt he could make better progress in independent study" [Snyder, p. 35]. This feeling was vindicated as the years went by. Tozer's remarkable knowledge came from his voracious reading and study. While in Indianapolis, he was a regular at the public library. "Every Monday and Wednesday people would see Tozer walking to the library with both arms loaded with books. He would exchange those books and return with a similar load" [Snyder, p. 67]. Further, "He read theology, history, philosophy, poetry, and literature in general. He was especially attracted to the ancient writers, particularly the church fathers and Christian mystics" [Snyder, p. 108]. Tozer believed the Biblical truth that the first responsibility of a pastor is to preach and teach the Word, which could be accomplished only by hours of study. As we'll point out in Chapter 8, this practice is not the norm in contemporary Christianity.

It was in 1928 that Tozer accepted the pastorate of the Southside Alliance Church in Chicago, where he labored faithfully for 31 years. Again, what struck me about Tozer's acceptance of this pastorate was his uncompromising commitment to study and prayer. In his meeting with the church board, he made it clear that the priority of his ministry was preaching and teaching, which required many hours of study and prayer. He made it clear that he was not "a visiting pastor," that he would not spend all week visiting the church people in their homes. While this seemed unusual to the board, they extended the invitation anyway. Again, as we'll see in Chapter 8, this is not the emphasis today. Because of so many other demands on a pastor's time, study and prayer are often the last considerations.

Tozer pastored one other church, the Avenue Road Church in Toronto, Canada. He believed the Lord was leading him away from Chicago for two reasons. First, the inner city neighborhood around the church had deteriorated considerably and the church people wanted to relocate to the cleaner and safer Chicago suburbs, but the 61-year-old Tozer felt this to be the job of a younger man. Second, Tozer wanted to devote more time to Bible conference speaking and to *Alliance Life*, the official publication of the Christian and Missionary Alliance.

A plethora of churches invited Tozer to be their pastor, but it was the persistence of Avenue Road, much like the persistence of Southside Alliance, that paid off. They offered Tozer a position of "preaching pastor," which meant that his only duty would be to preach twice on Sunday, leaving all other pastoral duties to the other pastor and thereby freeing Tozer to do the other things he wanted to do. Somewhat taken aback by such an offer, and after prayerful consideration, Tozer accepted and preached there for almost four years.

The noteworthy aspect of Tozer's departure from Southside was his making clear that he was not retiring. He told his Chicago congregation, "I'll preach as long as I can hold a Bible." He went on to observe that the priests of Israel only had a 20 year ministry, starting at 30 years of age and ending at 50, but that prophets never retired [Snyder, p. 217].

How unlike our day this is! Many pastors today have retired, or are planning to retire, in direct contradiction of the Biblical principle that Tozer practiced. Indeed, he carried on his busy ministry until the Lord took him home on May 12, 1963. In fact, the fatal heart attack that ushered him into glory occurred just seven days before he was scheduled to preach at the Alliance General Council. As one of his sons later commented, "He burned himself out for Christ."

One parallel between Tozer and John the Baptist was their attitude toward money and possessions. It was said of the Lord Jesus that, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Matt. 8:20), but John the Baptist had even less than Jesus. John lived in the wilderness, dressed in camel's hair, and ate locusts and wild honey. All of this was an indictment against the religious crowd of the day—the Pharisees, Saducees, and priests—who were self-indulgent and self-satisfied.

Likewise, early in his marriage to Ada Pfautz and early in his ministry, Tozer learned what it means to live by faith, often living literally from hand to mouth. The lesson stuck with him throughout his ministry. Even when "success" came, money was never a consideration. By his own choice, his salary was always meager, even in the peak years, and he signed away much of the book royalties he would have received. Like John the Baptist, Tozer was content with whatever food and clothing God provided.

This does not imply that either John or Tozer encouraged people to be hermits or ascetics. Rather their way of living was a dramatic reminder of how possessions and prestige can keep men away from the things that matter most.

The Ministry

The ministry of John the Baptist can be summed up in one word: *preaching*. As we'll examine in greater detail in Chapter 8, the word "preaching" translates the Greek verb *kerusso*, which primarily means, "to herald." The noun form pictures the imperial herald, whose duty it was to proclaim loudly, extensively, and authoritatively the coming of the king and the wishes of the king. Paul uses this word in II Timothy 4:2 to specify the first and foremost responsibility of the preacher: "*Preach* the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

This was John's task, his only task. He proclaimed the king in word and action. He never promoted himself or accepted honor for himself. His only desire was to proclaim the king.

This likewise was the ministry of A. W. Tozer. More than anything else, even more than his great success as a writer, he considered himself a preacher. His writing was, in fact, merely an extension of his pulpit ministry, which is the way it should be today but tragically is not as a rule. Every other aspect of Tozer's ministry revolved around the pulpit ministry.

The Message

Another important parallel between these two men of God was their message, namely, *repentance*. As we'll explore in Chapter 7, a prevalent teaching today is that of "no-lordship," the teaching that says one can "accept Christ" (a term Tozer criticized severely) as Savior without accepting Him as Lord. Going hand-in-hand with this teaching is the denial that "repentance" is a necessary aspect of salvation. John, however, clearly proclaimed the necessity of repentance.

The Greek for "repent" (*metanoeo*) literally means "to turn around, to change direction, to change the mind and will." It does not imply some vague or uncertain change; rather it always denotes a change from that which is wrong to that which is right. Repentance always implies a change of thinking, desire, and conduct of life. As we'll see, the Lord Jesus proclaimed repentance, as did "the twelve," Peter proclaimed repentance, and the Apostle Paul proclaimed repentance. Salvation, therefore, is truly a "conversion," that is, a conversion from a life of sin to a life of holiness.

Tozer likewise strongly preached the message of repentance:

I think there is little doubt that the teaching of salvation without repentance has lowered the moral standards of the Church and produced a multitude of deceived religious professors who erroneously believe themselves to be saved when in fact they are still in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity [*The Root of the Righteous*, p. 44].

The Manner

As mentioned already, the manner in which John spoke was of "one crying in the wilderness." That great expositor and scholar John Gill explains this term:

The voice of one crying, *bontos*, lowing like an ox; which expresses the austerity of the man, the roughness of his voice, the severity of his language; that he called aloud and

spoke out, openly, publicly, and freely; and that he delivered himself in preaching with a great deal of zeal and fervency.

I have often pondered the scene of John thundering out the truth of the Living God to the people of his day. I often imagine the shocked look on the faces of the self-righteous Jews when John pointed his finger at them and said that they, the covenant people of Abraham, needed to repent. Nowhere do we see John compromise, cower, or capitulate his message.

In reading Tozer I see the same attitude. I see a man who stood firmly for the Word of God and thundered forth its truth. As one writer comments, “To listen to Tozer preach was as safe as opening the door of a blast furnace!” [Warren Wiersbe, *Walking With the Giants*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), p. 163].

The interesting thing about this, however, is that Tozer’s voice was actually somewhat weak and had a distinct nasal quality about it. During his ministry in Chicago, he decided he should do something about this deficiency. So, as biographer James L. Snyder recounts, “Typical of Tozer, he went to a bookstore and purchased a volume on voice training to learn all he could about voice control. In his office was a large copy of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Tozer would place it on a music stand borrowed from the sanctuary and read it aloud. He read through the book at least four times in order to strengthen his voice and gain better control of it.” He even carried balloons in his briefcase and blew them up often to help strengthen his lungs [Snyder, p. 109].

Was all this motivated by vanity? Did Tozer do it so he could be acclaimed as a pupiteer? No, he did it all that he might be better able better to proclaim the truth of God.

And proclaim the truth he did, no matter what the consequences. As mentioned in the Introduction, he once remarked that he had preached myself off every Bible conference platform in the country.

On one occasion, for example, Tozer was invited to speak at a holiness church. The service consisted of what he viewed as “inappropriate levity” and a ladies trio that sang several secular songs. When it was his turn, Tozer laid aside his planned message and proceeded to rebuke the church for its lack of the very standards it used to have [Snyder, p. 112]. I don’t know if he was ever invited back, but I doubt it. Either way, however, it didn’t matter to Tozer. He never preached to ensure that he would be invited back.

Unlike the tolerance and lack of standards that permeate Christianity today, A. W. Tozer stood without apology against anything that dishonored the Lord he served. He was, indeed, “the voice of one crying in the wilderness.” How we so need more like him today!

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From the Introduction to his book,
The Forgotten Tozer

Excerpts from The Pursuit of God

Chapter 1. Following Hard After God

My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand, upholdeth me. Ps. 63:8

Christian theology teaches the doctrine of prevenient grace, which briefly stated means this, that before a man can seek God, God must first have sought the man.

Before a sinful man can think a right thought of God, there must have been a work of enlightenment done within him; imperfect it may be, but a true work nonetheless, and the secret cause of all desiring and seeking and praying which may follow.

We pursue God because, and only because, He has first put an urge within us that spurs us to the pursuit. "No man can come to me," said our Lord, "except the Father which hath sent me draw him," and it is by this very prevenient *drawing* that God takes from us every vestige of credit for the act of coming. The impulse to pursue God originates with God, but the outworking of that impulse is our following hard after Him; and all the time we are pursuing Him we are already in His hand: "Thy right hand upholdeth me."

In this divine "upholding" and human "following" there is no contradiction. All is of God, for as von Hugel teaches, *God is always previous*. In practice, however, (that is, where God's previous working meets man's present response) man must pursue God. On our part there must be positive reciprocation if this secret drawing of God is to eventuate in identifiable experience of the Divine. In the warm language of personal feeling this is stated in the Forty-second Psalm: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" This is deep calling unto deep, and the longing heart will understand it.

The doctrine of justification by faith—a Biblical truth, and a blessed relief from sterile legalism and unavailing self-effort—has in our time fallen into evil company and been interpreted by many in such manner as actually to bar men from the knowledge of God. The whole transaction of religious conversion has been made mechanical and spiritless. Faith may now be exercised without a jar to the moral life and without embarrassment to the Adamic ego. Christ may be "received" without creating any special love for Him in the soul of the receiver. The man is "saved," but he is not hungry nor thirsty after God. In fact he is specifically taught to be satisfied and encouraged to be content with little.

The modern scientist has lost God amid the wonders of His world; we Christians are in real danger of losing God amid the wonders of His Word. We have almost forgotten that God is a Person and, as such, can be cultivated as any person can. It is inherent in personality to be able to know other personalities, but full knowledge of one personality by another cannot be achieved in one encounter. It is only after long and loving mental intercourse that the full possibilities of both can be explored.

All social intercourse between human beings is a response of personality to personality, grading upward from the most casual brush between man and man to the fullest, most intimate communion of which the human soul is capable. Religion, so far as it is genuine, is in essence the response of created personalities to the Creating Personality, God. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

God is a Person, and in the deep of His mighty nature He thinks, wills, enjoys, feels, loves, desires and suffers as any other person may. In making Himself known to us, He stays by the familiar pattern of personality. He communicates with us through the avenues of our minds, our wills and our emotions. The continuous and unembarrassed interchange of love and thought between God and the soul of the redeemed man is the throbbing heart of New Testament religion.

This intercourse between God and the soul is known to us in conscious personal awareness. It is personal: that is, it does not come through the body of believers, as such, but is known to the individual, and to the body through the individuals which compose it. And it is conscious: that is, it does not stay below the threshold of consciousness and work there unknown to the soul (as, for instance, infant baptism is thought by some to do), but comes within the field of awareness where the man can "know" it as he knows any other fact of experience.

You and I are in little (our sins excepted) what God is in large. Being made in His image we have within us the capacity to know Him. In our sins we lack only the power. The moment the Spirit has quickened us to life in regeneration our whole being senses its kinship to God and leaps up in joyous recognition. That is the heavenly birth without which we cannot see the Kingdom of God. It is, however, not an end but an inception, for now begins the glorious pursuit, the heart's happy exploration of the infinite riches of the Godhead. That is where we begin, I say, but where we stop no man has yet discovered, for there is in the awful and mysterious depths of the Triune God neither limit nor end.

*Shoreless Ocean, who can sound Thee?
Thine own eternity is round Thee,
Majesty divine!*

To have found God and still to pursue Him is the soul's paradox of love, scorned indeed by the too-easily-satisfied religionist, but justified in happy experience by the children of the burning heart. St. Bernard stated this holy paradox in a musical quatrain that will be instantly understood by every worshipping soul:

*We taste Thee, O Thou Living Bread,
And long to feast upon Thee still:
We drink of Thee, the Fountainhead
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.*

Come near to the holy men and women of the past and you will soon feel the heat of their desire after God. They mourned for Him, they prayed and wrestled and sought for Him day and night, in season and out, and when they had found Him the finding was all the sweeter for the long seeking. Moses used the fact that he knew God as an argument for knowing Him better. "Now, therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight"; and from there he rose to make the daring request, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory." God was frankly pleased by this display of ardor, and the

next day called Moses into the mount, and there in solemn procession made all His glory pass before him.

David's life was a torrent of spiritual desire, and his psalms ring with the cry of the seeker and the glad shout of the finder. Paul confessed the mainspring of his life to be his burning desire after Christ. "That I may know Him," was the goal of his heart, and to this he sacrificed everything. "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 refuse, that I may win Christ."

Hymnody is sweet with the longing after God, the God whom, while the singer seeks, he knows he has already found. "His track I see and I'll pursue," sang our fathers only a short generation ago, but that song is heard no more in the great congregation. How tragic that we in this dark day have had our seeking done for us by our teachers. Everything is made to center upon the initial act of "accepting" Christ (a term, incidentally, which is not found in the Bible) and we are not expected thereafter to crave any further revelation of God to our souls. We have been snared in the coils of a spurious logic which insists that if we have found Him we need no more seek Him. This is set before us as the last word in orthodoxy, and it is taken for granted that no Bible-taught Christian ever believed otherwise. Thus the whole testimony of the worshiping, seeking, singing Church on that subject is crisply set aside. The experiential heart-theology of a grand army of fragrant saints is rejected in favor of a smug interpretation of Scripture which would have sounded strange to an Augustine, a Rutherford or a Brainerd.

In the midst of this great chill, there are some I rejoice to acknowledge, who will not be content with shallow logic. They will admit the force of the argument, and then turn away with tears to hunt some lonely place and pray, "O God, show me thy glory." They want to taste, to touch with their hearts, to see with their inner eyes the wonder that is God.

I want deliberately to encourage this mighty longing after God. The lack of it has brought us to our present low estate. The stiff and wooden quality about our religious lives is a result of our lack of holy desire. Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted. Too bad that with many of us He waits so long, so very long, in vain.

Every age has its own characteristics. Right now we are in an age of religious complexity. The simplicity which is in Christ is rarely found among us. In its stead are programs, methods, organizations and a world of nervous activities which occupy time and attention but can never satisfy the longing of the heart. The shallowness of our inner experience, the hollowness of our worship, and that servile imitation of the world which marks our promotional methods all testify that we, in this day, know God only imperfectly, and the peace of God scarcely at all.

If we would find God amid all the religious externals we must first determine to find Him, and then proceed in the way of simplicity. Now, as always, God reveals Himself to "babes" and hides Himself in thick darkness from the wise and the prudent. We must simplify our approach to Him. We must strip down to essentials (and they will be found to be blessedly few). We must put away all effort to impress, and come with the guileless candor of childhood. If we do this, without doubt God will quickly respond.

When religion has said its last word, there is little that we need other than God Himself. The evil habit of seeking *God-and* effectively prevents us from finding God in full revelation. In the "and" lies our great woe. If we omit the "and," we shall soon find God, and in Him we shall find that for which we have all our lives been secretly longing.

We need not fear that in seeking God only we may narrow our lives or restrict the motions of our expanding hearts. The opposite is true. We can well afford to make God our All, to concentrate, to sacrifice the many for the One.

The author of the quaint old English classic, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, teaches us how to do this. "Lift up thine heart unto God with a meek stirring of love; and mean Himself, and none of His goods. And thereto, look thee loath to think on aught but God Himself. So that nought work in thy wit, nor in thy will, but only God Himself. This is the work of the soul that most pleaseth God."

Again, he recommends that in prayer we practice a further stripping down of everything, even of our theology. "For it sufficeth enough, a naked intent direct unto God without any other cause than Himself." Yet underneath all his thinking lay the broad foundation of New Testament truth, for he explains that by "Himself" he means "God that made thee, and bought thee, and that graciously called thee to thy degree." And he is all for simplicity: If we would have religion "lapped and folden in one word, for that thou shouldst have better hold thereupon, take thee but a little word of one syllable: for so it is better than of two, for even the shorter it is the better it accordeth with the work of the Spirit. And such a word is this word GOD or this word LOVE."

When the Lord divided Canaan among the tribes of Israel, Levi received no share of the land. God said to him simply, "I am thy part and thine inheritance," and by those words made him richer than all his brethren, richer than all the kings and rajas who have ever lived in the world. And there is a spiritual principle here, a principle still valid for every priest of the Most High God.

The man who has God for his treasure has all things in One. Many ordinary treasures may be denied him, or if he is allowed to have them, the enjoyment of them will be so tempered that they will never be necessary to his happiness. Or if he must see them go, one after one, he will scarcely feel a sense of loss, for having the Source of all things he has in One all satisfaction, all pleasure, all delight. Whatever he may lose, he has actually lost nothing, for he now has it all in One, and he has it purely, legitimately and forever.

O God, I have tasted Thy goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more. I am painfully conscious of my need of further grace. I am ashamed of my lack of desire. O God, the Triune God, I want to want Thee; I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be made more thirsty still. Show me Thy glory, I pray Thee, that so I may know Thee indeed. Begin in mercy a new work of love within me. Say to my soul, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." Then give me grace to rise and follow Thee up from this misty lowland where I have wandered so long. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Chapter 2.

The Speaking Voice

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1

An intelligent plain man, untaught in the truths of Christianity, coming upon this text, would likely conclude that John meant to teach that it is the nature of God to speak, to communicate His thoughts to others. And he would be right. A word is a medium by which thoughts are expressed, and the application of the term to the Eternal Son leads us to believe that self-expression is inherent in the Godhead, that God is forever seeking to speak Himself out to His creation. The whole Bible supports the idea. God is speaking. Not God spoke, but *God is speaking*. He is by His nature continuously articulate. He fills the world with His speaking Voice.

One of the great realities with which we have to deal is the Voice of God in His world. The briefest and only satisfying cosmogony is this: "He spake and it was done." The *why* of natural law is the living Voice of God immanent in His creation. And this word of God which brought all worlds into being cannot be understood to mean the Bible, for it is not a written or printed word at all, but the expression of the will of God spoken into the structure of all things. This word of God is the breath of God filling the world with living potentiality. The Voice of God is the most powerful force in nature, indeed the only force in nature, for all energy is here only because the power-filled Word is being spoken.

The Bible is the written word of God, and because it is written it is confined and limited by the necessities of ink and paper and leather. The Voice of God, however, is alive and free as the sovereign God is free. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." The life is in the speaking words. God's word in the Bible can have power only because it corresponds to God's word in the universe. It is the present Voice which makes the written Word all-powerful. Otherwise it would lie locked in slumber within the covers of a book.

We take a low and primitive view of things when we conceive of God at the creation coming into physical contact with things, shaping and fitting and building like a carpenter. The Bible teaches otherwise: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.... For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." Again we must remember that God is referring here not to His written Word, but to His speaking Voice. His world-filling Voice is meant, that Voice which antedates the Bible by uncounted centuries, that Voice which has not been silent since the dawn of creation, but is sounding still throughout the full far reaches of the universe.

The Word of God is quick and powerful. In the beginning He spoke to nothing, and it became *something*. Chaos heard it and became order, darkness heard it and became light. "And God said—and it was so." These twin phrases, as cause and effect, occur throughout the Genesis story of the creation. The *said* accounts for the *so*. The *so* is the *said* put into the continuous present.

That God is here and that He is speaking—these truths are back of all other Bible truths; without them there could be no revelation at all. God did not write a book and send it by messenger to be read at a distance by unaided minds. He spoke a Book and lives in His spoken words, constantly speaking His words and causing the power of them to persist across the years.

God breathed on clay and it became a man; He breathes on men and they become clay. "Return ye children of men," was the word spoken at the Fall by which God decreed the death of every man, and no added word has He needed to speak. The sad procession of mankind across the face of the earth from birth to the grave is proof that His original Word was enough.

We have not given sufficient attention to that deep utterance in the Book of John, "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Shift the punctuation around as we will and the truth is still there: the Word of God affects the hearts of all men as light in the soul. In the hearts of all men the light shines, the Word sounds, and there is no escaping them. Something like this would of necessity be so if God is alive and in His world. And John says that it is so. Even those persons who have never heard of the Bible have still been preached to with sufficient clarity to remove every excuse from their hearts forever. "Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile either accusing or else excusing one another." "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."

This universal Voice of God was by the ancient Hebrews often called Wisdom, and was said to be everywhere sounding and searching throughout the earth, seeking some response from the sons of men. The eighth chapter of the Book of Proverbs begins, "Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?" The writer then pictures wisdom as a beautiful woman standing "in the top of the high places, by the way in the places of the paths." She sounds her voice from every quarter so that no one may miss hearing it. "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men." Then she pleads for the simple and the foolish to give ear to her words. It is spiritual response for which this Wisdom of God is pleading, a response which she has always sought and is but rarely able to secure. The tragedy is that our eternal welfare depends upon our hearing, and we have trained our ears not to hear.

This universal Voice has ever sounded, and it has often troubled men even when they did not understand the source of their fears. Could it be that this Voice distilling like a living mist upon the hearts of men has been the undiscovered cause of the troubled conscience and the longing for immortality confessed by millions since the dawn of recorded history? We need not fear to face up to this. The speaking Voice is a fact. How men have reacted to it is for any observer to note.

When God spoke out of heaven to our Lord, self-centered men who heard it explained it by natural causes: they said, "It thundered." This habit of explaining the Voice by appeals to natural law is at the very root of modern science. In the living, breathing cosmos there is a mysterious Something, too wonderful, too awful for any mind to understand. The believing man does not claim to understand. He falls to his knees and whispers, "God." The man of earth kneels also, but not to worship. He kneels to examine, to search, to find the cause and the how of things. Just now we happen to be living in a secular age. Our thought habits are those of the scientist, not those of the worshiper. We are more likely to explain than to adore. "It thundered," we exclaim, and go our earthly way. But still the Voice sounds and searches. The order and life of the world depend upon that Voice, but men are mostly too busy or too stubborn to give attention.

Everyone of us has had experiences which we have not been able to explain: a sudden sense of loneliness, or a feeling of wonder or awe in the face of the universal vastness. Or we have had a fleeting visitation of light like an illumination from some other sun, giving us in a quick flash an assurance that we are from another world, that our origins are divine. What we saw there, or felt, or heard, may have been contrary to all that we had been taught in the schools

and at wide variance with all our former beliefs and opinions. We were forced to suspend our acquired doubts while, for a moment, the clouds were rolled back and we saw and heard for ourselves. Explain such things as we will, I think we have not been fair to the facts until we allow at least the possibility that such experiences may arise from the Presence of God in the world and His persistent effort to communicate with mankind. Let us not dismiss such an hypothesis too flippantly.

It is my own belief (and here I shall not feel bad if no one follows me) that every good and beautiful thing which man has produced in the world has been the result of his faulty and sin-blocked response to the creative Voice sounding over the earth. The moral philosophers who dreamed their high dreams of virtue, the religious thinkers who speculated about God and immortality, the poets and artists who created out of common stuff pure and lasting beauty: how can we explain them? It is not enough to say simply, "It was genius." What then is genius? Could it be that a genius is a man haunted by the speaking Voice, laboring and striving like one possessed to achieve ends which he only vaguely understands? That the great man may have missed God in his labors, that he may even have spoken or written against God does not destroy the idea I am advancing. God's redemptive revelation in the Holy Scriptures is necessary to saving faith and peace with God. Faith in a risen Saviour is necessary if the vague stirrings toward immortality are to bring us to restful and satisfying communion with God. To me this is a plausible explanation of all that is best out of Christ. But you can be a good Christian and not accept my thesis.

The Voice of God is a friendly Voice. No one need fear to listen to it unless he has already made up his mind to resist it. The blood of Jesus has covered not only the human race but all creation as well. "And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." We may safely preach a friendly Heaven. The heaven as well as the earth are filled with the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush. The perfect blood of atonement secures this forever.

Whoever will listen will hear the speaking Heaven. This is definitely not the hour when men take kindly to an exhortation to *listen*, for listening is not today a part of popular religion. We are at the opposite end of the pole from there. Religion has accepted the monstrous heresy that noise, size, activity and bluster make a man dear to God. But we may take heart. To a people caught in the tempest of the last great conflict God says, "Be still, and know that I am God," and still He says it, as if He means to tell us that our strength and safety lie not in noise but in silence.

It is important that we get still to wait on God. And it is best that we get alone, preferably with our Bible outspread before us. Then if we will we may draw near to God and begin to hear Him speak to us in our hearts. I think for the average person the progression will be something like this: First a sound as of a Presence walking in the garden. Then a voice, more intelligible, but still far from clear. Then the happy moment when the Spirit begins to illuminate the Scriptures, and that which had been only a sound, or at best a voice, now becomes an intelligible word, warm and intimate and clear as the word of a dear friend. Then will come life and light, and best of all, ability to see and rest in and embrace Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and All.

The Bible will never be a living Book to us until we are convinced that God is articulate in His universe. To jump from a dead, impersonal world to a dogmatic Bible is too much for most people. They may admit that they *should* accept the Bible as the Word of God, and they may try to think of it as such, but they find it impossible to believe that the words there on the page are actually for them. A man may *say*, "These words are addressed to me," and yet in his heart not

feel and know that they are. He is the victim of a divided psychology. He tries to think of God as mute everywhere else and vocal only in a book.

I believe that much of our religious unbelief is due to a wrong conception of and a wrong feeling for the Scriptures of Truth. A silent God suddenly began to speak in a book and when the book was finished lapsed back into silence again forever. Now we read the book as the record of what God said when He was for a brief time in a speaking mood. With notions like that in our heads how can we believe? The facts are that God is not silent, has never been silent. It is the nature of God to speak. The second Person of the Holy Trinity is called the *Word*. The Bible is the inevitable outcome of God's continuous speech. It is the infallible declaration of His mind—for us put into our familiar human words.

I think a new world will arise out of the religious mists when we approach our Bible with the idea that it is not only a book which was once spoken, but a book which is *now speaking*. The prophets habitually said, "Thus *saith* the Lord." They meant their hearers to understand that God's speaking is in the continuous present. We may use the past tense properly to indicate that at a certain time a certain word of God was spoken, but a word of God once spoken continues to be spoken, as a child once born continues to be alive, or a world once created continues to exist. And those are but imperfect illustrations, for children die and worlds burn out, but the Word of our God endureth forever.

If you would follow on to know the Lord, come at once to the open Bible expecting it to speak to you. Do not come with the notion that it is a *thing* which you may push around at your convenience. It is more than a thing, it is a voice, a word, the very Word of the living God.

Lord, teach me to listen. The times are noisy and my ears are weary with the thousand raucous sounds which continuously assault them. Give me the spirit of the boy Samuel when he said to Thee, "Speak, for thy servant heareth." Let me hear Thee speaking in my heart. Let me get used to the sound of Thy Voice, that its tones may be familiar when the sounds of earth die away and the only sound will be the music of Thy speaking Voice. Amen.

Chapter 3.

Meekness and Rest

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Matt. 5:5

A fairly accurate description of the human race might be furnished one unacquainted with it by taking the Beatitudes, turning them wrong side out and saying, "Here is your human race." For the exact opposite of the virtues in the Beatitudes are the very qualities which distinguish human life and conduct.

In the world of men we find nothing approaching the virtues of which Jesus spoke in the opening words of the famous Sermon on the Mount. Instead of poverty of spirit we find the rankest kind of pride; instead of mourners we find pleasure seekers; instead of meekness, arrogance; instead of hunger after righteousness we hear men saying, "I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing"; instead of mercy we find cruelty; instead of purity of heart, corrupt imaginings; instead of peacemakers we find men quarrelsome and resentful; instead of rejoicing in mistreatment we find them fighting back with every weapon at their command.

Of this kind of moral stuff civilized society is composed. The atmosphere is charged with it; we breathe it with every breath and drink it with our mother's milk. Culture and education refine these things slightly but leave them basically untouched. A whole world of literature has been created to justify this kind of life as the only normal one. And this is the more to be wondered at, seeing that these are the evils which make life the bitter struggle it is for all of us. All our heartaches and a great many of our physical ills spring directly out of our sins. Pride, arrogance, resentfulness, evil imaginings, malice, greed: these are the sources of more human pain than all the diseases that ever afflicted mortal flesh.

Into a world like this the sound of Jesus' words comes wonderful and strange, a visitation from above. It is well that He spoke, for no one else could have done it as well; and it is good that we listen. His words are the essence of truth. He is not offering an opinion; Jesus never uttered opinions. He never guessed; He knew, and He knows. His words are not as Solomon's were, the sum of sound wisdom or the results of keen observation. He spoke out of the fulness of His Godhead, and His words are very Truth itself. He is the only one who could say "blessed" with complete authority, for He is the Blessed One come from the world above to confer blessedness upon mankind. And His words were supported by deeds mightier than any performed on this earth by any other man. It is wisdom for us to listen.

As was often so with Jesus, He used this word "meek" in a brief crisp sentence, and not till some time later did He go on to explain it. In the same book of Matthew He tells us more about it and applies it to our lives. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Here we have two things standing in contrast to each other, a burden and a rest. The burden is not a local one, peculiar to those first hearers, but one which is borne by the whole human race. It consists not of political oppression or poverty or hard work. It is far deeper than that. It is felt by the rich as well as the poor for it is something from which wealth and idleness can never deliver us.

The burden borne by mankind is a heavy and a crushing thing. The word Jesus used means a load carried or toil borne to the point of exhaustion. Rest is simply release from that burden. It

is not something we do, it is what comes to us when we cease to do. His own meekness, that is the rest.

Let us examine our burden. It is altogether an interior one. It attacks the heart and the mind and reaches the body only from within. First, there is the burden of *pride*. The labor of self-love is a heavy one indeed. Think for yourself whether much of your sorrow has not arisen from someone speaking slightly of you. As long as you set yourself up as a little god to which you must be loyal there will be those who will delight to offer affront to your idol. How then can you hope to have inward peace? The heart's fierce effort to protect itself from every slight, to shield its touchy honor from the bad opinion of friend and enemy, will never let the mind have rest. Continue this fight through the years and the burden will become intolerable. Yet the sons of earth are carrying this burden continually, challenging every word spoken against them, cringing under every criticism, smarting under each fancied slight, tossing sleepless if another is preferred before them.

Such a burden as this is not necessary to bear. Jesus calls us to His rest, and meekness is His method. The meek man cares not at all who is greater than he, for he has long ago decided that the esteem of the world is not worth the effort. He develops toward himself a kindly sense of humor and learns to say, "Oh, so you have been overlooked? They have placed someone else before you? They have whispered that you are pretty small stuff after all? And now you feel hurt because the world is saying about you the very things you have been saying about yourself? Only yesterday you were telling God that you were nothing, a mere worm of the dust. Where is your consistency? Come on, humble yourself, and cease to care what men think."

The meek man is not a human mouse afflicted with a sense of his own inferiority. Rather he may be in his moral life as bold as a lion and as strong as Samson; but he has stopped being fooled about himself. He has accepted God's estimate of his own life. He knows he is as weak and helpless as God has declared him to be, but paradoxically, he knows at the same time that he is in the sight of God of more importance than angels. In himself, nothing; in God, everything. That is his motto. He knows well that the world will never see him as God sees him and he has stopped caring. He rests perfectly content to allow God to place His own values. He will be patient to wait for the day when everything will get its own price tag and real worth will come into its own. Then the righteous shall shine forth in the Kingdom of their Father. He is willing to wait for that day.

In the meantime he will have attained a place of soul rest. As he walks on in meekness he will be happy to let God defend him. The old struggle to defend himself is over. He has found the peace which meekness brings.

Then also he will get deliverance from the burden of *pretense*. By this I mean not hypocrisy, but the common human desire to put the best foot forward and hide from the world our real inward poverty. For sin has played many evil tricks upon us, and one has been the infusing into us a false sense of shame. There is hardly a man or woman who dares to be just what he or she is without doctoring up the impression. The fear of being found out gnaws like rodents within their hearts. The man of culture is haunted by the fear that he will some day come upon a man more cultured than himself. The learned man fears to meet a man more learned than he. The rich man sweats under the fear that his clothes or his car or his house will sometime be made to look cheap by comparison with those of another rich man. So-called "society" runs by a motivation not higher than this, and the poorer classes on their level are little better.

Let no one smile this off. These burdens are real, and little by little they kill the victims of this evil and unnatural way of life. And the psychology created by years of this kind of thing

makes true meekness seem as unreal as a dream, as aloof as a star. To all the victims of the gnawing disease Jesus says, "Ye must become as little children." For little children do not compare; they receive direct enjoyment from what they have without relating it to something else or someone else. Only as they get older and sin begins to stir within their hearts do jealousy and envy appear. Then they are unable to enjoy what they have if someone else has something larger or better. At that early age, the galling burden comes down upon their tender souls, and it never leaves them till Jesus sets them free.

Another source of burden is *artificiality*. I am sure that most people live in secret fear that some day they will be careless and by chance an enemy or friend will be allowed to peep into their poor empty souls. So they are never relaxed. Bright people are tense and alert in fear that they may be trapped into saying something common or stupid. Traveled people are afraid that they may meet some Marco Polo who is able to describe some remote place where they have never been.

This unnatural condition is part of our sad heritage of sin, but in our day it is aggravated by our whole way of life. Advertising is largely based upon this habit of pretense. "Courses" are offered in this or that field of human learning frankly appealing to the victim's desire to shine at a party. Books are sold, clothes and cosmetics are peddled, by playing continually upon this desire to appear what we are not. Artificiality is one curse that will drop away the moment we kneel at Jesus' feet and surrender ourselves to His meekness. Then we will not care what people think of us so long as God is pleased. Then *what we are* will be everything; what we appear will take its place far down the scale of interest for us. Apart from sin we have nothing of which to be ashamed. Only an evil desire to shine makes us want to appear other than we are.

The heart of the world is breaking under this load of pride and pretense. There is no release from our burden apart from the meekness of Christ. Good, keen reasoning may help slightly, but so strong is this vice that if we push it down one place it will come up somewhere else. To men and women everywhere Jesus says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." The rest He offers is the rest of meekness, the blessed relief which comes when we accept ourselves for what we are and cease to pretend. It will take some courage at first, but the needed grace will come as we learn that we are sharing this new and easy yoke with the strong Son of God Himself. He calls it "my yoke," and He walks at one end while we walk at the other.

Lord, make me childlike. Deliver me from the urge to compete with another for place or prestige or position. I would be simple and artless as a little child. Deliver me from pose and pretense. Forgive me for thinking of myself. Help me to forget myself and find my true peace in beholding Thee. That Thou mayest answer this prayer, I humble myself before Thee. Lay upon me Thy easy yoke of self-forgetfulness that through it I may find rest. Amen.

Excerpts from *Born After Midnight*

Chapter 4. Born After Midnight

Among revival-minded Christians I have heard the saying, "Revivals are born after midnight."

This is one of those proverbs which, while not quite literally true, yet points to something very true.

If we understand the saying to mean that God does not hear our prayer for revival made in the daytime, it is of course not true. If we take it to mean that prayer offered when we are tired and worn-out has greater power than prayer made when we are rested and fresh, again it is not true. God would need to be very austere indeed to require us to turn our prayer into penance, or to enjoy seeing us punish ourselves by intercession. Traces of such ascetical notions are still found among some gospel Christians, and while these brethren are to be commended for their zeal, they are not to be excused for unconsciously attributing to God a streak of sadism unworthy of fallen men.

Yet there is considerable truth in the idea that revivals are born after midnight, for revivals (or any other spiritual gifts and graces) come only to those who want them badly enough. It may be said without qualification that every man is as holy and as full of the Spirit as he wants to be. He may not be as full as he wishes he were, but he is most certainly as full as he wants to be.

Our Lord placed this beyond dispute when He said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Hunger and thirst are physical sensations which, in their acute stages, may become real pain. It has been the experience of countless seekers after God that when their desires became a pain they were suddenly and wonderfully filled. The problem is not to persuade God to fill us, but to want God sufficiently to permit Him to do so. The average Christian is so cold and so contented with His wretched condition that there is no vacuum of desire into which the blessed Spirit can rush in satisfying fullness.

Occasionally there will appear on the religious scene a man whose unsatisfied spiritual longings become so big and important in his life that they crowd out every other interest. Such a man refuses to be content with the safe and conventional prayers of the frost-bound brethren who "lead in prayer" week after week and year after year in the local assemblies. His yearnings carry him away and often make something of a nuisance out of him. His puzzled fellow Christians shake their heads and look knowingly at each other, but like the blind man who cried after his sight and was rebuked by the disciples, he "cries the more a great deal." And if he has not yet met the conditions or there is something hindering the answer to his prayer, he may pray on into the late hours. Not the hour of night but the state of his heart decides the time of his visitation. For him it may well be that revival comes after midnight.

It is very important, however, that we understand that long prayer vigils, or even strong crying and tears, are not in themselves meritorious acts. Every blessing flows out of the goodness of God as from a fountain. Even those rewards for good works about which certain teachers talk so fulsomely, and which they always set in sharp contrast to the benefits received by grace alone, are at bottom as certainly of grace as is the forgiveness of sin itself. The holiest apostle can claim no more than that he is an unprofitable servant. The very angels exist out of the pure goodness of

God. No creature can "earn" anything in the usual meaning of the word. All things are by and of the sovereign goodness of God.

Lady Julian summed it up quaintly when she wrote, "It is more honor to God, and more very delight, that we faithfully pray to Himself of His goodness and cleave thereunto by His grace, and with true understanding, and steadfast by love, than if we took all the means that heart can think. For if we took all those means it is too little, and not full honor to God. But in His goodness is all the whole, and there faileth right nought... For the goodness of God is the highest prayer, and it cometh down to the lowest part of our need."

Yet for all God's good will toward us, He is unable to grant us our heart's desires till all our desires have been reduced to one. When we have dealt with our carnal ambitions; when we have trodden upon the lion and adder of the flesh, have trampled the dragon of self-love under our feet and have truly reckoned ourselves to have died unto sin, then and only then can God raise us to newness of life and fill us with His blessed Holy Spirit.

It is easy to learn the doctrine of personal revival and victorious living; it is quite another thing to take our cross and plod on to the dark and bitter hill of self-renunciation. Here many are called and few are chosen. For every one that actually crosses over into the Promised Land there are many who stand for a while and look longingly across the river and then turn sadly back to the comparative safety of the sandy wastes of the old life.

No, there is no merit in late hour prayers, but it requires a serious mind and a determined heart to pray past the ordinary into the unusual. Most Christians never do. And it is more than possible that the rare soul who presses on into the unusual experience reaches there after midnight.

Chapter 5.

The Erotic vs. the Spiritual

The period in which we now live may well go down in history as the Erotic Age. Sex love has been elevated into a cult. Eros has more worshipers among civilized men today than any other god. For millions the erotic has completely displaced the spiritual.

How the world got into this state is not difficult to trace. Contributing factors are the phonograph and radio, which can spread a love song from coast to coast within a matter of days; the motion picture and television, which enable a whole population to feast their eyes on sensuous women and amorous young men locked in passionate embrace (and this in the living rooms of "Christian" homes and before the eyes of innocent children!); shorter working hours and a multiplicity of mechanical gadgets with the resultant increased leisure for everyone. Add to these the scores of shrewdly contrived advertising campaigns which make sex the not too slyly concealed bait to attract buyers for almost every imaginable product; the degraded columnists who have consecrated their lives to the task of the publicizing of soft, slinky nobodies with the faces of angels and the morals of alley cats; conscienceless novelists who win a doubtful fame and grow rich at the inglorious chore of dredging up literary putridities from the sewers of their souls to provide entertainment for the masses. These tell us something about how Eros has achieved his triumph over the civilized world.

Now if this god would let us Christians alone, I for one would let his cult alone. The whole spongy, fetid mess will sink some day under its own weight and become excellent fuel for the fires of hell, a just recompense which is meet, and it becomes us to feel compassion for those who have been caught in its tragic collapse. Tears and silence might be better than words if things were slightly otherwise than they are. But the cult of Eros is seriously affecting the Church. The pure religion of Christ that flows like a crystal river from the heart of God is being polluted by the unclean waters that trickle from behind the altars of abomination that appear on every high hill and under every green tree from New York to Los Angeles.

The influence of the erotic spirit is felt almost everywhere in evangelical circles. Much of the singing in certain types of meetings has in it more of romance than it has of the Holy Ghost. Both words and music are designed to rouse the libidinous. Christ is courted with a familiarity that reveals a total ignorance of who He is. It is not the reverent intimacy of the adoring saint but the impudent familiarity of the carnal lover.

Religious fiction also makes use of sex to interest the reading public, the paper-thin excuse being that if romance and religion are woven into a story the average person who would not read a purely religious book will read the story and thus be exposed to the gospel. Leaving aside the fact that most modern religious novelists are home-talent amateurs, scarcely one of whom is capable of writing a single line of even fair literature, the whole concept behind the religio-romantic novel is unsound. The libidinous impulses and the sweet, deep movings of the Holy Spirit are diametrically opposed to each other. The notion that Eros can be made to serve as an assistant of the Lord of glory is outrageous. The "Christian" film that seeks to draw customers by picturing amorous love scenes in its advertising is completely false to the religion of Christ. Only the spiritually blind will be taken in by it.

The current vogue of physical beauty and sparkling personalities in religious promotion is a further manifestation of the influence of the romantic spirit in the Church. The rhythmic sway,

the synthetic smile and the too, too cheerful voice betray the religious worldling. He has learned his technique from the TV screen but not learned it well enough to succeed in the professional field, so he brings his inept production to the holy place and peddles it to the ailing and undersized Christians who are looking for something to amuse them while staying within the bounds of the current religious mores.

If my language should seem severe, let it be remembered that it is not directed at any individual. Toward the lost world of men I feel only a great compassion and a desire that all should come to repentance. For the Christians whose vigorous but mistaken leadership has wooed the modern church from the altar of Jehovah to the altars of error I feel genuine love and sympathy. I want to be the last to injure them and the first to forgive them, remembering my past sins and my need for mercy, as well as my own weakness and natural bent toward sin and error. Balaam's ass was used of God to rebuke a prophet. It would seem from this that God does not require perfection in the instrument He uses to warn and exhort His people.

When God's sheep are in danger, the shepherd must not gaze at the stars and meditate on "inspirational" themes. He is morally obliged to grab his weapon and run to their defense. When the circumstances call for it, love can use the sword, though by her nature she would rather bind up the broken heart and minister to the wounded. It is time for the prophet and the seer to make themselves heard and felt again. For the last three decades timidity disguised as humility has crouched in her corner while the spiritual quality of evangelical Christianity has become progressively worse year by year. *How long, O Lord, how long?*

Chapter 6.

To Be Right, We Must Think Right

What we think about when we are free to think about what we will—that is what we are or will soon become.

The Bible has a great deal to say about our thoughts; current evangelicalism has practically nothing to say about them. The reason the Bible says so much is that our thoughts are so vitally important to us; the reason evangelicalism says so little is that we are over-reacting from the "thought" cults, such as New Thought, Unity, Christian Science and their like. These cults make our thoughts to be very nearly everything and we counter by making them very nearly nothing. Both positions are wrong.

Our voluntary thoughts not only reveal what we are, they predict what we will become. Except for that conduct which springs from our basic natural instincts, all conscious behavior is preceded by and arises out of our thoughts. The will can become a servant of the thoughts, and to a large degree even our emotions follow our thinking. "The more I think about it the madder I get" is the way the average man states it, and in so doing not only reports accurately on his own mental processes but pays as well an unconscious tribute to the power of thought. Thinking stirs feeling and feeling triggers action. That is the way we are made and we may as well accept it.

The Psalms and Prophets contain numerous references to the power of right thinking to raise religious feeling and incite to right conduct. "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." "While I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue." Over and over the Old Testament writers exhort us to get quiet and think about high and holy things as a preliminary to amendment of life or a good deed or a courageous act.

The Old Testament is not alone in its respect for the God-given power of human thought. Christ taught that men defile themselves by evil thinking and even went so far as to equate a thought with an act: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Paul recited a list of shining virtues and commanded, "Think on these things."

These quotations are but four out of hundreds that could be cited from the Scriptures. Thinking about God and holy things creates a moral climate favorable to the growth of faith and love and humility and reverence. We cannot by thinking regenerate our hearts, nor take our sins away nor change the leopard's spots. Neither can we by thinking add one cubit to our stature or make evil good or darkness light. So to teach is to misrepresent a scriptural truth and to use it to our own undoing. But we can by Spirit-inspired thinking help to make our minds pure sanctuaries in which God will be pleased to dwell.

I referred in a previous paragraph to "our voluntary thoughts" and I used the words advisedly. In our journey through this evil and hostile world, many thoughts will be forced upon us which we do not like and for which we have no moral sympathy. The necessity to make a living may compel us for days on end to entertain thoughts in no sense elevating. Ordinary awareness of the doings of our fellow men will bring thoughts repugnant to our Christian soul. These need affect us but little. For them we are not responsible and they may pass through our minds like a bird through the air, without leaving a trace. They have no lasting effect upon us because they are not our own. They are unwelcome intruders for which we have no love and which we get rid of as quickly as possible.

Anyone who wishes to check on his true spiritual condition may do so by noting what his voluntary thoughts have been over the last hours or days. What has he thought about when free to think of what he pleased? Toward what has his inner heart turned when it was free to turn where it would? When the bird of thought was let go, did it fly out like the raven to settle upon floating carcasses or did it like the dove circle and return again to the ark of God? Such a test is easy to run, and if we are honest with ourselves we can discover not only what we are but what we are going to become. We'll soon be the sum of our voluntary thoughts.

While our thoughts stir our feelings, and thus strongly influence our wills, it is yet true that the will can be and should be master of our thoughts. Every normal person can determine what he will think about. Of course the troubled or tempted man may find his thoughts somewhat difficult to control and even while he is concentrating upon a worthy object, wild and fugitive thoughts may play over his mind like heat lightning on a summer evening. These are likely to be more bothersome than harmful and in the long run do not make much difference one way or another.

The best way to control our thoughts is to offer the mind to God in complete surrender. The Holy Spirit will accept it and take control of it immediately. Then it will be relatively easy to think on spiritual things, especially if we train our thought by long periods of daily prayer. Long practice in the art of mental prayer (that is, talking to God inwardly as we work or travel) will help to form the habit of holy thought.

Chapter 7.

Faith Dares to Fail

In this world men are judged by their ability to do.

They are rated according to the distance they have come up the hill of achievement. At the bottom is utter failure; at the top complete success, and between these two extremes the majority of civilized men sweat and struggle from youth to old age.

A few give up, slide to the bottom and become inhabitants of Skid Row. There, with ambition gone and will broken, they subsist on handouts till nature forecloses on them and death takes them away.

At the top are the few who by a combination of talent, hard work and good fortune manage to reach the peak and all the luxury, fame, and power that are found there.

But in all of this there is no happiness. The effort to succeed puts too much strain on the nerves. Excessive preoccupation with the struggle to win narrows the mind, hardens the heart, and shuts out a thousand bright visions which might be enjoyed if there were only leisure to notice them.

The man who reaches the pinnacle is seldom happy for very long. He soon becomes eaten by fears that he may slip back a peg and be forced to surrender his place to another. Examples of this are found in the feverish way the TV star watches his rating and the politician his mail.

Let an elected official learn that a poll shows him to be two per cent less popular in August than he was in March and he begins to sweat like a man on his way to prison. The ball player lives by his averages, the businessman by his rising graph and the concert star by his applause meter. It is not uncommon for a challenger in the ring to weep openly when he fails to knock out the champion. To be second best leaves him completely disconsolate; he must be first to be happy.

This mania to succeed is a good thing perverted. The desire to fulfill the purpose for which we were created is of course a gift from God, but sin has twisted this impulse about and turned it into a selfish lust for first place and top honors. By this lust the whole world of mankind is driven as by a demon, and there is no escape.

When we come to Christ we enter a different world. The New Testament introduces us to a spiritual philosophy infinitely higher than and altogether contrary to that which motivates the world. According to the teaching of Christ the poor in spirit are blessed; the meek inherit the earth; the first are last and the last first; the greatest man is the one that best serves others; the one who loses everything is the only one that will have everything at last; the successful man of the world will see his hoarded treasures swept away by the tempest of judgment; the righteous beggar goes to Abraham's bosom and the rich man burns in the fires of hell.

Our Lord died an apparent failure, discredited by the leaders of established religion, rejected by society and forsaken by His friends. The man who ordered Him to the cross was the successful statesman whose hand the ambitious hack politician kissed. It took the resurrection to demonstrate how gloriously Christ had triumphed and how tragically the governor had failed.

Yet today the professed church seems to have learned nothing. We are still seeing as men see and judging after the manner of man's judgment. How much eager-beaver religious work is done out of a carnal desire to make good? How many hours of prayer are wasted beseeching God to bless projects that are geared to the glorification of little men? How much sacred money is

poured out upon men who, in spite of their tear-in-the-voice appeals, nevertheless seek only to make a fair show in the flesh?

The true Christian should turn away from all this. Especially should ministers of the gospel search their own hearts and look deep into their inner motives. No man is worthy to succeed until he is willing to fail. No man is morally worthy of success in religious activities until he is willing that the honor of succeeding should go to another if God so wills.

God may allow His servant to succeed when He has disciplined him to a point where he does not need to succeed to be happy. The man who is elated by success and cast down by failure is still a carnal man. At best his fruit will have a worm in it.

God will allow His servant to succeed when he has learned that success does not make him dearer to God nor more valuable in the total scheme of things. We cannot buy God's favor with crowds or converts or new missionaries sent out or Bibles distributed. All these things can be accomplished without the help of the Holy Spirit. A good personality and a shrewd knowledge of human nature is all that any man needs to be a success in religious circles today.

Our great honor lies in being just what Jesus was and is. To be accepted by those who accept Him, rejected by all who reject Him, loved by those who love Him and hated by everyone that hates Him. What greater glory could come to any man?

We can afford to follow Him to failure. Faith dares to fail. The resurrection and the judgment will demonstrate before all worlds who won and who lost. We can wait.

Chapter 8.

The Value of a Sanctified Imagination

Like every other power belonging to us, the imagination may be either a blessing or a curse, depending altogether upon how it is used and how well it is disciplined.

We all have to some degree the power to imagine. This gift enables us to see meanings in material objects, to observe similarities between things which at first appear wholly unlike each other. It permits us to know that which the senses can never tell us, for by it we are able to see through sense impressions to the reality that lies behind things.

Every advance made by mankind in any field began as an idea to which nothing for the time corresponded. The mind of the inventor simply took bits of familiar ideas and made out of them something which was not only wholly unfamiliar but which up to that time was altogether nonexistent. Thus we "create" things and by so doing prove ourselves to have been made in the image of the Creator. That fallen man has often used his creative powers in the service of evil does not invalidate our argument. Any talent may be used for evil as well as for good, but every talent comes from God nevertheless.

That the imagination is of great value in the service of God may be denied by some persons who have erroneously confused the word "imaginative" with the word "imaginary."

The gospel of Jesus Christ has no truck with things imaginary. The most realistic book in the world is the Bible. God is real, men are real and so is sin and so are death and hell, toward which sin inevitably leads. The presence of God is not imaginary, neither is prayer the indulgence of a delightful fancy. The objects that engage the praying man's attention, while not material, are nevertheless completely real; more certainly real, it will at last be admitted, than any earthly object.

The value of the cleansed imagination in the sphere of religion lies in its power to perceive in natural things shadows of things spiritual. It enables the reverent man to

*See the world in a grain of sand
And eternity in an hour.*

The weakness of the Pharisee in days of old was his lack of imagination, or what amounted to the same thing, his refusal to let it enter the field of religion. He saw the text with its carefully guarded theological definition and he saw nothing beyond.

*A primrose by the river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.*

When Christ came with His blazing spiritual penetration and His fine moral sensitivity, He appeared to the Pharisee to be a devotee of another kind of religion, which indeed He was if the world had only understood. He could see the soul of the text while the Pharisee could see only the body, and he could always prove Christ wrong by an appeal to the letter of the law or to an interpretation hallowed by tradition. The breach between them was too great to permit them to coexist; so the Pharisee, who was in a position to do it, had the young Seer put to death. So it has

always been, and so I suppose it will always be till the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

The imagination, since it is a faculty of the natural mind, must necessarily suffer both from its intrinsic limitations and from an inherent bent toward evil. While the word as found in the King James Bible usually means not imagination at all, but merely the reasonings of sinful men, I yet do not write to excuse the unsanctified imagination. I well know that from such have flowed as from a polluted fountain streams of evil ideas which have throughout the years led to lawless and destructive conduct on the part of men.

A purified and Spirit-controlled imagination is, however, quite another thing, and it is this I have in mind here. I long to see the imagination released from its prison and given to its proper place among the sons of the new creation. What I am trying to describe here is the sacred gift of seeing, the ability to peer beyond the veil and gaze with astonished wonder upon the beauties and mysteries of things holy and eternal.

The stodgy pedestrian mind does no credit to Christianity. Let it dominate the church long enough and it will force her to take one of two directions: either toward liberalism, where she will find relief in a false freedom, or toward the world, where she will find an enjoyable but fatal pleasure.

But I wonder whether this is not all included in the words of our Lord as recorded in the Gospel of John: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (16:13, 14).

To possess a Spirit-indwelt mind is the Christian's privilege under grace, and this embraces all I have been trying to say here.

Chapter 9.

Nearness Is Likeness

One serious and often distressing problem for many Christians is their feeling that God is far from them, or that they are far from God, which is the same thing.

It is hard to rejoice in the Lord when we are suffering from this sense of remoteness. It is like trying to have a warm, bright summer without the sun. The chief trouble here is of course not intellectual and cannot be cured by intellectual means; yet truth must enter the mind before it can enter the heart, so let us reason together about this. In spiritual matters we think correctly only when we boldly rule out the concept of space. God is spirit, and spirit dwells not in space. Space has to do with matter and spirit is independent of it. By the concept of space we account for the relation of material bodies to each other.

We should never think of God as being spatially near or remote, for He is not here or there but carries here and there in His heart. Space is not infinite, as some have thought; only God is infinite and in His infinitude He swallows up all space. "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." He fills heaven and earth as the ocean fills the bucket that is submerged in it, and as the ocean surrounds the bucket so does God in the universe He fills. "The heaven of heavens cannot contain thee." God is not contained: He contains.

As earthborn creatures we naturally tend to think by earthly analogies. "He that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth." God created us living souls and gave us bodies through which we can experience the world around us and communicate with one another. When man fell through sin he began to think of himself as having a soul instead of being one. It makes a lot of difference whether a man believes that he is a body having a soul or a soul having a body.

The soul is inward and hidden, while the body is always present to the senses; consequently we tend to be body-conscious, and the concept of near and remote, which attaches to material things, seems quite natural to us. But it is valid only when it applies to moral creatures. When we try to apply it to God it no longer retains its validity.

Yet when we speak of men being "far" from God we speak truly. The Lord said of Israel, "Their heart is far from me," and there we have the definition of far and near in our relation to God. The words refer not to physical distance, but to likeness.

That God is equally near to all parts of His universe is plainly taught in the Scriptures ([Ps. 139:1-18](#)), yet some beings experience His nearness and others do not, depending upon their moral likeness to Him. It is dissimilarity that creates the sense of remoteness between creatures and between men and God.

Two creatures may be so close physically that they touch, yet because of dissimilarity of nature be millions of miles apart. An angel and an ape might conceivably be in the same room, but the radical difference between their natures would make communion impossible. They would be "far" from each other in fact.

For the moral unlikeness between man and God the Bible has a word, alienation, and the Holy Spirit presents a frightful picture of this alienation as it works itself out in human character. Fallen human nature is precisely opposite to the nature of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Because there is no moral likeness there is no communion, hence the sense of physical distance,

the feeling that God is far away in space. This erroneous notion discourages prayer and prevents many a sinner from believing unto life.

Paul encouraged the Athenians by reminding them that God was not far from any one of them, that it was He in whom they lived and moved and had their being. Yet men think of Him as farther away than the farthest star. The truth is that He is nearer to us than we are to ourselves.

But how can the conscious sinner bridge the mighty gulf that separates him from God in living experience? The answer is that he cannot, but the glory of the Christian message is that Christ did. Through the blood of His cross He made peace that He might reconcile all things unto Himself. "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight" (Col. 1:21, 22).

The new birth makes us partakers of the divine nature. There the work of undoing the dissimilarity between us and God begins. From there it progresses by the sanctifying operation of the Holy Spirit till God is satisfied.

That is the theology of it, but as I said, even the regenerated soul may sometimes suffer from the feeling that God is far from Him. What then should he do?

First, the trouble may be no more than a temporary break in God-conscious communion due to any one of half a hundred causes. The cure is faith. Trust God in the dark till the light returns.

Second, should the sense of remoteness persist in spite of prayer and what you believe is faith, look to your inner life for evidences of wrong attitudes, evil thoughts or dispositional flaws. These are unlike God and create a psychological gulf between you and Him. Put away the evil from you, believe, and the sense of nearness will be restored. God was never away in the first place.

Chapter 10.

Why We Are Lukewarm About Christ's Return

Shortly after the close of the first World War, I heard a great Southern preacher say that he feared the intense interest in prophecy current at that time would result in a dying out of the blessed hope when events had proved the excited interpreters wrong.

The man was a prophet, or at least a remarkably shrewd student of human nature, for exactly what he predicted has come to pass. The hope of Christ's coming is today all but dead among evangelicals.

I do not mean that Bible Christians have given up the doctrine of the second advent. By no means. There has been, as every informed person knows, an adjustment among some of the lesser tenets of our prophetic credo, but the vast majority of evangelicals continue to hold to the belief that Jesus Christ will sometime actually come back to the earth in person. The ultimate triumph of Christ is accepted as one of the unshakable doctrines of Holy Scripture.

It is true that in some quarters the prophecies of the Bible are occasionally expounded. This is especially so among Hebrew Christians who, for reasons well understood, seem to feel closer to the prophets of the Old Testament than do Gentile believers. Their love for their own people naturally leads them to grasp at every hope of the conversion and ultimate restoration of Israel. To many of them the return of Christ represents a quick and happy solution of the "Jewish problem." The long centuries of wandering will end when He comes and God will at that time "restore again the kingdom to Israel." We dare not allow our deep love for our Hebrew Christian brethren to blind us to the obvious political implications of this aspect of their Messianic hope. We do not blame them for this. We merely call attention to it.

Yet the return of Christ as a blessed hope is, as I have said, all but dead among us. The truth touching the second advent, where it is presented today, is for the most part either academic or political. The joyful personal element is altogether missing. Where are they who

*Yearn for the sign, O Christ, of Thy fulfilling,
Faint for the flaming of Thine advent feet?*

The longing to see Christ that burned in the breasts of those first Christians seems to have burned itself out. All we have left are the ashes. It is precisely the "yearning" and the "fainting" for the return of Christ that has distinguished the personal hope from the theological one. Mere acquaintance with correct doctrine is a poor substitute for Christ and familiarity with New Testament eschatology will never take the place of a love-inflamed desire to look on His face.

If the tender yearning is gone from the advent hope today, there must be a reason for it; and I think I know what it is, or what they are, for there are a number of them. One is simply that popular fundamentalist theology has emphasized the utility of the cross rather than the beauty of the One who died on it. The saved man's relation to Christ has been made contractual instead of personal. The "work" of Christ has been stressed until it has eclipsed the person of Christ. Substitution has been allowed to supersede identification. What He did for me seems to be more important than what He is to me. Redemption is seen as an across-the-counter transaction which we "accept," and the whole thing lacks emotional content. We must love someone very much to

stay awake and long for his coming, and that may explain the absence of power in the advent hope even among those who still believe in it.

Another reason for the absence of real yearning for Christ's return is that Christians are so comfortable in this world that they have little desire to leave it. For those leaders who set the pace of religion and determine its content and quality, Christianity has become of late remarkably lucrative. The streets of gold do not have too great an appeal for those who find it so easy to pile up gold and silver in the service of the Lord here on earth. We all want to reserve the hope of heaven as a kind of insurance against the day of death, but as long as we are healthy and comfortable, why change a familiar good for something about which we actually know very little? So reasons the carnal mind, and so subtly that we are scarcely aware of it.

Again, in these times religion has become jolly good fun right here in this present world, and what's the hurry about heaven anyway? Christianity, contrary to what some had thought, is another and higher form of entertainment. Christ has done all the suffering. He has shed all the tears and carried all the crosses; we have but to enjoy the benefits of His heartbreak in the form of religious pleasures modeled after the world but carried on in the name of Jesus. So say the same people who claim to believe in Christ's second coming.

History reveals that times of suffering for the Church have also been times of looking upward. Tribulation has always sobered God's people and encouraged them to look for and yearn after the return of their Lord. Our present preoccupation with this world may be a warning of bitter days to come. God will wean us from the earth some way—the easy way if possible, the hard way if necessary. It is up to us

Excerpts from *God Tells the Man Who Cares*

Chapter 11. God Tells the Man Who Cares

The Bible was written in tears and to tears it will yield its best treasures. God has nothing to say to the frivolous man.

It was to Moses, a trembling man, that God spoke on the mount, and that same man later saved the nation when he threw himself before God with the offer to have himself blotted out of God's book for Israel's sake. Daniel's long season of fasting and prayer brought Gabriel from heaven to tell him the secret of the centuries. When the beloved John wept much because no one could be found worthy to open the seven-sealed book, one of the elders comforted him with the joyous news that the Lion of the tribe of Judah had prevailed.

The psalmists often wrote in tears, the prophets could hardly conceal their heavyheartedness, and the apostle Paul in his otherwise joyous epistle to the Philippians broke into tears when he thought of the many who were enemies of the cross of Christ and whose end was destruction. Those Christian leaders who shook the world were one and all men of sorrows whose witness to mankind welled out of heavy hearts: There is no power in tears per se, but tears and power ever lie close together in the Church of the First-born.

It is not a reassuring thought that the writings of the grief-stricken prophets are often pored over by persons whose interests are merely curious and who never shed one tear for the woes of the world. They have a prying inquisitiveness about the schedule of future events, forgetting that the whole purpose of Bible prophecy is to prepare us morally and spiritually for the time to come.

The doctrine of Christ's return has fallen into neglect, on the North American continent at least, and as far as I can detect, today exercises no power whatever over the rank and file of Bible-believing Christians. For this there may be a number of contributing factors; but the chief one is, I believe, the misfortune suffered by prophetic truth between the two world wars when men without tears undertook to instruct us in the writings of the tear-stained prophets. Big crowds and big offerings resulted until event proved the teachers wrong on too many points; then the reaction set in and prophecy lost favor with the masses. This was a neat trick of the devil and it worked too well. We should and must learn that we cannot handle holy things carelessly without suffering serious consequences.

Another field where tearless men have done us untold harm is in prayer for the sick. There have always been reverent, serious men who felt it their sacred duty to pray for the sick that they might be healed in the will of God. It was said of Spurgeon that his prayers raised up more sick persons than the ministrations of any doctor in London. When tearless promoters took up the doctrine it was turned into a lucrative racket. Smooth, persuasive men used superior salesmanship methods to make impressive fortunes out of their campaigns. Their big ranches and heavy financial investments prove how successful they have been in separating the sick and suffering from their money. And this in the name of the Man of Sorrows who had not where to lay His head!

Whatever is done without heart is done in the dark no matter how scriptural it may appear to be. By the law of just compensation the heart of the religious trifter will be destroyed by the exceeding brightness of the truth he touches. Tearless eyes are finally blinded by the light at which they gaze.

We of the nonliturgical churches tend to look with some disdain upon those churches that follow a carefully prescribed form of service, and certainly there must be a good deal in such services that has little or no meaning for the average participant—this not because it is carefully prescribed but because the average participant is what he is. But I have observed that our familiar impromptu service, planned by the leader twenty minutes before, often tends to follow a ragged and tired order almost as standardized as the Mass. The liturgical service is at least beautiful; ours is often ugly. Theirs has been carefully worked out through the centuries to capture as much of beauty as possible and to preserve a spirit of reverence among the worshipers. Ours is often an off-the-cuff makeshift with nothing to recommend it. Its so-called liberty is often not liberty at all but sheer slovenliness.

The theory is that if the meeting is unplanned the Holy Spirit will work freely, and that would be true if all the worshipers were reverent and Spirit-filled. But mostly there is neither order nor Spirit, just a routine prayer that is, except for minor variations, the same week after week, and a few songs that were never much to start with and have long ago lost all significance by meaningless repetition.

In the majority of our meetings there is scarcely a trace of reverent thought, no recognition of the unity of the body, little sense of the divine Presence, no moment of stillness, no solemnity, no wonder, no holy fear. But so often there is a dull or a breezy song leader full of awkward jokes, as well as a chairman announcing each "number" with the old radio continuity patter in an effort to make everything hang together.

The whole Christian family stands desperately in need of a restoration of penitence, humility and tears. May God send them soon.

Chapter 12.

The Vital Place of the Church

The highest expression of the will of God in this age is the church which He purchased with His own blood. To be scripturally valid any religious activity must be part of the church. Let it be clearly stated that there can be no service acceptable to God in this age that does not center in and spring out of the church. Bible schools, tract societies, Christian business men's committees, seminaries, and the many independent groups working at one or another phase of religion need to check themselves reverently and courageously, for they have no true spiritual significance outside of or apart from the church.

According to the Scriptures the church is the habitation of God through the Spirit, and as such is the most important organism beneath the sun. She is not one more good institution along with the home, the state, and the school; she is the most vital of all institutions—the only one that can claim a heavenly origin.

The cynic may inquire which church we mean, and may remind us that the Christian church is so divided that it is impossible to tell which is the true one, even if such a one exists. But we are not too much troubled by the suppressed smile of the doubter. Being inside the church we are probably as well aware of her faults as any person on the outside could possibly be. And we believe in her nevertheless wherever she manifests herself in a world of darkness and unbelief.

The church is found wherever the Holy Spirit has drawn together a few persons who trust Christ for their salvation, worship God in spirit and have no dealings with the world and the flesh. The members may by necessity be scattered over the surface of the earth and separated by distance and circumstances, but in every true member of the church is the homing instinct and the longing of the sheep for the fold and the shepherd. Give a few real Christians half a chance and they will get together and organize and plan regular meetings for prayer and worship. In these meetings they will hear the Scriptures expounded, break bread together in one form or another according to their light, and try as far as possible to spread the saving gospel to the lost world.

Such groups are cells in the Body of Christ, and each one is a true church, a real part of the greater church. It is in and through these cells that the Spirit does His work on earth. Whoever scorns the local church scorns the Body of Christ.

The church is still to be reckoned with. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her."

Chapter 13.

Organization: Necessary and Dangerous

Basically, organization is the placing of several parts of a whole in such relation to each other that a desired end may be achieved. This may be by consent or compulsion, depending upon the circumstances.

A certain amount of organization is necessary everywhere throughout the created universe and in all human society. Without it there could be no science, no government, no family unit, no art, no music, no literature, no creative activity of any kind.

Life requires organization. There is no such thing as life apart from the medium through which it expresses itself. It cannot exist as a thing in itself independent of an organized body. It is found only where there is some body, some form in which it may reside. And where there is body and form there is organization. A man, for instance, is the sum of his organized and coordinated parts and in these and through these the mystery of life is afforded expression. When, for any cause, the parts become disorganized life departs and the man dies.

Society requires organization. If men are to live together in the world they must be organized in some manner. This has been recognized in all times and places and is seen on all levels of human society from the jungle tribe to the world empire. Ideally the object of government is to achieve order with a minimum of restraint while permitting a maximum of freedom to the individual.

That some restraint of individual liberty is good and necessary is admitted by all intelligent persons; that too much restraint is bad is also admitted by everyone. Disagreement arises when we try to define "some" and "too much." Just how much is too much? and how little is some? If this could be settled peace would descend upon Congress and Parliament, the Democrat and the liberal would lie down with the Republican and the conservative, and a little child should lead them.

The difference between the slave state and the free is one of degree only. Even the totalitarian countries enjoy some freedom, and the citizens of the free nations must endure a certain amount of restraint. It is the balance between the two that decides whether a given country is slave or free. No informed citizen believes he is absolutely free. He knows his liberty must be curtailed somewhat for the benefit of all. The best he can hope for is that the curtailment will be kept at a minimum. This minimum of curtailment he calls "freedom," and so precious is it that he is willing to risk his life for it. The Western world fought two major wars within twenty-five years to preserve this balance of liberty and escape the tighter restrictions that Nazism and Facism would have imposed upon it.

Being Christ-centered and church-oriented in his thinking, this writer of course relates everything to the Christian religion. I am and have been for years much distressed about the tendency to over-organize the Christian community, and I have for that reason had it charged against me that I do not believe in organization. The truth is quite otherwise.

The man who would oppose all organization in the church must needs be ignorant of the facts of life. Art is organized beauty; music is organized sound; philosophy is organized thought; science is organized knowledge; government is merely society organized. And what is the true church of Christ but organized mystery?

The throbbing heart of the church is life—in the happy phrase of Henry Scougal, "the life of God in the soul of man." This life, together with the actual presence of Christ within her, constitutes the church a divine thing, a mystery, a miracle. Yet without substance, form and order this divine life would have no dwelling place, and no way to express itself to the community.

For this reason there is much in the New Testament about organization. Paul's pastoral epistles and his letters to the Corinthian Christians reveal that the great apostle was an organizer. He reminded Titus that he had left him in Crete to set in order the things that were wanting and to ordain elders in every city. Surely this can only mean that Titus was commissioned by the apostle to impose some kind of order upon the various companies of believers living in the island, and order can only be achieved through organization.

Christians have tended to err in one of several directions because they have not understood the purpose of organization or the dangers that attend it if it is allowed to get out of hand. Some will have no organization at all, and of course the results are confusion and disorder, and these can never help mankind or bring glory to our Lord. Others substitute organization for life, and while having a name to live they are dead. Still others become so enamored of rules and regulations that they multiply them beyond all reason, and soon the spontaneity is smothered within the church and the life squeezed out of it.

It is with the latter error that I am mainly concerned. Many church groups have perished from too much organization, even as others from too little. Wise church leaders will watch out for both extremes. A man may die as a result of having too low blood pressure as certainly as from having too high, and it matters little which takes him off. He is equally dead either way. The important thing in church organization is to discover the scriptural balance between two extremes and avoid both.

It is painful to see a happy group of Christians, born in simplicity and held together by the bonds of heavenly love, slowly lose their simple character, begin to try to regulate every sweet impulse of the Spirit and slowly die from within. Yet that is the direction almost all Christian denominations have taken throughout history, and in spite of the warnings set out by the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures of truth it is the direction almost all church groups are taking today.

While there is some danger that our present-day evangelical groups may suffer from want of proper organization, the real peril surely lies on the other side. Churches run toward complexity as ducks take to water. What is back of this?

First, I think it arises from a natural but carnal desire on the part of a gifted minority to bring the less gifted majority to heel and get them where they will not stand in the way of their soaring ambitions. The oftquoted (and usually misquoted) saying is true in religion as well as in politics: "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely." The itch to have the preeminence is one disease for which no natural cure has ever been found.

Another cause back of our top-heavy and ugly over-organization is fear. Churches and societies founded by saintly men with courage, faith and sanctified imagination appear unable to propagate themselves on the same spiritual level beyond one or two generations. The spiritual fathers were not able to sire others with courage and faith equal to their own. The fathers had God and little else, but their descendants lose their vision and look to methods and constitutions for the power their hearts tell them they lack. Then rules and precedents harden into a protective shell where they can take refuge from trouble. It is always easier and safer to pull in our necks than to fight things out on the field of battle.

