A.W. TOZER

GOD TELLS the MAN WHO CARES

GOD SPEAKS
TO THOSE
WHO TAKE TIME
TO LISTEN

Compiled by
ANITA M. BAILEY

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INTRODUCTION

God speaks only to those who take time to listen. It is the man who cares who communes with the Most High and learns the secrets of the Lord. Such a man also sees the sorrow and feels the woe of the world. He shares the burdens of his brothers.

Because A.W. Tozer lived in the presence of God, he saw clearly and he spoke as a prophet to the church. He sought for God's honor with a zeal of Elijah and mourned with Jeremiah at the apostasy of God's people. But he was not a prophet of despair.

The chapters in this book are messages of concern. They expose the weaknesses of the church and denounce compromise. They warn and exhort. But they are messages of hope as well, for God is always there, ever faithful to restore and to fulfill His Word to those who hear and obey.

Anita M. Bailey
Former Managing Editor
The Alliance Witness

Chapter 1

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 curious merely and who never shed one tear for the woes of the world. They have a prying inquisitiveness about the schedule of future events, forgetting apparently 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 events 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 nowhere 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 trifler 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 pattern 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 2

The Voice of God Speaking

I think it may be accepted as axiomatic that God is constantly trying to speak to men. He desires to communicate Himself, to impart holy ideas to those of His creatures capable of receiving them.

This divine impulse toward self-expression may account for the creation, particularly for God's having made intelligent and moral beings who could hear and understand truth. Among these beings man stands at the top, having been created in the image of God and so possessing purer and finer organs for the apprehension of whatever can be known of God. The Second Person of the Godhead is called the Word of God, that is, the mind of God in expression.

Concerning God's speaking to men there are two views, opposed to each other, it is true, but alike in that both are erroneous. One is that God spoke the holy Scriptures into being and then elapsed into silence, a silence that will not be broken till God calls all men before Him to judgment. God will then speak again as in olden days, but in the meantime we have the Bible as a deposit of embalmed truth which scribe and theologian must decipher as they can.

This view is held by the majority of evangelicals, allowing for some variation in detail, and is extremely injurious to the Christian's soul. It is injurious because it contains two false notions, one that God is no longer speaking and the other that we are shut up to our intellects for the understanding and apprehension of truth. According to this view, God is far away and wholly noncommunicative; and we, whether we like to admit it or not, are forced into a kind of evangelical rationalism, since according to this notion the human mind becomes the final arbiter of truth as well as the organ for its reception into the soul.

Now, the blessed fact is that God is not silent and has never been silent, but is speaking in His universe. The written Word is effective because, and only because, the Living Word is speaking in heaven and the Living Voice is sounding in the earth. "And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (1 John 5:6-7).

That the creative voice of God is constantly sounding throughout the creation is a truth forgotten by modern Christianity. Yet it was by His word that He called the world into being and it is by His word that all things are held together. It is

the still voice of God in the heart of every human being that renders everyone culpable before the bar of God's judgment and convicts of sin even those who have never been exposed to the written Word.

The idea that the only mortal sin is the rejection of Christ and that men are not held accountable for sin in those parts of the world where the gospel has not been preached is a monstrous error. There is a light that lights every man that comes into the world. It is sin against light that destroys men, not the rejection of Christ, though that rejection leaves the sinner desolate in his sin and shuts him out forever from the forgiving love of God.

It is written that Christ upholds all things by the word of His power; and the word that upholds all things is the power-filled voice of God sounding vibrantly throughout the creation. The Bible is not, as some appear to think, God's last will and testament; it is, rather, the written expression of the mind of the Living God, inactive until the same breath that first inspired it breathes on it again.

The other and opposite error for the God-has-once-spoken error is that held by various kinds of liberals. It is that since God is vocal in His universe, there is no such thing as an inspired canon of Scripture containing a full body of revealed truth that can serve as the one final source of doctrine and practice. According to these gentlemen, the two ideas contradict each other. If God is still speaking, then we must keep our minds open to further revelation given, it may be, through poets, philosophers, scientists and novelists, as well as religionists of various kinds. Wherever new truth is discovered or new and advanced ideas are brought forth, there God is speaking again as He once spoke by the prophet and seer in olden days.

Certainly we must grant these men the right to believe what they will, as well as the right to teach what they believe. But one thing is settled: Whoever, for whatever reason, denies the finality of the biblical revelation and insists upon a continuing revelation having the same authority as the sacred Scriptures has shut himself out from the name of Christian. He is simply not a Christian in the scriptural and historic meaning of the word.

Between the ideas of a fixed biblical canon and a constantly speaking God, there is no contradiction. In the Scriptures God has caused to be written a full and sufficient body of truth. Holy men were moved by the Holy Spirit to record the words God knew would be best suited to teach doctrine, and to reprove, correct and instruct in righteousness. The point I make here is that if the living voice of God were not speaking in the world and in the hearts of men, the written Word could have no real meaning for us. Because God is speaking in His world we are able to hear Him speak in His Word.

Chapter 3

We Must Be Still to Know

Be still, and know that I am God. (Psalm 46:10)

Our fathers had much to say about stillness, and by stillness they meant the absence of motion or the absence of noise or both.

They felt that they must be still for at least a part of the day, or that day would be wasted. God can be known in the tumult of the world if His providence has for the time placed us there, but He is known best in the silence. So they held, and so the sacred Scriptures declare. Inward assurance comes out of the stillness. We must be still to know.

There has hardly been another time in the history of the world when stillness was needed more than it is today, and there has surely not been another time when there was so little of it or when it was so hard to find.

Christ is every man's contemporary. His presence and His power are offered to us in this time of mad activity and mechanical noises as certainly as to fishermen on the quiet lake of Galilee or to shepherds on the plains of Judea. The only condition is that we get still enough to hear His voice and that we believe and heed what we hear.

Some things can be learned in the din of modern life. Amid the noises we may become engineers or scientists or architects. In the humdrum we may learn how to fly a jet plane or to manage a department store. We may win an athletic contest, conduct an orchestra, earn a degree or get ourselves elected to public office. We do these things by accepting civilization at its face value and getting adjusted to it. Thus we become children of the twentieth century and our psychology takes its complexion from the times. We move as gracefully as we are able through the complicated steps of the dance of circumstance, the noise actually aiding our motion; or, not knowing where we are headed, we march with the multitude to booming music that keeps us in step and adds a bit of pleasure to the effort.

These things men can do and are doing. But when we begin to doubt the validity of a philosophy built on physical science and to question the soundness of a civilization that produced the H-bomb, and especially when we begin to

grope after God if perchance we may find Him, something strange and wonderful happens. As we draw nearer to the ancient Source of our being, we find that we are no longer learned or ignorant, modern or old-fashioned, crude or cultured, white or black; in that awesome Presence we are just *men.* Artificial distinctions fade away. Thousands of years of education disappear in a moment and we stand again where Adam and Eve stood after the Fall, where Cain stood, and Abel, outside the Garden, frightened and undone and fugitive from the terror of the broken law.

There before the judgment seat which suddenly becomes as real to the trembling sinner as if it were the very last judgment itself, no modern religious techniques avail; none of the carefully thought-out methods work. The civilized man surrounded by his lately invented and noisy gadgets passes back in his heart through the centuries of "progress" and becomes again a terrified, whimpering human thing desperately in need of a Savior.

Because this is true, any evangelism which by appeal to common interests and chatter about current events seeks to establish a common ground where the sinner can feel at home is as false as the altars of Baal ever were. Every effort to smooth out the road for men and to take away the guilt and the embarrassment is worse than wasted; it is evil and dangerous to the souls of men.

One of the most popular current errors, and the one out of which springs most of the noisy, blustering religious activity being carried on in evangelical circles these days, is the notion that as times change the church must change with them. Christians must adapt their methods by the demands of the people.

If they want ten-minute sermons, give them ten-minute sermons. If they want truth in capsule form, give it to them. If they want pictures, give them plenty of pictures. If they like stories, tell them stories. If they prefer to absorb their religious instruction through the drama, go along with them—give them what they want. "The message is the same, only the method changes," say the advocates of compromise.

"Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad," the old Greeks said, and they were wiser than they knew. That mentality which mistakes Sodom for Jerusalem and Hollywood for the Holy City is too gravely astray to be explained otherwise than as a judicial madness visited upon professed Christians for affronts committed against the Spirit of God.

> Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. (Isaiah

6:9–10)

But, some earnest persons reason, since there is no stillness in this mechanized world we must learn to get along without it. We cannot hope to bring back the still waters and the quiet pastures where David once led his sheep. This rat race of civilization is too noisy for us to hear the still, small Voice, so we must learn to hear God speak in the earthquake and the storm. And if modern evangelism is geared to the tumult and the agitation of the times, why should anyone complain? Does it not represent an honest effort to be all things to all men that by any means some should be saved?

The answer is that the soul of man does not change fundamentally, no matter how external conditions may change. The aborigine in his hut, the college professor in his study, the truck driver in the bedlam of city traffic have all the same basic needs: to be rid of their sins, to obtain eternal life and to be brought into communion with God. Civilized noises and activities are surface phenomena, a temporary rash on the epidermis of the human race. To attribute sound values to them and then to try to bring religion into harmony with them is to commit a moral blunder so huge as to stagger the imagination, and one for which we shall surely be paying long after this frenetic extravaganza we call civilization has ended in tragedy and everlasting grief.

What certain religious teachers fail to understand is that true Christian experience takes place in the human spirit, far in and beneath the changing surface of things. It is only the surface that responds to noise and agitation. The deep-in part of the man lies in primeval silence waiting that quickening word that shall give it second birth. Because this far-in spirit of the man is separated from God the whole life is out of order; so the flesh and the imagination take over and direct the thinking, the willing and the doing of the individual man and the race of which he is a part. These create the dance macabre, the dance of death we know as society and in which as natural men we find ourselves.

Popular Christianity parrots the language of New Testament theology, but it accepts the world's opinion of itself and sedulously apes its ways (except for a few evil practices which even the world itself admits are wrong). Then Christ is offered as something added, a Friend Up There, a Guarantor against the time when the tumult and the shouting dies and we are called in from the playground and forced to go to sleep.

Be it remembered that the great essential facts have not changed. Men are still what they were and the Son of Man is forever who and what He was. He calls to the eternal in us. Deep calls unto deep and the call, if it is heard at all, is heard by that in us which is neither savage nor civilized, old nor young, Western nor

Oriental, but simply human and once made in the image of God.

It is significant that the psalm in which the words “Be still” occur is filled with noise and commotion. The earth shakes, the waters roar and are troubled, the mountains threaten to tumble into the midst of the sea, the nations rage, the kingdoms are moved and the sound of war is heard throughout the land. Then a voice is heard out of the silence saying, “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

So today we must listen till our inner ears hear the words of God. When the Voice is heard, it will not be as the excited shouting of the nervous world; rather it will be the reassuring call of One of whom it was said, “He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street” (Isaiah 42:2).

It cannot be heard in the street, but it may be heard plainly enough in the heart. And that is all that matters at last.

Chapter 4

The Kingdoms of the World and the Glory of Them

Satan once tried to bring about the downfall of Christ by offering Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.

Here is sufficient proof that the devil is wise, but not wise enough.

He knew fallen human nature and just how to handle it. He knew the power of pomp and circumstance to charm the sinful heart and bring it into captivity. In presenting to the Man Jesus the glory of the world, he was shrewdly taking advantage of a known weakness in the human race. The trick should have worked, and it would have worked but for one thing: This was no fallen man Satan was attempting to seduce; it was a sinless Man full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whose penetrating glance pierced the world's attractive exterior and saw what was inside. What He saw revolted Him. He would have no part of it.

Our Lord saw in the world's glory not what other men saw and, conversely, He saw what other men could not see. He saw not beauty but death, a garish death that must be purchased at the price of the soul. Beneath its gaudy allurements He saw corruption and decay. He knew its glory was but bait to catch foolish victims. He knew its bright promises were all lies.

All this Jesus knew; and Satan for all his wisdom did not know that He knew it. The devil is an assiduous student of the Bible, but still he did not know or he would not have attempted the impossible, and that to his own confusion and permanent loss of face.

The delusive quality of all human glory is taught throughout the Bible, and with bold emphasis in the New Testament. It has been taught also with great clarity by the saints and faithful brethren since the days of the apostles. We sing it in our hymns and repeat it in our prayers, and no Christian but would admit the truth of it.

With the Bible open before us and a long tradition of truth behind us, there would seem to be no reason for our present tragic failure to recognize the world's deceptive appeal and to stay clear of it. For there must not be any denial of the facts: the church has been captured by the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. In spite of the prophetic voices that are raised here and there

among us, present-day believers are drawn to the world with irresistible force.

That world which our Savior once refused to buy at the price of disobedience to God is now wooing His professed followers with every sly, deceptive artifice. The glory which our Lord once rejected with cold scorn is now being admired and sought after by multitudes who make a loud profession of accepting the gospel. The old trick which our Lord saw through so easily is charming His present-day followers into smiling acquiescence. The devil did not know Christ, but apparently he knows Christians.

A century ago Satan launched a drive to destroy evangelical religion by a direct attack upon the Scriptures. He misjudged the strength of Christian orthodoxy and was thrown back with heavy losses. Today "Modernism" is a word without much meaning, and many liberals now admit that they have lost the beating heart out of their religion. But the evangelical creed is as vigorous as ever, and even in learned circles it is now considered intellectually respectable to believe Christian truth.

No, Satan's effort to destroy Christianity on the doctrinal front has not been a success; there are probably more Bible believers now than at any time in world history. Still the true religion of the cross is in great and serious peril on another front and, strangely enough, many of the very warriors who fought so valiantly when the veracity of the Bible was attacked have failed to recognize the enemy when he has approached from a new direction.

The real peril today arises from within the fold of orthodox believers. It consists of an acceptance of the world's values, a belief that the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them are valid prizes to be pursued by believing men and women. Blind leaders of blind souls are admitting that there is something to be said in favor of the world-glory after all; they insist that Christians should not cut themselves off from the pleasures of the world, except, of course, from those that are too degraded for respectable society. Everything else goes, and the very values that Christ scorned are now being used to attract people to the gospel.

Christ now stands in need of a patron, a celebrity who will sponsor Him before the world. He looks weakly about for some well-known figure upon whose inside popularity He can ride forth as He once rode into Jerusalem on the back of an ass' colt. His ability to draw men unto Him is frankly doubted, so He is provided with a gimmick to do the trick for Him. The cheap and tawdry glory which He once rejected is placed around His head as a crown. The crown they give Him is studded with paste imitations, all borrowed from the world: middle-class prosperity, success, fame, publicity, money, crowds, social acceptance, pomp, display, earthly honor. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life have all been Christianized (not by the liberal, mind you, but by the

evangelicals) and are now offered along with Christ to everyone who will "believe."

And on top of this we still pray for revival, with no awareness of our dark betrayal and no intention to repent. All such prayers are vain. We need only humble ourselves to obey the truth and the true revival has already started. An emotional revival superimposed upon an evangelical religion hopelessly sold out to the glory of the world would but increase the confusion and confirm the deception.

O Lord, save Thy people from such a snare.

