

new covenant Voice

*The Cross
leads to the Spirit,
and the Spirit back
again to the Cross.*

Andrew Murray

But ye are come unto mount
Sion, and unto the city of the
living God, the heavenly
Jerusalem, and to an
innumerable company of angels
to the general assembly and
church of the firstborn, which are
written in heaven, and to GOD
the Judge of all, and to the
spirits of just men made perfect
and to JESUS the mediator of the
new covenant, and to the blood
of sprinkling, that speaketh
better things than that of Abel
See that ye refuse not him that
speaketh

HEBREWS 12:22-25

GOD'S ORDINANCES

GEORGE W. NORTH

One of the worst follies which has marked the Church from earliest times is its seeming inability to distinguish between the typical and the real. This is an easy mistake to make, for it is commonly taught that the age of type and shadow has passed away and that we are now entered upon the age of reality. As a general statement of truth this is absolutely without challenge, but there are several particulars in which it is not so. Only in some areas, chiefly those that have to do with sacrifice and offering, is it true to say that the age of type and shadow has passed. Perhaps two chapters in Hebrews will help toward a clearer understanding of this:

1. Chapter ten commences, 'The law having a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the things':
2. Chapter eleven opens, 'Now faith is the substance'. So we have 'shadow' and 'substance' brought together and contrasted. But it would be absolute folly to believe that the 'law' age was nothing but shadow and that there was no 'substance' about anything or anybody during that period. Indeed the eleventh chapter furnishes us with information about facts and acts of men and women that are only mentioned because of the substance of faith displayed in and by them. The Tabernacle/Temple with all the implements of service as well as the system of atonements practised by the priesthood therein, were all utterly typical insofar as they were pictures Christ and His work. For that reason they have been done away, because the real Christ came and fulfilled all that for which they stood.

Nothing but deepest gratitude ought to be found in our hearts for this. The unprofitability and weakness of the legal system lay entirely in the human element involved in it in a twofold way:

1. The human element of Jesus was missing from the animals and other material artifacts that represented Him.
2. The humans who represented Him were sinful men. Therefore as soon as it was possible to do so, God finished with it altogether.

Paul put it perfectly when he said, 'we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin'. The weakness and unprofitability of the law lay in its inability to produce what God wanted, it could not bring many sons into glory, therefore the law had to give way to something which could fulfil its wishes, viz the 'great salvation' of Jesus Christ. However, because Jesus Christ has done away with all the outward things of salvation and worship and service of the law, He has not ended the righteousness of the law. Indeed only because He fulfilled the righteousness of the oral and written law could He terminate the Aaronic sacrificial system it engendered. When He had done the latter He removed it, but His mark remains forever the fulfilment of both parts. The first or oral part to be retained as spiritual, the

latter to be removed because it was carnal, that is, it subsisted in carnal elements.

FIVE ORDINANCES

It may not be realized that though the Lord concluded and removed the carnal outward elements of the law, He did not thereby entirely finish with outward carnal things. To the contrary he has instituted several carnal ordinances in the Church which are to remain as fundamentally necessary to us as were those of the former age to the Children of Israel. Each one of these is now as typical to us as were they to them. The tragedy of the Church in this age is that just as the Children of Israel mistook the typical for the real, so also do the vast number of modern people mistake the practise of the present ordinances for reality. Doing so the spiritual meaning and power of them are lost. The ordinances given by the Lord to the Church on earth are far fewer in number than those He gave to Israel, but they are just as binding upon us as were theirs upon them. They are five in number, namely: Baptism, Communion, Head-covering, Laying on of hands, the Collection. Each of these has a very real place in the Church and is by command of God. Every local church ought to practise them as of obedience to Christ, for the Lord instituted them for our good. That some may find themselves in no need of the fourth ordinance does not constitute ground for denying this rite, nor developing a philosophy that argues against its necessity. Laying on of hands, in common with the other four ordinances, is a fundamental practise in the Church for two purposes:

1. The impartation of the Holy Ghost
2. The healing of the sick (accompanied by anointing with oil).

For the following reasons, some people may never have need of ministry for either of these experiences:

1. Because God imparted the Holy Spirit to them by some other means.
2. They have never been sick, or have been healed of God apart from the administration of the ordinance.

Such a person has much for which to be thankful to God, but because he has been so blessed does not in any degree minimise the importance or necessity of the institution. There have been (and presumably still are) those who have not been outwardly baptized in water, nor have partaken of the Communion, yet have undoubtedly entered into the spiritual truth of which they speak. But true as this may be, in neither case does that fact either deny the validity or the necessity of the ordinance. The same may also be said about the third and fifth of these ordinances. Strange as it may seem, none of these was instituted because it is impossible for

a person to enter into the spiritual truth of which they speak in any other way than by submission to the administration of the particular outward forms connected with them.

SPIRITUAL NECESSITIES

The ordinances were instituted by the Lord that they might be simple parabolic enactments before everyone's eyes of vital spiritual necessities. The first thing for everyone to realize is that they were given unto men that they may be practised before Him and done as unto Him, that is, for His glory. The ordinances are given to us primarily to be acts of responsive love to the Lord, and only secondarily as means of blessing to us. The necessity therefore lies only in the act of obedience, for in no case does the ordinance as of itself impart virtue or benefit. Herein lies the wisdom of God, for by making the outward form of the ordinance valueless, His intention was to outlaw vain repetitions and preclude the more superstitious practises in which religion stands. By the doing of these things there shall no soul be justified in His sight. In exactly the same way that no man of old was justified by the works of the law, so also by these outward enactments of the ordinances of the Church in this age of grace shall no man be one whit advanced spiritually. 'Then why have they been instituted?', we may ask. 'If by compliance with them no benefit is to be gained, what is the advantage of them?' Much in every way; but it is of prime importance that everyone immediately banishes from the mind all thought of the personal benefit which may be gained from the act.