In all our fallen life there is a strong gravitational pull toward complexity and away from things simple and real.

There seems to be a kind of sad inevitability back of our morbid urge toward spiritual suicide. Only by prophetic insight, watchful prayer and hard work can we reverse the trend and recover the departed glory.

In the old cemetery near historic Plymouth Rock where sleep the Pilgrim Fathers, there is a stone into which has been carved these solemn words (I quote from memory): "That which our fathers at such a great price secured, let us not lightly cast away."

We mid-century evangelicals might be wise to apply these words to our own religious situation. We are still Protestants. We must protest the light casting away of our religious freedom. The simple liberty of early Christianity is being lost to us. One by one we are surrendering those rights purchased for us by the blood of the everlasting covenant—the right to be ourselves, the right to obey the Holy Spirit, the right to think our own private thoughts, the right to do what we will with our lives, the right to determine under God what we shall do with our money.

And remember, our dangers for the moment come not from without, but from within.

Chapter 14.

Divisions Are Not Always Bad

When to unite and when to divide, that is the question, and a right answer requires the wisdom of a Solomon.

Some settle the problem by rule of thumb: All union is good and all division bad. It's that easy. But obviously this effortless way of dealing with the matter ignores the lessons of history and overlooks some of the deep spiritual laws by which men live.

If good men were all for union and bad men for division, or vice versa, that would simplify things for us. Or if it could be shown that God always unites and the devil always divides it would be easy to find our way around in this confused and confusing world. But that is not how things are.

To divide what should be divided and unite what should be united is the part of wisdom. Union of dissimilar elements is never good even where it is possible, nor is the arbitrary division of elements that are alike; and this is as certainly true of things moral and religious as of things political or scientific.

The first divider was God who at the creation divided the light from the darkness. This division set the direction for all God's dealings in nature and in grace. Light and darkness are incompatible; to try to have both in the same place at once is to try the impossible and end by having neither the one nor the other, but dimness rather, and obscurity.

In the world of men there are at present scarcely any sharp outlines. The race is fallen. Sin has brought confusion. The wheat grows with the tares, the sheep and the goats coexist, the farms of the just and the unjust lie side by side in the landscape, the mission is next door to the saloon.

But things will not always be so. The hour is coming when the sheep will be divided from the goats and the tares separated from the wheat. God will again divide the light from the darkness and all things will run to their kind. Tares will go into the fire with tares and wheat into the garner with wheat. The dimness will lift like a fog and all outlines will appear. Hell will be seen to be hell all the way through, and heaven revealed as the one home of all who bear the nature of the one God.

For that time we with patience wait. In the meanwhile for each of us, and for the church wherever she appears in human society, the constantly recurring question must be: What shall we unite with and from what shall we separate? The question of coexistence does not enter here, but the question of union and fellowship does. The wheat grows in the same field with the tares, but shall the two cross-pollinate? The sheep graze near the goats, but shall they seek to interbreed? The unjust and the just enjoy the same rain and sunshine, but shall they forget their deep moral differences and intermarry?

To these questions the popular answer is *yes*. Union for union's sake, and men shall brothers be for a' that. Unity is so devoutly to be desired that no price is too high to pay for it and nothing is important enough to keep us apart. Truth is slain to provide a feast to celebrate the marriage of heaven and hell, and all to support a concept of unity which has no basis in the Word of God.

The Spirit-illuminated church will have none of this. In a fallen world like ours unity is no treasure to be purchased at the price of compromise. Loyalty to God, faithfulness to truth and the

preservation of a good conscience are jewels more precious than gold of Ophir or diamonds from the mine. For these jewels men have suffered the loss of property, imprisonment and even death; for them, even in recent times, behind the various curtains, followers of Christ have paid the last full measure of devotion and quietly died, unknown to and unsung by the great world, but known to God and dear to His Father heart. In the day that shall declare the secrets of all souls these shall come forth to receive the deeds done in the body. Surely such as these are wiser philosophers than the religious camp followers of meaningless unity who have not the courage to stand against current vogues and who bleat for brotherhood only because it happens to be for the time popular.

"Divide and conquer" is the cynical slogan of Machiavellian political leaders, but Satan knows also how to *unite* and conquer. To bring a nation to its knees the aspiring dictator must unite it. By repeated appeals to national pride or to the need to avenge some past or present wrong the demagogue succeeds in uniting the populace behind him. It is easy after that to take control of the military and to beat the legislature into submission. Then follows almost perfect unity indeed, but it is the unity of the stockyards and the concentration camp. We have seen this happen several times in this century, and the world will see it at least once more when the nations of the earth are united under Antichrist.

When confused sheep start over a cliff the individual sheep can save himself only by separating from the flock. Perfect unity at such a time can only mean total destruction for all. The wise sheep to save his own hide disaffiliates.

Power lies in the union of things similar and the division of things dissimilar. Maybe what we need in religious circles today is not more union but some wise and courageous division. Everyone desires peace but it could be that revival will follow the sword.

Chapter 15.

The Responsibility of Leadership

The history of Israel and Judah points up a truth taught clearly enough by *all* history, viz., that the masses are or soon will be what their leaders are. The kings set the moral pace for the people.

The public is never capable of acting en masse. Without a leader it is headless and a headless body is powerless. Always someone must lead. Even the mob engaged in pillage and murder is not the disorganized thing it appears to be. Somewhere behind the violence is a leader whose ideas it is simply putting into effect.

Israel sometimes rebelled against her leaders, it is true, but the rebellions were not spontaneous. The people merely switched to a new leader and followed him. The point is, they always had to have a leader.

Whatever sort of man the king turned out to be, the people were soon following his leadership. They followed David in the worship of Jehovah, Solomon in the building of the Temple, Jeroboam in the making of a calf and Hezekiah in the restoration of the temple worship.

It is not complimentary to the masses that they are so easily led, but we are not interested in praising or blaming; we are concerned for truth, and the truth is that for better or for worse religious people follow leaders. A good man may change the moral complexion of a whole nation; or a corrupt and worldly clergy may lead a nation into bondage. The transposed proverb, "Like priest, like people," sums up in four words a truth taught plainly in the Scriptures and demonstrated again and again in religious history.

Today Christianity in the Western world is what its leaders were in the recent past and is becoming what its present leaders are. The local church soon becomes like its pastor, and this is true even of those groups who do not believe in pastors. The true pastor of such a group is not hard to identify; he is usually the one who can present the strongest argument against any church having a pastor. The strong-minded leader of the local group who succeeds in influencing the flock through Bible teaching or frequent impromptu talks in the public gatherings is the pastor, no matter how earnestly he may deny it.

The poor condition of the churches today may be traced straight to their leaders. When, as sometimes happens, the members of a local church rise up and turn their pastor out for preaching the truth, they are still following a leader. Behind their act is sure to be found a carnal (and often well-to-do) deacon or elder who usurps the right to determine who the pastor shall be and what he shall say twice each Sunday. In such cases the pastor is unable to lead the flock. He merely *works* for the leader; a pitiful situation indeed.

A number of factors contribute to bad spiritual leadership. Here are a few:

1. *Fear*. The wish to be liked and admired is strong even among the clergy, so rather than risk public disapproval the pastor is tempted simply to sit on his hands and smile ingratiatingly at the people. "The fear of man bringeth a snare," says the Holy Spirit, and nowhere more than in the ministry.

2. *The economic squeeze*. The Protestant ministry is notoriously underpaid and the pastor's family is often large. Put these two facts together and you have a situation ready-made to bring trouble and temptation to the man of God. The ability of the congregation to turn off the flow of money to the church when the man in the pulpit gets on their toes is well known. The average pastor lives from year to year, barely making ends meet. To give vigorous moral leadership to

the church is often to invite economic strangulation, so such leadership is withheld. But the evil thing is that *leadership withheld is in fact a kind of inverted leadership*. The man who will not lead his flock up the mountainside leads it down without knowing it.

3. *Ambition*. When Christ is not all in all to the minister he is tempted to seek place for himself, and pleasing the crowds is a time-proved way to get on in church circles. Instead of leading his people where they ought to go he skillfully leads them where he knows they *want* to go. In this way he gives the appearance of being a bold leader of men, but avoids offending anyone, and thus assures ecclesiastical preferment when the big church or the high office is open.

4. *Intellectual pride*. Unfortunately there is in religious circles a cult of the intelligentsia which, in my opinion, is merely beatnikism turned wrong side out. As the beatnik, in spite of his loud protestations of individualism, is in reality one of the most slavish of conformists, so the young intellectual in the pulpit shakes in his carefully polished Oxfords lest he be guilty of saying something trite or common. The people look to him to lead them into green pastures but instead he leads them to a sandy desert.

5. *Absence of true spiritual experience*. No one can lead another farther than he himself has gone. For many ministers this explains their failure to lead. They simply do not know where to go.

6. *Inadequate preparation*. The churches are cluttered with religious amateurs culturally unfit to minister at the altar, and the people suffer as a consequence. They are led astray and are not aware of it.

The rewards of godly leadership are so great and the responsibilities of the leader so heavy that no one can afford to take the matter lightly.

Chapter 16.

The Prayer of a Minor Prophet

This is the prayer of a man called to be a witness to the nations. This is what he said to his Lord on the day of his ordination. After the elders and ministers had prayed and laid their hands on him he withdrew to meet his Saviour in the secret place and in the silence, farther in than his well-meaning brethren could take him.

And he said: O Lord, I have heard Thy voice and was afraid. Thou hast called me to an awesome task in a grave and perilous hour. Thou art about to shake all nations and the earth and also heaven, that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. O Lord, my Lord, Thou hast stooped to honor me to be Thy servant. No man taketh this honor upon himself save he that is called of God as was Aaron. Thou hast ordained me Thy messenger to them that are stubborn of heart and hard of hearing. They have rejected Thee, the Master, and it is not to be expected that they will receive me, the servant.

My God, I shall not waste time deploring my weakness nor my unfittedness for the work. The responsibility is not mine, but Thine. Thou hast said, "I knew thee—I ordained thee—I sanctified thee," and Thou hast also said, "Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak." Who am I to argue with Thee or to call into question Thy sovereign choice? The decision is not mine but Thine. So be it, Lord. Thy will, not mine, be done.

Well do I know, Thou God of the prophets and the apostles, that as long as I honor Thee Thou wilt honor me. Help me therefore to take this solemn vow to honor Thee in all my future life and labors, whether by gain or by loss, by life or by death, and then to keep that vow unbroken while I live.

It is time, O God, for Thee to work, for the enemy has entered into Thy pastures and the sheep are torn and scattered. And false shepherds abound who deny the danger and laugh at the perils which surround Thy flock. The sheep are deceived by these hirelings and follow them with touching loyalty while the wolf closes in to kill and destroy. I beseech Thee, give me sharp eyes to detect the presence of the enemy; give me understanding to see and courage to report what I see faithfully. Make my voice so like Thine own that even the sick sheep will recognize it and follow Thee.

Lord Jesus, I come to Thee for spiritual preparation. Lay Thy hand upon me. Anoint me with the oil of the New Testament prophet. Forbid that I should become a religious scribe and thus lose my prophetic calling. Save me from the curse that lies dark across the face of the modern clergy, the curse of compromise, of imitation, of professionalism. Save me from the error of judging a church by its size, its popularity or the amount of its yearly offering. Help me to remember that I am a prophet—not a promoter, not a religious manager, but a prophet. Let me never become a slave to crowds. Heal my soul of carnal ambitions and deliver me from the itch for publicity. Save me from bondage to things. Let me not waste my days puttering around the house. Lay Thy terror upon me, O God, and drive me to the place of prayer where I may wrestle with principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world. Deliver me from overeating and late sleeping. Teach me self-discipline that I may be a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

I accept hard work and small rewards in this life. I ask for no easy place. I shall try to be blind to the little ways that could make life easier. If others seek the smoother path I shall try to take the hard way without judging them too harshly. I shall expect opposition and try to take it quietly when it comes. Or if, as sometimes it faileth out to Thy servants, I should have grateful gifts pressed upon me by Thy kindly people, stand by me then and save me from the blight that often follows. Teach me to use whatever I receive in such manner that will not injure my soul nor diminish my spiritual power. And if in Thy permissive providence honor should come to me from Thy church, let me not forget in that hour that I am unworthy of the least of Thy mercies, and that if men knew me as intimately as I know myself they would withhold their honors or bestow them upon others more worthy to receive them.

And now, O Lord of heaven and earth, I consecrate my remaining days to Thee; let them be many or few, as Thou wilt. Let me stand before the great or minister to the poor and lowly; that choice is not mine, and I would not influence it if I could. I am Thy servant to do Thy will, and that will is sweeter to me than position or riches or fame and I choose it above all things on earth or in heaven.

Though I am chosen of Thee and honored by a high and holy calling, let me never forget that I am but a man of dust and ashes, a man with all the natural faults and passions that plague the race of men. I pray Thee, therefore, my Lord and Redeemer, save me from myself and from all the injuries I may do myself while trying to be a blessing to others. Fill me with Thy power by the Holy Spirit, and I will go in Thy strength and tell of Thy righteousness, even Thine only. I will spread abroad the message of redeeming love while my normal powers endure.

Then, dear Lord, when I am old and weary and too tired to go on, have a place ready for me above, and make me to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting. *Amen.* AMEN.

Chapter 17.

Wanted: Courage with Moderation

Sin has done a pretty complete job of ruining us and the process of restoration is long and slow.

The works of grace in the individual life may be never so clear and definite, but it is indeed the labor of a God to bring the once fallen heart back into the divine likeness again. In nothing is this seen more plainly than in the great difficulty we experience in achieving spiritual symmetry in our lives. The inability of even the most devout souls to show forth the Christian virtues in equal proportion and without admixture of unChristlike qualities has been the source of heartache to many of God's believing people.

The virtues before us, courage and moderation, when held in correct proportion, make for a well-balanced life and one of great usefulness in the kingdom of God. Where one is missing or present only in minute degree, the result is a life out of balance and powers wasted.

Almost any sincere writing, if examined closely, will be found to be autobiographic. We know best what we have ourselves experienced. This article is not an exception. I may as well admit frankly that it is autobiographic, for the discerning reader will discover the truth no matter how hard I may try to conceal it.

Briefly, I have seldom been called a coward, even by my most cordial enemies, but my want of moderation has sometimes caused grief to my dearest friends. An extreme disposition is not easy to tame, and the temptation to bring severe, immoderate methods to the aid of the Lord is one not easily resisted. The temptation is further strengthened by the knowledge that it is next to impossible to pin a preacher down and make him eat his words. There is a ministerial immunity accorded a man of God which may lead Boanerges into extravagant and irresponsible language unless he uses heroic measures to bring his nature under the sway of the Spirit of love. This I have sometimes failed to do, and always to my own real sorrow.

Here again the contrast between the ways of God and the ways of man is seen. Apart from such wisdom as painful experience may give, we are prone to try to secure our ends by direct attack, to rush the field and win by assault. That was Samson's way, and it worked well except for one minor oversight: it slew the victor along with the vanquished! There is a wisdom in the flank attack, but a wisdom which the rash spirit is likely to reject.

Of Christ it was said, "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment into victory." He achieved His tremendous purposes without undue physical exertion and altogether without violence. His whole life was marked by moderation; yet He was of all men the most utterly courageous. He could send back word to Herod who had threatened Him, "Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." There is consummate courage here, but no defiance, no sign of contempt, no extravagance of word or act. He had courage with moderation.

The failure to achieve balance between these virtues has caused much evil in the church through the years, and the injury is all the greater when church leaders are involved. Lack of courage is a grave fault and may be a real sin when it leads to compromise in doctrine or practice. To sit back for the sake of peace and allow the enemy to carry off the sacred vessels from the temple is never the part of a true man of God. Moderation to the point of surrender

where holy things are concerned is certainly not a virtue; but pugnacity never yet won when the battle was a heavenly one. The fury of man never furthered the glory of God. There is a right way to do things, and it is never the violent way. The Greeks had a famous saying: "Moderation is best"; and the homely proverb of the American farmer, "Easy does it," has in it a wealth of profound philosophy.

God has used, and undoubtedly will yet use men in spite of their failure to hold these qualities in proper balance. Elijah was a man of courage; no one could doubt that, but neither would anyone be so rash as to claim that he was a man of patience or moderation. He carried the day by assault, by challenge, and was not above satire and abuse when he thought it would help things; but when the enemy was confounded he went into a tailspin and sank into the depths of despair. That is the way of the extreme nature, of the man of courage without moderation.

Eli, on the other hand, was a man of moderation. He could not say "no" even to his own family. He loved a weak peace, and stark tragedy was the price he paid for his cowardice. Both these men were good men, but they could not find the happy mean. Of the two, the fiery Elijah was certainly the greater man. It is painful to think what Eli would have done in Elijah's circumstances. And I could pity even Hophni and Phinehas if Elijah had been their father!

This leads us logically to think of Paul, the apostle. Here is a man whom we need never take at a discount. He seems to have had an almost perfect courage along with a patient disposition and a forbearance truly Godlike. What he might have been apart from grace is seen in the brief description given of him before his conversion. After he had helped to stone Stephen to death, he went out Christian hunting, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter." Even after his conversion he was capable of summary judgments when he felt strongly on a question. His curt rejection of Mark after he had gone back from the work was an example of his short way of dealing with men in whom he had lost confidence. But time and suffering and an increasing intimacy with the patient Saviour seems to have cured this fault in the man of God. His later days were sweet with love and fragrant with forbearance and charity. So should it be with all of us.

It is a significant thing that the Bible gives no record of a coward ever being cured of his malady. No "timid soul" ever grew into a man of courage. Peter is sometimes cited as an exception, but there is nothing in his record that would mark him as a timid man either before or after Pentecost. He did touch the borderline once or twice, it is true, but for the most part he was a man of such explosive courage that he was forever in trouble by his boldness.

How desperately the church at this moment needs men of courage is too well known to need repetition. Fear broods over the church like some ancient curse. Fear for our living, fear of our jobs, fear of losing popularity, fear of each other: these are the ghosts that haunt the men who stand today in places of church leadership. Many of them, however, win a reputation for courage by repeating safe and expected things with comical daring.

Yet self-conscious courage is not the cure. To cultivate the habit of "calling a spade a spade" may merely result in our making a nuisance of ourselves and doing a lot of damage in the process. The ideal seems to be a quiet courage that is not aware of its own presence. It draws its strength each moment from the indwelling Spirit and is hardly aware of *self* at all. Such a courage will be patient also and well-balanced and safe from extremes. May God send a baptism of such courage upon us.

Chapter 18.

This World: Playground or Battleground?

Things are for us not only what they are; they are what we hold them to be. Which is to say that our attitude toward things is likely in the long run to be more important than the things themselves.

This is a common coin of knowledge, like an old dime, worn smooth by use. Yet it bears upon it the stamp of truth and must not be rejected because it is familiar.

It is strange how a fact may remain fixed, while our interpretation of the fact changes with the generations and the years.

One such fact is the world in which we live. It is here, and has been here through the centuries. It is a stable fact, quite unchanged by the passing of time, but how different is modern man's view of it from the view our fathers held. Here we see plainly how great is the power of interpretation. The world is for all of us not only what it is; it is what we believe it to be. And a tremendous load of woe or weal rides on the soundness of our interpretation.

Going no further back than the times of the founding and early development of our country we are able to see the wide gulf between our modern attitudes and those of our fathers. In the early days, when Christianity exercised a dominant influence over American thinking, men conceived the world to be a battleground. Our fathers believed in sin and the devil and hell as constituting one force; and they believed in God and righteousness and heaven as the other. These were opposed to each other in the nature of them forever in deep, grave, irreconcilable hostility. Man, so our fathers held, had to choose sides; he could not be neutral. For him it must be life or death, heaven or hell, and if he chose to come out on God's side he could expect open war with God's enemies. The fight would be real and deadly and would last as long as life continued here below. Men looked forward to heaven as a return from the wars, a laying down of the sword to enjoy in peace the home prepared for them.

Sermons and songs in those days often had a martial quality about them, or perhaps a trace of homesickness. The Christian soldier thought of home and rest and reunion, and his voice grew plaintive as he sang of battle ended and victory won. But whether he was charging into enemy guns or dreaming of war's end and the Father's welcome home, he never forgot what kind of world he lived in. It was a battleground, and many were the wounded and the slain.

That view of things is unquestionably the scriptural one. Allowing for the figures and metaphors with which the Scriptures abound, it still is a solid Bible doctrine that tremendous spiritual forces are present in the world, and man, because of his spiritual nature, is caught in the middle. The evil powers are bent upon destroying him, while Christ is present to save him through the power of the gospel. To obtain deliverance he must come out on God's side in faith and obedience. That in brief is what our fathers thought; and that, we believe, is what the Bible teaches.

How different today: the fact remains the same but the interpretation has changed completely. Men think of the world, not as a battleground but as a playground. We are not here to fight, we are here to frolic. We are not in a foreign land, we are at home. We are not getting ready to live, we are already living, and the best we can do is to rid ourselves of our inhibitions and our frustrations and live this life to the full. This, we believe, is a fair summary of the

religious philosophy of modern man, openly professed by millions and tacitly held by more multiplied millions who live out that philosophy without having given verbal expression to it.

This changed attitude toward the world has had and is having its effect upon Christians, even gospel Christians who profess the faith of the Bible. By a curious juggling of the figures they manage to add up the column wrong and yet claim to have the right answer. It sounds fantastic but it is true.

That this world is a playground instead of a battleground has now been accepted in practice by the vast majority of evangelical Christians. They might hedge around the question if they were asked bluntly to declare their position, but their conduct gives them away. They are facing both ways, enjoying Christ and the world too, and gleefully telling everyone that accepting Jesus does not require them to give up their fun, and that Christianity is just the jolliest thing imaginable.

The "worship" growing out of such a view of life is as far off center as the view itself, a sort of sanctified night clubbing without the champagne and the dressed-up drunks.

This whole thing has grown to be so serious of late that it now becomes the bounden duty of every Christian to reexamine his spiritual philosophy in the light of the Bible, and having discovered the scriptural way to follow it, even if to do so he must separate himself from much that he formerly accepted as real but which now in the light of truth he knows to be false.

A right view of God and the world to come requires that we have also a right view of the world in which we live and our relation to it. So much depends upon this that we cannot afford to be careless about it.

Chapter 19.

The Waning Authority of Christ in the Churches

Here is the burden of my heart; and while I claim for myself no special inspiration I yet feel that this is also the burden of the Spirit.

If I know my own heart it is love alone that moves me to write this. What I write here is not the sour ferment of a mind agitated by contentions with my fellow Christians. There have been no such contentions. I have not been abused, mistreated or attacked by anyone. Nor have these observations grown out of any unpleasant experiences that I have had in my association with others. My relations with my own church as well as with Christians of other denominations have been friendly, courteous and pleasant. My grief is simply the result of a condition which I believe to be almost universally prevalent among the churches.

I think also that I should acknowledge that I am myself very much involved in the situation I here deplore. As Ezra in his mighty prayer of intercession included himself among the wrongdoers, so do I. "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." Any hard word spoken here against others must in simple honesty return upon my own head. I too have been guilty. This is written with the hope that we all may turn unto the Lord our God and sin no more against Him.

Let me state the cause of my burden. It is this: *Jesus Christ has today almost no authority at all among the groups that call themselves by His name.* By these I mean not the Roman Catholics nor the liberals, nor the various quasi-Christian cults. I do mean Protestant churches generally, and I include those that protest the loudest that they are in spiritual descent from our Lord and His apostles, namely, the evangelicals.

It is a basic doctrine of the New Testament that after His resurrection the Man Jesus was declared by God to be both Lord and Christ, and that He was invested by the Father with absolute Lordship over the church which is His Body. All authority is His in heaven and in earth. In His own proper time He will exert it to the full, but during this period in history He allows this authority to be challenged or ignored. And just now it is being challenged by the world and ignored by the church.

The present position of Christ in the gospel churches may be likened to that of a king in a limited, constitutional monarchy. The king (sometimes depersonalized by the term "the Crown") is in such a country no more than a traditional rallying point, a pleasant symbol of unity and loyalty much like a flag or a national anthem. He is lauded, feted and supported, but his real authority is small. Nominally he is head over all, but in every crisis someone else makes the decisions. On formal occasions he appears in his royal attire to deliver the tame, colorless speech put into his mouth by the real rulers of the country. The whole thing may be no more than good-natured make-believe, but it is rooted in antiquity—it is a lot of fun and no one wants to give it up.

Among the gospel churches Christ is now in fact little more than a beloved symbol. "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" is the church's national anthem and the cross is her official flag, but in the week-by-week services of the church and the day-by-day conduct of her members someone else, not Christ, makes the decisions. Under proper circumstances Christ is allowed to say "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden" or "Let not your heart be troubled,"

but when the speech is finished someone else takes over. Those in actual authority decide the moral standards of the church, as well as all objectives and all methods employed to achieve them. Because of long and meticulous organization it is now possible for the youngest pastor just out of seminary to have more actual authority in a church than Jesus Christ has.

Not only does Christ have little or no authority; His influence also is becoming less and less. I would not say that He has none, only that it is small and diminishing. A fair parallel would be the influence of Abraham Lincoln over the American people. Honest Abe is still the idol of the country. The likeness of his kind, rugged face, so homely that it is beautiful, appears everywhere. It is easy to grow misty-eyed over him. Children are brought up on stories of his love, his honesty and his humility.

But after we have gotten control over our tender emotions what have we left? No more than a good example which, as it recedes into the past, becomes more and more unreal and exercises less and less real influence. Every scoundrel is ready to wrap Lincoln's long, black coat around him. In the cold light of political facts in the United States the constant appeal to Lincoln by the politicians is a cynical joke.

The Lordship of Jesus is not quite forgotten among Christians, but it has been relegated to the hymnal where all responsibility toward it may be comfortably discharged in a glow of pleasant religious emotion. Or if it is taught as a theory in the classroom it is rarely applied to practical living. The idea that the Man Christ Jesus has absolute and final authority over the whole church and over all of its members in every detail of their lives is simply not now accepted as true by the rank and file of evangelical Christians.

What we do is this: We accept the Christianity of our group as being identical with that of Christ and His apostles. The beliefs, the practices, the ethics, the activities of our group are equated with the Christianity of the New Testament. Whatever the group thinks or says or does is scriptural, no questions asked. It is assumed that all our Lord expects of us is that we busy ourselves with the activities of the group. In so doing we are keeping the commandments of Christ.

To avoid the hard necessity of either obeying or rejecting the plain instructions of our Lord in the New Testament we take refuge in a liberal interpretation of them. Casuistry is not the possession of Roman Catholic theologians alone. We evangelicals also know how to avoid the sharp point of obedience by means of fine and intricate explanations. These are tailor-made for the flesh. They excuse disobedience, comfort carnality and make the words of Christ of none effect. And the essence of it all is that Christ simply could not have meant what He said. His teachings are accepted even theoretically only after they have been weakened by interpretation.

Yet Christ is consulted by increasing numbers of persons with "problems" and sought after by those who long for peace of mind. He is widely recommended as a kind of spiritual psychiatrist with remarkable powers to straighten people out. He is able to deliver them from their guilt complexes and to help them to avoid serious psychic traumas by making a smooth and easy adjustment to society and to their own ids. Of course this strange Christ has no relation whatever to the Christ of the New Testament. The true Christ is also Lord, but this accommodating Christ is little more than the servant of the people.

But I suppose I should offer some concrete proof to support my charge that Christ has little or no authority today among the churches. Well, let me put a few questions and let the answers be the evidence.

What church board consults our Lord's words to decide matters under discussion? Let anyone reading this who has had experience on a church board try to recall the times or time

when any board member read from the Scriptures to make a point, or when any chairman suggested that the brethren should see what instructions the Lord had for them on a particular question. Board meetings are habitually opened with a formal prayer or "a season of prayer"; after that the Head of the Church is respectfully silent while the real rulers take over. Let anyone who denies this bring forth evidence to refute it. I for one will be glad to hear it.

What Sunday school committee goes to the Word for directions? Do not the members invariably assume that they already know what they are supposed to do and that their only problem is to find effective means to get it done? Plans, rules, "operations" and new methodological techniques absorb all their time and attention. The prayer before the meeting is for divine help to carry out their plans. Apparently the idea that the Lord might have some instructions for them never so much as enters their heads.

Who remembers when a conference chairman brought his Bible to the table with him for the purpose of using it? Minutes, regulations, rules of order, yes. The sacred commandments of the Lord, no. An absolute dichotomy exists between the devotional period and the business session. The first has no relation to the second.

What foreign mission board actually seeks to follow the guidance of the Lord as provided by His Word and His Spirit? They all think they do, but what they do in fact is to assume the scripturalness of their ends and then ask for help to find ways to achieve them. They may pray all night for God to give success to their enterprises, but Christ is desired as their helper, not as their Lord. Human means are devised to achieve ends assumed to be divine. These harden into policy, and thereafter the Lord doesn't even have a vote.

In the conduct of our public worship where is the authority of Christ to be found? The truth is that today the Lord rarely controls a service, and the influence He exerts is very small. We sing of Him and preach about Him, but He must not interfere; we worship our way, and it must be right because we have always done it that way, as have the other churches in our group.

What Christian when faced with a moral problem goes straight to the Sermon on the Mount or other New Testament Scripture for the authoritative answer? Who lets the words of Christ be final on giving, birth control, the bringing up of a family, personal habits, tithing, entertainment, buying, selling and other such important matters?

What theological school, from the lowly Bible institute up, could continue to operate if it were to make Christ Lord of its every policy? There may be some, and I hope there are, but I believe I am right when I say that most such schools to stay in business are forced to adopt procedures which find no justification in the Bible they profess to teach. So we have this strange anomaly: the authority of Christ is ignored in order to maintain a school to teach among other things the authority of Christ.

The causes back of the decline in our Lord's authority are many. I name only two.

One is the power of custom, precedent and tradition within the older religious groups. These like gravitation affect every particle of religious practice within the group, exerting a steady and constant pressure in one direction. Of course that direction is toward conformity to the status quo. Not Christ but custom is lord in this situation. And the same thing has passed over (possibly to a slightly lesser degree) into the other groups such as the full gospel tabernacles, the holiness churches, the pentecostal and fundamental churches and the many independent and un denominational churches found everywhere throughout the North American continent.

The second cause is the revival of intellectualism among the evangelicals. This, if I sense the situation correctly, is not so much a thirst for learning as a desire for a reputation of being

learned. Because of it good men who ought to know better are being put in the position of collaborating with the enemy. I'll explain.

Our evangelical faith (which I believe to be the true faith of Christ and His apostles) is being attacked these days from many different directions. In the Western world the enemy has forsworn violence. He comes against us no more with sword and fagot; he now comes smiling, bearing gifts. He raises his eyes to heaven and swears that he too believes in the faith of our fathers, but his real purpose is to destroy that faith, or at least to modify it to such an extent that it is no longer the supernatural thing it once was. He comes in the name of philosophy or psychology or anthropology, and with sweet reasonableness urges us to rethink our historic position, to be less rigid, more tolerant, more broadly understanding.

He speaks in the sacred jargon of the schools, and many of our half-educated evangelicals run to fawn on him. He tosses academic degrees to the scrambling sons of the prophets as Rockefeller used to toss dimes to the children of the peasants. The evangelicals who, with some justification, have been accused of lacking true scholarship, now grab for these status symbols with shining eyes, and when they get them they are scarcely able to believe their eyes. They walk about in a kind of ecstatic unbelief, much as the soloist of the neighborhood church choir might were she to be invited to sing at La Scala.

For the true Christian the one supreme test for the present soundness and ultimate worth of everything religious must be the place our Lord occupies in it. Is He Lord or symbol? Is He in charge of the project or merely one of the crew? Does He decide things or only help to carry out the plans of others? All religious activities, from the simplest act of an individual Christian to the ponderous and expensive operations of a whole denomination, may be proved by the answer to the question, Is Jesus Christ Lord in this act? Whether our works prove to be wood, hay and stubble or gold and silver and precious stones in that great day will depend upon the right answer to that question.

What, then, are we to do? Each one of us must decide, and there are at least three possible choices. One is to rise up in shocked indignation and accuse me of irresponsible reporting. Another is to nod general agreement with what is written here but take comfort in the fact that there are exceptions and we are among the exceptions. The other is to go down in meek humility and confess that we have grieved the Spirit and dishonored our Lord in failing to give Him the place His Father has given Him as Head and Lord of the Church.

Either the first or the second will but confirm the wrong. The third if carried out to its conclusion can remove the curse. The decisions lies with us.

Excerpts from *That Incredible Christian*

Chapter 20. That Incredible Christian

The current effort of so many religious leaders to harmonize Christianity with science, philosophy and every natural and reasonable thing is, I believe, the result of failure to understand Christianity and, judging from what I have heard and read, failure to understand science and philosophy as well.

At the heart of the Christian system lies the cross of Christ with its divine paradox. The power of Christianity appears in its antipathy toward, never in its agreement with, the ways of fallen men. The truth of the cross is revealed in its contradictions. The witness of the church is most effective when she declares rather than explains, for the gospel is addressed not to reason but to faith. What can be proved requires no faith to accept. Faith rests upon the character of God, not upon the demonstrations of laboratory or logic.

The cross stands in bold opposition to the natural man. Its philosophy runs contrary to the processes of the unregenerate mind, so that Paul could say bluntly that the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. To try to find a common ground between the message of the cross and man's fallen reason is to try the impossible, and if persisted in must result in an impaired reason, a meaningless cross and a powerless Christianity.

But let us bring the whole matter down from the uplands of theory and simply observe the true Christian as he puts into practice the teachings of Christ and His apostles. Note the contradictions:

The Christian believes that in Christ he has died, yet he is more alive than before and he fully expects to live forever. He walks on earth while seated in heaven and though born on earth he finds that after his conversion he is not at home here. Like the nighthawk, which in the air is the essence of grace and beauty but on the ground is awkward and ugly, so the Christian appears at his best in the heavenly places but does not fit well into the ways of the very society into which he was born.

The Christian soon learns that if he would be victorious as a son of heaven among men on earth he must not follow the common pattern of mankind, but rather the contrary. That he may be safe he puts himself in jeopardy; he loses his life to save it and is in danger of losing it if he attempts to preserve it. He goes down to get up. If he refuses to go down he is already down, but when he starts down he is on his way up.

He is strongest when he is weakest and weakest when he is strong. Though poor he has the power to make others rich, but when he becomes rich his ability to enrich others vanishes. He has most after he has given most away and has least when he possesses most.

He may be and often is highest when he feels lowest and most sinless when he is most conscious of sin. He is wisest when he knows that he knows not and knows least when he has acquired the greatest amount of knowledge. He sometimes does most by doing nothing and goes furthest when standing still. In heaviness he manages to rejoice and keeps his heart glad even in sorrow.

The paradoxical character of the Christian is revealed constantly. For instance, he believes that he is saved now, nevertheless he expects to be saved later and looks forward joyfully to future salvation. He fears God but is not afraid of Him. In God's presence he feels overwhelmed and undone, yet there is nowhere he would rather be than in that presence. He knows that he has been cleansed from his sin, yet he is painfully conscious that in his flesh dwells no good thing.

He loves supremely One whom he has never seen, and though himself poor and lowly he talks familiarly with One who is King of all kings and Lord of all lords, and is aware of no incongruity in so doing. He feels that he is in his own right altogether less than nothing, yet he believes without question that he is the apple of God's eye and that for him the Eternal Son became flesh and died on the cross of shame.

The Christian is a citizen of heaven and to that sacred citizenship he acknowledges first allegiance; yet he may love his earthly country with that intensity of devotion that caused John Knox to pray "O God, give me Scotland or I die."

He cheerfully expects before long to enter that bright world above, but he is in no hurry to leave this world and is quite willing to await the summons of his Heavenly Father. And he is unable to understand why the critical unbeliever should condemn him for this; it all seems so natural and right in the circumstances that he sees nothing inconsistent about it.

The cross-carrying Christian, furthermore, is both a confirmed pessimist and an optimist the like of which is to be found nowhere else on earth.

When he looks at the cross he is a pessimist, for he knows that the same judgment that fell on the Lord of glory condemns in that one act all nature and all the world of men. He rejects every human hope out of Christ because he knows that man's noblest effort is only dust building on dust.

Yet he is calmly, restfully optimistic. If the cross condemns the world the resurrection of Christ guarantees the ultimate triumph of good throughout the universe. Through Christ all will be well at last and the Christian waits the consummation. Incredible Christian!

Chapter 21.

What It Means to Accept Christ

A few things, fortunately only a few, are matters of life and death, such as a compass for a sea voyage or a guide for a journey across the desert. To ignore these vital things is not to gamble or take a chance; it is to commit suicide. Here it is: either be right or be dead.

Our relation to Christ is such a matter of life or death, and on a much higher plane. The Bible-instructed man knows that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that men are saved by Christ alone altogether apart from any works of merit.

That much is true and is known, but obviously the death and resurrection of Christ do not automatically save everyone. How does the individual man come into saving relation to Christ? That some do, we know, but that others do not is evident. How is the gulf bridged between redemption objectively provided and salvation subjectively received? How does that which Christ did for me become operative within me? To the question "What must I do to be saved?" we must learn the correct answer. To fail here is not to gamble with our souls; it is to guarantee eternal banishment from the face of God. Here we must be right or be finally lost.

To this anxious question evangelical Christians provide three answers, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," "Receive Christ as your personal Saviour," and "Accept Christ." Two of the answers are drawn almost verbatim from the Scriptures (Acts 16:31, John 1:12), while the third is a kind of paraphrase meant to sum up the other two. They are therefore not three but one.

Being spiritually lazy we naturally tend to gravitate toward the easiest way of settling our religious questions for ourselves and others; hence the formula "Accept Christ" has become a panacea of universal application, and I believe it has been fatal to many. Though undoubtedly an occasional serious-minded penitent may find in it all the instruction he needs to bring him into living contact with Christ, I fear that too many seekers use it as a short cut to the Promised Land, only to find that it has led them instead to "a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness."

The trouble is that the whole "Accept Christ" attitude is likely to be wrong. It shows Christ applying to us rather than us to Him. It makes Him stand hat-in-hand awaiting our verdict on Him, instead of our kneeling with troubled hearts awaiting His verdict on us. It may even permit us to accept Christ by an impulse of mind or emotions, painlessly, at no loss to our ego and no inconvenience to our usual way of life.

For this ineffectual manner of dealing with a vital matter we might imagine some parallels; as if, for instance, Israel in Egypt had "accepted" the blood of the Passover but continued to live in bondage, or the prodigal son had "accepted" his father's forgiveness and stayed on among the swine in the far country. Is it not plain that if accepting Christ is to mean anything there must be moral action that accords with it?

Allowing the expression "Accept Christ" to stand as an honest effort to say in short what could not be so well said any other way, let us see what we mean or should mean when we use it.

To accept Christ is to form an attachment to the Person of our Lord Jesus altogether unique in human experience.

The attachment is intellectual, volitional and emotional. The believer is intellectually convinced that Jesus is both Lord and Christ; he has set his will to follow Him at any cost and soon his heart is enjoying the exquisite sweetness of His fellowship.

This attachment is all-inclusive in that it joyfully accepts Christ for all that He is. There is no craven division of offices whereby we may acknowledge His Saviourhood today and withhold decision on His Lordship till tomorrow. The true believer owns Christ as his All in All without reservation. He includes all of himself, leaving no part of his being unaffected by the revolutionary transaction.

Further, his attachment to Christ is all-exclusive. The Lord becomes to him not one of several rival interests, but the one exclusive attraction forever. He orbits around Christ as the earth around the sun, held in thrall by the magnetism of His love, drawing all his life and light and warmth from Him. In this happy state he is given other interests, it is true, but these are all determined by his relation to his Lord.

That we accept Christ in this all-inclusive, all-exclusive way is a divine imperative. Here faith makes its leap into God through the Person and work of Christ, but it never divides the work from the Person. It believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, the whole Christ without modification or reservation, and thus it receives and enjoys all that He did in His work of redemption, all that He is now doing in heaven for His own and all that He does in and through them.

To accept Christ is to know the meaning of the words "as he is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). We accept His friends as our friends, His enemies as our enemies, His ways as our ways, His rejection as our rejection, His cross as our cross, His life as our life and His future as our future.

If this is what we mean when we advise the seeker to accept Christ, we had better explain it to him. He may get into deep spiritual trouble unless we do.

Chapter 22.

The Inadequacy of "Instant Christianity"

It is hardly a matter of wonder that the country that gave the world instant tea and instant coffee should be the one to give it instant Christianity. If these two beverages were not actually invented in the United States, it was certainly here that they received the advertising impetus that has made them known to most of the civilized world. And it cannot be denied that it was American Fundamentalism that brought instant Christianity to the gospel churches.

Ignoring for the moment Romanism, and Liberalism in its various disguises, and focusing our attention upon the great body of evangelical believers, we see at once how deeply the religion of Christ has suffered in the house of its friends. The American genius for getting things done quickly and easily with little concern for quality or permanence has bred a virus that has infected the whole evangelical church in the United States and, through our literature, our evangelists and our missionaries, has spread all over the world.

Instant Christianity came in with the machine age. Men invented machines for two purposes. They wanted to get important work done more quickly and easily than they could do it by hand, and they wanted to get the work over with so they could give their time to pursuits more to their liking, such as loafing or enjoying the pleasures of the world. Instant Christianity now serves the same purposes in religion. It disposes of the past, guarantees the future and sets the Christian free to follow the more refined lusts of the flesh in all good conscience and with a minimum of restraint.

By "instant Christianity" I mean the kind found almost everywhere in gospel circles and which is born of the notion that we may discharge our total obligation to our own souls by one act of faith, or at most by two, and be relieved thereafter of all anxiety about our spiritual condition that we may discharge our total obligation to our own and we are permitted to infer from this that there is no reason to seek to be saints by character. An automatic, once-for-all quality is present here that is completely out of mode with the faith of the New Testament.

In this error, as in most others, there lies a certain amount of truth imperfectly understood. It is true that conversion to Christ may be and often is sudden. Where the burden of sin has been heavy the sense of forgiveness is usually clear and joyful. The delight experienced in forgiveness is equal to the degree of moral repugnance left in repentance. The true Christian has met God. He knows he has eternal life and he is likely to know where and when he received it. And those also who have been filled with the Holy Spirit subsequent to their regeneration have a clear-cut experience of being filled. The Spirit is self-announcing, and the renewed heart has no difficulty identifying His presence as He floods in over the soul.

But the trouble is that we tend to put our trust in our experiences and as a consequence misread the entire New Testament. We are constantly being exhorted to make the decision, to settle the matter now, to get the whole thing taken care of at once—and those who exhort us are right in doing so. There are decisions that can be and should be made once and for all. There are personal matters that can be settled instantaneously by a determined act of the will in response to Bible-grounded faith. No one would want to deny this; certainly not I.

The question before us is, Just how much can be accomplished in that one act of faith? How much yet remains to be done and how far can a single decision take us?

Instant Christianity tends to make the faith act terminal and so smothers the desire for spiritual advance. It fails to understand the true nature of the Christian life, which is not static but dynamic and expanding. It overlooks the fact that a new Christian is a living organism as certainly as a new baby is, and must have nourishment and exercise to assure normal growth. It does not consider that the act of faith in Christ sets up a personal relationship between two intelligent moral beings, God and the reconciled man, and no single encounter between God and a creature made in His image could ever be sufficient to establish an intimate friendship between them.

By trying to pack all of salvation into one experience, or two, the advocates of instant Christianity flaunt the law of development which runs through all nature. They ignore the sanctifying effects of suffering, cross carrying and practical obedience. They pass by the need for spiritual training, the necessity of forming right religious habits and the need to wrestle against the world, the devil and the flesh.

Undue preoccupation with the initial act of believing has created in some a psychology of contentment, or at least of non-expectation. To many it has imparted a mood of disappointment with the Christian faith. God seems too far away, the world is too near, and the flesh too powerful to resist. Others are glad to accept the assurance of automatic blessedness. It relieves them of the need to watch and fight and pray, and sees them free to enjoy this world while waiting for the next.

Instant Christianity is twentieth-century orthodoxy. I wonder whether the man who wrote Philippians 3:7-16 would recognize it as the faith for which he finally died. I am afraid he would not.

Chapter 23.

There Is No Substitute for Theology

We being what we are and all things else being what they are, the most important and profitable study any of us can engage in is without question the study of theology.

That theology probably receives less attention than any other subject tells us nothing about its importance or lack of it. It indicates rather that men are still hiding from the presence of God among the trees of the garden and feel acutely uncomfortable when the matter of their relation to God is brought up. They sense their deep alienation from God and only manage to live at peace with themselves by forgetting that they are not at peace with God.

If there were no God things would be quite otherwise with us. Were there no one to whom we must finally render up account, at least one big load would be gone from our minds. We would only need to live within the law, not too hard a task in most countries, and there would be nothing to fear. But if God indeed created the earth and placed man upon it in a state of moral probation, then the heavy obligation lies upon us to learn the will of God and do it.

It has always seemed to me completely inconsistent that existentialism should deny the existence of God and then proceed to use the language of theism to persuade men to live right. The French writer, Jean-Paul Sartre, for instance, states frankly that he represents atheistic existentialism. "If God does not exist," he says, "we find no values or commands to turn to which legitimize our conduct. So in the bright realm of values, we have no excuse behind us, nor justification before us. We are all alone, with no excuses." Yet in the next paragraph he states bluntly, "Man is responsible for his passion," and further on, "A coward is responsible for his cowardice." And such considerations as these, he says, fill the existentialist with "anguish, forlornness and despair."

It seems to me that such reasoning must assume the truth of everything it seeks to deny. If there were no God there could be no such word as "responsible." No criminal need fear a judge who does not exist; nor would he need to worry about breaking a law that had not been passed. It is the knowledge that the law and the judge do in fact exist that strikes fear to the lawbreaker's heart. There is someone to whom he is accountable; otherwise the concept of responsibility could have no meaning.

It is precisely because God *is*, and because man is made in His image and is accountable to Him, that theology is so critically important. Christian revelation alone has the answer to life's unanswered questions about God and human destiny. To let these authoritative answers lie neglected while we search everywhere else for answers and find none is, it seems to me, nothing less than folly.

No motorist would be excused if he neglected to consult his road map and tried instead to find his way across the country by looking for moss on logs, or by observing the flight of wild bees or watching the movements of the heavenly bodies. If there *were* no map a man *might* find his way by the stars; but for a traveler trying to get home the stars would be a poor substitute for a map.

Without a map the Greeks did an admirable piece of navigating; but the Hebrews possessed the map and so had no need of human philosophy. As one not wholly unacquainted with Greek thought, it is my belief that but one of Isaiah's eloquent chapters or David's inspired

psalms contains more real help for mankind than all the output of the finest minds of Greece during the centuries of her glory.

The present neglect of the inspired Scriptures by civilized man is a shame and a scandal; for those same Scriptures tell him all he wants to know, or should want to know, about God, his own soul and human destiny. It is ironic that men will spend vast amounts both of time and of money in an effort to uncover the secrets of their past when their own future is all that should really matter to them.

No man is responsible for his ancestors; and the only past he must account for is the relatively short one he himself has lived here on earth. To learn how I can escape the guilt of sins committed in my brief yesterdays, how I can live free from sin today and enter at last into the blessed presence of God in a happy tomorrow—that is more important to me than anything that can be discovered by the anthropologist. It appears to me to be a strange perversion of interest to gaze backward at the dust when we are equipped to look upward at the glory.

Whatever keeps me from the Bible is my enemy, however harmless it may appear to be. Whatever engages my attention when I should be meditating on God and things eternal does injury to my soul. Let the cares of life crowd out the Scriptures from my mind and I have suffered loss where I can least afford it. Let me accept anything else instead of the Scriptures and I have been cheated and robbed to my eternal confusion.

The secret of life is theological and the key to heaven as well. We learn with difficulty, forget easily and suffer many distractions. Therefore we should set our hearts to study theology. We should preach it from our pulpits, sing it in our hymns, teach it to our children and make it the subject of conversation when we meet with Christian friends.

Chapter 24.

The Importance of Self-Judgment

Hardly anything else reveals so well the fear and uncertainty among men as the length to which they will go to hide their true selves from each other and even from their own eyes.

Almost all men live from childhood to death behind a semiopaque curtain, coming out briefly only when forced by some emotional shock and then retreating as quickly as possible into hiding again. The result of this lifelong dissimulation is that people rarely know their neighbors for what they really are, and worse than that, the camouflage is so successful that they do not know themselves either.

Self-knowledge is so critically important to us in our pursuit of God and His righteousness that we lie under heavy obligation to do immediately whatever is necessary to remove the disguise and permit our real selves to be known. It is one of the supreme tragedies in religion that so many of us think so highly of ourselves when the evidence lies all on the other side; and our self-admiration effectively blocks out any possible effort to discover a remedy for our condition. Only the man who knows he is sick will go to a physician.

Now, our true moral and spiritual state can be disclosed only by the Spirit and the Word. The final judgment of the heart is God's. There is a sense in which we dare not judge each other (Matt. 7:1-5), and in which we should not even try to judge ourselves (1 Cor. 4:3). The ultimate judgment belongs to the One whose eyes are like a flame of fire and who sees quite through the deeds and thoughts of men. I am glad to leave the final word with Him.

There is, nevertheless, a place for self-judgment and a real need that we exercise it (1 Cor. 11:31, 32). While our self-discovery is not likely to be complete and our self-judgment is almost certain to be biased and imperfect, there is yet every good reason for us to work along with the Holy Spirit in His benign effort to locate us spiritually in order that we may make such amendments as the circumstances demand. That God already knows us thoroughly is certain (Ps. 139:1-6). It remains for us to know ourselves as accurately as possible. For this reason I offer some rules for self-discovery; and if the results are not all we could desire they may be at least better than none at all. We may be known by the following:

1. *What we want most.* We have but to get quiet, recollect our thoughts, wait for the mild excitement within us to subside, and then listen closely for the faint cry of desire. Ask your heart, What would you rather have than anything else in the world? Reject the conventional answer. Insist on the true one, and when you have heard it you will know the kind of person you are.

2. *What we think about most.* The necessities of life compel us to think about many things, but the true test is what we think about *voluntarily*. It is more than likely that our thoughts will cluster about our secret heart treasure, and whatever that is will reveal what we are. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

3. *How we use our money.* Again we must ignore those matters about which we are not altogether free. We must pay taxes and provide the necessities of life for ourselves and family, if any. That is routine, merely, and tells us little about ourselves. But whatever money is left to do with as we please—that will tell us a great deal indeed.

4. *What we do with our leisure time.* A large share of our time is already spoken for by the exigencies of civilized living, but we do have some free time. What we do with it is vital. Most

people waste it staring at the television, listening to the radio, reading the cheap output of the press or engaging in idle chatter. What I do with mine reveals the kind of man I am.

5. *The company we enjoy.* There is a law of moral attraction that draws every man to the society most like himself. "Being let go, they went to their own company." Where we go when we are free to go where we will is a near-infallible index of character.

6. *Whom and what we admire.* I have long suspected that the great majority of evangelical Christians, while kept somewhat in line by the pressure of group opinion, nevertheless have a boundless, if perforce secret, admiration for the world. We can learn the true state of our minds by examining our unexpressed admirations. Israel often admired, even envied, the pagan nations around them, and so forgot the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the law and the promises and the fathers. Instead of blaming Israel let us look to ourselves.

7. *What we laugh at.* No one with a due regard for the wisdom of God would argue that there is anything wrong with laughter, since humor is a legitimate component of our complex nature. Lacking a sense of humor we fall that much short of healthy humanity.

But the test we are running here is not whether we laugh or not, but what we laugh at. Some things lie outside the field of pure humor. No reverent Christian, for instance, finds death funny, nor birth nor love. No Spirit-filled man can bring himself to laugh at the Holy Scriptures, or the Church which Christ purchased with His own blood, or prayer or righteousness or human grief or pain. And surely no one who has been in the presence of God could ever laugh at a story involving the Deity.

These are a few tests. The wise Christian will find others.

Chapter 25.

Marks of the Spiritual Man

The concept of spirituality varies among different Christian groups. In some circles the highly vocal person who talks religion continually is thought to be very spiritual; others accept noisy exuberance as a mark of spirituality, and in some churches the man who prays first, longest and loudest gets a reputation for being the most spiritual man in the assembly.

Now a vigorous testimony, frequent prayers and loud praise may be entirely consistent with spirituality, but it is important that we understand that they do not in themselves constitute it nor prove that it is present.

True spirituality manifests itself in certain dominant desires. These are ever-present, deep-settled wants sufficiently powerful to motivate and control the life. For convenience let me number them, though I make no effort to decide the order of their importance.

1. First is the desire to be holy rather than happy. The yearning after happiness found so widely among Christians professing a superior degree of sanctity is sufficient proof that such sanctity is not indeed present. The truly spiritual man knows that God will give abundance of joy after we have become able to receive it without injury to our souls, but he does not demand it at once. John Wesley said of the members of one of the early Methodist societies that he doubted that they had been made perfect in love because they came to church to enjoy religion instead of to learn how they could become holy.

2. A man may be considered spiritual when he wants to see the honor of God advanced through his life even if it means that he himself must suffer temporary dishonor or loss. Such a man prays "Hallowed be Thy name," and silently adds, "at any cost to me, Lord." He lives for God's honor by a kind of spiritual reflex. Every choice involving the glory of God is for him already made before it presents itself. He does not need to debate the matter with his own heart; there is nothing to debate. The glory of God is necessary to him; he gasps for it as a suffocating man gasps for air.

3. The spiritual man wants to carry his cross. Many Christians accept adversity or tribulation with a sigh and call it their cross, forgetting that such things come alike to saint and sinner. The cross is that extra adversity that comes to us as a result of our obedience to Christ. This cross is not forced upon us; we voluntarily take it up with full knowledge of the consequences. We choose to obey Christ and by so doing choose to carry the cross.

Carrying a cross means to be attached to the Person of Christ, committed to the Lordship of Christ and obedient to the commandments of Christ. The man who is so attached, so committed, so obedient is a spiritual man.

4. Again, a Christian is spiritual when he sees everything from God's viewpoint. The ability to weigh all things in the divine scale and place the same value upon them as God does is the mark of a Spirit-filled life.

God looks *at* and *through* at the same time. His gaze does not rest on the surface but penetrates to the true meaning of things. The carnal Christian looks at an object or a situation, but because he does not see through it he is elated or cast down by what he sees. The spiritual man is able to look through things as God looks and think of them as God thinks. He insists on seeing all things as God sees them even if it humbles him and exposes his ignorance to the point of real pain.

5. Another desire of the spiritual man is to die right rather than to live wrong. A sure mark of the mature man of God is his nonchalance about living. The earth-loving, body-conscious Christian looks upon death with numb terror in his heart; but as he goes on to live in the Spirit he becomes increasingly indifferent to the number of his years here below, and at the same time increasingly careful of the kind of life he lives while he is here. He will not purchase a few extra days of life at the cost of compromise or failure. He wants most of all to be right, and he is happy to let God decide how long he shall live. He knows that he can afford to die now that he is in Christ, but he knows that he cannot afford to do wrong, and this knowledge becomes a gyroscope to stabilize his thinking and his acting.

6. The desire to see others advance at his expense is another mark of the spiritual man. He wants to see other Christians above him and is happy when they are promoted and he is overlooked. There is no envy in his heart; when his brethren are honored he is pleased because such is the will of God and that will is his earthly heaven. If God is pleased, he is pleased for that reason, and if it pleases God to exalt another above him he is content to have it so.

7. The spiritual man habitually makes eternity-judgments instead of time-judgments. By faith he rises above the tug of earth and the flow of time and learns to think and feel as one who has already left the world and gone to join the innumerable company of angels and the general assembly and church of the First-born which are written in heaven. Such a man would rather be useful than famous and would rather serve than be served.

And all this must be by the operation of the Holy Spirit within him. No man can become spiritual by himself. Only the free Spirit can make a man spiritual.

Excerpts from *The Root of the Righteous*

Chapter 26. The Root of the Righteous

One marked difference between the faith of our fathers as conceived by the fathers and the same faith as understood and lived by their children is that the fathers were concerned with the root of the matter, while their present-day descendants seem concerned only with the fruit.

This appears in our attitude toward certain great Christian souls whose names are honored among the churches, as, for instance, Augustine and Bernard in earlier times, or Luther and Wesley in times more recent. Today we write the biographies of such as these and celebrate their fruit, but the tendency is to ignore the root out of which the fruit sprang. "The root of the righteous yieldeth fruit," said the wise man in the Proverbs. Our fathers looked well to the root of the tree and were willing to wait with patience for the fruit to appear. We demand the fruit immediately even though the root may be weak and knobby or missing altogether. Impatient Christians today explain away the simple beliefs of the saints of other days and smile off their serious-minded approach to God and sacred things. They were victims of their own limited religious outlook, but great and sturdy souls withal who managed to achieve a satisfying spiritual experience and do a lot of good in the world in spite of their handicaps. So we'll imitate their fruit without accepting their theology or inconveniencing ourselves too greatly by adopting their all-or-nothing attitude toward religion.

So we say (or more likely think without saying), and every voice of wisdom, every datum of religious experience, every law of nature tells us how wrong we are. The bough that breaks off from the tree in a storm may bloom briefly and give to the unthinking passer-by the impression that it is a healthy and fruitful branch, but its tender blossoms will soon perish and the bough itself wither and die. There is no lasting life apart from the root.

Much that passes for Christianity today is the brief bright effort of the severed branch to bring forth its fruit in its season. But the deep laws of life are against it. Preoccupation with appearances and a corresponding neglect of the out-of-sight root of the true spiritual life are prophetic signs which go unheeded. Immediate "results" are all that matter, quick proofs of present success without a thought of next week or next year. Religious pragmatism is running wild among the orthodox. Truth is whatever works. If it gets results it is good. There is but one test for the religious leader: success. Everything is forgiven him except failure.

A tree can weather almost any storm if its root is sound, but when the fig tree which our Lord cursed "dried up from the roots" it immediately "withered away." A church that is soundly rooted cannot be destroyed, but nothing can save a church whose root is dried up. No stimulation, no advertising campaigns, no gifts of money and no beautiful edifice can bring back life to the rootless tree.

With a happy disregard for consistency of metaphor, the Apostle Paul exhorts us to look to our sources. "Rooted and grounded in love," he says in what is obviously a confusion of figure; and again he urges his readers to be "rooted and built up in him," which envisages the Christian both as a tree to be well rooted and as a temple to rise on a solid foundation.

The whole Bible and all the great saints of the past join to tell us the same thing. "Take nothing for granted," they say to us. "Go back to the grass roots. Open your hearts and search the Scriptures. Bear your cross, follow your Lord and pay no heed to the passing religious vogue. The masses are always wrong. In every generation the number of the righteous is small. Be sure you are among them."

"A man shall not be established by wickedness: but the root of the righteous shall not be moved."

Chapter 27.

God Is Easy to Live With

Satan's first attack upon the human race was his sly effort to destroy Eve's confidence in the kindness of God. Unfortunately for her and for us he succeeded too well. From that day, men have had a false conception of God, and it is exactly this that has cut out from under them the ground of righteousness and driven them to reckless and destructive living.

Nothing twists and deforms the soul more than a low or unworthy conception of God. Certain sects, such as the Pharisees, while they held that God was stern and austere, yet managed to maintain a fairly high level of external morality; but their righteousness was only outward. Inwardly they were "whited sepulchres," as our Lord Himself told them. Their wrong conception of God resulted in a wrong idea of worship. To a Pharisee, the service of God was a bondage which he did not love but from which he could not escape without a loss too great to bear. The God of the Pharisee was not a God easy to live with, so his religion became grim and hard and loveless. It had to be so, for our notion of God must always determine the quality of our religion.

Much Christianity since the days of Christ's flesh has also been grim and severe. And the cause has been the same—an unworthy or an inadequate view of God. Instinctively we try to be like our God, and if He is conceived to be stern and exacting, so will we ourselves be.

From a failure properly to understand God comes a world of unhappiness among good Christians even today. The Christian life is thought to be a glum, unrelieved cross-carrying under the eye of a stern Father who expects much and excuses nothing. He is austere, peevish, highly temperamental and extremely hard to please. The kind of life which springs out of such libelous notions must of necessity be but a parody on the true life of Christ.

It is most important to our spiritual welfare that we hold in our minds always a right conception of God. If we think of Him as cold and exacting we shall find it impossible to love Him, and our lives will be ridden with servile fear. If, again, we hold Him to be kind and understanding our whole inner life will mirror that idea.

The truth is that God is the most winsome of all beings and His service one of unspeakable pleasure. He is all love, and those who trust Him need never know anything but that love. He is just, indeed, and He will not condone sin; but through the blood of the everlasting covenant He is able to act toward us exactly as if we had never sinned. Toward the trusting sons of men His mercy will always triumph over justice.

The fellowship of God is delightful beyond all telling. He communes with His redeemed ones in an easy, uninhibited fellowship that is restful and healing to the soul. He is not sensitive nor selfish nor temperamental. What He is today we shall find Him tomorrow and the next day and the next year. He is not hard to please, though He may be hard to satisfy. He expects of us only what He has Himself first supplied. He is quick to mark every simple effort to please Him, and just as quick to overlook imperfections when He knows we meant to do His will. He loves us for ourselves and values our love more than galaxies of new created worlds.

Unfortunately, many Christians cannot get free from their perverted notions of God, and these notions poison their hearts and destroy their inward freedom. These friends serve God grimly, as the elder brother did, doing what is right without enthusiasm and without joy, and seem altogether unable to understand the buoyant, spirited celebration when the prodigal comes home. Their idea of God rules out the possibility of His being happy in His people, and they

attribute the singing and shouting to sheer fanaticism. Unhappy souls, these, doomed to go heavily on their melancholy way, grimly determined to do right if the heavens fall and to be on the winning side in the day of judgment.

How good it would be if we could learn that God is easy to live with. He remembers our frame and knows that we are dust. He may sometimes chasten us, it is true, but even this He does with a smile, the proud, tender smile of a Father who is bursting with pleasure over an imperfect but promising son who is coming every day to look more and more like the One whose child he is.

Some of us are religiously jumpy and self-conscious because we know that God sees our every thought and is acquainted with all our ways. We need not be. God is the sum of all patience and the essence of kindly good will. We please Him most, not by frantically trying to make ourselves good, but by throwing ourselves into His arms with all our imperfections, and believing that He understands everything and loves us still.

Chapter 28.

On Receiving Admonition

An odd little passage in the Book of Ecclesiastes speaks of "an old and foolish king, who will no more be admonished."

It is not hard to understand why an old king, especially if he were a foolish one, would feel that he was beyond admonition. After he had for years given orders, he might easily build a self-confident psychology that simply could not entertain the notion that he should take advice from others. His word had long been law, and to him *right* had become synonymous with his will and *wrong* had come to mean anything that ran contrary to his wishes. Soon the idea that there was anyone wise enough or good enough to reprove him would not so much as enter his mind. He had to be a foolish king to let himself get caught in that kind of web, and an old king to give the web time to get so strong that he could not break it and to give him time to get used to it so that he was no longer aware of its existence.

Regardless of the moral process by which he arrived at his hardened state, the bell had already tolled for him. In every particular he was a lost man. His wizened old body still held together to provide a kind of movable tomb to house a soul already dead. Hope had long ago departed. God had left him to his fatal conceit. And soon he would die physically too, and he would die as a fool dieth.

A state of heart that rejected admonition was characteristic of Israel at various periods in her history, and these periods were invariably followed by judgment. When Christ came to the Jews He found them chuck full of that arrogant self-confidence that would not accept reproof. "We be Abraham's seed," they said coldly when He talked to them about their sins and their need of salvation. The common people heard Him and repented, but the Jewish priests had ruled the roost too long to be willing to surrender their privileged position. Like the old king, they had gotten accustomed to being right all the time. To reprove them was to insult them. They were beyond reproof.

Churches and Christian organizations have shown a tendency to fall into the same error that destroyed Israel: inability to receive admonition. After a time of growth and successful labor comes the deadly psychology of self-congratulation. Success itself becomes the cause of later failure. The leaders come to accept themselves as the very chosen of God. They are special objects of the divine favor; their success is proof enough that this is so. They must therefore be right, and anyone who tries to call them to account is instantly written off as an unauthorized meddler who should be ashamed to dare to reprove his betters.

If anyone imagines that we are merely playing with words let him approach at random any religious leader and call attention to the weaknesses and sins in his organization. Such a one will be sure to get the quick brush off, and if he dares to persist he will be confronted with reports and statistics to prove that he is dead wrong and completely out of order. "We be the seed of Abraham" will be the burden of the defense. And who would dare find fault with Abraham's seed?

Those who have already entered the state where they can no longer receive admonition are not likely to profit by this warning. After a man has gone over the precipice there is not much we can do for him; but we can place markers along the way to prevent the next traveler from going over. Here are a few:

1. Don't defend your church or your organization against criticism. If the criticism is false it can do no harm. If it is true you need to hear it and do something about it.

2. Be concerned not with what you have accomplished but over what you might have accomplished if you had followed the Lord completely. It is better to say (and feel), "We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."

3. When reproved, pay no attention to the source. Do not ask whether it is a friend or an enemy that reproves you. An enemy is often of greater value to you than a friend because he is not influenced by sympathy.

4. Keep your heart open to the correction of the Lord and be ready to receive His chastisement regardless of who holds the whip. The great saints all learned to take a licking gracefully—and that may be one reason why they were great saints.

Chapter 29.

The Great God Entertainment

A German philosopher many years ago said something to the effect that the more a man has in his own heart the less he will require from the outside; excessive need for support from without is proof of the bankruptcy of the inner man.

If this is true (and I believe it is), then the present inordinate attachment to every form of entertainment is evidence that the inner life of modern man is in serious decline. The average man has no central core of moral assurance, no spring within his own breast, no inner strength to place him above the need for repeated psychological shots to give him the courage to go on living. He has become a parasite on the world, drawing his life from his environment, unable to live a day apart from the stimulation which society affords him.

Schleiermacher held that the feeling of dependence lies at the root of all religious worship, and that however high the spiritual life might rise it must always begin with a deep sense of a great need which only God could satisfy. If this sense of need and a feeling of dependence are at the root of natural religion it is not hard to see why the great god Entertainment is so ardently worshiped by so many. For there are millions who cannot live without amusement; life without some form of entertainment for them is simply intolerable; they look forward to the blessed relief afforded by professional entertainers and other forms of psychological narcotics as a dope addict looks to his daily shot of heroin. Without them they could not summon courage to face existence.

No one with common human feeling will object to the simple pleasures of life, nor to such harmless forms of entertainment as may help to relax the nerves and refresh the mind exhausted by toil. Such things if used with discretion may be a blessing along the way. That is one thing. The all-out devotion to entertainment as a major activity for which and by which men live is definitely something else again.

The abuse of a harmless thing is the essence of sin. The growth of the amusement phase of human life to such fantastic proportions is a portent, a threat to the souls of modern men. It has been built into a multimillion dollar racket with greater power over human minds and human character than any other educational influence on earth. And the ominous thing is that its power is almost exclusively evil, rotting the inner life, crowding out the long eternal thoughts which would fill the souls of men if they were but worthy to entertain them. And the whole thing has grown into a veritable religion which holds its devotees with a strange fascination, and a religion, incidentally, against which it is now dangerous to speak.

For centuries the Church stood solidly against every form of worldly entertainment, recognizing it for what it was—a device for wasting time, a refuge from the disturbing voice of conscience, a scheme to divert attention from moral accountability. For this she got herself abused roundly by the sons of this world. But of late she has become tired of the abuse and has given over the struggle. She appears to have decided that if she cannot conquer the great god Entertainment she may as well join forces with him and make what use she can of his powers. So today we have the astonishing spectacle of millions of dollars being poured into the unholy job of providing earthly entertainment for the so-called sons of heaven. Religious entertainment is in many places rapidly crowding out the serious things of God. Many churches these days have become little more than poor theatres where fifth-rate "producers" peddle their shoddy wares

with the full approval of evangelical leaders who can even quote a holy text in defense of their delinquency. And hardly a man dares raise his voice against it.

The great god Entertainment amuses his devotees mainly by telling them stories. The love of stories, which is a characteristic of childhood, has taken fast hold of the minds of the retarded saints of our day, so much so that not a few persons manage to make a comfortable living by spinning yarns and serving them up in various disguises to church people. What is natural and beautiful in a child may be shocking when it persists into adulthood, and more so when it appears in the sanctuary and seeks to pass for true religion.

Is it not a strange thing and a wonder that, with the shadow of atomic destruction hanging over the world and with the coming of Christ drawing near, the professed followers of the Lord should be giving themselves up to religious amusements? That in an hour when mature saints are so desperately needed vast numbers of believers should revert to spiritual childhood and clamor for religious toys?

"Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach.... The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned! For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim." Amen. Amen.

Chapter 30.

Bible Taught or Spirit Taught

It may shock some readers to suggest that there is a difference between being Bible taught and being Spirit taught. Nevertheless it is so.

It is altogether possible to be instructed in the rudiments of the faith and still have no real understanding of the whole thing. And it is possible to go on to become expert in Bible doctrine and not have spiritual illumination, with the result that a veil remains over the mind, preventing it from apprehending the truth in its spiritual essence.

Most of us are acquainted with churches that teach the Bible to their children from their tenderest years, give them long instruction in the catechism, drill them further in pastor's classes, and still never produce in them a living Christianity nor a virile godliness. Their members show no evidence of having passed from death unto life. None of the earmarks of salvation so plainly indicated in the Scriptures are found among them. Their religious lives are correct and reasonably moral, but wholly mechanical and altogether lacking in radiance. They wear their faith as persons in mourning once wore black arm bands to show their love and respect for the departed.

Such persons cannot be dismissed as hypocrites. Many of them are pathetically serious about it all. They are simply blind. From lack of the vital Spirit they are forced to get along with the outward shell of faith, while all the time their deep hearts are starving for spiritual reality and they do not know what is wrong with them.

This difference between the religion of creed and the religion of the Spirit is well set forth by the saintly Thomas in a tender little prayer to his Lord: "The children of Israel in time past said unto Moses, 'Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.' Not so, Lord, not so, I beseech Thee; but rather with the prophet Samuel, I humbly and earnestly entreat, 'Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.' Let not Moses speak unto me, nor any of the prophets, but rather do Thou speak, O Lord God, the inspirer, enlightener of all the prophets; for Thou alone without them canst perfectly instruct me, but they without Thee can profit nothing. They indeed may utter words, but they cannot give the Spirit. Most beautifully do they speak, but if Thou be silent, they inflame not the heart. They teach the letter, but Thou openest the sense; they bring forth mysteries, but Thou unlockest the meaning of sealed things.... They work only outwardly, but Thou instructest and enlightenest the heart.... They cry aloud with words, but Thou impartest understanding to the hearing."

It would be hard to wrap it up better than that. The same thing has been said variously by others; however, the most familiar saying probably is, "The Scriptures, to be understood, must be read with the same Spirit that originally inspired them." No one denies this, but even such a statement will go over the heads of those who hear it unless the Holy Spirit inflames the heart.

The charge often made against us by Liberals, that we are "bibliolaters," is probably not true in the same sense as meant by our detractors; but candor and self-analysis will force us to admit that there is often too much truth in their charge. Among religious persons of unquestioned orthodoxy there is sometimes found a dull dependence upon the letter of the text without the faintest understanding of its spirit. That truth is in its essence spiritual must constantly be kept before our minds if we would know the truth indeed. Jesus Christ is Himself the Truth, and He cannot be confined to mere words even though, as we ardently believe, He has Himself inspired

the words. That which is spiritual cannot be shut in by ink or fenced in by type and paper. The best a book can do is to give us the letter of truth. If we ever receive more than this, it must be by the Holy Spirit who gives it.