Chapter 5

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 valid scripturally, 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 businessmen'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 it” (Matthew 16:18).

Chapter 6

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 overorganize 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 on 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 corrupts 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 overorganization 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 7

The Christian’s Witness to the World

The mission of the church is to declare, to proclaim, to witness. She has been left on earth to be a witness to certain great eternal truths which she received from God and which the world could not possibly know unless she told it.

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations” (Matthew 28:19), said Jesus to the infant church. The church was to teach and the world was to listen, and all who received the witness of the church were to be baptized and taught further in the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

That was the order established by the new-risen Christ. Those first Christians had seen and heard such wonders as had first terrified them, then filled them with a high spiritual excitement which they could not contain. With joy they turned their backs on the open tomb from which their Lord had walked forth, and literally raced away to spread the news.

A few days later the Holy Spirit came upon them to confirm the truth and to add a new afflatus of moral power to their testimony.

That is how it all began. The early church had the message; the world had only the need for that message. The disciples had seen and touched and handled that Eternal Life which was with the Father and was manifested unto men; and driven by an irresistible compulsion they went forth to Jew and Greek, bondman and freeman, high and low, to tell, to witness, to declare, to testify. Succeeding generations of Christians, not having seen Christ with their mortal eyes but having met Him in living encounter and having known and experienced Him by the inward operation of the Holy Spirit, told forth the message with the same zeal as had the original band. They had something to tell the world. They were witnesses eagerly testifying. They were devotees and zealots, convinced that they had the truth the world needed desperately and which it could not afford to ignore.

It has been so wherever the church has had eyesight and hearing. When she has been conscious of One walking among the golden candlesticks with a voice like the sound of many waters, she has stood to echo that voice and the world has had to listen. Sometimes that world turned its back upon its benefactors and persecuted them unto death; sometimes it listened as Herod listened to John the Baptist, deeply touched by what it heard but unwilling to obey. Sometimes it

listened sympathetically and numbers of people repented and went on to follow Christ. *But always the world was on the receiving end. The church spake and the world heard.* Thus it was as Christ said it must be.

But hear, O ye heavens, and be astonished, O earth, for a mighty derangement has occurred in the relative position of the church and the world, a transposition so radical and so grotesque as would not have been believed if it had been foretold but a few years ago.

The church has lost her testimony. She has no longer anything to say to the world. Her once robust shout of assurance has faded away to an apologetic whisper. She who one time went out to declare now goes out to inquire. Her dogmatic declaration has become a respectful suggestion, a word of religious advice, given with the understanding that it is after all only an opinion and not meant to sound bigoted.

Not only has the church nothing to say to the world, but the tables have also actually been turned and the ministers of Christ are now going to the world for light. They sit at Adam's feet for instruction and clear their message with the wise and the prudent before they dare deliver it. But the certainty that comes from seeing and the assurance that springs from hearing—where are they?

But let us be more specific. About whom am I speaking here? The liberal who denies the authenticity of the Scriptures? I wish it were so. No, I write off the liberal as long dead and expect nothing from him. It is of the evangelical church that I speak, and of the so-called gospel churches. I speak of the theology of popular evangelism which quotes the Bible copiously but without one trace of authority, accepts the world at its own estimate, chides sinners like a weak-chinned father of a family who has long ago lost control of his household and doesn't expect to be obeyed, offers Christ as a religious tranquilizer who is without sovereignty and without any semblance of Lordship, adopts the world's methods, courts the favor of rich men, politicians and playboys—with the understanding, of course, that the said playboy will stoop to say a nice word about Jesus now and then.

I refer to a religious journalism ostensibly orthodox but which can scarcely be told in appearance, tone, spirit, language, method or aim from the secular magazine it so sedulously apes. I refer to the Christianity which says to Christ, "We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach" (Isaiah 4:1). I refer to the masses of Christians who have "accepted" Jesus, but who turn their churches into playhouses, are entirely ignorant of worship, misunderstand the cross and are totally blind to the serious implications of discipleship.

Again I refer to the new crop of borderline liberals who use the language of

orthodoxy but are nevertheless fellow travelers with old-line liberals and who seek to escape the reproach of the cross by what they like to believe is a dazzling display of intellectualism.

The church is in her Babylonian captivity, and as Israel could not sing the songs of Zion in a strange land, so Christians in bondage have no authoritative message to declare. They must wait for the news broadcast for a text and read *TIME* magazine for a subject. Like the harried editor of a daily newspaper who languishes for a good story when no convenient murder or accident has happened for the last few hours, so the prophet in Babylon waits for a war, a new development in the Middle East or a space exploit to rescue him from enforced silence and give him a new lease on his pulpit.

But what is the church called to declare? What are the hard, bold, everlasting words she has been sent to give to the world? The first is that God is all in all. He is the great Reality which gives meaning to all other realities.

> Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me….Yea, before the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?" (43:10,13)

The next great fact is that we are made *by* God and *for* Him. The answer to the question, "Where did I come from?" is never better answered than by the mother who says "God made you." The pooled knowledge of the world cannot improve upon this simple answer. Scientific research has probed deep into the secrets of how matter operates, but the *origin* of matter lies in deep silence and refuses to give an answer to any questions. God made the heaven and the earth and man upon the earth and He made man for Himself, and there is no other answer to the inquiry, "Why did God make me?"

The Christian is not sent to argue or persuade, nor is he sent to prove or demonstrate; he is sent to declare "Thus saith the Lord." When he has done this he makes God responsible for the outcome. No one knows enough and no one *can* know enough to go beyond this. God made us for Himself: that is the first and last thing that can be said about human existence and whatever more we add is but commentary.

Seeing who God is and who we are, a right relationship between God and us is of vital importance. That God should be glorified in us is so critically important that it stands in lonely grandeur, a moral imperative more compelling than any other which the human heart can acknowledge. To bring ourselves into a place

where God will be eternally pleased with us should be the first responsible act of every man.

Knowing our sin and moral ignorance, the impossibility of effecting such a happy relationship becomes instantly evident. Since we cannot go to God, what then shall we do? The answer is found in the Christian witness: it is that God came to us in the Incarnation. “Who is Jesus?” asks the world, and the Church answers, “Jesus is God come to us.” He is come to seek us, to woo us, to win us to God again. And to do this He needed to die for us redemptively. He must in the some manner undo our sins, destroy our record of sins committed and break the power of sins entrenched within us. All this, says the Christian witness, He did upon the cross perfectly, effectually and for good.

“Where is Jesus now?” asks the world, and the Christian answers, “At the right hand of God.” He died but He is not dead. He rose again as He said He would, and scores of sober, trustworthy eyewitnesses saw Him after His return from among the dead. Better than all, His Spirit now reveals to the Christian heart not a dead Christ but a living one. This we are sent to declare with all the bold dogmatism of those who know, who have been there and experienced it beyond the possibility of a doubt.

The gospel is the official proclamation that Christ died for us and is risen again, with the added announcement that everyone who will believe, and as a result of that belief will cast in his lot with Christ in full and final committal, shall be saved eternally. He must come with the understanding that he will not be popular and that he will be called to stand where Jesus stood before the world: to be admired by many, loved by a few and rejected at last by the majority of men. He must be willing to pay this price; or let him go his way; Christ has nothing more to say to him now.

The Christian’s message to the world must also be one of sin, righteousness and judgment. He must not accept in any measure the world’s moral code, but stand boldly to oppose it and warn of the consequences of following it. And this he must do loudly and persistently, meanwhile taking great care that he himself walk so circumspectly that no flaw may be found in his life to give the lie to his testimony.

There is one thing more: the Christian witness includes also the faithful warning that God is a just and holy Being who will not trifle with men nor allow them to trifle with Him. He is longsuffering and waits patiently to be gracious, but after a while the friendly invitation of the gospel is withdrawn. The effort to persuade the incorrigible sinner is discontinued, death fixes the status of the man who loved his sins and he is sent to the place of the rejected where there is for him no further hope. That is hell, and it may be well we know so little about it.

What we do know is sufficiently terrifying.

To His own children God has much more to say, so much that it requires a lifetime of eager listening to hear it all; but His message to the world is simple and brief. It is the work of the church to keep on repeating it to each generation of men till it is either accepted or rejected by those who hear.

The Christian must not allow himself to be entrapped by current vogues in religion, and above all he must never go to the world for his message. He is a man of heaven sent to give witness on earth. As he shall give account to the Lord that bought him, let him see to his commission.

Chapter 8

The Church Must Not Conform

A stimulating little book written by a thoughtful observer of the religious scene attempts to explain Christian sects and denominations as reflections of the social conditions out of which they sprang.

The idea is, if I understand the author's arguments correctly, that differences in doctrine and in forms of church government among various Christian bodies have resulted from different economic, political, racial and cultural patterns throughout Christendom.

According to this theory, a democratic state would tend to produce a democratic church, whereas under a political dictatorship the authoritarian form of government would naturally prevail within the Christian community. In a highly cultured society ritualism would mark the worship of the church along with much rich symbolism and forms of external beauty.

Whether this conforms to historic fact I am not ready to say, though my limited knowledge of history would lead me to believe that this explanation is probably an accommodation of fact to theory and, while partly true, does not tell the whole story. One thing is certain, however; it is that wherever the Christian religion differs from itself there will surely be found elements that are unscriptural and altogether without biblical authority, and it is always those elements that divide the church against itself.

In whatever language they appear the Scriptures continue century after century to say the same thing to everyone. The Spirit that inspired the Christian revelation never differs from Himself, but remains from age to age the same. God works according to an eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began, and our Lord assures us that till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled. God's truth is the same wherever it is found and if the church conforms to the truth, it will be the same church in doctrine and in practice throughout the entire world.

There are in the Christian religion three major elements: spiritual life, moral practice and community organization, and these all spring out of and follow New Testament doctrine; or more correctly, the first must and the others should. Life is and must necessarily be first. Life comes mysteriously to the soul that believes the truth. "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath

everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). And again,

> He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified). (7:38–39)

The message of the cross offers eternal life and the blessedness of the Holy Spirit indwelling the soul. These distinguish Christianity from every other religion; and it is significant that these distinguishing marks are of such a nature as to be wholly above and beyond the reach of man. They are altogether mysterious and divine and are unaffected by race, politics, economics or education. The life of God in the soul of a man is wholly independent of the social status of that man. In the early church the Spirit leaped across all artificial lines that separate men from each other and made of all believers a spiritual brotherhood. Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, Greek and barbarian were all baptized into one body, of which Christ was and is the Head.

Along with the gift of eternal life, the entrance of the Holy Spirit into the believer's heart and the induction of the newborn soul into the Body of Christ comes instant obligation to obey the teachings of the New Testament. These teachings are so plain and so detailed that it is difficult to understand how they could appear different to persons living under different political systems or on different cultural levels. That they have so appeared cannot be denied; but always the reasons lie in the imperfect state of the believers composing the different groups. They permitted the unauthorized introduction of extrascriptural matter into their beliefs and suffered spiritual weakness and debility as a consequence.

Undoubtedly Christian groups have been influenced in their moral practices by the society in which they lived, but we should see it for what it is and not try to explain it away. "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19).

That we Christians modify the moral teachings of Christ at our convenience to avoid the stigma of being thought different is a proof of our backsliding, and the shame of it will not be removed until we have repented and brought our lives completely under the discipline of Christ.

The third element in the Christian religion, that of church polity or the political organization of the religious community in worship and service, is

subject to the pressures and influences of society to a greater degree than are the other two. A modern example of this is the Salvation Army, which is to all intents and purposes a Christian denomination imitating the military in its organization and nomenclature. Other examples may be found in the historic denominations which have often followed rather closely the organization of the state. That some may deny this and quote Scripture to justify their organizational pattern does not invalidate my statement.

Christianity does vary from itself from place to place and from time to time as it permits itself to be influenced by political, economic, racial or cultural factors. Without doubt neither I who write this nor you who read it can be said to have escaped completely the molding power of society. As Christians we are somewhat different from what we would have been had we lived in a different period of history.

I think we do well to admit this, but we should not accept it as normal; and certainly we should not accept it as inevitable that we continue to be shaped by the world. Paul said, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2). That we have to some extent conformed to the world is a proof of our weakness. We must begin at once to correct matters. By consecration, detachment, obedience and unceasing prayer we must escape the clutches of the world.

Pure Christianity, instead of being shaped by its environment, actually stands in sharp opposition to it, and where the power of God has been present over a sustained period, the church has sometimes reversed the direction of things and exercised a purifying effect upon society.

Chapter 9

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 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 the 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 10

Artificial Divisions Are Harmful

In the preceding chapter I remarked on the usefulness of division in certain situations. But I want to explain further.

I feel that we evangelicals are making two serious mistakes. One is insisting upon union where it should not be, and the other is creating divisions artificially where there is no justification for them.

One blessed fact to be kept ever in mind is the organic unity of all true believers in Christ. However ill taught God's children may be on this subject and however widely separated by artificial barriers, they are nonetheless all members of Christ and as surely one as a man's hands and feet and eyes and ears are one by being members of his body. Unity in Christ is not something to be achieved; it is something to be recognized. I think Paul made this sufficiently clear in First Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4.

The unity of believers was taken for granted by the church at Jerusalem. "And all that believed were together, and had all things common" (Acts 2:44). This very well describes the first naive attitude of those early Christians. Paul, in his epistles, gave the theological explanation of this unity, but the fact preceded the explanation by some years.

In writing to the Ephesians the apostle did not exhort them to seek to achieve unity; he told them rather to try to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace *because* there is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God the Father of all. God's sons should act like brethren because they *are* brethren, not in order to become brethren.

Now for the very reason that the church is one body, anything that tends to introduce division is an evil, however harmless, or even useful, it may appear to be. Yet the average evangelical church is divided into fragments which live and work separate from, and sometimes in opposition to, each other. In some churches there is simply no time or place for the worship and service of all members unitedly. These churches are organized to make such unity impossible.

Any belief or practice that causes the members of a local church to separate into groups on any pretext whatever is an evil. At first it may seem necessary to form such groups and it may be easy enough to show how many practical advantages follow these divisions; but soon the spirit of separateness

unconsciously enters the minds of the persons involved and grows and hardens until it is impossible for them to think of themselves as belonging to the whole church. They may each and all hold the *doctrine* of unity, but the damage has been done; they *think* and *feel* themselves to be separated nevertheless.

One place where the evil manifests itself is in the practice of dividing the church into age groups. As far as I can discover, neither the Hebrew worshipers of Old Testament times nor the church of the New Testament ever divided into age groups to worship the Lord. The practice appears to have come in with the modern vogue of glorifying youth and downgrading age as something a bit disgraceful. And this, incidentally, followed the children's rebellion of the last half century, which rebellion was foreseen by the apostle Paul 1,900 years ago.

This age-youth division has gone so far in some churches that the old and the young glare at each other from different parts of the church and can have no spiritual fellowship whatsoever. If all are true Christians the basic unity has not been destroyed, but the *spirit* of unity has, with the result that the Lord is grieved and the church weakened. Yet much current religious education aids and abets division.