That personal blessing does accrue from the act of participation in each of the ordinances is undoubtedly true, and will be more fully discussed later, but that must not be the motive for it, for the act in itself, like the ordinance of itself, has no spiritual worth whatsoever. The whole act must be of faith, for unless it is of faith it is of works, which fatally brands it before God as self-righteousness, and all self-righteousness is sin. So it is that what was originally instituted as good and made holy to us by God's sanctifying ordination is in danger of being thought of as being made sin unto us; whereas the sin lies in the promulgation-by-practise of an act which proves that the ordinance is worshipped instead of Him who ordained it.

COMMUNION

Now it must be thoroughly understood that the faith mentioned previously must not be placed in the ordinance; all such belief immediately transforms the act into a superstitious practise enforced upon the ignorant, causing it to become part of the trappings of a hierarchal priestcraft beloved by carnal men but hated by God. Because this is so, care must also be exercised to ensure that faith must not be placed in any person as bearing or filling an official capacity administering the ordinance. No man has ever been given power from God to transform any ordinance into a blessing as of itself; whether it be by prayer (so-called) or intention or by personal holiness, man is impotent to turn into divine blessing what was not first beatified by the Lord Jesus. As an instance of this we need only refer to the original Communion. Breaking bread and giving it to His disciples, the Lord said, 'This is my

body'; they took it and ate it, but did not eat His flesh, nor did they drink His actual blood when they drank of the cup. To this day the ordinance stands in eating bread and drinking wine, but no enlightened soul believes that by so doing he actually eats and drinks what the first apostles could not.

The whole is parabolic and symbolic, an aid, a focussing of spiritual susceptibilities and powers, faith's concentration and love's obedience to feed the soul, and slake its thirst upon all it apprehends Jesus Christ to be; more, lying far deeper than that, it is the edifying of the spirit in vitalities unapprehendable to the mind of the participant. Greater still it is the symbolic act of edifying the body of Christ in realms and for purposes largely unknown because they are unrevealed. The mystery deepens by constant practise through passing years, but the act is not mystical, and Jesus our Head never made it so. He made it exclusive, but vested it with no superstitious power. The value of the act lies entirely in the realm of active faith in the living Christ, and to be valid must be a confession of a constant state.

ETERNAL REALITIES

We are frankly told in scripture that there is a natural body and there is also a spiritual body; howbeit that which is first is not spiritual but that which is natural, then afterwards that which is spiritual. The context in which this truth is set is the human body and death and resurrection. That body which is seen and handled and buried is not spiritual, but natural, but it will be raised a spiritual body and then be seen and 'handled' and known for what it really is, and perhaps also for what it was while in the flesh.

Now Jesus of Nazareth was the Lord from heaven. On earth He was the spiritual man in a natural body of flesh and blood. With Him flesh and blood were as pure and holy as soul and spirit. He was so totally spiritual in body as in soul; His flesh and blood body was as perfect as His spiritual body, He was one in a sense far greater than at first may have been understood by us. Therefore substituting bread for His body and wine for His blood He established the ordinance, saying, 'eat my flesh', and 'drink my blood', all the while withholding His natural body from them. They were, and we are, to feed on the spiritual man, with special direction to His flesh.

Later He was to direct man to receive His spirit, but here He is emphasizing His flesh. Look, He said, 'A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have'. He was a body, a spiritual body, and He had said, 'Eat my flesh'. In His flesh all the spiritual thoughts and words and feelings were outworked to man and for man as they were worked out to the end in Him. His flesh was therefore ultimate perfection of manhood. The bread was not blessed into live physical flesh, nor the wine into living physical blood, but by bread and wine Jesus conveyed an idea, focussed attention, sank a truth into understandings. By a momentary act He symbolized eternal realities, forcing men to faith or failure. The same may be said of each of the other four; whether a soul be a dreary mystic or a practical pragmatist makes no difference, the cast or leanings of a soul cannot alter an ordinance. Personal approach or individual preferences cannot affect an

ordinance of God nor change or move it from its sure foundation and formation in His intentions. All these have their part and hold a position in eternal purposes for the truth they typify not for what they are in themselves or what they are imagined to be or to impart.

BAPTISM

Turning to an examination of Baptism we may distinguish and trace out much the same things as were written about the Communion. All that need be said about it is found in the experience of the Lord Jesus Himself. Each of the Gospels record His baptism in Jordan at the hands of John, but the reality of the symbolism enacted then did not emerge until after the passage of three years. He was crucified, buried and resurrected at Jerusalem. Until then with the exception of Jesus' baptism, water baptism was only associated by prophetic utterance with remission of sins upon the sole condition of repentance resulting from acceptance of John's word. The actual immersion imparted nothing, except the satisfaction of knowing the will of the Lord had been done. In itself this is very rewarding and is a spiritual blessing, but it is the response of faith which brings it, not the rite.

Water baptism does not impart death and resurrection, it conveys the idea of it. It is possible and has no doubt been the experience of some that in the act of obedience and whilst the ministration is in progress the spiritual reality has also been imparted, but that in no way invests that water with spiritual properties or power. The actual crucifixion, death and burial leading to resurrection was undergone by Jesus entirely apart from John and Jordan, it was entirely spiritual. The only outward elements were a cross and nails and a tomb. Jesus called it all baptism. What is certain is that Jordan of itself contributed nothing to His baptism. It played a part in His anointing, namely this: the baptism which took place there was a fulfilment of righteousness. Jesus pressed the unwilling John into this. John shrank from administering his lesser baptism to his Lord and Messiah, but Jesus knew it was an appointed way for Him to go. His Father wished it, so with faith's obedience He insisted that His servant co-operate with Him unto this end. In common with all the others who had been through the waters of Jordan before Him, and those who after Him should be baptized there, Jesus was no better because of it. His spiritual stature and ministry were advanced and increased from it, but not by it.