The great need of the hour among persons spiritually hungry is twofold: First, to know the Scriptures, apart from which no saving truth will be vouchsafed by our Lord; the second, to be enlightened by the Spirit, apart from whom the Scriptures will not be understood.

Chapter 31.

The Cross Is a Radical Thing

The cross of Christ is the most revolutionary thing ever to appear among men.

The cross of old Roman times knew no compromise; it never made concessions. It won all its arguments by killing its opponent and silencing him for good. It spared not Christ, but slew Him the same as the rest. He was alive when they hung Him on that cross and completely dead when they took Him down six hours later. That was the cross the first time it appeared in Christian history.

After Christ was risen from the dead the apostles went out to preach His message, and what they preached was the cross. And wherever they went into the wide world they carried the cross, and the same revolutionary power went with them. The radical message of the cross transformed Saul of Tarsus and changed him from a persecutor of Christians to a tender believer and an apostle of the faith. Its power changed bad men into good ones. It shook off the long bondage of paganism and altered completely the whole moral and mental outlook of the Western world. All this it did and continued to do as long as it was permitted to remain what it had been originally, a cross. Its power departed when it was changed from a thing of death to a thing of beauty. When men made of it a symbol, hung it around their necks as an ornament or made its outline before their faces as a magic sign to ward off evil, then it became at best a weak emblem, at worst a positive fetish. As such it is revered today by millions who know absolutely nothing about its power.

The cross effects its ends by destroying one established pattern, the victim's, and creating another pattern, its own. Thus it always has its way. It wins by defeating its opponent and imposing its will upon him. It always dominates. It never compromises, never dickers nor confers, never surrenders a point for the sake of peace. It cares not for peace; it cares only to end its opposition as fast as possible.

With perfect knowledge of all this Christ said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." So the cross not only brings Christ's life to an end, it ends also the first life, the old life, of every one of His true followers. It destroys the old pattern, the Adam pattern, in the believer's life, and brings it to an end. Then the God who raised Christ from the dead raises the believer and a new life begins.

This, and nothing less, is true Christianity, though we cannot but recognize the sharp divergence of this conception from that held by the rank and file of evangelicals today. But we dare not qualify our position. The cross stands high above the opinions of men and to that cross all opinions must come at last for judgment. A shallow and worldly leadership would modify the cross to please the entertainment-mad saintlings who will have their fun even within the very sanctuary; but to do so is to court spiritual disaster and risk the anger of the Lamb turned Lion.

We must do something about the cross, and one of two things only we can do—flee it or die upon it. And if we should be so foolhardy as to flee we shall by that act put away the faith of our fathers and make of Christianity something other than it is. Then we shall have left only the empty language of salvation; the power will depart with our departure from the true cross.

If we are wise we will do what Jesus did: endure the cross and despise its shame for the joy that is set before us. To do this is to submit the whole pattern of our lives to be destroyed and built again in the power of an endless life. And we shall find that it is more than poetry, more

than sweet hymnody and elevated feeling. The cross will cut into our lives where it hurts worst, sparing neither us nor our carefully cultivated reputations. It will defeat us and bring our selfish lives to an end. Only then can we rise in fulness of life to establish a pattern of living wholly new and free and full of good works.

The changed attitude toward the cross that we see in modern orthodoxy proves not that God has changed, nor that Christ has eased up on His demand that we carry the cross; it means rather that current Christianity has moved away from the standards of the New Testament. So far have we moved indeed that it may take nothing short of a new reformation to restore the cross to its right place in the theology and life of the Church.

Excerpts from *Of God and Men*

Chapter 32. The Report of the Watcher

Were some watcher or holy one from the bright world above to come among us for a time with the power to diagnose the spiritual ills of church people there is one entry which I am quite sure would appear on the vast majority of his reports: *Definite evidence of chronic spiritual lassitude; level of moral enthusiasm extremely low.*

What makes this condition especially significant is that Americans are not naturally an unenthusiastic people. Indeed they have a world-wide reputation for being just the opposite. Visitors to our shores from other countries never cease to marvel at the vigor and energy with which we attack our problems. We live at a fever pitch, and whether we are erecting buildings, laying highways, promoting athletic events, celebrating special days or welcoming returning heroes we always do it with an exaggerated flourish. Our building will be taller, our highway broader, our athletic contest more colorful, our celebration more elaborate and more expensive than would be true anywhere else on earth. We walk faster, drive faster, earn more, spend more and run a higher blood pressure than any other people in the world.

In only one field of human interest are we slow and apathetic: that is the field of personal religion. There for some strange reason our enthusiasm lags. Church people habitually approach the matter of their personal relation to God in a dull, half-hearted way which is altogether out of keeping with their general temperament and wholly inconsistent with the importance of the subject.

It is true that there is a lot of religious activity among us. Interchurch basketball tournaments, religious splash parties followed by devotions, weekend camping trips with a Bible quiz around the fire, Sunday school picnics, building fund drives and ministerial breakfasts are with us in unbelievable numbers, and they are carried on with typical American gusto. It is when we enter the sacred precincts of the heart's personal religion that we suddenly lose all enthusiasm.

So we find this strange and contradictory situation: a world of noisy, headlong religious activity carried on without moral energy or spiritual fervor. In a year's travel among the churches one scarcely finds a believer whose blood count is normal and whose temperature is up to standard. The flush and excitement of the soul in love must be sought in the New Testament or in the biographies of the saints; we look for them in vain among the professed followers of Christ in our day.

Now if there is any reality within the whole sphere of human experience that is by its very nature worthy to challenge the mind, charm the heart and bring the total life to a burning focus, it is the reality that revolves around the Person of Christ. If He is who and what the Christian message declares Him to be, then the thought of Him should be the most exciting, the most stimulating, to enter the human mind. It is not hard to understand how Paul could join wine and the Spirit in one verse: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). When the Spirit presents Christ to our inner vision it has an exhilarating effect on

the soul, much as wine has on the body. The Spirit-filled man may literally dwell in a state of spiritual fervor amounting to a mild and pure inebriation.

God dwells in a state of perpetual enthusiasm. He is delighted with all that is good and lovingly concerned about all that is wrong. He pursues His labors always in a fullness of holy zeal. No wonder the Spirit came at Pentecost as the sound of a rushing mighty wind and sat in tongues of fire on every forehead. In so doing He was acting as one of the Persons of the blessed Godhead.

Whatever else happened at Pentecost, one thing that cannot be missed by the most casual observer was the sudden upsurging of moral enthusiasm. Those first disciples burned with a steady, inward fire. They were enthusiastic to the point of complete abandon.

Dante, on his imaginary journey through hell, came upon a group of lost souls who sighed and moaned continually as they whirled about aimlessly in the dusky air. Virgil, his guide, explained that these were the "wretched people," the "nearly soulless," who while they lived on earth had not moral energy enough to be either good or evil. They had earned neither praise nor blame. And with them and sharing in their punishment were those angels who would take sides neither with God nor Satan. The doom of all of the weak and irresolute crew was to be suspended forever between a hell that despised them and a heaven that would not receive their defiled presence. Not even their names were to be mentioned again in heaven or earth or hell. "Look," said the guide, "and pass on."

Was Dante saying in his own way what our Lord had said long before to the church of Laodicea: "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth"?

The low level of moral enthusiasm among us may have a significance far deeper than we are willing to believe.

Chapter 33.

Exposition Must Have Application

Charles G. Finney believed that Bible teaching without moral application could be worse than no teaching at all and could result in positive injury to the hearers. I used to feel that this might be an extreme position, but after years of observation I have come around to it, or to a view almost identical with it.

There is scarcely anything so dull and meaningless as Bible doctrine taught for its own sake. Truth divorced from life is not truth in its Biblical sense, but something else and something less. Theology is a set of facts concerning God, man and the world. These facts may be and often are set forth as values in themselves; and there lies the snare both for the teacher and for the hearer.

The Bible is among other things a book of revealed truth. That is, certain facts are revealed that could not be discovered by the most brilliant mind. These facts are of such a nature as to be past finding out. They were hidden behind a veil, and until certain men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost took away that veil no mortal man could know them. This lifting of the veil of unknowing from undiscoverable things we call divine revelation.

The Bible, however, is more than a volume of hitherto unknown facts about God, man and the universe. It is a book of exhortation based upon those facts. By far the greater portion of the book is devoted to an urgent effort to persuade people to alter their ways and bring their lives into harmony with the will of God as set forth in its pages.

No man is better for knowing that God in the beginning created the heaven and the earth. The devil knows that, and so did Ahab and Judas Iscariot. No man is better for knowing that God so loved the world of men that He gave His only begotten Son to die for their redemption. In hell there are millions who know that. Theological truth is useless until it is obeyed. The purpose behind all doctrine is to secure moral action.

What is generally overlooked is that truth as set forth in the Christian Scriptures is a moral thing; it is not addressed to the intellect only, but to the will also. It addresses itself to the total man, and its obligations cannot be discharged by grasping it mentally. Truth engages the citadel of the human heart and is not satisfied until it has conquered everything there. The will must come forth and surrender its sword. It must stand at attention to receive orders, and those orders it must joyfully obey. Short of this any knowledge of Christian truth is inadequate and unavailing.

Bible exposition without moral application raises no opposition. It is only when the hearer is made to understand that truth is in conflict with his heart that resistance sets in. As long as people can hear orthodox truth divorced from life they will attend and support churches and institutions without objection. The truth is a lovely song, become sweet by long and tender association; and since it asks nothing but a few dollars, and offers good music, pleasant friendships and a comfortable sense of well-being, it meets with no resistance from the faithful. Much that passes for New Testament Christianity is little more than objective truth sweetened with song and made palatable by religious entertainment.

Probably no other portion of the Scriptures can compare with the Pauline Epistles when it comes to making artificial saints. Peter warned that the unlearned and the unstable would wrest Paul's writings to their own destruction, and we have only to visit the average Bible conference

and listen to a few lectures to know what he meant. The ominous thing is that the Pauline doctrines may be taught with complete faithfulness to the letter of the text without making the hearers one whit the better. The teacher may and often does so teach the truth as to leave the hearers without a sense of moral obligation.

One reason for the divorce between truth and life may be lack of the Spirit's illumination. Another surely is the teacher's unwillingness to get himself into trouble. Any man with fair pulpit gifts can get on with the average congregation if he just "feeds" them and lets them alone. Give them plenty of objective truth and never hint that they are wrong and should be set right, and they will be content.

On the other hand, the man who preaches truth and applies it to the lives of his hearers will feel the nails and the thorns. He will lead a hard life, but a glorious one. May God raise up many such prophets. The church needs them badly.

Chapter 34.

Beware the File-Card Mentality

The essence of true religion is spontaneity, the sovereign movings of the Holy Spirit upon and in the free spirit of redeemed men. This has through the years of human history been the hall mark of spiritual excellency, the evidence of reality in a world of unreality.

When religion loses its sovereign character and becomes mere form, this spontaneity is lost also, and in its place come precedent, propriety, system—and the file-card mentality.

Back of the file-card mentality is the belief that spirituality can be organized. Then is introduced into religion those ideas which never belong there—numbers, statistics, the law of averages, and other such natural and human things. And creeping death always follows.

Now a file card is a very harmless little tool and a very useful one for some purposes. It is splendid for keeping attendance records in the Sunday school, and a good mailing list can hardly be managed without it. It is a good thing in its place and deadly out of its place. Its danger comes from the well-known human tendency to depend upon external helps in dealing with internal things.

When the file card begins to direct the Christian's life, it immediately becomes a nuisance and a curse. When it gets out of the file case and into the human heart, woe be unto us; nothing but an internal spiritual revolution can deliver the victim from his fate.

Here's how the file card works when it gets into the Christian life and begins to create mental habits: It divides the Bible into sections fitted to the days of the year, and compels the Christian to read according to rule. No matter what the Holy Spirit may be trying to say to a man, still he goes on reading where the card tells him, dutifully checking it off each day.

Every Spirit-led saint knows that there are times when he is held by an inward pressure to one chapter, or even one verse, for days at a time while he wrestles with God till some truth does its work within him. To leave that present passage to follow a pre-arranged reading schedule is for him wholly impossible. He is in the hand of the free Spirit, and reality is appearing before him to break and humble and lift and liberate and cheer. But only the free soul can know the glory of this. To this the heart bound by system will be forever a stranger.

The slave to the file card soon finds that his prayers lose their freedom and become less spontaneous, less effective. He finds himself concerned over matters that should give him no concern whatever—how much time he spent in prayer yesterday, whether he did or did not cover his prayer list for the day, whether he gets up as early as he used to do or stays up in prayer as late at night. Inevitably the calendar crowds out the Spirit and the face of the clock hides the face of God. Prayer ceases to be the free breath of a ransomed soul and becomes a duty to be fulfilled. And even if under such circumstances he succeeds in making his prayer amount to something, still he is suffering tragic losses and binding upon his soul a yoke from which Christ died to set him free.

The pastor, too, must watch lest he become the victim of the file card. From the road in, it looks like a good idea to work out a system of sermon coverage, mapping out the doctrines of the Bible as a farmer divides his acres, allowing a certain amount of time during the year for sermons on the various Bible truths so that at the end of a given period proper attention will have been given to each one. Theoretically, this should be fine, but it will kill any man who follows it,

and it will kill his church as well; and one characteristic of this kind of death is that neither pastor nor people are aware that it has come.

Those responsible for the activities of churches and gospel workers must look out for the file-card snare. It is a deadly thing and works to quench the spontaneous operation of the Spirit. No one need die, no one need lie in patient, suffering prayer in the presence of God while the Holy Spirit imparts His sovereign will to his believing heart. No vision of God, high and lifted up, no shocking exposure of inner uncleanness, no pain of a burning coal upon the lips.

The glory of the gospel is its freedom. The Pharisees, who were slaves, hated Christ because He was free. The battle for spiritual freedom did not end when our Lord had risen from the dead. It still goes on, and in a tragic degree the sons of freedom are losing it. Many who know better are surrendering their liberties with only a token struggle. They find it easier to consult the card than to pray on to a place of spiritual illumination and inward prophetic assurance.

It will indeed be cause for mourning in Zion when the race of free men dies out in the church and the work of God is entrusted wholly to the file-card jockey.

Chapter 35.

The Use and Abuse of Humor

Few things are as useful in the Christian life as a gentle sense of humor and few things are as deadly as a sense of humor out of control.

Many lose the race of life through frivolity. Paul is careful to warn us. He says plainly that the Christian's characteristic mood should not be one of jesting and foolish talking but rather one of thanksgiving (Eph. 5:1-5). It is significant that in this passage the apostle classifies levity along with uncleanness, covetousness and idolatry.

Now obviously an appreciation of the humorous is not an evil in itself. When God made us He included a sense of humor as a built-in feature, and the normal human being will possess this gift in some degree at least. The source of humor is ability to perceive the incongruous. Things out of focus appear funny to us and may stir within us a feeling of amusement that will break into laughter.

Dictators and fanatics have no sense of humor. Hitler never knew how funny he looked, nor did Mussolini know how ridiculous he sounded as he solemnly mouthed his bombastic phrases. The religious fanatic will look upon situations so comical as to excite uncontrollable mirth in normal persons and see nothing amusing in them. This blind spot in his make-up prevents him from seeing how badly his own life and beliefs are out of focus. And just so far as he is blind to the incongruous he is abnormal; he is not quite as God meant him to be.

Humor is one thing, but frivolity is quite another. Cultivation of a spirit that can take nothing seriously is one of the great curses of society, and within the church it has worked to prevent much spiritual blessing that otherwise would have descended upon us. We have all met those people who will not be serious. They meet everything with a laugh and a funny remark. This is bad enough in the world, but positively intolerable among Christians.

Let us not allow a perverted sense of humor to ruin us. Some things are funny, and we may well laugh sometimes. But sin isn't funny; death isn't funny. There is nothing funny about a world tottering upon the brink of destruction; nothing funny about war and the sight of boys dying in blood upon the field of battle; nothing funny about the millions who perish each year without ever having heard the gospel of love.

It is time that we draw a line between the false and the true, between the things that are incidental and the things that are vital. Lots of things we can afford to let pass with a smile. But when humor takes religion as the object of its fun it is no longer natural—it is sinful and should be denounced for what it is and avoided by everyone who desires to walk with God.

Innumerable lectures have been delivered, songs sung and books written exhorting us to meet life with a grin and to laugh so the world can laugh with us; but let us remember that however jolly we Christians may become, the devil is not fooling. He is cold-faced and serious, and we shall find at last that he was playing for keeps. If we who claim to be followers of the Lamb will not take things seriously, Satan will, and he is wise enough to use our levity to destroy us.

I am not arguing for unnatural solemnity; I see no value in gloom and no harm in a good laugh. My plea is for a great seriousness which will put us in mood with the Son of Man and with the prophets and apostles of the Scriptures. The joy of the Lord can become the music of our hearts and the cheerfulness of the Holy Spirit will tune the harps within us. Then we may

attain that moral happiness which is one of the marks of true spirituality, and also escape the evil effects of unseemly humor.

Chapter 36.

Let's Cultivate Simplicity and Solitude

We Christians must simplify our lives or lose untold treasures on earth and in eternity.

Modern civilization is so complex as to make the devotional life all but impossible. It wears us out by multiplying distractions and beats us down by destroying our solitude, where otherwise we might drink and renew our strength before going out to face the world again.

"The thoughtful soul to solitude retires," said the poet of other and quieter times; but where is the solitude to which we can retire today? Science, which has provided men with certain material comforts, has robbed them of their souls by surrounding them with a world hostile to their existence. "Commune with your own heart upon your bed and be still" is a wise and healing counsel, but how can it be followed in this day of the newspaper, the telephone, the radio and the television? These modern playthings, like pet tiger cubs, have grown so large and dangerous that they threaten to devour us all. What was intended to be a blessing has become a positive curse. No spot is now safe from the world's intrusion.

One way the civilized world destroys men is by preventing them from thinking their own thoughts.

Our "vastly improved methods of communication" of which the shortsighted boast so loudly now enable a few men in strategic centers to feed into millions of minds alien thought-stuff, ready-made and predigested. A little effortless assimilation of these borrowed ideas and the average man has done all the thinking he will or can do. This subtle brainwashing goes on day after day and year after year to the eternal injury of the populace—a populace, incidentally, which is willing to pay big money to have the job done, the reason being, I suppose, that it relieves them of the arduous and often frightening task of reaching independent decisions for which they must take responsibility.

There was a time, not too long ago, when a man's home was his castle, a sure retreat to which he might return for quietness and solitude. There "the rains of heaven may blow in, but the king himself cannot enter without permission," said the proud British, and made good on their boast. That was home indeed. It was of such a sacred place the poet sang:

*O, when I am safe in my sylvan home,
I tread on the pride of Greece and Rome;
And when I am stretched beneath the pines,
Where the evening star so holy shines,
I laugh at the lore and the pride of man,
At the sophist schools, and the learned clan;
For what are they all, in their high conceit,
When man in the bush with God may meet?*

—Ralph Waldo Emerson in *Good-bye*

While it is scarcely within the scope of the present piece, I cannot refrain from remarking that the most ominous sign of the coming destruction of our country is the passing of the American home. Americans live no longer in homes, but in theaters. The members of many families hardly know each other, and the face of some popular TV star is to many wives as

familiar as that of their husbands. Let no one smile. Rather should we weep at the portent. It will do no good to wrap ourselves in the Stars and Stripes for protection. No nation can long endure whose people have sold themselves for bread and circuses. Our fathers sleep soundly, and the harsh bedlam of commercialized noise that engulfs us like something from Dante's Inferno cannot disturb their slumber. They left us a goodly heritage. To preserve that heritage we must have a national character as strong as theirs. And this can be developed only in the Christian home.

The need for solitude and quietness was never greater than it is today. What the world will do about it is their problem. Apparently the masses want it the way it is and the majority of Christians are so completely conformed to this present age that they, too, want things the way they are. They may be annoyed a bit by the clamor and by the goldfish bowl existence they live, but apparently they are not annoyed enough to do anything about it. However, there are a few of God's children who have had enough. They want to relearn the ways of solitude and simplicity and gain the infinite riches of the interior life. They want to discover the blessedness of what Dr. Max Reich called "spiritual aloneness." To such I offer a brief paragraph of counsel.

Retire from the world each day to some private spot, even if it be only the bedroom (for a while I retreated to the furnace room for want of a better place). Stay in the secret place till the surrounding noises begin to fade out of your heart and a sense of God's presence envelops you. Deliberately tune out the unpleasant sounds and come out of your closet determined not to hear them. Listen for the inward Voice till you learn to recognize it. Stop trying to compete with others. Give yourself to God and then be what and who you are without regard to what others think. Reduce your interests to a few. Don't try to know what will be of no service to you. Avoid the digest type of mind—short bits of unrelated facts, cute stories and bright sayings. Learn to pray inwardly every moment. After a while you can do this even while you work. Practice candor, childlike honesty, humility. Pray for a single eye. Read less, but read more of what is important to your inner life. Never let your mind remain scattered for very long. Call home your roving thoughts. Gaze on Christ with the eyes of your soul. Practice spiritual concentration.

All the above is contingent upon a right relation to God through Christ and daily meditation on the Scriptures. Lacking these, nothing will help us; granted these, the discipline recommended will go far to neutralize the evil effects of externalism and to make us acquainted with God and our own souls.

Chapter 37.

The Bible World Is the Real World

When reading the Scriptures the sensitive person is sure to feel the marked difference between the world as the Bible reveals it and the world as conceived by religious people today. And the contrast is not in our favor.

The world as the men and women of the Bible saw it was a personal world, warm, intimate, populated. Their world contained first of all the God who had created it, who still dwelt in it as in a sanctuary and who might be discovered walking among the trees of the garden if the human eyes clear enough to see. And there were also present many beings sent of God to be ministers to them who were the heirs of salvation. They also recognized the presence of sinister forces which it was their duty to oppose and which they might easily conquer by an appeal to God in prayer.

Christians today think of the world in wholly different terms. Science, which has brought us many benefits, has also brought us a world wholly different from that which we see in the Scriptures. Today's world consists of wide and limitless spaces, having here and there at remote distances from each other blind and meaningless bodies controlled only by natural laws from which they can never escape. That world is cold and impersonal and completely without inhabitants except for man, the little shivering ephemeral being that clings to the soil while he rides "round in earth's diurnal course with rocks and stones and trees."

How glorious is the world as men of the Bible knew it! Jacob saw a ladder set up on the earth with God standing above it and the angels ascending and descending upon it. Abraham and Balaam and Manoah and how many others met the angels of God and conversed with them. Moses saw God in the bush; Isaiah saw Him high and lifted up and heard the antiphonal chant filling the temple.

Ezekiel saw a great cloud and fire unfolding itself, and out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. Angels were present to tell of Jesus' coming birth and to celebrate that birth when it took place in Bethlehem; angels comforted our Lord when He prayed in Gethsemane; angels are mentioned in some of the inspired epistles, and the Book of the Revelation is bright with the presence of strange and beautiful creatures intent upon the affairs of earth and heaven.

Yes, the true world is a populated world. The blind eyes of modern Christians cannot see the invisible but that does not destroy the reality of the spiritual creation. Unbelief has taken from us the comfort of a personal world. We have accepted the empty and meaningless world of science as the true one, forgetting that science is valid only when dealing with material things and can know nothing about God and spiritual world.

We must have faith; and let us not apologize for it, for faith is an organ of knowledge and can tell us more about ultimate reality than all the findings of science. We are not opposed to science, but we recognize its proper limitations and refuse to stop where it is compelled to stop. The Bible tells of another world too fine for the instruments of scientific research to discover. By faith we engage that world and make it ours. It is accessible to us through the blood of the everlasting covenant. If we will believe we may even now enjoy the presence of God and the ministry of His heavenly messengers. Only unbelief can rob us of this royal privilege.

Chapter 38.

Praise in Three Dimensions

Christ is to His people so many wonderful things and brings to them such a wealth of benefits as the mind cannot comprehend nor the heart find words to express.

These treasures are both present and to come. The Spirit of Truth, speaking through Paul, assures us that God has in Christ blessed us with all spiritual blessings. These are ours as sons of the new creation and are made available to us now by the obedience of faith.

Peter, moved by the same Spirit, tells us of an inheritance guaranteed us by the resurrection of Christ, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and unfading, reserved in heaven for us.

There is no contradiction here, for one apostle speaks of present benefits and the other of benefits yet to be conferred upon us at the coming of Christ. And both exhaust human speech to celebrate the many blessings which we have already received.

Perhaps it would help us to understand if we thought of ourselves as fish in a vast river, at once enjoying the full flow of the stream, remembering with gratitude the current that has passed and awaiting with joyous anticipation the fullness that is moving on us from upstream. While this is but an imperfect figure of speech, it is quite literally true that we who trust in Christ are borne along by present grace while we remember with thankfulness the goodness we have enjoyed in days past and look forward in happy expectation to the grace and goodness that yet awaits us.

Bernard of Clairvaux speaks somewhere of a "perfume compounded of the remembered benefits of God." Such fragrance is too rare. Every follower of Christ should be redolent of such perfume; for have we not all received more from God's kindness than our imagination could have conceived before we knew Him and discovered for ourselves how rich and how generous He is?

That we have received of His fullness grace for grace no one will deny; but the fragrance comes not from the receiving; it comes from the remembering, which is something quite different indeed. Ten lepers received their health; that was the benefit. One came back to thank his benefactor; that was the perfume. Unremembered benefits, like dead flies, may cause the ointment to give forth a stinking savor.

Remembered blessings, thankfulness for present favors and praise for promised grace blend like myrrh and aloes and cassia to make a rare bouquet for the garments of the saints. With this perfume David also anointed his harp and the hymns of the ages have been sweet with it.

Perhaps it takes a purer faith to praise God for unrealized blessings than for those we once enjoyed or those we now enjoy. Yet many have risen to that sunlit peak, as did Anna Waring when she wrote,

*Glory to Thee for all the grace
I have not tasted yet...*

As we move into deeper personal acquaintance with the Triune God I think our life emphasis will shift from the past and the present to the future. Slowly we will become children of a living hope and sons of a sure tomorrow. Our hearts will be tender with memories of yesterday and our lives sweet with gratitude to God for the sure way we have come; but our eyes will be focused more and more upon the blessed hope of tomorrow.

Much of the Bible is devoted to prediction. Nothing God has yet done for us can compare with all that is written in the sure word of prophecy. And nothing He has done or may yet do for us can compare with *what He is and will be to us*. Perhaps the hymnist had this in mind when she sang.

*I have a heritage of joy
That yet I must not see;
The hand that bled to make it mine
Is keeping it for me.*

Could that "heritage of joy" be less than the Beatific Vision?

Excerpts from *Man: the Dwelling Place of God*

Chapter 39. Man: The Dwelling Place of God

Deep inside every man there is a private sanctum where dwells the mysterious essence of his being. This far-in reality is that part of a man which is what it is of itself without reference to any other part of the man's complex nature. It is the man's "I Am," a gift from the I AM who created him.

The I AM which is God is underived and self-existent; the "I Am" which is man is derived from God and dependent every moment upon His creative fiat for its continued existence. One is the Creator, high over all, ancient of days, dwelling in light unapproachable. The other is a creature and, though privileged beyond all others, is still but a creature, a pensioner on God's bounty and a suppliant before His throne.

The deep-in human entity of which we speak is called in the Scriptures *the spirit of man*. "For what man knoweth the things of man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:11). As God's self-knowledge lies in the eternal Spirit, so man's self-knowledge is by his own spirit, and his knowledge of God is by the direct impression of the Spirit of God upon the spirit of man.

The importance of all this cannot be overestimated as we think and study and pray. It reveals the essential spirituality of mankind. It denies that man is a creature having a spirit and declares that he is a spirit having a body.

That which makes him a human being is not his body but his spirit, in which the image of God originally lay.

One of the most liberating declarations in the New Testament is this: "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23, 24). Here the nature of worship is shown to be wholly spiritual. True religion is removed from diet and days, from garments and ceremonies, and placed where it belongs—in the union of the spirit of man with the Spirit of God.

From man's standpoint the most tragic loss suffered in the Fall was the vacating of this inner sanctum by the Spirit of God. At the far-in hidden center of man's being is a bush fitted to be the dwelling place of the Triune God. There God planned to rest and glow with moral and spiritual fire. Man by his sin forfeited this indescribably wonderful privilege and must now dwell there alone. For so intimately private is the place that no creature can intrude; no one can enter but Christ, and He will enter only by the invitation of faith. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).

By the mysterious operation of the Spirit in the new birth, that which is called by Peter "the divine nature" enters the deep-in core of the believer's heart and establishes residence there. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," for "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:9, 16). Such a one is a true Christian,

and only such. Baptism, confirmation, the receiving of the sacraments, church membership—these mean nothing unless the supreme act of God in regeneration also takes place. Religious externals may have a meaning for the God-inhabited soul; for any others they are not only useless but may actually become snares, deceiving them into a false and perilous sense of security.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence" is more than a wise saying; it is a solemn charge laid upon us by the One who cares most about us. To it we should give the most careful heed lest at any time we should let it slip.

Chapter 40.

Why People Find the Bible Difficult

That many persons find the Bible hard to understand will not be denied by those acquainted with the facts. Testimony to the difficulties encountered in Bible reading is too full and too widespread to be dismissed lightly.

In human experience there is usually a complex of causes rather than but one cause for everything, and so it is with the difficulty we run into with the Bible. To the question, Why is the Bible hard to understand? no snap answer can be given; the pert answer is sure to be the wrong one. The problem is multiple instead of singular, and for this reason the effort to find a single solution to it will be disappointing.

In spite of this I venture to give a short answer to the question, and while it is not the whole answer, it is a major one and probably contains within itself most of the answers to what must be an involved and highly complex question. *I believe that we find the Bible difficult because we try to read it as we would read any other book, and it is not the same as any other book.*

The Bible is not addressed to just anybody. Its message is directed to a chosen few. Whether these few are chosen by God in a sovereign act of election or are chosen because they meet certain qualifying conditions, I leave to each one to decide as he may, knowing full well that his decision will be determined by his basic beliefs about such matters as predestination, free will, the eternal decrees and other related doctrines. But whatever may have taken place in eternity, it is obvious what happens in time: Some believe and some do not; some are morally receptive and some are not; some have spiritual capacity and some have not. It is to those who do and are and have that the Bible is addressed. Those who do not and are not and have not will read it in vain.

Right here I expect some readers to enter strenuous objections, and for reasons not hard to find. Christianity today is man-centered, not God-centered. God is made to wait patiently, even respectfully, on the whims of men. The image of God currently popular is that of a distracted Father, struggling in heartbroken desperation to get people to accept a Saviour of whom they feel no need and in whom they have very little interest. To persuade these self-sufficient souls to respond to His generous offers, God will do almost anything, even using salesmanship methods and talking down to them in the chummiest way imaginable. This view of things is, of course, a kind of religious romanticism which, while it often uses flattering and sometimes embarrassing terms in praise of God, manages nevertheless to make man the star of the show.

The notion that the Bible is addressed to everybody has wrought confusion within and without the church. The effort to apply the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount to the unregenerate nations of the world is one example of this. Courts of law and the military powers of the earth are urged to follow the teachings of Christ, an obviously impossible thing for them to do. To quote the words of Christ as guides for policemen, judges and generals is to misunderstand those words completely and to reveal a total lack of understanding of the purposes of divine revelation. The gracious words of Christ are for the sons and daughters of grace, not for the Gentile nations whose chosen symbols are the lion, the eagle, the dragon and the bear.

Not only does God address His words of truth to those who are able to receive them, He actually conceals their meaning from those who are not. The preacher uses stories to make truth clear; our Lord often used them to obscure it. The parables of Christ were the exact opposite of

the modern "illustration," which is meant to give light; the parables were "dark sayings" and Christ asserted that He sometimes used them so that His disciples could understand and His enemies could not. (See Matthew 13:10-17.) As the pillar of fire gave light to Israel but was cloud and darkness to the Egyptians, so our Lord's words shine in the hearts of His people but leave the self-confident unbeliever in the obscurity of moral night.

The saving power of the Word is reserved for whom it is intended. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. The impenitent heart will find the Bible but a skeleton of facts without flesh or life or breath. Shakespeare may be enjoyed without penitence; we may understand Plato without believing a word he says; but penitence and humility along with faith and obedience are necessary to a right understanding of the Scriptures.

In natural matters faith follows evidence and is impossible without it, but in the realm of the spirit faith precedes understanding; it does not follow it. The natural man must know in order to believe; the spiritual man must believe in order to know. The faith that saves is not a conclusion drawn from evidence; it is a moral thing, a thing of the spirit, a supernatural infusion of confidence in Jesus Christ, a very gift of God.

The faith that saves reposes in the Person of Christ; it leads at once to a committal of the total being to Christ, an act impossible to the natural man. To believe rightly is as much a miracle as was the coming forth of dead Lazarus at the command of Christ.

The Bible is a supernatural book and can be understood only by supernatural aid.

Chapter 41.

Faith: The Misunderstood Doctrine

In the divine scheme of salvation the doctrine of faith is central. God addresses His words to faith, and where no faith is, no true revelation is possible. "Without faith it is impossible to please him."

Every benefit flowing from the atonement of Christ comes to the individual through the gateway of faith. Forgiveness, cleansing, regeneration, the Holy Spirit, all answers to prayer, are given to faith and received by faith. There is no other way. This is common evangelical doctrine and is accepted wherever the cross of Christ is understood.

Because faith is so vital to all our hopes, so necessary to the fulfillment of every aspiration of our hearts, we dare take nothing for granted concerning it. Anything that carries with it so much of weal or woe, which indeed decides our heaven or our hell, is too important to neglect. We simply must not allow ourselves to be uninformed or misinformed. We must know.

For a number of years my heart has been troubled over the doctrine of faith as it is received and taught among evangelical Christians everywhere. Great emphasis is laid upon faith in orthodox circles, and that is good; but still I am troubled. Specifically, my fear is that the modern conception of faith is not the Biblical one; that when the teachers of our day use the word they do not mean what Bible writers meant when they used it.

The causes of my uneasiness are these:

1. The lack of spiritual fruit in the lives of so many who claim to have faith.
2. The rarity of a radical change in the conduct and general outlook of persons professing their new faith in Christ as their personal Saviour.
3. The failure of our teachers to define or even describe the thing to which the word *faith* is supposed to refer.
4. The heartbreaking failure of multitudes of seekers, be they ever so earnest, to make anything out of the doctrine or to receive any satisfying experience through it.
5. The real danger that a doctrine that is parroted so widely and received so uncritically by so many is false as understood by them.
6. I have seen faith put forward as a substitute for obedience, an escape from reality, a refuge from the necessity of hard thinking, a hiding place for weak character. I have known people to miscall by the name of faith high animal spirits, natural optimism, emotional thrills and nervous tics.
7. Plain horse sense ought to tell us that anything that makes no change in the man who professes it makes no difference to God either, and it is an easily observable fact that for countless numbers of persons the change from no-faith to faith makes no actual difference in the life.

Perhaps it will help us to know what faith is if we first notice what it is not. It is not the believing of a statement we know to be true. The human mind is so constructed that it must of necessity believe when the evidence presented to it is convincing. It cannot help itself. When the evidence fails to convince, no faith is possible. No threats, no punishment, can compel the mind to believe against clear evidence.

Faith based upon reason is faith of a kind, it is true; *but it is not of the character of Bible faith*, for it follows the evidence infallibly and has nothing of a moral or spiritual nature in it.

Neither can the absence of faith based upon reason be held against anyone, for the evidence, not the individual, decides the verdict. To send a man to hell whose only crime was to follow evidence straight to its proper conclusion would be palpable injustice; to justify a sinner on the grounds that he had made up his mind according to the plain facts would be to make salvation the result of the workings of a common law of the mind as applicable to Judas as to Paul. It would take salvation out of the realm of the volitional and place it in the mental, where, according to the Scriptures, it surely does not belong.

True faith rests upon the character of God and asks no further proof than the moral perfections of the One who cannot lie. It is enough that God said it, and if the statement should contradict every one of the five senses and all the conclusions of logic as well, still the believer continues to believe. "Let God be true, but every man a liar," is the language of true faith. Heaven approves such faith because it rises above mere proofs and rests in the bosom of God.

In recent years among certain evangelicals there has arisen a movement designed to prove the truths of Scriptures by appeal to science. Evidence is sought in the natural world to support supernatural revelation. Snowflakes, blood, stones, strange marine creatures, birds and many other natural objects are brought forward as proof that the Bible is true. This is touted as being a great support to faith, the idea being that if a Bible doctrine can be *proved* to be true, faith will spring up and flourish as a consequence.

What these brethren do not see is that the very fact that they feel a necessity to seek proof for the truths of the Scriptures proves something else altogether, namely, their own basic unbelief. When God speaks unbelief asks, "How shall I know that this is true?" I AM THAT I AM is the only grounds for faith. To dig among the rocks or search under the sea for evidence to support the Scriptures is to insult the One who wrote them. Certainly I do not believe that this is done intentionally; but I cannot see how we can escape the conclusion that it is done, nevertheless.

Faith as the Bible knows it is confidence in God and His Son Jesus Christ; it is the response of the soul to the divine character as revealed in the Scriptures; and even this response is impossible apart from the prior inworking of the Holy Spirit. Faith is a gift of God to a penitent soul and has nothing whatsoever to do with the senses or the data they afford. Faith is a miracle; it is the ability God gives to trust His Son, and anything that does not result in action in accord with the will of God is not faith but something else short of it.

Faith and morals are two sides of the same coin. Indeed the very essence of faith is moral. Any professed faith in Christ as personal Saviour that does not bring the life under plenary obedience to Christ as Lord is inadequate and must betray its victim at the last.

The man that believes will obey; failure to obey is convincing proof that there is not true faith present. To attempt the impossible God must give faith or there will be none, and He gives faith to the obedient heart only. Where real repentance is, there is obedience; for repentance is not only sorrow for past failures and sins, it is also a determination to begin now to do the will of God as He reveals it to us.

Chapter 42.

True Religion Is Not Feeling but Willing

One of the puzzling questions likely to turn up sooner or later to vex the seeking Christian is how he can fulfill the scriptural command to love God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself.

The earnest Christian, as he meditates on his sacred obligation to love God and mankind, may experience a sense of frustration gendered by the knowledge that he just cannot seem to work up any emotional thrill over his Lord or his brothers. He wants to, but he cannot. The delightful wells of feeling simply will not flow.

Many honest persons have become discouraged by the absence of religious emotion and concluded that they are not really Christian after all. They conclude that they must have missed the way somewhere back there and their religion is little more than an empty profession. So for a while they belabor themselves for their coldness and finally settle into a state of dull discouragement, hardly knowing what to think. They do believe in God; they do indeed trust Christ as their Saviour, but the love they hoped to feel consistently eludes them. What is the trouble?

The problem is not a light one. A real difficulty is involved, one which may be stated in the form of a question: How can I love by commandment? Of all the emotions of which the soul is capable, love is by far the freest, the most unreasoning, the one least likely to spring up at the call of duty or obligation, and surely the one that will not come at the command of another. No law has ever been passed that can compel one moral being to love another, for by the very nature of it, love must be voluntary. No one can be coerced or frightened into loving anyone. Love just does not come that way. So what are we to do with our Lord's command to love God and our neighbor?

To find our way out of the shadows and into the cheerful sunlight we need only to know that there are two kinds of love: the love of *feeling* and the love of *willing*. The one lies in the emotions, the other in the will. Over the one we may have little control. It comes and goes, rises and falls, flares up and disappears as it chooses, and changes from hot to warm to cool and back to warm again very much as does the weather. Such love was not in the mind of Christ when He told His people to love God and each other. We could as well command a butterfly to light on our shoulder as to attempt to command this whimsical kind of affection to visit our hearts.

The love the Bible enjoins is not the love of feeling; *it is the love of willing, the willed tendency of the heart*. (For these two happy phrases I am indebted to another, a master of the inner life whose pen was only a short time ago stilled by death.)

God never intended that such a being as man should be the plaything of his feelings. The emotional life is a proper and noble part of the total personality, but it is, by its very nature, of secondary importance. *Religion lies in the will, and so does righteousness*. The only good that God recognizes is a willed good; the only valid holiness is a willed holiness.

It should be a cheering thought that before God every man is what he wills to be. The first requirement in conversion is a rectified will. "If any man will," says our Lord, and leaves it there. To meet the requirements of love toward God, the soul need but will to love and the miracle begins to blossom like the budding of Aaron's rod.

The will is the automatic pilot that keeps the soul on course. "Flying is easy," said a friend who flies his own plane. "Just take her up, point her in the direction you want her to go and set

the pilot. After that she'll fly herself." While we must not press the figure too far, it is yet blessedly true that the will, not the feelings, determines moral direction.

The root of all evil in human nature is the corruption of the will. The thoughts and intents of the heart are wrong and as a consequence the whole life is wrong. Repentance is primarily a change of moral purpose, a sudden and often violent reversal of the soul's direction. The prodigal son took his first step upward from the pigsty when he said, "I will arise and go to my father." As he had once willed to leave his father's house, now he willed to return. His subsequent action proved his expressed purpose to be sincere. He *did* return.

Someone may infer from the above that we are ruling out the joy of the Lord as a valid part of the Christian life. To avoid that erroneous conclusion I offer this further word of explanation.

To love God with all our heart we must first of all *will* to do so. We should repent our lack of love and determine from this moment on to make God the object of our devotion. We should set our affections on things above and aim our hearts toward Christ and heavenly things. We should read the Scriptures devotionally every day and prayerfully obey them, always firmly *willing* to love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourself.

If we do these things we may be sure that we shall experience a wonderful change in our whole inward life. We shall soon find to our great delight that our feelings are becoming less erratic and are beginning to move in the direction of the "willed tendency of the heart." Our emotions will become disciplined and directed. We shall begin to taste the "piercing sweetness" of the love of Christ. Our religious affection will begin to mount evenly on steady wings instead of flitting about idly without purpose or intelligent direction. The whole life, like a delicate instrument, will be tuned to sing the praises of Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

But first of all we must will, for the will is master of the heart.

Chapter 43.

The Old Cross and the New

All unannounced and mostly undetected there has come in modern times a new cross into popular evangelical circles. It is like the old cross, but different: the likenesses are superficial; the differences, fundamental.

From this new cross has sprung a new philosophy of the Christian life, and from that new philosophy has come a new evangelical technique—a new type of meeting and a new kind of preaching. This new evangelism employs the same language as the old, but its content is not the same and its emphasis not as before.

The old cross would have no truck with the world. For Adam's proud flesh it meant the end of the journey. It carried into effect the sentence imposed by the law of Sinai. The new cross is not opposed to the human race; rather, it is a friendly pal and, if understood aright, it is the source of oceans of good clean fun and innocent enjoyment. It lets Adam live without interference. His life motivation is unchanged; he still lives for his own pleasure, only now he takes delight in singing choruses and watching religious movies instead of singing bawdy songs and drinking hard liquor. The accent is still on enjoyment, though the fun is now on a higher plane morally if not intellectually.

The new cross encourages a new and entirely different evangelistic approach. The evangelist does not demand abnegation of the old life before a new life can be received. He preaches not contrasts but similarities. He seeks to key into public interest by showing that Christianity makes no unpleasant demands; rather, it offers the same thing the world does, only on a higher level. Whatever the sin-mad world happens to be clamoring after at the moment is cleverly shown to be the very thing the gospel offers, only the religious product is better.

The new cross does not slay the sinner, it redirects him. It gears him into a cleaner and jollier way of living and saves his self-respect. To the self-assertive it says, "Come and assert yourself for Christ." To the egotist it says, "Come and do your boasting in the Lord." To the thrill-seeker it says, "Come and enjoy the thrill of Christian fellowship." The Christian message is slanted in the direction of the current vogue in order to make it acceptable to the public.

The philosophy back of this kind of thing may be sincere but its sincerity does not save it from being false. It is false because it is blind. It misses completely the whole meaning of the cross.

The old cross is a symbol of death. It stands for the abrupt, violent end of a human being. The man in Roman times who took up his cross and started down the road had already said goodbye to his friends. He was not coming back. He was going out to have it ended. The cross made no compromise, modified nothing, spared nothing; it slew all of the man, completely and for good. It did not try to keep on good terms with its victim. It struck cruel and hard, and when it had finished its work, the man was no more.

The race of Adam is under death sentence. There is no commutation and no escape. God cannot approve any of the fruits of sin, however innocent they may appear or beautiful to the eyes of men. God salvages the individual by liquidating him and then raising him again to newness of life.

That evangelism which draws friendly parallels between the ways of God and the ways of men is false to the Bible and cruel to the souls of its hearers. The faith of Christ does not parallel

the world, it intersects it. In coming to Christ we do not bring our old life up onto a higher plane; we leave it at the cross. The corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die.

We who preach the gospel must not think of ourselves as public relations agents sent to establish good will between Christ and the world. We must not imagine ourselves commissioned to make Christ acceptable to big business, the press, the world of sports or modern education. We are not diplomats but prophets, and our message is not a compromise but an ultimatum.

God offers life, but not an improved old life. The life He offers is life out of death. It stands always on the far side of the cross. Whoever would possess it must pass under the rod. He must repudiate himself and concur in God's just sentence against him.

What does this mean to the individual, the condemned man who would find life in Christ Jesus? How can this theology be translated into life? Simply, he must repent and believe. He must forsake his sins and then go on to forsake himself. Let him cover nothing, defend nothing, excuse nothing. Let him not seek to make terms with God, but let him bow his head before the stroke of God's stern displeasure and acknowledge himself worthy to die.

Having done this let him gaze with simple trust upon the risen Saviour, and from Him will come life and rebirth and cleansing and power. The cross that ended the earthly life of Jesus now puts an end to the sinner; and the power that raised Christ from the dead now raises him to a new life along with Christ.

To any who may object to this or count it merely a narrow and private view of truth, let me say God has set His hallmark of approval upon this message from Paul's day to the present. Whether stated in these exact words or not, this has been the content of all preaching that has brought life and power to the world through the centuries. The mystics, the reformers, the revivalists have put their emphasis here, and signs and wonders and mighty operations of the Holy Ghost gave witness to God's approval.

Dare we, the heirs of such a legacy of power, tamper with the truth? Dare we with our stubby pencils erase the lines of the blueprint or alter the pattern shown us in the Mount? May God forbid. Let us preach the old cross and we will know the old power.

Chapter 44.

God Must Be Loved for Himself

God being who He is must always be sought for Himself, never as a means toward something else.

Whoever seeks other objects and not God is on his own; he may obtain those objects if he is able, but he will never have God. God is never found accidentally. "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13).

Whoever seeks God as a means toward desired ends will not find God. The mighty God, the maker of heaven and earth, will not be one of many treasures, not even the chief of all treasures. He will be all in all or He will be nothing. God will not be used. His mercy and grace are infinite and His patient understanding is beyond measure, but He will not aid men in their selfish striving after personal gain. He will not help men to attain ends which, when attained, usurp the place He by every right should hold in their interest and affection.

Yet popular Christianity has as one of its most effective talking points the idea that God exists to help people to get ahead in this world. The God of the poor has become the God of an affluent society. Christ no longer refuses to be a judge or a divider between money-hungry brothers. He can now be persuaded to assist the brother who has accepted Him to get the better of the brother who has not.

A crass example of the modern effort to use God for selfish purposes is the well-known comedian who, after repeated failures, promised someone he called God that if He would help him to make good in the entertainment world he would repay Him by giving generously to the care of sick children. Shortly afterward he hit the big time in the night clubs and on television. He has kept his word and is raising large sums of money to build children's hospitals. These contributions to charity, he feels, are a small price to pay for a success in one of the sleaziest fields of human endeavor.

One might excuse the act of this entertainer as something to be expected of a twentieth-century pagan; but that multitudes of evangelicals in North America should actually believe that God had anything to do with the whole business is not so easily overlooked. This low and false view of Deity is one major reason for the immense popularity God enjoys these days among well-fed Westerners.

The teaching of the Bible is that God is Himself the end for which man was created. "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" cried the psalmist, "and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee" (Ps. 73:25). The first and greatest commandment is to love God with every power of our entire being. Where love like that exists there can be no place for a second object. If we love God as much as we should, surely we cannot dream of a loved object beyond Him, which He might help us to obtain.

Bernard of Clairvaux begins his radiant little treatise on the love of God with a question and an answer. The question, Why should we love God? The answer, Because He is God. He develops the idea further, but for the enlightened heart little more need be said. We should love God because He is God. Beyond this the angels cannot think.

Being who He is, God is to be loved for His own sake. He is the reason for our loving Him, just as He is the reason for His loving us and for every other act He has performed, is performing and will perform world without end. God's primary reason for everything is His own good

pleasure. The search for secondary reasons is gratuitous and mostly futile. It affords occupation for theologians and adds pages to books on doctrine, but that it ever turns up any true explanations is doubtful.

But it is the nature of God to share. His mighty acts of creation and redemption were done for His good pleasure, but His pleasure extends to all created things. One has but to look at a healthy child at play or listen to the song of a bird at sundown and he will know that God meant His universe to be a joyful one.

Those who have been spiritually enabled to love God for Himself will find a thousand fountains springing up from the rainbow-circled throne and bringing countless treasures which are to be received with reverent thanksgiving as being the overflow of God's love for His children. Each gift is a bonus of grace which, because it was not sought for itself, may be enjoyed without injury to the soul. These include the simple blessings of life, such as health, a home, a family, congenial friends, food, shelter, the pure joys of nature or the more artificial pleasures of music and art.

The effort to find these treasures by direct search apart from God has been the major activity of mankind through the centuries; and this has been man's burden and man's woe. The effort to gain them as the ulterior motive back of accepting Christ may be something new under the sun; but new or old it is an evil that can only bring judgment at last.

God wills that we should love Him for Himself alone with no hidden reasons, trusting Him to be to us all our natures require. Our Lord said all this much better: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

Chapter 45.

How to Try the Spirits

These are the times that try men's souls. The Spirit has spoken expressly that in the latter times some should depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron. Those days are upon us and we cannot escape them; we must triumph in the midst of them, for such is the will of God concerning us.

Strange as it may seem, the danger today is greater for the fervent Christian than for the lukewarm and the self-satisfied. The seeker after God's best things is eager to hear anyone who offers a way by which he can obtain them. He longs for some new experience, some elevated view of truth, some operation of the Spirit that will raise him above the dead level of religious mediocrity he sees all around him, and for this reason he is ready to give a sympathetic ear to the new and the wonderful in religion, particularly if it is presented by someone with an attractive personality and a reputation for superior godliness.

Now our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, has not left His flock to the mercy of the wolves. He has given us the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit and natural powers of observation, and He expects us to avail ourselves of their help constantly. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good," said Paul (1 Thess. 5:21). "Beloved, believe not every spirit," wrote John, "but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). "Beware of false prophets," our Lord warned, "which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. 7:15). Then He added the word by which they may be tested, "Ye shall know them by their fruits."

From this it is plain not only that there shall be false spirits abroad, endangering our Christian lives, but that they may be identified and known for what they are. And of course once we become aware of their identity and learn their tricks, their power to harm us is gone. "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird" (Prov. 1:17).

It is my intention to set forth here a method by which we may test the spirits and prove all things religious and moral that come to us or are brought or offered to us by anyone. And while dealing with these matters we should keep in mind that not all religious vagaries are the work of Satan. The human mind is capable of plenty of mischief without any help from the devil. Some persons have a positive genius for getting confused, and will mistake illusion for reality in broad daylight with the Bible open before them. Peter had such in mind when he wrote, "Our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Pet. 3:15, 16).

It is unlikely that the confirmed apostles of confusion will read what is written here or that they would profit much if they did; but there are many sensible Christians who have been led astray but are humble enough to admit their mistakes and are now ready to return unto the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls. These may be rescued from false paths. More important still, there are undoubtedly large numbers of persons who have not left the true way but who want a rule by which they can test everything and by which they may prove the quality of Christian teaching and experience as they come in contact with them day after day throughout their busy

lives. For such as these I make available here a little secret by which I have tested my own spiritual experiences and religious impulses for many years.

Briefly stated the test is this: This new doctrine, this new religious habit, this new view of truth, this new spiritual experience—*how has it affected my attitude toward and my relation to God, Christ, the Holy Scriptures, self, other Christians, the world and sin.* By this sevenfold test we may prove everything religious and know beyond a doubt whether it is of God or not. By the fruit of the tree we know the kind of tree it is. So we have but to ask about any doctrine or experience, What is this doing to me? and we know immediately whether it is from above or from below.

1. One vital test of all religious experience is how it affects our relation to God, our concept of God and our attitude toward Him.

God being who He is must always be the supreme arbiter of all things religious. The universe came into existence as a medium through which the Creator might show forth His perfections to all moral and intellectual beings: "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another" (Isa. 42:8). "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11).

The health and balance of the universe require that God should be magnified in all things. "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable." God acts only for His glory and whatever comes from Him must be to His own high honor. Any doctrine, any experience that serves to magnify Him is likely to be inspired by Him. Conversely, anything that veils His glory or makes Him appear less wonderful is sure to be of the flesh or the devil.

The heart of man is like a musical instrument and may be played upon by the Holy Spirit, by an evil spirit or by the spirit of man himself. Religious emotions are very much the same, no matter who the player may be. Many enjoyable feelings may be aroused within the soul by low or even idolatrous worship. The nun who kneels "breathless with adoration" before an image of the Virgin is having a genuine religious experience. She feels love, awe and reverence, all enjoyable emotions, as certainly as if she were adoring God. The mystical experiences of Hindus and Sufis cannot be brushed aside as mere pretense. Neither dare we dismiss the high religious flights of spiritists and other occultists as imagination. These may have and sometimes do have genuine encounters with something or someone beyond themselves. In the same manner Christians are sometimes led into emotional experiences that are beyond their power to comprehend. I have met such and they have inquired eagerly whether or not their experience was of God.

The big test is, What has this done to my relationship to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? If this new view of truth—this new encounter with spiritual things—has made me love God more, if it has magnified Him in my eyes, if it has purified my concept of His being and caused Him to appear more wonderful than before, then I may conclude that I have not wandered astray into the pleasant but dangerous and forbidden paths of error.

2. The next test is, How has this new experience affected my attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ? Whatever place present-day religion may give to Christ, God gives Him top place in earth and in heaven. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," spoke the voice of God from heaven concerning our Lord Jesus. Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, declared: "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ"

(Acts 2:36). Jesus said of Himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Again Peter said of Him, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for

there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The whole Book of Hebrews is devoted to the idea that Christ is above all others. He is shown to be above Aaron and Moses, and even the angels are called to fall down and worship Him. Paul says that He is the image of the invisible God, that in Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily and that in all things He must have the preeminence. But time would fail me to tell of the glory accorded Him by prophets, patriarchs, apostles, saints, elders, psalmists, kings and seraphim. He is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. He is our hope, our life, our all and all, now and forevermore.

All this being true, it is clear that He must stand at the center of all true doctrine, all acceptable practice, all genuine Christian experience. Anything that makes Him less than God has declared Him to be is delusion pure and simple and must be rejected, no matter how delightful or how satisfying it may for the time seem to be.

Christ-less Christianity sounds contradictory but it exists as a real phenomenon in our day. Much that is being done in Christ's name is false to Christ in that it is conceived by the flesh, incorporates fleshly methods, and seeks fleshly ends. Christ is mentioned from time to time in the same way and for the same reason that a self-seeking politician mentions Lincoln and the flag, to provide a sacred front for carnal activities and to deceive the simplehearted listeners. *The* giveaway is that Christ is not central: He is not all and in all.

Again, there are psychic experiences that thrill the seeker and lead him to believe that he has indeed met the Lord and been carried to the third heaven; but the true nature of the phenomenon is discovered later when the face of Christ begins to fade from the victim's consciousness and he comes to depend more and more upon emotional jags as a proof of his spirituality.

If on the other hand the new experience tends to make Christ indispensable, if it takes our interest off our feeling and places it in Christ, we are on the right track. Whatever makes Christ dear to us is pretty sure to be from God.

3. Another revealing test of the soundness of religious experience is, How does it affect my attitude toward the Holy Scriptures?

Did this new experience, this new view of truth, spring out of the Word of God itself or was it the result of some stimulus that lay outside the Bible? Tenderhearted Christians often become victims of strong psychological pressure applied intentionally or innocently by someone's personal testimony, or by a colorful story told by a fervent preacher who may speak with prophetic finality but who has not checked his story with the facts nor tested the soundness of his conclusions by the Word of God.

Whatever originates outside the Scriptures should for that very reason be suspect until it can be shown to be in accord with them. If it should be found to be contrary to the Word of revealed truth, no true Christian will accept it as being from God. However high the emotional content, no experience can be proved to be genuine unless we can find chapter and verse authority for it in the Scriptures. "To the word and to the testimony" must always be the last and final proof.

Whatever is new or singular should also be viewed with a lot of caution until it can furnish scriptural proof of its validity. Over the last half-century quite a number of unscriptural notions have gained acceptance among Christians by claiming that they were among the truths that were to be revealed in the last days. To be sure, say the advocates of this latter-daylight theory, Augustine did not know, Luther did not, John Knox, Wesley, Finney and Spurgeon did not understand this; but greater light has now shined upon God's people and we of these last days

have the advantage of fuller revelation. We should not question the new doctrine nor draw back from this advanced experience. The Lord is getting His Bride ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb. We should all yield to this new movement of the Spirit. So they tell us.

The truth is that the Bible does not teach that there will be new light and advanced spiritual experiences in the latter days; if *teaches the exact opposite*. Nothing in Daniel or the New Testament epistles can be tortured into advocating the idea that we of the end of the Christian era shall enjoy light that was not known at its beginning. Beware of any man who claims to be wiser than the apostles or holier than the martyrs of the Early Church. The best way to deal with him is to rise and leave his presence. You cannot help him and he surely cannot help you.

Granted, however, that the Scriptures may not always be clear and that there are differences of interpretation among equally sincere men, this test will furnish all the proof needed of anything religious, viz., What does it do to my love for and appreciation of the Scriptures?

While true power lies not in the letter of the text but in the Spirit that inspired it, we should never underestimate the value of the letter. The text of truth has the same relation to truth as the honeycomb has to honey. One serves as a receptacle for the other. But there the analogy ends. The honey can be removed from the comb, but the Spirit of truth cannot and does not operate apart from the letter of the Holy Scriptures. For this reason a growing acquaintance with the Holy Spirit will always mean an increasing love for the Bible. The Scriptures are in print what Christ is in person. The inspired Word is like a faithful portrait of Christ. But again the figure breaks down. Christ is in the Bible as no one can be in a mere portrait, for the Bible is a book of holy ideas and the eternal Word of the Father can and does dwell in the thought He has Himself inspired. Thoughts are things, and the thoughts of the Holy Scriptures form a lofty temple for the dwelling place of God.

From this it follows naturally that a true lover of God will be also a lover of His Word. Anything that comes to us from the God of the Word will deepen our love for the Word of God. This follows logically, but we have confirmation by a witness vastly more trustworthy than logic, viz., the concerted testimony of a great army of witnesses living and dead. These declare with one voice that their love for the Scriptures intensified as their faith mounted and their obedience became consistent and joyous.

If the new doctrine, the influence of that new teacher, the new emotional experience fills my heart with an avid hunger to meditate in the Scriptures day and night, I have every reason to believe that God has spoken to my soul and that my experience is genuine. Conversely, if my love for the Scriptures has cooled even a little, if my eagerness to eat and drink of the inspired Word has abated by as much as one degree, I should humbly admit that I have missed God's signal somewhere and frankly backtrack until I find the true way once more.

4. Again, we can prove the quality of religious experience by its effect on the self-life.

The Holy Spirit and the fallen human self are diametrically opposed to each other. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. 5:17). "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit... Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:5, 7).

Before the Spirit of God can work creatively in our hearts He must condemn and slay the "flesh" within us; that is, He must have our full consent to displace our natural self with the Person of Christ. This displacement is carefully explained in Romans 6, 7, and 8. When the

seeking Christian has gone through the crucifying experience described in chapters 6 and 7, he enters into the broad, free regions of chapter 8. There, self is dethroned and Christ is enthroned forever.

In the light of this it is not hard to see why the Christian's attitude toward self is such an excellent test of the validity of his religious experiences. Most of the great masters of the deeper life, such as Fenelon, Molinos, John of the Cross, Madame Guyon and a host of others, have warned against pseudo-religious experiences that provide much carnal enjoyment but feed the flesh and puff up the heart with self-love.

A good rule is this: if this experience has served to humble me and make me little and vile in my own eyes, it is of God; but if it has given me a feeling of self-satisfaction, it is false and should be dismissed as emanating from self or the devil. Nothing that comes from God will minister to my pride or self-congratulation. If I am tempted to be complacent and to feel superior because I have had a remarkable vision or an advanced spiritual experience, I should go at once to my knees and repent of the whole thing. I have fallen a victim to the enemy.

5. Our relation to and our attitude toward our fellow Christians is another accurate test of religious experience.

Sometimes an earnest Christian will, after some remarkable spiritual encounter, withdraw himself from his fellow believers and develop a spirit of faultfinding. He may be honestly convinced that his experience is superior, that he is now in an advanced state of grace, and that the *hoi polloi* in the church where he attends are but a mixed multitude and he alone is a true son of Israel. He may struggle to be patient with these religious worldlings, but his soft language and condescending smile reveal his true opinion of them—and of himself. This is a dangerous state of mind, and the more dangerous because it can justify itself by the facts. The brother *has* had a remarkable experience; he *has* received some wonderful light on the Scriptures; he *has* entered into a joyous land unknown to him before. And it may easily be true that the professed Christians with whom he is acquainted are worldly and dull and without spiritual enthusiasm. It is not that he is mistaken in his facts that proves him to be in error, but that his reaction to the facts is of the flesh. His new spirituality has made him less charitable.

The Lady Julian tells us in her quaint English how true Christian grace affects our attitude toward others: "For of all things the beholding and loving of the Maker maketh the soul to seem less in his own sight, and most filleth him with reverent dread and true meekness; with plenty of charity to his fellow Christians." Any religious experience that fails to deepen our love for our fellow Christians may safely be written off as spurious.

The apostle John makes love for our fellow Christians to be a test of true faith. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him" (1 John 3:18, 19). Again he says, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:7, 8).

As we grow in grace we grow in love toward all God's people. "Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him" (1 John 5:1). This means simply that if we love God we will love His children. All true Christian experience will deepen our love for other Christians.

Therefore we conclude that whatever tends to separate us in person or in heart from our fellow Christians is not of God, but is of the flesh or of the devil. And conversely, whatever causes us to love the children of God is likely to be of God. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

6. Another certain test of the source of religious experience is this: Note how it affects our relation to and our attitude toward the world.

By "the world" I do not mean, of course, the beautiful order of nature which God has created for the enjoyment of mankind. Neither do I mean the world of lost men in the sense used by our Lord when He said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16, 17). Certainly any true touch of God in the soul will deepen our appreciation of the beauties of nature and intensify our love for the lost. I refer here to something else altogether.

Let an apostle say it for us: "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:16, 17).

This is the world by which we may test the spirits. It is the world of carnal enjoyments, of godless pleasures, of the pursuit of earthly riches and reputation and sinful happiness. It carries on without Christ, following the counsel of the ungodly and being animated by the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that works in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2). Its religion is a form of godliness, without power, which has a name to live but is dead. It is, in short, unregenerate human society romping on its way to hell, the exact opposite of the true Church of God, which is a society of regenerate souls going soberly but joyfully on their way to heaven.

Any real work of God in our heart will tend to unfit us for the world's fellowship. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14). It may be stated unequivocally that any spirit that permits compromise with the world is a false spirit. Any religious movement that imitates the world in any of its manifestations is false to the cross of Christ and on the side of the devil—and this regardless of how much purring its leaders may do about "accepting Christ" or "letting God run your business."

7. The last test of the genuineness of Christian experience is what it does to our attitude toward sin.

The operation of grace within the heart of a believing man will turn that heart away from sin and toward holiness. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13).

I do not see how it could be plainer. The same grace that saves, teaches, and its teaching is both negative and positive. Negatively it teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. Positively it teaches us to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.

The man of honest heart will find no difficulty here. He has but to check his own bent to discover whether he is concerned about sin in his life more or less since the supposed work of grace was done. Anything that weakens his hatred of sin may be identified immediately as false to the Scriptures, to the Saviour and to his own soul. Whatever makes holiness more attractive and sin more intolerable may be accepted as genuine. "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity" (Ps. 5:4, 5).

Jesus warned, "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; in-so much that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect." These words describe our day too well to be coincidental. In the hope that the "elect" may profit by them I have set forth these tests. The result is in the hand of God.

Chapter 46.

Some Thoughts on Books and Reading

One big problem in many parts of the world today is to learn how to read, and in others it is to find something to read after one has learned. In our favored West we are overwhelmed with printed matter, so the problem here becomes one of selection. We must decide what not to read.

Nearly a century ago Emerson pointed out that if it were possible for a man to begin to read the day he was born and to go on reading without interruption for seventy years, at the end of that time he would have read only enough books to fill a tiny niche in the British Library. Life is so short and the books available to us are so many that no man can possibly be acquainted with more than a fraction of one percent of the books published.

It hardly need be said that most of us are not selective enough in our reading. I have often wondered how many square yards of newsprint pass in front of the eyes of the average civilized man in the course of a year. Surely it must run into several acres; and I am afraid our average reader does not realize a very large crop of his acreage. The best advice I have heard on this topic was given by a Methodist minister. He said, "Always read your newspaper standing up." Henry David Thoreau also had a low view of the daily press. Just before leaving the city for his now-celebrated sojourn on the banks of Walden Pond, a friend asked him if he would like to have a newspaper delivered to his cottage. "No," replied Thoreau, "I have already seen a newspaper."

In our serious reading we are likely to be too greatly influenced by the notion that the chief value of a book is to inform; and if we were talking of textbooks, of course that would be true, but when we speak or write of books we have not textbooks in mind.

The best book is not one that informs merely, but one that stirs the reader up to inform himself. The best writer is one that goes with us through the world of ideas like a friendly guide who walks beside us through the forest pointing out to us a hundred natural wonders we had not noticed before. So we learn from him to see for ourselves and soon we have no need for our guide. If he has done his work well we can go on alone and miss little as we go.

That writer does the most for us who brings to our attention thoughts that lay close to our minds waiting to be acknowledged as our own. Such a man acts as a midwife to assist at the birth of ideas that have been gestating long within our souls, but which without his help might not have been born at all.

There are few emotions so satisfying as the joy that comes from the act of recognition when we see and identify our own thoughts. We have all had teachers who sought to educate us by feeding alien ideas into our minds, ideas for which we felt no spiritual or intellectual kinship. These we dutifully tried to integrate into our total spiritual philosophy but always without success.

In a very real sense no man can teach another; he can only aid him to teach himself. Facts can be transferred from one mind to another as a copy is made from the master tape on a sound recorder. History, science, even theology, may be taught in this way, but it results in a highly artificial kind of learning and seldom has any good effect upon the deep life of the student. What the learner contributes to the learning process is fully as important as anything contributed by the teacher. If nothing is contributed by the learner the results are useless; at best there will be but the artificial creation of another teacher who can repeat the dreary work on someone else, ad infinitum.

Perception of ideas rather than the storing of them should be the aim of education. The mind should be an eye to see with rather than a bin to store facts in. The man who has been taught by the Holy Spirit will be a seer rather than a scholar. The difference is that the scholar sees and the seer sees through; and that is a mighty difference indeed.

The human intellect even in its fallen state is an awesome work of God, but it lies in darkness until it has been illuminated by the Holy Spirit. Our Lord has little good to say of the unilluminated mind, but He revels in the mind that has been renewed and enlightened by grace. He always makes the place of His feet glorious; there is scarcely anything on earth more beautiful than a Spirit-filled mind, certainly nothing more wonderful than an alert and eager mind made incandescent by the presence of the indwelling Christ.

Since what we read in a real sense enters the soul, it is vitally important that we read the best and nothing but the best. I cannot but feel that Christians were better off before there was so much reading matter to choose from. Today we must practice sharp discipline in our reading habits. Every Christian should master the Bible, or at least spend hours and days and years trying. And always he should read his Bible, as George Muller said, "with meditation."

After the Bible the next most valuable book for the Christian is a *good* hymnal. Let any young Christian spend a year prayerfully meditating on the hymns of Watts and Wesley alone and he will become a fine theologian. Then let him read a balanced diet of the Puritans and the Christian mystics. The results will be more wonderful than he could have dreamed.

Chapter 47.

The Saint Must Walk Alone

Most of the world's great souls have been lonely. Loneliness seems to be one price the saint must pay for his saintliness.

In the morning of the world (or should we say, in that strange darkness that came soon after the dawn of man's creation), that pious soul, Enoch, walked with God and was not, for God took him; and while it is not stated in so many words, a fair inference is that Enoch walked a path quite apart from his contemporaries.

Another lonely man was Noah who, of all the antediluvians, found grace in the sight of God; and every shred of evidence points to the aloneness of his life even while surrounded by his people.

Again, Abraham had Sarah and Lot, as well as many servants and herdsmen, but who can read his story and the apostolic comment upon it without sensing instantly that he was a man "whose soul was alike a star and dwelt apart"? As far as we know not one word did God ever speak to him in the company of men. Face down he communed with his God, and the innate dignity of the man forbade that he assume this posture in the presence of others. How sweet and solemn was the scene that night of the sacrifice when he saw the lamps of fire moving between the pieces of offering. There, alone with a horror of great darkness upon him, he heard the voice of God and knew that he was a man marked for divine favor.

Moses also was a man apart. While yet attached to the court of Pharaoh he took long walks alone, and during one of these walks while far removed from the crowds he saw an Egyptian and a Hebrew fighting and came to the rescue of his countryman. After the resultant break with Egypt he dwelt in almost complete seclusion in the desert. There, while he watched his sheep alone, the wonder of the burning bush appeared to him, and later on the peak of Sinai he crouched alone to gaze in fascinated awe at the Presence, partly hidden, partly disclosed, within the cloud and fire.

The prophets of pre-Christian times differed widely from each other, but one mark they bore in common was their enforced loneliness. They loved their people and gloried in the religion of the fathers, but their loyalty to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and their zeal for the welfare of the nation of Israel drove them away from the crowd and into long periods of heaviness. "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children," cried one and unwittingly spoke for all the rest.

Most revealing of all is the sight of that One of whom Moses and all the prophets did write, treading His lonely way to the cross. His deep loneliness was unrelieved by the presence of the multitudes.

*'Tis midnight, and on Olive's brow
The star is dimmed that lately shone;
'Tis midnight; in the garden now,
The suffering Saviour prays alone.*

*'Tis midnight, and from all removed
The Saviour wrestles lone with fears;
E'en the disciple whom He loved*

Heeds not his Master's grief and tears.

—William B. Tappan

He died alone in the darkness hidden from the sight of mortal man and no one saw Him when He arose triumphant and walked out of the tomb, though many saw Him afterward and bore witness to what they saw. There are some things too sacred for any eye but God's to look upon. The curiosity, the clamor, the well-meant but blundering effort to help can only hinder the waiting soul and make unlikely if not impossible the communication of the secret message of God to the worshiping heart.

Sometimes we react by a kind of religious reflex and repeat dutifully the proper words and phrases even though they fail to express our real feelings and lack the authenticity of personal experience. Right now is such a time. A certain conventional loyalty may lead some who hear this unfamiliar truth expressed for the first time to say brightly, "Oh, I am never lonely. Christ said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you,' and, 'Lo, I am with you always.' How can I be lonely when Jesus is with me?"