Another harmful thing is the dividing of Christians into groups crystallizing around their secular professions. So-called Christian guilds built around occupations, trades and professions cannot but be deeply injurious when they exist within a church. Where organizations are formed outside the local church to afford a center of fellowship within one or another secular field, such as student groups in universities or groups for the promotion of Christian fellowship and testimony in the military services, these have a useful function within our quasi-Christian society. They tend to unify, not divide, Christians, and do not come in for censure here.

Deeper and more far-reaching in its effects is the old practice of dividing the Christians in any communion into two classes, called respectively laymen and the clergy. This has grown out of a partial truth and is for that reason extremely hard to correct.

It is true that God has ordained that some in the church should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and some teachers, and He has, furthermore, invested these with certain limited authority in the congregation of the saints; but the notion that they constitute a superior or privileged class is wholly wrong. They do not, but the exercise of their proper offices within the church easily leads to the idea that they do and this makes for division.

I have identified here only three artificial divisions; the alert reader will have no difficulty in carrying on his own examination of the injuries wrought by arbitrary divisions within the church.

Chapter 11

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” (Proverbs 29:25), 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 in circles over 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 12

The Way of Christ Is Still Narrow

We who follow Christ in these perilous times are engaged in a war that has many fronts.

Action ebbs in one sector only to flare up in another or two or ten others. The enemy is everywhere, assuming many forms and taking at any given time whatever shape best serves his evil purposes, and he is for that reason often mistaken for a friend.

Traditionally fighting men have proudly worn the uniform of their country, and could be identified as far as they could be seen. In World War II the Nazis sometimes donned the uniforms of Allied soldiers and thus managed to destroy some who would otherwise have been on the defensive against them. But this trick was no Nazi invention. It dates back to that hour when the devil in the guise of a friend won the confidence of Mother Eve and brought about the downfall of the race.

Deception has always been an effective weapon and is deadliest when used in the field of religion. Our Lord warned against this when He said, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15). These words have been turned into a proverb known around the world, and still we continue to be taken in by the wolves.

There was a time, no longer ago than the ’20s and ’30s, when a Christian knew, or at least could know, where he stood. The words of Christ were taken seriously. A man either was or was not a believer in New Testament doctrine. Clear, sharp categories existed. Black stood in sharp contrast to white; light was separated from darkness; it was possible to distinguish right from wrong, truth from error, a true believer from an unbeliever. Christians knew that they must forsake the world, and there was for the most part remarkable agreement about what was meant by the world. It was that simple.

But over the last score of years a quiet revolution has taken place. The whole religious picture has changed. Without denying a single doctrine of the faith, multitudes of Christians have nevertheless forsaken the faith and are as far astray as the Modernists, who were at least honest enough to repudiate the Scriptures before they began to violate them.

Many of our best-known preachers and teachers have developed ventriloquial

tongues and can now make their voices come from any direction. They have surrendered the traditional categories of religious thought. For them there is no black or white, there is only gray. Anyone who makes a claim to having "accepted Christ" is admitted at once into the goodly fellowship of the prophets and the glorious company of the apostles regardless of the worldliness of his life or the vagueness of his doctrinal beliefs.

I have listened to certain speakers and have recognized the ingredients that went to make up their teachings. A bit of Freud, a dash of Émile Coué, a lot of watered-down humanism, tender chunks of Emersonian transcendentalism, auto-suggestion a la Dale Carnegie, plenty of hopefulness and religious sentimentality, but nothing hard and sharp and specific. Nothing of the either/or of Christ and Peter and Paul. None of the "Who is on the LORD's side?" (Exodus 32:26) of Moses, or the "Choose you this day whom ye will serve" (Joshua 24:15) of Joshua: just tender pleading to "take Jesus and let Him solve your problems."

If such as I here describe were cultists or liberals of one stripe or another I would say nothing more about it, but many of them are professed evangelicals. Press them and they will insist that they believe the Scriptures and accept every tenet of the historic Christian faith, but listen to them teach and you are left wondering. They are building upon sand; the rock of sound theology is not under them.

The notion is now pretty well disseminated throughout the ranks of current evangelicalism that love is really all that matters and for that reason we ought to receive everyone whose intention is right, regardless of his doctrinal position, granted of course that he is ready to read the Scriptures, trust Jesus and pray. The unregenerate sympathies of the fallen human heart adopt this foggy creed eagerly. The trouble is that the holy Scriptures teach nothing of the kind.

The apostle Paul warned against what he called "profane and vain babblings" (1 Timothy 6:20) as for instance that of Hymenaeus and Philetus, stating that their words would eat as does a canker and overthrow the faith of some. And what was their error? They merely taught a spiritual resurrection instead of a physical one.

"If a man hath the mind to get the start of other sinners and be in hell before them," said an old divine, "he need do no more than open his sails to the winds of heretical doctrine, and he is like to make a short voyage to hell; for these bring upon their maintainers a swift destruction." This is nearer to Paul's view than is that of the new evangelical latitudinarians. The way of the cross is still narrow.

Chapter 13

The Best Things Come Hard

In this twisted world of ours the most important things are often the most difficult to learn; and conversely, the things that come easiest are mostly of little real value to us in the long haul.

This is seen clearly in the Christian life, where it often happens that the things we learn to do with the least trouble are the superficial and less important activities, and the really vital exercises tend to be avoided because of their difficulty.

It is seen still more clearly in our various forms of Christian service, particularly in the ministry. There the most difficult activities are the ones that produce the greatest fruit, and the less fruitful services are performed with the least effort. This constitutes a trap into which the wise minister will not fall, or if he should find that he is already caught in it he will assault heaven and earth in his determined fight to escape.

To pray successfully is the first lesson the preacher must learn if he is to preach fruitfully; yet prayer is the hardest thing he will ever be called upon to do and, being human, it is the one act he will be tempted to do less frequently than any other. He must set his heart to conquer by prayer, and that will mean that he must first conquer his own flesh, for it is the flesh that hinders prayer always.

Almost anything associated with the ministry may be learned with an average amount of intelligent application. It is not hard to preach or manage church affairs or pay a social call; weddings and funerals may be conducted smoothly with a little help from Emily Post and the Minister's Manual. Sermon making can be learned as easily as shoemaking—introduction, conclusion and all. And so with the whole work of the ministry as it is carried on in the average church today.

But prayer—that is another matter. There Mrs. Post is helpless and the Minister's Manual can offer no assistance. There the lonely man of God must wrestle it out alone, sometimes in fastings and tears and weariness untold. There every man must be an original, for true prayer cannot be imitated nor can it be learned from someone else. Everyone must pray as if he alone could pray, and his approach must be individual and independent; independent, that is, of everyone but the Holy Spirit.

Thomas a Kempis says that the man of God ought to be more at home in his prayer chamber than before the public. It is not too much to say that the preacher who loves to be before the public is hardly prepared spiritually to be before them. Right praying may easily make a man hesitant to appear before an audience. The man who is really at home in the presence of God will find himself caught in a kind of inward contradiction. He is likely to feel his responsibility so keenly that he would rather do almost anything than face an audience; and yet the pressure upon his spirit may be so great that wild horses could not drag him away from his pulpit.

No man should stand before an audience who has not first stood before God. Many hours of communion should precede one hour in the pulpit. The prayer chamber should be more familiar than the public platform. Prayer should be continuous, preaching but intermittent.

It is significant that the schools teach everything about preaching except the important part, praying. For this weakness the schools are not to be blamed, for the reason that prayer cannot be taught; it can only be done. The best any school or any book (or any article) can do is to recommend prayer and exhort to its practice. Praying itself must be the work of the individual. That it is the one religious work which gets done with the least enthusiasm cannot but be one of the tragedies of our times.

Chapter 14

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, you 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 15

The Era of an Absentee God

"There are over many who have much knowledge and little virtue," said the blind saint, Malaval, "and who often speak of God while rarely speaking to Him."

These words were written a long time ago; whether they were true of Christians in Malaval's day I am not able to say; we have but his word for it. But I can testify that they describe vast numbers of Christians today.

The Bible teaches plainly enough the doctrine of the divine omnipresence, but for the masses of professed Christians this is the era of the Absentee God. Most Christians speak of God in the manner usually reserved for a departed loved one, rarely as of one present; but they do not often speak to Him.

Since errors are not equally harmful I suppose it is better to think of God as existing in some remote region of a lonely universe than not to think of Him at all or, worse, to deny outright that there is any such being as God. But truth is always better than error, and with the inspired Scriptures before us we need not think wrongly about such an important matter as this. We can know the truth if we will.

An Absentee God is among other things inadequate. He does not meet the needs of the being called man. As a baby is not satisfied away from its mother, and as life on earth is impossible without the sun, so human beings need a present God, and they can be neither healthy nor satisfied without Him. Surely God would not have created us to be satisfied with nothing less than His presence if He had intended that we should get on with nothing more than His absence. No. The Scriptures and moral reason agree that God is present.

Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden. Their fear and chagrin for the moment overcame their conscious need of God. Sin never feels comfortable in the divine Presence. Jonah, in his determined refusal to obey God's command, rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. Peter, with a sudden acute consciousness of personal guilt, sought not to flee from the Lord's presence but begged the Lord instead to depart from him. Men need God above everything else, yet are uncomfortable in His presence. This is the self-contradictory moral situation sin has brought us into.

A convinced atheist is more logical than a Christian who tries to worship an Absentee God. The atheist can ignore all moral and religious precepts without fear because he believes that there is no God to call him to account. His mental state is the same as that of a burglar who has talked himself into the belief that there are no policemen, no courts and no jails. Both may enjoy peace of mind for a while—till the truth catches up with them.

The notion that there is a God but that He is comfortably far away is not embodied in the doctrinal statement of any Christian church. Anyone who dared admit that he held such a creed would be considered a heretic and avoided by respectable religious people; but our actions, and especially our spontaneous utterances, reveal our true beliefs better than any conventional creed can do, and if we are to judge by these then I think it can hardly be denied that the average Christian thinks of God as being at a safe distance looking the other way.

One advantage gained from thinking of God as being absent is that we may assume that He is pleased with whatever we may be trying to do, as long as it is not downright wicked. There would seem to be no other way to account for the vast amount of religious nonsense being carried on these days in the name of the Lord. Ambitious persons burned up with desire to promote the kingdom hatch up religious schemes so moronic as to be altogether beyond credibility, and which would never be believed by serious-minded persons if they were not put on display in every city, town and hamlet throughout the country.

Since Protestants have no pope to keep them in line and since God is too far away to be consulted, the only limit to our modern religious folly is the amount the people will stand; and present indications are that they will stand plenty and pay for it, too. That the divine method and manner for evangelizing the world and conducting public services are set forth in the Holy Scriptures never seems to occur to the busy planners whom an Absentee God has left in charge of His affairs while he is away.

At the far end of the spectrum are the conventional churches. I think it is the deep-seated notion that God is absent that makes so many of our church services so insufferably dull. When true believers gather around a present Christ, it is all but impossible to have a poor meeting. The drabbest sermon may be endured cheerfully when the sweet fragrance of Christ’s presence fills the room. But nothing can save a meeting held in the name of an Absentee God.

Chapter 16

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 breakdowns 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 scripturalness 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 also 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 17

The Call to the Ministry

The Christian minister, as someone has pointed out, is a descendant not of the Greek orator but of the Hebrew prophet.

The differences between the orator and the prophet are many and radical, the chief being that the orator speaks for himself while the prophet speaks for God. The orator originates his message and is responsible to himself for its content. The prophet originates nothing but delivers the message he has received from God who alone is responsible for it, the prophet being responsible to God for its delivery only. The prophet must hear the message clearly and deliver it faithfully, and that is indeed a grave responsibility; but it is to God alone, not to men.

It is a dubious compliment to a preacher to say that he is original. The very effort to be original has become a snare to many young men fresh out of seminary who feel that the old and tried ways are too dull for them. These reject the pure wheat of the Word and try to nourish their congregations on chaff of their own manufacture, golden chaff maybe, but chaff nevertheless that can never feed the soul.

I heard of one graduate of a theological school who determined to follow his old professor's advice and preach the Word only. His crowds were average. Then one day a cyclone hit the little town and he yielded to the temptation to preach on the topic "Why God Sent the Cyclone to Centerville." The church was packed. This shook the young preacher and he went back to ask his professor for further advice in the light of what had happened. Should he continue to preach the Word to smaller crowds or try to fill his church by preaching sermons a bit more sensational? The old man did not change his mind. "If you preach the Word," he told the inquirer, "you will always have a text. But if you wait for cyclones you will not have enough to go around."

The true preacher is a man of God speaking to men; he is a man of heaven giving God's witness on earth. Because he is a man of God, he can speak from God. He can decode the message he receives from heaven and deliver it in the language of earth.

The response earth gives to the message of heaven at any given time varies with the moral conditions of those to whom it is addressed. The true messenger

of God is not always successful as men judge success. The message delivered in power has sometimes returned to destroy the messenger, as witness the slain prophets of Israel in Old Testament times, and Stephen, the first Christian martyr.

The true minister is one not by his own choice but by the sovereign commission of God. From a study of the Scriptures one might conclude that the man God calls seldom or never surrenders to the call without considerable reluctance. The young man who rushes too eagerly into the pulpit at first glance seems to be unusually spiritual, but he may in fact only be revealing his lack of understanding of the sacred nature of the ministry.

The old rule, “Don’t preach if you can get out of it,” if correctly understood, is still a good one. The call of God comes with an insistence that will not be denied and can scarcely be resisted. Moses fought his call strenuously and lost to the compulsion of the Spirit within him; and the same may be said of many others in the Bible and since Bible times. Christian biography shows that many who later became great Christian leaders at first tried earnestly to avoid the burden of the ministry; but I cannot offhand recall one single instance of a prophet’s having applied for the job. The true minister simply surrenders to the inward pressure and cries, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”

While there is only one way to become a true preacher, unfortunately there are many doors into the pulpit. One is to be endowed with what is sometimes called a “good pulpit presence.” Many a tall Absalom whose commanding presence and sonorous voice mark him as a natural leader of men is attempting to speak for God when he has not been sent by God. His call is from the people instead of from the Spirit and the results cannot but be disastrous.

Others have become ministers from a genuine but altogether human love for mankind. These have a strong sense of social obligation which they feel they can best discharge by entering the ministry. Of all wrong reasons for becoming a preacher this would seem to be the most laudatory, but it is nevertheless not a spiritually valid reason, for it overlooks the sovereign right of the Holy Spirit to call whom He will.

Most surely the church has a service of compassion to render to the world, but her motives are not humanitarian. They are higher than this by as much as the new creation is higher than the old. It is inherent in the Christian spirit that the followers of Christ should wish to minister to the bodies as well as the souls of men. But the call to give God’s prophetic message to the world is something apart.

The call to witness and serve comes to every Christian; the call to be a Voice to mankind comes only to the man who has the Spirit’s gift and special enabling.

We need not fewer men to show mercy, but we need more men who can hear the words of God and translate them into human speech.

Chapter 18

Perils of the Preacher

Some occupations have built-in hazards, such as that of the coal miner, the deep-sea diver and the steeplejack. Everyone knows that the men who follow these pursuits are in at least some degree of danger most of the time.

Contrasted with these the work of the ministry would appear to carry with it no danger at all. For physical hazard the ministry stands just about at the bottom of the list and the minister is considered one of the best actuarial risks any insurance company can handle.