HEADCOVERING

The next ordinance to be considered is that of headcovering. This is an even more controversial subject than either Baptism or Communion. Only the minority of Christian churches or groups reject these two, but only the minority of believers accept headcovering as an ordinance of equal standing with its two more popular rites. Truly popularity is no basis of judgement, for it seems that all that is needed to cause people to reject God's word is that some able apologist should stand up and seemingly disprove it. In many instances even this is not necessary so long as some sort of case should be made out for loosening its power or robbing

it of plain meaning, leaving the churches to do as they like. Yet to read Paul's classic passage on the matter with unbiased mind is to convince oneself of the seriousness of the mind of the Spirit on the subject. Contrary to the opinions of many, this is not a matter of discriminating between the sexes with a heavy and unwarrantable emphasis upon the supposed superiority of the male, headcovering has far greater significance than that. It is a sign connected with order and authority:

1. in the Godhead;
2. in creation;
3. in the family and
4. in the Church.

Scripture makes plain that there is an undoubted order and authority in the being of God to which the members of the Godhead willingly submit. God has not been pleased to give us a categorical statement about Himself, but we are told that 'the head of Christ is God'. We also know that Christ Jesus ever submitted Himself to His Father, calling Him THE Father. The Father in the Godhead was the Father of the man Jesus. In the Godhead they were equal God, but on earth as a man Jesus acknowledged being in an inferior position to His Father. Without renouncing His Godhead, He nevertheless said His Father was greater than He, indeed, 'greater than all'. Jesus was and is 'I AM', and His incarnate position in no way affected His eternal deity. His humbling to humanity was entirely voluntary, but it was also logical, for in the Godhead He was ever the Son. The 'Hebrews' statement is most enlightening in its Greek form, 'I will be to him for a father and He shall be to me for a son'. The Son became a son; The Father became a father. John also says of Jesus' earthly manifestation, 'we beheld his glory, the glory as of an only begotten with a father'. In no degree does such language belittle the person of Christ or disparage His person or deny His Godhead, instead it enhances His greatness. It does however, point to the fact that there is an order and authority in the being of God to which each person as willingly submits as He gladly adheres, because it is of the nature of their one eternal being. Without this God could not have been, and breaking it, could no longer be.

GOD'S ORDER

We are all learning of Him; God, this great eternal life, this mysterious being, around whom everything revolves, from whom and for whom and unto whom everything moves and with whom all things and persons are in some way connected. In a very definite mysterious way headcovering is a sign of the order of God's being.

Then also it is a testimony to the fact of creation. This is a very importance issue in the world of science and education today. It is a testimony that man is a special creation and not the result of a blind, fortuitous, mindless evolution. That it is the woman who wears the headcovering is as logical and delightful a thing as is the Son's acknowledgement of the Father. By doing so the woman in no way degrades or humiliates herself, she no more renounces her validity as a human being by wearing the covering, than by becoming a man Jesus renounced His

deity; rather, she enhances it. She does, however, by this, signify clearly to all, the truth that God is a creator and that the creation story as set out in Genesis is correct, for she is declaring that God made man first. By headcovering she is glorifying God's being and power and wisdom. But beyond that she is also confessing the Church's submission to Christ and Christ's to God. By doing this she is playing a most important part in God's overall plan and is pointing backwards and upwards and forward. Backward to the order of creation, forward to the coming of Christ and upward to the headship of Christ and God.

Headcovering also testifies to the headship under and authority of the male in the home and family. It is perhaps not too great an assumption to make that it is probably because of the breakdown of proper order and behaviour in the home that headcovering is so largely abandoned by the Church. Refusal of the woman to submit to the husband in marriage and in the home and family is an attack upon and an attempt to break the essence of true union as it is known in the Godhead. This being so, it is therefore not surprising, indeed it is logical and practically inevitable that headcovering in the gatherings should be refused also. To continue covering the head in the church when everything in the home is in direct contrast to the sign would be hypocrisy. One of the meanings of the sign is lost. It is thought and said by some that it bore

greater significance in the kind of society which existed in the early Church and that prevailing customs influenced divine writ. But this is not so. In limited measure human conditions do have some influence on the application of eternal principles, but they have nothing to do with their formation and existence. The reasons and needs for headcovering have their roots in God's being, not in the changing conditions of society. Women's so-called emancipation is largely mythical; it is only a transition from one form of bondage to another and worse form. Acknowledgment of and submission to order and authority is not a confession of weakness or devaluation, it is common sense, and should be gladly accepted by all people of ordinary sanity. A woman is behaving like Christ when she becomes a man's body and he becomes her head, for Christ is as the body of God who is His head. Children proceeding from such a sacred union are shown a true picture of the Christ and the Church from their mother's womb, it is perfect. Lastly, headcovering is a confession and sign of the order of the Church, an acknowledgment and testimony that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. It is of the Spirit first and fundamentally, for as we are told, only by the Spirit can any man say, 'Jesus, Lord'. The meek and lowly spirit of men and women will bring them into a frame of mind which will cause them joyfully to co-operate with everything God says.

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JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

EDITED FROM A SERMON BY JOHN WESLEY

'To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.'
Romans 4:5

How a sinner may be justified before God, the Lord and Judge of all, is a question of no small importance to every child of man. It contains the foundation of all our hope, because while we are at enmity with God there can be no true peace, no solid joy, either in time or in eternity. What peace can there be while not only our own heart condemns us, but much more, He that is greater than our heart and knows all things? What solid joy can there be in this world or the one to come while 'the wrath of God abides on us.'

And yet how little has this important question been understood? What confused ideas have many had concerning it! Not only confused, but often utterly false, absolutely inconsistent with the scriptures, and with the whole reality of faith. And by erring concerning the very foundation, they could not possibly build on it.

In order to do justice to the vast importance of the subject and to clear the confusion of thought into which so many have already been led, I will endeavour to show:

- I. What the background of this whole doctrine of justification is
- II. What is justification
- III. Who they are that are justified
- IV. On what terms they are justified

I. First, what the background of this whole doctrine of justification is:

In the image of God man was made: holy as He that created him is holy, merciful as the Author of all is merciful, and perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect. As God is love, so man, dwelling in love, dwelt in God, and God in him. God made him to be an 'image of His own eternity', an incorruptible picture of the God of glory. He was accordingly pure as God is pure from every spot of sin. He did not know evil in any kind of degree but was inwardly and outwardly sinless and undefiled. He 'loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his mind, and soul, and strength.'