Now I do not want to reflect on the sincerity of any Christian soul, but this stock testimony is too neat to be real. It is obviously what the speaker thinks *should* be true rather than what he has proved to be true by the test of experience. This cheerful denial of loneliness proves only that the speaker has never walked with God without the support and encouragement afforded him by society. The sense of companionship which he mistakenly attributes to the presence of Christ may and probably does arise from the presence of friendly people. Always remember: you cannot carry a cross in company. Though a man were surrounded by a vast crowd, his cross is his alone and his carrying of it marks him as a man apart. Society has turned against him; otherwise he would have no cross. No one is a friend to the man with a cross. "They all forsook him, and fled."

The pain of loneliness arises from the constitution of our nature. God made us for each other. The desire for human companionship is completely natural and right. The loneliness of the Christian results from his walk with God in an ungodly world, a walk that must often take him away from the fellowship of good Christians as well as from that of the unregenerate world. His God-given instincts cry out for companionship with others of his kind, others who can understand his longings, his aspirations, his absorption in the love of Christ; and because within his circle of friends there are so few who share his inner experiences, he is forced to walk alone. The unsatisfied longings of the prophets for human understanding caused them to cry out in their complaint, and even our Lord Himself suffered in the same way.

The man who has passed on into the divine Presence in actual inner experience will not find many who understand him. A certain amount of social fellowship will of course be his as he mingles with religious persons in the regular activities of the church, but true spiritual fellowship will be hard to find. But he should not expect things to be otherwise. After all he is a stranger and a pilgrim, and the journey he takes is not on his feet but in his heart. He walks with God in the garden of his own soul—and who but God can walk there with him? He is of another spirit from the multitudes that tread the courts of the Lord's house. He has seen that of which they have only heard, and he walks among them somewhat as Zacharias walked after his return from the altar when the people whispered, "He has seen a vision."

The truly spiritual man is indeed something of an oddity. He lives not for himself but to promote the interests of Another. He seeks to persuade people to give all to his Lord and asks no portion or share for himself. He delights not to be honored but to see his Saviour glorified in the

eyes of men. His joy is to see his Lord promoted and himself neglected. He finds few who care to talk about that which is the supreme object of his interest, so he is often silent and preoccupied in the midst of noisy religious shoptalk. For this he earns the reputation of being dull and overserious, so he is avoided and the gulf between him and society widens. He searches for friends upon whose garments he can detect the smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia out of the ivory palaces, and finding few or none, he, like Mary of old, keeps these things in his heart.

It is this very loneliness that throws him back upon God. "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." His inability to find human companionship drives him to seek in God what he can find nowhere else. He learns in inner solitude what he could not have learned in the crowd—that Christ is All in All, that He is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, that in Him we have and possess life's *summum bonum*.

Two things remain to be said. One, that the lonely man of whom we speak is not a haughty man, nor is he the holier-than-thou, austere saint so bitterly satirized in popular literature. He is likely to feel that he is the least of all men and is sure to blame himself for his very loneliness. He wants to share his feelings with others and to open his heart to some like-minded soul who will understand him, but the spiritual climate around him does not encourage it, so he remains silent and tells his griefs to God alone.

The second thing is that the lonely saint is not the withdrawn man who hardens himself against human suffering and spends his days contemplating the heavens. Just the opposite is true. His loneliness makes him sympathetic to the approach of the brokenhearted and the fallen and the sin-bruised. Because he is detached from the world, he is all the more able to help it. Meister Eckhart taught his followers that if they should find themselves in prayer as it were caught up to the third heaven and happen to remember that a poor widow needed food, they should break off the prayer instantly and go care for the widow. "God will not suffer you to lose anything by it," he told them. "You can take up again in prayer where you left off and the Lord will make it up to you." This is typical of the great mystics and masters of the interior life from Paul to the present day.

The weakness of so many modern Christians is that they feel too much at home in the world. In their effort to achieve restful "adjustment" to unregenerate society they have lost their pilgrim character and become an essential part of the very moral order against which they are sent to protest. The world recognizes them and accepts them for what they are. And this is the saddest thing that can be said about them. They are not lonely, but neither are they saints.

Excerpt from *How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit*

Chapter 48. How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

Before we deal with the question of how to be filled with the Holy Spirit, there are some matters which first have to be settled. As believers you have to get them out of the way, and right here is where the difficulty arises. I have been afraid that my listeners might have gotten the idea somewhere that I had a how-to-be-filled-with-the-Spirit-in-five-easy-lessons doctrine, which I could give you. If you have any such vague ideas as that, I can only stand before you and say, "I am sorry"; because it isn't true; I can't give you such a course. There are some things, I say, that you have to get out of the way, settled. One of them is: Before you are filled with the Holy Spirit you must *be sure that you can be filled*.

Satan has opposed the doctrine of the Spirit-filled life about as bitterly as any other doctrine there is. He has confused it, opposed it, surrounded it with false notions and fears. He has blocked every effort of the Church of Christ to receive from the Father her divine and blood-bought patrimony. The Church has tragically neglected this great liberating truth—that there is now for the child of God a full and wonderful and completely satisfying anointing with the Holy Ghost.

So you have to be sure that it is for you. You must be sure that it is God's will for you; that is, that it is part of the total plan, that it is included and embraced within the work of Christ in redemption; that it is, as the old camp-meeting, praying folks used to say, "the purchase of His blood."

I might throw a bracket in here and say that whenever I use the neutral pronoun "it" I am talking about the gift. When I speak directly of the Holy Spirit, I shall use a personal pronoun, *He* or *Him* or *His*, referring to a person, for the Holy Spirit is not an *it*, but the *gift* of the Holy Spirit must necessarily in our English language be called "it."

You must, I say, be satisfied that this is nothing added or extra. The Spirit-filled life is not a special, deluxe edition of Christianity. It is part and parcel of the total plan of God for His people.

You must be satisfied that it is not abnormal. I admit that it is unusual, because there are so few people who walk in the light of it or enjoy it, but it is not abnormal. In a world where everybody was sick, health would be unusual, but it wouldn't be abnormal. This is unusual only because our spiritual lives are so wretchedly sick and so far down from where they should be.

You must be satisfied, again, that there is nothing about the Holy Spirit queer or strange or eerie. I believe it has been the work of the devil to surround the person of the Holy Spirit with an aura of queerness, or strangeness, so that the people of God feel that this Spirit-filled life is a life of being odd and peculiar, of being a bit uncanny.

That is not true, my friend! The devil manufactured that. He hatched it out, the same devil that once said to our ancient mother, "Yea, hath God said," and thus maligned God Almighty. That same devil has maligned the Holy Ghost. There is nothing eerie, nothing queer, nothing contrary to the normal operations of the human heart about the Holy Ghost. He is only the

essence of Jesus imparted to believers. You read the four Gospels and see for yourself how wonderfully calm, pure, sane, simple, sweet, natural, and lovable Jesus was. Even philosophers who don't believe in His deity have to admit the loveliness of His character.

You must be sure of all this to the point of conviction. That is, you must be convinced to a point where you won't try to persuade God.

You don't have to persuade God at all. There is no persuasion necessary. Dr. Simpson used to say, "Being filled with the Spirit is as easy as breathing; you can simply breathe out and breathe in." He wrote a hymn to that effect. I am sorry that it is not a better hymn, because it is wonderful theology.

Unless you have arrived at this place in your listening and thinking and meditating and praying, where you know that the Spirit-filled life is for you, that there is no doubt about it—no book you read or sermon you heard, or tract somebody sent you is bothering you; you are restful about all this; you are convinced that in the blood of Jesus when He died on the cross there was included, as a purchase of that blood, your right to a full, Spirit-filled life—unless you are convinced of that, unless you are convinced that it isn't an added, unusual, extra, de luxe something that you have to go to God and beg and beat your fists on the chair to get, I recommend this to you: I recommend that you don't do anything about it yet except to meditate upon the Scriptures bearing on this truth. Go to the Word of God and to those parts of it which deal with the subject under discussion tonight and meditate upon them; for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Real faith springs not out of sermons but out of the Word of God and out of sermons only so far as they are of the Word of God. I recommend that you be calm and confident about this. Don't get excited, don't despond. The darkest hour is just before the dawn. It may be that this moment of discouragement which you are going through is preliminary to a sunburst of new and beautiful living, if you will follow on to know the Lord.

Remember, fear is of the flesh and panic is of the devil. Never fear and never get panicky. When they came to Jesus nobody except a hypocrite ever needed to fear Him. When a hypocrite came to Jesus He just sliced him to bits and sent him away bleeding from every pore. If they were ready to give up their sin and follow the Lord and they came in simplicity of heart and said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" The Lord took all the time in the world to talk to them and explain to them and to correct any false impressions or wrong ideas they had. He is the sweetest, most understanding and wonderful Teacher in the world, and He never panics anybody. It is sin that does that. If there is a sense of panic upon your life, it may be because there is sin in that life of yours which you need to get rid of.

Again, before you can be filled with the Spirit you must desire to be filled. Here I meet with a certain amount of puzzlement. Somebody will say, "How is it that you say to us that we must desire to be filled, because you know we desire to be. Haven't we talked to you in person? Haven't we called you on the phone? Aren't we out here tonight to hear the sermon on the Holy Spirit? Isn't this all a comforting indication to you that we are desirous of being filled with the Holy Spirit?"

Not necessarily, and I will explain why. For instance, are you sure that you want to be possessed by a spirit other than your own? Even though that spirit be the pure Spirit of God? even though He be the very gentle essence of the gentle Jesus? even though He be sane and pure and free? even though He be wisdom personified, wisdom Himself, even though He have a healing, precious ointment to distill? even though He be loving as the heart of God? That Spirit, if He ever possesses you, will be the Lord of your Life!

I ask you, Do you want Him to be Lord of your life? That you want His benefits, I know. I take that for granted. But do you want to be possessed by Him? Do you want to hand the keys of your soul over to the Holy Spirit and say, "Lord, from now on I don't even have a key to my own house. I come and go as Thou tellest me"? Are you willing to give the office of your business establishment, your soul, over to the Lord and say to Jesus, "You sit in this chair and handle these telephones and boss the staff and be Lord of this outfit"? That is what I mean. Are you sure you want this? Are you sure that you desire it?

Are you sure that you want your personality to be taken over by One who will expect obedience to the written and living Word? Are you sure that you want your personality to be taken over by One who will not tolerate the self sins? For instance, self-love. You can no more have the Holy Ghost and have self-love than you can have purity and impurity at the same moment in the same place. He will not permit you to indulge self-confidence. Self-love, self-confidence, self-righteousness, self-admiration, self-aggrandizement, and self-pity are under the interdiction of God Almighty, and He cannot send His mighty Spirit to possess the heart where these things are.

Again, I ask you if you desire to have your personality taken over by One who stands in sharp opposition to the world's easy ways? No tolerance of evil, no smiling at crooked jokes, no laughing off things that God hates. The Spirit of God, if He takes over, will bring you into opposition to the world just as Jesus was brought into opposition to it. The world crucified Jesus because they couldn't stand Him! There was something in Him that rebuked them and they hated Him for it and finally crucified Him. The world hates the Holy Ghost as bad as they ever hated Jesus, the One from whom He proceeds. Are you sure, brother? You want His help, yes; you want a lot of His benefits, yes; but are you willing to go with Him in His opposition to the easygoing ways of the world? If you are not, you needn't apply for anything more than you have, because you don't want Him; you only think you do!

Again, are you sure that you need to be filled? Can't you get along the way you are? You have been doing fairly well: You pray, you read your Bible, you give to missions, you enjoy singing hymns, you thank God you don't drink or gamble or attend theaters, that you are honest, that you have prayer at home. You are glad about all this. Can't you get along like that? Are you sure you need any more than that? I want to be fair with you. I want to do what Jesus did. He turned around to them when they were following Him and told them the truth. I don't want to take you in under false pretense. "Are you sure you want to follow Me?" He asked, and a great many turned away. But Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And the crowd that wouldn't turn away was the crowd that made history. The crowd that wouldn't turn back was the crowd that was there when the Holy Ghost came and filled all the place where they were sitting. The crowd that turned back never knew what it was all about.

But maybe you feel in your heart that you just can't go on as you are, that the level of spirituality to which you know yourself called is way beyond you. If you feel that there is something that you must have or your heart will never be satisfied, that there are levels of spirituality, mystic deeps and heights of spiritual communion, purity and power that you have never known, that there is fruit which you know you should bear and do not, victory which you know you should have and have not—I would say, "Come on," because God has something for you tonight.

There is a spiritual loneliness, an inner aloneness, an inner place where God brings the seeker, where he is as lonely as if there were not another member of the Church anywhere in the

world. Ah, when you come there, there is a darkness of mind, an emptiness of heart, a loneliness of soul, but it is preliminary to the daybreak. *O God, bring us, somehow, to the daybreak!*

Here is how to receive. First, present your body to Him (Rom. 12:1, 2). God can't fill what He can't have. Now I ask you: Are you ready to present your body with all of its functions and all that it contains—your mind, your personality, your spirit, your love, your ambitions, your all? That is the first thing. That is a simple, easy act—presenting the body. Are you willing to do it?

Now the second thing is to *ask* (Luke 11:9-11), and I set aside all theological objections to this text. They say that is not for today. Well, why did the Lord leave it in the Bible then? Why didn't He put it somewhere else; why did He put it where I could see it if He didn't want me to believe it? It is all for us, and if the Lord wanted to do it, He could give it without our asking, but He chooses to have us ask. "Ask of me, and I will give thee" is always God's order; so why not ask?

Acts 5:32 tells us the third thing to do. God gives His Holy Spirit to them that obey Him. Are you ready to obey and do what you are asked to do? What would that be? Simply to live by the Scriptures as you understand them. Simple, but revolutionary.

The next thing is, have faith (Gal. 3:2). We receive Him by faith as we receive the Lord in salvation by faith. He comes as a gift of God to us in power. First He comes in some degree and measure when we are converted; otherwise we couldn't be converted. Without Him we couldn't be born again, because we are born of the Spirit. But I am talking about something different now, an advance over that. I am talking about His coming and possessing the full body and mind and life and heart, taking the whole personality over, gently, but directly and bluntly, and making it His, so that we may become a habitation of God through the Spirit.

So now suppose we sing. Let us sing *The Comforter Has Come*, because He has come. If He hasn't come to your heart in fullness, He will; but He has come to the earth. He is here and ready, when we present our vessel, to fill our vessel if we will ask and believe. Will you do it?

Excerpt from *Worship, the Missing Jewel of the Evangelical Church*

Chapter 49.

Worship: The Normal Employment of Moral Beings

Why did Christ come? Why was He conceived? Why was He born? Why was He crucified? Why did He rise again? Why is He now at the right hand of the Father.

The answer to all these questions is, "In order that He might make worshipers out of rebels; in order that He might restore us again to the place of worship we knew when we were first created."

Now because we were created to worship, worship is the normal employment of moral beings. It's the normal employment, not something stuck on or added, like listening to a concert or admiring flowers. It is something that is built into human nature. Every glimpse of heaven shows them worshipping; Ezekiel 1:1-5, the creatures out of the fire were worshipping God; Isaiah 6:1-6, we see the Lord high and lifted up and hear the creatures saying, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts"; Revelation 4:8-11, God opens heaven and we see them there worshipping God the Father; and in the fifth chapter, verses 6 to 14, we see them worshipping God the Son.

Worship is a moral imperative. In Luke 19:37-40 the whole multitude of disciples were worshipping the Lord as He came along and some rebuked them. The Lord said, "Don't rebuke them; if they didn't worship Me the stones would cry out."

Now, worship is the missing jewel in modern evangelicalism. We're organized; we work; we have our agendas.

We have almost everything, but there's one thing that the churches, even the gospel churches, do not have: that is the ability to worship. We are not cultivating the art of worship. It's the one shining gem that is lost to the modern church, and I believe that we ought to search for this until we find it.

I think I ought to talk a little more about what worship is and what it would be like if it were in the church. Well, it's an attitude, a state of mind, a sustained act, subject to degrees of perfection and intensity. As soon as He sends the Spirit of His Son into our hearts we say "Abba" and we're worshipping. That's one thing. But it's quite another thing to be worshipers in the full New Testament sense of the word.

Now I say that worship is subject to degrees of perfection and intensity. There have been those who worshiped God to the point where they were in ecstasies of worship. I once saw a man kneel at an altar, taking Communion. Suddenly he broke into holy laughter. This man laughed until he wrapped his arms around himself as if he was afraid he would burst just out of sheer delight in the presence of Almighty God. A few times I have seen other people rapt in an ecstasy of worship where they were carried away with it, and I have also heard some simplehearted new converts saying "Abba Father." So worship is capable of running from the very simple to the most intense and sublime.

Now what are the factors that you will find present in worship? Let me give you a few of them as I go along. First there is *boundless confidence*. You cannot worship a Being you cannot

trust. Confidence is necessary to respect, and respect is necessary to worship. Worship rises or falls in any church altogether depending upon the attitude we take toward God, whether we see God big or whether we see Him little. Most of us see God too small; our God is too little. David said, "O magnify the Lord with me," and "magnify" doesn't mean to make God big. You can't make God big. But you can *see* Him big.

Worship, I say, rises or falls with our concept of God; that is why I do not believe in these half-converted cowboys who call God the Man Upstairs. I do not think they worship at all because their concept of God is unworthy of God and unworthy of them. And if there is one terrible disease in the Church of Christ, it is that we do not see God as great as He is. We're too familiar with God.

Communion with God is one thing; familiarity with God is quite another thing. I don't even like (and this may hurt some of your feelings—but they'll heal) to hear God called "You." "You" is a colloquial expression. I can call a man "you," but I ought to call God "Thou" and "Thee." Now I know these are old Elizabethan words, but I also know that there are some things too precious to cast lightly away and I think that when we talk to God we ought to use the pure, respectful pronouns.

Also I think we ought not to talk too much about Jesus just as Jesus. I think we ought to remember who He is. "He is thy Lord; and worship thou him." And though He comes down to the lowest point of our need and makes Himself accessible to us as tenderly as a mother to her child, still don't forget that when John saw Him—that John who had lain on His bosom—he fell at His feet as dead.

I've heard all kinds of preachers. I've heard the ignorant boasters; I've heard the dull, dry ones; I've heard the eloquent ones; but the ones who have helped me most were the ones who were awestruck in the presence of the God about whom they spoke. They might have a sense of humor, they might be jovial; but when they talked about God another tone came into their voice altogether; this was something else, something wonderful. I believe we ought to have again the old Biblical concept of God which makes God awful and makes men lie face down and cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." That would do more for the church than everything or anything else.

Then there is *admiration*, that is, appreciation of the excellency of God. Man is better qualified to appreciate God than any other creature because he was made in His image and is the only creature who was. This admiration for God grows and grows until it fills the heart with wonder and delight. "In our astonished reverence we confess Thine uncreated loveliness," said the hymn writer. "In our astonished reverence." The God of the modern evangelical rarely astonishes anybody. He manages to stay pretty much within the constitution. Never breaks over our bylaws. He's a very well-behaved God and very denominational and very much one of us, and we ask Him to help us when we're in trouble and look to Him to watch over us when we're asleep. The God of the modern evangelical isn't a God I could have much respect for. But when the Holy Ghost shows us God as He is we admire Him to the point of wonder and delight.

Fascination is another element in true worship. To be filled with moral excitement. To be captivated and charmed and entranced. Excited, not with how big you're getting or how big the offering was. Not with how many people came out to church. But entranced with who God is, and struck with astonished wonder at the inconceivable elevation and magnitude and splendor of Almighty God.

I remember as a young Christian when I got my first awful, wonderful, entrancing vision of God. I was in West Virginia in the woods sitting on a log reading the Scriptures along with an

old Irish evangelist by the name of Robert J. Cunningham, now long in heaven. I got up and wandered away to have prayer by myself. I had been reading one of the driest passages imaginable from the Scriptures—where Israel came out of Egypt and God arranged them into a diamond-shaped camp. He put Levi in the middle and Reuben out in front and Benjamin behind. It was a diamond-shaped moving city with a flame of fire in the middle giving light. Suddenly it broke over me; God is a geometrician; He's an artist! When He laid out that city, He laid it out skillfully, diamond-shaped with a plume in the middle, and it suddenly swept over me like a wave of the sea: how beautiful God is and how artistic and how poetic and how musical, and I worshiped God there under that tree all by himself. You know, after that I began to love the old hymns and I have been a lover of the great hymns ever since.

Next is *adoration*, to love God with all the power within us. To love God with fear and wonder and yearning and awe. To yearn for God with great yearning, and to love Him to a point where it is both painful and delightful. At times this will lead us to breathless silence. I think that some of the greatest prayer is prayer where you don't say one single word or ask for anything. Now God does answer and He does give us what we ask for. That's plain; nobody can deny that unless he denies the Scriptures. But that's only one aspect of prayer, and it's not even the important aspect. Sometimes I go to God and say, "God, if Thou dost never answer another prayer while I live on this earth I will still worship Thee as long as I live and in the ages to come for what Thou hast done already." God's already put me so far in debt that if I were to live one million millenniums I couldn't pay Him for what he's done for me.

We go to God as we send a boy to a grocery store with a long written list, "God, give me this, give me this, and give me this," and our gracious God often does give us what we want. But I think God is disappointed because we make Him to be no more than a source of what we want. Even our Lord Jesus is presented too often as "Someone who will meet your need." That's the throbbing heart of modern evangelism. You're in need and Jesus will meet your need. He's the Need-meeter. Well, He is that indeed; but, ah, He's infinitely more than that.

Now when the mental and emotional and spiritual factors that I've spoken to you about are present and, as I've admitted, in varying degrees of intensity, in song, in praise, in prayer and in mental prayer, you are worshiping. Do you know what mental prayer is? I mean by that, do you know what it is to pray continually? Old Brother Lawrence, who wrote *The Practice of the Presence of God*, said, "If I'm washing dishes I do it to the glory of God and if I pick up a straw from the ground I do it to the glory of God. I'm in communion with God all the time." He said, "The rules tell me that I have to take time off to go alone to pray, and I do, but such times do not differ any from my regular communion." He had learned the art of fellowship with God, continuous and unbroken.

I am afraid of the pastor who enters the pulpit as a different person from what he was before. Reverend, you should never think a thought or do a deed or be caught in any situation that you couldn't carry into the pulpit with you without embarrassment. You should never have to be a different man or get a new voice and a new sense of solemnity when you enter the pulpit. You should be able to enter the pulpit with the same spirit and the same sense of reverence that you had just before when you were talking to someone about the common affairs of life. Moses came down from the mount to speak to the people. Woe be to the church when the pastor comes *up to* the pulpit or comes *into* the pulpit! He must come *down* to the pulpit always. Wesley, they said, habitually dwelt with God but came down at times to speak to the people. So should it be with all of us. *Amen.*

Excerpt from *Who Put Jesus on the Cross?*

Chapter 50.

Christian, Do You Downgrade Yourself too Much?

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Titus 2:13-14

The people of God, Christians who are living between the two mighty events of Christ's incarnation and His promised second coming, are not living in a vacuum!

It is amazing that segments in the Christian church that deny the possibility of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus accuse those who do believe in His soon coming of sitting around, twiddling their thumbs, looking at the sky, and blankly hoping for the best!

Nothing could be further from the truth. We live in the interim between His two appearances, but we do not live in a vacuum. We have much to do and little time in which to get it done!

Stretch your mind and consider some very apparent facts of our day.

Who are the Christians leaving all to staff the missionary posts around the world? Who are the Christians staying at home and sacrificing in order to support the great evangelical thrust of the Christian gospel everywhere? Those who fervently believe that He is coming.

What kind of churches are busy praying and teaching and giving, preparing their young people for the ministry and for missionary work? Churches that are responding to Christ's appeal to "occupy until I come!"

Well, in this text Titus has given us Christian doctrine that has validity both in the light of the expected return of Jesus Christ as well as in the face of death.

It is in the record of the early Methodists in England, when there was persecution and testing in every direction, that John Wesley was able to say, "Our people die well!"

In more recent years, I have heard a quotation from a denominational bishop who estimated that only about ten percent of the men and women in the membership of his church body are prepared and spiritually ready to die when their time comes.

I believe you can only die well when you have lived well, from a spiritual point of view. This doctrine of the Christian life and spiritual vitality of the believer as propounded by Titus has full validity in the face of any contingency which awaits us.

Titus quickly identifies Jesus Christ as the Saviour "who gave himself for us," and we can quickly learn the value of any object by the price which people are willing to pay for it. Perhaps I should qualify that—you may not learn the true value, for it is my private opinion that a diamond or other jewelry has no intrinsic value at all.

You may remember the story about the rooster scratching around in the barnyard for kernels of corn. Suddenly he scratched up a beautiful pearl of fabulous price which had been lost years before, but he just pushed it aside and kept on looking for corn. The pearl had no value for the rooster, although it had a great value for those who had set a price upon it.

There are various kinds of markets in the world, and something which has no value for a disinterested person may be considered of great value by the person desiring it and purchasing it.

It is in this sense, then, that we learn how dear and precious we are to Christ by what He was willing to give for us.

I believe many Christians are tempted to downgrade themselves too much. I am not arguing against true humility and my word to you is this: Think as little of yourself as you want to, but always remember that our Lord Jesus Christ thought very highly of you—enough to give Himself for you in death and sacrifice.

If the devil does come to you and whispers that you are no good, don't argue with him. In fact, you may as well admit it, but then remind the devil: "Regardless of what you say about me, I must tell you how the Lord feels about me. He tells me that I am so valuable to Him that He gave Himself for me on the cross!"

So, the value is set by the price paid—and, in our case, the price paid was our Lord Himself!

The end that the Saviour had in view was that He might redeem us from all iniquity, that is, from the power and consequences of iniquity.

We often sing the words of a hymn by Charles Wesley in which the death of our Lord Jesus is described as "the double cure" for sin. I think many people sing the hymn without realizing what Wesley meant by the double cure.

"Be of sin the double cure, Save me from its wrath and power." The wrath of God against sin and then the power of sin in the human life—these both must be cured. Therefore, when He gave Himself for us, He redeemed us with a double cure, delivering us from the consequences of sin and delivering us from the power which sin exercises in human lives.

Now, Titus, in this great nugget of spiritual truth, reminds us that the redemptive Christ performs a purifying work in the people of God.

You will have to agree with me that one of the deep and outbroken diseases of this present world and society is impurity, and it displays itself in dozens of symptoms. We are prone to look upon certain lewd and indecent physical actions as the impurities which plague human life and society—but the actual lusting and scheming and planning and plotting come from a far deeper source of impurity within the very minds and innermost beings of sinful men and women.

If we were people of clean hands and pure hearts, we would be intent upon doing the things that please God. Impurity is not just a wrong action; impurity is the state of mind and heart and soul which is just the opposite of purity and wholeness.

Sexual misconduct is a symptom of the disease of impurity—but so is hatred. Pride and egotism, resentfulness and churlishness come to the surface out of sinful and impure minds and hearts, just as gluttony and slothfulness and self-indulgence do. All of these and countless others come to the surface as outward symptoms of the deep, inward disease of selfishness and sin.

Because this is a fact in life and experience, it is the spiritual work of Jesus Christ to purify His people by His own blood to rid them of this deep-lying disease. That is why He is called the Great Physician—He is able to heal us of this plague of impurity and iniquity, redeeming us from the consequences of our sins and purifying us from the presence of our sins.

Now, brethren, either this is true and realizable in human life and experience or Christianity is the cheap fraud of the day. Either it is true and a dependable spiritual option or we should fold up the Bible and put it away with other classical pieces of literature which have no particular validity in the face of death.

Thank God that there are millions who dare to stand as if in a great chorus and shout with me, "It is true! He did give Himself to redeem us from all iniquity and He does perform this purifying work in our lives day by day!"

The result of Christ's purifying work is the perfecting of God's very own people, referred to in this passage from the King James version as "a peculiar people."

Many of us know all too well that this word *peculiar* has been often used to cloak religious conduct both strange and irrational. People have been known to do rather weird things and then grin a self-conscious grin and say in half-hearted apology: "Well, we are a peculiar people!"

Anyone with a serious and honest concern for scriptural admonition and instruction could quickly learn that this English word *peculiar* in the language of 1611 describing the redeemed people of God had no connotation of queerness, ridiculousness nor foolishness.

The same word was first used in Exodus 19:5 when God said that Israel "shall be unto me a peculiar treasure above all people." It was God's way of emphasizing that His people would be to Him a treasure above all other treasures. In the etymological sense, it means "shut up to me as my special jewel."

Every loving mother and father has a good idea of what God meant. There are babies in houses up and down every street, as you can tell by the baby clothes hanging on the lines of a summer day.

But in the house where you live, there is one little infant in particular, and he is a peculiar treasure unto you above all others. It does not mean necessarily that he is prettier, but it does mean that he is the treasure above all other treasures and you would not trade him for any other child in the whole world. He is a *peculiar* treasure!

This gives us some idea, at least, of what we are—God's special jewels marked out for him!

Titus then clearly spelled out one thing that will always characterize the children of God—the fact that they are zealous of good works.

Titus and all of the other writers who had a part in God's revelation through the scriptures agree at this point—our Lord never made provision for any of His followers to be "armchair" Christians. "Ivory tower" Christianity, an abstract kind of believing, composed simply of fine and beautiful thoughts, is not what Jesus taught at all.

The language in this passage is plain: The children of God in Jesus Christ, redeemed by the giving of Himself, purified and made unto Him as special jewels, a peculiar people, are characterized by one thing—their zeal for good works.

Because of the grace of God, we learn, these followers of Jesus Christ are zealous of good works and in their daily experience they live "looking." The Christian should always live in joyous anticipation of the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ!

Now, there is something in Christian theology that I want to share with you. Some people say they cannot bother with theology because they do not know either Greek or Hebrew. I cannot believe that there is any Christian who is so humble that he would insist that he knows nothing about theology.

Theology is the study of God and we have a very wonderful textbook—actually 66 textbooks rolled into one. We call it the Bible. The point I want to make is this: I have noted in study and in experience that the more vital and important any theological or doctrinal truth may be, the devil will fight it harder and bring greater controversy to bear upon it.

Consider the deity of Jesus, for example.

More and more people are arguing and debating and fighting over this absolutely vital and foundational truth.

The devil is smart enough not to waste his attacks on minor and nonvital aspects of Christian truth and teaching.

The devil will not cause any trouble for a preacher who is scared stiff of his congregation and worried about his job to the extent that he preaches for thirty minutes and the sum of what he says is "Be good and you will feel better!"

You can be as good as you want to and yet go to hell if you have not put your trust in Jesus Christ! The devil is not going to waste his time causing any trouble for the preacher whose only message is "Be good!"

But the believing Christian lives in joyful anticipation of the return of Jesus Christ and that is such an important segment of truth that the devil has always been geared up to fight it and ridicule it. One of his big successes is being able to get people to argue and get mad about the second coming—rather than looking and waiting for it.

Suppose a man has been overseas two or three years, away from his family. Suddenly a cable arrives for the family with the message, "My work completed here; I will be home today."

After some hours he arrives at the front door and finds the members of his family in turmoil. There had been a great argument as to whether he would arrive in the afternoon or evening. There had been arguments about what transportation he would be using. As a result, there were no little noses pushing against the window glass, no one looking to be able to catch the first glimpse of returning Daddy.

You may say, "That is only an illustration."

But what is the situation in the various segments of the Christian community?

They are fighting with one another and glaring at each other. They are debating whether He is coming and how He is coming and they are busy using what they consider to be proof texts about the fall of Rome and the identification of the anti-Christ.

Brethren, that is the work of the devil—to make Christian people argue about the details of His coming so they will forget the most important thing. How many Christians are so confused and bewildered by the arguments that they have forgotten that the Saviour has purified unto Himself a peculiar people, expecting that we will live soberly, righteously and godly, looking for the glorious appearing of the great God and Saviour.

That is the Epiphany, which is an expression in the Christian church, and it is used in reference to Christ's manifestation in the world.

It is used in two senses in 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy.

First, Paul says in 2 Timothy 1:8-10: "... God, who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

In that passage we have the record of His first appearing, the shining forth when He came into the world to abolish death by His death and resurrection.

Then, the apostle in one of those moving and wonderful doxologies, said in 1 Timothy 6:13-16: "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Paul speaks of the second appearing, when Christ "shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light

which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."

When I read something like this given us by the apostle Paul, it makes me think of a skylark or a meadowlark mounting a branch and bursting into an unexpected but brilliantly melodious song. Paul often breaks forth with one of his wonderful and uplifting ascriptions of praise to Jesus Christ in the midst of his epistles, and this is one of those!

Paul reminds Christian believers here that when Jesus Christ appears again, He will show forth, and leave no doubts at all as to the Person of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Paul was also careful to comfort those in the early church who feared that they might die before this second appearing of Jesus Christ. Actually, there were believers in the Thessalonian church who were worried on two counts, the first of which was their thought that the Lord had already come and they had been passed by. The second was their thought that they would die before He came and that through death, they would miss out on the joys of His appearing.

So, Paul wrote the two epistles to the Thessalonian church to straighten them out on the truth concerning Christ's second appearing.

"If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him"—that is, if you die and go to be with the Lord, God will bring you along with Jesus at His appearing—"for this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not (run ahead of those) which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

You see, Paul's inspired explanation instructs us that those who died before the coming of Jesus will not be at a disadvantage. If anything, they will be in a position of advantage, because before the Lord glorifies the waiting saints throughout the earth, He will raise in glorified bodies the great company of believers who have been parted from us by death throughout the centuries.

Brethren, that is very plainly what the apostle Paul tells us in the instructions originally given to the Thessalonian Christians.

Don't we have the right to think that it is very strange that the majority of the Christian pulpits are completely silent concerning this glorious truth of the imminent return of Jesus Christ? It is paradoxical that there should be this great silence in Christian churches at the very time when the danger of suddenly being swept off the face of the earth is greater than it has ever been.

Russia and the United States, the two great nuclear powers, continue to measure their ability to destroy in terms of *over-kill*. This is a terrible compound word never before used in the history of the English language. The scientists had to express the almost incredible destructive power of the nuclear bombs in our stockpiles—so the word *over-kill* is a new invention of our times.

Both the United States and Russia have made statements about the over-kill power of nuclear stockpiles sufficient to kill every man, woman and child in the world—not once, but 20 times over. That is over-kill!

Isn't it just like that old enemy, Satan, to persuade the saints in the Body of Christ to engage in bitter arguments about post-tribulation rapture and pre-tribulation rapture; post-millennialism, a-millennialism and pre-millennialism—right at the very hour when over-kill hangs over us like a black, threatening cloud.

Brethren, this is the kind of age and hour when the Lord's people should be so alert to the hope and promise of His coming that they should get up every morning just like a child on Christmas morning—eager and believing that it should be today!

Instead of that kind of expectancy, what do we find throughout His church today? Arguments pro and con about His coming, about the details of the rapture—and some of this to the point of bitterness. Otherwise, we find great segments of Christians who seem to be able to blithely ignore the whole matter of the return of Jesus Christ.

Very few ministers bother to preach from the Book of Revelation any more—and that is true of large areas of evangelicalism and fundamentalism, too! We have been intimidated by the cynicism and sophistication of our day.

There are so many apparent anomalies and contradictions in society and in the ranks of professing Christians that someone will certainly write a book about it.

There is the anomaly of the necessity of getting to know one another better in order to love and understand one another better. Millions are traveling and meeting other millions and getting acquainted, so if the premise is true, we ought all to love each other like one big blessed family.

Instead, we hate each other like the devil. It is true that all over the world the nations are hating each other in startling, record-breaking measure.

I will mention another contradiction that is all too apparent. Our educators and sociologists told us that all we had to do was allow the teaching of sexual education in the schools and all of our vexing sexual problems in society would disappear.

Is it not a strange anomaly that the generation that has been teaching and outlining more about sexual practices than any twenty-five generations combined did in the past is the generation that is the most rotten and perverted in sexual conduct?

And is it not strange, too, that the very generation that might expect to be atomized suddenly by over-kill is the generation that is afraid to talk about the coming of the Lord and unwilling to discuss His gracious promises of deliverance and glorification?

You may not expect me to say it, but I will: what a bunch of weirdies we are! What a strange generation we are!

God has said that He would place a great premium on the holy, spiritual consistency of the Christian saints, but how inconsistent we are when we allow the devil and our own carnality to confuse and mix us up so that we will be diverted from patient waiting for His appearing!

So, we live between two mighty events—that of His incarnation, death and resurrection, and that of His ultimate appearing and the glorification of those He died to save. This is the interim time for the saints—but it is not a vacuum. He has given us much to do and He asks for our faithfulness.

In the meantime, we are zealous of good works, living soberly, righteously, godly in this present world, looking unto Him and His promise. In the midst of our lives, and between the two great mountain peaks of God's acts in the world, we look back and remember, and we look forward and hope! As members of His own loving fellowship, we break the bread and drink the wine. We sing His praise and we pray in His Name, remembering and expecting!

Brethren, that moves me more than anything else in this world. It is such a blessed privilege that it is more beautiful and satisfying than friendships or paintings or sunsets or any other beauties of nature. Looking back to His grace and love; looking forward to His coming and glory; meanwhile actively working and joyously hoping—until He comes!

Excerpt from *Paths to Power*

Chapter 51. Miracles Follow the Plow

*Break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain
righteousness upon you. Hos. 10:12*

Here are two kinds of ground: fallow ground, and ground that has been broken up by the plow.

The fallow field is smug, contented, protected from the shock of the plow and the agitation of the harrow. Such a field, as it lies year after year, becomes a familiar landmark to the crow and the blue jay. Had it intelligence, it might take a lot of satisfaction in its reputation; it has stability; nature has adopted it; it can be counted upon to remain always the same while the fields around it change from brown to green and back to brown again. Safe and undisturbed, it sprawls lazily in the sunshine, the picture of sleepy contentment. But it is paying a terrible price for its tranquility: Never does it see the miracle of growth; never does it feel the motions of mounting life nor see the wonders of bursting seed nor the beauty of ripening grain. Fruit it can never know because it is afraid of the plow and the harrow.

In direct opposite to this, the cultivated field has yielded itself to the adventure of living. The protecting fence has opened to admit the plow, and the plow has come as plows always come, practical, cruel, business-like and in a hurry. Peace has been shattered by the shouting farmer and the rattle of machinery. The field has felt the travail of change; it has been upset, turned over, bruised and broken, but its rewards come hard upon its labors. The seed shoots up into the daylight its miracle of life, curious, exploring the new world above it. All over the field the hand of God is at work in the age-old and ever renewed service of creation. New things are born, to grow, mature, and consummate the grand prophecy latent in the seed when it entered the ground. Nature's wonders follow the plow.

There are two kinds of lives also: the fallow and the plowed. For examples of the fallow life we need not go far. They are all too plentiful among us.

The man of fallow life is contented with himself and the fruit he once bore. He does not want to be disturbed. He smiles in tolerant superiority at revivals, fastings, self-searchings, and all the travail of fruit-bearing and the anguish of advance. The spirit of adventure is dead within him. He is steady, "faithful," always in his accustomed place (like the old field), conservative, and something of a landmark in the little church. But he is fruitless. The curse of such a life is that it is fixed, both in size and in content. *To be* has taken the place of *to become*. The worst that can be said of such a man is that he *is* what he *will be*. He has fenced himself in, and by the same act, he has fenced out God and the miracle.

The plowed life is the life that has, in the act of repentance, thrown down the protecting fences and sent the plow of confession into the soul. The urge of the Spirit, the pressure of circumstances and the distress of fruitless living have combined thoroughly to humble the heart. Such a life has put away defense, and has forsaken the safety of death for the peril of life. Discontent, yearning, contrition, courageous obedience to the will of God: these have bruised and broken the soil till it is ready again for the seed. And as always fruit follows the plow. Life

and growth begin as God "rains down righteousness." Such a one can testify, "And the hand of the Lord was upon me there."

Corresponding to these two kinds of life, religious history shows two phases, the dynamic and the static.

The dynamic periods were those heroic times when God's people stirred themselves to do the Lord's bidding and went out fearlessly to carry His witness to the world. They exchanged the safety of inaction for the hazards of God-inspired progress. Invariably the power of God followed such action. The miracle of God went when and where His people went; it stayed when His people stopped.

The static periods were those times when the people of God tired of the struggle and sought a life of peace and security. Then they busied themselves trying to conserve the gains made in those more daring times when the power of God moved among them.

Bible history is replete with examples. Abraham "went out" on his great adventure of faith, and God went with him. Revelations, theophanies, the gift of Palestine, covenants and promises of rich blessings to come were the result. Then Israel went down into Egypt, and the wonders ceased for four hundred years. At the end of that time Moses heard the call of God and stepped forth to challenge the oppressor. A whirlwind of power accompanied that challenge, and Israel soon began to march. As long as she dared to march, God sent out His miracles to clear the way for her. Whenever she lay down like a fallow field, He turned off His blessing and waited for her to rise again and command His power.

This is a brief but fair outline of the history of Israel and of the Church as well. As long as they "went forth and preached everywhere," the Lord worked "with them.... confirming the word with signs following." But when they retreated to monasteries or played at building pretty cathedrals, the help of God was withdrawn till a Luther or a Wesley arose to challenge hell again. Then invariably God poured out His power as before.

In every denomination, missionary society, local church or individual Christian this law operates. God works as long as His people *live daringly*: He ceases when they no longer need His aid. As soon as we seek protection outside of God, we find it to our own undoing. Let us build a safety-wall of endowments, bylaws, prestige, multiplied agencies for the delegation of our duties, and creeping paralysis sets in at once, a paralysis which can only end in death.

The power of God comes only where it is called out by the plow. It is released into the Church only when she is doing something that demands it. By the word "doing" I do not mean mere activity. The Church has plenty of "hustle" as it is, but in all her activities she is very careful to leave her fallow ground mostly untouched. She is careful to confine her hustling within the fear-marked boundaries of complete safety. That is why she is fruitless; she is safe, but fallow.

Look around today and see where the miracles of power are taking place. Never in the seminary where each thought is prepared for the student, to be received painlessly and at second hand; never in the religious institution where tradition and habit have long ago made faith unnecessary; never in the old church where memorial tablets plastered over the furniture bear silent testimony to a glory that once was. Invariably where daring faith is struggling to advance against hopeless odds, there is God sending "help from the sanctuary."

In the missionary society with which I have for many years been associated, I have noticed that the power of God has always hovered over our frontiers. Miracles have accompanied our advances and have ceased when and where we allowed ourselves to become satisfied and ceased to advance. The creed of power cannot save a movement from barrenness. There must be also the

work of power. But I am more concerned with the effect of this truth upon the local church and the individual. Look at that church where plentiful fruit was once the regular and expected thing, but now there is little or no fruit, and the power of God seems to be in abeyance. What is the trouble? God has not changed, nor has His purpose for that church changed in the slightest measure. No, the church itself has changed.

A little self-examination will reveal that it and its members have become fallow. It has lived through its early travails and has now come to accept an easier way of life. It is content to carry on its painless program with enough money to pay its bills and a membership large enough to assure its future. Its members now look to it for security rather than for guidance in the battle between good and evil. It has become a school instead of a barracks. Its members are students, not soldiers. They study the experiences of others instead of seeking new experiences of their own.

The only way to power for such a church is to come out of hiding and once more take the danger-encircled path of obedience. Its security is its deadliest foe. The church that fears the plow writes its own epitaph: the church that uses the plow walks in the way of revival.

Excerpt from *Let My People Go*

Chapter 52. The Jaffray Pattern

Right here seems as good a place as any to look at the Jaffray philosophy of Christian missions. It was a simple philosophy based on New Testament principles and shot through with salty common sense. From it he evolved a pattern for his work, a pattern whose lines show through everything he did from his earliest South China days to the end of his life.

Whether Robert Jaffray ever sat down and reasoned out a policy is very doubtful. His mind did not work that way. He scooped his ideas on the move as a swallow at evening takes its supper on the wing. The Bible and a sound instinct guided him, and hard experience soon corrected any flaws in his theories. His views were never complex nor difficult to comprehend. The work of missions was fairly simple after all. It consisted chiefly of four things to do: contact, evangelize, organize and instruct. That was all. But in the doing of these essentials a man might toil a lifetime, and his toil would be fruitful, for these were the things Christ had sent His servants to do.

Contact was first. Nothing could be done until communication had been established. The missionary must go to the lost tribes. This was the basal tenet in his missionary creed, and to him it was the voice of command. It created within his mind an eager restlessness that never left him for one day nor one hour while life remained in him. The sight of a map or the sound of a strange heathen name stirred him as the sound of an alarm bell stirred the old fire horse of other days. So Jaffray was a pioneer, an explorer, an adventurer obsessed with the urge to discover new peoples and hidden tribes.

It is this aspect of missionary work that captures the imagination of the public. We are all children enough to love the thrill of missionary adventure enjoyed by proxy, and Jaffray knew this. As a good showman he was willing to give the people at home what they wanted. His newsletters and magazine articles often read like real tales of the wild, but they were never told for their own sake nor for mere amusement. Jaffray was altogether too serious for any such child's play. If he could win attention with honest reports of exotic customs and curious ways of strange peoples, he was not adverse to doing it, but always his motives were in full view. He wanted help. He wanted money, lots of it, but more than all, he wanted young men to hurry over and help him with the job. And they came, these young men, and they came winged with prayer and backed with the consecrated wealth of the people at home.

After contact came evangelization. Christ had told His disciples to go into all the world and make disciples. To Jaffray that could mean only one thing: win lost men to Christ now, bring them to trust Him as their personal Saviour at once, without waiting for civilizing influences or long courses of instruction to condition them. They had but to hear the Gospel and they could be saved, as certainly as any white man could.

That was Jaffray's theory, and its soundness was confirmed in man-to-man practice. It worked, that was the glory of it. Lives were actually changed overnight, transformed by this simple technique. Men could and did jump from raw savagery into the kingdom of God at one

bound, and for the most part, those who made the great transition lived to prove that the change was real and permanent.

The next step was to organize these new Christians into a church. It would need to be a simple thing at first, little more than a loose, common-consent kind of organization with certain men among them picked to act as leaders and give some direction to the group. Later it could go on to a more perfect form of organization with a pastor, deacons and elders; but that could wait, for the missionary would act as the real leader until the new converts had been better instructed. Ecclesiastical-minded persons may smile at this, but it worked, and it still works, and that fact cannot be smiled away.

Then, this new church must be taught the great truths of the Christian faith, must be instructed, indoctrinated, and to accomplish this two means were required: the school and the printing press. These came after organization, and where Jaffray could have his way, not long after.

The printing press was to Jaffray what hand-written epistles were to Paul, a means of keeping in touch with his converts as they increased in number, and distances made personal contact impossible. Then too, the press made available to these new Christians the best in spiritual literature. Usually Jaffray's presses turned out matter written by himself and addressed to particular needs, but they produced also books, tracts, magazines, Bible courses, and expositions of one after another of the books of the Bible as he could prepare them and as he felt the people were ready to receive them.

Along with the printing press stood the Bible School as an effective instrument for the dissemination of the truth. Jaffray believed in the Bible School with a positiveness amounting to sheer dogmatism. He knew its power and promoted it with unremitting zeal. Foreign missionaries would never be the last word in the evangelization of any country. The best and swiftest work would always be done by Christian nationals operating among their own people. But these must first be taught the truth and trained for the most effective service. The Bible School could do this; there was no other agent that could. So every field must have a school; at least one, and more if the need demanded. That was Jaffray's view, and again its soundness was confirmed in practical outwork.

The speed with which the Christian faith spread among the hitherto unreached peoples testifies to the fact that Jaffray's vision was divinely given. He would never allow his workers to huddle together; they were expected to spread out, always spread out and stay on the move. He was so insistent upon this that some of his workers were at times led to question his wisdom, and a few dared to oppose him outright. Usually subsequent developments justified him, however, and the doubters were forced to acknowledge that he had been right.

"Of course," said one official before whom he appeared to request permission to preach the Gospel within his territory, "of course you will concentrate your forces?"

"Certainly," agreed Jaffray quickly. Then stepping to the wall where hung a huge map of the country, he touched with his finger one after another spot on the map.

"We'll concentrate here, and here, and here, and here."

"Why, how many missionaries have you?" asked the astonished official.

"Six," replied Jaffray, unsmiling.

It was this strategy of "concentrating" all over the map that gave such thrust to his missionary drives.

In spite, however, of this blitz-like speed of advance he never fell into the error current today in some quarters—he never believed he had done the Lord's work merely by announcing

the Gospel and moving on. He would not leave the new Christians to fall back into heathenism. Wherever a few converts were made, there a church must be formed; gains must be consolidated. Then the messenger could go on, but not till then. This was wisdom and it was New Testament procedure. It might well serve as a pattern for all missionary societies everywhere.

The notion that we have only to announce the Gospel once to each tribe and then pass on to the next without regard to results is as old as it is false. Though it is the philosophy back of much present-day missionary enterprise, it is nevertheless a plain heresy of method based upon a misreading of orders. It is interesting to know that Wesley and his Methodists had this to face in their early missionary activities, and it is instructive to learn how they handled it.

In one section of the old Methodist Discipline published in 1848 and bearing (I would guess) from an earlier day the marks of Wesley's own mind, under the head, "Rules by which we should Continue, or Desist from, Preaching at any Place," the question is asked, "Is it advisable for us to preach in as many places as we can without forming any societies?" The answer is emphatic. "By no means. We have made the trail in various places; and that for considerable time. But all the seed has fallen by the wayside. There is scarcely any fruit remaining."

Jaffray was of Presbyterian stock, and it is doubtful whether he ever gave much attention to the ways of the early Methodists, but in the hot fires of experience he learned the same lessons they had learned before him and he arrived at the same conclusions. This may not be the last word that can be spoken on the subject, but the wise missionary will listen respectfully to these masters. They bring to the support of their philosophy the unanswerable argument of overwhelming success.

Excerpts from *The Knowledge of the Holy*

Chapter 53. The Immutability of God

O Christ our Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. As conies to their rock, so have we run to Thee for safety; as birds from their wanderings, so have we flown to Thee for peace. Chance and change are busy in our little world of nature and men, but in Thee we find no variableness nor shadow of turning. We rest in Thee without fear or doubt and face our tomorrows without anxiety. Amen.

The immutability of God is among those attributes less difficult to understand, but to grasp it we must discipline ourselves to sort out the usual thoughts with which we think of created things from the rarer ones that arise when we try to lay hold of whatever may be comprehended of God.

To say that God is immutable is to say that He never differs from Himself. The concept of a growing or developing God is not found in the Scriptures. It seems to me impossible to think of God as varying from Himself in any way. Here is why:

For a moral being to change it would be necessary that the change be in one of three directions. He must go from better to worse or from worse to better; or, granted that the moral quality remain stable, he must change within himself, as from immature to mature or from one order of being to another. It should be clear that God can move in none of these directions. His perfections forever rule out any such possibility.

God cannot change for the better. Since He is perfectly holy, He has never been less holy than He is now and can never be holier than He is and has always been. Neither can God change for the worse. Any deterioration within the unspeakably holy nature of God is impossible. Indeed I believe it impossible even to think of such a thing, for the moment we attempt to do so, the object about which we are thinking is no longer God but something else and someone less than He. The one of whom we are thinking may be a great and awesome creature, but because he is a creature he cannot be the self-existent Creator.

As there can be no mutation in the moral character of God, so there can be none within the divine essence. The being of God is unique in the only proper meaning of that word; that is, His being is other than and different from all other beings. We have seen how God differs from His creatures in being self-existent, self-sufficient, and eternal. By virtue of these attributes God is God and not some other being. One who can suffer any slightest degree of change is neither self-existent, self-sufficient, nor eternal, and so is not God.

Only a being composed of parts may change, for change is basically a shift in the relation of the parts of a whole or the admission of some foreign element into the original composition. Since God is self-existent, He is not composed. There are in Him no parts to be altered. And since He is self-sufficient, nothing can enter His being from without.

"Whatever is composed of parts," says Anselm, "is not altogether one, but is in some sort plural, and diverse from itself; and either in fact or in concept is capable of dissolution. But these things are alien to Thee, than whom nothing better can be conceived of. Hence, there are no parts in Thee, Lord, nor art Thou more than one. But Thou art so truly a unitary being, and so identical

with Thyself, that in no respect art Thou unlike Thyself; rather Thou art unity itself, indivisible by any conception."

"All that God is He has always been, and all that He has been and is He will ever be." Nothing that God has ever said about Himself will be modified; nothing the inspired prophets and apostles have said about Him will be rescinded. His immutability guarantees this.

The immutability of God appears in its most perfect beauty when viewed against the mutability of men. In God no change is possible; in men change is impossible to escape. Neither the man is fixed nor his world, but he and it are in constant flux. Each man appears for a little while to laugh and weep, to work and play, and then to go to make room for those who shall follow him in the never-ending cycle.

Certain poets have found a morbid pleasure in the law of impermanence and have sung in a minor key the song of perpetual change. Omar the tentmaker was one who sang with pathos and humor of mutation and mortality, the twin diseases that afflict mankind. "Don't slap that clay around so roughly," he exhorts the potter, "that may be your grandfather's dust you make so free with." "When you lift the cup to drink red wine," he reminds the reveler, "you may be kissing the lips of some beauty dead long ago."

This note of sweet sorrow expressed with gentle humor gives a radiant beauty to his quatrains but, however beautiful, the whole long poem is sick, sick unto death. Like the bird charmed by the serpent that would devour it, the poet is fascinated by the enemy that is destroying him and all men and every generation of men.

The sacred writers, too, face up to man's mutability, but they are healthy men and there is a wholesome strength in their words. They have found the cure for the great sickness. God, they say, changes not. The law of mutation belongs to a fallen world, but God is immutable, and in Him men of faith find at last eternal permanence. In the meanwhile change works for the children of the kingdom, not against them. The changes that occur in them are wrought by the hand of the inliving Spirit. "But we all," says the apostle, "with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

In a world of change and decay not even the man of faith can be completely happy. Instinctively he seeks the unchanging and is bereaved at the passing of dear familiar things.

*O Lord! my heart is sick,
Sick of this everlasting change;
And life runs tediously quick
Through its unresting race and varied range:
Change finds no likeness to itself in Thee,
And wakes no echo in Thy mute Eternity.*

Frederick W. Faber

These words of Faber find sympathetic response in every heart; yet much as we may deplore the lack of stability in all earthly things, in a fallen world such as this the very *ability* to change is a golden treasure, a gift from God of such fabulous worth as to call for constant thanksgiving. For human beings the whole possibility of redemption lies in their ability to change. To move across from one sort of person to another is the essence of repentance: the liar becomes truthful, the thief honest, the lewd pure, the proud humble. The whole moral texture of the life is altered. The thoughts, the desires, the affections are transformed, and the man is no longer what he had been before. So

radical is this change that the apostle calls the man that used to be "the old man" and the man that now is "the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

Yet the change is deeper and more basic than any external acts can reveal, for it includes also the reception of life of another and higher quality. The old man, even at his best, possesses only the life of Adam: the new man has the life of God. And this is more than a mere manner of speaking; it is quite literally true. When God infuses eternal life into the spirit of a man, the man becomes a member of a new and higher order of being.

In the working out of His redemptive processes the unchanging God makes full use of change and through a succession of changes arrives at permanence at last. In the Book of Hebrews this is shown most clearly. "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second," is a kind of summation of the teaching of that remarkable book. The old covenant, as something provisional, was abolished, and the new and everlasting covenant took its place. The blood of goats and bulls lost its significance when the blood of the Paschal Lamb was shed. The law, the altar, the priesthood—all were temporary and subject to change; now the eternal law of God is engraven forever on the living, sensitive stuff of which the human soul is composed. The ancient sanctuary is no more, but the new sanctuary is eternal in the heavens and there the Son of God has His eternal priesthood.

Here we see that God uses change as a lowly servant to bless His redeemed household, but He Himself is outside of the law of mutation and is unaffected by any changes that occur in the universe.

*And all things as they change proclaim
The Lord eternally the same.*

Charles Wesley

Again the question of use arises. "Of what use to me is the knowledge that God is immutable?" someone asks. "Is not the whole thing mere metaphysical speculation? Something that might bring a certain satisfaction to persons of a particular type of mind but can have no real significance for practical men?"

If by "practical men" we mean unbelievers engrossed in secular affairs and indifferent to the claims of Christ, the welfare of their own souls, or the interests of the world to come, then for them such a book as this can have no meaning at all; nor, unfortunately, can any other book that takes religion seriously. But while such men may be in the majority, they do not by any means compose the whole of the population. There are still the seven thousand who have not bowed their knees to Baal. These believe they were created to worship God and to enjoy His presence forever, and they are eager to learn all they can about the God with whom they expect to spend eternity.

In this world where men forget us, change their attitude toward us as their private interests dictate, and revise their opinion of us for the slightest cause, is it not a source of wondrous strength to know that the God with whom we have to do changes not? That His attitude toward us now is the same as it was in eternity past and will be in eternity to come?

What peace it brings to the Christian's heart to realize that our Heavenly Father never differs from Himself. In coming to Him at any time we need not wonder whether we shall find Him in a receptive mood. He is always receptive to misery and need, as well as to love and faith. He does not keep office hours nor set aside periods when He will see no one. Neither does He change His mind about anything. Today, this moment, He feels toward His creatures, toward

babies, toward the sick, the fallen, the sinful, exactly as He did when He sent His only-begotten Son into the world to die for mankind.

God never changes moods or cools off in His affections or loses enthusiasm. His attitude toward sin is now the same as it was when He drove out the sinful man from the eastward garden, and His attitude toward the sinner the same as when He stretched forth His hands and cried, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

God will not compromise and He need not be coaxed. He cannot be persuaded to alter His Word nor talked into answering selfish prayer. In all our efforts to find God, to please Him, to commune with Him, we should remember that all change must be on our part. "I am the Lord, I change not." We have but to meet His clearly stated terms, bring our lives into accord with His revealed will, and His infinite power will become instantly operative toward us in the manner set forth through the gospel in the Scriptures of truth.

*Fountain of being! Source of Good!
Immutable Thou dost remain!
Nor can the shadow of a change
Obscure the glories of Thy reign.*

*Earth may with all her powers dissolve,
If such the great Creator will;
But Thou for ever art the same,
I AM is Thy memorial still.*

From Walker's Collection

Chapter 54.

The Justice of God

Our Father, we love Thee for Thy justice. We acknowledge that Thy judgments are true and righteous altogether. Thy justice upholds the order of the universe and guarantees the safety of all who put their trust in Thee. We live because Thou art just—and merciful. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, righteous in all Thy ways and holy in all Thy works. Amen.

In the inspired Scriptures justice and righteousness are scarcely to be distinguished from each other. The same word in the original becomes in English *justice* or *righteousness*, almost, one would suspect, at the whim of the translator.

The Old Testament asserts God's justice in language clear and full, and as beautiful as may be found anywhere in the literature of mankind. When the destruction of Sodom was announced, Abraham interceded for the righteous within the city, reminding God that he knew He would act like Himself in the human emergency. "That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

The concept of God held by the psalmists and prophets of Israel was that of an all-powerful ruler, high and lifted up, reigning in equity. "Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Of the long-awaited Messiah it was prophesied that when He came He should judge the people with righteousness and the poor with judgment. Holy men of tender compassion, outraged by the inequity of the world's rulers, prayed, "O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself. Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud. Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?" And this is to be understood not as a plea for personal vengeance but as a longing to see moral equity prevail in human society.

Such men as David and Daniel acknowledged their own unrighteousness in contrast to the righteousness of God, and as a result their penitential prayers gained great power and effectiveness. "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces." And when the long-withheld judgment of God begins to fall upon the world, John sees the victorious saints standing upon a sea of glass mingled with fire. In their hands they hold the harps of God; the song they sing is the song of Moses and the Lamb, and the theme of their song is the divine justice. "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou alone art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest."

Justice embodies the idea of moral equity, and iniquity is the exact opposite; it is *in* - equity, the absence of equality from human thoughts and acts. Judgment is the application of equity to moral situations and may be favorable or unfavorable according to whether the one under examination has been equitable or inequitable in heart and conduct.

It is sometimes said, "Justice requires God to do this," referring to some act we know He will perform. This is an error of thinking as well as of speaking, for it postulates a principle of justice outside of God which compels Him to act in a certain way. Of course there is no such principle. If there were it would be superior to God, for only a superior power can compel obedience. The truth is that there is not and can never be anything outside of the nature of God which can move Him in the least degree. All God's reasons come from within His uncreated

being. Nothing has entered the being of God from eternity, nothing has been removed, and nothing has been changed.

Justice, when used of God, is a name we give to the way God is, nothing more; and when God acts justly He is not doing so to conform to an independent criterion, but simply acting like Himself in a given situation. As gold is an element in itself and can never change nor compromise but is gold wherever it is found, so God is God, always, only, fully God, and can never be other than He is. Everything in the universe is good to the degree it conforms to the nature of God and evil as it fails to do so. God is His own self-existent principle of moral equity, and when He sentences evil men or rewards the righteous, He simply acts like Himself from within, uninfluenced by anything that is not Himself.

All this seems, but only seems, to destroy the hope of justification for the returning sinner. The Christian philosopher and saint, Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, sought a solution to the apparent contradiction between the justice and the mercy of God. "How dost Thou spare the wicked," he inquired of God, "if Thou art all just and supremely just?" Then he looked straight at God for the answer, for he knew that it lies in *what God is*. Anselm's findings may be paraphrased this way: God's being is unitary; it is not composed of a number of parts working harmoniously, but simply one. There is nothing in His justice which forbids the exercise of His mercy. To think of God as we sometimes think of a court where a kindly judge, compelled by law, sentences a man to death with tears and apologies, is to think in a manner wholly unworthy of the true God. God is never at cross-purposes with Himself. No attribute of God is in conflict with another.

God's compassion flows out of His goodness, and goodness without justice is not goodness. God spares us because He is good, but He could not be good if He were not just. When God punishes the wicked, Anselm concludes, it is just because it is consistent with their deserts; and when He spares the wicked it is just because it is compatible with His goodness; so God does what becomes Him as the supremely good God. This is reason seeking to understand, not that it may believe but because it already believes.

A simpler and more familiar solution for the problem of how God can be just and still justify the unjust is found in the Christian doctrine of redemption. It is that, through the work of Christ in atonement, justice is not violated but satisfied when God spares a sinner. Redemptive theology teaches that mercy does not become effective toward a man until justice has done its work. The just penalty for sin was exacted when Christ our Substitute died for us on the cross. However unpleasant this may sound to the ear of the natural man, it has ever been sweet to the ear of faith. Millions have been morally and spiritually transformed by this message, have lived lives of great moral power, and died at last peacefully trusting in it.

This message of justice discharged and mercy operative is more than a pleasant theological theory; it announces a fact made necessary by our deep human need. Because of our sin we are all under sentence of death, a judgment which resulted when justice confronted our moral situation. When infinite equity encountered our chronic and willful inequity, there was violent war between the two, a war which God won and must always win. But when the penitent sinner casts himself upon Christ for salvation, the moral situation is reversed. Justice confronts the changed situation and pronounces the believing man just. Thus justice actually goes over to the side of God's trusting children. This is the meaning of those daring words of the apostle John: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

But God's justice stands forever against the sinner in utter severity. The vague and tenuous hope that God is too kind to punish the ungodly has become a deadly opiate for the consciences of millions. It hushes their fears and allows them to practice all pleasant forms of iniquity while death draws every day nearer and the command to repent goes unregarded. As responsible moral beings we dare not so trifle with our eternal future.

*Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.*

*Bold shall I stand in Thy great day;
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully absolved through these I am—
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.*
Count N. L. von Zinzendorf

Chapter 55.

The Mercy of God

Holy Father, Thy wisdom excites our admiration, Thy power fills us with fear, Thy omnipresence turns every spot of earth into holy ground; but how shall we thank Thee enough for Thy mercy which comes down to the lowest part of our need to give us beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and for the spirit of heaviness a garment of praise? We bless and magnify Thy mercy, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

When through the blood of the everlasting covenant we children of the shadows reach at last our home in the light, we shall have a thousand strings to our harps, but the sweetest may well be the one tuned to sound forth most perfectly the mercy of God.

For what right will we have to be there? Did we not by our sins take part in that unholy rebellion which rashly sought to dethrone the glorious King of creation? And did we not in times past walk according to the course of this world, according to the evil prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the sons of disobedience? And did we not all once live in the lusts of our flesh? And were we not by nature the children of wrath, even as others? But we who were one time enemies and alienated in our minds through wicked works shall then see God face to face and His name shall be on our foreheads. We who earned banishment shall enjoy communion; we who deserve the pains of hell shall know the bliss of heaven. And all through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us.

*When all Thy mercies, O my God,
My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
In wonder, love, and praise.*

Joseph Addison

Mercy is an attribute of God, an infinite and inexhaustible energy within the divine nature which disposes God to be actively compassionate. Both the Old and the New Testaments proclaim the mercy of God, but the Old has more than four times as much to say about it as the New.

We should banish from our minds forever the common but erroneous notion that justice and judgment characterize the God of Israel, while mercy and grace belong to the Lord of the Church. Actually there is in principle no difference between the Old Testament and the New. In the New Testament Scriptures there is a fuller development of redemptive truth, but one God speaks in both dispensations, and what He speaks agrees with what He is. Wherever and whenever God appears to men, He acts like Himself. Whether in the Garden of Eden or the Garden of Gethsemane, God is merciful as well as just. He has always dealt in mercy with mankind and will always deal in justice when His mercy is despised. Thus He did in antediluvian times; thus when Christ walked among men; thus He is doing today and will continue always to do for no other reason than that He is God.

If we could remember that the divine mercy is not a temporary mood but an attribute of God's eternal being, we would no longer fear that it will someday cease to be. Mercy never began to be, but from eternity was; so it will never cease to be. It will never be more since it is in itself infinite; and it will never be less because the infinite cannot suffer diminution. Nothing that

has occurred or will occur in heaven or earth or hell can change the tender mercies of our God. Forever His mercy stands, a boundless, overwhelming immensity of divine pity and compassion.

As judgment is God's justice confronting moral inequity, so mercy is the goodness of God confronting human suffering and guilt. Were there no guilt in the world, no pain and no tears, God would yet be infinitely merciful; but His mercy might well remain hidden in His heart, unknown to the created universe. No voice would be raised to celebrate the mercy of which none felt the need. It is human misery and sin that call forth the divine mercy.

"Kyrie eleison! Christe eleison!" the Church has pleaded through the centuries; but if I mistake not I hear in the voice of her pleading a note of sadness and despair. Her plaintive cry, so often repeated in that tone of resigned dejection, compels one to infer that she is praying for a boon she never actually expects to receive. She may go on dutifully to sing of the greatness of God and to recite the creed times beyond number, but her plea for mercy sounds like a forlorn hope and no more, as if mercy were a heavenly gift to be longed for but never really enjoyed.

Could our failure to capture the pure joy of mercy consciously experienced be the result of our unbelief or our ignorance, or both? It was so once in Israel. "I bear them record," Paul testified of Israel, "that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." They failed because there was at least one thing they did not know, one thing that would have made the difference. And of Israel in the wilderness the Hebrew writer says, "But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." To receive mercy we must first know that God is merciful. And it is not enough to believe that He once showed mercy to Noah or Abraham or David and will again show mercy in some happy future day. We must believe that God's mercy is boundless, free and, through Jesus Christ our Lord, available to us now in our present situation.

We may plead for mercy for a lifetime in unbelief, and at the end of our days be still no more than sadly hopeful that we shall somewhere, sometime, receive it. This is to starve to death just outside the banquet hall into which we have been warmly invited. Or we may, if we will, lay hold on the mercy of God by faith, enter the hall, and sit down with the bold and avid souls who will not allow diffidence and unbelief to keep them from the feast of fat things prepared for them.

*Arise, my soul, arise;
Shake off thy guilty fears;
The bleeding Sacrifice
In my behalf appears:
Before the throne my Surety stands,
My name is written on His Hands.*

*My God is reconciled;
His pardoning voice I hear:
He owns me for His child;
I can no longer fear:
With confidence I now draw nigh
And "Father, Abba, Father," cry.*
Charles Wesley

Chapter 56.

The Sovereignty of God

Who wouldst not fear Thee, O Lord God of Hosts, most high and most terrible? For Thou art Lord alone. Thou hast made heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth and all things that are therein, and in Thy hand is the soul of every living thing. Thou sittest king upon the flood; yea, Thou sittest king forever. Thou art a great king over all the the earth. Thou art clothed with strength; honor and majesty are before Thee. Amen.

God's sovereignty is the attribute by which He rules His entire creation, and to be sovereign God must be all-knowing, all-powerful, and absolutely free. The reasons are these:

Were there even one datum of knowledge, however small, unknown to God, His rule would break down at that point. To be Lord over all the creation, He must possess all knowledge. And were God lacking one infinitesimal modicum of power, that lack would end His reign and undo His kingdom; that one stray atom of power would belong to someone else and God would be a limited ruler and hence not sovereign.

Furthermore, His sovereignty requires that He be absolutely free, which means simply that He must be free to do whatever He wills to do anywhere at any time to carry out His eternal purpose in every single detail without interference. Were He less than free He must be less than sovereign.

To grasp the idea of unqualified freedom requires a vigorous effort of the mind. We are not psychologically conditioned to understand freedom except in its imperfect forms. Our concepts of it have been shaped in a world where no absolute freedom exists. Here each natural object is dependent upon many other objects, and that dependence limits its freedom.

Wordsworth at the beginning of his "Prelude" rejoiced that he had escaped the city where he had long been pent up and was "now free, free as a bird to settle where I will." But to be free as a bird is not to be free at all. The naturalist knows that the supposedly free bird actually lives its entire life in a cage made of fears, hungers, and instincts; it is limited by weather conditions, varying air pressures, the local food supply, predatory beasts, and that strangest of all bonds, the irresistible compulsion to stay within the small plot of land and air assigned it by birdland comity. The freest bird is, along with every other created thing, held in constant check by a net of necessity. Only God is free.

God is said to be absolutely free because no one and no thing can hinder Him or compel Him or stop Him. He is able to do as He pleases always, everywhere, forever. To be thus free means also that He must possess universal authority. That He has unlimited power we know from the Scriptures and may deduce from certain other of His attributes. But what about His authority?

Even to discuss the authority of Almighty God seems a bit meaningless, and to question it would be absurd. Can we imagine the Lord God of Hosts having to request permission of anyone or to apply for anything to a higher body? To whom would God go for permission? Who is higher than the Highest? Who is mightier than the Almighty? Whose position antedates that of the Eternal? At whose throne would God kneel? Where is the greater one to whom He must appeal? "Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God."

The sovereignty of God is a fact well established in the Scriptures and declared aloud by the logic of truth. But admittedly it raises certain problems which have not to this time been satisfactorily solved. These are mainly two.

The first is the presence in the creation of those things which God cannot approve, such as evil, pain, and death. If God is sovereign He could have prevented their coming into existence. Why did He not do so?

The *Zend-Avesta*, sacred book of Zoroastrianism, loftiest of the great non-Biblical religions, got around this difficulty neatly enough by postulating a theological dualism. There were two Gods, Ormazd and Ahriman, and these between them created the world. The good Ormazd made all good things and the evil Ahriman made the rest. It was quite simple. Ormazd had no sovereignty to worry about, and apparently did not mind sharing his prerogatives with another.

For the Christian this explanation will not do, for it flatly contradicts the truth taught so emphatically throughout the whole Bible, that there is one God and that He alone created the heaven and the earth and all the things that are therein. God's attributes are such as to make impossible the existence of another God. The Christian admits that he does not have the final answer to the riddle of permitted evil. But he knows what that answer is not. And he knows that the *Zend-Avesta* does not have it either.

While a complete explanation of the origin of sin eludes us, there are a few things we do know. In His sovereign wisdom God has permitted evil to exist in carefully restricted areas of His creation, a kind of fugitive outlaw whose activities are temporary and limited in scope. In doing this God has acted according to His infinite wisdom and goodness. More than that no one knows at present; and more than that no one needs to know. The name of God is sufficient guarantee of the perfection of His works.