Yet the ministry is one of the most perilous of professions. The devil hates the Spirit-filled minister with an intensity second only to that which he feels for Christ Himself. The source of this hatred is not difficult to discover. An effective, Christlike minister is a constant embarrassment to the devil, a threat to his dominion, a rebuttal of his best arguments and a dogged reminder of his coming overthrow. No wonder he hates him.

Satan knows that the downfall of a prophet of God is a strategic victory for him, so he rests not day or night devising hidden snares and deadfalls for the ministry. Perhaps a better figure would be the poison dart that only paralyzes its victim, for I think that Satan has little interest in killing the preacher outright. An ineffective, half-alive minister is a better advertisement for hell than a good man dead. So the preacher's dangers are likely to be spiritual rather than physical, though sometimes the enemy works through bodily weaknesses to get to the preacher's soul.

There are indeed some very real dangers of the grosser sort which the minster must guard against, such as love of money and women; but the deadliest perils are far more subtle than these. So let's concentrate on them.

There is, for one, the danger that the minister shall come to think of himself as belonging to a privileged class. Our "Christian" society tends to increase this danger by granting the clergy discounts and other courtesies, and the church itself helps a bad job along by bestowing upon men of God various sonorous honorifics which are either comical or awe-inspiring, depending upon how you look at them.

Seeing whose name he bears, the unconscious acceptance of belonging to a privileged class is particularly incongruous for the minister. Christ came to give,

to serve, to sacrifice and to die, and said to His disciples, “As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21). The preacher is a servant of the Lord and of the people. He is in great moral peril when he forgets this.

Another danger is that he may develop a perfunctory spirit in the performance of the work of the Lord. Familiarity may breed contempt even at the very altar of God. How frightful a thing it is for the preacher when he becomes accustomed to his work, when his sense of wonder departs, when he gets used to the unusual, when he loses his solemn fear in the presence of the High and Holy One; when, to put it bluntly, he gets a little bored with God and heavenly things.

If anyone should doubt that this can happen, let him read the Old Testament and see how the priests of Jehovah sometimes lost their sense of divine mystery and became profane even as they performed their holy duties. And church history reveals that this tendency toward perfunctoriness did not die with the passing of the Old Testament order. Secular priests and pastors who keep the doors of God’s house for bread are still among us. Satan will see to it that they are, for they do the cause of God more injury than a whole army of atheists would do.

There is the danger also that the preacher may suffer alienation of spirit from the plain people. This arises from the nature of institutionalized Christianity. The minister meets religious people almost exclusively. People are on their guard when they are with him. They tend to talk over their own heads and to be for the time the kind of persons they think he wants them to be rather than the kind of persons they are in fact. This creates a world of unreality where no one is quite himself, but the preacher has lived in it so long that he accepts it as real and never knows the difference.

The results of living in this artificial world are disastrous. There are no more casual conversations, there are only “conferences”; there are no more plain people such as our Lord loved so well, there are only “cases” and people with “problems.” The simple, unaffected candor that should characterize all relationships between the Christian and his fellow men is lost and the church is turned into a religious clinic. The Holy Spirit cannot work in such an atmosphere, and this in the end is calamitous, for without Him the work of the ministry becomes wood, hay and stubble.

Then there is always the danger that the minister may suffer detachment of sympathy and his attitude become abstract and academic, so that he loves mankind without loving people. Christ was the exact opposite of this. He loved babies, publicans, harlots and sick people, and He loved them spontaneously and individually. The man who claims to follow Him cannot afford to do otherwise.

Another peril that confronts the minister is that he may come unconsciously to

love religious and philosophic ideas rather than saints and sinners. It is altogether possible to feel for the world of lost men the same kind of detached affection that the naturalist Fabre, say, felt for a hive of bees or a hill of black ants. They are something to study, to learn from, possibly even to help, but nothing to weep over or die for.

Where this attitude prevails it soon leads to a stilted and pedantic kind of preaching. The minister assumes that his hearers are as familiar with history, philosophy and theology as he is, so he indulges in learned allusions, makes casual reference to books and writers wholly unknown to the majority of the people who listen to him, and mistakes the puzzled expression on the faces of his parishioners for admirations of his brilliance.

Why religious people continue to put up with this sort of thing, as well as to pay for it and support it, is beyond me. I can only add it to the long list of things I do not and probably never will understand.

Another trap into which the preacher is in danger of falling is that he may do what comes naturally and just take it easy. I know how ticklish this matter is and, while my writing this will not win me friends, I hope it may influence people in the right direction. It is easy for the minister to be turned into a privileged idler, a social parasite with an open palm and an expectant look. He has no boss within sight; he is not often required to keep regular hours, so he can work out a comfortable pattern of life that permits him to loaf, putter, play, doze and run about at his pleasure. And many do just that.

To avoid this danger the minister should voluntarily impose upon himself a life of labor as arduous as that of a farmer, a serious student or a scientist. No man has any right to a way of life less rugged than that of the workers who support him. No preacher has any right to die of old age if hard work will kill him.

Perhaps it should be said, however, that some men of God have learned to labor in the Holy Spirit and have thus escaped both idleness and death by exhaustion, and have lived to a great age. Such men were Moses and Samuel in olden times and men like John Wesley, Bishop Asbury, A.B. Simpson and Pastor Philpott of more recent times. These wrought mighty deeds without injuring their constitutions, but not every man has been able to find their secret. Charles Finney taught frankly that a man of God could hasten his end by carrying the burdens of a backslidden church, and he exonerated the preacher and blamed the church. Whether we agree with him or not, he is still a man whose convictions are not to be taken lightly.

Again, the usefulness of any minister may be greatly impaired by either of two opposite sins—too great flexibility or too great rigidity. Between these two rocks

there is a deep, clear channel, and blessed is the man who finds it.

To bend to the wishes of an unspiritual congregation on matters of morals or doctrine is a dark evil; to modify the sermon to please a carnal deacon is a deep sin; but to refuse to compromise on trivial matters reveals a spirit altogether out of harmony with that described by James in the third chapter of his epistle: “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17).

The evil of too great rigidity was noted by Thomas a Kempis:

> True it is that everyone willingly doeth that which agreeth with his own liking, and inclineth most to those that are of his own mind … but if God be among us we must sometimes cease for the sake of peace to adhere to our own opinion. Who is so wise that he can know all things? Be not therefore too confident in thine own opinion; but be willing to hear the judgment of others.

Two other perils to the man of God should be mentioned, and these also are opposites. One is to be elated by success and the other to be cast down by failure.

These may strike the reader as being trivial, but the history of the Christian ministry will not support this conclusion. They are critically dangerous and should be guarded against with great care. The disciples returned to Christ with brimming enthusiasm, saying, “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name,” and He quickly reminded them of another being who had allowed success to go to his head. “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven,” He said. “Rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:17-18,20).

The second of these twin dangers need not be labored. Every minister of the gospel knows how hard it is to stay spiritual when his work appears to be fruitless. Yet he is required to rejoice in God as certainly when he is having a bad year as when he is seeing great success.

It is not my purpose here to accuse or belittle, but to point out dangers. We are all objects of the malicious hatred of the devil, and we are safe only as we are willing to humble ourselves and accept help from each other, possibly even from one who is as weak and who stands daily in as great peril as this writer.

Chapter 19

Goodness and Greatness

When the mists have cleared away and all things appear in their proper light I think it will be revealed that goodness and greatness are synonymous. I do not see how it could be otherwise in a moral world.

In the meantime the two qualities are not the same but can be separated, and indeed are often contrary one to the other.

Judged by our tentative human standards, mankind may be divided into four distinct classes: Those who are great but not good; those who are good but not great; those who are both great and good, and those who are neither good nor great. In the Bible they stand out with great clarity.

Among those who were *great and good* is Abraham the Hebrew. By goodness here I mean moral soundness within the framework of the individual's understanding of it. Abraham was not perfect according to Christian standards, but his moral character nevertheless rose above that of his contemporaries like a mountain peak above the hills below.

For the greatness of the man no brief need be submitted here. He was a big man, a giant in a field of utmost importance, the field of religion. As the father of the faithful and founder of the nation of Israel his place has been long established.

In secular history it is not difficult to identify men who were *great but not good.* Three men of more recent times come at once to mind—Napoleon, Hitler and Stalin. However grudgingly we admit it, they were great men and must be acknowledged as such if we would be completely honest. A man who can forge out an empire, change radically the course of world history or hold in his iron control nearly a third of the human race must be called a great man, even a prodigy, regardless of what kind of personal character he may possess. And these men did these things. They were great but not good.

Then there are the men who are *good but not great,* and we may thank God that there are so many of them, being grateful not that they failed to achieve greatness but that by the grace of God they managed to acquire plain goodness.

These men move quietly enough across the pages of the Bible, but where they walk there is pleasant weather and good companionship. Such was Isaac, who was the son of the great father and the father of a great son, but who himself

never rose above mediocrity. Such were Boaz the ancestor of King David, Joseph the husband of Mary, and Barnabas the son of consolation.

Every pastor knows this kind—the plain people who have nothing to recommend them but their deep devotion to their Lord and the fruit of the Spirit which they all unconsciously display. Without these the churches as we know them in city, town and country could not carry on. These are the first to come forward when there is work to be done and the last to go home when there is prayer to be made. They are not known beyond the borders of their own parish because there is nothing dramatic in faithfulness or newsworthy in goodness, but their presence is a benediction wherever they go. They have no greatness to draw to them the admiring eyes of carnal men but are content to be good men and full of the Holy Spirit, waiting in faith for the day that their true worth shall be known. When they die they leave behind them a fragrance of Christ that lingers long after the cheap celebrities of the day are forgotten.

The fourth class consists of persons who are *neither great nor good.* Into this class fall the majority of men.

A Bible example of this kind of man was Ahab, the king of Israel. True he had the external trappings of greatness; he was a king. But the very contrast between what he should have been and was serves but to accent the shabby, contemptible character of the man. Beneath his royal robes beats the heart of a weakling. This whimpering, sulking fellow was the craven tool of a strong but vicious wife who corrupted him and ruined his people. He has not one lonely virtue to commend him. He was neither good nor great.

At the other extreme are the millions of common people who can claim neither goodness nor greatness. Thomas Gray in his exquisite *Elegy* describes those who have been overlooked by the world.

> Far from the madding crowd’s ignoble strife
> Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
> After the cool sequestered vale of life
> They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Beautiful as this thought is it yet represents what we want things to be rather than what they are. It raises tender feelings within us to dream of the noble masses of mankind living their hidden lives as pure as undiscovered gems and as fragrant as unseen flowers, but the hard facts are quite otherwise.

The masses of men are not great, but this does not argue them good. The truth is that they are almost without exception selfish, lustful, egotistical, opinionated,

vain and afraid. If this appears a harsh judgment on my fellow men, please know that I claim for myself no inspiration, and commend my readers to an inspired apostle. Read Paul's words in Romans 3:9-19 and Ephesians 2:1-3.

It remains only to be said that not all men can be great, but all men are called to be good by the blood of the Lamb and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 20

The Prayer of a Minor Prophet

The covenant and prayer of a preacher

Written in 1950, this chapter has been reprinted many times and widely circulated.

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 Savior 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 has 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 falleth 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 21

The Holy Spirit Is Indispensable

The continued neglect of the Holy Spirit by evangelical Christians is too evident to deny and impossible to justify.

Evangelical Christianity is Trinitarian: “Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost” is sung in almost every church every Sunday of the year; and whether the singer realizes it or not he is acknowledging that the Holy Spirit is God indeed with equal claim to be worshiped along with the Father and the Son. Yet after this claim is sung at or near the beginning of the service little or nothing is heard of the Spirit again until the benediction. Why?

There is no single answer to this question. The historic church has not as a rule done much better than we. The Apostles’ Creed dismisses the Holy Spirit with the words, “I believe in the Holy Ghost.” Various other ancient creeds follow this one-sentence acknowledgment. The Nicene Creed goes a bit further, saying, “And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Life-giver, that proceedeth from the Father, who with Father and Son is worshipped together and glorified together, who spake through the prophets.”

The Athanasian Creed, the fullest and most explicit of them all, attributes full deity to the Spirit, but while the right truth about the Father and the Son is set forth at considerable length in the document, the most that is said of the Spirit is this: “The Holy Ghost is of the Father and the Son: not made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.” The *Te Deum Laudamus*, that most famous and most beautiful of ancient Christian hymns, praises at great length the Father and the Son, but of the Spirit it says only, “Also, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.”

Is it not strange that so much is made of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament and so little in Christian writings supposed to be based upon the New Testament? One of the church fathers, in a treatise on the Trinity written in the third century, devotes to the Holy Spirit but six pages of a book 140 pages in length. While defending the deity of the Spirit, he yet says twenty times as much about the Father and the Son as about the Spirit.

I think it would be only fair to admit that there is more in the New Testament about the Son than about the Spirit, but the disproportion is surely not so great as in the writings referred to above, and certainly the all but total neglect of the Spirit in contemporary Christianity cannot be justified by the Scriptures. The

Spirit appears in the second verse of the first book of the Bible and in the last chapter of the last book of the Bible, as well as hundreds of times between the first and the last.

It is not, however, the frequency of the Spirit's mention in the Bible or in other writings that matters most, but the importance attached to Him when He is mentioned. And there can be no doubt that there is a huge disparity between the place given to the Spirit in the Holy Scriptures and the place He occupies in popular evangelical Christianity. In the Scriptures the Holy Spirit is necessary. There He works powerfully, creatively; here He is little more than a poetic yearning or at most a benign influence. There He moves in majesty, with all the attributes of the Godhead; here He is a mood, a tender feeling of good will.

According to the Scriptures everything God did in creation and redemption He did by His Spirit. The Spirit was found brooding over the world at the moment God called it into being. His presence there was necessary. The life-giving work of the Spirit is seen throughout the entire Bible; and it is precisely because He is the Lord and giver of life that the mystery of the Incarnation could occur. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

It is highly significant that our Lord, though He was very God of very God, did not work until "God anointed [him] with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 10:38). The Son did His work of love as a Spirit-anointed Man; His power derived from the Spirit of power.

It has been wisely suggested that a more revealing title for The Acts of the Apostles would be The Acts of the Holy Spirit. The men whose mighty deeds are recorded there could have done not one lone act of power if they had not been filled with the Spirit. Indeed the Lord specifically forbade them to try to do anything in their own strength. "But tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem," He told them, "until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

The only power God recognizes in His church is the power of His Spirit whereas the only power actually recognized today by the majority of evangelicals is the power of man. God does His work by the operation of the Spirit, while Christian leaders attempt to do theirs by the power of trained and devoted intellect. Bright personality has taken the place of the divine afflatus.

Everything that men do in their own strength and by means of their own abilities is done for time alone; the quality of eternity is not in it. Only what is done through the Eternal Spirit will abide eternally; all else is wood, hay, stubble.

It is a solemn thought that some of us who fancy ourselves to be important

evangelical leaders may find at last we have been but busy harvesters of stubble.

Chapter 22

Religion Can Be a Front or a Fount

If we think of the Christian religion as faith in Christ, love toward God and loving service toward men we can readily see how it may be a fountain of sweet water springing up unto eternal life. And such it is surely meant to be.