To man, thus upright and perfect, God gave a perfect law to which he required full and perfect obedience. He required full obedience in every point to be performed without ceasing from the moment man became a living soul

till the time of his trial should be ended. No allowance was made for any falling short. There was no need of any since man was totally equal to the given task and completely equipped for every good word and work.

To the whole law of love which was written in man's heart, God in His wisdom added one positive law: 'Thou shalt not eat of the fruit of the tree that groweth in the midst of the garden.' Included was the penalty, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.'

This then was the state of man in Paradise. By the free, unmerited love of God, he was holy and happy. He knew, loved, and enjoyed God which is, in substance, life everlasting. And in this life of love he was to continue for ever if he continued to obey God in all things. But if he disobeyed Him in any, he was to forfeit all. 'In that day', said God, 'thou shalt surely die.'

Man did disobey God. He 'ate of the tree of which God commanded him, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it.' And in that day he was condemned by the righteous judgement of God. Then the sentence that he had been warned of began to take place upon him. For the moment he tasted that fruit he died. His soul died and was separated from God. His body, likewise, became corruptible and mortal so that death took hold on it also. And being already dead in spirit, dead to God and dead in sin, he hurried on to death everlasting, the destruction both of body and soul, in the fire never to be quenched.

Thus 'by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. And so death passed upon all men', as being contained in him who was the common father and representative of us all. So 'through the offence of one', all are dead: dead to God, dead in sin, dwelling in a corruptible, mortal body that will soon be gone and under the sentence of eternal death. 'For as by one man's disobedience' all 'were made sinners', so 'by the offence of one judgement came upon all men to condemnation' (Romans 5:12-19).

We and all mankind were in this state when 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son' so that we might 'not perish, but have everlasting life.' In the fulness of time He was made man, another common Head of mankind, a second Parent and Representative of the whole human race. And as a man 'He bore our griefs', 'the Lord laying upon Him the iniquities of us all.' He was 'wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.' He poured out His blood for the transgressors. He 'bare our sins in His own body on the tree', that by His stripes we might be healed. And by that one sacrifice of Himself, once offered, He has redeemed me and all mankind; having made a full, perfect, and complete sacrifice and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

Since the Son of God has 'tasted death for every man', God has now 'reconciled the world to Himself, not imputing to them their former trespasses.' And 'as by the offence of one judgement came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all

men unto justification.' So that for the sake of His beloved Son, God now promises, on only one condition (which He also enables us to perform), both to remit the punishment due to our sins, reinstating us in His favour, and to restore our dead souls to spiritual life, as the pledge of life eternal.

This, then, is the general ground of the whole doctrine of justification. By the sin of the first Adam, who was not only the father but likewise the representative of us all, we all fell short of the favour of God. We all became children of wrath, or as the Apostle expresses it, 'judgement came upon all men to condemnation.' Even so, by the sacrifice for sin made by the second Adam, Jesus, as the Representative of us all, God is reconciled to all the world to such a degree that He has given them a new covenant. The condition being now fulfilled, 'there is no more condemnation' for us but 'we are justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.'

II. But what is it to be justified?

What is justification? It is clear from what has already been seen that it is not the being made actually just and righteous. This is sanctification, which is in some degree the immediate fruit of justification, yet a distinct gift of God, and of a totally different nature. Justification is what God does FOR US through His Son; sanctification is what He works IN US by His Spirit.

Nor is justification the clearing us from accusation, particularly that of satan. It is clear from the Bible that satan is the 'accuser' of men. But the great Apostle does not make any reference to this in all that he has written concerning justification, either to the Romans or the Galatians.

Nor is justification the clearing us from the accusation brought against us by the law: at least if this means that though we transgressed the law of God, and consequently deserved the damnation of hell, God does not inflict on those who are justified the punishment which they had deserved.

Justification does not imply that God is deceived concerning those whom He justifies or that He thinks them to be what, in fact, they are not, or that He considers them to be other than they are. It does in no way imply that God sees us contrary to the real nature of things, that He esteems us better than we really are, or believes us righteous when we are unrighteous. Surely no. The judgement of the all-wise God is always according to truth. Neither can it ever be consistent with His unerring wisdom to think that I am innocent, righteous, or holy because another is so. Such an idea of justification is not true to reason or Scripture.

The plain scriptural meaning of justification is pardon, the forgiveness of sins. It is that act of God the Father, whereby, for the sake of payment made by the blood of His Son, He 'showeth forth His righteousness' (or mercy) 'by the remission of the sins that are past.' This is the easy, natural account of it given by St. Paul throughout the whole letter to the Romans. So he explains it himself, more particularly in chapter 4 and 5. 'Blessed are they', he says, 'whose

iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.' To him that is justified or forgiven, God 'will not impute sin' to his condemnation. He will not condemn him on that account, either in this world or in that which is to come. His sins, all his past sins, in thought, word and deed, are covered, blotted out, and shall not be remembered or mentioned against him, any more than if they had never been. God will not inflict on that sinner what he deserved to suffer, because the Son of His love has suffered for him. And from the time we are 'accepted through the Beloved', 'reconciled to God through His blood', He loves, and blesses, and watches over us for good, even as if we had never sinned.

III. But who are they that are justified?

The Apostle tells us clearly: the ungodly. 'He' (that is, God) 'justifieth the ungodly', the ungodly of every kind and degree, and none but the ungodly. It is only sinners that have any need for pardon. It is sin alone which has need of being forgiven. It is our unrighteousness to which the pardoning God is merciful. It is our iniquity which He 'remembereth no more.'