Another real problem created by the doctrine of the divine sovereignty has to do with the will of man. If God rules His universe by His sovereign decrees, how is it possible for man to exercise free choice? And if he cannot exercise freedom of choice, how can he be held responsible for his conduct? Is he not a mere puppet whose actions are determined by a behind-the-scenes God who pulls the strings as it pleases Him?

The attempt to answer these questions has divided the Christian church neatly into two camps which have borne the names of two distinguished theologians, Jacobus Arminius and John Calvin. Most Christians are content to get into one camp or the other and deny either sovereignty to God or free will to man. It appears possible, however, to reconcile these two positions without doing violence to either, although the effort that follows may prove deficient to partisans of one camp or the other.

Here is my view: God sovereignly decreed that man should be free to exercise moral choice, and man from the beginning has fulfilled that decree by making his choice between good and evil. When he chooses to do evil, he does not thereby countervail the sovereign will of God but fulfills it, inasmuch as the eternal decree decided not which choice the man should make but that he should be free to make it. If in His absolute freedom God has willed to give man limited freedom, who is there to stay His hand or say, "What doest thou?" Man's will is free because God is sovereign. A God less than sovereign could not bestow moral freedom upon His creatures. He would be afraid to do so.

Perhaps a homely illustration might help us to understand. An ocean liner leaves New York bound for Liverpool. Its destination has been determined by proper authorities. Nothing can change it. This is at least a faint picture of sovereignty.

On board the liner are several scores of passengers. These are not in chains, neither are their activities determined for them by decree. They are completely free to move about as they will. They eat, sleep, play, lounge about on the deck, read, talk, altogether as they please; but all the while the great liner is carrying them steadily onward toward a predetermined port.

Both freedom and sovereignty are present here and they do not contradict each other. So it is, I believe, with man's freedom and the sovereignty of God. The mighty liner of God's sovereign design keeps its steady course over the sea of history. God moves undisturbed and unhindered toward the fulfillment of those eternal purposes which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began. We do not know all that is included in those purposes, but enough has been disclosed to furnish us with a broad outline of things to come and to give us good hope and firm assurance of future well-being.

We know that God will fulfill every promise made to the prophets; we know that sinners will some day be cleansed out of the earth; we know that a ransomed company will enter into the joy of God and that the righteous will shine forth in the kingdom of their Father; we know that God's perfections will yet receive universal acclamation, that all created intelligences will own Jesus Christ Lord to the glory of God the Father, that the present imperfect order will be done away, and a new heaven and a new earth be established forever.

Toward all this God is moving with infinite wisdom and perfect precision of action. No one can dissuade Him from His purposes; nothing turn Him aside from His plans. Since He is omniscient, there can be no unforeseen circumstances, no accidents. As He is sovereign, there can be no countermanded orders, no breakdown in authority; and as He is omnipotent, there can be no want of power to achieve His chosen ends. God is sufficient unto Himself for all these things.

In the meanwhile things are not as smooth as this quick outline might suggest. The mystery of iniquity doth already work. Within the broad field of God's sovereign, permissive will the deadly conflict of good with evil continues with increasing fury. God will yet have His way in the whirlwind and the storm, but the storm and the whirlwind are here, and as responsible beings we must make our choice in the present moral situation.

Certain things have been decreed by the free determination of God, and one of these is the law of choice and consequences. God has decreed that all who willingly commit themselves to His Son Jesus Christ in the obedience of faith shall receive eternal life and become sons of God. He has also decreed that all who love darkness and continue in rebellion against the high authority of heaven shall remain in a state of spiritual alienation and suffer eternal death at last.

Reducing the whole matter to individual terms, we arrive at some vital and highly personal conclusions. In the moral conflict now raging around us whoever is on God's side is on the winning side and cannot lose; whoever is on the other side is on the losing side and cannot win. Here there is no chance, no gamble. There is freedom to choose which side we shall be on but no freedom to negotiate the results of the choice once it is made. By the mercy of God we may repent a wrong choice and alter the consequences by making a new and right choice. Beyond that we cannot go.

The whole matter of moral choice centers around Jesus Christ. Christ stated it plainly: "He that is not with me is against me," and "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." The gospel message embodies three distinct elements: an announcement, a command, and a call. It announces the good news of redemption accomplished in mercy; it commands all men everywhere to repent and it calls all men to surrender to the terms of grace by believing on Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

We must all choose whether we will obey the gospel or turn away in unbelief and reject its authority. Our choice is our own, but the consequences of the choice have already been determined by the sovereign will of God, and from this there is no appeal.

*The Lord descended from above,
And bowed the heavens most high,
And underneath His feet He cast
The darkness of the sky.*

*On cherubim and seraphim
Full royally He rode,
And on the wings of mighty winds
Came flying all abroad.*

*He sat serene upon the floods,
Their fury to restrain;
And He, as sovereign Lord and King,
For evermore shall reign.*

Psalm paraphrase,
by Thomas Sternhold

Excerpts from *The Divine Conquest*

Chapter 57. The Forgotten One

The comforter, which is the Holy Ghost. John 14:26

In neglecting or denying the deity of Christ the Liberals have committed a tragic blunder, for it leaves them nothing but an imperfect Christ whose death was a mere martyrdom and whose resurrection is a myth. They who follow a merely human Saviour follow no Saviour at all, but an ideal only, and one furthermore that can do no more than mock their weaknesses and sins. If Mary's son was not the Son of God in a sense no other man is, then there can be no more hope for the human race. If He who called Himself the Light of the World was only a flickering torch, then the darkness that enshrouds the earth is here to stay. So-called Christian leaders shrug this off, but their responsibility toward the souls of their flocks cannot be dismissed with a shrug. God will yet bring them to account for the injury they have done to the plain people who trusted them as spiritual guides.

But however culpable the act of the Liberal in denying the Godhood of Christ, we who pride ourselves on our orthodoxy must not allow our indignation to blind us to our own shortcomings. Certainly this is no time for self-congratulations, for we too have in recent years committed a costly blunder in religion, a blunder paralleling closely that of the Liberal. Our blunder (or shall we frankly say our sin?) has been to neglect the doctrine of the Spirit to a point where we virtually deny Him His place in the Godhead. This denial has not been by open doctrinal statement, for we have clung closely enough to the Biblical position wherever our credal pronouncements are concerned. Our formal creed is sound; *the breakdown is in our working creed.*

This is not a trifling distinction. A doctrine has practical value only as far as it is *prominent in our thoughts* and *makes a difference in our lives*. By this test the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as held by evangelical Christians today has almost no practical value at all. In most Christian churches the Spirit is quite entirely overlooked. Whether He is present or absent makes no real difference to anyone. Brief reference is made to Him in the Doxology and the Benediction. Further than that He might as well not exist. So completely do we ignore Him that it is only by courtesy that we can be called Trinitarian. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity boldly declares the equality of the Three Persons and the right of the Holy Spirit to be worshipped and glorified. Anything less than this is something less than Trinitarianism.

Our neglect of the doctrine of the blessed Third Person has had and is having serious consequences. For doctrine is dynamite. It must have emphasis sufficiently sharp to detonate it before its power is released. Failing this it may lie quiescent in the back of our minds for the whole of our lives without effect. The doctrine of the Spirit is buried dynamite. Its power awaits discovery and use by the Church. The power of the Spirit will not be given to any mincing assent to pneumatological truth. The Holy Spirit cares not at all whether we write Him into our credenda in the back of our hymnals; He waits for our *emphasis*. When He gets into the thinking of the teachers He will get into the expectation of the hearers. When the Holy Spirit ceases to be

incidental and again becomes fundamental the power of the Spirit will be asserted once more among the people called Christians.

The idea of the Spirit held by the average church member is so vague as to be nearly nonexistent. When he thinks of the matter at all he is likely to try to imagine a nebulous substance like a wisp of invisible smoke which is said to be present in churches and to hover over good people when they are dying. Frankly he does not believe in any such thing, but he wants to believe something, and not feeling up to the task of examining the whole truth in the light of Scripture he compromises by holding belief in the Spirit as far out from the center of his life as possible, letting it make no difference in anything that touches him practically. This describes a surprisingly large number of earnest persons who are sincerely trying to be Christians.

Now, how should we think of the Spirit? A full answer might well run to a dozen volumes. We can at best only point to the "gracious Unction from above" and hope that the reader's own desire may provide the necessary stimulus to urge him on to know the blessed Third Person for himself.

If I read aright the record of Christian experience through the years, those who most enjoyed the power of the Spirit have had the least to say about Him by way of attempted definition. The Bible saint who walked in the Spirit never tried to explain Him. In post-Biblical times many who were filled and possessed by the Spirit were by the limitations of their literary gifts prevented from telling us much about Him. They had no gift for self-analysis, but lived from within in uncritical simplicity. To them the Spirit was One to be loved and fellowshiped the same as the Lord Jesus Himself. They would have been lost completely in any metaphysical discussion of the nature of the Spirit, but they had no trouble in claiming the power of the Spirit for holy living and fruitful service.

This is as it should be. Personal experience must always be first in real life. The most important thing is that we experience reality by the shortest and most direct method. A child may eat nutritious food without knowing anything about chemistry or diatetics. A country boy may know the delights of pure love while never having heard of Sigmund Freud or Havelock Ellis. Knowledge by acquaintance is always better than mere knowledge by description, and the first does not presuppose the second nor require it.

In religion more than in any other field of human experience a sharp distinction must always be made between *knowing about* and *knowing*. The distinction is the same as between knowing about food and actually eating it. A man can die of starvation knowing all about bread, and a man can remain spiritually dead while knowing all the historic facts of Christianity. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent." We have but to introduce one extra word into this verse to see how vast is the difference between knowing about and knowing. "This is life eternal, that they might know *about* thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent." That one word makes all the difference between life and death, for it goes to the very root of the verse and changes its theology radically and vitally.

For all this we would not underestimate the importance of mere knowing about. Its value lies in its ability to rouse us to desire to know in actual experience. Thus knowledge by description may lead on to knowledge by acquaintance. *May* lead on, I say, but does not necessarily do so. Thus we dare not conclude that because we learn about the Spirit we for that reason actually know Him. Knowing Him comes only by a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit himself.

How shall we think of the Spirit? A great deal can be learned about the Holy Spirit from the word *spirit* itself. Spirit means existence on a level above and beyond matter; it means life subsisting in another mode. Spirit is substance that has no weight, no dimension, no size nor extension in space. These qualities belong to matter and can have no application to spirit. Yet spirit has true being and is objectively real. If this is hard to visualize, just pass it up, for it is at best but a clumsy attempt of the mind to grasp that which is above the mind's powers. And no harm is done if in our thinking about the Spirit we are forced by the limitations of our intellects to clothe Him in the familiar habiliments of material form.

How shall we think of the Spirit? The Bible and Christian theology agree to teach that He is a Person, endowed with every quality of personality, such as emotion, intellect and will. He knows, He wills, He loves; He feels affection, antipathy and compassion. He thinks, sees, hears and speaks and performs any act of which personality is capable.

One quality belonging to the Holy Spirit, of great interest and importance to every seeking heart, is penetrability. He can penetrate matter, such as the human body; He can penetrate mind; He can penetrate another spirit, such as the human spirit. He can achieve complete penetration of and actual intermingling with the human spirit. He can invade the human heart and make room for Himself without expelling anything essentially human. The integrity of the human personality remains unimpaired. Only moral evil is forced to withdraw.

The metaphysical problem involved here can no more be avoided than it can be solved. How can one personality enter another? The candid reply would be simply that we do not know, but a near approach to an understanding may be made by a simple analogy borrowed from the old devotional writers of several hundred years ago. We place a piece of iron in a fire and blow up the coals. At first we have two distinct substances, iron and fire. When we insert the iron in the fire we achieve the penetration of the fire by the iron. Soon the fire begins to penetrate the iron and we have not only the iron in the fire but the fire in the iron as well. They are two distinct substances, but they have comingled and interpenetrated to a point where the two have become one.

In some such manner does the Holy Spirit penetrate our spirits. In the whole experience we remain our very selves. There is no destruction of substance. Each remains a separate being as before; the difference is that now the Spirit penetrates and fills our personalities and we are *experientially one with God*.

How shall we think of the Holy Spirit? The Bible declares that He is God. Every quality belonging to Almighty God is freely attributed to Him. All that God is, the Spirit is declared to be. The Spirit of God is one with and equal to God just as the spirit of a man is equal to and one with the man. This is so fully taught in the Scriptures that we may without loss to the argument omit the formality of proof texts. The most casual reader will have discovered it for himself.

The historic Church when she formulated her "rule of faith" boldly wrote into her confession her belief in the Godhood of the Holy Ghost. The Apostles' Creed witnesses to faith in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Ghost, and makes no difference between the Three. The Fathers who composed the Nicene Creed testified in a passage of great beauty to their faith in the deity of the Spirit:

*And I believe in the Holy Ghost,
The Lord and Giver of Life,
Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son;
Who with the Father and Son together
Is worshipped and glorified.*

The Arian controversy of the Fourth Century compelled the Fathers to state their beliefs with greater clarity than before. Among the important writings which appeared at that time is the Athanasian Creed. Who composed it matters little to us now. It was written as an attempt to state in as few words as possible what the Bible teaches about the nature of God; and this it has done with a comprehensiveness and precision hardly matched anywhere in the literature of the world. Here are a few quotations bearing on the deity of the Holy Ghost:

"There is one Person of the Father, another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.

And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other: none is greater, or less than another; But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together: and co-equal.

So that in all things, as is aforesaid: the Unity in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped."

In her sacred hymnody the Church has freely acknowledged the Godhead of the Spirit and in her inspired song she has worshipped Him with joyous abandon. Some of our hymns to the Spirit have become so familiar that we tend to miss their true meaning by the very circumstance of their familiarity. Such a hymn is the wondrous "Holy Ghost, With Light Divine"; another is the more recent "Breathe on Me, Breath of God"; and there are many others. They have been sung so often by persons who have had no experiential knowledge of their content, that for the most of us they have become almost meaningless.

In the poetical works of Frederick Faber I have found a hymn to the Holy Spirit which I would rank among the finest ever written, but so far as I know it has not been set to music, or if it has, it is not sung today in any church with which I am acquainted. Could the reason be that it embodies personal experience of the Holy Spirit so deep, so intimate, so fiery hot that it corresponds to nothing in the hearts of the worshippers in present-day evangelicalism? I quote three stanzas:

*Fountain of Love! Thyself true God!
Who through eternal days
From Father and from Son hast flowed
In uncreated ways!*

*I dread Thee, Unbegotten Love!
True God! sole Fount of Grace!
And now before Thy blessed throne
My sinful self abase.*

*O Light! O Love! O very God
I dare no longer gaze
Upon Thy wondrous attributes
And their mysterious ways.*

These lines have everything to make a great hymn, sound theology, smooth structure, lyric beauty, high compression of profound ideas and a full charge of lofty religious feeling. Yet they are in complete neglect. I believe that a mighty resurgence of the Spirit's power among us will open

again wells of hymnody long forgotten. For song can never bring the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit does invariably bring song.

What we have in the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit is Deity present among us. He is not God's messenger only, *He is God*. He is God in contact with His creatures, doing in them and among them a saving and renewing work.

The Persons of the Godhead never work separately. We dare not think of them in such a way as to "divide the substance." Every act of God is done by all three Persons. God is never anywhere present in one Person without the other two. He cannot divide Himself. Where the Spirit is, there also is the Father and the Son. "We will come unto him and make our abode with him." For the accomplishment of some specific work one Person may for the time be more prominent than the others are, but never is He alone. God is altogether present wherever He is present at all.

To the reverent question, "What is God like?" a proper answer will always be, "He is like Christ." For Christ is God, and the Man who walked among men in Palestine was God acting like Himself in the familiar situation where His incarnation placed Him. To the question, "What is the Spirit like?" the answer must always be, "He is like Christ." For the Spirit is the essence of the Father and the Son. As they are, so is He. As we feel toward Christ and toward our Father who art in heaven, so should we feel toward the Spirit of the Father and the Son.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life and light and love. In His uncreated nature He is a boundless sea of fire, flowing, moving ever, performing as He moves the eternal purposes of God. Toward nature He performs one sort of work, toward the world another and toward the Church still another. And every act of His accords with the will of the Triune God. Never does He act on impulse nor move after a quick or arbitrary decision. Since He is the Spirit of the Father He feels toward His people exactly as the Father feels, so there need be on our part no sense of strangeness in His presence. He will always act like Jesus, toward sinners in compassion, toward saints in warm affection, toward human suffering in tenderest pity and love.

It is time for us to repent, for our transgressions against the blessed Third Person have been many and much aggravated. We have bitterly mistreated Him in the House of His friends. We have crucified Him in His own temple as they crucified the Eternal Son on the hill above Jerusalem. And the nails we used were not of iron, but of the finer and more precious stuff of which human life is made. Out of our hearts we took the refined metals of will and feeling and thought, and from them we fashioned the nails of suspicion and rebellion and neglect. By unworthy thoughts about Him and unfriendly attitudes toward Him we grieved and quenched Him days without end.

The truest and most acceptable repentance is to reverse the acts and attitudes of which we repent. A thousand years of remorse over a wrong act would not please God as much as a change of conduct and a reformed life. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

We can best repent our neglect by neglecting Him no more. Let us begin to think of Him as One to be worshipped and obeyed. Let us throw open every door and invite Him in. Let us surrender to Him every room in the temple of our hearts and insist that He enter and occupy as Lord and Master within His own dwelling. And let us remember that He is drawn to the sweet Name of Jesus as bees are drawn to the fragrance of clover. Where Christ is glorified He will move about freely, pleased and at home.

Chapter 58.

The Illumination of the Spirit

John answered and said, A man can receive nothing except it be given him from Heaven. John 3:27

Here in a brief sentence is the hope and despair of mankind. "A man can receive nothing." From the context we know that John is speaking of spiritual truth. He is telling us that there is a kind of truth which can never be grasped by the intellect, for the intellect exists for the apprehension of ideas, and this truth consists not in ideas but in life. Divine truth is of the nature of spirit and for that reason can be received only by spiritual revelation. "Except it be given him from heaven."

This was no new doctrine which John here set forth, but an advance rather upon truth already taught in the Old Testament. The prophet Isaiah, for instance, has this passage, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Perhaps this had meant to its readers no more than that God's thoughts, while similar to ours, were loftier, and His ways as high above ours as would befit the ways of One whose wisdom is infinite and whose power is without bounds. Now John says plainly enough that God's thoughts are not only greater than ours quantitatively but qualitatively wholly different from ours. God's thoughts belong to the world of spirit, man's to the world of intellect, and while spirit can embrace intellect, the human intellect can never comprehend spirit. Man's thoughts cannot cross over into God's. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

God made man in His own image and placed within him an organ by means of which he could know spiritual things. When man sinned that organ died. "Dead in sin" is a description not of the body nor yet of the intellect, but of the organ of God-knowledge within the human soul. Now men are forced to depend upon another and inferior organ and one furthermore which is wholly inadequate to the purpose. I mean, of course, the mind as the seat of his powers of reason and understanding.

Man by reason cannot know God; he can only *know about* God. Through the light of reason certain important facts about God may be discovered. "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Through the light of nature man's moral reason may be enlightened, but the deeper mysteries of God remain hidden to him until he has received illumination from above. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." When the Spirit illuminates the heart, then a part of the man sees which never saw before; a part of him knows which never knew before, and that with a kind of knowing which the most acute thinker cannot imitate. He knows now in a deep and authoritative way, and what he knows needs no reasoned proof. His experience of knowing is above reason, immediate, perfectly convincing and inwardly satisfying.

"A man can receive nothing." That is the burden of the Bible. Whatever men may think of human reason God takes a low view of it. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of the world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Man's reason is a

fine instrument and useful within its field. It is a gift of God and God does not hesitate to appeal to it, as when He cries to Israel, "Come now, and let us reason together." The inability of human reason as an organ of divine knowledge arises not from its own weakness but from its unfittedness for the task by its own nature. It was not given as an organ by which to know God.

The doctrine of the inability of the human mind and the need for divine illumination is so fully developed in the New Testament that it is nothing short of astonishing that we should have gone so far astray about the whole thing. Fundamentalism has stood aloof from the Liberal in self-conscious superiority and has on its own part fallen into error, the error of textualism, which is simply orthodoxy without the Holy Ghost. Everywhere among Conservatives we find persons who are Bible-taught but not Spirit-taught. They conceive truth to be something which they can grasp with the mind. If a man hold to the fundamentals of the Christian faith he is thought to possess divine truth. But it does not follow. There is no truth apart from the Spirit. The most brilliant intellect may be imbecilic when confronted with the mysteries of God. For a man to understand revealed truth requires an act of God equal to the original act which inspired the text.

"Except it be given him from heaven." Here is the other side of the truth; here is hope for all, for these words do certainly mean that there is such a thing as a gift of knowing, a gift that comes from heaven. Christ taught His disciples to expect the coming of the Spirit of Truth who would teach them all things. He explained Peter's knowledge of His Saviourhood as being a direct revelation from the Father in heaven. And in one of His prayers He said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." By "the wise and prudent" our Lord meant not Greek philosophers but Jewish Bible students and teachers of the Law.

This basic idea, the inability of human reason as an instrument of God-knowledge, was fully developed in the epistles of Paul. The Apostle frankly rules out every natural faculty as instruments for discovering divine truth and throws us back helpless upon the inworking Spirit. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. For God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God."

The passage just quoted is taken from Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians and is not lifted out of context nor placed in a setting which would tend to distort its meaning. Indeed it expresses the very essence of Paul's spiritual philosophy and fully accords with the rest of the Epistle, and I might add, with the rest of Paul's writings as we have them preserved in the New Testament. That type of theological rationalism which is so popular today would have been wholly foreign to the mind of the great Apostle. He had not faith in man's ability to comprehend truth apart from the direct illumination of the Holy Ghost.

I have just now used the word *rationalism* and I must either retract it or justify its use in association with orthodoxy. The latter I think I shall have no trouble doing.

For the textualism of our times is based upon the same premise as the old-line rationalism, that is, the belief that the human mind is the supreme authority in the judgment of truth. Or otherwise stated, it is *confidence in the ability of the human mind to do that which the Bible declares it was never created to do and consequently is wholly incapable of doing*. Philosophical rationalism is honest enough to reject the Bible flatly. Theological rationalism rejects it while pretending to accept it and in so doing puts out its own eyes.

The inward kernel of truth has the same configuration as the outward shell. The mind can grasp the shell but only the Spirit of God can lay hold of the internal essence. Our great error has been that we have trusted to the shell and have believed we were sound in the faith because we were able to explain the external shape of truth as found in the letter of the Word. From this mortal error Fundamentalism is slowly dying. We have forgotten that the essence of spiritual truth cannot come to the one who knows the external shell of truth unless there is first a miraculous operation of the Spirit within the heart. Those overtones of religious delight which accompany truth when the Spirit illuminates it are all but missing from the Church today. Those transporting glimpses of the Celestial Country are few and dim; the fragrance of "Sharon's dewy Rose" is hardly discernible. Consequently we have been forced to look elsewhere for our delights and we have found them in the dubious artistry of converted opera singers or the tinkling melodies of odd and curious musical arrangements. We have tried to secure spiritual pleasures by working upon fleshly emotions and whipping up synthetic feeling by means wholly carnal. And the total effect has been evil.

In a remarkable sermon on "The True Way of Attaining Divine Knowledge," John Smith states the truth I am attempting to set forth here. "Were I indeed to define divinity I should rather call it a divine *life* than a divine *science*; it is something rather to be understood by a *spiritual sensation*, than by any *verbal description*.... Divinity is indeed a true *efflux* from the eternal Light, which like the sunbeams, does not only enlighten, but *heat* and *enliven*.... We must not think that we have attained to the right knowledge of truth, when we have broken through the outward shell of words and phrases that house it up;... There is a knowing of Truth as it is in Jesus, as it is in a Christlike nature, as it is in that sweet, mild, humble, and loving Spirit of Jesus, which spreads itself like a morning sun upon the souls of good men, full of life and light. It profits little to know Christ Himself after the flesh; but he gives his Spirit to good men that search the deep things of God. There is an inward beauty, life and loveliness in divine Truth, which can be known only when it is digested into life and practice."

This old Divine held that a pure life was absolutely necessary to any real understanding of spiritual truth. "There is," he says, "an inward sweetness and delicious-ness in divine truth, which no sensual mind can taste or relish: this is that 'natural' man that savors not the things of God... Divinity is not so much perceived by a subtle wit as by a purified sense."

Twelve hundred years before these words were uttered Athanasius had written a profound treatise called, "The Incarnation of the Word of God." In this treatise he boldly attacked the difficult problems inherent in the doctrine of the Incarnation. The whole thing is a remarkable demonstration of pure reason engaged with divine revelation. He makes a great case for the deity of Christ, and for all who believe the Bible, settles the matter for all time. Yet so little does he trust the human mind to comprehend divine mysteries that he closes his great work with a strong warning against a mere intellectual understanding of spiritual truth. His words should be printed in large type and tacked on the desk of every pastor and theological student in the world:

"But for the searching of the Scriptures and true knowledge of them, an honorable life is needed, and a pure soul, and that virtue which is according to Christ; so that the intellect guiding its path by it, may be able to attain what it desires, and to comprehend it, in so far as it is accessible to human nature to learn concerning the word of God. For without a pure mind and a modeling of the life after the saints, a man could not possibly comprehend the words of the saints.... He that would comprehend the mind of those who speak of God needs begin by washing and cleansing his soul."

The old Jewish believers of pre-Christian times who gave us the (to modern Protestants little-known) books, the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus, believed that it is impossible for an impure heart to know divine truth. "For into a malicious soul wisdom will not enter; nor dwell in the body that is subject unto sin. For the holy spirit of discipline will flee deceit, and remove from thoughts that are without understanding, and will not abide when unrighteousness cometh in."

These books, along with our familiar Book of Proverbs, teach that true spiritual knowledge is the result of a visitation of heavenly wisdom, a kind of baptism of the Spirit of Truth which comes to God-fearing men. This wisdom is always associated with righteousness and humility and is never found apart from godliness and true holiness of life.

Conservative Christians in this day are stumbling over this truth. We need to re-examine the whole thing. We need to learn that truth consists not in correct doctrine, but in correct doctrine *plus the inward enlightenment of the Holy Spirit*. We must declare again the mystery of wisdom from above. A re-preachment of this vital truth could result in a fresh breath from God upon a stale and suffocating orthodoxy.

Chapter 59.

The Spirit as Power

But ye shall receive power, after that The Holy Ghost is come upon you.... Acts 1:8

Some good Christians have misread this text and have assumed that Christ told his disciples that they were to receive the Holy Spirit *and* power, the power to come after the coming of the Spirit. A superficial reading of the King James text might conceivably lead to that conclusion, but the truth is that Christ taught not the coming of the Holy Spirit *and* power, but the coming of the Holy Spirit *as* power; the power and the Spirit are the same.

Our mother tongue is a beautiful and facile instrument, but it can also be a tricky and misleading one, and for this reason it must be used with care if we would avoid giving and receiving wrong impressions by its means. Especially is this true when we are speaking of God, for God being wholly unlike anything or anybody in His universe our very thoughts of Him as well as our words are in constant danger of going astray. One example is found in the words, "The power of God." The danger is that we think of "power" as something belonging to God as muscular energy belongs to a man, as something which He *has* and which might be separated from Him and still have existence in itself. We must remember that the "attributes" of God are not component parts of the blessed Godhead nor elements out of which He is composed. A god who could be *composed* would not be God at all but the work of something or someone greater than he, great enough to compose him. We would then have a synthetic God made out of the pieces we call attributes, and the true God would be another Being altogether, One indeed who is above all thought and all conceiving.

The Bible and Christian theology teach that God is an indivisible Unity, being what He is in undivided oneness, from Whom nothing can be taken and to Whom nothing can be added. Mercy, for instance, immutability, eternity, these are but names which we have given to something which God has declared to be true of Himself. All the "of God" expressions in the Bible must be understood to mean not what God has but *what God is* in His undivided and indivisible Unity. Even the word "nature" when applied to God should be understood as an accommodation to our human way of looking at things and not as an accurate description of anything true of the mysterious Godhead. God has said, "I am that I am," and we can only repeat in reverence, "O God, Thou art."

Our Lord before His ascension said to His disciples, "Tarry in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." That word *until* is a time-word; it indicates a point in relation to which everything is either before or after. So the experience of those disciples could be stated like this: Up to that point they *had not* received the power; at that point they *did* receive the power; after that point they *had* received the power. Such is the plain historic fact. Power came upon the Church, such power as had never been released into human nature before (with the lone exception of that mighty anointing which came upon Christ at the waters of Jordan). That power, still active in the Church, has enabled her to exist for nearly twenty centuries, even though for all of that time she has remained a highly unpopular minority group among the nations of mankind and has always been surrounded by enemies who would gladly have ended her existence if they could have done so.

"Ye shall receive power." By those words our Lord raised the expectation of His disciples and taught them to look forward to the coming of a supernatural potency into their natures from a

source outside of themselves. It was to be something previously unknown to them, but suddenly to come upon them from another world. It was to be nothing less than God himself entering into them with the purpose of ultimately reproducing His own likeness within them.

Here is the dividing line that separates Christianity from all occultism and from every kind of oriental cult ancient or modern. These are all built around the same ideas, varying only in minor details, each with its own peculiar set of phrases and apparently vying with each other in vagueness and obscurity. They each advise, "Get in tune with the Infinite," or "Wake the giant within you," or "Tune in to your hidden potentialities," or "Learn to think creatively." All this may have some fleeting value as a psychological shot in the arm, but its results are not permanent because at its best it builds its hopes upon the fallen nature of man and knows no invasion from above. And whatever may be said in its favor, *it most certainly is not Christianity.*

Christianity takes for granted the absence of any self-help and offers a power which is nothing less than the power of God. This power is to come upon powerless men as a gentle but resistless invasion from another world bringing a moral potency infinitely beyond anything that might be stirred up from within. This power is sufficient; no additional help is needed, no auxiliary source of spiritual energy, for it is the Holy Spirit of God come where the weakness lay to supply power and grace to meet the moral need.

Set over against such a mighty provision as this ethical Christianity (if I may be allowed the term) is seen to be no Christianity at all. An infantile copying of Christ's "ideals," a pitiable effort to carry out the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount! All this is but religious child's play and is not the faith of Christ and the New Testament.

"Ye shall receive power." This was and is a unique afflatus, an endowment of supernatural energy affecting every department of the believer's life and remaining with him forever. It is not physical power nor even mental power though it may touch everything both mental and physical in its benign outworkings. It is too another kind of power than that seen in nature, in the lunar attraction that creates the tides or the angry flash that splits the great oak during a storm. This power from God operates on another level and affects another department of His wide creation. It is spiritual power. It is the kind of power that God is. It is the ability to achieve spiritual and moral ends. Its long range result is to produce Godlike character in men and women who were once wholly evil by nature and by choice.

Now how does this power operate? At its purest it is an unmediated force directly applied by the Spirit of God to the spirit of man. The wrestler achieves his ends by the pressure of his physical body upon the body of his opponent, the teacher by the pressure of ideas upon the mind of the student, the moralist by the pressure of duty upon the conscience of the disciple. So the Holy Spirit performs His blessed work by direct contact with the human spirit.

It would be less than accurate to say that the power of God is always experienced in a direct and unmediated form, for when He so wills the Spirit may use other means as Christ used spittle to heal a blind man. But always the power is above and beyond the means. While the Spirit may use appropriate means to bless a believing man, He never need do so for they are at best but temporary concessions made to our ignorance and unbelief. Where adequate power is present almost any means will suffice, but where the power is absent not all the means in the world can secure the desired end. The Spirit of God may use a song, a sermon, a good deed, a text or the mystery and majesty of nature, but always the final work will be done by the pressure of the inliving Spirit upon the human heart.

In the light of this it will be seen how empty and meaningless is the average church service today. All the means are in evidence; the one ominous weakness is the absence of the Spirit's

power. The form of godliness is there, and often the form is perfected till it is an aesthetic triumph. Music and poetry, art and oratory, symbolic vesture and solemn tones combine to charm the mind of the worshipper, but too often the supernatural afflatus is not there. The power from on high is neither known nor desired by pastor or people. This is nothing less than tragic, and all the more so because it falls within the field of religion where the eternal destinies of men are involved.

To the absence of the Spirit may be traced that vague sense of unreality which almost everywhere invests religion in our times. In the average church service the most real thing is the shadowy unreality of everything. The worshipper sits in a state of suspended mentation; a kind of dreamy numbness creeps upon him; he hears words but they do not register, he cannot relate them to anything on his own life-level. He is conscious of having entered a kind of half-world; his mind surrenders itself to a more or less pleasant mood which passes with the benediction leaving no trace behind. It does not affect anything in his everyday life. He is aware of no power, no Presence, no spiritual reality. There is simply nothing in his experience corresponding to the things which he heard from the pulpit or sang in the hymns.

One meaning of the word "power" is "ability to do." There precisely is the wonder of the Spirit's work in the Church and in the hearts of Christians, His sure ability to make spiritual things real to the soul. This power can go straight to its object with piercing directness; it can diffuse itself through the mind like an infinitely fine volatile essence securing ends above and beyond the limits of the intellect. Reality is its subject matter, reality in heaven and upon earth. It does not create objects which are not there but reveals objects already present and hidden from the soul. In actual human experience this is likely to be the first felt in a heightened sense of the Presence of Christ. He is felt to be a real Person and to be intimately, ravishingly near. Then all other spiritual objects begin to stand out clearly before the mind. Grace, forgiveness, cleansing take on a form of almost bodily clearness. Prayer loses its unmeaning quality and becomes a sweet conversation with Someone actually there. Love for God and for the children of God takes possession of the soul. We feel ourselves near to heaven and it is now the earth and the world that begin to seem unreal. We know them now for what they are, realities indeed, but like stage scenery here for one brief hour and soon to pass away. The world to come takes on a hard outline before our minds and begins to invite our interest and our devotion. Then the whole life changes to suit the new reality and the change is permanent. Slight fluctuations there may be like the rise and dip of the line on a graph, but the established direction is upward and the ground taken is held.

This is not all, but it will give a fair idea of what is meant when the New Testament speaks of *power*, and perhaps by contrast we may learn how little of the power we enjoy.

I think there can be no doubt that the need above all other needs in the Church of God at this moment is the power of the Holy Spirit. More education, better organization, finer equipment, more advanced methods—all are unavailing. It is like bringing a better pulmotor after the patient is dead. Good as these things are they can never give life. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." Good as they are they can never bring power. "Power belongeth unto God." Protestantism is on the wrong road when it tries to win merely by means of a "united front." It is not organizational unity we need most; the great need is power. The headstones in the cemetery present a united front, but they stand mute and helpless while the world passes by.

I suppose my suggestion will not receive much serious attention, but I should like to suggest that we Bible-believing Christians announce a moratorium on religious activity and set our house in order preparatory to the coming of an afflatus from above. So carnal is the body of

Christians which composes the conservative wing of the Church, so shockingly irreverent are our public services in some quarters, so degraded are our religious tastes in still others, that the need for power could scarcely have been greater at any time in history. I believe we should profit immensely were we to declare a period of silence and self-examination during which each one of us searched his own heart and sought to meet every condition for a real baptism of power from on high.

We may be sure of one thing, that for our deep trouble there is no cure apart from a visitation, yes, an *invasion* of power from above. Only the Spirit Himself can show us what is wrong with us and only the Spirit can prescribe the cure. Only the Spirit can save us from the numbing unreality of Spiritless Christianity. Only the Spirit can show us the Father and the Son. Only the in working of the Spirit's power can discover to us the solemn majesty and the heart ravishing mystery of the Triune God.

Chapter 60.

The Holy Spirit as Fire

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, And it sat upon each of them. Acts 2:3

Christian theology teaches that God in His essential nature is both inscrutable and ineffable. This by simple definition means that He is incapable of being searched into or understood, and that He cannot tell forth or utter what He is. This inability lies not in God but in the limitations of our creaturehood. "Why inquirest thou after my name, for it is secret?" Only God knows God in any final meaning of the word *know*. "Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

To the average Christian today this may sound strange, if not downright confusing, for the temper of religious thinking in our times is definitely not theological. We may live out a full lifetime and die without once having our minds challenged by the sweet mystery of the Godhead if we depend upon the churches to do the challenging. They are altogether too busy playing with shadows and getting "adjusted" to one thing and another to spend much time thinking about God. It might be well, therefore, to consider for a moment longer the divine inscrutability.

God in His essential Being is unique in the only sense that word will bear. That is, there is nothing like Him in the universe. What He is cannot be conceived by the mind because He is "altogether other" than anything with which we have had experience before. The mind has no material with which to start. No man has ever entertained a thought which can be said to describe God in any but the vaguest and most imperfect sense. Where God is known at all it must be otherwise than by our creature-reason.

Novatian, in a famous treatise on the Trinity written sometime about the middle of the third century, says, "In all our meditations upon the qualities of the attributes and content of God, we pass beyond our powers of fit conception, nor can human eloquence put forth a power commensurate with His greatness. At the contemplation and utterance of His majesty, all eloquence is rightly dumb, all mental effort is feeble. For God is greater than mind itself. His greatness cannot be conceived. Nay, if we could conceive of His greatness, He would be less than the human mind which could form the conception. He is greater than all language, and no statement can express Him. Indeed, if any statement could express Him, He would be less than human speech, which could by such statement comprehend and gather up all that He is. Up to a certain point, of course, we can have experience of Him, without language, but no man can express in words all that He is in Himself. Suppose, for instance, one speaks of Him as light; this is an account of part of His creation, not of Himself. It does not express what He is. Or suppose one speaks of Him as power. This too sets forth in words His attribute of might, rather than His being. Or suppose one speaks of Him as majesty. Once again, we have a declaration of the honor which is His Own, rather than of Him in Himself.... To sum up the matter in a single sentence, every possible statement that can be made about God expresses some possession or virtue of God, rather than God Himself. What words or thoughts are worthy of Him, Who is above all language and all thought? The conception of God as He is can only be grasped in one way, and even that is impossible for us, beyond our grasp and understanding; by thinking of Him as a Being Whose attributes and greatness are beyond our powers of understanding, or even of thought."

Just because God cannot tell us *what He is* He very often tells us *what He is like*. By these "like" figures He leads our faltering minds as close as they can come to that "Light which no man can approach unto." Through the more cumbersome medium of the intellect the soul is prepared for the moment when it can, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, know God as He is in Himself. God has used a number of these similitudes to hint at His incomprehensible being, and judging from the Scriptures one would gather that His *favorite similitude is fire*. In one place the Spirit speaks expressly, "For our God is a consuming fire." This accords with His revelation of Himself as recorded throughout the Bible. As a fire He spoke to Moses from the burning bush; in the fire He dwelt above the camp of Israel through all the wilderness journey; as fire He dwelt between the wings of the cherubim in the Holy of Holies; to Ezekiel He revealed Himself as a strange brightness of "a fire infolding itself." "I saw as it were the appearance of a fire and it had a brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake" (Ezek. 1:27-28).

With the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the same imagery was continued. "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." That which came upon the disciples in that upper room was nothing less than God Himself. To their mortal eyes He appeared as fire, and may we not safely conclude that those Scripture-taught believers knew at once what it meant? The God who had appeared to them as fire throughout all their long history was now dwelling in them as fire. He had moved from without to the interior of their lives. The Shekinah that had once blazed over the mercy seat now blazed on their foreheads as an external emblem of the fire that had invaded their natures. This was Deity giving Himself to ransomed men. The flame was the seal of a new union. They were now men and women of the Fire.

Here is the whole final message of the New Testament: Through the atonement in Jesus' blood sinful men may now become one with God. Deity indwelling men! That is Christianity in its fullest effectuation, and even those greater glories of the world to come will be in essence but a greater and more perfect experience of the soul's union with God.

Deity indwelling men! That, I say, is Christianity, and no man has experienced rightly the power of Christian belief until he has known this for himself as a living reality. Everything else is preliminary to this. Incarnation, atonement, justification, regeneration; what are these but acts of God preparatory to the work of invading and the act of indwelling the redeemed human soul? Man who moved out of the heart of God by sin now moves back into the heart of God by redemption. God who moved out of the heart of man because of sin now enters again His ancient dwelling to drive out His enemies and once more make the place of His feet glorious.

That visible fire on the day of Pentecost had for the Church a deep and tender significance, for it told to all ages that they upon whose heads it sat were men and women apart; they were "creatures out of the fire" as surely as were they whom Ezekiel in his vision saw by the river Chebar. The mark of the fire was the sign of divinity; they who received it were forever a peculiar people, sons and daughters of the Flame.

One of the most telling blows which the enemy ever struck at the life of the Church was to create in her a fear of the Holy Spirit. No one who mingles with Christians in these times will deny that such a fear exists. Few there are who without restraint will open their whole heart to the blessed Comforter. He has been and is so widely misunderstood that the very mention of His Name in some circles is enough to frighten many people into resistance. The source of this

unreasoning fear may easily be traced, but it would be a fruitless labor to do it here. Sufficient to say that the fear is groundless. Perhaps we may help to destroy its power over us if we examine that fire which is the symbol of the Spirit's Person and Presence.

The Holy Spirit is first of all a *moral flame*. It is not an accident of language that He is called the *Holy Spirit*, for whatever else the word *holy* may mean it does undoubtedly carry with it the idea of moral purity. And the Spirit, being God, must be absolutely and infinitely pure. With Him there are not (as with men) grades and degrees of holiness. He is holiness itself, the sum and essence of all that is unspeakably pure.

No one whose senses have been exercised to know good and evil but must grieve over the sight of zealous souls seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit while they are yet living in a state of moral carelessness or borderline sin. Such a thing is a moral contradiction. Whoever would be filled and indwelt by the Spirit should first judge his life for any hidden iniquities; he should courageously expel from his heart everything which is out of accord with the character of God as revealed by the Holy Scriptures.

At the base of all true Christian experience must lie a sound and sane morality. No joys are valid, no delights legitimate where sin is allowed to live in life or conduct. No transgression of pure righteousness dare excuse itself on the ground of superior religious experience. To seek high emotional states while living in sin is to throw our whole life open to self deception and the judgment of God. "Be ye holy" is not a mere motto to be framed and hung on the wall. It is a serious commandment from the Lord of the whole earth. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness" (James 4:8-9). The true Christian ideal is not to be happy but to be holy. The holy heart alone can be the habitation of the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Spirit is also a *spiritual flame*. He alone can raise our worship to true spiritual levels. For we might as well know once for all that morality and ethics, however lofty, are still not Christianity. The faith of Christ undertakes to raise the soul to actual communion with God, to introduce into our religious experiences a supra-rational element as far above mere goodness as the heavens are above the earth. The coming of the Spirit brought to the Book of Acts this very quality of supramundane-ness, this mysterious elevation of tone not found in as high intensity even in the Gospels. The key of the Book of Acts is definitely the major. There is in it no trace of creature-sadness, no lingering disappointment, no quaver of uncertainty. The mood is heavenly. A victorious spirit is found there, a spirit which could never be the result of mere religious belief. The joy of the first Christians was not the joy of logic working on facts. They did not reason, "Christ is risen from the dead; therefore we ought to be glad." Their gladness was as great a miracle as the resurrection itself; indeed these were and are organically related. The moral happiness of the Creator had taken residence in the breasts of redeemed creatures and they could not but be glad.

The flame of the Spirit is also *intellectual*. Reason, say the theologians, is one of the divine attributes. There need be no incompatibility between the deepest experiences of the Spirit and the highest attainments of the human intellect. *It is only required that the Christian intellect be fully surrendered to God and there need be no limit to its activities* beyond those imposed upon it by its own strength and size. How cold and deadly is the unblessed intellect. A superior brain without the saving essence of godliness may turn against the human race and drench the world with blood, or worse, it may loose ideas into the earth which will continue to curse mankind for centuries after it has turned to dust again. But a Spirit-filled mind is a joy to God and a delight to

all men of good will. What would the world have missed if it had been deprived of the love-filled mind of a David or a John or an Isaac Watts?

We naturally shy away from superlatives and from comparisons which praise one virtue at the expense of another, yet I wonder whether there is on earth anything as exquisitely lovely as a brilliant mind aglow with the love of God. Such a mind sheds a mild and healing ray which can actually be *felt* by those who come near it. Virtue goes forth from it and blesses those who merely touch the hem of its garment. One has, for instance, but to read *The Celestial Country*, by Bernard of Cluny, to understand what I mean. There a sensitive and shining intellect warm with the fire of the inliving Spirit writes with a vast and tender sympathy of those longings for immortality which have dwelt deep in the human breast since the first man kneeled down upon the earth out of whose bosom he came and into whose bosom he must soon return again. For loftiness of concept, for sheer triumph of the Christian spirit over mortality, for ability to rest the soul and raise the mind to rapturous worship its equal is hardly found anywhere in uninspired literature. I submit it as my respectful opinion that this single hymn may have ministered more healing virtue to distressed spirits than all the writings of secular poets and philosophers since the art of writing was invented. No unblessed intellect, however sure its genius, would be remotely capable of producing such a work. One closes the book after reading it with the feeling, yes the solemn conviction, that he has heard the voice of the cherubim and the sound of harpers strumming beside the sea of God.

This same feeling of near-inspiration is experienced also in the letters of Samuel Rutherford, in the *Te Deum*, in many of the hymns of Watts and Wesley, and occasionally in a work of some lesser known saint whose limited gifts may have been for one joyous moment made incandescent by the fire of the indwelling Spirit.

The blight of the Pharisee's heart in olden times was doctrine without love. With the teachings of the Pharisees Christ had little quarrel, but with the pharisaic spirit He carried on unceasing warfare to the end. It was religion that put Christ on the cross, religion without the indwelling Spirit. It is no use to deny that Christ was crucified by persons who would today be called Fundamentalists. This should prove most disquieting if not downright distressing to us who pride ourselves on our orthodoxy. An unblessed soul filled with the letter of truth may actually be worse off than a pagan kneeling before a fetish. We are safe only when the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, only when our intellects are indwelt by the loving Fire that came at Pentecost. For the Holy Spirit is not a luxury, not something added now and again to produce a de luxe type of Christian once in a generation. No, He is for every child of God a vital necessity, and that He fill and indwell His people is more than a languid hope. It is rather an inescapable imperative.

The Spirit is also a *volitional flame*. Here as elsewhere the imagery is inadequate to express all the truth, and unless care is taken we may easily gain a wrong impression from its use. For fire as we see and know it every day is a *thing*, not a person, and for that reason it has no will of its own. But the Holy Spirit is a Person, having those attributes of personality of which volition is one. He does not, upon entering the human soul, void any of His attributes, nor does He surrender them in part or in full to the soul into which He enters. Remember, the Holy Spirit is Lord. "Now the Lord is that Spirit," said Paul to the Corinthians. The Nicene Creed says, "And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life," and the Athanasian Creed declares, "So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords: but one Lord." Whatever problems this may pose for the understanding, our faith must accept it and make it a part of our total belief about God and the Spirit. Now it hardly need be said that the

Sovereign Lord will never abandon the prerogatives of His Godhood. Wherever He is He must continue to act like Himself. When He enters the human heart He will be there what He has always been, Lord in His own right.

The deep disease of the human heart is a will broken loose from its center, like a planet which has left its central sun and started to revolve around some strange body from outer space which may have moved in close enough to draw it away. When Satan said, "I will," he broke loose from his normal center, and the disease with which he has infected the human race is the disease of disobedience and revolt. Any adequate scheme of redemption must take into account this revolt and must undertake to restore again the human will to its proper place in the will of God. In accord with this underlying need for the healing of the will, the Holy Spirit, when He effects His gracious invasion of the believing heart, must win that heart to glad and voluntary obedience to the whole will of God. The cure must be wrought from within; no outward conformity will do. Until the will is sanctified the man is still a rebel just as an outlaw is still an outlaw at heart even though he may be yielding grudging obedience to the sheriff who is taking him to prison.

The Holy Spirit achieves this inward cure by merging the will of the redeemed man with His own. This is not accomplished at one stroke. There must be, it is true, some kind of over-all surrender of the will to Christ before any work of grace can be done, but the full mergence of every part of the life with the life of God in the Spirit is likely to be a longer process than we in our creature impatience would wish. The most advanced soul may be shocked and chagrined to discover some private area within his life where he had been, unknown to himself, acting as lord and proprietor of that which he thought he had given to God. It is the work of the inliving Spirit to point out these moral discrepancies and correct them. He does not, as is sometimes said, "break" the human will, but He does invade it and bring it gently to a joyous union with the will of God.

To will the will of God is to do more than give unprotesting consent to it; it is rather to choose God's will with positive determination. As the work of God advances the Christian finds himself free to choose whatever he will, and he gladly chooses the will of God as his highest conceivable good. Such a man has found life's highest goal. He has been placed beyond the little disappointments that plague the rest of men. Whatever happens to him is the will of God for him and that is just what he most ardently desires. But it is only fair to state that this condition is one not reached by many of the busy Christians of our busy times. Until it is reached, however, the Christian's peace cannot be complete. There must be still a certain inward controversy, a sense of spiritual disquiet which poisons our joy and greatly reduces our power.

Another quality of the indwelling Fire is *emotion*. This must be understood in the light of what has been said before about the divine inscrutability. What God is in His unique essence cannot be discovered by the mind nor uttered by the lips, but those qualities in God which may be termed rational, and so received by the intellect, have been freely set forth in the sacred Scriptures. They do not tell us what God is, but they do tell us what God is like, and the sum of them constitute a mental picture of the Divine Being seen as it were afar off and through a glass darkly.

Now the Bible teaches that there is something in God which is like emotion. He experiences something which is like our love, something that is like our grief, that is like our joy. And we need not fear to go along with this conception of what God is like. Faith would easily draw the inference that since we were made in His image He would have qualities like our own. But such an inference, while satisfying to the mind, is not the ground of our belief. *God has said*

certain things about Himself, and these furnish all the grounds we require. "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (Zeph. 3:17). This is but one verse among thousands which serve to form our rational picture of what God is like, and they tell us plainly that God feels something like our love, like our joy, and what He feels makes Him act very much as we would in a similar situation; He rejoices over His loved ones with joy and singing.

Here is emotion on as high a plane as it can ever be seen, emotion flowing out of the heart of God Himself. Feeling, then, is not the degenerate son of unbelief that it is often painted by some of our Bible teachers. Our ability to feel is one of the marks of our divine origin. We need not be ashamed of either tears or laughter. The Christian stoic who has crushed his feelings is only two-thirds of a man; an important third part has been repudiated.

Holy feeling had an important place in the life of our Lord. "For the joy that was set before Him" He endured the cross and despised its shame. He pictured Himself crying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." On the night of His agony He "sang an hymn" before going out to the Mount of Olives. After His resurrection He sang among His brethren in the great congregation (Ps. 22:22). And if the Song of Solomon refers to Christ (as most Christians believe it does) then how are we to miss the sound of His rejoicing as He brings His bride home after the night has ended and the shadows have fled away?

One of the very greatest calamities which sin has brought upon us is the debasement of our normal emotions. We laugh at things which are not funny; we find pleasure in acts which are beneath our human dignity; and we rejoice in objects which should have no place in our affections. The objection to "sinful pleasures" which has always been characteristic of the true saint, is at bottom simply a protest against the degradation of our human emotions. That gambling, for instance, should be allowed to engross the interests of men made in the image of God has seemed like a horrible perversion of noble powers; that alcohol should be necessary to stimulate the feeling of pleasure has seemed like a kind of prostitution; that men should turn to the man-made theatre for enjoyment has seemed an affront to the God who placed us in the midst of a universe charged with high dramatic action. The world's artificial pleasures are all but evidence that the human race has to a large extent lost its power to enjoy the true pleasures of life and is forced to substitute for them false and degrading thrills.

The work of the Holy Spirit is, among other things, to rescue the redeemed man's emotions, to restring his harp and open again the wells of sacred joy which have been stopped up by sin. That He does this is the unanimous testimony of the saints. And it is not inconsistent with the whole way of God in His creation. Pure pleasure is a part of life, such an important part that it is difficult to see how human life could be justified if it were to consist of endless existence devoid of pleasurable feeling.

The Holy Spirit would set an aeolian harp in the window of our souls so that the winds of heaven may play sweet melody for a musical accompaniment to the humblest task we may be called to perform. The spiritual love of Christ will make constant music within our hearts and enable us to rejoice even in our sorrows.

Chapter 61.

The Spirit-Filled Life

... be filled with the Spirit. Eph. 5:18

That every Christian can be and should be filled with the Holy Spirit would hardly seem to be a matter for debate among Christians. Yet some will argue that the Holy Spirit is not for plain Christians but for ministers and missionaries only. Others hold that the measure of the Spirit received at regeneration is identical with that received by the disciples at Pentecost and any hope of additional fullness after conversion simply rests upon error. A few will express a languid hope that some day they may be filled, and still others will avoid the subject as one about which they know very little and which can only cause embarrassment.

I want here boldly to assert that it is my happy belief that every Christian can have a copious outpouring of the Holy Spirit in a measure far beyond that received at conversion, and I might also say, far beyond that enjoyed by the rank and file of orthodox believers today. It is important that we get this straight, for until doubts are removed faith is impossible. God will not surprise a doubting heart with an effusion of the Holy Spirit, nor will He fill anyone who has doctrinal questions about the possibility of being filled.

To remove doubts and create a confident expectation I recommend a reverent study of the Word of God itself. I am willing to rest my case upon the teachings of the New Testament. If a careful and humble examination of the words of Christ and His apostles does not lead to a belief that we may be filled with the Holy Spirit now, then I see no reason to look elsewhere. For it matters little what this or that religious teacher has said for or against the proposition. If the doctrine is not taught in the Scriptures then it cannot be supported by any argument, and all exhortations to be filled are valueless.

I shall not here present a case for the affirmative. Let the inquirer examine the evidence for himself, and if he decides that there is no warrant in the New Testament for believing that he can be filled with the Spirit, let him shut this book and save himself the trouble of reading further. What I say from here on is addressed to men and women who have gotten over their questions and are confident that when they meet the conditions they may indeed be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Before a man can be filled with the Spirit *he must be sure he wants to be*. And let this be taken seriously. Many Christians want to be filled, but their desire is a vague romantic kind of thing hardly worthy to be called desire. They have almost no knowledge of what it will cost them to realize it.

Let us imagine that we are talking to an inquirer, some eager young Christian, let us say, who has sought us out to learn about the Spirit-filled life. As gently as possible, considering the pointed nature of the questions, we would probe his soul somewhat as follows: "Are you sure you want to be filled with a Spirit who, though He is like Jesus in His gentleness and love, will nevertheless demand to be Lord of your life? Are you willing to let your personality be taken over by another, even if that other be the Spirit of God Himself? If the Spirit takes charge of your life He will expect unquestioning obedience in everything. He will not tolerate in you the self-sins even though they are permitted and excused by most Christians. By the self-sins I mean self-love, self-pity, self-seeking, self-confidence, self-righteousness, self-aggrandizement, self-defense. You will find the Spirit to be in sharp opposition to the easy ways of the world and of

the mixed multitude within the precincts of religion. He will be jealous over you for good. He will not allow you to boast or swagger or show off. He will take the direction of your life away from you. He will reserve the right to test you, to discipline you, to chasten you for your soul's sake. He may strip you of many of those borderline pleasures which other Christians enjoy but which are to you a source of refined evil. Through it all He will enfold you in a love so vast, so mighty, so all-embracing, so wondrous that your very losses will seem like gains and your small pains like pleasures. Yet the flesh will whimper under His yoke and cry out against it as a burden too great to bear. And you will be permitted to enjoy the solemn privilege of suffering to 'fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ' in your flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church. Now, with the conditions before you, do you still want to be filled with the Holy Spirit?"

If this appears severe, let us remember that the way of the cross is never easy. The shine and glamour accompanying popular religious movements is as false as the sheen on the wings of the angel of darkness when he for a moment transforms himself into an angel of light. The spiritual timidity that fears to show the cross in its true character is not on any grounds to be excused. It can result only in disappointment and tragedy at last.

Before we can be filled with the Spirit *the desire to be filled must be all-consuming*. It must be for the time the biggest thing in the life, so acute, so intrusive as to crowd out everything else. The degree of fullness in any life accords perfectly with the intensity of true desire. We have as much of God as we actually want. One great hindrance to the Spirit-filled life is the theology of complacency so widely accepted among gospel Christians today. According to this view acute desire is an evidence of unbelief and proof of lack of knowledge of the Scriptures. A sufficient refutation of this position is afforded by the Word of God itself and by the fact that it always fails to produce real saintliness among those who hold it.

Then, I doubt whether anyone ever received that divine afflatus with which we are here concerned who did not first *experience a period of deep anxiety and inward agitation*. Religious contentment is the enemy of the spiritual life always. The biographies of the saints teach that the way to spiritual greatness has always been through much suffering and inward pain. The phrase, "the way of the cross," though it has come in certain circles to denote something very beautiful, even enjoyable, still means to the real Christian what it has always meant, the way of rejection and loss. No one ever enjoyed a cross, just as no one ever enjoyed a gallows.

The Christian who is seeking better things and who has to his consternation found himself in a state of complete self-despair need not be discouraged. Despair with self, where it is accompanied by faith, is a good friend, for it destroys one of the heart's most potent enemies and prepares the soul for the ministration of the Comforter. A sense of utter emptiness, of disappointment and darkness can (if we are alert and wise to what is going on) be the shadow in the valley of shadows that leads on to those fruitful fields that lie further in. If we misunderstand it and resist this visitation of God we may miss entirely every benefit a kind heavenly Father has in mind for us. If we cooperate with God He will take away the natural comforts which have served us as mother and nurse for so long and put us where we can receive no help except from the Comforter Himself. He will tear away that false thing the Chinese call "face" and show us how painfully small we really are. When He is finished with us we will know what our Lord meant when He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

Be sure, however, that in these painful chastenings we shall not be deserted by our God. He will never leave us nor forsake us, nor will He be wroth with us nor rebuke us. He will not break His covenant nor alter that which has gone out of His mouth. He will keep us as the apple of His eye and watch over us as a mother watches over her child. His love will not fail even

while He is taking us through this experience of self-crucifixion so real, so terrible, that we can express it only by crying, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Now let us keep our theology straight about all this. There is not in this painful stripping one remote thought of human merit. The "dark night of the soul" knows not one dim ray of the treacherous light of self-righteousness. We do not by suffering earn the anointing for which we yearn, nor does this devastation of soul make us dear to God nor give us additional favor in His eyes. The value of the stripping experience lies in its power to detach us from life's passing interests and to throw us back upon eternity. It serves to empty our earthly vessels and prepare us for the inpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The filling with the Spirit, then, requires that we give up our all, that we undergo an inward death, that we rid our hearts of that centuries-old accumulation of Adamic trash and open all rooms to the heavenly Guest.

The Holy Spirit is a living Person and should be treated as a person. We must never think of Him as a blind energy nor as an impersonal force. He hears and sees and feels as any person does. He speaks and hears us speak. We can please Him or grieve Him or silence Him as we can any other person. He will respond to our timid effort to know Him and will ever meet us over half the way.

However wonderful the crisis-experience of being filled with the Spirit, we should remember that it is only a means toward something greater: that greater thing is the lifelong walk in the Spirit, indwelt, directed, taught and empowered by His mighty Person. And to continue thus to walk in the Spirit requires that we meet certain conditions. These are laid down for us in the sacred Scriptures and are there for all to see.

The Spirit-filled walk demands, for instance, that we live in the Word of God as a fish lives in the sea. By this I do not mean that we study the Bible merely, nor that we take a "course" in Bible doctrine. I mean that we should "mediate day and night" in the sacred Word, that we should love it and feast upon it and digest it every hour of the day and night. When the business of life compels our attention we may yet, by a kind of blessed mental reflex, keep the Word of Truth ever before our minds.

Then if we would please the indwelling Spirit we must be all taken up with Christ. The Spirit's present work is to honor Him, and everything He does has this for its ultimate purpose. And we must make our thoughts a clean sanctuary for His holy habitation. He dwells in our thoughts, and soiled thoughts are as repugnant to Him as soiled linen to a king. Above all we must have a cheerful faith that will keep on believing however radical the fluctuation in our emotional states may be.

The Spirit indwelt life is not a special de luxe edition of Christianity to be enjoyed by a certain rare and privileged few who happen to be made of finer and more sensitive stuff than the rest. Rather, it is the normal state for every redeemed man and woman the world over. It is "that mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:26). Faber, in one of his sweet and reverent hymns, addressed this good word to the Holy Spirit:

*Ocean, wide flowing Ocean, Thou
Of uncreated Love;
I tremble as within my soul
I feel Thy waters move.*

*Thou art a sea without a shore;
Awful, immense Thou art;
A sea which can contract itself
Within my narrow heart.*

Excerpts from *Born After Midnight*

Chapter 62. Faith Is a Journey, Not a Destination

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts 2:42

So says Luke of the thousands who received the Word and were baptized following the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost.

Conversion for those first Christians was not a destination; it was the beginning of a journey. And right there is where the Biblical emphasis differs from ours.

Today all is made to depend upon the initial act of believing. At a given moment a "decision" is made for Christ, and after that everything is automatic. This is not taught in so many words, but such is the impression inadvertently created by our failure to lay a scriptural emphasis in our evangelistic preaching. We of the evangelical churches are almost all guilty of this lopsided view of the Christian life, and because the foundations are out of plumb the temple of God leans dangerously and threatens to topple unless some immediate corrections are made.

In our eagerness to make converts we allow our hearers to absorb the idea that they can deal with their entire responsibility once and for all by an act of believing. This is in some vague way supposed to honor grace and glorify God, whereas actually it is to make Christ the author of a grotesque, unworkable system that has no counterpart in the Scriptures of truth.

In the Book of Acts faith was for each believer a beginning, not an end; it was a journey, not a bed in which to lie while waiting for the day of our Lord's triumph. Believing was not a once-done act; it was more than an act, it was an attitude of heart and mind which inspired and enabled the believer to take up his cross and follow the Lamb whithersoever He went.

"They continued," says Luke, and is it not plain that it was only by continuing that they could confirm their faith? On a given day they believed, were baptized and joined themselves to the believing company. Very good, but tomorrow what? and the next day? and the next week? How could anyone know that their conversion had been genuine? How could they live down the critic's charge that they had been pressured into a decision? that they had cracked under the psychological squeeze set up by crowds and religious excitement? Obviously there was only one way: They continued.

Not only did they continue, they continued steadfastly. So wrote Luke, and the word "steadfastly" is there to tell us that they continued against serious opposition. Steadfastness is required only when we are under attack, mental or physical, and the story of those early Christians is a story of faith under fire. The opposition was real.

Here again is seen the glaring discrepancy between Biblical Christianity and that of present-day evangelicals, particularly in the United States. In certain countries, I am told, some of our brethren are suffering painful persecution and counting not their lives dear unto themselves that they might win Christ. For these I have only utmost admiration. I speak not of such as they, but of the multitudes of religious weaklings within our evangelical fold here in America.

To make converts here we are forced to play down the difficulties and play up the peace of mind and worldly success enjoyed by those who accept Christ. We must assure our hearers that Christianity is now a proper and respectable thing and that Christ has become quite popular with political bigwigs, well-to-do business tycoons and the Hollywood swimming pool set. Thus assured, hell-deserving sinners are coming in droves to "accept" Christ for what they can get out of Him; and though one now and again may drop a tear as proof of his sincerity, it is hard to escape the conclusion that most of them are stooping to patronize the Lord of glory much as a young couple might fawn on a boresome but rich old uncle in order to be mentioned in his will later on.

We will never be completely honest with our hearers until we tell them the blunt truth that as members of a race of moral rebels they are in a serious jam, and one they will not get out of easily. If they refuse to repent and believe on Christ they will most surely perish; if they do turn to Him, the same enemies that crucified Him will try to crucify them. One way they suffer alone without hope; the other way they suffer with Christ for a while, but in the midst of their suffering they enjoy His loving consolation and inward support and are able to rejoice even in tribulation.

Those first believers turned to Christ with the full understanding that they were espousing an unpopular cause that could cost them everything. They knew they would henceforth be members of a hated minority group with life and liberty always in jeopardy.

This is no idle flourish. Shortly after Pentecost some were jailed, many lost all their earthly goods, a few were slain outright and hundreds "scattered abroad."

They could have escaped all this by the simple expedient of denying their faith and turning back to the world; but this they steadfastly refused to do.

Seen thus in comparison with each other, is the Christianity of American evangelicalism today the same as that of the first century? I wonder. But again, I think I know.

Chapter 63.

The Key to Human Life Is Theological

Anthropology tries to understand man by digging into his past and examining his primitive beginnings. Psychology seeks to understand him by digging into his mind. Philosophy takes whatever data it can assemble about man's external or internal life, past or present, borrows freely from historian and scientist, and reasons from this to the nature of man.

The answer to the question "What is man?" is sought by going straight to men to test and weigh and measure. Skull shape, bone structure, folklore, habits, customs, diet, superstitious practices, religion, social patterns, civil organization, tabus, reactions, emotions and countless other factors are taken into consideration in the search for the answer. The plan is, of course, to determine scientifically what man is by observing on a wide scale and over a long period what he does. But because the technique is wrong the conclusions must be false. It cannot be otherwise.

I well know that I am simply raising here the old question of naturalism versus supernaturalism, a question that has for centuries been fruitlessly debated and left unsettled for each generation to dispose of as it would or could. Were I a philosopher I might properly join the search for the key to life. As a man fully persuaded of the truth of the New Testament evangel and totally committed to Christ, there is for me no question here demanding an answer. That answer has been given in the positive and joyous Biblical declaration that God made man in His own image and likeness, akin to the earth as touching his physical body, it is true, but next of kin to heaven in his spirit, which came from God to return to God again (Eccl. 12:7). His body does not hold the key to his true nature; that key is found in his spirit which, while alienated from God by that mighty moral disaster theologians call the Fall, is yet susceptible of reclamation and full restoration to God through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

To know man we must begin with God. Secular learning, darkly colored as it is by humanism and rationalism in their various forms, has made a great many present-day Christians afraid to state their true position lest they earn for themselves one or more of the caustic sobriquets by which the wise men of this world stigmatize those who disagree with them; such, for instance, as "transcendentalist," "absolutist" or "supernaturalist."

As for myself, I do not fear such appellations even though they be hurled at me with the purpose of discrediting me once and for all. Far from fearing them, I glory in them. While I do not allow them to retain all the shades of meaning they have gathered to themselves in their journey down the years, I cheerfully accept them as far as they express meanings which I find in the Christian revelation.

No Christian, for instance, need draw back from the word *transcendentalist*, for at the very root of his holy faith is belief in a transcendent world, a world above nature, different from and lying beyond matter and space and time, into which science cannot pry and at whose portals uncomprehending reason can do no other than reverently kneel and adore. Nor should he shrink from the word "supernaturalist," for it quite accurately describes an important tenet in his Christian creed. He does believe that there is a Divinity which shapes our ends. Nature, he holds, cannot account for herself but must humbly point upward to the One who gave her birth and whose invisible presence is her wisdom and her life. This he believes, and he considers everyone who believes less than this to be "finished and finite clods," Esau who have sold their birthright for a mess of pottage.

Neither does the term *absolutist* make the instructed Christian blush or apologize. However scornfully the word may be spat at him, he is unperturbed. He knows his enemies are angry with him for refusing to accept two of their favorite doctrines, the relativity of morals and the pragmatic nature of religious beliefs. He does not try to deny that he holds with complete dogmatism the scriptural teaching that God is among other things uncreated, self-sufficient, eternal, infinite, sovereign and absolute. He glories in a God absolutely holy, absolutely wise: in short, in a God who is everything that He is absolutely, unaffected by anything external to Himself. Indeed, it is necessary to him that he believe this about God; and if so to believe brands him as an absolutist he is quite happy about the whole thing. He knows what he believes, and words do not frighten him.

The flaw in current evangelism lies in its humanistic approach. It struggles to be supernaturalistic but never quite makes it. It is frankly fascinated by the great, noisy, aggressive world with its big names, its hero worship, its wealth and its garish pageantry. To the millions of disappointed persons who have always yearned for worldly glory but never attained to it, the modern evangel offers a quick and easy short cut to their heart's desire. Peace of mind, happiness, prosperity, social acceptance, publicity, success in sports, business, the entertainment field, and perchance to sit occasionally at the same banquet table with a celebrity—all this on earth and heaven at last. Certainly no insurance company can offer half as much.

In this quasi-Christian scheme of things God becomes the Aladdin lamp who does the bidding of everyone that will accept His Son and sign a card. The total obligation of the sinner is discharged when he accepts Christ. After that he has but to come with his basket and receive the religious equivalent of everything the world offers and enjoy it to the limit. Those who have not accepted Christ must be content with this world, but the Christian gets this one with the one to come thrown in as a bonus.

Such is the Christian message as interpreted by vast numbers of religious leaders today. This gross misapprehension of the truth is back of much (I almost said most) of our present evangelical activity. It determines directions, builds programs, decides the content of sermons, fixes the quality of local churches and even of whole denominations, sets the pattern for religious writers and forms the editorial policy of many evangelical publications.

This concept of Christianity is in radical error, and because it touches the souls of men it is a dangerous, even deadly, error. At bottom it is little more than weak humanism allied with weak Christianity to give it ecclesiastical respectability. It may be identified by its religious approach. Invariably it begins with man and his needs and then looks around for God; true Christianity reveals God as searching for man to deliver him from his ambitions.

Always and always God must be first. The gospel in its scriptural context puts the glory of God first and the salvation of man second. The angels, approaching from above, chanted, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." This puts the glory of God and the blessing of mankind in their proper order, as do also the opening words of the prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." Before any petitions are allowed, the name of God must be hallowed. God's glory is and must forever remain the Christian's true point of departure. Anything that begins anywhere else, whatever it is, is certainly not New Testament Christianity.

Chapter 64.

The Tragedy of Wasted Religious Activity

There is probably not another field of human activity where there is so much waste as in the field of religion.

It is altogether possible to waste an hour in church or even in a prayer meeting. The popular "attend the church of your choice" signs that have lately been appearing everywhere may have some small value if they do no more than remind a materialistic civilization that this world is not all and that there are some treasures that cannot be bought with money. Yet we must not forget that a man may attend church for a lifetime and be none the better for it.

In the average church we hear the same prayers repeated each Sunday year in and year out with, one would suspect, not the remotest expectation that they will be answered. It is enough, it seems, that they have been uttered. The familiar phrase, the religious tone, the emotionally loaded words have their superficial and temporary effect, but the worshiper is no nearer to God, no better morally and no surer of heaven than he was before. Yet every Sunday morning for twenty years he goes through the same routine and, allowing two hours for him to leave his house, sit through a church service and return to his house again, he has wasted more than 170 twelve-hour days with this exercise in futility.

The writer, to the Hebrews says that some professed Christians were marking time and getting nowhere. They had had plenty of opportunity to grow, but they had not grown; they had had sufficient time to mature, yet they were still babes; so he exhorted them to leave their meaningless religious round and press on to perfection (Heb. 5:11-6:3).

It is possible to have motion without progress, and this describes much of the activity among Christians today. It is simply lost motion.

In God there is motion, but never wasted motion; He always works toward a predetermined end. Being made in His image, we are by nature constituted so that we are justifying our existence only when we are working with a purpose in mind. Aimless activity is beneath the worth and dignity of a human being. Activity that does not result in progress toward a goal is wasted; yet most Christians have no clear end toward which they are striving. On the endless religious merry-go-round they continue to waste time and energy, of which, God knows, they never had much and have less each hour. This is a tragedy worthy of the mind of an Aeschylus or a Dante.

Back of this tragic waste there is usually one of three causes: The Christian is either ignorant of the Scriptures, unbelieving or disobedient.