On the other hand, if we think of religion as the outward profession of inward grace (and it must be that to some extent), then we can see how it may become a mere facade behind which there is no reality, a showcase containing everything in the store, the shelves inside being completely bare. The passerby never dreams how empty the interior is until he goes inside and takes a look around; then he will understand that the window display has been a front to hide the poverty of the owner.

If these remarks should seem unpleasantly realistic, remember that the burden of the Old Testament was the disparity between the external and the internal life of Israel, and much of the preaching of Christ was directed against the Jews for their failure to be inwardly what their outward profession proclaimed them to be. Paul, too, warned of those who had but a form of godliness without the corresponding substance, and the history of the church provides all the proof we need that the temptation to make a front of religion is very real and very strong. Our wisest course will be not timidly to skirt this subject, but to face up to it and deal with it courageously.

The tendency to make a mere front of religion is strongest among persons engaged in professional Christian service, such as pastors, evangelists, teachers, Sunday school workers and those who write, edit, publish and promote religion generally. The Christian worker must be always ready to lead in public prayer or to offer a “word of prayer” under all sorts of circumstances and in almost every imaginable situation. He must be ready with a spiritual epigram for all occasions and on a moment’s notice must be able to come up with wise and devotional counsel for anyone who might ask for it. The necessity to say the godly thing at all times often forces him to display an enthusiasm he does not feel and to settle for others questions about which he is not too sure himself. His profession compels him to *seem* spiritual whether he is or not. Human nature being what it is, the man of God may soon adopt an air of constant piety and try to appear what the public thinks he is. The fixed smile and hollow tones of the

professional cleric are too well-known to require further mention.

All this show of godliness, by the squeeze of circumstances and through no fault of the man himself, may become a front behind which the man hides, a plaintive, secretly discouraged and lonely soul. Here is no hypocrisy, no intentional double living, no actual desire to deceive. The man has been mastered by the circumstances. He has been made the keeper of other people's vineyards but his own vineyard has not been kept. So many demands have been made upon him that they have long ago exhausted his supply. He has been compelled to minister to others while he himself is in desperate need of a physician.

While this condition prevails more widely than we like to admit, it must not be accepted as inevitable. There is a better, a truer, a happier way, and it is not hard to find. We need only be bold and frank about the whole thing and the remedy will soon be discovered.

Briefly, the way to escape religion as a front is to make it a fount. See to it that we pray more than we preach and we will never preach ourselves out. Stay with God in the secret place longer than we are with men in the public place and the fountain of our wisdom will never dry up. Keep our hearts open to the inflowing Spirit and we will not become exhausted by the outflow. Cultivate the acquaintance of God more than the friendship of men and we will always have abundance of bread to give to the hungry.

Our first responsibility is not to the public but to God and our own souls. Moses came down from the mount to speak to the people. Christ told His disciples to *tarry* before they *went.* Nicolas Grou refused to write a line until his heart was in a state of glowing worship. George Mueller would not step into the pulpit until he had first bathed his soul in prayer and was feeling within the stirrings of divine grace.

These men show us the way. It is by humility, simplicity and constant trustful communion with God that we keep the fountain open within our hearts.

Chapter 23

We Need Sanctified Thinkers

Part 1

The church today is languishing for men who can bring to the problems of religion reverent, courageous minds intent upon a solution.

Unfortunately fundamentalism has never produced a great thinker. One may examine the output of the religious press since the turn of the century and not find a single book written by a fundamentalist Christian that gives evidence of any real independent thought. And as for those Christian scholars who, while thoroughly orthodox, yet do not care to be classed with the fundamentalists, they have done little better.

Let it be understood by everyone that I am now and have always been an evangelical. I accept the Bible as the very Word of God and believe with complete and restful confidence that it contains all things necessary to life and godliness. I embrace the tenets of the historical Christian faith without reservation and am conscious of no spiritual sympathy with liberalism in any of its manifestations.

Yet it is my painful duty to record not only that I have not been challenged by the intellectual output of the evangelicals of this generation, but also that I have found evidence of genuine religious thinking almost exclusively on the side of those who for one or another reason are in revolt against fundamentalism. We of the gospel churches have sat quietly by and allowed those on the other side to do all the thinking. We have been content to echo the words of other men and to repeat religious cliches *ad nauseam*.

By this I do not mean to assert that there have been no good or useful books produced in gospel circles in the last fifty years. Undoubtedly there have been. Many good doctrinal books have appeared, mainly expositions of the Pauline Epistles. Some excellent devotional works have also been written, as well as some good Christian biographies and a number of fine books on foreign missions, not to mention a whole raft of books on revival, written usually by persons who never saw a revival of more than local proportions. All these books have served some good end, no doubt, and we may in all sincerity be grateful for them; but the trouble with them is that they are no more than rehashes of other works that have appeared before them. They carry no evidence that they are in any sense original. They were put together out of pieces borrowed from others rather than born out of the anguish and joy of personal experience. They cost the

authors nothing beyond the mechanical labor of writing them.

After committing myself to the foregoing sweeping statements I suppose I should provide myself with an escape hatch in case someone drops a depth charge in my vicinity. I admit that I am forced to speak within the framework of my own limited experience, and it could be that some great evangelical thinker has appeared unknown to me and written a masterpiece of which I have not yet heard. If this is so, then I am in error.

Again, if some of my readers should consider such a man as C.S. Lewis an original thinker, I might explain that I would classify Mr. Lewis as an apologist rather than as a creative religious writer. He brings to the defense of historic Christianity a mind as clear as sunlight and an amazing ability to make the faith of our fathers appear reasonable. His weakness, or rather the weakness of his books, lies in an almost total absence of moral urgency. One may read his arguments, admit their soundness and remain completely unmoved by the whole thing. In short, his books persuade the intellect but never get the conscience in trouble. For this reason C.S. Lewis must remain an apologist; he can never be a reformer.

While I am in my spiritual sympathies wholly on the side of the orthodox Christian faith, I am nevertheless forced to acknowledge that evangelicalism as it has been held and taught over the last half century has tended to paralyze the critical faculties and discourage vigorous thinking. Modern gospel Christians are parrots, not eagles, and rather than sail out and up to explore the illimitable ranges of the kingdom of God they are content to sit safe on their familiar perches and repeat in a bright falsetto religious words and phrases the meaning of which they scarcely understand at all. Another generation or two of this and what is now evangelicalism will be liberalism. No living thing can subsist for long on its yesterdays.

The Christians of this generation must see and hear something for themselves if they are to escape religious stultification. Effete catchwords cannot save them. Meanings are expressed in words, but it is one of the misfortunes of life that words tend to persist long after their meanings have departed, with the result that thoughtless men and women believe they have the reality because they have the word for it. That’s where we are now.

Part 2

The creative religious thinker is not a day-dreamer, not an ivory tower intellectual carrying on his lofty cogitations remote from the rough world. He is

more likely to be a troubled, burdened man weighed down by the woes of existence, occupied not with matters academic or theoretical but the practical and personal.

The great religious thinkers of the past were rarely men of leisure; mostly they were men of affairs, close to and very much a part of the troubled world. Neither will the sanctified thinker of our times be a poet gazing at a sunset from some quiet secluded spot, but one who feels himself a traveler lost in a wilderness who must find his way to safety. That others will later follow the path he makes will not be primary in his thinking. Later he will understand this, but for the time being he will be all engaged hunting the way out for himself.

To think well and usefully a man must be endowed with certain indispensable qualifications. He must, for one thing, be completely honest and transparently sincere. The trifler is automatically eliminated. He is weighed in the balance and found too light to be entrusted with the thoughts of God. Let but a breath of levity enter the mind and the power to do creative thinking instantly goes out. And by levity I do not mean wit or even humor; I do mean insincerity, sham, the absence of moral seriousness. Great thoughts require a grace attitude toward life and mankind and God.

Another qualification is courage. The timid man dare not think lest he discover himself, an experience to him as shocking as the discovery that he has cancer. The sincere thinker comes to his task with the abandonment of a Saul of Tarsus, crying, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). Thinking carries a moral imperative. The searcher for truth must be ready to obey truth without reservation or it will elude him. Let him refuse to follow the light and he dooms himself to darkness. The coward may be shrewd or clever but he can never be a wise thinker, for wisdom is at bottom a moral thing and will have no truck with evil.

Again, the effective religious thinker must possess some degree of knowledge. A Chinese saying has it, “Learning without thought is a snare; thought without learning is a danger.” I have met Christians with sharp minds but limited outlook who saw one truth and, being unable to relate it to other truths, became narrow extremists, devoutly cultivating their tiny plot, naively believing that their little fence enclosed the whole earth.

An acquaintance with or at least a perception of the significance of what Kant called “the starry heavens above and the moral law within” is necessary to right thinking. Add to this a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, a good historic sense and some intimate contact with the Christian religion as it is practiced currently and you have the raw material for creative thought. Still, this is not enough to make a thinker.

Man is a worshiper and only in the spirit of worship does he find release for all the powers of his amazing intellect. A religious writer has warned us that it may be fatal to “trust to the squirrel-work of the industrious brain rather than to the piercing vision of the desirous heart.” The Greek church father, Nicephorus, taught that we should learn to think with our heart. “Force your mind to descend into the heart,” he says, “and to remain there… When you thus enter into the place of the heart give thanks to God and, praising His mercy, keep always to this doing, and it will teach you things which in no other way will you ever learn.”

It is itself a cliche that the Christian faith is full of apparent self-contradictions commonly called paradoxes. One such paradox is the necessity to repudiate self and depend wholly upon God while at the same time having complete confidence in our own ability to receive and know and understand with the faculties God Himself has given us. That brand of humility which causes a man to distrust his own mentality to the point of moral diffidence and chronic irresolution is but a weak parody on the real thing. It is a serious reflection upon the wisdom and goodness of God to question His handiwork. “Does the clay say to the potter, What are you making?”

A religious mentality characterized by timidity and lack of moral courage has given us today a flabby Christianity, intellectually impoverished, dull, repetitious and, to a great many persons, just plain boresome. This is peddled as the very faith of our fathers in direct lineal descent from Christ and the apostles. We spoon-feed this insipid pabulum to our inquiring youth and, to make it palatable, spice it up with carnal amusements filched from the unbelieving world. It is easier to entertain than to instruct, it is easier to follow degenerate public taste than to think for oneself, so too many of our evangelical leaders let their minds atrophy while they keep their fingers nimble operating religious gimmicks to bring in the curious crowds.

Well, I dare to risk a prophecy: The sheep are soon going to become weary both of the wilted clover we are giving them and the artificial color we are spraying over it to make it look fresh. And when they get sick enough to leave our pastures, Father Divine, Mrs. Eddy and their kind will find them easy victims.

Christianity must embrace the total personality and command every atom of the redeemed being. We cannot withhold our intellects from the blazing altar and still hope to preserve the true faith of Christ.

Chapter 24

The Wasp and the Church Member

Once while walking among the hills of a southeastern state I noticed a piece of white paper lying by the roadside.

Its presence there was, under the circumstances, so unexpected that it aroused my curiosity. I picked it up and found written on it in a clear, legible hand these words: “In all the world there are only two creatures that are larger when they are born than when they get their growth; one is a wasp and the other is a church member.”

Whether this was a lost gem taken from a sermon delivered in a church somewhere among the hills or in the nearby town, or whether it had been placed there by some friendly philosopher who had observed my approach and dropped it there for my edification I will probably never know, but I found it more than a little interesting.

Not being an apiarist I am unable to judge the truth of the statement that a baby wasp is larger than an adult one; but that part about the church member I find too true to be amusing or even comfortable.

Knowing the good people of the hills as I do, and being familiar with their religious terminology, I am sure that the writer of the epigram meant the term “church member” to be understood as synonymous with Christian, and intended to say that his experience had taught him that the average Christian lost “size” and became less a Christian later on than when he was first converted.

Why do so many enthusiastic new converts later run out of steam and settle down to a life of dull religious routine? Why do they lose their first zeal and accept the dead average of subnormal spirituality they see about them as the best they can hope to maintain in this present world? Why are they often “smaller” after they have been on the way for several years than they were when they first started on their journey toward the Celestial City?

Now I do not insist that my description applies to all Christians. In fact I think our epigrammatist was covering too much territory when he gave the impression that *all* church members get smaller as they get older. I do not think they all do, but the fact that *some* do is enough to disturb one who loves the church and carries the welfare of the saints on his heart; and the fact that *any* do calls for prayer and careful investigation.

Could it be that after a joyful conversion many have without knowing it become enamored of their experience instead of fixing their eyes upon the Lord? Then when the novelty wears off their experience the joy and enthusiasm go out of their lives. What they should be taught is that a true Christian is converted to Christ, not to peace or rest or joy. These things will come in their time, but they will go again unless the gaze is fixed upon Christ who is the source and fountain of all spiritual delights.

Every emotion has its reaction and every pleasurable experience will dim after a while. The human organism is built that way and there is nothing we can do about it. It is well-known that the second year of marriage is often the most critical, for then the first excitement has worn off the relationship and the young couple has not had time to acquire a new set of common interests and to learn to accept a more stable if less emotional kind of life.

Only engrossment with God can maintain perpetual spiritual enthusiasm because only God can supply everlasting novelty. In God every moment is new and nothing ever gets old. Of things religious we may become tired; even prayer may weary us; but God never. He can show a new aspect of His glory to us each day for all the days of eternity and still we shall have but begun to explore the depths of the riches of His infinite being.

If we offer our converts something beside Christ or something in addition to Christ, we should not be disappointed if they do not run well or long. Novelty soon wears off everything, no matter how precious. When the interest begins to flag, we try to recapture it by fiery exhortations. I for one admit that I am weary of the familiar religious pep talk. I am tired of being whipped into line, of being urged to work harder, to pray more, to give more generously, when the speaker does not show me Christ. This is sure to lead to a point of diminishing return and leave us exhausted and a little bored with it all. And from there we may easily grow backward and become smaller and less fervent than when we were first converted.

I have spent many uncomfortable hours in prayer meetings listening to my brethren begging for blessings, but all prayer is comfortable when the heart is having fellowship with God and the inner eyes are looking upon His blessed face. I have suffered through many a dull and tedious sermon, but no sermon is poor or long when the preacher is showing me the beauty of Jesus. A sight of His face will inspire love and zeal and a longing to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God.

The sum of all this is that nothing can preserve the sweet savor of our first experience except to be preoccupied with God Himself. Our little rill is sure to run dry unless we keep it replenished from the fountain. Let the new convert

know that if he would grow instead of shrink he must spend his nights and his days in communion with the Triune God.

Chapter 25

Artificiality Is a Disease of the Soul

When I was a young lad and first beginning to observe the human scene, one thing that struck me forcibly was the artificiality of preachers. The world they inhabited was, it seemed to me, always once removed from reality.

I was not brought up in a Christian home and so was not accustomed to the conventional language of religion, and when I chanced occasionally to hear a sermon I listened with an ear undulled by familiarity. How strange the preachers sounded to me, how artificial their tones and how unnatural their demeanor.