This does not seem to be considered by those who contend that a man must be holy before he can be justified; especially by some of them that say that complete holiness or obedience must precede justification. The very supposition is simply impossible. For it is not a saint but a sinner that is forgiven. God justifies not the godly, but the ungodly; not those that are holy already, but the unholy. Upon what condition he does this, will be considered shortly: but whatever it is, it cannot be holiness. To insist on this, is to say the Lamb of God takes away only those sins which were taken away before.

Does then the Good Shepherd seek and save only those that are found already? No. He seeks and saves that which is lost. He pardons those who need His pardoning mercy. He saves sinners from the guilt of sin (and, at the same time, from the power) of every kind, of every degree. He saves men who till then were completely ungodly, in whom the love of the Father was not. And, consequently, He saves men in whom dwelt no good thing, no good or truly Christian disposition, but things that were evil and abominable such as pride, anger, love of the world, the genuine fruits of the carnal mind which is 'enmity against God.'

These who are sick, who have the unbearable burden of sin, are they that need a Physician. These who are guilty, who groan under the wrath of God, are they that need a pardon. These who are condemned already, not only by God but also by their own conscience of all their ungodliness, both in thought, and word and work, cry out for Him that 'justifieth the ungodly', through Jesus. Before he is justified he cannot do any thing that is good and truly holy, but only evil continually. For his heart is essentially evil till the love of God is shed abroad in it. And while the tree is corrupt, so are the fruits; 'for an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit.'

Some may ask: 'Can't a man, before he is justified,

feed the hungry, or help the poor? These are good works.' The answer is easy: He may do these, even before he is justified. And these are, in one sense, 'good works.' They are 'good and helpful to men.' But it does not mean that they are, strictly speaking, good in themselves, or good in the sight of God. All truly good works are done after justification; and they are therefore good and 'acceptable to God in Christ', because they 'spring out of a true and living faith.' All works done before justification are not good in the Christian sense because they spring not from faith in Jesus Christ (though they may spring from some kind of faith in God) and because they are not done as God has willed and commanded them to be done. However strange it may sound to some, these works spring from the nature of sin.

Perhaps those who don't believe this have not considered the clear reasoning behind it:

*No works are good which are not done as God has willed and commanded them to be done.

*But no works done before justification are done as God has willed and commanded them to be done.

*Therefore, no works done before justification are good.

God has willed and commanded that all our works should be done in love, the kind of love to God which produces love to all mankind. But none of our works can be done in this love, while the love of the Father (of God as our Father) is not in us; and this love cannot be in us till we receive the Spirit of God.

IV. But on what condition is a man justified who is completely ungodly?

On one alone, which is faith. He 'believeth in Him that justifieth the ungodly.' And 'he that believeth is not condemned.' he is 'passed from death unto life.' 'For the righteousness' (or mercy) 'of God is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: whom God hath set forth for a propitiation, through faith in His blood; that he might be just, and' (consistently with his justice) 'the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus'; 'therefore, we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law'; without previous obedience to the moral law which he could not till now perform. That law which is referred to here is not the ritual law or the ceremonial law of Moses, but the great unchangeable law of love, the holy love of God and of our neighbour.

Faith in general is a divine, supernatural evidence or certainty 'of things not seen.' Justifying faith implies not only a divine evidence or certainty that 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself', but a sure trust and confidence that Christ died for MY sins, that He loved ME, and gave Himself for ME. And whenever a sinner believes in this way, God justifies that ungodly one. God, for the sake of His Son, pardons and absolves him who had in him, till then, no good thing. And whatever good he has or does from that time on is produced by this faith. This is the fruit of faith. First the tree is good, and then the fruit will be good also. Faith is a sure trust and confidence that God has and will forgive our sins, that He has accepted us again into His favour, by

the merits of Christ's death. You are to have a sure and constant faith, not only that the death of Christ is available for all the world, but that He has made a full and sufficient sacrifice for YOU, a perfect cleansing of YOUR sins, so that you may say, with the Apostle, He loved YOU, and gave Himself for YOU. For this is to make Christ YOUR OWN, and to apply His merits unto YOURSELF.

By affirming that this faith is the condition of justification, I mean, first, that there is no justification without it. 'He that believeth not is condemned already'; and so long as he believes not, that condemnation cannot be removed, but 'the wrath of God abideth on him.' As 'there is no other name given under heaven' than that of Jesus of Nazareth and no other merit by which a condemned sinner can ever be saved from the guilt of sin, so there is no other way of obtaining a share in His merit, than by faith in His name. Whatever virtues (so called) a man may have, whatever good works (so called) he may do, it profits not; he is still a child of wrath! still under the curse, till he believes in Jesus.

The second point we must see is that the very moment God gives faith (for it is the gift of God) to the 'ungodly', that 'faith is counted to him for righteousness.' He has no righteousness at all before this. But 'faith is imputed (or counted) to him for righteousness' the very moment that he believes. Not that God (as was seen before) thinks him to be what he is not. But as 'he made Christ to be sin for us', that is, treated Him as a sinner, punishing Him for our sins, so He counts us righteous from the time we believe in Him. He does not punish us for our sins but treats us as though we were guiltless and righteous.

Faith is the only thing without which none is justified; the only thing that is immediately, indispensably, absolutely required in order to receive pardon. Suppose a sinner, with a full sense of his total ungodliness, of his utter inability to think, speak, or do good, and of his absolute fitness for hell-fire, casts himself wholly on the mercy of God in Christ. Who can doubt that he is forgiven in that moment? Who will affirm that any more is required before that sinner can be justified?

It is not right for poor, guilty, sinful worms, who receive whatever blessings they enjoy (from the least drop of water that cools our tongue, to the immense riches of glory in eternity), to ask of God the reasons of His ways. It is not suitable for us to demand, 'Why did you make faith the condition, the only condition of justification?' There is no unrighteousness with God in fixing His own terms according to His own good pleasure. He may justly say, 'I will have

mercy on whom I will have mercy', namely, on him who believes in Jesus. God accepts none at all, but by His own free love and His unmerited goodness.