I think most Christians are simply uninstructed. They may have been talked into the kingdom when they were only half ready. Any convert made within the last thirty years was almost certainly told that he had but to take Jesus as his personal Saviour and all would be well. Possibly some counselor may have added that he now had eternal life and would most surely go to heaven when he died, if indeed the Lord does not return and carry him away in triumph before the unpleasant moment of death arrives.

After that first hurried entrance into the kingdom there is usually not much more said. The new convert finds himself with a hammer and a saw and no blueprint. He has not the remotest notion what he is supposed to build, so he settles down to the dull routine of polishing his tools once each Sunday and putting them back in their box.

Sometimes, however, the Christian wastes his efforts because of unbelief. Possibly we are all guilty of this to some degree. In our private prayers and in our public services we are forever asking God to do things that He either has already done or cannot do because of our unbelief. We plead for Him to speak when He has already spoken and is at that very moment speaking. We ask Him to come when He is already present and waiting for us to recognize Him. We beg the Holy Spirit to fill us while all the time we are preventing Him by our doubts.

Of course the Christian can hope for no manifestation of God while he lives in a state of disobedience. Let a man refuse to obey God on some clear point, let him set his will stubbornly to resist any commandment of Christ, and the rest of his religious activities will be wasted. He may go to church for fifty years to no profit. He may tithe, teach, preach, sing, write or edit or run a Bible conference till he gets too old to navigate and have nothing but ashes at the last. "To obey is better than sacrifice."

I need only add that all this tragic waste is unnecessary. The believing Christian will relish every moment in church and will profit by it. The instructed, obedient Christian will yield to God as the clay to the potter, and the result will not be waste but glory everlasting.

Excerpts from *The Pursuit After God*

Chapter 65. Apprehending God

O taste and see.... Ps. 34:8

It was Canon Holmes, of India, who more than twenty-five years ago called attention to the inferential character of the average man's faith in God. To most people God is an inference, not a reality. He is a deduction from evidence which they consider adequate; but He remains personally unknown to the individual. "He *must* be," they say, "therefore we believe He is." Others do not go even so far as this; they know of Him only by hearsay. They have never bothered to think the matter out for themselves, but have heard about Him from others, and have put belief in Him into the back of their minds along with the various odds and ends that make up their total creed. To many others God is but an ideal, another name for goodness, or beauty, or truth; or He is law, or life, or the creative impulse back of the phenomena of existence.

These notions about God are many and varied, but they who hold them have one thing in common: they do not know God in personal experience. The possibility of intimate acquaintance with Him has not entered their minds. While admitting His existence they do not think of Him as knowable in the sense that we know things or people.

Christians, to be sure, go further than this, at least in theory. Their creed requires them to believe in the personality of God, and they have been taught to pray, "Our Father, which art in heaven." Now personality and fatherhood carry with them the idea of the possibility of personal acquaintance. This is admitted, I say, in theory, but for millions of Christians, nevertheless, God is no more real than He is to the non-Christian. They go through life trying to love an ideal and be loyal to a mere principle.

Over against all this cloudy vagueness stands the clear scriptural doctrine that God can be known in personal experience. A loving Personality dominates the Bible, walking among the trees of the garden and breathing fragrance over every scene. Always a living Person is present, speaking, pleading, loving, working, and manifesting Himself whenever and wherever His people have the receptivity necessary to receive the manifestation.

The Bible assumes as a self-evident fact that men can know God with at least the same degree of immediacy as they know any other person or thing that comes within the field of their experience. The same terms are used to express the knowledge of God as are used to express knowledge of physical things. "*O taste and see that the Lord is good.*" "*All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces.*" "*My sheep hear my voice.*" "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*" These are but four of countless such passages from the Word of God. And more important than any proof text is the fact that the whole import of the Scripture is toward this belief.

What can all this mean except that we have in our hearts organs by means of which we can know God as certainly as we know material things through our familiar five senses? We apprehend the physical world by exercising the faculties given us for the purpose, and we possess spiritual faculties by means of which we can know God and the spiritual world if we obey the Spirit's urge and begin to use them.

That a saving work must first be done in the heart is taken for granted here. The spiritual faculties of the unregenerate man lie asleep in his nature, unused and for every purpose dead; that is the stroke which has fallen upon us by sin. They may be quickened to active life again by the operation of the Holy Spirit in regeneration; that is one of the immeasurable benefits which come to us through Christ's atoning work on the cross.

But the very ransomed children of God themselves: why do they know so little of that habitual conscious communion with God which the Scriptures seem to offer? The answer is our chronic unbelief. Faith enables our spiritual sense to function. Where faith is defective the result will be inward insensibility and numbness toward spiritual things. This is the condition of vast numbers of Christians today. No proof is necessary to support that statement. We have but to converse with the first Christian we meet or enter the first church we find open to acquire all the proof we need.

A spiritual kingdom lies all about us, enclosing us, embracing us, altogether within reach of our inner selves, waiting for us to recognize it. God Himself is here waiting our response to His Presence. This eternal world will come alive to us the moment we begin to reckon upon its reality.

I have just now used two words which demand definition; or if definition is impossible, I must at least make clear what I mean when I use them. They are "reckon" and "reality."

What do I mean by *reality*? I mean that which has existence apart from any idea any mind may have of it, and which would exist if there were no mind anywhere to entertain a thought of it. That which is real has being in itself. It does not depend upon the observer for its validity.

I am aware that there are those who love to poke fun at the plain man's idea of reality. They are the idealists who spin endless proofs that nothing is real outside of the mind. They are the relativists who like to show that there are no fixed points in the universe from which we can measure anything. They smile down upon us from their lofty intellectual peaks and settle us to their own satisfaction by fastening upon us the reproachful term "absolutist." The Christian is not put out of countenance by this show of contempt. He can smile right back at them, for he knows that there is only One who is Absolute, that is God. But he knows also that the Absolute One has made this world for man's uses, and, while there is nothing fixed or real in the last meaning of the words (the meaning as applied to God) *for every purpose of human life we are permitted to act as if there were*. And every man does act thus except the mentally sick. These unfortunates also have trouble with reality, but they are consistent; they insist upon living in accordance with their ideas of things. They are honest, and it is their very honesty that constitutes them a social problem.

The idealists and relativists are not mentally sick. They prove their soundness by living their lives according to the very notions of reality which they in theory repudiate and by counting upon the very fixed points which they prove are not there. They could earn a lot more respect for their notions if they were willing to live by them; but this they are careful not to do. Their ideas are brain-deep, not life-deep. Wherever life touches them they repudiate their theories and live like other men.

The Christian is too sincere to play with ideas for their own sake. He takes no pleasure in the mere spinning of gossamer webs for display. All his beliefs are practical. They are geared into his life. By them he lives or dies, stands or falls for this world and for all time to come. From the insincere man he turns away.

The sincere plain man knows that the world is real. He finds it here when he wakes to consciousness, and he knows that he did not think it into being. It was here waiting for him when

he came, and he knows that when he prepares to leave this earthly scene it will be here still to bid him good-bye as he departs. By the deep wisdom of life he is wiser than a thousand men who doubt. He stands upon the earth and feels the wind and rain in his face and he knows that they are real. He sees the sun by day and the stars by night. He sees the hot lightning play out of the dark thundercloud. He hears the sounds of nature and the cries of human joy and pain. These he knows are real. He lies down on the cool earth at night and has no fear that it will prove illusory or fail him while he sleeps. In the morning the firm ground will be under him, the blue sky above him and the rocks and trees around him as when he closed his eyes the night before. So he lives and rejoices in a world of reality.

With his five senses he engages this real world. All things necessary to his physical existence he apprehends by the faculties with which he has been equipped by the God who created him and placed him in such a world as this.

Now, by our definition also God is real. He is real in the absolute and final sense that nothing else is. All other reality is contingent upon His. The great Reality is God who is the Author of that lower and dependent reality which makes up the sum of created things, including ourselves. God has objective existence independent of and apart from any notions which we may have concerning Him. The worshipping heart does not create its Object. It finds Him here when it wakes from its moral slumber in the morning of its regeneration.

Another word that must be cleared up is the word *reckon*. This does not mean to visualize or imagine. Imagination is not faith. The two are not only different from, but stand in sharp opposition to, each other. Imagination projects unreal images out of the mind and seeks to attach reality to them. Faith creates nothing; it simply reckons upon that which is already *there*.

God and the spiritual world are real. We can reckon upon them with as much assurance as we reckon upon the familiar world around us. Spiritual things are there (or rather we should say *here*) inviting our attention and challenging our trust.

Our trouble is that we have established bad thought habits. We habitually think of the visible world as real and doubt the reality of any other. We do not deny the existence of the spiritual world but we doubt that it is real in the accepted meaning of the word.

The world of sense intrudes upon our attention day and night for the whole of our lifetime. It is clamorous, insistent and self-demonstrating. It does not appeal to our faith; it is here, assaulting our five senses, demanding to be accepted as real and final. But sin has so clouded the lenses of our hearts that we cannot see that other reality, the City of God, shining around us. The world of sense triumphs. The visible becomes the enemy of the invisible; the temporal, of the eternal. That is the curse inherited by every member of Adam's tragic race.

At the root of the Christian life lies belief in the invisible. The object of the Christian's faith is unseen reality.

Our uncorrected thinking, influenced by the blindness of our natural hearts and the intrusive ubiquity of visible things, tends to draw a contrast between the spiritual and the real; but actually no such contrast exists. The antithesis lies elsewhere: between the real and the imaginary, between the spiritual and the material, between the temporal and the eternal; but between the spiritual and the real, never. The spiritual *is* real.

If we would rise into that region of light and power plainly beckoning us through the Scriptures of truth we must break the evil habit of ignoring the spiritual. We must shift our interest from the seen to the unseen. For the great unseen Reality is God. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." This is basic

in the life of faith. From there we can rise to unlimited heights. "Ye believe in God," said our Lord Jesus Christ, "believe also in me." Without the first there can be no second.

If we truly want to follow God we must seek to be other-worldly. This I say knowing well that that word has been used with scorn by the sons of this world and applied to the Christian as a badge of reproach. So be it. Every man must choose his world. If we who follow Christ, with all the facts before us and knowing what we are about, deliberately choose the Kingdom of God as our sphere of interest I see no reason why anyone should object. If we lose by it, the loss is our own; if we gain, we rob no one by so doing. The "other world," which is the object of this world's disdain and the subject of the drunkard's mocking song, is our carefully chosen goal and the object of our holiest longing.

But we must avoid the common fault of pushing the "other world" into the future. It is not future, but present. It parallels our familiar physical world, and the doors between the two worlds are open. "Ye are come," says the writer to the Hebrews (and the tense is plainly present), "unto Mount Zion, 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." All these things are contrasted with "the mount that might be touched" and "the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words" that might be heard. May we not safely conclude that, as the realities of Mount Sinai were apprehended by the senses, so the realities of Mount Zion are to be grasped by the soul? And this not by any trick of the imagination, but in downright actuality. The soul has eyes with which to see and ears with which to hear. Feeble they may be from long disuse, but by the life-giving touch of Christ alive now and capable of sharpest sight and most sensitive hearing.

As we begin to focus upon God the things of the spirit will take shape before our inner eyes. Obedience to the word of Christ will bring an inward revelation of the Godhead (John 14:21-23). It will give acute perception enabling us to see God even as is promised to the pure in heart. A new God-consciousness will seize upon us and we shall begin to taste and hear and inwardly feel the God who is our life and our all. There will be seen the constant shining of the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. More and more, as our faculties grow sharper and more sure, God will become to us the great All, and His Presence the glory and wonder of our lives.

O God, quicken to life every power within me, that I may lay hold on eternal things. Open my eyes that I may see; give me acute spiritual perception; enable me to taste Thee and know that Thou art good. Make heaven more real to me than any earthly thing has ever been. Amen.

Chapter 66.

Restoring the Creator-Creature Relation

*Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.
Ps. 57:5*

It is a truism to say that order in nature depends upon right relationships; to achieve harmony each thing must be in its proper position relative to each other thing. In human life it is not otherwise.

I have hinted before in these chapters that the cause of all our human miseries is a radical moral dislocation, an upset in our relation to God and to each other. For whatever else the Fall may have been, it was most certainly a sharp change in man's relation to his Creator. He adopted toward God an altered attitude, and by so doing destroyed the proper Creator-creature relation in which, unknown to him, his true happiness lay. Essentially salvation is the restoration of a right relation between man and his Creator, a bringing back to normal of the Creator-creature relation.

A satisfactory spiritual life will begin with a complete change in relation between God and the sinner; not a judicial change merely, but a conscious and experienced change affecting the sinner's whole nature. The atonement in Jesus' blood makes such a change judicially possible and the working of the Holy Spirit makes it emotionally satisfying. The story of the prodigal son perfectly illustrates this latter phase. He had brought a world of trouble upon himself by forsaking the position which he had properly held as son of his father. At bottom his restoration was nothing more than a re-establishing of the father-son relation which had existed from his birth and had been altered temporarily by his act of sinful rebellion. This story overlooks the legal aspects of redemption, but it makes beautifully clear the experiential aspects of salvation.

In determining relationships we must begin somewhere. There must be somewhere a fixed center against which everything else is measured, where the law of relativity does not enter and we can say "IS" and make no allowances. Such a center is God. When God would make His Name known to mankind He could find no better word than "I AM." When He speaks in the first person He says, "I AM"; when we speak of Him we say, "He is"; when we speak to Him we say, "Thou art." Everyone and everything else measures from that fixed point. "I am that I am," says God, "I change not."

As the sailor locates his position on the sea by "shooting" the sun, so we may get our moral bearings by looking at God. We must begin with God. We are right when and only when we stand in a right position relative to God, and we are wrong so far and so long as we stand in any other position.

Much of our difficulty as seeking Christians stems from our unwillingness to take God as He is and adjust our lives accordingly. We insist upon trying to modify Him and to bring Him nearer to our own image. The flesh whimpers against the rigor of God's inexorable sentence and begs like Agag for a little mercy, a little indulgence of its carnal ways. It is no use. We can get a right start only by accepting God as He is and learning to love Him for what He is. As we go on to know Him better we shall find it a source of unspeakable joy that God is just what He is. Some of the most rapturous moments we know will be those we spend in reverent admiration of the Godhead. In those holy moments the very thought of change in Him will be too painful to endure.

So let us begin with God. Back of all, above all, before all is God; first in sequential order, above in rank and station, exalted in dignity and honor. As the self-existent One He gave being

to all things, and all things exist out of Him and for Him. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Every soul belongs to God and exists by His pleasure. God being Who and What He is, and we being who and what we are, the only thinkable relation between us is one of full lordship on His part and complete submission on ours. We owe Him every honor that it is in our power to give Him. Our everlasting grief lies in giving Him anything less.

The pursuit of God will embrace the labor of bringing our total personality into conformity to His. And this not judicially, but actually. I do not here refer to the act of justification by faith in Christ. I speak of a voluntary exalting of God to His proper station over us and a willing surrender of our whole being to the place of worshipful submission which the Creator-creature circumstance makes proper.

The moment we make up our minds that we are going on with this determination to exalt God over all we step out of the world's parade. We shall find ourselves out of adjustment to the ways of the world, and increasingly so as we make progress in the holy way. We shall acquire a new viewpoint; a new and different psychology will be formed within us; a new power will begin to surprise us by its upsurgings and its outgoings.

Our break with the world will be the direct outcome of our changed relation to God. For the world of fallen men does not honor God. Millions call themselves by His Name, it is true, and pay some token respect to Him, but a simple test will show how little He is really honored among them. Let the average man be put to the proof on the question of who is *above*, and his true position will be exposed. Let him be forced into making a choice between God and money, between God and men, between God and personal ambition, God and self, God and human love, and God will take second place every time. Those other things will be exalted above. However the man may protest, the proof is in the choices he makes day after day throughout his life.

"Be thou exalted" is the language of victorious spiritual experience. It is a little key to unlock the door to great treasures of grace. It is central in the life of God in the soul. Let the seeking man reach a place where life and lips join to say continually "Be thou exalted," and a thousand minor problems will be solved at once. His Christian life ceases to be the complicated thing it had been before and becomes the very essence of simplicity. By the exercise of his will he has set his course, and on that course he will stay as if guided by an automatic pilot. If blown off course for a moment by some adverse wind he will surely return again as by a secret bent of the soul. The hidden motions of the Spirit are working in his favor, and "the stars in their courses" fight for him. He has met his life problem at its center, and everything else must follow along.

Let no one imagine that he will lose anything of human dignity by this voluntary sell-out of his all to his God. He does not by this degrade himself as a man; rather he finds his right place of high honor as one made in the image of his Creator. His deep disgrace lay in his moral derangement, his unnatural usurpation of the place of God. His honor will be proved by restoring again that stolen throne. In exalting God over all he finds his own highest honor upheld.

Anyone who might feel reluctant to surrender his will to the will of another should remember Jesus' words. "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." We must of necessity be servant to someone, either to God or to sin. The sinner prides himself on his independence, completely overlooking the fact that he is the weak slave of the sins that rule his members. The man who surrenders to Christ exchanges a cruel slave driver for a kind and gentle Master whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light.

Made as we were in the image of God we scarcely find it strange to take again our God as our All. God was our original habitat and our hearts cannot but feel at home when they enter again that ancient and beautiful abode.

I hope it is clear that there is a logic behind God's claim to pre-eminence. That place is His by every right in earth or heaven. While we take to ourselves the place that is His the whole course of our lives is out of joint. Nothing will or can restore order till our hearts make the great decision: God shall be exalted above.

"Them that honour me I will honour," said God once to a priest of Israel, and that ancient law of the Kingdom stands today unchanged by the passing of time or the changes of dispensation. The whole Bible and every page of history proclaim the perpetuation of that law. "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour," said our Lord Jesus, tying in the old with the new and revealing the essential unity of His ways with men.

Sometimes the best way to see a thing is to look at its opposite. Eli and his sons are placed in the priesthood with the stipulation that they honor God in their lives and ministrations. This they fail to do, and God sends Samuel to announce the consequences. Unknown to Eli this law of reciprocal honor has been all the while secretly working, and now the time has come for judgment to fall. Hophni and Phineas, the degenerate priests, fall in battle, the wife of Hophni dies in childbirth, Israel flees before her enemies, the ark of God is captured by the Philistines and the old man Eli falls backward and dies of a broken neck. Thus stark utter tragedy followed upon Eli's failure to honor God.

Now set over against this almost any Bible character who honestly tried to glorify God in his earthly walk. See how God winked at weaknesses and overlooked failures as He poured upon His servants grace and blessing untold. Let it be Abraham, Jacob, David, Daniel, Elijah or whom you will; honor followed honor as harvest the seed. The man of God set his heart to exalt God above all; God accepted his intention as fact and acted accordingly. Not perfection, but holy intention made the difference.

In our Lord Jesus Christ this law was seen in simple perfection. In His lowly manhood He humbled Himself and gladly gave all glory to His Father in heaven. He sought not His own honor, but the honor of God who sent Him. "If I honour myself," He said on one occasion, "my honour is nothing; it is my Father that honoureth me." So far had the proud Pharisees departed from this law that they could not understand one who honored God at his own expense. "I honour my Father," said Jesus to them, "and ye do dishonour me."

Another saying of Jesus, and a most disturbing one, was put in the form of a question, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God alone?" If I understand this correctly Christ taught here the alarming doctrine that the desire for honor among men made belief impossible. Is this sin at the root of religious unbelief? Could it be that those "intellectual difficulties" which men blame for their inability to believe are but smoke screens to conceal the real cause that lies behind them? Was it this greedy desire for honor from man that made men into Pharisees and Pharisees into Deicides? Is this the secret back of religious self-righteousness and empty worship? I believe it may be. The whole course of the life is upset by failure to put God where He belongs. We exalt ourselves instead of God and the curse follows.

In our desire after God let us keep always in mind that God also hath desire, and His desire is toward the sons of men, and more particularly toward those sons of men who will make the once-for-all decision to exalt Him over all. Such as these are precious to God above all treasures of earth or sea. In them God finds a theater where He can display His exceeding kindness toward

us in Christ Jesus. With them God can walk unhindered, toward them He can act like the God He is.

In speaking thus I have one fear; it is that I may convince the mind before God can win the heart. For this God-above-all position is one not easy to take. The mind may approve it while not having the consent of the will to put it into effect. While the imagination races ahead to honor God, the will may lag behind and the man never guess how divided his heart is. The whole man must make the decision before the heart can know any real satisfaction. God wants us all, and He will not rest till He gets us all. No part of the man will do.

Let us pray over this in detail, throwing ourselves at God's feet and meaning everything we say. No one who prays thus in sincerity need wait long for tokens of divine acceptance. God will unveil His glory before His servant's eyes, and He will place all His treasures at the disposal of such a one, for He knows that His honor is safe in such consecrated hands.

O God, be Thou exalted over my possessions. Nothing of earth's treasures shall seem dear unto me if only Thou art glorified in my life. Be Thou exalted over my friendships. I am determined that Thou shalt be above all, though I must stand deserted and alone in the midst of the earth. Be Thou exalted above my comforts. Though it mean the loss of bodily comforts and the carrying of heavy crosses I shall keep my vow made this day before Thee. Be Thou exalted over my reputation. Make me ambitious to please Thee even if as a result I must sink into obscurity and my name be forgotten as a dream. Rise, O Lord, into Thy proper place of honor, above my ambitions, above my likes and dislikes, above my family, my health and even my life itself. Let me decrease that Thou mayest increase, let me sink that Thou mayest rise above. Ride forth upon me as Thou didst ride into Jerusalem mounted upon the humble little beast, a colt, the foal of an ass, and let me hear the children cry to Thee, "Hosanna in the highest."

Excerpts from *The Root of the Righteous*

Chapter 67.

No Regeneration Without Reformation

In the Bible the offer of pardon on the part of God is conditioned upon intention to reform on the part of man. There can be no spiritual regeneration till there has been a moral reformation. That this statement requires defense only proves how far from the truth we have strayed.

In our current popular theology pardon depends upon faith alone. The very word *reform* has been banished from among the sons of the Reformation!

We often hear the declaration, "I do not preach reformation; I preach regeneration." Now we recognize this as being the expression of a commendable revolt against the insipid and unscriptural doctrine of salvation by human effort. But the declaration as it stands contains real error, for it opposes reformation to regeneration. Actually the two are never opposed to each other in sound Bible theology. The not-reformation-but-regeneration doctrine incorrectly presents us with an either-or; either you take reformation or you take regeneration. This is inaccurate. The fact is that on this subject we are presented not with an either-or, but with a both-and. The converted man is both reformed and regenerated. And unless the sinner is willing to reform his way of living he will never know the inward experience of regeneration. This is the vital truth which has gotten lost under the leaves in popular evangelical theology.

The idea that God will pardon a rebel who has not given up his rebellion is contrary both to the Scriptures and to common sense. How horrible to contemplate a church full of persons who have been pardoned but who still love sin and hate the ways of righteousness. And how much more horrible to think of heaven as filled with sinners who had not repented nor changed their way of living.

A familiar story will illustrate this. The governor of one of our states was visiting the state prison incognito. He fell into conversation with a personable young convict and felt a secret wish to pardon him. "What would you do," he asked casually, "if you were lucky enough to obtain a pardon?" The convict, not knowing to whom he was speaking, snarled his reply: "If I ever get out of this place, the first thing I'll do is to cut the throat of the judge who sent me here." The governor broke off the conversation and withdrew from the cell. The convict stayed on in prison. To pardon a man who had not reformed would be to let loose another killer upon society. That kind of pardon would not only be foolish, it would be downright immoral.

The promise of pardon and cleansing is always associated in the Scriptures with the command to repent. The widely-used text in Isaiah, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," is organically united to the verses that precede it: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." What does this teach but radical reformation of life before there can be any expectation of pardon? To divorce the words from each other is to do violence to the Scriptures and to convict ourselves of deceitfully handling the truth.

I think there is little doubt that the teaching of salvation without repentance has lowered the moral standards of the Church and produced a multitude of deceived religious professors who

erroneously believe themselves to be saved when in fact they are still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. And to see such persons actually seeking the deeper life is a grim and disillusioning sight. Yet our altars are sometimes filled with seekers who are crying with Simon, "Give me this power," when the moral groundwork has simply not been laid for it. The whole thing must be acknowledged as a clear victory for the devil, a victory he could never have enjoyed if unwise teachers had not made it possible by preaching the evil doctrine of regeneration apart from reformation.

Chapter 68.

Faith Is a Perturbing Thing

"Faith," said the early Lutherans, "is a perturbing thing." To Martin Luther goes the credit under God for having rediscovered the Biblical doctrine of justification by faith. Luther's emphasis upon faith as the only way into peace of heart and deliverance from sin gave a new impulse of life to the decadent Church and brought about the Reformation. That much is history. It is not a matter of opinion but of simple fact. Anyone can check it.

But something has happened to the doctrine of justification by faith as Luther taught it. What has happened is not so easily discovered. It is not a matter of simple fact, a plain yes or no, an obvious black or white. It is more elusive than that, and very much more difficult to come at; but what has happened is so serious and so vital that it has changed or is in the process of changing the whole evangelical outlook. If it continues it may well turn Christianity inside out and put for the faith of our fathers something else entirely. And the whole spiritual revolution will be so gradual and so innocent appearing that it will hardly be noticed. Anyone who fights it will be accused of jousting against windmills like Don Quixote.

The faith of Paul and Luther was a revolutionizing thing. It upset the whole life of the individual and made him into another person altogether. It laid hold on the life and brought it under obedience to Christ. It took up its cross and followed along after Jesus with no intention of going back. It said good-bye to its old friends as certainly as Elijah when he stepped into the fiery chariot and went away in the whirlwind. It has a finality about it. It snapped shut on a man's heart like a trap; it captured the man and made him from that moment forward a happy love-servant of his Lord. It turned earth into a desert and drew heaven within sight of the believing soul. It realigned all life's actions and brought them into accord with the will of God. It set its possessor on a pinnacle of truth from which spiritual vantage point he viewed everything that came into his field of experience. It made him little and God big and Christ unspeakably dear. All this and more happened to a man when he received the faith that justifies.

Came the revolution, quietly, certainly, and put another construction upon the word "faith." Little by little the whole meaning of the word shifted from what it had been to what it is now. And so insidious was the change that hardly a voice has been raised to warn against it. But the tragic consequences are all around us.

Faith now means no more than passive moral acquiescence in the Word of God and the cross of Jesus. To exercise it we have only to rest on one knee and nod our heads in agreement with the instructions of a personal worker intent upon saving our soul. The general effect is much the same as that which men feel after a visit to a good and wise doctor. They come back from such a visit feeling extra good, withal smiling just a little sheepishly to think how many fears they had entertained about their health when actually there was nothing wrong with them. They just needed a rest.

Such a faith as this does not perturb people. It comforts them. It does not put their hip out of joint so that they halt upon their thigh; rather it teaches them deep breathing exercises and improves their posture. The face of their ego is washed and their self-confidence is rescued from discouragement. All this they gain, but they do not get a new name as Jacob did, nor do they limp into the eternal sunlight. "As he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him." That was

Jacob—rather, that was Israel, for the sun did not shine much upon Jacob. It was ashamed to. But it loved to rest upon the head of the man whom God had transformed.

This generation of Christians must hear again the doctrine of the perturbing quality of faith. People must be told that the Christian religion is not something they can trifle with. The faith of Christ will command or it will have nothing to do with a man. It will not yield to experimentation. Its power cannot reach any man who is secretly keeping an escape route open in case things get too tough for him. The only man who can be sure he has true Bible faith is the one who has put himself in a position where he cannot go back. His faith has resulted in an everlasting and irrevocable committal, and however strongly he may be tempted he always replies, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

Chapter 69.

True Faith Brings Commitment

To many Christians Christ is little more than an idea, or at best an ideal. He is not a fact. Millions of professed believers talk as if He were real and act as if He were not. And always our actual position is to be discovered by the way we act, not by the way we talk.

We can prove our faith by our commitment to it, and in no other way. Any belief that does not command the one who holds it is not a real belief; it is a pseudo belief only. And it might shock some of us profoundly if we were brought suddenly face to face with our beliefs and forced to test them in the fires of practical living.

Many of us Christians have become extremely skillful in arranging our lives so as to admit the truth of Christianity without being embarrassed by its implications. We arrange things so that we can get on well enough without divine aid, while at the same time ostensibly seeking it. We boast in the Lord but watch carefully that we never get caught depending on Him. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Pseudo faith always arranges a way out to serve in case God fails it. Real faith knows only one way and gladly allows itself to be stripped of any second way or makeshift substitutes. For true faith, it is either God or total collapse. And not since Adam first stood up on the earth has God failed a single man or woman who trusted Him.

The man of pseudo faith will fight for his verbal creed but refuse flatly to allow himself to get into a predicament where his future must depend upon that creed being true. He always provides himself with secondary ways of escape so he will have a way out if the roof caves in.

What we need very badly these days is a company of Christians who are prepared to trust God as completely now as they know they must do at the last day. For each of us the time is surely coming when we shall have nothing but God. Health and wealth and friends and hiding places will all be swept away and we shall have only God. To the man of pseudo faith that is a terrifying thought, but to real faith it is one of the most comforting thoughts the heart can entertain.

It would be a tragedy indeed to come to the place where we have no other but God and find that we had not really been trusting God during the days of our earthly sojourn. It would be better to invite God now to remove every false trust, to disengage our hearts from all secret hiding places and to bring us out into the open where we can discover for ourselves whether or not we actually trust Him. That is a harsh cure for our troubles, but it is a sure one. Gentler cures may be too weak to do the work. And time is running out on us.

Chapter 70.

No Saviourhood Without Lordship

We must never underestimate the ability of human beings to get themselves tangled up.

Mankind appears to have a positive genius for twisting truth until it ceases to be truth and becomes downright falsehood. By overemphasizing in one place and under-emphasizing in another the whole pattern of truth may be so altered that a completely false view results without our being aware of it.

This fact was brought forcibly to mind recently by hearing again the discredited doctrine of a divided Christ so widely current a few years ago and still accepted in many religious circles. It goes like this: Christ is both Saviour and Lord. A sinner may be saved by accepting Him as Saviour without yielding to Him as Lord. The practical outworking of this doctrine is that the evangelist presents and the seeker accepts a divided Christ. We have all heard the tearful plea made to persons already saved to accept Christ as Lord and thus enter into the victorious life.

Almost all deeper life teaching is based upon this fallacy, but because it contains a germ of truth its soundness is not questioned. Anyway, it is extremely simple and quite popular, and in addition to these selling points it is also ready-made for both speaker and hearer and requires no thinking by either. So sermons embodying this heresy are freely preached, books are written and songs composed, all saying the same thing; and all saying the wrong thing, except, as I have said, for a feeble germ of truth lying inert at the bottom.

Now, it seems odd that none of these teachers ever noticed that the only true object of saving faith is none other than Christ Himself; not the "saviourhood" of Christ nor the "lordship" of Christ, but Christ Himself. God does not offer salvation to the one who will believe on one of the offices of Christ, nor is an office of Christ ever presented as an object of faith. Neither are we exhorted to believe on the atonement, nor on the cross, nor on the priesthood of the Saviour. All of these are embodied in the person of Christ, but they are never separated nor is one ever isolated from the rest. Much less are we permitted to accept one of Christ's offices and reject another. The notion that we are so permitted is a modern day heresy, I repeat, and like every heresy it has had evil consequences among Christians. No heresy is ever entertained with impunity. We pay in practical failure for our theoretical errors.

It is altogether doubtful whether any man can be saved who comes to Christ for His help but with no intention to obey Him. Christ's saviourhood is forever united to His lordship. Look at the Scriptures: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved... for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:9-13). There the *Lord* is the object of faith for salvation. And when the Philippian jailer asked the way to be saved, Paul replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). He did not tell him to believe on the Saviour with the thought that he could later take up the matter of His lordship and settle it at his own convenience. To Paul there could be no division of offices. Christ must be Lord or He will not be Saviour.

There is no intention here to teach that the earnest believer may not go on to explore ever-increasing meanings in Christ, nor do we hold that our first saving contact with Christ brings perfect knowledge of all He is to us. The contrary is true. Ages upon ages will hardly be long enough to allow us to experience all the riches of His grace. As we discover new meanings in his

titles and make them ours we will grow in the knowledge of our Lord and in personal appreciation of the multifold offices He fills and the many forms of love He wears exalted on His throne. That is the truth which has been twisted out of shape and reduced to impotence by the doctrine that we can believe on His saviourhood while rejecting His lordship.

Excerpts from *That Incredible Christian*

Chapter 71. Why the Holy Spirit Is Given

A generation ago the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer was neatly reduced by certain Bible teachers to one thing: to impart power for service.

In the first quarter of the present century the phrase "power for service" occurred everywhere in the literature of evangelical Christianity, and one gets the distinct impression that it was meant to serve as a Biblical reason for the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church other than that advanced by the charismatic sects which about that time were going big in various parts of the world, especially in the United States. These claimed that they had returned to basic New Testament Christianity and offered as proof the presence of the Spirit's gifts among them, with particular, one might say exclusive, emphasis on the gift of tongues. This teaching was accompanied by a great outburst of emotionalism. Those who had the experience enjoyed it immensely and the onlookers could not but be deeply affected by this demonstration of joy.

The more staid members of the evangelical community could not go along with the emotionalism of the Pentecostals nor with the obvious lack of balance in their theology and lack of responsibility in their general conduct. But the matter of the Spirit had to be dealt with. The popular Bible teachers came up with the "power for service" doctrine and a lot of good people were greatly relieved. According to this counter-doctrine, the infilling of the Spirit is necessary and altogether to be desired, but for reasons other than those advanced by the Pentecostals. The one great work of the Spirit in the life of the believer, they said, is to impart "power for service." Thus it is not emotional or charismatic but practical. The Christian is weak and the Spirit is given to make him strong so that he can serve effectively. This view was supported by Acts 1:8: "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me."

Now I have often tried to make the point that truths that are compelled to stand alone never stand straight and are not likely to stand long. Truth is one but truths are many. Scriptural truths are interlocking and interdependent. A truth is rarely valid in isolation. A statement may be true in its relation to other truths and less than true when separated from them. "The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" is good not only for a court of law but for the pulpit, the classroom and the prayer chamber as well.

To teach that the filling with the Holy Spirit is given to the Christian to provide "power for service" is to teach truth, but not the whole truth. Power for service is but one effect of the experience, and I do not hesitate to say that it is the least of several effects. It is least for the very reason that it touches service, presumably service to mankind; and contrary to the popular belief, "to serve this present age" is not the Christian's first duty nor the chief end of man.

As I have stated elsewhere, the two great verbs that dominate the life of man are *be* and *do*. What a man *is* comes first in the sight of God. What he does is determined by what he is, so *is* is of first importance always. The modern notion that we are "saved to serve," while true, is true only in a wider context, and as understood by busy Christians today it is not true at all.

Redemption became necessary not because of what men were doing only, but because of what they were. Not human conduct alone had gone wrong but human nature as well; apart from the moral defect in human nature no evil conduct would have occurred. Fallen men acted in accord with what they were. Their hearts dictated their deeds. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth." That much any moral being could have seen. But God saw more; He saw the cause of man's wicked ways, and that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The stream of human conduct flows out of a fountain polluted by evil thoughts and imaginations.

To purge the stream it was necessary to purify the fountain; and to reform human conduct it is necessary to regenerate human nature. The fundamental *be* must be sanctified if we would have a righteous *do*, for being and doing are related as cause and effect, as father and son.

The primary work of the Holy Spirit is to restore the lost soul to intimate fellowship with God through the washing of regeneration. To accomplish this He first reveals Christ to the penitent heart (1 Cor. 12:3). He then goes on to illumine the newborn soul with brighter rays from the face of Christ (John 14:26; 16:13-15) and leads the willing heart into depths and heights of divine knowledge and communion. Remember, we know Christ only as the Spirit enables us and we have only as much of Him as the Holy Spirit imparts.

God wants worshipers before workers; indeed the only acceptable workers are those who have learned the lost art of worship. It is inconceivable that a sovereign and holy God should be so hard up for workers that He would press into service anyone who had been empowered regardless of his moral qualifications. The very stones would praise Him if the need arose and a thousand legions of angels would leap to His will.

Gifts and power for service the Spirit surely desires to impart; but holiness and spiritual worship come first.

Chapter 72.

The Divine Indwelling

The doctrine of the divine indwelling is one of the most important in the New Testament, and its meaning for the individual Christian is precious beyond all description. To neglect it is to suffer serious loss. The apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesian Christians that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith. Surely it takes faith of a more than average vitality to grasp the full implications of this great truth.

Two facts join to make the doctrine difficult to accept: the supreme greatness of God and the utter sinfulness of man. Those who think poorly of God and well of themselves may chatter idly of "the deity within," but the man who trembles before the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, the man who knows the depth of his own sin, will detect a moral incongruity in the teaching that One so holy should dwell in the heart of one so vile.

But however incongruous it may appear to be, in the Holy Scriptures it is taught so fully that it cannot be overlooked and so plainly that it can hardly be misunderstood. "If a man love me," said our Lord Jesus Christ, "he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). That this abiding is *within the man* is shown by these words: "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (vs. 20). Christ said of the Holy Spirit: "He... shall be in you" (vs. 17), and in His great prayer in John 17 our Lord twice used the words "I in them."

The truth of the divine indwelling is developed more fully in the epistles of Paul. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?.... For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3:16, 17). And again (1 Cor. 6:19), "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"

Without question, the teaching of the New Testament is that the very God Himself inhabits the nature of His true children. How this can be I do not know, but neither do I know how my soul inhabits my body. Paul called this wonder of the indwelling God a rich mystery: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." And if the doctrine involved a contradiction or even an impossibility we must still believe what the mouth of the Lord has spoken. "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4).

The spiritual riches lying buried in this truth are so vast that they are worth any care or effort we may give to their recovery. Yet we are not concerned primarily with the theology or metaphysics embodied here. We want to know the reality of it. What does the truth mean to us in practical outworking? What does it have for a serious-minded Christian compelled to live in a dark and godless world? As Paul would say, "Much every way."

God does not dwell passively in His people; He *wills* and *works* in them (Phil. 2:13); and remember, wherever He is, God always acts like Himself. He will do in us whatever His holy nature moves Him to do; and unless He is hindered by our resistance He will act in us precisely as He acts in heaven. Only an unsanctified human will can prevent Him.

Without doubt we hinder God greatly by our willfulness and our unbelief. We fail to cooperate with the holy impulses of the inliving Spirit; we go contrary to His will as it is revealed in the Scriptures, either because we have not taken time to discover what the Bible teaches or because we do not approve it when we do.

This contest between the indwelling Deity and our own fallen propensities occupies a large place in New Testament theology. But the warfare need not continue indefinitely. Christ has made full provision for our deliverance from the bondage of the flesh. A frank and realistic presentation of the whole thing is set forth in Romans six and seven, and in the eighth chapter a triumphant solution is discovered: It is, briefly, through a spiritual crucifixion with Christ followed by resurrection and an infusion of the Holy Spirit.

Once the heart is freed from its contrary impulses, Christ within becomes a wondrous experiential fact. The surrendered heart has no more controversy with God, so He can live in us congenial and uninhibited. Then He thinks His own thoughts in us: thoughts about ourselves, about Himself, about sinners and saints and babes and harlots; thoughts about the church, about sin and judgment and hell and heaven. And He thinks about us and Himself and His love for us and our love for Him; and He woos us to Himself as a bridegroom woos his bride.

Yet there is nothing formal or automatic about His operations within us. We are personalities and we are engaged with personality. We are intelligent and have wills of our own. We can, so to speak, stand outside of ourselves and discipline ourselves into accord with the will of God. We can commune with our own hearts upon our beds and be still. We can talk to our God in the night watches. We can learn what He wants us to be, and pray and work to prepare Him a habitation.

And what kind of habitation pleases God? What must our natures be like before He can feel at home within us? He asks nothing but a pure heart and a single mind. He asks no rich paneling, no rugs from the Orient, no art treasures from afar. He desires but sincerity, transparency, humility and love. He will see to the rest.

Chapter 73.

We Are Saved *To* as well as *From*

The evangelical church today is in the awkward position of being wrong while it is right, and a little preposition makes the difference.

I think there can be no question but that if we let the Bible decide right and wrong the evangelicals are right in their creedal position. Even the skeptic, H. L. Mencken, said, "If the Bible is true, the fundamentalists are right." He did not grant the truth of the Bible, but he was sharp enough to see that the basic doctrines taught by fundamentalists were identical with those taught by the Bible.

One place where we are wrong while we are right is in the relative stress we lay upon the prepositions *to* and *from* when they follow the word *saved*. For a long generation we have been holding the letter of truth while at the same time we have been moving away from it in spirit because we have been preoccupied with what we are saved *from* rather than what we have been saved *to*.

The right relative importance of the two concepts is set forth by Paul in his first epistle to the Thessalonians: "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven."

The Christian is saved from his past sins. With these he simply has nothing more to do; they are among the things to be forgotten as the night is forgotten at the dawning of the day. He is also saved from the wrath to come. With this also he has nothing to do. It exists, but not for him. Sin and wrath have a cause and effect relationship, and because for the Christian sin is canceled wrath is canceled also. The *from's* of the Christian life concern negatives, and to be engrossed in them is to live in a state of negation. Yet that is where many earnest believers live most of the time.

We are not called to fellowship with nonexistence. We are called to things that exist in truth, to positive things, and it is as we become occupied with these that health comes to the soul. Spiritual life cannot feed on negatives. The man who is constantly reciting the evils of his unconverted days is looking in the wrong direction. He is like a man trying to run a race while looking back over his shoulder.

What the Christian used to be is altogether the least important thing about him. What he is yet to be is all that should concern him. He may occasionally, as Paul sometimes did, remember to his own shame the life he once lived; but that should be only a quick glance; it is never to be a fixed gaze. Our long permanent look is on God and the glory that shall be revealed.

What we are saved *from* and what we are saved *to* bear the same relation to each other as a serious illness and recovered health. The physician should stand between these two opposites to save from one and restore to the other. Once the great sickness is cured the memory of it should be thrust out onto the margin of the mind to grow fainter and weaker as it retreats farther away; and the fortunate man whose health has been restored should go on to use his new strength to accomplish something useful for mankind.

Yet many persons permit their sick bodies to condition their mental stuff so that after the body has gotten well they still retain the old feeling of chronic invalidism they had before. They are recovered, true enough, but not *to* anything. We have but to imagine a group of such persons

testifying every Sunday about their late illnesses and singing plaintive songs about them and we have a pretty fair picture of many gatherings among Christians today.

There is an art of forgetting, and every Christian should become skilled in it. Forgetting the things which are behind is a positive necessity if we are to become more than mere babes in Christ. If we cannot trust God to have dealt effectually with our past we may as well throw in the sponge now and have it over with. Fifty years of grieving over our sins cannot blot out their guilt. But if God has indeed pardoned and cleansed us, then we should count it done and waste no more time in sterile lamentations.

And thank God this sudden obliteration of our familiar past does not leave us with a vacuum. Far from it. Into the empty world vacated by our sins and failures rushes the blessed Spirit of God, bringing with Him everything new. New life, new hope, new enjoyments, new interests, new purposeful toil, and best of all a new and satisfying object toward which to direct our soul's enraptured gaze. God now fills the recovered garden, and we may without fear walk and commune with Him in the cool of the day.

Right here is where the weakness of much current Christianity lies. We have not learned where to lay our emphasis. Particularly we have not understood that we are saved to know God, to enter His wonder-filled Presence through the new and living way and remain in that Presence forever. We are called to an everlasting preoccupation with God. The Triune God with all of His mystery and majesty is ours and we are His, and eternity will not be long enough to experience all that He is of goodness, holiness and truth.

In heaven they rest not day or night in their ecstatic worship of the Godhead. We profess to be headed for that place; shall we not begin now to worship on earth as we shall do in heaven?

Chapter 74.

The Need for Divine Illumination

Spiritual truths differ from natural truths both in their constitution and in the manner of their apprehension by us.

Natural truths can be learned by us regardless of our moral or spiritual condition. The truths of the natural sciences, for instance, can be grasped by anyone of normal intelligence regardless of whether he is a good man or a scoundrel. There is no relation between, say, chastity and logic, or between kindness and oceanography. In like manner a sufficient degree of mental vigor is all that is required to grasp philosophical propositions. A man may study philosophy for a lifetime, teach it, write books about it, and be all the while proud, covetous and thoroughly dishonest in his private dealings.

The same thing may be said of theology. A man need not be godly to learn theology. Indeed I wonder whether there is anything taught in any seminary on earth that could not be learned by a brigand or a swindler as well as by a consecrated Christian. While I have no doubt that the majority of theological students live far better than average lives, yet it should be kept in mind that they can easily get their lessons without living any better than is absolutely required to stay in the institution.

It does not strain my imagination to think of Judas Iscariot as coming out of school with a Th.B., if such a thing had been offered in his day. There is simply no necessary relation between the studies engaged in by students in a divinity school and the state of the students' hearts. Anything that is taught under the heading of hamartiology, Soteriology, eschatology, pneumatology or any of the rest may be grasped as easily by a sinner as by a saint. And certainly it takes no great degree of sanctity to learn Hebrew and Greek.

Surely God has that to say to the pure in heart which He cannot say to the man of sinful life. But what He has to say is not theological, it is spiritual; and right there lies the weight of my argument. Spiritual truths cannot be received in the ordinary way of nature. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." So wrote the apostle Paul to the believers at Corinth.

Our Lord referred to this kind of Spirit-enlightened knowledge many times. To Him it was the fruit of a divine illumination, not contrary to but altogether beyond mere intellectual light. The fourth Gospel is full of this idea; indeed the idea is so important to the understanding of John's Gospel that anyone who denies it might as well give up trying to grasp our Lord's teachings as given by the apostle John. And the same idea is found in John's First Epistle, making that epistle extremely difficult to understand but also making it one of the most beautiful and rewarding of all the epistles of the New Testament when its teachings are spiritually discerned.

The necessity for spiritual illumination before we can grasp spiritual truths is taught throughout the entire New Testament and is altogether in accord with the teachings of the Psalms, the Proverbs and the Prophets. The Old Testament Apocrypha agrees with the Scriptures here, and while the Apocryphal books are not to be received as divinely inspired, they are useful as showing how the best minds of ancient Israel thought about this matter of divine truth and how it is received into the human heart.

The New Testament draws a sharp line between the natural mind and the mind that has been touched by divine fire. When Peter made his good confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," our Lord replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And Paul expresses much the same thing when he says, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

The sum of what I am saying is that there is an illumination, divinely bestowed, without which theological truth is information and nothing more. While this illumination is never given apart from theology, it is entirely possible to have theology without the illumination. This results in what has been called "dead orthodoxy," and while there may be some who deny that it is possible to be both orthodox and dead at the same time I am afraid experience proves that it is.

Revivals, as they have appeared at various times among the churches of the past, have been essentially a quickening of the spiritual life of persons already orthodox. The revivalist, as long as he exercised his ministry as a revivalist, did not try to teach doctrine. His one object was to bring about a quickening of the churches which while orthodox in creed were devoid of spiritual life. When he went beyond this he was something else than a revivalist. Revival can come only to those who know truth. When the inner meaning of familiar doctrines suddenly flashes in upon the heart of a Christian the revival for him has already begun. It may go on to be much more than this but it can never be less.

Chapter 75.

The Sanctification of Our Minds

Thinking is a kind of living. To think and to be aware that we think is to be conscious; life without consciousness is but a shadow of life, having no meaning and being of no value to the individual. Our thoughts are the product of our thinking, and since these are of such vast importance to us it is imperative that we learn how to think rightly.

I am not concerned here with that kind of profound cerebration known as "heavy thinking." Few of us have the intellectual equipment to enable us, or the will power to compel us, to engage in such heroic mental exercise. I am dealing here with that kind of thinking done by every normal person every waking moment from birth to death.

After all, it is not our heavy thinking that shapes our characters, but the quiet attention of the mind to the surrounding world day after day throughout our lives. Men are influenced more by their common, everyday thinking than by any rare intellectual feat such as writing a great poem or painting a famous picture. Feats of thinking may create reputation, but habits of thinking create character. The incredible mental accomplishments of an Einstein, for instance, had almost nothing to do with the kind of human being he was; the constant, undramatic, moment-by-moment interplay of his mind with his environment, on the other hand, had almost everything to do with it.

We all live in two environments, the one being the world around us, the other our thoughts about that world. The larger world cannot affect us directly; it must be mediated to us by our thoughts, and will be to us at last only what we allow it to be.

Three men walking side by side may yet be inhabiting three different worlds. Imagine a poet, a naturalist and a lumberman traveling together through a forest. The poet's mind races back over the centuries to the time when the mighty trees now towering above him were but beginning to appear as tiny green shoots out of the gray earth. He dreams of the mighty of the world who then wore crowns and swayed empires, but who have long ago passed from this earthly scene and been forgotten by everyone but a few historians.

The naturalist's world is smaller and more detailed. He hears the sweet, hardly audible bird song that floats among the branches and seeks to discover the hidden singer; he knows what kind of moss it is that clings to the base of the centuries-old trees; he seeks what the others miss, the fresh claw marks on the bark of a tree, and knows that a bear has recently passed that way.

The lumberman's world is smaller still. He is concerned neither with history nor nature but with lumber. He judges the diameter and height of the tree, and by quick calculation determines how much it will bring on the market. His world is the dull world of commerce. He sees nothing beyond it.

It is obvious that one external world has been turned into three internal worlds by the thinking of the three men. External things and events are the raw material only; the finished product is whatever the mind makes of these. Judas Iscariot and John the Beloved lived in the same world, but how differently they interpreted it. The same may be said of Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Saul and David. From these we learn that circumstances do not make men; it is their reaction to circumstances that determines what kind of men they will be.

What then can we Christians do? The answer is, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be

reprobates?" The mental stuff of the Christian can be and should be modified and conditioned by the Spirit of Christ which indwells his nature. God wills that we think His thoughts after Him. The Spirit-filled, prayerful Christian actually possesses the mind of Christ, so that his reactions to the external world are the same as Christ's. He thinks about people and things just as Christ does. All life becomes to him the raw nectar which the Spirit within him turns into the honey of paradise.

Yet this is not automatic. To do His gracious work God must have the intelligent cooperation of His people. If we would think God's thoughts we must learn to think continually of God. "God thinks continuously of each one of us as if He had no one but ourselves," said Francois Malaval; "it is therefore no more than just if we think continuously of Him, as if we had no one but Himself."

We must think of the surrounding world of people and things against the background of our thoughts of God. The experienced Christian will never think of anything directly; his thoughts go first to God and from God out to His creation. His thoughts, like the angels of Jacob's ladder, ascend and descend, but ever God stands above them presiding over all.

To be heavenly-minded we must think heavenly thoughts. "So let us return to ourselves, brothers,.... for it is impossible for us to be reconciled and united with God if we do not first return to ourselves,.... striving constantly to keep attention on the kingdom of heaven which is within us."

So wrote Nicephorus, a father of the Greek Orthodox Church, in the fourteenth century, and nothing since has changed. God must have all our thoughts if we would experience the sanctification of our minds.

Excerpts from *Of God and Men*

Chapter 76. We Need Men of God Again

The church at this moment needs men, the right kind of men, bold men. The talk is that we need revival, that we need a new baptism of the Spirit—and God knows we must have both; but God will not revive mice. He will not fill rabbits with the Holy Ghost.

We languish for men who feel themselves expendable in the warfare of the soul, who cannot be frightened by threats of death because they have already died to the allurements of this world. Such men will be free from the compulsions that control weaker men. They will not be forced to do things by the squeeze of circumstances; their only compulsion will come from within—or from above.

This kind of freedom is necessary if we are to have prophets in our pulpits again instead of mascots. These free men will serve God and mankind from motives too high to be understood by the rank and file of religious retainers who today shuttle in and out of the sanctuary. They will make no decisions out of fear, take no course out of a desire to please, accept no service for financial considerations, perform no religious act out of mere custom; nor will they allow themselves to be influenced by the love of publicity or the desire for reputation.

Much that the church—even the evangelical church—is doing these days she is doing because she is afraid not to. Ministerial associations take up projects for no higher reason than that they are being scared into it. Whatever their ear-to-the-ground, fear-inspired reconnoitering leads them to believe the world expects them to do they will be doing come next Monday morning with all kinds of trumped-up zeal and show of godliness. The pressure of public opinion calls these prophets, not the voice of Jehovah.

The true church has never sounded out public expectations before launching her crusades. Her leaders heard from God and went ahead wholly independent of popular support or the lack of it. They knew their Lord's will and did it, and their people followed them—sometimes to triumph, oftener to insults and public persecution—and their sufficient reward was the satisfaction of being right in a wrong world.

Another characteristic of the true prophet has been love. The free man who has learned to hear God's voice and dared to obey it has felt the moral burden that broke the hearts of the Old Testament prophets, crushed the soul of our Lord Jesus Christ and wrung streams of tears from the eyes of the apostles.

The free man has never been a religious tyrant, nor has he sought to lord it over God's heritage. It is fear and lack of self-assurance that has led men to try to crush others under their feet. These have had some interest to protect, some position to secure, so they have demanded subjection from their followers as a guarantee of their own safety. But the free man—never; he has nothing to protect, no ambition to pursue and no enemy to fear. For that reason he is completely careless of his standing among men. If they follow him, well and good; if not, he loses nothing that he holds dear; but whether he is accepted or rejected he will go on loving his people with sincere devotion. And only death can silence his tender intercession for them.

Yes, if evangelical Christianity is to stay alive she must have men again, the right kind of men. She must repudiate the weaklings who dare not speak out, and she must seek in prayer and much humility the coming again of men of the stuff prophets and martyrs are made of. God will hear the cries of His people as He heard the cries of Israel in Egypt. And He will send deliverance by sending deliverers. It is His way among men.

And when the deliverers come—reformers, revivalists, prophets—they will be men of God and men of courage. They will have God on their side because they will be careful to stay on God's side. They will be co-workers with Christ and instruments in the hand of the Holy Ghost. Such men will be baptized with the Spirit indeed, and through their labors He will baptize others and send the long delayed revival.

Chapter 77.

The Cross Does Interfere

"Things have come to a pretty pass," said a famous Englishman testily, "when religion is permitted to interfere with our private lives."

To which we may reply that things have come to a worse pass when an intelligent man living in a Protestant country could make such a remark. Had this man never read the New Testament? Had he never heard of Stephen? or Paul? or Peter? Had he never thought about the millions who followed Christ cheerfully to violent death, sudden or lingering, because they *did* allow their religion to interfere with their private lives?

But we must leave this man to his conscience and his Judge and look into our own hearts. Maybe he but expressed openly what some of us feel secretly. Just how radically has our religion interfered with the neat pattern of our own lives? Perhaps we had better answer that question first.

I have long believed that a man who spurns the Christian faith outright is more respected before God and the heavenly powers than the man who pretends to religion but refuses to come under its total domination. The first is an overt enemy, the second a false friend. It is the latter who will be spued out of the mouth of Christ; and the reason is not hard to understand.

One picture of a Christian is a man carrying a cross. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." The man with a cross no longer controls his destiny; he lost control when he picked up his cross. That cross immediately became to him an all-absorbing interest, an overwhelming interference. No matter what he may desire to do, there is but one thing he *can* do; that is, move on toward the place of crucifixion.

The man who will not brook interference is under no compulsion to follow Christ. "If any man will," said our Lord, and thus freed every man and placed the Christian life in the realm of voluntary choice.

Yet no man can escape interference. Law, duty, hunger, accident, natural disasters, illness, death, all intrude into his plans, and in the long run there is nothing he can do about it. Long experience with the rude necessities of life has taught men that these interferences will be thrust upon them sooner or later, so they learn to make what terms they can with the inevitable. They learn how to stay within the narrow circular rabbit path where the least interference is to be found. The bolder ones may challenge the world, enlarge the circle somewhat and so increase the number of their problems, but no one invites trouble deliberately. Human nature is not built that way.

Truth is a glorious but hard mistress. She never consults, bargains or compromises. She cries from the top of the high places, "Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold." After that, every man is on his own. He may accept or refuse, receive or set at naught as he pleases; and there will be no attempt at coercion, though the man's whole destiny is at stake.

Let a man become enamored of Eternal Wisdom and set his heart to win her and he takes on himself a full-time, all-engaging pursuit. Thereafter he will have room for little else. Thereafter his whole life will be filled with seekings and findings, self-repudiations, tough disciplines and daily dyings as he is being crucified unto the world and the world unto him.

Were this an unfallen world the path of truth would be a smooth and easy one. Had the nature of man not suffered a huge moral dislocation there would be no discord between the way of God and the way of man. I assume that in heaven the angels live through a thousand serene millenniums without feeling the slightest discord between their desires and the will of God. But not so among men on earth. Here the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; the flesh lusts against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary one to the other. In that contest there can be only one outcome. We must surrender and God must have His way. His glory and our eternal welfare require that it be so.

Another reason that our religion must interfere with our private lives is that we live in the world, the Bible name for human society. The regenerated man has been inwardly separated from society as Israel was separated from Egypt at the crossing of the Red Sea. The Christian is a man of heaven temporarily living on earth. Though in spirit divided from the race of fallen men he must yet in the flesh live among them. In many things he is like them, but in others he differs so radically from them that they cannot but see and resent it. From the days of Cain and Abel the man of earth has punished the man of heaven for being different. The long history of persecution and martyrdom confirms this.

But we must not get the impression that the Christian life is one continuous conflict, one unbroken irritating struggle against the world, the flesh and the devil. A thousand times no. The heart that learns to die with Christ soon knows the blessed experience of rising with Him, and all the world's persecutions cannot still the high note of holy joy that springs up in the soul that has become the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 78.

Each His Own Cross

An earnest Christian woman sought help from Henry Suso concerning her spiritual life. She had been imposing rigid austerities upon herself in an effort to feel the sufferings that Christ had felt on the cross. Things weren't going so well with her and Suso knew why.

The old saint wrote his spiritual daughter and reminded her that our Lord had not said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up *my* cross, and follow me." He had said, "Let him... take up *his* cross." There is a difference of only one small pronoun; but that difference is vast and important.

Crosses are all alike, but no two are identical. Never before nor since has there been a cross-experience just like that endured by the Saviour. The whole dreadful work of dying which Christ suffered was something unique in the experience of mankind. It had to be so if the cross was to mean life for the world. The sin-bearing, the darkness, the rejection by the Father were agonies peculiar to the Person of the holy sacrifice. To claim any experience remotely like that of Christ would be more than an error; it would be sacrilege.

Every cross was and is an instrument of death, but no man could die on the cross of another; each man died on his own cross; hence Jesus said, "Let him... take up *his* cross, and follow me."

Now there is a real sense in which the cross of Christ embraces all crosses and the death of Christ encompasses all deaths. "If one died for all, then were all dead"... "I am crucified with Christ"... "The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." This is in the judicial working of God in redemption. The Christian as a member of the body of Christ is crucified along with his divine Head. Before God every true believer is reckoned to have died when Christ died. All subsequent experience of personal crucifixion is based upon this identification with Christ on the cross.

But in the practical, everyday outworking of the believer's crucifixion his own cross is brought into play. "Let him... take up *his* cross." That is obviously not the cross of Christ. Rather it is the believer's own personal cross by means of which the cross of Christ is made effective in slaying his evil nature and setting him free from its power.

The believer's own cross is one he has assumed voluntarily. Therein lies the difference between his cross and the cross on which Roman convicts died. They went to the cross against their will; he, because he chooses to do so. No Roman officer ever pointed to a cross and said, "If any man will, let him." Only Christ said that, and by so saying He placed the whole matter in the hands of the Christian. He can refuse to take his cross, or he can stoop and take it up and start for the dark hill. The difference between great sainthood and spiritual mediocrity depends upon which choice he makes.

To go along with Christ step by step and point by point in identical suffering of Roman crucifixion is not possible for any of us, and certainly is not intended by our Lord. What He does intend is that each of us should count himself dead indeed with Christ, and then accept willingly whatever of self-denial, repentance, humility and humble sacrifice that may be found in the path of obedient daily living. That is *his* cross, and it is the only one the Lord has invited him to bear.

Chapter 79.

Religion Should Produce Action

The supreme purpose of the Christian religion is to make men like God in order that they may act like God. In Christ the verbs *to be* and *to do* follow each other in that order.

True religion leads to moral action. The only true Christian is the practicing Christian. Such a one is in very reality an incarnation of Christ as Christ is the incarnation of God; not in the same degree and fullness of perfection, for there is nothing in the moral universe equal to that awful mystery of godliness which joined God and man in eternal union in the person of the Man Christ Jesus; but as the fullness of the Godhead was and is in Christ, so Christ is in the nature of the one who believes in Him in the manner prescribed in the Scriptures.

God always acts like Himself wherever He may be and whatever He may be doing. When God became flesh and dwelt among us He did not cease to act as He had been acting from eternity. "He veiled His deity but He did not void it." The ancient flame dimmed down to spare the helpless eyes of mortal men, but as much as was seen was true fire. Christ restrained His powers but He did not violate His holiness. In whatsoever He did He was holy, harmless, separate from sinners and higher than the highest heaven.

Just as in eternity God acted like Himself and when incarnated in human flesh still continued in all His conduct to be true to His holiness, so does He when He enters the nature of a believing man. This is the method by which He makes the redeemed man holy. He enters a human nature at regeneration as He once entered human nature at the incarnation and acts as becomes God, using that nature as a medium of expression for His moral perfections.

Cicero, the Roman orator, once warned his hearers that they were in danger of making philosophy a substitute for action instead of allowing it to produce action. What is true of philosophy is true also of religion. The faith of Christ was never intended to be an end in itself nor to serve instead of something else. In the minds of some teachers faith stands in lieu of moral conduct and every inquirer after God must take his choice between the two. We are presented with the well-known either/or: either we have faith or we have works, and faith saves while works damn us. Hence the tremendous emphasis on faith and the apologetic, mincing approach to the doctrine of personal holiness in modern evangelism. This error has lowered the moral standards of the church and helped to lead us into the wilderness where we currently find ourselves.

Rightly understood, faith is not a substitute for moral conduct but a means toward it. The tree does not serve in lieu of fruit but as an agent by which fruit is secured. Fruit, not trees, is the end God has in mind in yonder orchard; so Christlike conduct is the end of Christian faith. To oppose faith to works is to make the fruit the enemy to the tree; yet that is exactly what we have managed to do. And the consequences have been disastrous.

A miscalculation in laying the foundation of a building will throw the whole superstructure out of plumb, and the error that gave us faith as a substitute for action instead of faith in action has raised up in our day unsymmetrical and ugly temples of which we may well be ashamed and for which we shall surely give a strict account in the day when Christ judges the secrets of our hearts.

In practice we may detect the subtle (and often unconscious) substitution when we hear a Christian assure someone that he will "pray over" his problem, knowing full well that he intends

to use prayer as a substitute for service. It is much easier to pray that a poor friend's needs may be supplied than to supply them. James' words burn with irony: "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" And the mystical John sees also the incongruity involved in substituting religion for action: "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."

A proper understanding of this whole thing will destroy the false and artificial either/or. Then we will have not less faith but more godly works; not less praying but more serving; not fewer words but more holy deeds; not weaker profession but more courageous possession; not a religion as a substitute for action but religion in faith-filled action.

And what is that but to say that we will have come again to the teaching of the New Testament?

Excerpts from *Man, The Dwelling Place of God*

Chapter 80. The Once-Born and the Twice-Born

Classification is one of the most difficult of all tasks. Even in the realm of religion there are enough lights and shades to make it injudicious to draw too fine a line between men and men. If the religious world were composed of squares of solid black and solid white classification would be easy; but unfortunately it is not.

It is a grave error for us evangelicals to assume that the children of God are all in our communion and that all who are not associated with us are *ipso facto* enemies of the Lord. The Pharisees made that mistake and crucified Christ as a consequence.

With all this in mind, and leaning over backwards to be fair and charitable, there is yet one distinction which we dare make, which indeed we *must* make if we are to think the thoughts of God after Him and bring our beliefs into harmony with the Holy Scriptures. That distinction is the one which exists between two classes of human beings, the once-born and the twice-born.

That such a distinction does in fact exist was taught by our Lord with great plainness of speech, in contexts which preclude the possibility that He was merely speaking figuratively. "Except man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," He said, and the whole chapter where these words are found confirms that He was speaking precisely, setting forth meanings as blunt and downright as it is possible for language to convey.

"Ye must be born again," said Christ. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." This clear line of demarcation runs through the entire New Testament, quite literally dividing one human being from another and making a distinction as sharp as that which exists between different genera of the animal kingdom.

Just who belongs to one class and who to the other it is not always possible to judge, though the two kinds of life ordinarily separate from each other. Those who are twice-born crystallize around the Person of Christ and cluster together in companies, while the once-born are held together only by the ties of nature, aided by the ties of race or by common political and social interests.

Our Lord warned His disciples that they would be persecuted. "In the world ye shall have tribulation," He said, and "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."

These are only two of many passages of the New Testament warning of persecution or recording the fact of harassment and attack suffered by the followers of the Lord. This same idea runs through the entire Bible from the once-born Cain who slew the twice-born Abel to the Book of the Revelation where the end of human history comes in a burst of blood and fire.

That hostility exists between the once-born and the twice-born is known to every student of the Bible; the reason for it was stated by Christ when He said, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the

world, therefore the world hateth you." The rule was laid down by the apostle Paul when he wrote, "But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now."

Difference of moral standards between the once-born and the twice-born, and their opposite ways of life, may be contributing causes of this hostility; but the real cause lies deeper. There are two spirits abroad in the earth: the spirit that works in the children of disobedience and the Spirit of God. These two can never be reconciled in time or in eternity. The spirit that dwells in the once-born is forever opposed to the Spirit that inhabits the heart of the twice-born. This hostility began somewhere in the remote past before the creation of man and continues to this day. The modern effort to bring peace between these two spirits is not only futile but contrary to the moral laws of the universe.

To teach that the spirit of the once-born is at enmity with the Spirit of the twice-born is to bring down upon one's head every kind of violent abuse. No language is too bitter to hurl against the conceited bigot who would dare to draw such a line of distinction between men. Such malignant ideas are at odds with the brotherhood of man, says the once-born, and are held only by the apostles of disunity and hate. This mighty rage against the twice-born only serves to confirm the truth they teach. But this no one seems to notice.

What we need to restore power to the Christian testimony is not soft talk about brotherhood but an honest recognition that two human races occupy the earth simultaneously: a fallen race that sprang from the loins of Adam and a regenerate race that is born of the Spirit through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

To accept this truth requires a tough-mindedness and a spiritual maturity that modern Christians simply do not possess. To face up to it hardly contributes to that "peace of mind" after which our religious weaklings bleat so plaintively.

For myself, I long ago decided that I would rather know the truth than be happy in ignorance. If I cannot have both truth and happiness, give me truth. We'll have a long time to be happy in heaven.

Chapter 81.

The Communion of Saints

I believe in the communion of saints. Apostles' Creed

These words were written into the creed about the middle of the fifth century.

It would be difficult if not altogether impossible for us at this late date to know exactly what was in the minds of the Church Fathers who introduced the words into the creed, but in the Book of Acts we have a description of the first Christian communion: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Here is the original apostolic fellowship, the pattern after which every true Christian communion must be modeled.

The word "fellowship," in spite of its abuses, is still a beautiful and meaningful word. When rightly understood it means the same as the word "communion," that is, the act and condition of sharing together in some common blessing by numbers of persons. The communion of saints, then, means an intimate and loving sharing together of certain spiritual blessings by persons who are on an equal footing before the blessing in which they share. This fellowship must include every member of the Church of God from Pentecost to this present moment and on to the end of the age.

Now, before there can be *communion* there must be *union*. The sharers are one in a sense altogether above organization, nationality, race or denomination. That oneness is a divine thing, achieved by the Holy Spirit in the act of regeneration. Whoever is born of God is one with everyone else who is born of God. Just as gold is always gold, wherever and in whatever shape it is found, and every detached scrap of gold belongs to the true family and is composed of the same elements, so every regenerate soul belongs to the universal Christian community and to the fellowship of the saints.

Every redeemed soul is born out of the same spiritual life as every other redeemed soul and partakes of the divine nature in exactly the same manner. Each one is thus made a member of the Christian community and a sharer in everything which that community enjoys. This is the true communion of saints. But to know this is not enough. If we would enter into the power of it we must exercise ourselves in this truth; we must *practice* thinking and praying with the thought that we are members of the Body of Christ and brothers to all the ransomed saints living and dead who have believed on Christ and acknowledged Him as Lord.

We have said that the communion of saints is a fellowship, a sharing in certain divinely given things by divinely called persons. Now, what are those things?

The first and most important is *life*—"the life of God in the soul of man," to borrow a phrase from Henry Scougal. This life is the basis of everything else which is given and shared. And that life is nothing else than God Himself. It should be evident that there can be no true Christian sharing unless there is first an impartation of life. An organization and a name do not make a church. One hundred religious persons knit into a unity by careful organization do not constitute a church any more than eleven dead men make a football team. The first requisite is life, always.

The apostolic fellowship is also a fellowship of *truth*. The inclusiveness of the fellowship must always be held along with the exclusiveness of it. Truth brings into its gracious circle all who admit and accept the Bible as the source of all truth and the Son of God as the Saviour of men. But there dare be no weak compromise with the facts, no sentimental mouthing of the old phrases: "We are all headed for the same place. Each one is seeking in his own way to please the Father and make heaven his home." The truth makes men free, and the truth will bind and loose, will open and shut, will include and exclude at its high will without respect to persons. To reject or deny the truth of the Word is to exclude ourselves from the apostolic communion.

Now, someone may ask, "What is the truth of which you speak? Is my fate to depend upon Baptist truth or Presbyterian truth or Anglican truth, or all of these or none of these? To know the communion of saints must I believe in Calvinism or Arminianism? In the Congregational or the Episcopal form of church government? Must I interpret prophecy in accord with the premillenarians or the postmillenarians? Must I believe in immersion or sprinkling or pouring?" The answer to all this is easy. The confusion is only apparent, not actual.

The early Christians, under the fire of persecution, driven from place to place, sometimes deprived of the opportunity for careful instruction in the faith, wanted a "rule" which would sum up all that they must believe to assure their everlasting welfare. Out of this critical need arose the creeds. Of the many, the Apostles' Creed is the best known and best loved, and has been reverently repeated by the largest number of believers through the centuries. And for millions of good men that creed contains the essentials of truth. Not all truths, to be sure, but the heart of all truth. It served in trying days as a kind of secret password that instantly united men to each other when passed from lip to lip by the followers of the Lamb. It is fair to say, then, that the truth shared by saints in the apostolic fellowship is the same truth which is outlined for convenience in the Apostles' Creed.

In this day when the truth of Christianity is under serious fire from so many directions it is most important that we know what we believe and that we guard it carefully. But in our effort to interpret and expound the Holy Scriptures in accord with the ancient faith of all Christians, we should remember that a seeking soul may find salvation through the blood of Christ while yet knowing little of the fuller teachings of Christian theology. We must, therefore, admit to our fellowship every sheep who has heard the voice of the Shepherd and has tried to follow Him.

The beginner in Christ who has not yet had time to learn much Christian truth and the underprivileged believer who has had the misfortune to be brought up in a church where the Word has been neglected from the pulpit, are very much in the same situation. Their faith grasps only a small portion of truth, and their "sharing" is necessarily limited to the small portion they grasp. The important thing, however, is that the little bit they do enjoy is *real truth*. It may be no more than this, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"; but if they walk in the light of that much truth, no more is required to bring them into the circle of the blessed and to constitute them true members of the apostolic fellowship.

Then, true Christian communion consists in the sharing of a *Presence*. This is not poetry merely, but a fact taught in bold letters in the New Testament. God has given us Himself in the Person of His Son. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." The immanence of God in His universe makes possible the enjoyment of the "real Presence" by the saints of God in heaven and on earth simultaneously. Wherever they may be, He is present to them in the fullness of His Godhead.