They were men, obviously, but they lacked completely the candor and downrightness I knew so well in other men. The bold, man-to-man approach was missing. They seemed to be afraid of something, though I could not tell what, for certainly the tame, patient, almost indifferent persons who listened to them were harmless enough. No one paid much attention to what they said anyway. I am sure that if one of them had slyly interspersed into his sermon stray bits of the Gettysburg Address repeated backward few of those present would have noticed or cared. Yet they spoke so gingerly and apologetically that one got the impression that they would rather remain silent forever than to offend anyone. After listening to some of them now and again, I knew the meaning of the French saying (though I did not hear it till many years later), “There are three sexes: men, women and preachers.”

Now I am all for preachers and I do not expect them to be perfect, but I am all for downrightness, too. I think it highly improbable that anyone who speaks cautiously can speak effectively. His timidity will deactivate his effort and render it impotent.

It is true that the church has suffered from pugnacious men who would rather fight than pray, but she has suffered more from timid preachers who would rather be nice than be right. The latter have done more harm if for no other reason than that there are so many more of them. I do not think, however, that we must make our choice between the two. It is altogether possible to have love and courage at the same time, to be both true and faithful. “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6). It is the absence of salt that makes so much of our preaching vapid and dull. “Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?”

(Job 6:6).

Our theological schools may be at fault here. They strive to turn out preachers who will be all things to all men in a sense Paul never had in mind. They want their students to be cultured if it kills them and they begin by draining off all salt and leaving only a sweetness and light that appears to some of us to be neither sweet nor light. Everything natural is as far as possible refined away. All tang is eliminated from the speech, all angularity carefully filed off the language. The young man is trained to gesture gracefully, smile faintly and sound scholarly. The direct language that men naturally use when speaking to each other is edited out and a vague, stilted jargon is substituted for it. The total result is artificiality and ineffectiveness.

But back to my own experience: it was by the mercy of God that I was later permitted to hear an evangelist who was completely human and paid his hearers the compliment of assuming that they were human too. He knew what he wanted to say and said it fearlessly; and the people knew what he meant and either took it or left it. Thank God a good number of them took it.

Every man who stands to proclaim the Word should speak with something of the bold authority of the Word itself. The Bible is the book of supreme love, but it is at the same time altogether frank and downright. Its writers are never rude or unkind, but they are invariably honest and entirely sincere. A great sense of urgency is upon everything they write. They are deeply concerned with moral decisions. Protocol is of less interest to them than the glory of God and the welfare of the people.

One is tempted to offer advice to the young preacher to prevent him from becoming a mere purveyor of artificial religious platitudes, but further consideration shows how useless that would be. One might urge him to study the best writers and speakers, to strive to be original, to look at and through things before speaking of them, to avoid cliches, to speak in the vernacular; but this is to miss the point entirely. Religious artificiality is not a technical thing but a deeply human and spiritual one. It is a disease of the soul and can only be healed by the Physician of souls.

To escape the snare of artificiality it is necessary that a man enjoy a satisfying personal experience with God. He must be totally committed to Christ and deeply anointed with the Holy Spirit. Further, he must be delivered from the fear of man. The focus of his attention must be God and not men. He must let everything dear to him ride out on each sermon. He must so preach as to jeopardize his future, his ministry, even his life itself. He must make God responsible for the consequences and speak as one who will not have long to speak before he is called to judgment. Then the people will know they are

hearing a voice instead of a mere echo.

Chapter 26

Wanted: Courage with Moderation*

**This chapter appeared in* The Alliance Witness (*then* Weekly) *in July,* 1946.

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 un-Christlike qualities has been the source of heartache to how 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 cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth" (Isaiah 42:2–3). 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 to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected" (Luke 13:32). 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, 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, "yet breathing out threatenings" (Acts 9:1). 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 Savior 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 for 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 27

We All Think in Circles

Ministers and religious writers are often blamed for repeating themselves. The implication is that an idea, once it has been annunciated, should be left behind and mentioned no more forever, the notion being, apparently, that ideas are like birthdays: nobody can have the same one twice, or if he does, there is something wrong with his memory or his honesty.

The truth is that we all think in circles. It is totally impossible for anyone to take off on a train of thought and move away in a straight line from the point of departure. We are all compelled by the structure of our minds to move around a circle, passing every so often the same ideas, which appear to us as loved and familiar landmarks.

There are accessible to mankind only a relatively few ideas, and these make up the whole fabric of human thought possible to anyone from a schoolboy to Plato. *New facts* may be added to the sum of our knowledge day by day to the end of our lives, but these can do no more than enlarge the tapestry somewhat; they cannot change the color or alter the pattern appreciably. Greatness lies in the ability to combine and recombine the old and familiar ideas to form new and "original" beauties.

This is not to assert that all men are equal in their acquisition of ideas. Certainly they are not. Some try to weave with but a small fraction of the number of ideas they could possess if they would but take advantage of the opportunities life affords; consequently their tapestries are dull and monotonous. But the most learned scholar or the profoundest thinker has never more than a *relatively* few major ideas to work with.

If the mere statement of this fact should tend to discourage anyone, let us remember that the greatest artists of the centuries were compelled to paint their famous masterpieces with only seven basic colors. Their genius enabled them to create innumerable combinations and shades, but never to find any new colors. And the mighty works of a Beethoven or a Donizetti are but a handful of musical tones skillfully combined.

So the creative art of the genius as well as the humbler thoughts of the less endowed minister must move around the familiar circle. And this is true in every field of human thought, including Christian theology. There are, for instance,

150 psalms in our Bible, every one of which is a treasure in itself and inestimably precious to the worshiping heart. Yet if we were to eliminate all repetition we could reduce the whole collection to a mere half dozen or less. The same shining thoughts occur over and over again, as the colors in a painting or the notes in a symphony; but they never tire the mind that is aflame with the love of God; each old sweet thought seems as new and as fresh as if we had discovered it only a moment before.

In the New Testament the same thing is true. Were some critic to decide arbitrarily that he would not permit Paul to express the same idea twice, his thirteen epistles could be shortened from the eighty pages they now occupy in the average English Bible to a surprising few. Yet no Christian would think of permitting such an outrage. We want all the Pauline Epistles left just as they are. The ideas they contain are not many but they are like the pillars that uphold the universe, and up out of them rises the mighty soaring temple of Christian doctrine in whose shadow men have for centuries lived their joyous lives and for whose sake they have gladly laid their lives down when necessary.

Again, the hymnal reveals the same wealth of beauty growing up in wild profusion out of a few root ideas. Look at the index of any well-edited hymnal and you will see that the hymns found there cover a relatively few topics: God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the cross, the resurrection, et cetera. Examine any hymn, or ten hymns or 100, for actual theological ideas, and you will find only a few; but when combined and applied to human needs or offered as a lyric expression of loving worship these few ideas are all we need for this world and the next. So we sing in happy circles, and the recurrence of the familiar instead of boring us actually serves to delight us like the sight of home after a short time away.

Some preachers have such a phobia for repetition and such an unnatural fear of the familiar that they are forever straining after the odd and the startling. The church page of the newspaper almost any Saturday will be sure to announce at least one or two sermon topics so far astray as to be positively grotesque; only by the most daring flight of uncontrolled imagination can any relation be established between the topic and the religion of Christ. We dare not impugn the honesty or the sincerity of the men who thus flap their short wings so rapidly in an effort to take off into the wild blue yonder, but we do deplore their attitudes. No one should try to be more original than an apostle.

Chapter 28

Evangelical Snobbery

We are a bad lot, we sons of Adam. One convincing proof of our inherent badness is the way we manage to turn good into evil and make our very blessings a curse to us. Indeed I think a strong case can be made for the belief that sin is merely righteousness in reverse and evil but perverted good. Sin is at bottom the abuse of things in themselves innocent, an illegitimate use of legitimate gifts.

We Christians are cut from the same bolt as the rest of mankind, and while we have been made partakers of a new nature we have not yet been entirely divested of the old. For this reason we are under constant temptation to lapse into the flesh and manifest the old nature rather than the new. I know the arguments against this, but they have never seemed very convincing to me, especially when those who advance them are as likely as not to reveal pretty plain evidences of the old nature before the argument is ended.

Because we are so very human there is real danger that we may inadvertently do the human thing and turn our blessings upside down. Unless we watch and pray in dead earnest we may turn our good into evil and make the grace of God a trap instead of a benefit.

Among the purest gifts we have received from God is truth. Another gift almost as precious, and without which the first would be meaningless, is our ability to grasp truth and appreciate it. For these priceless treasures we should be profoundly grateful; for them our thanks should rise to the Giver of all good gifts throughout the day and in the night seasons. And because these and all other blessings flow to us by grace without merit or worth on our part, we should be very humble and watch with care lest such undeserved favors, if unappreciated, be taken from us.

Men are notoriously lacking in gratitude. Bible history reveals that Israel often took God’s gifts too casually and so turned their blessings into a curse. This human fault appears also in the New Testament, and the activities of Christians through the centuries show that as Christ was followed by Satan in the wilderness so truth is often accompanied by a strong temptation to pride. The very truth that makes men free may be and often is fashioned into chains to keep them in bondage. And never forget it: there is no pride so insidious and yet so

powerful as the pride of orthodoxy.

Snobbery is the child of pride. Pride at first may be eager and ambitious as it tries to make a place for itself or to prove that it has already attained that place. Later it loses its eager quality and becomes defensive. Finally it ceases to struggle or defend and accepts its own image of itself as something too well established for discussion and too beautiful to improve. When it reaches that stage it has produced a snob, and no snob is ever aware that he is one.

The snob whose claim to superiority is her material possessions is a comical figure, but because she is so pathetic she may with some effort be tolerated. The snob whose glory lies in her ancestors is less easy to endure, but she may be dismissed with the remark that since all she has to be proud of is her forebears the best part of her is underground. But what shall we say of the intellectual snob? He is unbearable, a man difficult to love and impossible to like.

A new school of evangelical Christianity has come up of late which appears to me to be in grave danger of producing a prime crop of intellectual snobs. The disciples of this school are orthodox in creed, if by that we mean that they hold the fundamental tenets of the historic faith; but right there the similarity of their school to New Testament Christianity ends. Their spirit is quite other than the spirit of the early church.

This new breed of Christian may be identified by certain field marks. One is the habit of puffing out the chest and uttering a noise that sounds suspiciously like crowing. Another is the habit of nesting so high that ordinary Christians have difficulty in locating the aerie, and when they do they are unable to climb to it. Then, the song is also quite noticeable in that it consists almost wholly of imitations. Rarely does one of them manage to give forth an original note, but each one waits to hear what Barth or Brunner or Bultmann or Tillich has to say and then imitates it as nearly as possible, only transposing it into the orthodox key. Their mating call is a shrill “Me too! Me too!” which may be heard any time between September and June ringing through the halls of various institutions of evangelical higher learning.

What is overlooked by this new school is that truth is not mental only but also moral. The Apostles’ Creed quoted in pride, though true, is not true for the one who thus quotes it; one indispensable quality is missing—humility. A theological fact becomes a spiritual truth only when it is received by a humble mind. The proud mind, however orthodox, can never know spiritual truth. Light means nothing to a blind man.

In the Christian life we know most when we know that we do not know, and we understand best when we know that we understand little and that there is much that we will never understand. In the Scriptures knowledge is a kind of

experience and wisdom has a moral content. Knowledge without humility is vanity. The religious snob is devoid of truth. Snobbery and truth are irreconcilable.

Chapter 29

I Believe in the Brotherhood of Man

Centuries before the present highly self-conscious and, in some quarters, legally enforced love feast between the races began, the Apostle Paul, a Jew, was saying to the Greeks at Athens, “God … hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:24,26).

That modern sociological discovery, the unity and equality of all men, is therefore very old hat indeed and not, as claimed, a new, advanced concept and a proof of human progress.

By teaching that all men have a common origin, the Bible, as usual, anticipated by several thousand years every sound thing that is being said today about human brotherhood. The book of Genesis lays down as a historical fact that the human race began with the original pair, Adam and Eve. All that now live or that have every lived descended from those first parents. According to the Bible, there has not been introduced into the human organism any non-Adamic strain that might have made for basic differences between men and men. Before the Flood of Noah God lumped the human inhabitants of the earth together under the generic title *man.* “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth” (Genesis 6:5). After the Flood He again referred to all peoples as *man.* “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man” (9:6).

The subsequent separation of Israel from the rest of mankind to fulfill the high purposes of God did not and could not make any biological difference between the Jew and Gentile. All men sprang from the loins of Adam and are born after the human pattern. While Israel received the adoption and the glory and the covenants, the giving of the Law and the service of God and the promises, and while it was through Israel that the Redeemer came, yet Israel is biologically one with all the rest of mankind. Christ recognized this and called Himself the Son of Man. He came *through* Israel but He came *to* the race of man.

Fundamentally all men are one. They are all members of the same order of created life and can never escape the vital unity that exists between them. No matter how they may war on one another they are still closer to each other than they can ever be to any other order of created life. They are brothers in Adam.

This knowledge does not by any means clear up the problem of differences

that exist between individuals, races and nations. These differences are incidental only and lie on the surface of our common life. Physiologically they have to do with size, body shape, skull structure and especially skin color. To these have been added over the centuries such further differences as political groupings, languages and social customs. Trifling as these may be, they appear important enough to cause no end of misery among men. Cain still slays Abel and Jacob cheats Esau out of his birthright. So it has always been and so it will always be, let the social dreamers say what they will.

And why must it always be so? Because the human race is morally and spiritually fallen. The much-talked-of human brotherhood is a brotherhood of fallen men. Should the hope expressed in the sticky little song be realized and "the world become one through a prayer" it would still be a lost world. Were the United Nations truly united they would still be but a confederation of nations in rebellion against God.

The very idea of human brotherhood, about which large numbers of pseudo-philosophers bleat so plaintively these days, rather than bringing us comfort should throw the fear of God into us, for the apostle Paul was long ago inspired to write "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). The unity of mankind with itself means universal condemnation for all its members.

Strange as it may seem, hope for all of us lies not in huddling up to the human race but in renouncing allegiance to the world altogether. To put our trust in a brotherhood of condemned men is but to die with them at last.

Highly significant among the words of the Christian message are the little prepositions "from" and "out" and "unto." The first call of the New Testament evangel is to repentance from sin, the next is to separation from the world. Not until the lost man has transferred his hope from human "togetherness" and fixed it upon Christ will he know the joy of sins forgiven and the deep, deep assurance that he has been reconciled to God. He must come out to come unto.

The brotherhood of man is a fact, but it carries with it no hope for the race. Out from this old condemned brotherhood Christ is calling unto Himself a people for His own possession. These are redeemed and regenerated men and women and they are saved by renouncing the original Adamic fellowship, not by cultivating it. Taken together they form a new human race, a brotherhood of ransomed men who are related to and yet separated from the fallen world as the ark of Noah was related to and yet separated from the waters of the Flood.