One reason, however, we may humbly understand was to hide pride from man. Pride had already destroyed the very angels of God. It was also in many ways due to pride that Adam fell from his own steadfastness, and brought sin and death into the world when the devil tempted Adam. It was therefore according to wisdom worthy of God, to make such a condition of reconciliation for Adam and all his posterity, that might effectively humble them to the dust. And such is faith. He that comes unto God by this faith must come as a mere sinner, inwardly and outwardly, self-destroyed and self-condemned, bringing nothing to God but ungodliness alone, pleading that he owns nothing but sin and misery. It is in this way alone, when his mouth is stopped, and he stands utterly guilty before God, that he can look unto Jesus as the whole and sole sacrifice for his sins. Only in this way can he be found in Him and receive the 'righteousness which is of God by faith.'

You ungodly one, who hears or reads these words! You vile, helpless, miserable sinner! I charge you before God the Judge of all to go straight unto Him with all your ungodliness. Take heed that you don't destroy your soul by pleading your righteousness. Go as totally ungodly, guilty, lost, destroyed, deserving hell; and you shall then find favour in His sight, and know that He justifies the ungodly. Look unto Jesus! There is the Lamb of God who takes away your sins! Plead no works, no righteousness, no humility of your own! In no way. That would be really to deny the Lord that bought you. Only plead the blood of the covenant, the ransom paid for your proud, stubborn, sinful soul. Who are you that now sees and feels your inward and outward ungodliness? You are the one! I want you for my Lord! I challenge you to be a child of God by faith! The Lord has need of you. You who feel you are fit for hell are just the one fit to advance His glory; the glory of His free grace, justifying the ungodly and him that works not. Come quickly! Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you, even you, are reconciled to God.

This article has been edited from the original sermon of John Wesley, by Dick Porowski, the leader of the Resurrection Life Church, Santa Ana, California, and it is printed with his kind permission.

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MORE TO FOLLOW - Every blessing that comes from God is sent with the message, 'And more to follow'. 'I forgive you your sins, but there's more to follow'. 'I justify you in the righteousness of Christ, but there's more to follow'. 'I adopt you into my family, but there's more to follow'. 'I educate you for heaven, but there's more to follow'. 'I give you grace upon grace, but there's more to follow'.

C.H. SPURGEON

EDITOR

This issue's Small Bible Words is taken from Dr. W.E. Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, published by 'Oliphants', and is available from Bookshops priced £11.95.

O = ONLY

ADJECTIVES

1. MONOS (μονος), alone, solitary, is translated 'only', e.g. in Matt. 4:10; 12:4; 17:8; 1 Cor.9:6; 14:36, Phil. 4:15; Col. 4:11; 2 John 1; it is used as an attribute of God in John 5:44; 17:3; Rom. 16:27; 1 Tim.1:17; 1 Tim.6:15,16; Jude 4,25; Rev. 15:4.

2. MONOGENĒS (μονογενης), only begotten (No. 1 and genos, offspring), has the meaning 'only', of human offspring, in Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; the term is one of endearment, as well as of singleness.

ADVERBS

1. MONON (μονον), the neuter of A, No. 1, only, exclusively, is translated 'only', e.g. in Matt.5:47; 8:8; John 5:18; 11:52; 12:9; 13:9; frequently in Acts, Romans and Galatians.

2. PLĒN (πλην), howbeit, except that, is translated 'only that' in the R.V. of Phil. 1:18 (A.V., 'notwithstanding'); 'only' in 3:16 (A.V., 'nevertheless').

Notes:

- (1) In Mark 2:7, A.V., *heis*, 'one' (so R.V.) is translated 'only'; in Jas. 4:12, R.V., 'one only' (A.V., 'one').
- (2) For 'only that' in Acts 21:25, A.V., see the R.V.
- (3) The conjunction *ei*, if, with the negative, *mē*, not, is translated 'but only' in Luke 4:26, R.V. (A.V., 'save'); 4:27 (A.V., 'saving'); 'only' in 1 Cor.7:17 (A.V., 'but'); in some mss. in Acts 21:25 (A.V. 'save only').

ONLY BEGOTTEN

MONOGENĒS (μονογενης) is used five times, all in the writings of the Apostle John, of Christ as the Son of God; it is translated 'only begotten' in Heb. 11:17 of the relationship of Isaac to Abraham.

With reference to Christ, the phrase 'the only begotten from the Father', John 1:14, R.V. (see also the marg.),

indicates that as the Son of God He was the sole representative of the Being and character of the One who sent Him. In the original the definite article is omitted both before 'only begotten' and before 'Father', and its absence in each case serves to lay stress upon the characteristics referred to in the terms used. The Apostle's object is to demonstrate what sort of glory it was that he and his fellow-Apostles had seen. That he is not merely making a comparison with earthly relationships is indicated by *para*, 'from'. The glory was that of a unique relationship and the word 'begotten' does not imply a beginning of His Sonship. It suggests relationship indeed, but must be distinguished from generation as applied to man.

We can only rightly understand the term 'the only begotten' when used of the Son, in the sense of unoriginated relationship. 'The begetting is not an event of time, however remote, but a fact irrespective of time. The Christ did not *become*, but necessarily and eternally *is* the Son. He, a Person, possesses every attribute of pure Godhood. This necessitates eternity, absolute being; in this respect He is not 'after' the Father' (Moule). The expression also suggests the thought of the deepest affection, as in the case of the O.T. word *yachid*, variously rendered, 'only one', Gen. 22:2, 12; 'only son', Jer. 6:26; Amos 8:10; Zech. 12:10; 'only beloved', Prov. 4:3, and 'darling' Psa. 22:20; 35:17.