I do not believe that the Bible teaches the possibility of communication between the saints on earth and those in heaven. But while there cannot be communication, there most surely can be

communion. Death does not tear the individual believer from his place in the Body of Christ. As in our human bodies each member is nourished by the same blood which at once gives life and unity to the entire organism, so in the Body of Christ the quickening Spirit flowing through every part gives life and unity to the whole. Our Christian brethren who have gone from our sight retain still their place in the universal fellowship. The Church is one, whether waking or sleeping, by a unity of life forevermore.

The most important thing about the doctrine of the communion of saints is its practical effects on the lives of Christians. We know very little about the saints above, but about the saints on earth we know, or can know, a great deal. We Protestants do not believe (since the Bible does not teach) that the saints who have gone into heaven before us are in any way affected by the prayers or labors of saints who remain on earth. Our particular care is not for those whom God has already honored with the vision beatific, but for the hard-pressed and struggling pilgrims who are still traveling toward the City of God. We all belong to each other; the spiritual welfare of each one is or should be the loving concern of all the rest.

We should pray for an enlargement of soul to receive into our hearts all of God's people, whatever their race, color or church affiliation. Then we should practice thinking of ourselves as members of the blessed family of God and should strive in prayer to love and appreciate everyone who is born of the Father.

I suggest also that we try to acquaint ourselves as far as possible with the good and saintly souls who lived before our times and now belong to the company of the redeemed in heaven. How sad to limit our sympathies to those of our own day, when God in His providence has made it possible for us to enjoy the rich treasures of the minds and hearts of so many holy and gifted saints of other days. To confine our reading to the works of a few favorite authors of today or last week is to restrict our horizons and to pinch our souls dangerously.

I have no doubt that the prayerful reading of some of the great spiritual classics of the centuries would destroy in us forever that constriction of soul which seems to be the earmark of modern evangelicalism.

For many of us the wells of the past wait to be reopened. Augustine, for instance, would bring to us a sense of the overwhelming majesty of God that would go far to cure the flippancy of spirit found so widely among modern Christians. Bernard of Cluny would sing to us of "Jerusalem the Golden" and the peace of an eternal sabbath day until the miserable pleasures of this world become intolerable; Richard Rolle would show us how to escape from "the abundance of riches, the flattering of women and the fairness of youth," that we may go on to know God with an intimacy that will become in our hearts "heat, fragrance and song"; Tersteegen would whisper to us of the "hidden love of God" and the awful Presence until our hearts would become "still before Him" and "prostrate inwardly adore Him"; before our eyes the sweet St. Francis would throw his arms of love around sun and moon, trees and rain, bird and beast, and thank God for them all in a pure rapture of spiritual devotion.

But who is able to complete the roster of the saints? To them we owe a debt of gratitude too great to comprehend: prophet and apostle, martyr and reformer, scholar and translator, hymnist and composer, teacher and evangelist, not to mention ten thousand times ten thousand simplehearted and anonymous souls who kept the flame of pure religion alive even in those times when the faith of our fathers was burning but dimly all over the world.

They belong to us, all of them, and we belong to them. They and we and all redeemed men and women of whatever age or clime are included in the universal fellowship of Christ, and

together compose "a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people," who enjoy a common but blessed communion of saints.

Chapter 82.

Does God Always Answer Prayer?

Contrary to popular opinion, the cultivation of a psychology of uncritical belief is not an unqualified good, and if carried too far it may be a positive evil. The whole world has been booby-trapped by the devil, and the deadliest trap of all is the religious one. Error never looks so innocent as when it is found in the sanctuary.

One field where harmless-looking but deadly traps appear in great profusion is the field of prayer. There are more sweet notions about prayer than could be contained in a large book, all of them wrong and all highly injurious to the souls of men.

I think of one such false notion that is found often in pleasant places consorting smilingly with other notions of unquestionable orthodoxy. It is that *God always answers prayer*.

This error appears among the saints as a kind of all-purpose philosophic therapy to prevent any disappointed Christian from suffering too great a shock when it becomes evident to him that his prayer expectations are not being fulfilled. It is explained that God always answers prayer, either by saying Yes or by saying No, or by substituting something else for the desired favor.

Now, it would be hard to invent a neater trick than this to save face for the petitioner whose requests have been rejected for nonobedience. Thus when a prayer is not answered he has but to smile brightly and explain, "God said No." It is all so very comfortable. His wobbly faith is saved from confusion and his conscience is permitted to lie undisturbed. But I wonder if it is honest.

To receive an answer to prayer as the Bible uses the term and as Christians have understood it historically, two elements must be present: (1) A clear-cut request made to God for a specific favor. (2) A clear-cut granting of that favor by God in answer to the request. There must be no semantic twisting, no changing of labels, no altering of the map during the journey to help the embarrassed tourist to find himself.

When we go to God with a request that He modify the existing situation for us, that is, that He answer prayer, there are two conditions that we must meet: (1) We must pray in the will of God and (2) we must be on what old-fashioned Christians often call "praying ground"; that is, we must be living lives pleasing to God.

It is futile to beg God to act contrary to His revealed purposes. To pray with confidence the petitioner must be certain that his request falls within the broad will of God for His people.

The second condition is also vitally important. God has not placed Himself under obligation to honor the requests of worldly, carnal or disobedient Christians. He hears and answers the prayers only of those who walk in His way. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.... If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (1 John 3:21, 22; John 15:7).

God wants us to pray and He wants to answer our prayers, but He makes our use of prayer as a privilege to commingle with His use of prayer as a discipline. To receive answers to prayer we must meet God's terms. If we neglect His commandments our petitions will not be honored. He will alter situations only at the request of obedient and humble souls.

The God-always-answers-prayer sophistry leaves the praying man without discipline. By the exercise of this bit of smooth casuistry he ignores the necessity to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, and actually takes God's flat refusal to answer his prayer as the very answer itself. Of course such a man will not grow in holiness; he will never learn how to wrestle and wait; he will never know correction; he will not hear the voice of God calling him forward; he will never arrive at the place where he is morally and spiritually fit to have his prayers answered. His wrong philosophy has ruined him.

That is why I turn aside to expose the bit of bad theology upon which his bad philosophy is founded. The man who accepts it never knows where he stands; he never knows whether or not he has true faith, for if his request is not granted he avoids the implication by the simple dodge of declaring that God switched the whole thing around and gave him something else. He will not allow himself to shoot at a target, so he cannot tell how good or how bad a marksman he is.

Of certain persons James says plainly: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts," From that brief sentence we may learn that God refuses some requests because they who make them are not morally worthy to receive the answer. But this means nothing to the one who has been seduced into the belief that God always answers prayer. When such a man asks and receives not he passes his hand over the hat and comes up with the answer in some other form. One thing he clings to with great tenacity: God never turns anyone away, but invariably grants every request.

The truth is that God always answers the prayer that accords with His will as revealed in the Scriptures, provided the one who prays is obedient and trustful. Further than this we dare not go.

Chapter 83.

The Importance of Sound Doctrine

It would be impossible to overemphasize the importance of sound doctrine in the life of a Christian. Right thinking about all spiritual matters is imperative if we would have right living. As men do not gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles, so sound character does not grow out of unsound teaching.

The word *doctrine* means simply religious beliefs held and taught. It is the sacred task of all Christians, first as believers and then as teachers of religious beliefs, to be certain that these beliefs correspond exactly to truth. A precise agreement between belief and fact constitutes soundness in doctrine. We cannot afford to have less.

The apostles not only taught truth but contended for its purity against any who would corrupt it. The Pauline epistles resist every effort of false teachers to introduce doctrinal vagaries. John's epistles are sharp with condemnation of those teachers who harassed the young church by denying the incarnation and throwing doubts upon the doctrine of the Trinity; and Jude in his brief but powerful epistle rises to heights of burning eloquence as he pours scorn upon evil teachers who would mislead the saints.

Each generation of Christians must look to its beliefs. While truth itself is unchanging, the minds of men are porous vessels out of which truth can leak and into which error may seep to dilute the truth they contain. The human heart is heretical by nature and runs to error as naturally as a garden to weeds. All a man, a church or a denomination needs to guarantee deterioration of doctrine is to take everything for granted and do nothing. The unattended garden will soon be overrun with weeds; the heart that fails to cultivate truth and root out error will shortly be a theological wilderness; the church or denomination that grows careless on the highway of truth will before long find itself astray, bogged down in some mud flat from which there is no escape.

In every field of human thought and activity accuracy is considered a virtue. To err ever so slightly is to invite serious loss, if not death itself. Only in religious thought is faithfulness to truth looked upon as a fault. When men deal with things earthly and temporal they demand truth; when they come to the consideration of things heavenly and eternal they hedge and hesitate as if truth either could not be discovered or didn't matter anyway.

Montaigne said that a liar is one who is brave toward God and a coward toward men; for a liar faces God and shrinks from men. Is this not simply a proof of unbelief? Is it not to say that the liar believes in men but is not convinced of the existence of God, and is willing to risk the displeasure of a God who may not exist rather than that of man who obviously does?

I think also that deep, basic unbelief is back of human carelessness in religion. The scientist, the physician, the navigator deals with matters he knows are real; and because these things are real the world demands that both teacher and practitioner be skilled in the knowledge of them. The teacher of spiritual things only is required to be unsure in his beliefs, ambiguous in his remarks and tolerant of every religious opinion expressed by anyone, even by the man least qualified to hold an opinion.

Haziness of doctrine has always been the mark of the liberal. When the Holy Scriptures are rejected as the final authority on religious belief something must be found to take their place. Historically that something has been either reason or sentiment: if sentiment, it has been humanism. Sometimes there has been an admixture of the two, as may be seen in liberal

churches today. These will not quite give up the Bible, neither will they quite believe it; the result is an unclear body of beliefs more like a fog than a mountain, where anything *may* be true but nothing may be trusted as being *certainly* true.

We have gotten accustomed to the blurred puffs of gray fog that pass for doctrine in modernistic churches and expect nothing better, but it is a cause for real alarm that the fog has begun of late to creep into many evangelical churches. From some previously unimpeachable sources are now coming vague statements consisting of a milky admixture of Scripture, science and human sentiment that is true to none of its ingredients because each one works to cancel the others out.

Certain of our evangelical brethren appear to be laboring under the impression that they are advanced thinkers because they are rethinking evolution and re-evaluating various Bible doctrines or even divine inspiration itself; but so far are they from being advanced thinkers that they are merely timid followers of modernism—fifty years behind the parade.

Little by little evangelical Christians these days are being brainwashed. One evidence is that increasing numbers of them are becoming ashamed to be found unequivocally on the side of truth. They say they believe but their beliefs have been so diluted as to be impossible of clear definition.

Moral power has always accompanied definitive beliefs. Great saints have always been dogmatic. We need right now a return to a gentle dogmatism that smiles while it stands stubborn and firm on the Word of God that liveth and abideth forever.

Excerpts from *I Call It Heresy*

Chapter 84. I Call It Heresy

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance. 1 Peter 1:14

The scriptures do not teach that the Person of Jesus Christ nor any of the important offices which God has given Him can be divided or ignored according to the whims of men.

Therefore, I must be frank in my feeling that a notable heresy has come into being throughout our evangelical Christian circles—the widely-accepted concept that we humans can choose to accept Christ only because we need Him as Saviour and that we have the right to postpone our obedience to Him as Lord as long as we want to!

This concept has sprung naturally from a misunderstanding of what the Bible actually says about Christian discipleship and obedience. It is now found in nearly all of our full gospel literature. I confess that I was among those who preached it before I began to pray earnestly, to study diligently and meditate with anguish over the whole matter.

I think the following is a fair statement of what I was taught in my early Christian experience and it certainly needs a lot of modifying and a great many qualifiers to save us from being in error:

"We are saved by accepting Christ as our Saviour;
We are sanctified by accepting Christ as our Lord;
We may do the first without doing the second!"

The truth is that salvation apart from obedience is unknown in the sacred scriptures. Peter makes it plain that we are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience."

What a tragedy that in our day we often hear the gospel appeal made on this kind of basis: "Come to Jesus! You do not have to obey anyone. You do not have to change anything. You do not have to give up anything, alter anything, surrender anything, give back anything—just come to Him and believe in Him as Saviour!"

So they come and believe in the Saviour. Later on, in a meeting or conference, they will hear another appeal:

"Now that you have received Him as Saviour, how would you like to take Him as Lord?"

The fact that we hear this everywhere does not make it right. To urge men and women to believe in a divided Christ is bad teaching for no one can receive half of Christ, or a third of Christ, or a quarter of the Person of Christ! We are not saved by believing in an office nor in a work.

I have heard well-meaning workers say, "Come and believe on the finished work." That work will not save you. The Bible does not tell us to believe in an office or a work, but to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Person who has done that work and holds those offices.

Now, note again, Peter's emphasis on obedience among the scattered and persecuted Christians of his day.

It seems most important to me that Peter speaks of his fellow Christians as "obedient children." He was not giving them a command or an exhortation to be obedient. In effect, he said, "Assuming that you are believers, I therefore gather that you are also obedient. So now, as obedient children, do so and so."

Brethren, I would point out that obedience is taught throughout the entire Bible and that true obedience is one of the toughest requirements of the Christian life. Apart from obedience, there can be no salvation, for salvation without obedience is a self-contradictory impossibility.

The essence of sin is rebellion against divine authority.

God said to Adam and Eve, "Thou shalt not eat from this tree, and in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Here was a divine requirement calling for obedience on the part of those who had the power of choice and will.

In spite of the strong prohibition, Adam and Eve stretched forth their hands and tasted of the fruit and thus they disobeyed and rebelled, bringing sin upon themselves.

Paul writes very plainly and directly in the Book of Romans about "one man's disobedience"—and this is a stern word by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle—by one man's disobedience came the downfall of the human race!

In John's Gospel, the Word is very plain and clear that sin is lawlessness, that sin is disobedience to the law of God. Paul's picture of sinners in Ephesians concludes that "the people of the world are the children of disobedience." Paul certainly means that disobedience characterizes them, conditions them, molds them. Disobedience has become a part of their nature.

All of this provides background for the great, continuing question before the human race: "Who is boss?" This breaks down into a series of three questions: "To whom do I belong?" "To whom do I owe allegiance?" and "Who has authority to require obedience of me?"

Now, I suppose of all the people in the world Americans have the most difficult time in giving obedience to anyone or anything. Americans are supposed to be sons of freedom. We ourselves were the outcropping of a revolt. We spawned a revolution, pouring the tea overboard in Boston harbor. We made speeches and said, "The sound of the clash of arms is carried on every wind that blows from the Boston Commons" and finally, "Give me liberty or give me death!"

That is in the American blood and when anyone says, "You owe obedience," we immediately bristle! In the natural sense, we do not take kindly to the prospect of yielding obedience to anyone.

In the same sense, the people of this world have a quick and ready answer to the questions: "To whom do I belong?" and "To whom do I owe obedience?"

Their answer is: "I belong to myself. No one has authority to require my obedience!"

Our generation makes a great deal out of this, and we give it the name of "individualism." On the basis of our individuality we claim the right of self-determination.

In an airplane, the pilot who sits at the controls determines where that plane is going. He must determine the destination.

Now, if God had made us humans to be mere machines we would not have the power of self-determination. But since He made us in His own image and made us to be moral creatures, He has given us that power of self-determination.

I would insist that we do not have the right of self-determination because God has given us only the power to choose evil. Seeing that God is a holy God and we are moral creatures having the power but not the right to choose evil, no man has any right to lie.

We have the power to lie but no man has any right to lie.

We have the power to steal—I could go out and get myself a better coat than the one I own. I could slip out through a side door and get away with the coat. I have that power but I do not have that right!

I have the power to use a knife, a razor or a gun to kill another person—but I do not have that right! I have only the power to do it.

Actually, we only have the right to be good—we never have the right to be bad because God is good. We only have the right to be holy; we never have the right to be unholy. If you are unholy you are using a right that is not yours. Adam and Eve had no moral right to eat of that tree of good and evil, but they took it and usurped the right that was not theirs.

The poet Tennyson must have thought about this for he wrote in his *In Memoriam*: "Our wills are ours, we know not how; our wills are ours to make them Thine!"

Oh, this mystery of man's free will is far too great for us! Tennyson said, "We know not how." But then he girds himself and continues, "Yes, our wills are ours to make them Thine." And that is the only right we have here to make our wills the wills of God, to make the will of God our will!

We must remember that God is Who He is and we are what we are. God is the Sovereign and we are the creatures. He is the Creator and therefore He has a right to command us with the obligation that we should obey. It is a happy obligation, I might say, for "His yoke is easy and His burden is light."

Now, this is where I raise the point again of our human insistence that Christ may sustain a divided relationship toward us. This is now so commonly preached that to oppose it or object to it means that you are sticking your neck out and you had best be prepared for what comes.

But how can we insist and teach that our Lord Jesus Christ can be our Saviour without being our Lord? How can we continue to teach that we can be saved without any thought of obedience to our Sovereign Lord?

I am satisfied that when a man believes on Jesus Christ he must believe on the whole Lord Jesus Christ—not making any reservation! I am satisfied that it is wrong to look upon Jesus as a kind of divine nurse to whom we can go when sin has made us sick, and after He has helped us, to say "Goodbye"—and go on our own way.

Suppose I slip into a hospital and tell the staff, I need a blood transfusion or perhaps an X-ray of my gall bladder. After they have ministered to me and given their services, do I just slip out of the hospital again with a cheery "Goodbye"—as though I owe them nothing and it was kind of them to help me in my time of need?

That may sound like a grotesque concept to you, but it does pretty well draw the picture of those who have been taught that they can use Jesus as a Saviour in their time of need without owning Him as Sovereign and Lord and without owing Him obedience and allegiance.

The Bible never in any way gives us such a concept of salvation. Nowhere are we ever led to believe that we can use Jesus as a Saviour and not own Him as our Lord. He is the Lord and as the Lord He saves us, because He has all of the offices of Saviour and Christ and High Priest and Wisdom and Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption! He is all of these things and all of these are embodied in Him as Christ the Lord.

My brethren, we are not allowed to come to Jesus Christ as shrewd, clever operators saying, "We will take this and this, but we won't take that!" We do not come to Him as one who, buying furniture for his house, declares: "I will take this table but I don't want that chair"—dividing it up!

No, sir! It is either all of Christ or none of Christ!

I believe we need to preach again a whole Christ to the world—a Christ who does not need our apologies, a Christ who will not be divided, a Christ who will either be Lord of all or who will not be Lord at all!

I think it is important to agree that true salvation restores the right of a Creator-creature relationship because it acknowledges God's right to our fellowship and communion.

You see, in our time we have over-emphasized the psychology of the sinner's condition. We spend much time describing the woe of the sinner, the grief of the sinner, and the great burden he carries. He does have all of these, but we have over-emphasized them until we forget the principal fact—that the sinner is actually a rebel against properly-constituted authority!

That is what makes sin, sin. We are rebels. We are sons of disobedience. Sin is the breaking of the law and we are in rebellion and we are fugitives from the just laws of God while we are sinners.

By way of illustration, suppose a man escapes from prison. Certainly he will have grief. He is going to be in pain after bumping logs and stones and fences as he crawls and hides away in the dark. He is going to be hungry and cold and weary. His beard will grow long and he will be tired and cramped and cold—all of these will happen, but they are incidental to the fact that he is a fugitive from justice and a rebel against law.

So it is with sinners. Certainly they are heartbroken and they carry a heavy load. Certainly they labor and are heavy-laden. The Bible takes full account of these things; but they are incidental to the fact that the reason the sinner is what he is, is because he has rebelled against the laws of God and he is a fugitive from divine judgment.

It is that which constitutes the nature of sin; not the fact that he carries a heavy load of misery and sadness and guilt. These things constitute only the outcropping of the sinful nature, but the root of sin is rebellion against law, rebellion against God. Does not the sinner say: "I belong to myself—I owe allegiance to no one unless I choose to give it!" That is the essence of sin.

But thankfully, salvation reverses that and restores the former relationship so that the first thing the returning sinner does is to confess: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight, and I am no more worthy to be called Thy son. Make me as one of Thy hired servants."

Thus, in repentance, we reverse that relationship and we fully submit to the Word of God and the will of God, as obedient children.

Now the happiness of all the moral creatures lies right here, brethren, in the giving of obedience to God. The Psalmist cried out in Psalm 103: "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word."

The angels in heaven find their complete freedom and highest happiness in obeying the commandments of God. They do not find it a tyranny—they find it a delight.

I have been looking again into the mysteries in the first chapter of Ezekiel and I don't understand it. There are creatures with four faces and four wings, strange beings doing strange things. They have wheels and still other wheels in the middle of the wheels. There is fire coming out of the north and there are creatures going straight ahead and some that lower their wings and

wave them. Strange, beautiful beings and they are all having the time of their lives. Utterly, completely delighted with the Presence of God and that they could serve God!

Heaven is a place of surrender to the whole will of God and it is heaven because it is such a place.

On the other hand, hell is certainly the world of disobedience. Everything else that may be said about hell may be true, but this one thing is the essence—hell is the world of the rebel! Hell is the Alcatraz for the unconstituted rebels who refuse to surrender to the will of God.

I thank God that heaven is the world of God's obedient children. Whatever else we may say of its pearly gates, its golden streets and its jasper walls, heaven is heaven because it is the world of obedient children. Heaven is heaven because children of the Most High God find they are in their normal sphere as obedient moral beings.

Jesus said there are fire and worms in hell, but that is not the reason it is hell. You might endure worms and fire, but for a moral creature to know and realize that he is where he is because he is a rebel—that is the essence of hell and judgment. It is the eternal world of all the disobedient rebels who have said, "I owe God nothing!"

This is the time given us to decide. Each person makes his own decision as to the eternal world he is going to inhabit.

This is a serious matter of decision. You do not come to this decision as though it were a matter of being interviewed for a job or getting your diploma at a school.

We have no basis to believe that we can come casually and sprightly to the Lord Jesus and say, "I have come for some help, Lord Jesus. I understand that you are the Saviour so I am going to believe and be saved and then I am going to turn away and think about the other matters of lordship and allegiance and obedience at some time in the future."

I warn you—you will not get help from Him in that way for the Lord will not save those whom He cannot command!

He will not divide His offices. You cannot believe on a half-Christ. We take Him for what He is—the anointed Saviour and Lord who is King of kings and Lord of all lords! He would not be Who He is if He saved us and called us and chose us without the understanding that He can also guide and control our lives.

Brethren, I believe in the deeper Christian life and experience—oh yes! But I believe we are mistaken when we try to add the deeper life to an imperfect salvation, obtained imperfectly by an imperfect concept of the whole thing.

Under the working of the Spirit of God through such men as Finney and Wesley, no one would ever dare to rise in a meeting and say, "I am a Christian" if he had not surrendered his whole being to God and had taken Jesus Christ as his Lord as well as his Saviour, and had brought himself under obedience to the will of the Lord. It was only then that he could say, "I am saved!"

Today, we let them say they are saved no matter how imperfect and incomplete the transaction, with the proviso that the deeper Christian life can be tacked on at some time in the future.

Can it be that we really think that we do not owe Jesus Christ our obedience?

We have owed Him our obedience ever since the second we cried out to Him for salvation, and if we do not give Him that obedience, I have reason to wonder if we are really converted!

I see things and I hear of things that Christian people are doing and as I watch them operate within the profession of Christianity I do raise the question of whether they have been truly converted.

Brethren, I believe it is the result of faulty teaching to begin with. They thought of the Lord as a hospital and Jesus as chief of staff to fix up poor sinners that had gotten into trouble!

"Fix me up, Lord," they have insisted, "so that I can go on my own way!"

That is bad teaching, brethren. It is filled with self-deception. Let us look unto Jesus our Lord, high, holy, wearing the crowns, Lord of lords and King of all, having a perfect right to command full obedience from all of His saved people!

Just remember what the Bible says about the Person and the titles and the offices of Jesus:

"God hath made this same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ." Jesus means Saviour, Lord means Sovereign, Christ means Anointed One. The Apostle, therefore, did not preach Jesus as Saviour—he preached to them Jesus as Lord and Christ and Saviour, never dividing His person or offices.

Remember, too, that Paul wrote to the Roman Christians:

"What saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

The Apostle did not say that "Thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Saviour." He said, "Thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation;... for there is no difference between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Three times he calls Jesus Lord in these passages telling us how to be saved. He says that faith in the Lord Jesus plus confession of that faith to the world brings salvation to us!

God desires that we be honest with Him above everything else. Search the scriptures, read the New Testament, and if you see that I have given a germ of truth, then I urge you to do something about it. If you have been led to believe imperfectly in a divided Saviour, be glad that there is still time for you to do something about it!

Chapter 85.

The Bible Is Not Dated

... the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.... And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. 1 Peter 1:23, 25

There are Christians among us today who seem to feel that their spiritual lives would have been greatly helped if they could have had voice-to-voice and person-to-person counsel from our Lord or from the Apostle Peter or Paul.

I know it is fair to say that if one of the apostles or any of the great early fathers of the church could return to this world from their yesteryear, there would not be room to contain the crowds that would rush in.

If it were known that St. Augustine or Chrysostom or Francis of Assisi or Knox or Luther or any of the great who have lived were to be present to speak, we would all give our closest attention and listen as though we were hearing indeed a very word from God.

Under the circumstances, we cannot hope to hear from men of God who centuries ago completed their ministries and went to be with the Lord. The voices of the great saints and mighty warriors of yesterday can no longer be heard in this twentieth century.

However, there is good news for those who are anxious to hear a word from the Lord! If we have a mind to listen, we may still "hear" the voice of an apostle for we are dealing with the words written by the man, Peter. He was indeed a great saint, even though we may not consider him the greatest of the apostles. I think it is safe to say that he was the second of the apostles. Paul alone, perhaps, having a higher place than the man, Peter.

So, as we look into his message, Peter will be speaking to us, even though it is through an "interpreter."

Often our missionaries have told us of difficult times they have had with interpreters. The expression of the missionary may go in one way and come out with a different sense to the hearer, and I think when we expound the scriptures, we are often guilty of being imperfect interpreters. I shall do the best I can to catch the spirit of the man, Peter, and to determine what God is trying to say to us and to reduce the interference to a minimum.

Now, I suppose more people would like me if I were to declare that I preach the Bible and nothing but the Bible. I attempt to do that, but honesty compels me to say that the best I can do is to preach the Bible as I understand it. I trust that through your prayers and the Spirit of Christ my understanding may be right. If you pray and if I yield and trust, perhaps what we get from First Peter will indeed be approximately what Peter would say if he were here in person. We will stay as close as we can to the Word of the Living God.

The man Peter had a reputation for being first because he was a most impetuous man. He was either the first or among the very first in almost everything that took place and that touched him while he was alive.

For this reason, I suppose that Peter would have made a wonderful American! He usually opened his mouth and talked before he thought and that is a characteristic of many of us. He rushed to do what he had to do—and that is also characteristic of us.

From the record of the Gospels, it appears that Peter may have been the first, or at least among the very first, to become a disciple of John the Baptist. He was among the first disciples

who turned to Jesus when John the Baptist pointed and said, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world."

Peter was the first apostle called by our Lord to follow Him. I believe that Peter was the first convert for he was the first man to say, "Thou art the Son of the Living God."

Peter was among the very first to see our Lord after He had risen from the dead. There are those who insist that Peter was the first, believing that the Lord Jesus appeared to no one else until after a meeting with His beloved friend, Peter.

Also, remember that Peter was the first of the New Testament preachers. It is quite in keeping with the temperament of this man that when the Holy Spirit had come at Pentecost and there was opportunity for someone to stand and speak the Truth, Peter should be the man to do it.

I think there is no profound theological reason back of this. I think it is a matter of temperament and disposition. When 120 persons are suddenly filled with the Holy Spirit and it falls to the lot of one of them to leap up and express the wonder of what has just happened, it would be normal for the man Peter to be the one. So, he got to his feet and poured out that great sermon recorded in the second chapter of the Book of Acts—the great sermon that converted 3,000 persons!

But Peter was a man, and in his early discipleship and ministry there were glaring contradictions and inconsistencies in his life. It is not possible for us to try to boast and say that this man, this second greatest of the apostles, never deviated one inch from the straight line from the moment of his conversion to the time of his death. I do believe in realism in religion and I do not think any good can come from hiding the bad and trying to reflect an unnatural righteousness which is not true to the whole character of the man.

Actually, I wish that every one of us could be like the angels or those strange creatures in the first chapter of Ezekiel, of whom it is said that when they went "they went every one straight forward."

I do not know what that means precisely, but I do know that it is an intriguing test—when they went they went straight forward. I wish that from the time I was converted at the age of 17 I had gone straight forward; but I did not and most of us have not. We zigzag on our way to heaven in place of flying a straight course. I am sorry about this. I don't excuse it, but I try to understand it!

Well, Peter was a bundle of contradictions and I take the position that it further glorifies the grace of God that He could take a weak and vacillating and inconsistent man like Peter and make Saint Peter out of him!

Read again all that the New Testament says about Peter and you will find glaring contradictions. In His very first meeting with Peter, Jesus said, "Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone." Jesus Himself in calling Peter gave him this new name meaning a rock, which is of course a solid and unshaking thing.

But this man—this "rock"—was so wavering that he denied his Lord! He clipped off a man's ear in an impetuous act to defend his Master, yet within a few hours denied that he had ever met Jesus. He was prone to rush into a situation, to act without thinking, and to apologize often. That was the rock—but a wavering rock—and that in itself is a contradiction!

I note also that Peter was not above rebuking his Lord and Master. He could walk up to Jesus and rebuke Him as though they were equals. But in the next moment, he might be down on his knees in a trembling reverence, crying, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am an unclean man!"

That was Peter—more daring than any of the apostles and often with more faith—but he had more daring than he had faith! Have you met any of God's children like that?

You remember that Peter was so daring that he rushed out of the boat and actually walked on the water, and yet he had such little faith that it would not support his daring. So he sank, and then had to be helped by the Lord to keep him from drowning!

Yes, this man Peter was the first one to confess his Lord and then the first one to deny Him.

He was the man that Jesus called "Blessed" and a little later called him Satan. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona"; then, "Get thee behind me, Satan!"

I mention a few other contradictions about the man, Peter. He is said by a portion of the Christian church to be the vicar of Christ on earth, and yet Peter himself never seemed to have found out about it! He never referred to himself as the vicar or vice-regent of Christ; he called himself an apostle, one of the elders. That's all. The humblest elder in any Presbyterian church has a title as great as Peter ever claimed for himself, except that he said he was one of the apostles.

I could point out that Peter is supposed by many to have been the first of the popes and yet he was overshadowed by one of his fellow apostles, for without question, Paul overshadowed Peter.

The man Peter was a great man, but the man Paul was greater. It would seem to me that if God were to select a pope, the first one, He would have chosen Paul, the mightiest, the most intellectual of them all, rather than the wavering and inconsistent Peter.

I point out, too, that Peter fades out of the Book of Acts and as he does so, Paul moves in. By the time we come to the end of the Acts, Peter is not visible anywhere. Paul fills the horizon and when God would lay the foundations of His church, forming its doctrines deep and strong, He chose Paul and not Peter.

So, this is a simple and very brief sketch of the man, Peter. Many other things could be said about him, but he is able to speak to us again out of his New Testament letters for he was declared an apostle to the Jews as Paul was to the Gentiles.

The Jews had been scattered abroad and that is the reason for this letter from Peter. They had been dispersed into many nations and at the day of Pentecost, they had come back to Jerusalem, numbering into the hundreds of thousands. Then when Peter preached, they were converted in large numbers, and returning to their own countries, carried the message of the risen Saviour and the coming of the Holy Spirit. Thus there were colonies of Christians in all of the provinces of Rome and Peter felt that he was to be pastor to that great number of Jewish Christians scattered abroad. He accepted his apostleship to the Jews most seriously and he wrote his first pastoral letter to the Jewish converts to Christ scattered throughout Roman Asia.

Actually, the circumstances in the Roman provinces that brought forth this letter from Peter were very grievous indeed. The Roman emperors had begun harsh persecution of the Christians. Jesus had told them that they were to expect persecution and now it was beginning to break over their heads like billows over a sinking ship.

One of the men coming into great political power was the emperor Nero, who is remembered in history as the most incredibly wicked of all the sons of Rome. His life and his acts and his habits are among the most wretched and offensive in all of history so no one can mention in public all the crimes of which he was guilty. But he was the Emperor—and Peter and the rest of the Christians were under his control.

It is recorded of Nero that he set the city of Rome on fire and then in his own tower played the harp and sang Greek songs while Rome burned. But then he became frightened, realizing that

the Romans would turn on him if they knew he had set the fire, so he looked around for a scapegoat—and who could be easier to blame than the troublesome Christians?

These believers were vocal and they were in evidence everywhere. So, Nero turned on the Christians as Hitler turned on the Jews and he had them slain by the tens of thousands. Property was taken from them, they were thrown into jail, they were tortured in many ways and they were killed—all of this throughout the regions of Bithynia and Pontus and Cappadocia and Roman Asia.

Peter, the dear man of God, knew what was happening. He had seen some of it himself in the city of Jerusalem and he knew the fury of the persecution. Out of this knowledge came his letter of encouragement, a letter inspired by the Spirit of God as he waited on the Lord in long, amazing hours of prayer for his suffering Christian brothers and sisters.

I think it must be said of Peter that within himself he felt very keenly the loneliness of the "strangers" to whom he wrote. They were scattered, they were persecuted, they were in heaviness, they were isolated in this world for their Christian faith.

The Christian, the genuine Christian, realizes that he is indeed a lonely soul in the middle of a world which affords him no fellowship. I contend that if the Christian breaks down on occasion and lets himself go in tears, he ought not to feel that he is weak. It is a normal loneliness in the midst of a world that has disowned him. He has to be a lonely man!

Those to whom Peter wrote were strangers in many ways and first of all because they were Jews. They were Jews scattered among the Romans and they never could accept and bow to the Roman ways. They learned the Greek tongue in the world of their day, but they never could learn the Roman ways. They were Jews, a people apart, even as they are today.

Besides that, they had become Christian believers so they were no longer merely Jews. Their sense of alienation from the world around them had increased and doubled. They were not only Jews—unlike the Gentiles around them—but they were Christians, unlike the Jews as well as unlike the Gentiles!

This is the reason that it is easily possible for a Christian believer to be the loneliest person in the world under a set of certain circumstances. This sense of not belonging is a part of our Christian heritage. That sense of belonging in another world and not belonging to this one steals into the Christian bosom and marks him off as being different from the people around him. Many of our hymns have been born out of that very loneliness, that sense of another and higher citizenship!

That is exactly the thing that keeps a Christian separated—knowing that his citizenship is not on earth at all but in heaven above, and that he looks for the Saviour to come. Who is there that can look more earnestly for the coming of the Lord Jesus than the one who feels that he is a lonely person in the middle of a lonely world?

Peter loved the Lord Jesus Christ and his letters to suffering believers clearly reveal that great and sweeping changes had come into his life. He had become stable, he had become solid, he had become the steady and dependable servant of Christ. Now he was able to see that suffering for Christ is one of the privileges of the Christian life and he prepared his brothers and sisters for the future with his counsel: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you... but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings."

Fellow believers, it is the same kind of world in which we live in this twentieth century. We do well to let the Apostle Peter speak to us!

No matter who you are, no matter what your education, you can read Peter's First Epistle and understand it reasonably well and you can say to yourself, "The Holy Spirit is saying this to me!"

There isn't anything dated in the Book of God. When I go to my Bible, I find dates but no dating. I mean that I find the sense and the feeling that everything here belongs to me. There is nothing here that is obviously for another age, another time, another people.

Many other volumes and many other books of history contain the passionate outpourings of the minds of men on local situations but we soon find ourselves bored with them. Unless we are actually doing research we do not care that much about something dated, something belonging only to another age.

But when the Holy Spirit wrote the epistles, through Peter and Paul and the rest, He wrote them and addressed them to certain people and then made them so universally applicable that every Christian who reads them today in any part of the world, in any language or dialect, forgets that they were written to someone else and says, "This was addressed to me. The Holy Spirit had me in mind. This is not antiquated and dated. This is the living Truth for me—now! It is just as though God had just heard of my trouble and is speaking to me to help me and encourage me in the time of my distress!"

Brethren, this is why the Bible stays young always. This is why the Word of the Lord God is as fresh as every new sunrise, as sweet and graciously fresh as the dew on the grass the morning after the clear night—because it is God's Word to man!

This is the wonder of divine inspiration and the wonder of the Book of God!

Chapter 86.

Holiness Is Not an Option

*... as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;
because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. 1 Peter 1:15, 16*

You cannot study the Bible diligently and earnestly without being struck by an obvious fact—the whole matter of personal holiness is highly important to God!

Neither do you have to give long study to the attitudes of modern Christian believers to discern that by and large we consider the expression of true Christian holiness to be just a matter of personal option: "I have looked it over and considered it, but I don't buy it!"

I have always liked the word *exhort* better than *command* so I remind you that Peter has given every Christian a forceful exhortation to holiness of life and conversation. He clearly bases this exhortation on two great facts—first, the character of God, and second, the command of God.

His argument comes out so simply that we sophisticates stumble over it—God's children ought to be holy because God Himself is holy! We so easily overlook the fact that Peter was an apostle and he is here confronting us with the force of an apostolic injunction, completely in line with the Old Testament truth concerning the person and character of God and also in line with what the Lord Jesus had taught and revealed to His disciples and followers.

Personally, I am of the opinion that we who claim to be apostolic Christians do not have the privilege of ignoring such apostolic injunctions. I do not mean that a pastor can forbid or that a church can compel. I only mean that morally we dare not ignore this commandment, "Be ye holy."

Because it is an apostolic word, we must face up to the fact that we will have to deal with it in some way, and not ignore it—as some Christians do.

Certainly no one has provided us with an option in this matter. Who has ever given us the right or the privilege to look into the Bible and say, "I am willing to consider this matter and if I like it, I will buy it"—using the language of the day.

There is something basically wrong with our Christianity and our spirituality if we can carelessly presume that if we do not like a Biblical doctrine and choose not to "buy" it, there is no harm done.

Commandments which we have received from our Lord or from the apostles cannot be overlooked or ignored by earnest and committed Christians. God has never instructed us that we should weigh His desires for us and His commandments to us in the balances of our own judgment and then decide what we want to do about them.

A professing Christian may say, "I have found a place of real Christian freedom; these things just don't apply to me."

Of course you can walk out on it! God has given every one of us the power to make our own choices. I am not saying that we are forced to bow our necks to this yoke and we do not have to apply it to ourselves. It is true that if we do not like it, we can turn our backs on it.

The record in the New Testament is plain on this point—many people followed Jesus for a while and then walked away from Him.

Once Jesus said to His disciples: "Except ye eat my body, my flesh, and drink my blood, there is no life in you." Many looked at one another and then walked away from Him.

Jesus turned to those remaining and said, "Will you also go away?"

Peter gave the answer which is still my answer today: "Lord, if we wanted to go away, where would we go? Thou alone hast the words of eternal life."

Those were wise words, indeed, words born of love and devotion.

So, we are not forced to obey in the Christian life, but we are forced to make a choice at many points in our spiritual maturity.

We have that power within us to reject God's instructions—but where else shall we go? If we refuse His words, which way will we turn? If we turn away from the authority of God's Word, to whose authority do we yield? Our mistake is that we generally turn to some other human—a man with breath in his nostrils.

I am old-fashioned about the Word of God and its authority. I am committed to believe that if we ignore it or consider this commandment optional, we jeopardize our souls and earn for ourselves severe judgment to come.

Now, brethren, I have said that the matter of holiness is highly important to God. I have personally counted in an exhaustive concordance and found that the word *holiness* occurs 650 times in the Bible. I have not counted words with a similar meaning in English, such as *sanctify* and *sanctified*, so the count would jump nearer to a thousand if we counted these other words with the same meaning.

This word *holy* is used to describe the character of angels, the nature of heaven and the character of God. It is written that angels are holy and those angels who gaze down upon the scenes of mankind are called the watchers and holy ones.

It is said that heaven is a holy place where no unclean thing can enter in. God Himself is described by the adjective *holy*—Holy Ghost, Holy Lord and Holy Lord God Almighty. These words are used of God throughout the Bible, showing that the highest adjective that can be ascribed to God, the highest attribute that can be ascribed to God is that of holiness, and, in a relative sense, even the angels in heaven partake of the holiness of God.

We note in the Bible, too, that the absence of holiness is given as a reason for not seeing God. I am aware of some of the grotesque interpretations which have been given to that text, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." My position is this: I will not throw out this Bible text just because some people have misused it to support their own patented theory about holiness. This text does have a meaning and it ought to disturb us until we have discovered what it means and how we may meet its conditions.

What does this word *holiness* really mean? Is it a negative kind of piety from which so many people have shied away?

No, of course not! Holiness in the Bible means moral wholeness—a positive quality which actually includes kindness, mercy, purity, moral blamelessness and godliness. It is always to be thought of in a positive, white intensity of degree.

Whenever it is written that God is holy it means that God is kind, merciful, pure and blameless in a white, holy intensity of degree. When used of men, it does not mean absolute holiness as it does of God, but it is still the positive intensity of the degree of holiness—and not negative.

This is why true Bible holiness is positive—a holy man can be trusted. A holy man can be tested. People who try to live by a negative standard of piety, a formula that has been copyrighted by other humans, will find that their piety does not stand up in times of difficult testing.

Genuine holiness can be put into the place of testing without fear. Whenever there is a breakdown of holiness, that is proof there never was any real degree of holiness in the first place.

Personally, I truly have been affected in my heart by reading the testimonies and commentaries of humble men of God whom I consider to be among the great souls of Christian church history.

I have learned from them that the word and idea of holiness as originally used in the Hebrew did not have first of all the moral connotation. It did not mean that God first of all was pure, for that was taken for granted!

The original root of the word *holy* was of something beyond, something strange and mysterious and awe-inspiring. When we consider the holiness of God we talk about something heavenly, full of awe, mysterious and fear-inspiring. Now, this is supreme when it relates to God, but it is also marked in men of God and deepens as men become more like God.

It is a sense of awareness of the other world, a mysterious quality and difference that has come to rest upon some men—that is a holiness. Now, if a man should have that sense and not be morally right, then I would say that he is experiencing a counterfeit of the devil.

Whenever Satan has reason to fear a truth very gravely, he produces a counterfeit. He will try to put that truth in such a bad light that the very persons who are most eager to obey it are frightened away from it. Satan is very sly and very experienced in the forming of parodies of truth which he fears the most, and then pawns his parody off as the real thing and soon frightens away the serious-minded saints.

I regret to say that some who have called themselves by a kind of copyrighted name of holiness have allowed the doctrine to harden into a formula which has become a hindrance to repentance, for this doctrine has been invoked to cover up frivolity and covetousness, pride and worldliness.

I have seen the results. Serious, honest persons have turned away from the whole idea of holiness because of those who have claimed it and then lived selfish and conceited lives.

But, brethren, we are still under the holy authority of the apostolic command. Men of God have reminded us in the Word that God does ask us and expect us to be holy men and women of God, because we are the children of God, who is holy. The doctrine of holiness may have been badly and often wounded—but the provision of God by His pure and gentle and loving Spirit is still the positive answer for those who hunger and thirst for the life and spirit well-pleasing God.

When a good man with this special quality and mysterious Presence is morally right and walking in all the holy ways of God and carries upon himself without even knowing it the fragrance of a kingdom that is supreme above the kingdoms of this world, I am ready to accept that as being of God and from God!

By way of illustration, remember that Moses possessed these marks and qualities when he came down from the mount. He had been there with God 40 days and 40 nights—and when he came back everyone could tell where he had been. The lightning still played over his countenance, the glory of the Presence remained. This strange something which men cannot pin down or identify was there.

I lament that this mysterious quality of holy Presence has all but forsaken the earth in our day. Theologians long ago referred to it as the numinous, meaning that overplus of something that is more than righteous, but is righteous in a fearful, awe-inspiring, wondrous, heavenly sense. It is as though it is marked with a brightness, glowing with a mysterious fire.

I have commented that this latter quality has all but forsaken the earth and I think the reason is very obvious. We are men who have reduced God to our own terms. In the context of the Christian church, we are now told to "gossip" the gospel and "sell" Jesus to people!

We still talk about righteousness, but we are lacking in that bright quality, that numinous which is beyond description.

This mysterious fire was in the bush as you will remember from the Old Testament. A small fire does not frighten people unless it spreads and gets out of control. We are not afraid of fire in that sense, yet we read how Moses, kneeling beside a bush where a small fire burned, hid his face for he was afraid! He had met that mysterious quality. He was full of awe in that manifested Presence.

Later, alone in the mountain and at the sounding of a trumpet, Moses shook, and said, "I am fearfully afraid, and quake."

We are drawn again and again to that Shekinah that was over Israel for it sums up wonderfully this holiness of God's Presence. There was the overhanging cloud by day, plainly visible. It was a mysterious cloud not made of water vapor, not casting a shadow anywhere, mysterious.

As the light of day would begin to fade, that cloud began to turn incandescent and when the darkness had settled, it shone brightly like one vast light hanging over Israel.

Every tent in that diamond-shaped encampment was fully lighted by the strange Shekinah that hung over it. No man had built that fire. No one added any fuel—no one stoked or controlled it. It was God bringing Himself within the confines of the human eye and shining down in His Presence over Israel.

I can imagine a mother taking her little child by the hand to walk through the encampment.

I am sure she would kneel down and whisper to that little fellow: "I want to show you something wonderful, Look! Look at that!"

Probably the response would be: "What is it, Mama?"

Then she would reply in a hushed voice: "That is God—God is there! Our leader Moses saw that fire in the bush. Later, he saw that fire in the mountain. Since we left Egypt that fire of God has followed us and hovered over us all through these years."

"But how do you know it is God, Mama?"

"Because of the Presence in that fire, the mysterious Presence from another world."

This Shekinah, this Presence, had no particular connotation of morality for Israel—that was all taken for granted. It did hold the connotation and meaning of reverence and awe, the solemn and inspiring, different and wonderful and glorious—all of that was there as it was also in the temple.

Then it came down again at Pentecost—that same fire sitting upon each of them—and it rested upon them with an invisible visibility. If there had been cameras, I do not think those tongues of fire could have been photographed—but they were there. It was the sense of being in or surrounded by this holy element, and so strong was it that in Jerusalem when the Christians gathered on Solomon's porch, the people stood off from them as wolves will stand away from a bright camp fire. They looked on, but the Bible says "they durst not join themselves to them."

Why? Were they held back by any prohibition or restriction?

No one had been warned not to come near these praying people, humble and harmless, clean and undefiled. But the crowd could not come. They could not rush in and trample the place down. They stood away from Solomon's porch because they had sensed a holy quality, a mysterious and holy Presence within this company of believers.

Later, when Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians to explain the mysterious fullness of the Holy Spirit of God, he said: "Some of you, when you meet together and you hear and obey God, know there is such a sense of God's presence that the unbelievers fall on their faces and then go out and report that God is with you indeed."

Now, that kind of Presence emanates from God as all holiness emanates from God.

If we are what we ought to be in Christ and by His Spirit, if the whole sum of our lives beginning with the inner life is becoming more Godlike and Christlike, I believe something of that divine and mysterious quality and Presence will be upon us.

I have met a few of God's saints who appeared to have this holy brightness upon them, but they did not know it because of their humility and gentleness of spirit. I do not hesitate to confess that my fellowship with them has meant more to me than all of the teaching I have ever received. I do stand deeply indebted to every Bible teacher I have had through the years, but they did little but instruct my head. The brethren I have known who had this strange and mysterious quality and awareness of God's Person and Presence instructed my heart.

Do we understand what a gracious thing it is to be able to say of a man, a brother in the Lord, "He is truly a man of God"? He doesn't have to tell us that, but he lives quietly and confidently day by day with the sense of this mysterious, awe-inspiring Presence that comes down on some people and means more than all the glib tongues in the world!

Actually, I am afraid of all the glib tongues. I am afraid of the man who can always flip open his Bible and answer every question—he knows too much! I am afraid of the man who has thought it all out and has a dozen epigrams he can quote, the answers which he has thought up over the years to settle everything spiritual. Brethren, I'm afraid of it!

There is a silence that can be more eloquent than all human speech. Sometimes there is a confusion of face and bowing of the head that speaks more divine truth than the most eloquent preacher can impart.

So, Peter reminds us that it is the Lord who has said: "Be ye holy as I am holy, and because I am holy."

First, bring your life into line morally so that God can make it holy; then bring your spiritual life into line that God may settle upon you with the Holy Ghost—with that quality of the Wonderful and the Mysterious and the Divine.

You do not cultivate it and you do not even know it, but it is there and it is this quality of humility invaded by the Presence of God which the church of our day lacks. Oh, that we might yearn for the knowledge and Presence of God in our lives from moment to moment, so that without human cultivation and without toilsome seeking there would come upon us this endowment that gives meaning to our witness! It is a sweet and radiant fragrance and I suggest that in some of our churches it may be strongly sensed and felt.

Now that I have said that, I had better stop and predict that some will ask me. "You don't go by your feelings, do you, Mr. Tozer?"

Well, I do not dismiss the matter of feeling and you can quote me on that if it is worth it!

Feeling is an organ of knowledge and I do not hesitate to say so. Feeling is an organ of knowledge.

To develop this, will you define the word *love* for me?

I don't believe you can actually define love—you can describe it but you cannot define it. A person or a group of people or a race which has never heard of the word *love* can never come to an understanding of what love is even if they could memorize the definitions in all of the world's dictionaries.

But just consider what happens to any simple, freckle-faced boy with his big ears and his red hair awry when he first falls in love and the feeling of it comes into every part of his being. All at once he knows more about love than all of the dictionaries put together!

This is what I am saying—love can only be understood by the feeling of it. The same is true with the warmth of the sun. Tell a man who has no feeling that it is a warm day and he will never understand what you mean. But take a normal man who is out in the warm sun and he will soon know it is warm. You can know more about the sun by feeling than you can by description.

So there are qualities in God that can never be explained to the intellect and can only be known by the heart, the innermost being. That is why I say that I do believe in feeling. I believe in what the old writers called religious affection—and we have so little of it because we have not laid the groundwork for it. The groundwork is repentance and obedience and separation and holy living!

I am confident that whenever this groundwork is laid, there will come to us this sense of the other-worldly Presence of God and it will become wonderfully, wonderfully real.

I have at times heard an expression in our prayers, "Oh, God, draw feelingly near!"

I don't think that is too far off—in spite of those who can only draw back and sit in judgment.

"Oh, God, come feelingly near!" God drew feelingly near to Moses in the bush and on the mount. He came feelingly near to the church at Pentecost and He came feelingly near to that Corinthian church when the unbelievers went away awe-struck to report that "God is really in their midst!"

I am willing to confess in humility that we need this in our day.

Chapter 87.

Husband and Wife: A Partnership!

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands.... husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge; giving honor unto the wife... whose adorning... the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit. 1 Peter 3:1-7

We have come to a sorry time in history when public speakers—including many preachers—see fit to deal with problems between men and women, husbands and wives, as a kind of humor calling for a bushel of laughs.

Throughout man's existence, the biological positions of the two sexes have remained unchanged, but the psychological attitudes and the social relations have been altered radically from time to time.

In recent years there has been a positive and radical revolution with respect to the relationships of the sexes and I think its origins can largely be traced in the United States. It is an impossibility for me to analyze here the impetus and the details of this movement which has been widely acclaimed as seeking "liberation" for women of the world.

What I do want to say about the relationships of husbands and wives will boil down to this: for the Christian of either sex, there is only one rule to follow and that is, "What does the Bible say?"

Christians are first of all children of God, and as children of God we are committed to the Word of God. We are committed to a Man and a Book, the man being the Lord Jesus Christ and the book, of course, the Holy Scriptures.

When we have discovered what the Bible has to say with finality about any subject and have determined what pleases the Man in the glory, there is no room left for argument.

In this epistle, Peter makes a plain statement that Christian wives ought to be in subjection to their own husbands, enforcing what the Bible seems to teach in other places—that the man as head of the race is head of the home.

Go back to Genesis and you will find that God made Adam from the dust of the ground and blew the breath of life into his nostrils. Then, because it was not good for him to be alone, God made the woman from a part of the man—and the woman must understand and accept that.

But, quickly and on the other hand, it must be said that there is absolutely no scriptural authority, neither precept nor biblical example, to allow any husband to behave as a brutal lord, ruling his home with an iron hand.

Read again the story of Abraham and Sarah and you will note the noble leadership of the man Abraham. He never ruled with an iron hand!

Go on to poor Jacob with all of his domestic difficulties. There was always a graciousness and a kindness within his family circle!

You can continue through Old Testament history and although it was a bit in the shadows compared with the New Testament, still and nevertheless, there was never any brutal masculine domination in the families with whom God was dealing.

In your serious study of the Bible as the Word of God, you will have to agree that the Bible seems to teach that the husband and wife should supplement one another. In other words, it seems to be the will of God that husband and wife together may become what neither one could be apart and alone!

Certainly the Bible picture is plain in denying the husband any right to be a dominating despot delighting in hard-handed dealings with his wife and family.

On the other hand, neither is a dominating and rebellious wife ever recognized nor approved in the scriptures!

An overwhelming and mischievous wife is the product of sin and unbelief and such a role has no place whatsoever in the will of God for the Christian family.

Actually, I think we may interpret the scriptures as teaching that God never intended there should be a continuing rivalry and competition between husbands and wives. Rather, it teaches the ideals of understanding and cooperation.

There is to be the understanding that two people have entered into a covenant by their choice and by force of circumstance, living in the same home and situation. The understanding should include the fact that the husband, according to the scripture and the will of God, is the head of the race and the home, but that he should function wisely, according to Peter's gentle admonition: "Ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge."

Peter is advising the husband to use his head and the common sense he has been given: "... giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life."

In other words, husband and wife are children of God together, equal heirs of the grace of life.

If we will remember this fact prayerfully, I think we will become aware that it is at this point that chivalry was born! I am speaking of Christian chivalry, as we understand it.

The world in which we live and the society of which we are a part have often sought to lampoon and satirize the concept of woman as the weaker vessel. There have been thousands of jokes, and cartoonists have had a field day with their drawings of the buxom woman leading the meek, little lamb-of-a-man down the street.

But we remember that the scriptures say that the man and the woman are heirs together of the grace of life. Husband and wife, if both are Christians, are Christian heirs together! They are united in their strongest bond—they are one in Jesus Christ, their Saviour!

Now, Peter makes a very strong comment in this passage for the benefit of husbands.

"Husbands, your prayers will be hindered if you do not give honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel..."

I suppose there are many Christian husbands whose prayers are not being answered and they can think up lots of reasons. But the fact is that thoughtless husbands are simply big, overbearing clods when it comes to consideration of their wives.

If the husband would get himself straightened out in his own mind and spirit and live with his wife according to knowledge, and treat her with the chivalry that belongs to her as the weaker vessel, remembering that she is actually his sister in Christ, his prayers would be answered in spite of the devil and all of the other reasons that he gives.

A husband's spiritual problems do not lie in the Kremlin nor in the Vatican but in the heart of the man himself—in his attitude and inability to resist the temptation to grumble and growl and dominate!

There is no place for that kind of male rulership in any Christian home. What the Bible calls for is proper and kindly recognition of the true relationships of understanding and love, and the acceptance of a spirit of cooperation between the husband and wife.

Peter also seeks to give us a plain answer in this passage concerning the life and conduct of a Christian wife who has an unbelieving and scornful husband.

We dare not deal with this only as a problem out of ancient history. In all of our congregations, we do face the question of the Christian wife: "How do I adjust my Christian life so that I can be obedient to the scriptures while I am living with a man who hates God and showers me with grumbling and abuse when I insist that I am going to God's house?"

First, we must admit that there is the kind of woman who talks about praying for her husband, but she will never live to see him converted because she refuses the scriptural position that God has given her, and more bluntly, because her husband has never seen any spiritual characteristics in her life that he would want for himself!

Peter could hardly give Christian wives any plainer counsel: "Be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear."

The scriptural advice is to this effect: that the quiet, cooperative Christian wife is a powerful instrument for good in the home, and without too many words, is still an evangelist hard to resist. Peter strongly infers that the man, seemingly rejecting her doctrine and laughing at her faith, is badly smitten deep in his own conscience by her meek and quiet spirit and her chaste conversation coupled with godly fear.

In summary, we have mentioned two extremes—the harsh husband whose prayers are not answered, and the wife whose life does not show consistent godliness and patience in adversity.

I thank God that in between those two positions there are great throngs of good, decent people trying to do the best they can for God in their life situations, overlooking the obvious irritations and together experiencing the grace of God!

I thank God indeed for that great number of believing men and women who get along together in Christ's bonds and with the help of the Spirit of God succeed in establishing a consistent example to their families, their neighbors and their friends!

I am aware that at about this point some of you are wondering if I will ignore the rest of Peter's admonition to the Christian women of his day.

There is a problem in this passage, but I may die tomorrow and I would not want to die knowing that only a day before I had been too cowardly and timid to deal with a text of scripture!

Here it is, in Peter's counsel to the wives:

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart."

First, notice the manner which Peter lifts the entire questions up and beyond the plane where there is division between the sexes and puts the matter on a spiritual plane where there is no division and where it is the hidden being of the heart and the spirit that really matters.

Second, what does the Bible really teach here about the outward adorning and dress. Does it expressly forbid the plaiting of the hair, the wearing of gold and the putting on of apparel? This is a question often asked.

Let's say "yes" and then go on from there and see where we stand.

When I was a boy they used to call plaiting of the hair "braiding." Every little girl had a pigtail that came to her hips. The longer the pigtail the prouder the girl!

My sister used to wear braided hair and that's what it means—exactly what plaited hair once meant in England.

Does the Bible say, then, that a woman must not be adorned with braided hair?

If we say, "Yes, that's what it means"—that rules out the braiding of your hair.

The advice continues: "Let it not be the wearing of gold."

Does that mean that gold can never be worn in any way by a Christian woman?

We will agree for the moment and say that gold is out!

"Nor the putting on of apparel."

Now, wait a minute! We are in trouble with our reasoning here, because this certainly does not mean that the woman is not to put on any apparel.

If it doesn't mean a strict ban on fixing the hair or wearing of gold or putting on of apparel, what does it mean?

It means the true attractiveness of the person is not outward but inward! Therefore, the Christian woman should remember that she cannot buy true attractiveness—that radiance which really shines forth in beauty is of the heart and spirit and not of the body!

That is what Peter meant and anything else by way of exclusion or structure is of narrow, private interpretation and will lead into an unloving fanaticism!

There is not one line of expression here that would lead us to believe that Peter was laying down the law that it is wrong for a woman to braid her hair. The women know they have to do something with it!

Nor is there anything in the scripture that teaches that the use of gold is forbidden in proper ways. God in creation made gold and strung it all around. It is pretty to look at and it is an element in itself. If we have any of it and can afford it, there is nothing in the scripture that says "Don't wear it" any more than it says, "Don't wear apparel!"

So, the teaching is plain: don't let your apparel be your true attractiveness. Don't try to substitute gold or jewelry for the true beauty of the being!

I am sure that we would not be mistaken to presume that Peter had a reason for writing this, for history bears out the fact that there were customs and fads and styles in those days, too.

I suppose it was the vogue and the thing to do—make the braided hair a kind of work of art, with great displays of gold and jewelry and fine apparel among the worldly and unsaved women of that pagan time.

Perhaps Peter sounds a trifle sour to some when he writes and says, "You Christian women are a different kind of person than you were before you knew the Lord. As Christians you should be more interested in character and inward spiritual life than in your clothing and adornment."

Having said this about the true inward attractiveness of the person, it must also be said that no Christian woman should ever sink into slovenly habits of dress and appearance. How can it be possible for any Christian woman, carrying her big Bible and teacher's quarterly, to become known as a proverbial "dowd"?

She cannot impress me with her professed spirituality. I can only shrug and think about her unkempt dress: "Did she go to the old bureau in the attic and pull out the old rag or did she sleep in it?"

I can be very positive about this—I don't believe that true spirituality can afford to leave that kind of slovenly impression. There is no place in the heart of Jesus Christ nor in that of the tender, artistic Holy Ghost for dowdiness nor dirt nor inconsistency!

I remember the account of the old Quaker brother who had to make a call at the home of one of the Christian sisters in his city.

They greeted one another in the traditional dignified manner of the Quakers and then had a brief conversation about the things of God.

As he was about to leave, she said, "Brother, would you care to pray with me before you go?"

He said, "No," and she said, "Why?"

He answered, "Your house is dirty and God never told me to get down on my knees in a dirty house. Clean up your house and I will come back and pray."

Perhaps she had been too busy praying to keep the house clean, but I believe an orderly and well-kept house would have helped her Christian testimony, and perhaps she could have prayed better, as well.

Now, there has to be some sort of outward adorning and I would summarize it in four familiar words: *clean, neat, modest, appropriate*.

None can say that they do not understand the word *clean*. However poor we may be, we may still be clean. Nearly everyone has enough water available for basic cleanliness.

Why can't we all be neat in our daily contacts? I do not think anyone ever needs to look as though he had gone through a cyclone and had no time since to get "accumulated."

In our day, some folks seem to think the word *modest* is a comical word. You can laugh it off if you want to, but it is one of the words that we will face in that great day of coming judgment.

In our Christian lives, we should know the strength of the word *appropriate*. I think every Christian woman should dress appropriately, properly and suitably to her circumstances and to her income. A Christian woman who tries to give out tracts dressed in loud, flashy apparel or in dirty and disheveled garb will be a poor advertisement for the gospel she is trying to proclaim publicly!

I realize that some women excuse their manner of dress in public by the fact that they have so little money to spend for clothing.

I contend that a woman still doesn't have to be grotesque in her garb even though she must wrestle with the problems of small income.

You know that I ride the public busses occasionally and for the small price of the fare it is a wonderful place to observe human nature.

When I see some of the inappropriate and grotesque things worn by women boarding the busses I have wondered why others in the family did not protest: "Please, Mama, don't go out like that! People will think you have escaped..."

I think there is a great contradiction apparent among us. Many women are working so hard in all kinds of jobs that they are making themselves old in the effort to get money enough to buy the clothes and cosmetics that are supposed to make them look young.

As far as I am concerned, it does not reflect any credit on the common sense or spirituality of any woman who knowingly goes beyond her financial bracket to decorate herself for the sake of appearance!

Finally, I think that a Christian woman must be careful about the kind of person she sets up as a model of character and example in daily life. It is a sad thing to have our minds occupied with the wrong kind of people.

I don't think English history books will ever report that Suzanna Wesley was one of the best-dressed women of her day or that she ever received a medal for social activity. But she was the mother of Charles and John Wesley, those princes of Christian song and theology. She taught her own family, and her spiritual life and example have placed her name high in God's hall of fame for all eternity.

So, if you want to take models to follow day by day, please do not take the artificial, globe-trotting females who are intent only upon themselves, their careers and their publicity. Rather, take Sara, the princess who gave her love and obedience to Abraham; or Suzanna Wesley or Florence Nightingale, Clara Barton or Mary Fuller.

There are so many good examples and it is a serious matter, for the judgment shall declare every person's faith and work and influence!

I have not been trying here just to fill the role of a feminine counselor, but to remind you that the Apostle Peter, a great man of God, said it all a long time ago! True adorning is the lasting beauty that is within. It is the glowing but hidden being of the heart, more radiant than all of the jewels that one can buy!

God help us all, men and women of whatever marital, social or domestic status, that we may do the will of God and thus win our crown!

Excerpts from *Who Put Jesus on the Cross?*

Chapter 88. Who Put Jesus on the Cross?

He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. Isa. 53:5

There is a strange conspiracy of silence in the world today—even in religious circles—about man's responsibility for sin, the reality of judgment, and about an outraged God and the necessity for a crucified Saviour.

On the other hand, there is an open and powerful movement swirling throughout the world designed to give people peace of mind in relieving them of any historical responsibility for the trial and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The problem with modern decrees and pronouncements in the name of brotherhood and tolerance is their basic misconception of Christian theology.

A great shadow lies upon every man and every woman—the fact that our Lord was bruised and wounded and crucified for the entire human race. This is the basic human responsibility that men are trying to push off and evade.

Let us not eloquently blame Judas nor Pilate. Let us not curl our lips at Judas and accuse, "He sold Him for money!"

Let us pity Pilate, the weak-willed, because he did not have courage enough to stand for the innocence of the man whom he declared had done no wrong.

Let us not curse the Jews for delivering Jesus to be crucified. Let us not single out the Romans in blaming them for putting Jesus on the cross.

Oh, they were guilty, certainly! But they were our accomplices in crime. They and we put Him on the cross, not they alone. That rising malice and anger that burns so hotly in your breast today put Him there. That basic dishonesty that comes to light in your being when you knowingly cheat and chisel on your income tax return—that put Him on the cross. The evil, the hatred, the suspicion, the jealousy, the lying tongue, the carnality, the fleshly love of pleasure—all of these in natural man joined in putting Him on the cross.

We may as well admit it. Everyone of us in Adam's race had a share in putting Him on the cross!

I have often wondered how any professing Christian man or woman could approach the communion table and participate in the memorial of our Lord's death without feeling and sensing the pain and the shame of the inward confession: "I, too, am among those who helped put Him on the cross!"

I remind you that it is characteristic of the natural man to keep himself so busy with unimportant trifles that he is able to avoid the settling of the most important matters relating to life and existence.

Men and women will gather anywhere and everywhere to talk about and discuss every subject from the latest fashions on up to Plato and philosophy—up and down the scale. They talk about the necessity for peace. They may talk about the church and how it can be a bulwark against communism. None of these things are embarrassing subjects.

But the conversation all stops and the taboo of silence becomes effective when anyone dares to suggest that there are spiritual subjects of vital importance to our souls that ought to be discussed and considered. There seems to be an unwritten rule in polite society that if any religious subjects are to be discussed, it must be within the framework of theory—"never let it get personal!"

All the while, there is really only one thing that is of vital and lasting importance—the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ "was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

There are two very strong and terrible words here—*transgressions* and *iniquities*.

A *transgression* is a breaking away, a revolt from just authority. In all of the moral universe, only man and the fallen angels have rebelled and violated the authority of God, and men are still in flagrant rebellion against that authority.

There is no expression in the English language which can convey the full weight and force of terror inherent in the words *transgression* and *iniquity*. But in man's fall and transgression against the created order and authority of God we recognize perversion and twistedness and deformity and crookedness and rebellion. These are all there, and, undeniably, they reflect the reason and the necessity for the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

The word *iniquity* is not a good word—and God knows how we hate it! But the consequences of iniquity cannot be escaped.

The prophet reminds us clearly that the Saviour was bruised for "our iniquities."

We deny it and say, "No!" but the fingerprints of all mankind are plain evidence against us. The authorities have no trouble finding and apprehending the awkward burglar who leaves his fingerprints on tables and doorknobs, for they have his record. So, the fingerprints of man are found in every dark cellar and in every alley and in every dimly-lighted evil place throughout the world—every man's fingerprints are recorded and God knows man from man. It is impossible to escape our guilt and place our moral responsibilities upon someone else. It is a highly personal matter—"our iniquities."

For our iniquities and our transgressions He was bruised and wounded. I do not even like to tell you of the implications of His wounding. It really means that He was profaned and broken, stained and defiled. He was Jesus Christ when men took Him into their evil hands. Soon He was humiliated and profaned. They plucked out His beard. He was stained with His own blood, defiled with earth's grime. Yet He accused no one and He cursed no one. He was Jesus Christ, the wounded one.

Israel's great burden and amazing blunder was her judgment that this wounded one on the hillside beyond Jerusalem was being punished for His own sin.

The prophet foresaw this historic error in judgment, and he himself was a Jew, saying: "We thought He was smitten of God. We thought that God was punishing Him for His own iniquity for we did not know then that God was punishing Him for our transgressions and our iniquities."

He was profaned for our sakes. He who is the second person of the Godhead was not only wounded for us, but He was profaned by ignorant and unworthy men.

Isaiah reported that "the chastisement of our peace was upon him."

How few there are who realize that it is this peace—the health and prosperity and welfare and safety of the individual—which restores us to God. A chastisement fell upon Him so that we as individual humans could experience peace with God if we so desired. But the chastisement was upon Him. Rebuke, discipline and correction—these are found in chastisement. He was beaten and scourged in public by the decree of the Romans. They lashed Him in public view as

they later lashed Paul. They whipped and punished Him in full view of the jeering public, and His bruised and bleeding and swollen person was the answer to the peace of the world and to the peace of the human heart. He was chastised for our peace; the blows fell upon Him.

I do not suppose there is any more humiliating punishment ever devised by mankind than that of whipping and flogging grown men in public view. Many men who have been put in a jail have become a kind of hero in the eye of the public. Heavy fines have been assessed against various offenders of the law, but it is not unusual for such an offender to boast and brag about his escape. But when a bad man is taken out before a laughing, jeering crowd, stripped to the waist and soundly whipped like a child—a bad child—he loses face and has no boasting left. He will probably never be the bold, bad man he was before. That kind of whipping and chastisement breaks the spirit and humiliates. The chagrin is worse than the lash that falls on the back.

I speak for myself as a forgiven and justified sinner, and I think I speak for a great host of forgiven and born-again men and women, when I say that in our repentance we sensed just a fraction and just a token of the wounding and chastisement which fell upon Jesus Christ as He stood in our place and in our behalf. A truly penitent man who has realized the enormity of his sin and rebellion against God senses a violent revulsion against himself—he does not feel that he can actually dare to ask God to let him off. But peace has been established, for the blows have fallen on Jesus Christ—publicly humiliated and disgraced as a common thief, wounded and bruised and bleeding under the lash for sins He did not commit; for rebellions in which He had no part; for iniquity in the human stream that was an outrage to a loving God and Creator.

Isaiah sums up his message of a substitutionary atonement with the good news that "with his stripes we are healed."

The meaning of these "stripes" in the original language is not a pleasant description. It means to be actually hurt and injured until the entire body is black and blue as one great bruise. Mankind has always used this kind of bodily laceration as a punitive measure. Society has always insisted upon the right to punish a man for his own wrongdoing. The punishment is generally suited to the nature of the crime. It is a kind of revenge—society taking vengeance against the person who dared flout the rules.

But the suffering of Jesus Christ was not punitive. It was not for Himself and not for punishment of anything that He Himself had done.

The suffering of Jesus was corrective. He was willing to suffer in order that He might correct us and perfect us, so that His suffering might not begin and end in suffering, but that it might begin in suffering and end in healing.

Brethren, that is the glory of the cross! That is the glory of the kind of sacrifice that was for so long in the heart of God! That is the glory of the kind of atonement that allows a repentant sinner to come into peaceful and gracious fellowship with his God and Creator! It began in His suffering and it ended in our healing. It began in His wounds and ended in our purification. It began in His bruises and ended in our cleansing.

What is our repentance? I discover that repentance is mainly remorse for the share we had in the revolt that wounded Jesus Christ, our Lord. Further, I have discovered that truly repentant men never quite get over it, for repentance is not a state of mind and spirit that takes its leave as soon as God has given forgiveness and as soon as cleansing is realized.

That painful and acute conviction that accompanies repentance may well subside and a sense of peace and cleansing come, but even the holiest of justified men will think back over his part in the wounding and the chastisement of the Lamb of God. A sense of shock will still come

over him. A sense of wonder will remain—wonder that the Lamb that was wounded should turn His wounds into the cleansing and forgiveness of one who wounded Him.

This brings to mind a gracious moving in many of our evangelical church circles—a willingness to move toward the spiritual purity of heart taught and exemplified so well by John Wesley in a time of spiritual dryness.