Chapter 30

Midsummer Madness*

**This chapter first appeared in* The Alliance Witness *in 1937. Twenty-three years later (1960) it was reprinted because, said Dr. Tozer, "apparently it had little or no effect, for the conditions it describes have grown increasingly worse year by year. And to make matters still more serious, crippled churches have now been accepted as normal…. When will this abuse end?" The article has been widely circulated since then and still bears repeating.*

As the sun makes its annual climb up from the outh a strange restlessness comes over those of our citizens who live north of the Mason-Dixon Line, and by the time summer has finally arrived this has increased into a pathological condition which turns the country into one vast cage of waltzing mice. A kind of madness grips the populace, and then begins that four-month frenzied effort on everybody's part to get somewhere other than where he is. No one stops to ask what it is all about, but practically everyone who is not in the hospital or in jail joins the general stampede from everywhere to anywhere and return.

An irresistible impulse picks most of us up like grains of dust caught by the wind, and spins and churns us about dizzily and dangerously till the first frost comes to ripen the pumpkin and drive home the trailers.

The sturdy old deacon who spent his entire life in the same county where he was born has passed and gone forever. He existed before the days of the modern nomad. Changing times have eliminated him as surely as the buggy shed and the hitching post. His chief use now is to decorate a museum along with the three-toed horse and the dinosaur.

His basic error was that he failed to take a vacation. He needed a change and a rest, also a bit of recreation; but not having heard of these wonderful aids to health and longevity, he kept his nose to the grindstone, raised ten healthy children, worked his own farm, attended the Baptist church four times a week and managed also to read one or two good books a month. Though he had failed to relax properly at yearly intervals, he could still shoot a squirrel out of a chestnut tree at a hundred yards without glasses and chin himself a dozen times

running when he was eighty-seven. When he finally died he was mourned sincerely by his family and a host of real neighbors who had learned to appreciate his sterling worth by living beside him for a lifetime.

How anyone can claim that his grandson, who changes apartments every two years and spends his summers roaring through the landscape in a cloud of fumes, is his equal in manly character is beyond comprehension. Goldsmith's famous lines come back to trouble the serious-minded:

> Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.

Now we believe in liberty as guaranteed by the Constitution and the inalienable right of every man to do as he likes as long as he stays within the law. If most of the population choose to forsake their homes and spend all their spare time scudding between filling stations, there is nothing we can do about it. To protest it is to blow against the wind or shout against the tide. However, some of us old-fashioned throwbacks to a saner if slower age may be forgiven if we indulge in a few honest tears for the havoc this midsummer madness works among the churches of this hectic day.

Even though the vacation habit is a craze and a curse, even though millions each season take long and expensive vacations from nothing more strenuous than loafing, we are still willing to concede that there might be some therapeutic value in a vacation trip where and when needed. I would surely not begrudge the hard-working man or woman a rest from the daily grind.

But the sad truth is that the vacation habit, plus the habit of making weekend trips throughout the summer season, has worked practically to paralyze the church of God for several months out of the year. Some churches close altogether, some are forced to give up evening services for the duration of the summer and many are compelled to join with several other churches in union services in order to have an attendance large enough to justify a meeting. Even full-gospel churches and tabernacles are seriously crippled, the finances go into the red, the morale suffers and faith burns down to a gray ash.

It is hard to understand how a follower of Christ can justify himself in laying down his cross so frequently and so shamelessly in this day of the world's judgment. The army of the Lord is the only army on earth where the soldiers expect a four-month furlough in time of war. It is an ironic fact that in the very months of the year when Satan is the busiest the children of God are the laziest. Hell reaps her harvest during the summer season, while the poor overburdened

heirs of the ages crisscross the continent at eighty miles an hour in a grim effort to relax.

If someone should remind me that it is during the summer that the great conventions and camp meetings are held, I would reply that a ten-day period of fun at a camp meeting is a poor substitute for a summer of faithful service back at the home church.

It is a pitiful thing to see on any summer Sunday morning a discouraged Sunday school superintendent standing before the tattered remnant of his school, trying to appear cheerful with half of his teachers missing. And it is a tragicomic sight to see a peripatetic playboy of the church getting down on his knees on a Saturday afternoon to thank God for that prosperity which enables him to desert the house of God more frequently than he was able to do in his leaner years, and pray for "journeying mercies" as he speeds away from his post of duty to commune with nature among sardine cans.

That the church of Christ should so completely succumb to this midsummer madness is proof enough of our low spiritual condition. It is little wonder that the people of the world smile cynically when we come back and go to work on them after the cool weather sets in. They do not take us seriously, and we have ourselves to thank for their attitude.

We need a revival! We need a revival of consecration to death, a revival of happy abandonment to the will of God that will laugh at sacrifice and count it a privilege to bear the cross through the heat and burden of the day. We are too much influenced by the world and too little controlled by the Spirit. We of the deeper life persuasion are not immune to the temptations of ease and we are in grave danger of becoming a generation of pleasure lovers.

Any who disagree with these conclusions are within their rights, and I would be the last to deny them the privilege. But in the name of a thousand struggling churches and disheartened pastors, may I not plead for a little more loyalty to the local church during this season of difficulty?

May God raise up a people who will consult their pleasures less and the great need more. I know of one successful layman who refuses again and again to take perfectly legitimate pleasure trips because he cannot bring himself to leave his class of adolescent Sunday school boys. May God multiply such men and women among us till the reproach of Egypt is rolled away and man's confidence in us restored.

Chapter 31

All Truths Agree in Christ

All truth is one and the many truths revealed in the holy Scriptures are but various facets of the one truth.

The follower of Christ is called upon to embrace all truths and every truth. That is, he must open his heart to God's truth, and having done so he must be prepared to accept all truths and reject none. Where one truth seems to contradict another, the wise Christian will not make his choice between them but will believe both and wait for the day of Christ to resolve what appears to be their differences.

Wherever men think and try to express their thoughts two types of mind are clearly revealed, the scientific and the poetic. I do not mean that all men are either poets or scientists; I mean rather that the cast of mind that makes a poet is marked in some men while others have a bent distinctly scientific. The one may never write poetry nor the other engage in scientific pursuits, but the bent is there.

The scientist is concerned with differences, the poet with likenesses. The poet may see the world in a grain of sand; the scientist is more concerned with the number and composition of the grains of sand in the world. I believe not only that this difference is among men, but also within each man. In every one of us there is somewhat of both scientist and poet until one gains the ascendancy and crowds the other out. Then we have a man bent only on analysis or a man incapable of analysis, a man altogether scientist or altogether poet—that is, only half a man.

Unfortunately this controversy between the poet and the scientist among men and within each man is found also in the field of religion. The Church of Christ has not escaped the conflict but has been pulled and torn by the play of these contrary forces. Strong leaders have risen to stamp their images upon whole denominations for centuries, and the body of believers has divided where the leaders differed. In one group certain truths have been ignored or suppressed to make greater room for other truths that were felt to be more important; in another the same thing has taken place with an opposite set of truths. Serious cleavage has been the result.

Those who insist upon seeing the world in a grain of sand have their slavish,

unthinking followers, and those who go doggedly about the task of counting the grains of sand in the world have theirs. The moral texture and spiritual complexion of the two groups are so completely different from each other that an uninformed but intelligent person who might chance to spend some time with each group could be forgiven for concluding that they drew their beliefs from different Bibles or perhaps even worshiped different gods.

There fell into my hands some time ago a new hymnbook. It came from a far country and looked inviting. I opened it eagerly with the hope of finding some rare psalm or hymn or spiritual song that I had not known before, but my hope was short-lived. The book was published by a Christian group of the sand-counting school of doctrine and I soon discovered that each hymn was a prosaic lesson intended to indoctrinate the user in a narrow, one-eyed view of Christianity. The breath of sacred poesy was absent from the book. It did not mount up on wings as an eagle but walked solemnly and awkwardly along the ground. What original songs it contained were stuffy, joyless, unlovely and weighed down heavily with the half-dozen doctrines this particular group has chosen for constant and monotonous emphasis. Worst of all, many of the old favorite hymns were there but so mangled and emasculated as to be almost unrecognizable. The editors did not play on David's harp; rather they used it as a sledge to hammer hard, angular doctrines into the heads of their followers. They did not intend that the hymns should give the singer joy, only that they should bring him into line and make him correct in his doctrinal position.

I believe the uninspired view of the Christian faith set forth in such a book to be a real tragedy for everyone concerned, but we cannot help things by going to the opposite extreme. We dare not turn our undisciplined imagination loose in the holy place. We dare not bring strange fire to the altar of God. We dare not trust the uninstructed religious teacher who finds equal inspiration in the sunrise and the book of Romans, who gives to Homer and Shakespeare the same authority that he gives to the prophets and apostles of the holy Scriptures.

It is necessary that we escape both the shackles of textualism and the irresponsible liberty of soulish emotionalism; that is, the scientist and the poet. To do this we must learn a few simple things:

Words are not truth, but caskets in which the gem of truth is carried. God will hold us responsible for meanings, not for texts only. If God is hard to satisfy, He is also easy to please. Love is more important than correct doctrine, though there is no incompatibility between the two: love without right doctrine is sentimentality and right doctrine without love is dead. Our spirits are vaster than our intellects and can penetrate behind the veil where our conscious thoughts cannot come. We may believe all that God has revealed, however self-

contradictory it may appear to be, because all truths meet and harmonize in the truth, and “the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

Chapter 32

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” (Luke 1:45).

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 pervades 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 33

Humility: True and False

For the Christian, humility is absolutely indispensable. Without it there can be no self-knowledge, no repentance, no faith and no salvation.

The promises of God are made to the humble: the proud man by his pride forfeits every blessing promised to the lowly in heart, and from the hand of God he need expect only justice.

We should not forget, however, that there is a pseudo-humility which can scarcely be distinguished from the real thing and which passes commonly among Christians without their being aware that it is false.

True humility is a healthy thing. The humble man accepts the truth about himself. He believes that in his fallen nature dwells no good thing. He acknowledges that apart from God he is nothing, has nothing, knows nothing and can do nothing. But this knowledge does not discourage him, for he knows also that in Christ he is somebody. He knows that he is dearer to God than the apple of His eye and that he can do all things through Christ who strengthens him; that is, he can do all that lies within the will of God for him to do.

Pseudo-humility is in truth only pride with a different face. It is evident in the prayer of the man who condemns himself roundly before God as weak, sinful and foolish but who would angrily resent the same thing being said about him by his wife.

Nor is such a man necessarily hypocritical. The prayer of self-condemnation may be completely sincere, and the defense of self as well, though the two appear to contradict each other. Where they are alike is in their being born of the same parents, self-love being the father and self-trust the mother.

The man filled with high self-regard naturally expects great things of himself and is bitterly disappointed when he fails. The self-regarding Christian has the loftiest moral ideals: he will be the holiest man in his church, if not the saintliest one in his generation. He may talk of total depravity, grace and faith, while all the time he is unconsciously trusting self, promoting self and living for self.

Because he has such noble aspirations, any failure to reach his ideals fills him with disappointment and disgust. Then comes the attack of conscience which he mistakenly believes to be evidence of humility but which is in fact no more than a sour refusal to forgive himself for falling below his own high opinion of

himself. A parallel is sometimes found in the person of the proud, ambitious father who hopes to see in his son the kind of man he himself had hoped to be and is not, and who when the son fails to live up to his expectation will not forgive him. The father's grief springs not from his love for his son but from his love of self.

The truly humble man does not expect to find virtue in himself, and when he finds none he is not disappointed. He knows that any good deed he may do is the result of God's working in him, and if it is his own work he knows that it is not good, however good it may appear to be.

When this belief becomes so much a part of a man that it operates as a kind of unconscious reflex he is released from the burden of trying to live up to his own opinion of himself. He can relax and count upon the Spirit to fulfill the moral law within him. The emphasis of his life shifts from self to Christ, where it should have been in the first place, and he is thus set free to serve his generation by the will of God without the thousand hindrances he knew before.

Should such a man fail God in any way he will be sorry and repent, but he will not spend his days castigating himself for his failure. He will say with Brother Lawrence: "I shall never do otherwise if You leave me to myself; it is You who must hinder my falling and mend what is amiss," and after that "give himself no further uneasiness about it."

It is when we read the lives and writings of the saints that false humility becomes particularly active. We read Augustine and know that we have not his intellect; we read Bernard of Clairvaux and feel a heat in his spirit which is not in our own in anything like equal degree; we read the journal of George Whitefield and are forced to confess that compared with him we are mere beginners, spiritual tyros, and that for all our supposed "busy lives" we get little or nothing accomplished. We read the letters of Samuel Rutherford and feel that his love for Christ so far outstrips our own that it would be folly to mention the two in the same breath.

It is then that pseudo-humility goes to work in the name of true humility and brings us to the dust in a welter of self-pity and self-condemnation. Our self-love turns on us angrily and reproaches us in great bitterness for our lack of godliness. Let us be careful here. What we believe to be penitence may easily be a perverted form of envy and nothing more. We may simply envy these mighty men and despair of ever equaling them and imagine we are very saintly for feeling cast down and discouraged.

I have met two classes of Christians: the proud who imagine they are humble and the humble who are afraid they are proud. There should be another class: the self-forgetful who leave the whole thing in the hands of Christ and refuse to

waste any time trying to make themselves good. They will reach the goal far ahead of the rest.

Chapter 34

Let’s Break That “Guilty Silence”

One of the great saints of the past, in a well-known hymn, calls on his tongue to break its “guilty silence” and praise the Lord.

The logic behind the stanza is that if it is right to praise God it is wrong not to praise Him and for that reason the tongue that is silent is sinful. Dr. R.A. Torrey taught that, since the greatest commandment is to love God, the greatest sin is failure to love Him. Such sins as not praising and not loving are called “sins of omission” because no positive act has been committed. The guilt lies in what is *not* done and might be designated as passive guilt rather than active. But though passive, it is nonetheless real.

Under the Law of Moses a man could incur guilt by keeping still about some evil he knew was present in the camp of the Lord, and in the New Testament James tells us bluntly, “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). Is it not a serious thought that many clean-living, decent persons, against whom no overt act of wrongdoing can be charged, may yet be deeply guilty and inwardly stained with the sin that does not show, the sin of silence and inaction? There are moral situations where it is immoral to say nothing and basely immoral to do nothing.

The Bible has much to say in praise of prudence and circumspection, but it has nothing but condemnation for the coward. It is plainly taught in the New Testament that the soul that is too timid to own Christ before men on earth will be denied before the Father who is in heaven (Matthew 10:33). And in the book of the Revelation the fearful are classed with the unbelievers, the murderers, the whoremongers, the sorcerers, the liars, and all are relegated to the lake which burns with fire and brimstone (Revelation 21:8). Obviously moral cowardice is a sin, a grave and deeply injurious sin.

The fear that keeps us quiet when faith and love and loyalty cry out for us to speak is surely evil and must be judged as evil before the bar of eternal justice. The fear that prevents us from acting when the honor of God and the good of mankind call for bold action is unalloyed iniquity. God will not overlook it and, if it is persisted in, He will not forgive it.

The sinfulness of silence and inaction is more than academic; it is sharply practical and may impinge upon the soul of any one of us at anytime. Let a

moral situation shape itself so that righteousness demands speech and action, and theory becomes practical fact instantly. We have but to keep still and sit tight to become guilty of real sin.