In John 1:18 the clause 'The Only Begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father', expresses both His eternal union with the Father in the Godhead and the ineffable intimacy and love between them, the Son sharing all the Father's counsels and enjoying all His affections. Another reading is *monogenēs Theos*, 'God only-begotten'. In John 3:16 the statement, 'God so loved the world that he gave His Only Begotten Son', must not be taken to mean that Christ became the Only Begotten Son by Incarnation. The value and the greatness of the gift lay in the Sonship of Him who was given. His Sonship was not the effect of His being given. In John 3:18 the phrase 'the Name of the Only Begotten Son of God' lays stress upon the full revelation of God's character and will, His love and grace, as conveyed in the Name of One who, being in a unique relationship to Him, was provided by Him as the Object of faith. In 1 John 4:9 the statement 'God hath sent His Only begotten Son into the world' does not mean that God sent out into the world one who at His birth in Bethlehem had become His Son. Cp. the parallel statement, 'God sent forth the Spirit of His Son', Gal. 4:6, R.V., which could not mean that God sent forth One who became His Spirit when He sent Him.

SEED THOUGHT - 'If a wise man contendeth with a foolish man, whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest.'
Prov. 29:9

A MISSION OF MERCY..... AFRICA



□ CASUALTIES OF WAR: Children at the Maforga farm. Right: Little Antonio Mutize



□ DEVOTION: Jim (above) and Margaret Bailey



□ CRUSADERS: (from left) Kin Ng, Margaret Bailey, Alan Weston, Jim Bailey with Lyn Childs and Frances Greenall (front)

Fight the good fight

LITTLE Antonio Mutize still bears the bayonet scar on his foot from the wound he received as a baby, strapped to his mother's back when she was killed.

The horrifying incident occurred as his family were trying to escape Renamo guerrilla fighters in war-torn Mozambique.

Abandoned by their father, Antonio and his older brother Alfai were taken in by a Christian farm, called Maforga.

They are among the 70 children now living at Maforga and they all have a very special place in the hearts of the congregation at Eltham Green Fellowship Church in Westhorne Avenue.

The church has developed very close ties with the farm and some of its Eltham parishioners are now out in Mozambique helping with the farm's relief work.

Jim and Margaret Bailey, of Earshall Road, Eltham, with their daughter Victoria, 18, spent nearly six weeks on the farm this summer helping with the orphans, famine relief and with its evangelical work.

Jim, 46, has given up his job as a production manager for a film processing company to concentrate full-time on fund raising and helping to organise supplies for Maforga.

The war is never far away from life there. "They have 32 soldiers protecting the farm day and night and there is a trench all round the farm house," said Jim.

And while the Bailey family was out there a nearby village and a local town, Gondola, which is not even as big as Eltham, were both attacked.

"Nowhere is safe except the big towns," said Jim. "Every night all the workers and children are transported to the town

for safety. They have got two containers there, like those on the back of lorries. The 40ft container houses all the girls and babies and the 20ft container houses all the older boys."

Jim and his wife had a room in a house and their daughter shared a garden shed with another girl.

As well as the terrors of war, the team at Maforga have to contend with considerable health problems, including TB, measles and malnutrition. Four children died from measles while the Baileys were there and another three youngsters died from related diseases.

One family of five sisters came to the farm suffering from mal-

nutrition. But, said Margaret, two of the girls died from TB while another two sisters have also now contracted the disease.

Maforga has a clinic staffed by nurses and runs a special programme to feed children who are malnourished.

In Gondola there is a cottage hospital which has a doctor about three days a week and there is a hospital in the nearest large town, Chimoi. "If anyone is injured they have to rely on someone giving them a lift into Chimoi," said Jim. Not many people have cars so this can put a lot of pressure on the mission.

Many of the youngsters who arrive at Maforga have also been traumatised by their war experi-

ences. Said Jim: "They are in an awful condition. You have to deal with the physical conditions before you can even start to deal with their mental need."

Jim has been going into some of Greenwich's schools to talk about his experiences in Mozambique.

He is now hoping to enlist the help of Greenwich youngsters with his work by asking them to collect and donate old clothes.

The Baileys would also like to hear from anyone who would like to help with fundraising.

If you would like to help or would like Jim to give a talk at your school contact him on 081 850 8524 or ring pastor Terry Watson on 081 859 0433.

Jim and Margaret Bailey are regular readers of the New Covenant Voice magazine. If you would like to support this work, in any way, please contact them at :-

10, Earshall Road
Eltham
London SE9 1PT

Tel: 081-850-8524

For further information concerning Maforga Farm Ministry, Mozambique and Ameva Farm Ministry, Zimbabwe please contact:-
Terry Watson, Eltham Green Fellowship,
Westhorne Avenue, Eltham, London
Tel: 081-850-1331

MOUNTAIN TOP TEACHING

GEORGE W. NORTH

In this section of his Gospel, Matthew furnishes us with a very vital sample of the Lord's teaching. Delivered as it was from a Palestinian peak, it may be aptly called 'Mountain Top Teaching'; it is certainly panoramic. Though not totally comprehensive it covers a wide range of subjects, touching upon spiritual, moral, natural, legal and social matters of great importance. It has been perceptively called 'the manifesto of the king', an apt description. This King came from heaven to earth to set up the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men, and with this in view, here sets forth the conditions which would obtain in the kingdom of heaven on earth under His rule.

TOTAL MASTERY

The preceding chapter should be regarded as an account in part of the path by which the Lord approached these matters. It commences with a view of the earth and the conditions prevailing in the world at that time; they are unchanged to this day:

1. The world and its god.
2. The city and its temple
3. Man and his life.

Then follows:

1. Darkness and death.
2. Light and sight.
3. The call to walk and work in that light.
4. The manner of light it was.

Throughout this chapter we observe the Lord moving in total mastery over all, from breadless wilderness to temple pinnacle to the mountain top of Satan's choosing, overcoming in all. Descending from the mountain pinnacle to sea level He calls (or is it gives commands?) to men and leads them up the mountain of His choosing, where He sets forth His manifesto, reviewing Moses' law, and adding new truth of His own.