In spite of the fact that the word *sanctification* is a good Bible word, we have experienced a period in which evangelical churches hardly dared breathe the word because of the fear of being classified among the "holy rollers."

Not only is the good word *sanctification* coming back, but I am hopeful that what the word stands for in the heart and mind of God is coming back, too. The believing Christian, the child of God, should have a holy longing and desire for the pure heart and clean hands that are a delight to his Lord. It was for this that Jesus Christ allowed Himself to be humiliated, maltreated, lacerated. He was bruised, wounded and chastised so that the people of God could be a cleansed and spiritual people—in order that our minds might be pure and our thoughts pure. This provision all began in His suffering and ends in our cleansing. It began with His open, bleeding wounds and ends in peaceful hearts and calm and joyful demeanor in His people.

Every humble and devoted believer in Jesus Christ must have his own periods of wonder and amazement at this mystery of godliness—the willingness of the Son of Man to take our place in judgment and in punishment. If the amazement has all gone out of it, something is wrong, and you need to have the stony ground broken up again!

I often remind you that Paul, one of the holiest men who ever lived, was not ashamed of his times of remembrance and wonder over the grace and kindness of God. He knew that God did not hold his own sins against him forever. Knowing the account was all settled, Paul's happy heart assured him again and again that all was well. At the same time, Paul could only shake his head in amazement, and confess: "I am unworthy to be called, but by His grace, I am a new creation in Jesus Christ!"

I make this point about the faith and assurance and rejoicing of Paul in order to say that if that humble sense of perpetual penance ever leaves our justified being, we are on the way to backsliding.

Charles Finney, one of the greatest of all of God's men throughout the years, testified that in the midst of his labors and endeavors in bringing men to Christ, he would at times sense a coldness in his own heart.

Finney did not excuse it. In his writings he told of having to turn from all of his activities, seeking God's face and Spirit anew in fasting and prayer.

"I plowed up until I struck fire and met God," he wrote. What a helpful and blessed formula for the concerned children of God in every generation!

Those who compose the Body of Christ, His church, must be inwardly aware of two basic facts if we are to be joyfully effective for our Lord.

We must have the positive knowledge that we are clean through His wounds, with God's peace realized through His stripes. This is how God assures us that we may be all right inside. In this spiritual condition, we will treasure the purity of His cleansing and we will not excuse any evil or wrongdoing.

Also, we must keep upon us a joyful and compelling sense of gratitude for the bruised and wounded One, our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, what a mystery of redemption—that the bruises of One healed the bruises of many; that the wounds of One healed the wounds of millions; that the stripes of One healed the stripes of many.

The wounds and bruises that should have fallen upon us fell upon Him, and we are saved for His sake!

Many years ago, an historic group of Presbyterians were awed by the wonder and the mystery of Christ's having come in the flesh to give Himself as an offering for every man's sin.

Those humble Christians said to one another: "Let us walk softly and search our hearts and wait on God and seek His face throughout the next three months. Then we will come to the communion table with our hearts prepared—lest the table of our Lord should become a common and careless thing."

God still seeks humble, cleansed and trusting hearts through which to reveal His divine power and grace and life. A professional botanist from the university can describe the acacia bush of the desert better than Moses could ever do—but God is still looking for the humble souls who are not satisfied until God speaks with the divine fire in the bush.

A research scientist could be employed to stand and tell us more about the elements and properties found in bread and wine than the apostles ever knew. But this is our danger: we may have lost the light and warmth of the Presence of God, and we may have only bread and wine. The fire will have gone from the bush, and the glory will not be in our act of communion and fellowship.

It is not so important that we know all of the history and all of the scientific facts, but it is vastly important that we desire and know and cherish the Presence of the Living God, who has given Jesus Christ to be the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Chapter 89.

What Is the Supreme Sin of a Profane Society

*He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
John 1:10*

The Bible tells us in a variety of ways of an ancient curse that lingers with us to this very hour—the willingness of human society to be completely absorbed in a godless world!

It is still the supreme sin of unregenerate man that, even though Jesus Christ has come into the world, he cannot feel His all-pervading Presence, he cannot see the true Light, and he cannot hear His Voice of love and entreaty!

We have become a "profane" society—absorbed and intent with nothing more than the material and physical aspects of this earthly life. Men and women glory in the fact that they are now able to live in unaccustomed luxury in expensive homes; that they can trade in shiny and costly automobiles on shinier and more costly automobiles every year; and that their tailored suits and silk and satin dresses represent an expenditure never before possible in a society of common working people.

This is the curse that lies upon modern man—he is insensible and blind and deaf in his eagerness to forget that there is a God, in his strange belief that materialism and humanism constitute the "good life."

My fellow man, do you not know that your great sin is this: the all-pervading and eternal Presence is here, and you cannot feel Him?

Are you not aware that there is a great and true Light which brightly shines—and you cannot see it?

Have you not heard within your being a tender Voice whispering of the eternal value of your soul—and yet you have said, "I have heard nothing"?

This is, in essence, the charge that John levels at human kind: Jesus Christ, the Word of God, was in the world, and the world failed to recognize Him.

Now, our word *world* in the English needs a bit of definition. In the Bible it has three distinct meanings, and two of them concern us in this passage in John's Gospel. *World* here means nature and mankind—both coming from the very same Greek word. They are used together without clear distinction, so that when the Bible says, "He was in the world, and the world knew him not," the two meanings are apparent. You must check the context to learn which meaning is which, because they come from a precise word in the original.

In the Bible, the word *world* comes from a root word meaning to tend and take care of and provide for. Then, it also means an orderly arrangement plus a decoration.

As far as I am concerned, everywhere I look in His world I see God and my soul is delighted. I look into a dry, old book that looks like a telephone directory gone mad—we call it a lexicon—and I find that in the New Testament the word *world* means "an orderly arranged system, highly decorative, which is tended, cared for, looked after and provided for." It is all there in that one word.

Anyone who knows God, even slightly, would expect God to make an orderly world because God Himself is the essence of order. God was never the author of disorder—whether it be in society, in the home, or in the mind or body of man.

I have noticed that some people let themselves go to seed in a number of ways, thinking it makes them more spiritual—but I disagree. I think it is proper to comb your hair, if you have any. I do not think it is a mark of deep inward spirituality for a man to forget that a soiled shirt is easily cleaned and that baggy trousers were originally meant to have an orderly crease in them. I am sure God is not grieved when His Christian children take a little time every day to present themselves in clean and orderly appearance.

Some of the saints of God also insist upon completely informal and spontaneous worship. I do not think our Lord is grieved by a service of worship in which we know what we are going to sing—because God is a God of order.

So the word *world* has this idea of order in it, and we can expect God to be orderly because it is necessary to His nature. The world is a mathematical world and the essence of mathematics is order—it has to be that way.

Those who have gone on to know God better will also expect that God would make a beautiful world and that is exactly what the Bible teaches. God has made an orderly and beautiful world, and He is looking after it, providing for it, and tending it.

I think this is a delightful thing—God can take an old, dry word which has been dead for hundreds of years and speak to the bones and they get up and stand and sing a solo. That is what God has done here with the word *world*.

You will think about this the next time you are asked to sing: "For the beauty of the earth, For the glory of the skies, / For the love which from our birth over and around us lies, / Lord of all, to Thee we raise This our hymn of grateful praise. / For the wonder of each hour Of the day and of the night, / Hill and vale, and tree and flower, Sun and moon, and stars of light, / Lord of all, to Thee we raise This our hymn of grateful praise."

Let me tell you that the man who wrote that was not simply having himself a poetical time. He was putting in harmonious language a truth—and that truth is that God made a world beautiful in its order.

At this point I anticipate a word of argument from Mr. Worldly Wiseman, the man who has more brains than he has heart, who thinks more than he prays, and who tries to understand and measure the unapproachable glory of God with his poor little peanut head.

He is likely to say, "Now, wait a minute. You are talking about God making the world so beautiful, but don't you know that *beauty* is a word only—a word we use to describe that which happens to please us? If a person likes the way something looks, he says it is beautiful. On the other hand, if we don't like the way something looks, we say it is ugly. So, nothing is beautiful or ugly in itself—it just depends upon whether we happen to like it or not!"

So, Mr. Worldly Wiseman tells us that this idea that God made a beautiful world is all wrong. He is of the opinion that such an idea is only the figment of an over-heated religious imagination.

Frankly, Mr. Worldly Wiseman does not frighten me by his learned criticism and I am not looking for a place to hide, because I think that he is the dumb one, after all.

Listen, brethren. God made us in His image and in His own likeness and there is a similarity between the minds of men and the mind of God, sin being excepted. Take sin out of the mind of man and the similarity to God is there because God made man in His image. I repeat—if the human race would only see that God made us in His image, we would stop wallowing in the gutter and try to behave like God ordained when He made us in His own image and likeness.

When He made us in His image, part of that was mental and aesthetic so that my mind is somewhat like God's mind as soon as I get sin out of it. There is no doubt that when God makes a thing beautiful and orderly, it pleases the mind of God.

I say that it is only a half-educated man who insists that *beauty* is only a word that we give to something that happens to please us. The simple fact is that God made things to please Himself and for His pleasure they are and were created. Why should we apologize because we have the God-given ability to like what God likes and to be pleased with that which pleases God?

Now, I think that God first makes things orderly for utility. Whenever He made something in this universe it was because He had a purpose for it. I do not believe there is anything in the universe that just got here by accident. Everything in the universe has a meaning.

My father was philosophical about many things and I remember that he used to sit during the summertime and ponder why God made the mosquitoes. I still do not have the answer, but I am just a human being, and just because I do not have that answer, I am not going to accuse the Creator of making a cosmic blunder. I know the mosquito is not a blunder—he is just a pest. But God made him.

The same principle is true of a great many other things. I do not know why God does some things, but I am convinced that nothing is accidental in His universe. The fact that we do not know the reason behind some things is not basis enough for us to call them divine accidents.

If I am allowed to go into an operating room in a hospital, I find many strange and complex things all around me. I am completely ignorant as to what most of them are and how they are supposed to be used. But the surgeon knows—and all of those tools and instruments are not there by accident.

If I could step into the cab of one of the great, powerful diesel locomotives, I would be perplexed and confused trying to figure out why there are so many buttons and handles and bars. I could wreck the whole thing in a few minutes if I started pushing buttons and pressing bars. But the engineer knows—and he gets the proper results when he pushes the right buttons.

So, when God Almighty stepped into the cab of His locomotive, which we call the cosmos, He was at the controls and He has always pushed the right buttons. Just because there are things in the universe beyond my human explanation does not allow me to accuse God of making a lot of unnecessary truck to clutter up the universe. God made everything for some purpose.

I have mentioned utility in this regard. In the book of Genesis, we find that usefulness was God's first plan. God said, "Let there be light," and He saw that it was good and that it had a purpose. So He divided the light from the darkness, and called the light day and the darkness night.

God did the same thing with the waters and throughout those two chapters of Genesis there is a beautiful exercise in utility—God making an orderly world for a purpose, with everything having a reason for existence.

With God usefulness was first, and so it is with people.

Whenever a pioneering man has gone out to the undeveloped plains to get himself a homestead, a little plot of ground which is to become his home, he does not think about beauty but about utility and usefulness. He knows he must have a log house or some kind of safe dwelling before the blizzards come. You will still find many such plain, often ugly houses scattered throughout the West. It is a place to live, it is home, it is a place to rest when a man is tired. It may be primitive, but it fulfills its purpose.

In the second place, God added decoration. That is the expression that is actually in the Greek root. The word *decorative* is in it. First, He created for utility and purpose and then added

decoration and beauty. There probably is a sense in which we could get along without the decoration, but it is a lot better to have it. There is that which is in the mind of God that desires to be pleased—not only satisfied. Order and usefulness and purpose bring satisfaction, but God desired that there should be beauty in His work.

I think it would be a great thing if more human beings discovered the truth that it does not cost any more to have things pleasing and beautiful than it does to have them useful and ugly. We could start out right here in our own city. You start to drive out of the city in almost any direction and you soon wonder if there is anything beautiful left in the world. Smoke stacks and smell and the sprawling apparatus for making gasoline out of crude oil—ugly, ugly, ugly! But, of course, the utility is inherent in our factories and foundaries and refineries. If it were not for that kind of utility, many of you could not have driven to church—useful but not beautiful.

Well, perhaps the day will come in the millennium when we will make things beautiful as well as useful. I still think it does not cost any more to add the beauty and the pleasure and the delight. It costs no more to raise a beautiful daughter than to raise a homely daughter, and a beautiful wife does not eat any more than a homely wife.

You choose two men and give each of them a pot of paint, and one of them will turn out a masterpiece to hang in a gallery, and the other will turn out a horrible insult to the human imagination. All of that with just the same amount of paint and just the same amount of time. One is an artist and the other is a dauber.

Give two architects a free hand, each with a carload of bricks, and one will come up with a monstrosity—like some church buildings I have seen—while the other will add a touch entirely pleasing and satisfying. The costs will be the same—it is just a question of beauty in arrangement.

God could have made a river to go roaring right down to the sea—a plain, straight, ugly-looking channel. It would have fed the fish and done its job. But I think God smiled and made it to meander around under trees and around hills, a stream that catches the blue of the sky and reflects it to those nearby. People are intrigued by the meandering stream and comment, "Isn't it beautiful?" And God says, "Thank you for seeing it. I made you to see it." God is able to make things useful and beautiful. That is what the word *world* means.

Now, you say, what is this—a lecture on art?

No, it is a theological talk on what the word *world* means in the Bible—the created world which is God Almighty's decorated order which He watches and tends.

The other use of this word *world* is that which means mankind—the organized world and society of men and women.

When God reports that Christ was in the world and the world neither recognized nor knew Him, He was not referring to the created clouds and hills and rocks and rivers. He was referring to human society, the world of mankind, and it was this organized world of man that knew Him not.

John testified that God's World, His only begotten Son, became flesh and dwelt among us. What was He doing in our kind of world, in our kind of fallen society?

Before the incarnation, He was the all-permeating Word of God moving creatively in His universe. When Jesus Christ became man, God incarnate in a human body, He did not cease to be the all-permeating Word of God. To this very day, the all-permeating Word still fills the universe and moves among us.

How few men there are who realize His presence, who realize that they have Him to deal with. He is still the Light of the world. It is He that lighteth every man that cometh into the

world. After His ascension from Olivet's mountain, He still remains as the all-permeating, vitalizing, life-giving Word operative in the universe.

What is He doing in the universe?

The scriptures tell us that "by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things (in time), and by him all things consist (or hold together)." The all-permeating Word which is in the world is the adhesive quality of the universe. That is why we do not fall apart. He is, in a very true sense, the mortar and the magnetism that holds all things together.

That is why He is here, for this is not a dead planet that we inhabit. Sin is the only dead thing. This is a living world we inhabit and it is held together by the spiritual presence of the invisible Word. He was in the world and the world was made by Him.

The scriptures continue speaking of Him: "Who being the brightness of his (God's) glory,... and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." He is upholding all things by the word of His power.

When a little child looks up into the starry sky at night there may be a natural and childish fear that the sky will fall down. The parents laugh and pat the child on the head and apologize that he is tired—but the child is not as dumb as we might think.

Why doesn't the sky fall down? Why is it that stars and planets do not go tearing apart and ripping off into chaos?

Because there is a Presence that makes all things consist—and it is the Presence of that One who upholdeth all things by the word of His power. This is basically a spiritual explanation, for this universe can only be explained by spiritual and eternal laws. This is why the scientists can never manage to get through to the root of all things and never will, for they deal only with the things that they can see and touch and taste and mix in the experimental test tubes.

The scientist does not know how to deal with this mysterious Presence and Force that holds all things together. He can mix elements and chemicals and note the reactions that take place and then write an article and say, "I did not see God in the formula." But the scientist is only able to come up with dependable and consistent formulas because of God's faithfulness and power in holding all things together.

The scientist announces that a certain star will be in a definite place in the universe after another 2,510 years and twenty minutes! Then he sits back from his computer and boasts, "I have run God out of His world! I can predict where the stars will be in the future."

Oh, what a foolish man! The stars would all grind themselves to powder unless God in His faithfulness continues to keep them in their course and in their systems. He upholds all things by the word of His power.

Again, we read in the scriptures: "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth."

We lose a good deal of the expression of this passage in our English translation, but it is still one of the most beautiful in the Bible. It is a companion piece to the twenty-third Psalm, dealing with the astronomical host instead of His care for human beings.

The man of God says, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created all these things." He is referring to that great display of shining, bright, diamond things that look down

upon the country and the city and reflect on the waters of the sea. These stars yonder—who has created these things that bring out their host by number?

Why do they bring out their host?

Because they are like sheep, and this is the figure of a shepherd bringing his sheep out by number and calling them all by name, counting them as they come out and naming every one, and leading them across the green grass of the meadows and beside the still waters.

So, the shepherd-minded poet, Isaiah, saw that the starry hosts above were like a flock of sheep and that God, the great Shepherd, called and they came sailing out through the inter-stellar space as He numbered them and said, "They are all here!" Then He called them by their names, throughout the boundless universe, and because He is strong in power, not one faileth!

I believe that this can be said to be the most majestic and elevated figure of speech in the entire Bible—with no possible exception. We still know so little about the far reaches of the universe, but the astronomers tell us that the very Milky Way is not a milky way at all—but simply an incredible profusion of stars, billions of light-years away, and yet all moving in their prescribed and orderly directions.

We delight in the fact that it was God who called them all out, who knows their numbers, and He calls them all by name as a shepherd calls his sheep. What a lofty, brain-stretching illustration of what God is doing in His universe, holding all things together in proper courses and orbits.

He is that kind of Creator and God—yet the world knew Him not. That is mankind. He is still in the world, but mankind scoffs in its ignorance of Him, almost completely unaware of His revelation that the Word can be known and honored and loved by the humble human heart.

Now, the Word in His Presence can be known by mankind of the world. I am not conferring salvation upon every man by this statement. I mean to say that an awareness and consciousness of the Presence of God has often been known among men.

May I put it like this?

In the early days of America, when our founding fathers were writing constitutions and drafting laws and making history, many of the men in high places were not believing Christians. As a nation, we have been dreamy-eyed about some of those old boys and have made them out to be Christians when they were not.

I recall that Benjamin Franklin, who often said that he was not a believing Christian, suggested prayer to Almighty God at a time when the young nation was being threatened. The leaders did pray and they got out of the right place.

Now, Franklin was not a Christian, but he believed there was a God operative in the world and he did not deny the awareness of that Presence. Daniel Webster confessed that the profoundest thought he had ever entertained in his life was his "responsibility to a holy God."

Surely, our fathers were not all fundamental Christians and many were not born again, but most of them were men who held a reverent and profound belief in the presence of God in His world. A modern generation considers them old-fashioned and laughs at them, but they drafted far-sighted legislation and a world-renowned code of personal and national ethics and responsibilities that remain to this day.

Standing up for the awareness and consciousness of a Creator God did not save them, but it stamped them in character and manhood as apart from some of the poker-playing, whiskey-drinking rascals who have never given any thought to the idea of God and His Presence in our day. The Word is in the world and the world knows Him not—but it is possible to know.

A Moslem falls down on the ground five times a day in reverence to God in heaven—and a lot of people laugh at him. The Hindu measures himself painfully on the way to the Ganges river to bathe himself—and a lot of people comment, "How foolish can you get?"

But I would rather be a Moslem or a Hindu or a primitive tribesman living in a cootie-infested hut in Africa, kneeling before bones and feathers and mumbling some kind of home-made prayer, than to come into judgment as a self-sufficient American businessman who ruled God out of his life and out of his business and out of his home.

Many an unthinking, secular-minded American would reply: "I'm willing to take my chances!"

What foolish talk from a mortal man!

Men do not have the luxury of taking their chances—either they are saved or they are lost. Surely this is the great curse that lies upon mankind today—men are so wrapped up in their own godless world that they refuse the Light that shines, the Voice that speaks, and the Presence that pervades.

If you can stop this modern, self-sufficient man long enough to talk, he will assure you that preaching is for the down-and-out bum on Skid Row. He will assure you that he has never robbed a bank, that he is a good husband and a good citizen.

Citizenship is not the final issue with God. Morality and obeying the law are not the final issues with God. The Spirit of God tries to speak to this modern man of the great curse that lies upon his heart and life—he has become so absorbed with money and bank accounts and profit and loss and markets and loans and interest that any thought of God and salvation and eternity has been crowded out. There are dollar signs before his eyes and he would rather close another deal and make a neat profit than to make his way into the kingdom of God.

Many others in our human society are completely hooked on fame and notoriety and public attention. A well-known actress and singer recently told the press about her long career and the fame and fortune which have come to her, and she summed it all up in these words: "Fate made me what I am!"

After an entire life absorbed in a godless world and society, no better answer than some kind of esoteric, weird fate. She has lived only for the kind of fame and notice that men can give, and she would rather have her name on the marquee of a theater than to have it eternally inscribed in the Lamb's Book of Life. The Voice has been here with us, but she has never heeded it. The Light is here, but she has never seen it. The Presence is in our world, but she cannot feel it.

Money and profits, fame and fortune—and with millions of others it is a complete addiction to pleasure. Flesh contacts, nerve endings, sensuous delight, carnal joy—anything to keep humans from sensing that there is a Presence, the Way, the Truth and the Light.

Brethren, do not charge me with acting like a mystic.

Instead, hear again these words of scripture: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." And "in the beginning was the Word," and the Word "was in the world."

Now, there is the Word—and He is the Voice and He is the Light.

And the Word "was in the world"—there is His Presence. This is not poetry. This is the truth of God. And because our generation does not recognize the Voice and does not perceive the Light and has no sense of the Presence, we have become a profane generation. We dote on things—secular things—until we mistakenly assume that there is nothing in the universe but

material and physical values. The profane man has come to the conclusion that he alone is important in this universe—thus he becomes his own god.

It is sad but true that a great and eternal woe awaits the profane and completely secular man whose only religion is in the thought that he probably is not as bad as some other man. I think that there is an Old Testament portion in the book of Job that fits modern, profane man very well: "Woe is me, that I was ever born, that my mother ever conceived me. Let the stars of the twilight of that night be as darkness. Oh, that I might have been carried from my mother's knees to the grave, where the wicked cease from troubling and the toil-worn are dressed."

I am thinking actually of men who give lip service to the church and some mental assent to religion, but they have forgotten that they were created, that they have a responsibility to God, and they have ignored Jesus Christ—His Presence, His Voice, His Light.

Actually, you can be too bright and too educated and too sophisticated, and thus fail to hear and to heed God's entreaty. But you cannot be too simple!

I was an ignorant 17-year-old boy when I first heard preaching on the street, and I was moved to wander into a church where I heard a man quoting a text: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Actually, I was little better than a pagan, but with only that kind of skimpy biblical background, I became greatly disturbed, for I began to feel and sense and acknowledge God's gracious Presence. I heard His Voice—ever so faintly. I discerned that there was a Light—ever so dimly.

I was still lost, but thank God, I was getting closer. The Lord Jesus knows that there are such among us today, of whom He says: "Ye are not far from the kingdom of God."

Once again, walking on the street, I stopped to hear a man preaching at a corner, and he said to those listening: "If you do not know how to pray, go home and get down and ask, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'"

That is exactly what I did, and in spite of the dispensational teachers who tell me that I used the wrong text, I got into my Father's house. I got my feet under my Father's table. I got hold of a big spoon and I have been enjoying my Father's spiritual blessings ever since.

Actually, I have paid no attention to those brethren pounding on the window outside, shouting at me and beckoning to me, "Come on out of there, boy. You got in by the wrong door!"

Dispensations or not, God has promised to forgive and satisfy anyone who is hungry enough and concerned enough and anxious enough to cry out, "Lord, save me!"

When Peter was starting to sink under those waters of Galilee, he had no time to consult the margin of someone's Bible to find out how he should pray. He just prayed out of his heart and out of his desperation, "Lord, save me!" And his Lord answered.

Brethren, why don't we just let our hearts do the praying? If a man will just get his heart down on its knees, he will find that there is an awful lot that he does not need to know to receive Jesus Christ!

He is here now. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." He went away in His human body, but He is still with us—the everlasting, all-permeating Word—still with us to save! He only waits for a childlike prayer from a humble and needy heart—"Oh, Lamb of God, I come, I come!"

Excerpts from *God Tells the Man Who Cares*

Chapter 90. Honesty in Prayer

The saintly David M'Intyre, in his radiant little book, *The Hidden Life of Prayer*, deals frankly, if briefly, with a vital element of true prayer which in our artificial age is likely to be overlooked.

We mean just plain honesty.

"Honest dealing becomes us," says M'Intyre, "when we kneel in His pure presence."

"In our address to God," he continues, "we like to speak of Him as we think we ought to speak, and there are times when our words far outrun our feelings. But it is best that we should be perfectly frank before Him. He will allow us to say anything we will, so long as it is to Himself. 'I will say unto God, my rock,' exclaims the psalmist, 'why hast thou forgotten me?' If he had said, 'Lord, thou canst not forget. Thou hast graven my name on the palms of thy hands,' he would have spoken more worthily, but less truly.

"On one occasion Jeremiah failed to interpret God aright. He cried as if in anger, 'O Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived.' These are terrible words to utter before Him who is changeless truth. But the prophet spoke as he felt, and the Lord not only pardoned him, but met him and blessed him there."

So far M'Intyre. Another spiritual writer of unusual penetration has advised frankness in prayer even to a degree that might appear to be downright rudeness. When you come to prayer, he says, and find that you have no taste for it, tell God so without mincing words. If God and spiritual things bore you, admit it frankly. This advice will shock some squeamish saints, but it is altogether sound nevertheless. God loves the guileless soul even when in his ignorance he is actually guilty of rashness in prayer. The Lord can soon cure his ignorance, but for insincerity no cure is known.

The basic artificiality of civilized human beings is hard to shake off. It gets into our very blood and conditions our thoughts, attitudes and relationships much more seriously than we imagine. A book on human relations has appeared within recent years whose underlying philosophy is deception and whose recommended technique is a skillful use of flattery to gain desired ends. It has had an unbelievably wide sale, actually running into the millions. Of course its popularity may be explained by the fact that it said what people wanted to hear.

The desire to make a good impression has become one of the most powerful of all the factors determining human conduct. That gracious (and scriptural) social lubricant called courtesy has in our times degenerated into a completely false and phony etiquette that hides the true man under a shimmery surface as thin as the oil slick on a quiet pond. The only time some persons expose their real self is when they get mad.

With this perverted courtesy determining almost everything men say and do in human society it is not surprising that it should be hard to be completely honest in our relations with God. It carries over as a kind of mental reflex and is present without our being aware of it. Nevertheless, it is extremely hateful to God. Christ detested it and condemned it without mercy when He found it among the Pharisees. The artless little child is still the divine model for all of

us. Prayer will increase in power and reality as we repudiate all pretense and learn to be utterly honest before God as well as before men.

A great Christian of the past broke out all at once into a place of such radiance and victory as to excite wonder among his friends. Someone asked him what had happened to him. He replied simply that his new life of power began one day when he entered the presence of God and took a solemn vow never again to say anything to God in prayer that he did not mean. His transformation began with that vow and continued as he kept it.

We can learn something there if we will.

Chapter 91.

Pragmatism Goes to Church

It is not by accident that the philosophy of pragmatism around the turn of the century achieved such wide popularity in the United States. The American temperament was perfect for it, and still is.

Pragmatism has a number of facets and can mean various things to various people, but basically it is the doctrine of the utility of truth. For the pragmatist there are no absolutes; nothing is absolutely good or absolutely true. Truth and morality float on a sea of human experience. If an exhausted swimmer can lay hold of a belief or an ethic, well and good; it may keep him afloat till he can get to shore; then it only encumbers him, so he tosses it away. He feels no responsibility to cherish truth for its own sake. It is there to serve him; he has no obligation to serve it.

Truth is to use. Whatever is useful is true for the user, though for someone else it may not be useful, so not true. The truth of any idea is its ability to produce desirable results. If it can show no such results it is false. That is pragmatism stripped of its jargon.

Now, since practicality is a marked characteristic of the American people they naturally lean strongly toward the philosophy of utility. Whatever will get things done immediately with a maximum of efficiency and a minimum of undesirable side effects must be good. The proof is that it succeeds; no one wants to argue with success.

It is useless to plead for the human soul, to insist that what a man can do is less important than what he is. When there are wars to be won, forests to be cleared, rivers to be harnessed, factories to be built, planets to be visited, the quieter claims of the human spirit are likely to go unregarded. The spectacular drama of successful deeds leaves the beholder breathless. Deeds you can see. Factories, cities, highways, rockets are there in plain sight, and they got there by the practical application of means to ends. So who cares about ideals and character and morals? These things are for poets, nice old ladies and philosophers. Let's get on with the job.

Now all this has been said, and said better, a few dozen times before, and I would not waste space on it here except that this philosophy of pragmatism has had and is having a powerful influence upon Christianity in the middle years of this century. And whatever touches the faith of Christ immediately becomes a matter of interest to me and, I hope, to my readers also.

The nervous compulsion to get things done is found everywhere among us. We are affected by a kind of religious tic, a deep inner necessity to accomplish something that can be seen and photographed and evaluated in terms of size, numbers, speed and distance. We travel a prodigious number of miles, talk to unbelievably large crowds, publish an astonishing amount of religious literature, collect huge sums of money, build vast numbers of churches and amass staggering debts for our children to pay. Christian leaders compete with each other in the field of impressive statistics, and in so doing often acquire peptic ulcers, have nervous breaks or die of heart attacks while still relatively young.

Right here is where the pragmatic philosophy comes into its own. It asks no embarrassing questions about the wisdom of what we are doing or even about the morality of it. It accepts our chosen ends as right and good and casts about for efficient means and ways to get them accomplished. When it discovers something that works it soon finds a text to justify it, "consecrates" it to the Lord and plunges ahead. Next a magazine article is written about it, then a

book, and finally the inventor is granted an honorary degree. After that any question about the scriptural-ness of things or even the moral validity of them is completely swept away. You cannot argue with success. The method works; *ergo*, it must be good.

The weakness of all this is its tragic shortsightedness. It never takes the long view of religious activity, indeed it dare not do so, but goes cheerfully on believing that because it works it is both good and true. It is satisfied with present success and shakes off any suggestion that its works may go up in smoke in the day of Christ.

As one fairly familiar with the contemporary religious scene, I say without hesitation that a part, a very large part, of the activities carried on today in evangelical circles are not only influenced by pragmatism but almost completely controlled by it. Religious methodology is geared to it; it appears large in our youth meetings; magazines and books constantly glorify it; conventions are dominated by it; and the whole religious atmosphere is alive with it.

What shall we do to break its power over us? The answer is simple. *We must acknowledge the right of Jesus Christ to control the activities of His church.* The New Testament contains full instructions, not only about what we are to believe but what we are to do and how we are to go about doing it. *Any deviation from those instructions is a denial of the Lordship of Christ.*

I say the answer is simple, but it is not easy for it requires that we obey God rather than man, and that always brings down the wrath of the religious majority. It is not a question of knowing what to do; we can easily learn that from the Scriptures. It is a question of whether or not we have the courage to do it.

Chapter 92.

Faith Without Expectation Is Dead

Expectation and faith, though alike, are not identical. An instructed Christian will not confuse the two.

True faith is never found alone; it is always accompanied by expectation. The man who believes the promises of God expects to see them fulfilled. Where there is no expectation there is no faith.

It is, however, quite possible for expectation to be present where no faith is. The mind is quite capable of mistaking strong desire for faith. Indeed faith, as commonly understood, is little more than desire compounded with cheerful optimism. Certain writers make a comfortable living promoting that kind of so-called faith which is supposed to create the "positive" as opposed to the negative mind. Their effusions are dear to the hearts of those in the population who are afflicted with a psychological compulsion to believe, and who manage to live with facts only by the simple expedient of ignoring them.

Real faith is not the stuff dreams are made of; rather it is tough, practical and altogether realistic. Faith sees the invisible but it does not see the nonexistent. Faith engages God, the one great Reality, who gave and gives existence to all things. God's promises conform to reality, and whoever trusts them enters a world not of fiction but of fact.

In common experience we arrive at truth by observation. Whatever can be verified by experiment is accepted as true. Men believe the report of their senses. If it walks like a duck, looks like a duck and quacks like a duck it is probably a duck. And if its eggs hatch into little ducks the test is about complete. Probability gives way to certainty; it is a duck. This is a valid way to deal with our environment. No one dare complain about it for everyone does it. It is the way we manage to get on in this world.

But faith introduces another and radically different element into our lives. "By faith we know" is the word that lifts our knowing onto a higher level. Faith engages facts that have been revealed from heaven and by their nature they do not respond to scientific tests. The Christian knows a thing to be true, not because he has verified it in experience but because God has said it. His expectations spring from his confidence in the character of God.

Expectation has always been present in the church in the times of her greatest power. When she believed, she expected, and her Lord never disappointed her. "And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord."

Every great movement of God in history, every unusual advance in the church, every revival, has been preceded by a sense of keen anticipation. Expectation accompanied the operations of the Spirit always. His bestowals hardly surprised His people because they were gazing expectantly toward the risen Lord and looking confidently for His word to be fulfilled. His blessings accorded with their expectations.

One characteristic that marks the average church today is lack of anticipation. Christians when they meet do not expect anything unusual to happen; consequently only the usual happens, and that usual is as predictable as the setting of the sun. A psychology of nonexpectation prevades the assembly, a mood of quiet ennui which the minister by various means tries to dispel, the means depending upon the cultural level of the congregation and particularly of the minister.

One will resort to humor, another will latch on to some topic currently dividing the public, such as fluoridation, capital punishment or Sunday sports. Another who may have a modest opinion of his gifts as a humorist and who is not sure which side of a controversy he may safely support will seek to arouse expectation by outlining enthusiastically the shape of things to come: the Men's Banquet to be held at the Chicken-in-a-Basket Tea Room next Thursday evening; or the picnic with its thrilling game to be played between the Married Men and the Single Men, the outcome of which the jocular minister coyly refuses to predict; or the coming premier of the new religious film, full of sex, violence and false philosophy but candied over with vapid moralizings and gentle suggestions that the enraptured viewers should be born again.

The activities of the saints are thus laid out for them by those who are supposed to know what they need better than they do. And this planned play is made acceptable to the more pious-minded by tagging on a few words of devotion at the close. This is called "fellowship," though it bears scant resemblance to the activities of those Christians to which the word was first applied.

Christian expectation in the average church follows the program, not the promises. Prevailing spiritual conditions, however low, are accepted as inevitable. What will be is what has been. The weary slaves of the dull routine find it impossible to hope for anything better.

We need today a fresh spirit of anticipation that springs out of the promises of God. We must declare war on the mood of nonexpectation, and come together with childlike faith. Only then can we know again the beauty and wonder of the Lord's presence among us.

Chapter 93.

A Christian and His Money

The whole question of the believer and his money is so involved and so intimate that one hesitates to approach a consideration of it. Yet it is of such grave importance that one who desires to qualify as a good servant of Christ dare not avoid it lest he be found wanting in the day of reckoning. Someone should tackle the problem in the light of Scripture. God's people will have reason to thank the man who has the courage to deal with it.

Four considerations should govern our Christian giving. They are: (1) That we give systematically; (2) that we give from a right motive; (3) that we give enough in proportion to what we possess, and (4) that we give to the right place or places.

First, we should see to it that we give of our substance to the Lord with regularity. It is so very easy to fall into the habit of forgetting to do this. We tell ourselves that we are not able to give at the moment, but that when we are better fixed financially we shall catch up on our giving. Or we assure ourselves that while we do not give systematically we no doubt give far beyond our tenth, if the truth were known. These are sure ways to deceive ourselves. Spotty, unsystematic giving has a way of appearing far greater than it is. We would likely be quite shocked if we took the trouble to find out just how little we really give that way.

Then we must give from a right motive. Money paid to a church or missionary society may be for the giver money wasted unless he first makes sure that his heart is in his gift. Gifts that do not carry the heart with them may do the receiver some good, but it is certain that they will bring the giver no reward. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor... and have not charity (love), it profiteth me nothing."

Then it is also important that we give enough in proportion to what we possess. The story of the widow and her two mites makes this very clear. The widow gave out of her "poverty," and though her gift was small it was in the sight of God a far greater treasure than all the huge sums donated by the rich "out of their abundance." This is a solemn warning and we shall do well to heed it.

We humans judge "after the sight of our eyes" and so are prone to make a great deal over a large donation and pass over the small ones without comment. By so doing we are letting ourselves in for a fearful shock in the day of Christ. The safest rule to appraise our giving and determine our expectations in the day of rewards is this: Remember, *my giving will be rewarded not by how much I gave but by how much I had left*. Ministers are sometimes tempted to shy away from such doctrine as this lest they offend the important givers in their congregation. But it is better to offend men than to grieve the blessed Spirit of God which dwells in the church. No man ever yet killed a true church by withdrawing his gifts from it because of a personal pique. The Church of the Firstborn is not dependent upon the patronage of men. No man has ever been able really to harm a church by boycotting it financially. The moment we admit that we fear the displeasure of the carnal givers in our congregations we admit also that our congregations are not of heaven but of the earth. A heavenly church will enjoy a heavenly and supernatural prosperity. She cannot be starved out. The Lord will supply her needs.

That we place our gifts intelligently is also of vital importance if we would please our Heavenly Father and save those gifts from the fate of "wood, hay and stubble" at the coming of our Lord.

The matter of where to give is a large one, and one that we had all better settle while we can. Careless, unintelligent and prejudiced giving is wasting millions of consecrated dollars among evangelical Christians. Many believers toss their gifts around as if they did not expect to give an account of them to the Lord. They have not found the mind of the Lord on the question of their own giving, so they become the prey of anyone who happens along with an interesting story. In this way innumerable religious rackets are enabled to flourish which should never receive one cent from serious-minded and God-honoring people.

Now, we are quite aware that the reply to the above could be a polite request that we stay in our own back yard and let people put their own money where they please; after all it is theirs, and what they do with it is their own affair. But it is not that simple. If we must give account of every idle word, surely we must also give account of every idle dollar. Spotty, prayerless and whimsical giving will come under the just scrutiny of God in the day when He judges every work of men. We can do something about this whole thing now. Very soon it will be too late.

Excerpt from *I Talk Back to the Devil!*

Chapter 94. Denominations Can Backslide Too!

Oh, that we would have a naked intent to know Jesus Christ! It means putting the world and things and people beneath our feet, opening our hearts to only one lover—the Son of God Himself!

Our problems of spiritual coldness and apathy in the churches would quickly disappear if Christian believers generally would confess their great need for rediscovering the loveliness of Jesus Christ, their Saviour.

I have good scriptural ground for constantly emphasizing my deep concern that Christians should again begin to love our Lord Jesus with an intensity of love and desire such as our fathers knew.

What is basically wrong with us when we start to backslide as individuals or as churches and denominations?

Jesus Himself gave us a plain answer when He said, "You have left your first degree of love!" He was not speaking of first love as first in consecutive order, but of the degree of our first love for Him.

These words of Jesus reflect one of our great weaknesses in the Christian churches of our day. The fact that we are not going on to know Christ in rich intimacy of acquaintance and fellowship is apparent—but why are we not even willing to talk about it? We are not hearing anything about spiritual desire and yearning and the loveliness of our Saviour which would break down all barriers if we would move into communion with Him. This appeal is not getting into our books. You don't hear it in radio messages. It is not being preached in our churches.

Can it be that we do not believe that Jesus Christ is capable of a growing and increasing intimacy of fellowship with those who are His own? To become acquainted with God is one thing, but to go on in commitment and to experience God in intensity and richness of acquaintance is something more. The Apostle Paul knew this in his yearning as he said, "I want to know Him in that depth and rich intensity of experience!" Of the many compelling reasons why we ought to know our Saviour better than we do certainly the first is that He is a person, Jesus Christ. We all agree that He is a person, that He is the Eternal Son, but have we gone on to adore Him because He is the source and fountain of everything that you and I are created to enjoy?

He is the fountain of all truth, but He is more—He is truth itself. He is the source and strength of all beauty, but He is more—He is beauty itself. He is the fountain of all wisdom, but He is more—He is wisdom itself. In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden away!

Jesus Christ our Saviour is the fountain of all grace. He is the fountain and source of all life, but He is more than that. He could say, "I AM the life!" He is the fountain of love, but again, He is far more than that—He is love!

He is resurrection and He is immortality and as one of the adoring song writers said, He is the "brightness of the Father's glory, sunshine of the Father's face."

In another hymn, "Fairest Lord Jesus," there are at least two verses that are not always included, which tell us in candor and realism that when everything else has perished and vanished, we will find it is Jesus alone who abides for aye. One verse says, "Earth's fairest beauty, heaven's brightest splendor, in Jesus Christ unfolded see; all that here shineth quickly declineth before His spotless purity."

There is excitement in true love, and I think that we Christians who love our Saviour ought to be more excited about Who He is and What He is!

A friend of mine has been quite irked because I cannot get excited and steamed up about earthly things. I just cannot stand and strike an attitude of awe when a friend drives up with one of the classy new automobiles. I hear people describing the magnificent new houses that they are building, and they have excitement in their voices. But the Word of God forces me to remember that when you have seen the house or the city that hath foundations and whose builder and maker is God, you cannot really ever get excited again about any house ever built by any man in this world.

It has been said that Abraham could never build a permanent house for himself after he had seen the city whose builder and maker was God. I know I have made up my mind about that city—and I would be willing to live in a tent here because I have some idea about my future home up there. I am convinced that it will be beautiful and satisfying beyond anything I can know down here. It is a tragedy if we forget that "earth's fairest beauty and heaven's brightest splendor are all unfolded in Jesus Christ, and all that here shineth quickly declineth before His spotless purity."

The man who wrote those words, breathed them from his soul, must have been one of God's special kind of Christians. He must have known Jesus Christ intimately day by day. He probably knew all about the cost of knowing the Saviour in this way.

But people are not willing to pay that price, and that is why so many Christians must be described as "common." Most Christians talk piously about the cost of Christianity in terms of the unclean, injurious and grossly sinful things they have "surrendered." But if they never get beyond that they are still common Christians. They talk about having given up the bad things, but the Apostle Paul said that for Christ's sake he surrendered the good things as well as the bad.

"What things were gain to me I count but loss," he said. He meant things to which he still had a legal and moral right, things about which he could have said, "These are mine and Christianity is not going to take them from me!"

"I yield them all, I give them all because I have found That which is so much better," he wrote. He had found "That" which was with the Father, Jesus Christ, the fountain from Whom flows all wisdom and beauty and truth and immortality!

Paul knew something that many Christians still have not learned—that the human heart is idolatrous and will worship anything it can possess. Therein lies the danger of the "good" things. We have surrendered evil things, bad things, but we hold on to the good things and these we are prone to worship. Whatever we refuse to surrender and count but loss we will ultimately worship. It may be something good, but it gets between you and God—whether it be property or family or reputation or security or your life itself.

Jesus warned us about our selfishness in grasping and hanging on to our own lives. He taught that if we make our life on earth so important and so all-possessing that we cannot surrender it gladly to Him, we will lose it at last. He taught that plainly, and He also warned us about trusting earthly security rather than putting our complete confidence in God.

We all want a guarantee of security, but we didn't get that idea from the Apostle Paul. He was hardly ever secure as far as the things of this life were concerned. He said he died daily. He was always in difficulty, whether with the governments of this world or with the stormy elements on the sea.

Brethren, we want security in this life and eternal security in the world above! I think that is a kind of definition of our modern-day Christian fundamentalism. But Paul said, "I have been captured by Jesus Christ so I disavow and disown everything."

Now there were certain things that God let Paul have. He let him have a book or two. He let him have a garment, a cloak. In one instance, He let him have his own hired house for two years. But the example Paul gave us was the fact that any "things" which God allowed him to have never touched him at heart, at the point of possession.

Any of our external treasures which really bind us at heart will become a curse. Paul said, "I give them up that I might know Him." He never allowed things to become important enough to mar his relationship with God.

The example and admonitions of Paul cause me to call into question some of the teachings in our current Christian circles that Christ is something "added on"—that by ourselves we can have a rather jolly earthly life, but we also need Jesus to save us from hell and to get us into the mansions on the other side!

Now, that is not New Testament teaching and certainly not the way in which Paul looked at things in this world. Paul said that he found Jesus Christ so infinitely attractive that he was forced to throw out every set of values established on earth.

Paul was a learned man, an intellectual educated at the feet of Gamaliel. We would have honored him as a Ph.D. But Paul said, "That is all dross." His expression actually meant: "It is a kind of garbage."

Paul spoke of his birth and of his register and standing among the fathers of his religious heritage and then testified that "for the sake of Jesus Christ, I count it nothing at all—I put it under my feet."

That ought to say something to us who have so many things about which we are proud. Some of us boast about our national and cultural forebears until we actually become carnal about it. We are proud of things and proud of what we can do. But Paul said, "Everything about which I could be proud as a man I count but loss for the sake of Jesus Christ."

So Paul gives us the proper motives for loving and following the Saviour and for giving up the things that would hold us back. Modern Christianity has a lot to learn from Paul in this area of motives. Because of the nature of our times, some are insisting: "America, you had better turn to God or that final bomb will get you!" Another voice of alarm warns: "America, you had better stop drinking and gambling or you will go down like Rome!"

Our old teacher-friend, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, gives us some light on proper motives in relationship to the nature of God Himself. "God is a jealous lover and He suffereth no rival," this saint wrote more than 600 years ago. "God cannot work in our wills unless He can possess our wills for Himself."

Now brethren, this is one of our greatest faults in our Christian lives. We are allowing too many rivals of God. We actually have too many gods. We have too many irons in the fire. We have too much theology that we don't understand. We have too much churchly institutionalism. We have too much religion. Actually, I guess we just have too much of too much!

God is not in our beings by Himself! He cannot do His will in us and through us because we refuse to put away the rivals. When Jesus Christ has cleansed everything from the temple and dwells there alone, He will work!

God wants to do His work hidden and unseen within the human breast. Have you ever been deep down in a mine in the earth? They are mining out coal or gold or diamonds, but anyone flying or walking or traveling overhead may have no idea of what is going on in the depths of that hill. They would never know that deep within the earth there is an intelligent force at work bringing out jewels. That is what God does deep within us—and He works hidden and unseen.

But in our day we must be dramatic about everything. We don't want God to work unless He can make a theatrical production of it. We want Him to come dressed in costumes with a beard and with a staff. We want Him to play a part according to our ideas. Some of us even demand that He provide a colorful setting and fireworks as well!

That is how we want it, but God says, "No, no, no! You children of Adam, you children of carnality and lust, you who love a fair showing of flesh, you who have wrong ideas about my Son, I cannot do my work according to your prescription. I cannot do my work in you!"

How can God do His work in people who seem to think that Christianity is just another way of getting things from God?

I hear people testify that they give their tithe because God makes their nine-tenths go farther than the ten-tenths. That is not spirituality: that is just plain business. I insist that it is a dangerous thing to associate the working of God with our prosperity and success down here. I cannot promise that if you will follow the Lord you will soon experience financial prosperity, because that is not what He promised His disciples. Down through the years, following the Lord has meant that we count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

"And don't some Christians prosper?" you ask.

We have many examples of Christian men whom God has been able to trust with unusual prosperity and as they continue to follow the Lord, they give most of it back to Him. But they haven't made Christianity just a technique of getting things.

I hear people testify about their search for the deeper Christian life and it sounds as though they would like to be able to get it in pill form. It seems that it would have been much more convenient for them if God had arranged religion so they could take it like a pill with a glass of water. They buy books, hoping to get their religion by prescription. But there isn't any such thing. There is a cross. There is a gallows. There is a man with bleeding stripes on his back. There is an apostle with no property, with a tradition of loneliness and weariness and rejection and glory—but there are no pills!

There are a thousand ways in which we try to use the Lord. What about that young fellow studying for the ministry, studying until his eyesight begins to fail, but he wants to use Jesus Christ to make him a famous preacher. They will ordain him, and he will get the title of Reverend and if he writes a book, they will make him a Doctor. But if he has been using Jesus Christ, he is just a common huckster buying and selling and getting gain, and the Lord would drive him out of the temple along with the rest.

Then there are some among us these days who have to depend upon truckloads of gadgets to get their religion going, and I am tempted to ask: What will they do when they don't have the help of the trappings and gadgets? The truck can't come along where they are going!

I heard a man boasting on his radio program about the equipment they were going to bring in from Pennsylvania and Ohio so they could better serve the Lord. I don't know of any fancy kind of equipment which will brighten your testimony or your service for God.

I think of the dear old camp meeting ladies who used to say, "This is my harp of ten strings, and I praise the Lord!" I can see in my mind now those wrinkled hands with brown spots, but as they clapped those wrinkled, aging hands how their faces would shine! And their harp? Just those hands as they clapped and sang praises to God.

Who needs a bushel basket full of clap-trap in order to serve the Lord? You can worship God anywhere if you will let Him work in your being and suffer no rival. You may be still with arthritis so that you can't even get on your knees to pray, but you can look up in your heart, for prayer isn't a matter of getting on your knees. Prayer is the elevation of the heart to God and that is all a man needs to praise, to pray and to worship.

Now here is a strange thing. If you talk about mysticism in our day, every fundamentalist throws his hands high in the air with disgust to let you know that he considers the mystics dreamers, those who believe in the emotion and feeling. But all of those old saints and the fathers of whom I have read taught that you must believe God by a naked, cold intent of your will and then the other things follow along.

A naked intent unto God—those old saints were practical men. They have exhorted us to press on in faith whether we feel like it or not. They have exhorted us to pray—when we feel like it and when we don't. They never taught that we would always be lifted emotionally to the heights. They knew that there are times when your spiritual progress must be by a naked intent unto God.

Oh that we would have this naked intent to know God, to know Jesus Christ! To be able to put the world and things and people beneath our feet and to open our hearts to only one lover, and that the Son of God Himself!

Oh for the proper balance in all of our relationships! Husband and wife, father and son, mother and daughter, business man and partner, taxpayer and citizen—all of these in their proper place; but in the deep of the heart having only the One lover, He who suffers no rival.

Why has God insisted that it should be this way?

Because it is His intention that our understanding and our reason should be broken down and that our whole case should be thrown back on God. Many have known the time of darkness and oppression as they sought to go on with God and to be filled with His fullness. You believed God and you trusted Christ. Whether you felt like it or not, you went on and you believed and you obeyed. You prayed whether you felt like it or not. You straightened things out and you got adjusted in your relationships at home and in business. You quit the wrong things, the things that had been hindering you, whether you felt like it or not. This is faith—a naked intent unto God, and I must tell you this: out of our darkness and out of our stony grief, God will raise a Bethel. Out of the tomb, He will lift you into the sky. Out of darkness, He will lift you into the light!

This is what it means to love Jesus, to know Him just for Himself. How I pray that we may again recapture in our day the glory that men may have known of the beauty of Jesus.

In *The Cloud of Unknowing*, the old saint wrote that because God is a jealous lover, He wants us to be unwilling to think on anything but God Himself.

Now, this was the message of Dr. A. B. Simpson. He shocked and blessed a generation because of his central message: "Jesus—Himself!"

Dr. Simpson was asked to go to England to preach in a Bible conference. He discovered that he was to preach the third of three messages on sanctification—and that is a bad spot to be in. The first fellow said in his sermon that the way to be holy and victorious in the Christian life is to suppress "the old man." His was the position of sanctification by suppression. The second

man got up and took the position of eradication, deliverance from the old carnal life by eradication. "Get rid of the old man, pull him up, turn up the roots in the sun to die!"

Doctor Simpson had to get in between there and he took just one word for his text: "Himself." Then he gave his testimony of efforts and struggles to get the victory. He said, "Sometimes I would think I had gotten it, and then I would lose it. What a blessedness when I came to the knowledge that I had been looking in the wrong place, when I found that victory, sanctification, deliverance, purity, holiness—all must be found in Jesus Christ Himself, not in some formula. When I claimed Jesus just for Himself, it became easy and the glory came to my life."

Out of that knowledge and out of that blessing, Dr. Simpson wrote his famous hymn, "Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord. Once His gift I wanted, now Himself alone."

This is the basic teaching of the deeper Christian life. It is the willingness to let Jesus Christ Himself be glorified in us and through us. It is the willingness to quit trying to use the Lord for our ends and to let Him work in us for His glory.

That is the kind of revival I am interested in and the only kind—the kind of spiritual reviving and renewing that will cause people to tremble with rapture in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Once it was the blessing—now it is the Lord!"

Excerpt from *Worship: The Missing Jewel in the Evangelical Church*

Chapter 95. Acceptable Worship

God wants us to worship Him. He doesn't need us, for He couldn't be a self-sufficient God and need anything or anybody, but He wants us. When Adam sinned it was not he who cried "God, where art Thou?" It was God who cried "Adam, where art thou?"

Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, referred to the time when Christ shall come to be glorified in the saints and admired by all them that believe He wants to be glorified. Those are a few proof texts in addition to the one I have read from the Psalms, but more convincing than any proof text is the full import and drift of the Scriptures. The whole substance of the Bible teaches that God wants us to worship Him.

Now, there are good, sound, theological and philosophical reasons for this. But while God wants us to worship Him we cannot worship Him just any way we will. The One who made us to worship Him has decreed how we shall worship Him. He accepts only the worship which He Himself has decreed.

I want to speak of some kinds of worship that God has ruled out. There's no use trying to be nice about it. The kingdom of God has suffered a great deal of harm from fighters—men who would rather fight than pray; but the kingdom of God has also been done great harm by men who would rather be nice than be right. I believe that God wants us to be right, though He wants us to be right lovingly.

The first false worship is Cain worship, which is worship without atonement. This kind of worship rests upon three basic errors. One is the error that assumes God to be different from what He is. He who seeks to worship a God he does not know comes without having first been cleansed by the coals from off the altar. But this kind of worship will not be accepted by God.

The second error is that man assumes he occupies a relation to God which he does not occupy. The man who worships without Christ and without the blood of the Lamb and without forgiveness and without cleansing is assuming too much. He is mistaking error for truth, and spiritual tragedy is the result.

The third error is that sin is made less serious than it is in fact. The psychologists and psychiatrists and sociologists and that gang of left-wingers that have come in over the past years have taken the terror out of sin. To worship God acceptably we must be freed from sin. Cain worship is worship out of an unregenerate heart.

And then there is Samaritan worship. It is heretical worship in the correct meaning of the word "heretical." Heresy is picking out what you want to believe and rejecting, or at least ignoring, the rest. This the Samaritans did. They worshiped Jehovah but they didn't worship Jerusalem; they worshiped at Samaria. The history of the Samaritans shows that there were some Jews among them and that they had Jewish theology. But they had their Jewish theology all mixed up with pagan theology, and it was neither fish nor fowl but an unholy mixture of both. That is Samaritan worship, and our Lord said, "Ye worship ye know not what."

Then there is nature worship. That is the worship of the natural man, only on a very poetic and philosophical level. It is an appreciation for the poetry of religion. It's a high enjoyment of the contemplation of the sublime. When I was a young fellow and didn't know any better I studied, more or less for fun, the old-fashioned and now thoroughly repudiated doctrine of phrenology. It says that the shape of your head tells what you are. There are certain bumps on your head that reveal your personality. If you have a bump here just above your forehead, that's the bump of sublimity. You love the sublime.

Such are the poets; they like to look at trees and write sonnets. Well, there's a good deal of religion and supposed worship that is no higher than that. It's simply the enjoyment of nature. People may mistake the rapt feeling they have in the presence of trees and rivers for worship. Ralph Waldo Emerson said that he had at times—on a moonlit night walking across a meadow after a rain and smelling the freshness of the ground and seeing the broken clouds with the moon struggling through—he said he had often been glad to the point of fear. Yet Emerson was not a regenerated man. He did not claim to be.

I want to warn you against the religion that is no more than love, music and poetry. I happen to be somewhat of a fan of good music. I think Beethoven's nine symphonies constitute the greatest body of music ever composed by mortal man. Yet I realize I'm listening to music; I'm not worshipping God necessarily. There's a difference between beautiful sounds beautifully put together and worship. Worship is another matter.

Now, I'm very much concerned that we realize that the worship I'm talking about has a sharp theological definition, that there must be truth in it, that it must lie within the confines of eternal truth or it is rejected.

God is Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. Only the Holy Spirit can enable a fallen man to worship God acceptably. As far as that's concerned, only the Holy Spirit can pray acceptably; only the Holy Spirit can do anything acceptably. My brethren, I don't know your position about the gifts of the Spirit, but I believe that all the gifts of the Spirit not only ought to be but have been present in His Church all down the centuries. The Spirit's gifts to the Church are the organs through which the Holy Spirit works, and He cannot work through His Church without the organs being present. You cannot account for Augustine and Chrysostom and Luther and Charnock and Wesley and Finney except they were men gifted by the Holy Ghost.

I believe that the Holy Spirit distributes His gifts severally as He will to the Church and that they are in the Church and have been in the Church all along. Otherwise the Church would have died the day that everybody who had been in the upper chamber died. The Church has been propagated by the Holy Spirit, so we can only worship in the Spirit, we can only pray in the Spirit, and we can only preach effectively in the Spirit, and what we do must be done by the power of the Spirit. I believe that the gifts are in the Body of Christ and they that worship God must worship Him in the Spirit.

But also we must worship Him in truth. Now the worshiper must submit to truth. I can't worship God acceptably unless I have accepted what God has said about five things. Before my worship is accepted I must accept what God has said about Himself. We must never edit God. We must never, never, apologize for God. No man has any right to get up in the pulpit and try to smooth over or amend anything that God has said about Himself. There is that passage about God hardening Pharaoh's heart. There have been books written to explain that away, but I will not explain it away. I will let it stand. If I don't understand it I will let it stand anyway. I believe what God says about Himself.

Then to worship correctly I must believe what God says about His Son. Not what some philosopher says about God's Son, or some theologian. I must believe what God says about His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Then I must believe what God says about me. I must believe all the bad God says about me, and I also must believe all the good things He says He'll do for me. I must believe I'm as bad as God says I am and I must believe His grace is as great as He says it is.

Then I must believe whatever God says about sin. Here's another place where the psychologists and psychiatrists have done us great injury. They have euphonized sin. They call it a guilt complex. I believe that our trouble these days is that we've listened to the blandishments of these children of Adam and that we're afraid to see anybody get on his knees and get really scared.

Some of you have no doubt read of Peter Cartright, the great Methodist preacher who lived a century or so ago. Well, Peter was quite a preacher—an ignorant fellow, but God was on him. They tell how he once went to a conference and preached. The conference was in the charge of a little fellow from a seminary and of course Peter had little time for those boys. When Peter gave the invitation a lot of men came, including a big logger—a great big brawny fellow with monstrous, apelike arms, a huge fellow. He came down to the front and threw himself down and began to pray.

He'd been a sinner and he told God about it loudly, which scared this little seminary student half to death. He rant to him and said, "Compose yourself, brother, compose yourself." Peter Cartright pushed him aside, slapped the big logger on the back and said, "Pray on, brother, there's no composure in hell where you're going." Finally the man saw the goodness of God and the power of the cross, and the grace of God reached down and saved him. He leaped to his feet with a howl of delight and looked around for someone to hug and the first fellow he got hold of was the little seminary student. He picked him up and went dancing around at the top of his voice. It was hard on the young student's dignity, but perfectly right nevertheless.

Now it is possible to have religious experience without Jesus Christ. It's not only possible to have religious experience, it's possible to have worship without Jesus Christ. That is, it is possible for a man to have an experience of talking with God or being talked to by God. Look at Cain. Cain had a religious experience, but God did not accept him. Look at Balaam, son of Beor. He had an experience and yet God was not pleased with him. In an old Catholic church in Mexico I saw a pale-faced old lady come and kneel down before a statue of the Virgin. With her hands together and her eyes open and her face set in worship she was having a real religious experience, but it was in the presence of the Virgin Mary. In a church in the United States I saw a huge statue of the Virgin, much larger than any person here; her bare feet were extended so the worshipers could kiss them and her great toe on one foot had been worn down with the lips of those who came to worship.

Yes, it's possible to worship but not be accepted by God Almighty. Brethren, I'm not sure but that those old pagans who believed in the gods of Olympia and Valhalla, who called God Thor or Zeus, were having some kind of an experience; but they died and perished nevertheless. It is not an experience that saves us; it is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Worship is not simply having a solemn feeling about the length of time and the brief duration of our lives on earth and the vastness of the heavens and the smallness of our bodies. That may be beautiful but it's not worship. To worship acceptably, I repeat, is to be born anew by the Holy Ghost through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and have the Holy Spirit of Christ teach us to worship and enable us to worship.

We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.

*All the earth doth worship Thee, the Father everlasting.
To Thee all angels cry aloud, the heavens and all the powers
therein;
To Thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry,
Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth:
Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory.*

*The glorious company of the Apostles praise Thee.
The goodly fellowship of the Prophets praise Thee.
The noble army of Martyrs praise Thee.
The holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge
Thee,
The Father of an infinite Majesty;
Thine adorable, true and only Son;
Also the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.*

So says the old Te Deum.

Excerpt from *How to be Filled with the Holy Spirit*

Chapter 96. Who is the Holy Spirit?

We all use the word "spirit" a great deal. Now I want to tell you what I do and do not mean by it. In the first place, we rule out all of the secondary uses of the word "spirit." I do not mean courage, as when we say, "That's the spirit!" I don't mean temper or temperament or pluck. I mean nothing so nebulous as that. Spirit is a specific and identifiable substance. If not definable, it can at least be described. Spirit is as real as matter, but it is another mode of being than matter.

We are all materialists to some extent. We are born of material parents into a material world; we are wrapped in material clothes and fed on material milk and lie in a material bed, and sleep and walk and live and talk and grow up in a world of matter. Matter presses upon us obtrusively and takes over our thinking so completely that we cannot speak of spirit without using materialistic terms. God made man out of the dust of the ground, and man has been dust ever since, and we can't quite shake it off.

Matter is one mode of being; spirit is another mode of being as authentic as matter.

Material things have certain characteristics. For instance, they have weight. Everything that is material weighs something; it yields to gravitational pull. Then, matter has dimensions; you can measure the thing if it is made of matter. It has shape. It has an outline of some sort, no matter whether it is a molecule or an atom or whatever it may be, on up to the stars that shine. Then, it is extended in space. So I say that weight, dimension, shape and extension are the things that belong to matter. That is one mode of being; that is one way of existing.

One power of spirit, of any spirit (for I am talking about *spirit* now, not about the Holy Spirit), is its ability to penetrate. Matter bumps against other matter and stops; it cannot penetrate. Spirit can penetrate everything. For instance, your body is made of matter, and yet your spirit has penetrated your body completely. Spirit can penetrate spirit. It can penetrate personality—oh, if God's people could only learn that spirit can penetrate personality, that your personality is not an impenetrable substance, but can be penetrated. A mind can be penetrated by thought, and the air can be penetrated by light, and material things and mental things, and even spiritual things, can be penetrated by spirit.

Now, what is the Holy Spirit? Not *who*, but *what*? The answer is that the Holy Spirit is a Being dwelling in another mode of existence. He has not weight, nor measure, nor size, nor any color, no extension in space, but He nevertheless exists as surely as you exist.

The Holy Spirit is not enthusiasm. I have found enthusiasm that hummed with excitement, and the Holy Spirit was nowhere to be found there at all; and I have found the Holy Ghost when there has not been much of what we call enthusiasm present. Neither is the Holy Spirit another name for genius. We talk about the spirit of Beethoven and say, "This or that artist played with great spirit. He interpreted the spirit of the master." The Holy Spirit is none of these things. Now what is He?

He is a Person. Put that down in capital letters—that the Holy Spirit is not only a Being having another mode of existence, but He is Himself a Person, with all the qualities and powers of personality. He is not matter, but He *is* substance. The Holy Spirit is often thought of as a beneficent wind that blows across the Church. If you think of the Holy Spirit as being literally a wind, a breath, then you think of Him as nonpersonal and nonindividual. But the Holy Spirit has will and intelligence and feeling and knowledge and sympathy and ability to love and see and think and hear and speak and desire the same as any person has.

You may say, "I believe all that. You surely don't think you are telling us anything new!" I don't hope to tell you very much that is new; I only hope to set the table for you, arranging the dishes a little better and a little more attractively so that you will be tempted to partake. Many of us have grown up on the theology that accepts the Holy Spirit as a Person, and even, as a divine Person, but for some reason it never did us any good. We are as empty as ever, we are as joyless as ever, we are as far from peace as ever, we are as weak as ever. What I want to do is to tell you the old things, but while I am doing it, to encourage your heart to make them yours now, and to walk into the living, throbbing, vibrating heart of them, so that from here on your life will be altogether different.

So the Spirit is a Person. That's *what* He is. Now, *who* is He?

The historic church has said that He is God. Let me quote from the Nicene Creed: "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, Which proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified."

That is what the Church believed about the Holy Ghost 1,600 years ago. Let's be daring for a moment. Let's try to think away this idea that the Holy Spirit is truly God. All right. Let's admit something else into the picture. Let's say, "I believe in one Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who with the Father and the Son is to be worshiped and glorified." For the "Holy Ghost" let's put in "Abraham, the father of the faithful, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified." That is a monstrous thing, and in your heart already there is a shocked feeling. You couldn't do it. You couldn't admit a mere man into the holy circle of the Trinity! The Father and the Son are to be worshiped and glorified, and if the Holy Spirit is to be included here He has to be equal to the Father and the Son.

Now let's look at the Athanasian Creed. Thirteen hundred years old it is. Notice what it says about the Holy Spirit: "Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost." Once more let's do that terrible thing. Let's introduce into this concept the name of a man. Let's put David in there. Let's say, "Such as the Father is, such also is the Son, and such is the hymnist David." That would be a shock like cold water in the face! You can't do that. And you can't put the archangel Michael in there. You can't say, "Such as the Father is, such also is the Son, and such is the archangel Michael." That would be a monstrous inconsistency, and you know it!

I have told you what the great creeds of the church say. If the Bible taught otherwise, I would throw the creeds away. Nobody can come down the years with flowing beard, and with the dust of centuries upon him, and get me to believe a doctrine unless he can give me chapter and verse. I quote the creeds, but I preach them only so far as they summarize the teaching of the Bible on a given subject. If there were divergency from the teachings of the Word of God I would not teach the creed; I would teach the Book, for the Book is the source of all authentic information. However, our fathers did a mighty good job of going into the Bible, finding out what it taught, and then formulating the creeds for us.

Now let's look at what our song writers and our hymnists believed. Recall the words the quartet sang this evening:

*Holy Ghost, with light divine,
Shine upon this heart of mine.*

Let's pray that prayer to Gabriel, to Saint Bernard, to D. L. Moody. Let's pray that prayer to any man or any creature that has ever served God. You can't pray that kind of prayer to a creature. To put those words into a hymn means that the one about whom you are speaking must be God.

*Holy Ghost, with power divine,
Cleanse this guilty heart of mine.*

Who can get into the intricate depths of a human soul, into the deep confines of a human spirit and cleanse it? Nobody but the God who made it! The hymn writer who said "Cleanse this guilty heart of mine" meant that the Holy Ghost to whom he prayed was God.

*Holy Spirit, all divine,
Dwell within this heart of mine;
Cast down every idol throne,
Reign supreme—and reign alone.*

The church has sung that now for about one hundred years. "*Reign supreme—and reign alone.*" Could you pray that to anybody you know? The man who wrote that hymn believed that the Holy Ghost was God, otherwise he wouldn't have said, "Reign supreme, and reign all by Yourself." That is an invitation no man can make to anybody, except the Divine One, except God.

Now the Scriptures. Notice that I am trying to establish the truth that the Holy Spirit is not only a Person, but that He is a divine Person; not only a divine Person, but God.

In Psalm 139 the hymnist attributes omnipresence to the Holy Ghost. He says, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" and he develops throughout the 139th Psalm, a language that is as beautiful as a sunrise and as musical as the wind through the willows, the idea that the Spirit is everywhere, having the attributes of deity. He must be deity, for no creature could have the attributes of deity.

In Hebrews 9:14 there is attributed to the Holy Ghost that which is never attributed to an archangel, or a seraphim, or a cherubim, or an angel, or an apostle, or a martyr, or a prophet, or a patriarch, or anyone that has ever been created by the hand of God. It says, "Through the eternal Spirit," and every theologian knows that eternity is an attribute of no creature which deity has ever formed. The angels are not eternal; that is, they had a beginning, and all created things had beginning. As soon as the word "eternal" is used about a being it immediately establishes the fact that he never had a beginning, is not a creature at all, but God. Therefore, when the Holy Ghost says "the eternal Spirit" about Himself He is calling Himself God.

Again, the baptismal formula in Matthew 28 says, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Now try to imagine putting the name of a man in there. "Baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Apostle Paul." You couldn't think it! It is horrible to contemplate! No man can be admitted into that closed circle of deity. We baptize in the name of the Father and the Son, because the Son is equal with the Father in His

Godhead, and we baptize in the name of the Holy Ghost because the Holy Ghost is also equal with the Father and the Son.

You say, "You are just a Trinitarian and we are Trinitarians already." Yes, I know it, but once again I tell you that I am trying to throw emphasis upon this teaching.

How many blessed truths have gotten snowed under. People believe them, but they are just not being taught, that is all. I think of our experience this morning. Here was a man and his wife, a very fine intelligent couple from another city. They named the church to which they belonged, and I instantly said, "That is a fine church!" "Oh, yes," they said, "but they don't teach what we came over here for." They came over because they were ill and wanted to be scripturally anointed for healing. So I got together two missionaries, two preachers, and an elder, and we anointed them and prayed for them. If you were to go to that church where they attend and say to the preacher, "Do you believe that the Lord answers prayer and heals the sick?" he would reply, "Sure, I do!" He believes it, but he doesn't teach it, and what you don't believe strongly enough to teach doesn't do you any good.

It is the same with the fullness of the Holy Ghost. Evangelical Christianity believes it, but nobody experiences it. It lies under the snow, forgotten. I am praying that God may be able to melt away the ice from this blessed truth, and let it spring up again alive, that the Church and the people who hear may get some good out of it and not merely say "I believe" while it is buried under the snow of inactivity and nonattention.

Let us recapitulate. Who is the Spirit? The Spirit is God, existing in another mode of being than ourselves. He exists as a spirit and not as matter, for He is not matter, but He is God. He is a Person. It was so believed by the whole Church of Christ down through the years. It was so sung by the hymnists back in the days of the first hymn writers. It is so taught in the Book, all through the Old Testament and the New, and I have given you only a few proof texts. I could spend the evening reading Scriptures stating this same thing.

Now what follows from all this? Ah, there is an unseen Deity present, a knowing, feeling Personality, and He is indivisible from the Father and the Son, so that if you were to be suddenly transferred to heaven itself you wouldn't be any closer to God than you are now, for God is already here. Changing your geographical location would not bring you any nearer to God nor God any nearer to you, because the indivisible Trinity is present, and all that the Son is the Holy Ghost is, and all that the Father is the Holy Ghost is, and the Holy Ghost is in His Church.

What will we find Him to be like? He will be exactly like Jesus. You have read your New Testament, and you know what Jesus is like, and the Holy Spirit is exactly like Jesus, for Jesus was God and the Spirit is God, and the Father is exactly like the Son; and you can know what Jesus is like by knowing what the Father is like, and you can know what the Spirit is like by knowing what Jesus is like.

If Jesus were to come walking down this aisle there would be no stampede for the door. Nobody would scream and be frightened. We might begin to weep for sheer joy and delight that He had so honored us, but nobody would be afraid of Jesus; no mother with a little crying babe would ever have to be afraid of Jesus; no poor harlot being dragged by the hair of her head had to be afraid of Jesus—nobody! Nobody ever need to be afraid of Jesus, because He is the epitome of love, kindliness, geniality, warm attractiveness and sweetness. And that is exactly what the Holy Ghost is, for He is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. *Amen.*