The world situation today is such that sin by silence may be more widespread than at any other time in the history of the world. For the first time in human history a shockingly wicked ideology has been organized into a world conspiracy, shrewd, cruel, inhuman and fanatically determined. Of course, I mean international communism, the devil's most cunning and most effective imitation of Christianity to date. It is as if the boiling cauldrons of Gehenna had sprung a leak and the noxious vapors had entered the brains of men and turned them into moral cavemen without any conscience or any sense of common decency. They appear to be possessed and morally demented to a degree known nowhere else on earth. These men, though numerically few, yet constitute a threat to the world so grave, so deadly, that nothing else on earth can be compared to it.

Standing as we do under the shadow of such a mighty evil, how can any informed person be still? How can any member of the noncommunist world be indifferent as he sees every value that differentiates man from the beasts being destroyed and every spiritual quality that makes life worth the living being extinguished? The statesman who refuses to take sides has already taken sides. His tolerance has made him a traitor to his own country and to the human race.

Serious as all this may be, there is something more serious still. It is the failure to take sides and to speak up when the enemy stalks into the very sanctuary and pollutes the holy place. Precious as human values may be, such values as freedom and decency and the dignity of the individual, divine values, are infinitely more precious. As high as is the heaven above the earth so great are the spiritual treasures revealed to us by the inspiration of the Spirit and secured to us by the blood of the everlasting covenant. The wisdom of God contained in the message and practice of the redemptive revelation is above a king's ransom.

> For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. (Proverbs 3:14–17)

At this hour in world history the state of religion is such that the church is in grave danger of losing this priceless treasure. Her gold is being turned to copper

and her diamonds to glass. The religion of Cain is now in the ascendancy—and marching under the banner of the cross. Even among those who make a great noise about believing the Bible, that Bible has virtually no practical influence left. Fiction, films, fun, frolic, religious entertainment, Hollywood ideals, big business techniques and cheap, worldly philosophies now overrun the sanctuary. The grieved Holy Spirit broods over the chaos but no light breaks forth. “Revivals” come without rousing the hostility of organized sin and pass without raising the moral level of the community or purifying the lives of professing Christians. Why?

Could it be that too many of God’s true children, and especially the preachers, are sinning against God by guilty silence? When those whose eyes are opened by the touch of Christ become vocal and active God may begin to fight again on the side of truth. I for one am waiting to hear the loud voices of the prophets and reformers sounding once more over a sluggish and drowsy church.

They’ll pay a price for their boldness, but the results will be worth it.

Chapter 35

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. "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor … and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3).

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" (Mark 12:44). 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 First-born 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 backyard 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.

Chapter 36

The Dangers of Too Much Liberty

Freedom is priceless. Where it is present almost any kind of life is enjoyable. When it is absent life can never be enjoyed; it can only be endured.

Though millions have died in freedom's defense and though her praise is in everyone's mouth, yet she has been tragically misunderstood by her advocates and sorely wounded in the house of her friends. I think the difficulty lies with our failure to distinguish freedom from liberty, which are indeed sisters but not identical twins.

Freedom is liberty within bounds: liberty to obey holy laws, liberty to keep the commandments of Christ, to serve mankind, to develop to the full all the latent possibilities within our redeemed natures. True Christian liberty never sets us free to indulge our lusts or to follow our fallen impulses.

The desire for unqualified freedom caused the fall of Lucifer and wrought the destruction of the angels that sinned. These sought freedom to do as they willed, and to get it they threw away the beautiful liberty that meant freedom to do the will of God. And the human race followed them in their tragic moral blunder.

To anyone who bothers to think a bit it should be evident that there is in the universe no such thing as absolute freedom. Only God is free. It is inherent in creaturehood that its freedom must be limited by the will of the Creator and the nature of the thing created. The glory of heaven lies in the character of the freedom enjoyed by those who dwell therein. That innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and Church of the First-born and the spirits of just men made perfect are at liberty to fulfill all the broad purposes of God, and this liberty secures for them an infinitely greater degree of happiness than unqualified freedom could do.

Unqualified freedom in any area of human life is deadly. In government it is anarchy, in domestic life free love and in religion antinomianism. The freest cells in the body are cancer cells, but they kill the organism where they grow. A healthy society requires that its members accept a limited freedom. Each must curtail his own liberty that all may be free, and this law runs throughout all the created universe, including the kingdom of God.

Too much liberty weakens whatever it touches. The corn of wheat can bring forth fruit only as it waives its freedom and surrenders itself to the laws of

nature. The robin may fly about all summer enjoying her freedom, but if she wants a nest full of fledglings she must sit for weeks a voluntary captive while the mystery of life gestates beneath her soft feathers. She has her choice: be free and barren or curtail her freedom and bring forth young.

Every man in a free society must decide whether he will exploit his liberty or curtail it for intelligent and moral ends. He may take upon him the responsibility of a business and a family and thus be useful to the race, or he may shun all obligations and end on skid row. The tramp is freer than president or king, but his freedom is his undoing. While he lives he remains socially sterile and when he dies he leaves behind him nothing to make the world glad he lived.

The Christian cannot escape the peril of too much liberty. He is indeed free, but his very freedom may prove a source of real temptation to him. He is free from the chains of sin, free from the moral consequences of evil acts now forgiven, free from the curse of the law and the displeasure of God. Grace has opened the prison door for him, and like Barabbas of old he walks at liberty because Another died in his stead.

All this the instructed Christian knows and he refuses to let false teachers and misguided religionists rivet a yoke of bondage upon his neck. But now what shall he do with his freedom? Two possibilities offer themselves. He may accept his blood-won freedom as a cloak for the flesh, as the New Testament declares that some have done, or he may kneel like the camel to receive his voluntary burden. And what is this burden? The woes of his fellowmen which he must do what he can to assuage; the debt which he along with Paul owes to the lost world; the sound of hungry children crying in the night; the church in Babylonian captivity; the swift onrush of evil doctrines and the success of false prophets; the slow decay of the moral foundations of the so-called Christian nations, and whatever else demands self-sacrifice, cross-carrying, long prayer vigils and courageous witness to alleviate and correct.

Christianity is the religion of freedom and democracy is freedom in organized society, but if we continue to misunderstand this freedom we may soon have neither Christianity nor democracy. To protect political liberty free men must lay a voluntary obligation upon themselves; to preserve the religion of salvation by free grace a great many Christians must waive their right to be free and take upon themselves a load greater than they have ever carried before.

When in danger the state can conscript men to fight for her freedom, but there are no conscripts in the army of the Lord. To bear a cross the Christian must take it up of his own free will. No authority can compel us to feed the hungry or evangelize the lost or pray for revival or sacrifice ourselves for Christ’s sake and the sake of suffering humanity.

The ideal Christian is one who knows he is free to do as he will and *wills* to be a servant. This is the path Christ took; blessed is the man who follows Him.

Chapter 37

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 nightclubbing 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 38

We Are Becoming What We Love*

**This chapter was written for* Eternity Magazine *and is included here with the kind permission of the editors of that magazine.*

"To be another than I am I must abandon that I am."—Chrysostom

We are all in process of becoming. We have already moved from what we were to what we are, and we are now moving toward what we shall be.

That our character is not solid but fluid is not in itself a disturbing thought. Indeed, the man who knows himself may take great comfort in the realization that he is not fixed in his present state, that he may cease to be what he is ashamed that he has ever been and go on to be "remolded nearer to the heart's desire."

The perturbing thought is not that we are becoming, but *what* we are becoming; not that we are moving, but *toward what* we are moving. For it is not in human nature to move on a horizontal plane; we are either ascending or descending, mounting up or sinking down. When a moral being travels from one to another position, it must always be toward the worse or toward the better. This corresponds to a spiritual law revealed in the Revelation. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Revelation 22:11).

Not only are we all in the process of becoming, *we are becoming what we love.* We are to a large degree the sum of our loves and we will of moral necessity grow into the image of what we love most; for love is among other things a creative affinity; it changes and molds and shapes and transforms. It is without doubt the most powerful agent affecting human nature next to the direct action of the Holy Spirit of God within the soul.

What we love is therefore not a small matter to be lightly shrugged off; rather it is of present, critical and everlasting importance. It is prophetic of our future. It tells us what we shall be, and so predicts accurately our eternal destiny.

Loving wrong objects is fatal to spiritual growth; it twists and deforms the life

and makes impossible the appearing of the image of Christ in the soul. It is only as we love right objects that we become right, and only as we go on loving them that we continue to experience a slow but continuous transmutation toward the objects of our purified affection.

This furnishes in part (but only in part) a rational explanation for the first and greatest commandment: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37).

To become like God is and must be the supreme goal of all moral creatures. This is the reason for their creation, the end apart from which no excuse can be found for their existence. Leaving out of consideration for the moment those strange and beautiful heavenly beings of which we have hints in the Bible but about which we know so little, we concentrate upon the fallen race of mankind. Once made in the image of God we kept not our first estate, but left our proper habitation, consorted with Satan and

> walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. (Ephesians 2:2–5)

The supreme work of Christ in redemption is not to save us from hell but to restore us to Godlikeness again, the purpose being stated in Romans: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29).

While perfect restoration to the divine image awaits the day of Christ’s appearing, the work of restoration is now going on. There is a slow but steady transmutation of the base metal of human nature into the gold of Godlikeness effected by the faith-filled gaze of the soul at the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Right here we might do well to anticipate a difficulty and try to clear it away, a difficulty that arises from an erroneous conception of love. The problem may be stated this way: Love is whimsical, unpredictable and almost wholly beyond our control. It springs up and burns on or dies of itself. How then can we control our love? How can we direct it toward worthy objects? And particularly, how can we force it to rest on God as the proper and permanent object of its devotion?

Were love indeed unpredictable and beyond our control, these questions could have no satisfactory answers and our outlook would be hopeless. The simple

truth is, however, that spiritual love is not the capricious and irresponsible emotion men mistakenly believe it to be. It is the servant of the will and must ever go where it is sent and do what it is told. The romantic phrase “fall in love” has given people the notion that we are perforce victims of the arrows of Cupid and can have no control over our affections. The average young person these days expects to fall in love after the love-in-idleness pattern of Oberon and Titania and be swept away by a tempest of delightful emotions. Unconsciously we extend this concept of love to our relation to our Creator and ask, How can we make ourselves love God supremely?

The answer to this and all related questions is that the love we have for God is not the love of *feeling*, but the love of *willing*. Love is within our power of choice, otherwise we would not be commanded to love God nor be held accountable for not loving Him.

The taking over of the romantic love ideal into our relation to God has been extremely injurious to our Christian lives. The idea that we should “fall in love” with God is ignoble, unscriptural, unworthy of us and certainly does no honor to the Most High God. We do not come to love God by a sudden emotional visitation. Love for God results from repentance, amendment of life and a fixed determination to love Him. As God moves more perfectly into the focus of our hearts, our love for Him may indeed rise and swell within us till like a flood it sweeps everything before it.

But we should not wait for this intensity of feeling. We are not responsible to *feel* but we *are* responsible to love, and true spiritual love begins in the will. We should set our hearts to love God supremely, however cold or hard they may seem to be, and go on to confirm our love by careful and happy obedience to His Word. Enjoyable emotions are sure to follow. Bird song and blossoms do not make the spring, but when the spring comes they come with it.

Now I would hasten to disclaim all sympathy with the popular salvation-by-willpower cult. I am in radical disagreement with all forms of quasi-Christianity that depend upon the “latent power within us” or trust to “creative thinking” instead of to the power of God. All these paper-thin religious philosophies break down at the same place—in the erroneous assumption that the stream of human nature can be made to run backward up over the falls. This it can never do. “Salvation is of the Lord.”

To be saved a lost man must be picked up bodily by the power of God and raised to a higher level. There must be an impartation of divine life in the wonder of the second birth before the words of the apostle apply to him: “But we all, 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” (2

Corinthians 3:18).

It has been established here, I hope, that human nature is in a formative state and that it is being changed into the image of the thing it loves. Men and women are being molded by their affinities, shaped by their affections and powerfully transformed by the artistry of their loves. In the unregenerate world of Adam this produces day-by-day tragedies of cosmic proportions. Think of the power that turned an innocent pink-cheeked boy into a Nero or a Himmler. And was Jezebel always the "cursed woman" whose head and hands the very dogs, with poetic justice, refused to eat? No; once she dreamed her pure girlish dreams and blushed at the thoughts of womanly love; but soon she became interested in evil things, admired them and went on at last to love them. There the law of moral affinity took over and Jezebel, like clay in the hand of the potter, was turned to the deformed and hateful thing that the chamberlains threw down from the window.

For His own children our heavenly Father has provided right moral objects for admiration and love. These are to God as the colors in the rainbow round about the throne. They are not God but they are nearest to God; we cannot love Him without loving them and as we love them we are enabled to love Him more. What are they?

The first is *righteousness.* Our Lord Jesus loved righteousness and hated iniquity (Hebrews 1:9), and for this reason God anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Here the pattern is fixed. To love is also to hate. The heart that is drawn to righteousness will be repulsed by iniquity in the same degree, and this moral repulsion is hate. The holiest man is the one who loves righteousness most and hates evil with the most perfect hatred.

The next is *wisdom.* From the Greeks we take the word "philosophy," the love of wisdom, but before the Greek philosophers were the Hebrew prophets and their concept of wisdom was loftier and more spiritual than anything known in Greece. The wisdom literature of the Old Testament—Proverbs, Ecclesiastes (and to some degree the Psalms)—breathes with a love of wisdom unknown even to Plato.

So high do the Old Testament writers place wisdom that sometimes we can scarcely distinguish the wisdom that comes from God from the wisdom that is God. The Hebrews anticipated by some centuries the Greek idea of God as essential wisdom, though their concept of wisdom was less intellectual than moral. To them the wise man was the good man, the godly man, and wisdom at its noblest reaches was to love God and keep His commandments. The Hebrew thinker could not divorce wisdom from righteousness. Two of the greatest of the apocryphal books, *Wisdom of Solomon* and *Ecclesiasticus*, celebrate the wisdom

that consorts with righteousness with an eloquence that is sometimes equal to that of the canonical Scriptures.

Another object for Christian love to fix upon is *truth*, and again we have difficulty separating the truth of God from God Himself. Christ said, “I am the truth,” and in so saying joined truth and the Deity in inseparable union. To love God is to love truth, and to love truth with steadfast ardor is to grow toward the image of truth and away from the lie and the error.

It is unnecessary to name or try to name all the other good and holy things God has approved as our models. The Bible sets them before us—mercy, kindness, purity, humility and many more, and the Spirit-taught souls will know what to do about them.

The sum of it all seems to be that we should cultivate interest in and love for the morally beautiful. Was that why Paul wrote to the Philippians (Philippians 4:8): “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things”?

Chapter 39

The Waning Authority of Christ in the Churches*

**This article appeared in* The Alliance Witness *May15,1963, just two days after the death of Dr. Tozer. In a sense it was his valedictory, for it expressed the concern of his heart. Because of its wide acceptance it has been included in this selection.*

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” (Ezra 9:6). 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" (Matthew 11:28) or "Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:1), 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 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 less degree) into the other groups such as the full gospel tabernacles, the holiness churches, the pentecostal and fundamental churches and the many independent and undenominational 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 decision lies with us.

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