FROM BARREN WILDERNESS TO THE MOUNTAIN PEAKS OF GLORY

Pausing awhile in this fourth chapter and taking a closer look at these spiritual backgrounds in which the truth is set we may also learn much of God's thoughts, and see the way He regards this world of need into which He sent His Son. It is a barren wilderness full of beasts and serpents, in and among which men are trying in vain to turn stones into bread. Full of cities and temples ('holy places') the whole earth crammed with men is waiting in vain for the appearing of some god who will bring salvation to them, not knowing that when they reach all their mountain peaks of glory and look out over the earth they and all they see are under the domination

of the devil. From imagination's peak right down to sea-level, mankind sits helpless, overshadowed by death, smothered under a great pall of darkness - and then suddenly into that situation the great light shines. Its full light veiled at first, it was endurable to them, all people felt drawn and began to move towards it, some were definitely attracted, others He called. These responsive ones He drew out from the rest, leading them up into a mountain to be taught truth they must know, commencing right at the beginning with the fruits of repentance, and the life which results from it. They could not but believe that He expected it of them.

FULL OF BLESSING

The King was living in His kingdom by every word which proceeded from the mouth of God, and listening to Him they must have discerned that so must they. With what thankfulness they found that the very first word which proceeded out of His mouth was, 'Blessed'. Again and again He said it, nine times in all, in His heart there was a well of endless blessing; they listened with joy and amazement: would it never cease to flow out? This was but the beginning; He had so much more to reveal to them. Gently He led them on from the Baptist's stern preaching of repentance which made them tremble, to an understanding of the precious fruit of it, and listening they learned that John was a prophet with limitations; but Jesus was the King bountiful. John announced the kingdom at hand; but on that mountain they learned that Jesus taught them the kingdom in possession, the earth inherited and the soul in blessing.

A NEW INTERPRETATION

What a way to begin and how like Him; not lawgiver, nor prophet, nor king ever spake like Him, and though not all of what He said was pleasant, they would ever live to be grateful that before anything else He blessed and assured their hearts. Encouragement poured out of His lips - they were the salt of the earth, a city set on a hill, a light of the world. Full of fruit, full of savour, full of light, full of blessing - could they wish for anything more?

He turned their attention to the law of Moses; His understanding of that, His attitude toward it, His teaching was new and pleasing, but there had been nothing inflammable about it. It was plain for all to see that He kept the law; no one could have failed to observe that neither He nor His forerunner had spent one moment in teaching the God-inspired law of Moses though. The prophets were quoted; Isaiah especially, but not Moses. Why? Where was he in all this? All the people were followers of Moses, but Jesus had been saying, 'follow Me'. What was happening? They were aware that a great change was taking place, but just what it

was no-one could say: they were soon to learn though. A quiet revolution was being born, a revolution of ideas and of teaching which once accepted would change everyone's life. Caesar and Herod need have no fears, King Jesus abhorred the sword they used; His only sword was His tongue, but it was sharper than any sword forged by any smith employed in their kingdoms or in any land on earth. The Lord's teaching was revolutionary, but He had not come to stir up rebellion. He who would not accept the kingdoms of the world as a gift from Satan would not try to take the kingdoms of the earth from man. He did not play on people's hates or fears, nor did He seek to establish Himself in their favour to lead them in an insurrection. He had come to give to the people a new interpretation of nearly everything Moses said and did, and to show them that He was David's son and superior.

FULFILMENT

David had said, 'the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple', and many other things to the same effect, and all knew how truly David spoke. Now his son Jesus was about to show them how very truly the law of Moses was the law of the Lord Christ of God whom they did not know. The mountain on which He sat was not as high as the mountain on which Moses stood to receive the law, nor as high as the mountain to which He Himself had been taken by the devil to view the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. He sat nearer to the people than that. Jesus the Lord of all the earth, was much closer to the hearts of the people than either Moses or David or any of the prophets had ever been, He knew what men were thinking: O how truly he understood men's hearts. 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets', He said, 'I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil', and He proceeded to tell them what He meant by fulfilment.

OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WILL

They had been taught that they must obey the law, but He went far beyond obedience, and listening to Him they must have been overwhelmed, well-nigh stunned to silence. From Him they learned that fulfilment was obedience overflowing, agreement in abundance, the over-generosity of a soul exceeding all demands, truly giving itself up to God and to man. Go two miles not just one, give thy cloak as well as thy coat, He said. Fulfilment is obedience with joy, it is love overflowing, it is delighting to do God's will, it is whole-hearted obedience plus a hundred per cent more. All Moses gave as law has to be fulfilled, every jot and tittle of it, earth and heaven shall not pass away till all that Moses has said plus what He was now saying is accomplished.

The dazzling prospects of the promises extended to them in those wonderful blessings would be fulfilled unto them as by law if they obeyed Him, they are the fruits of life, guaranteed to all who obey the law of the Spirit of the life in the one who spoke on that mountain top. He thought these blessings and promises incentives enough to all men: they ARE to everyone who would follow and obey His words and His spirit. In all He said that day His prime purpose was to

impinge on all minds the absolute necessity for righteousness. The law MUST be fulfilled according to His personal understanding, interpretation and application of it to Himself. Righteousness was the dominant principle ruling the Lord's mind and to Him the fulfilment of it was the basic rule of life. He advanced it to John Baptist as the reason for His baptism at Jordan, 'it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness', He said to John. His own determination to fulfil every jot and tittle of spiritual truth, and by His own life give meaning to the law of righteousness, caused Him to draw His servant into joint fulfilment of all righteousness with Him. The Lord had no need of water baptism, He did not SAY He needed it. Baptism added nothing to Him, but it did increase His spiritual stature. His actual words were as above stated; it BECOMETH to fulfil and to fulfil all. The Lord was determined that His disciples no less than John should be drawn up to this height of spiritual attainment. Fulfilment is the mountain top, the highest peak of the entire range of all life's mountains. In the day of His temptation in the wilderness, when He stood with the devil on the mount of temptation, He was undefeatable for in heart He stood on the peak of righteousness, towering above all else - 'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven', He said, and so set the standard expected of us all. With this He proceeded to interpret to them the law they all thought they understood so well. Unknown to them as yet, this law of the Lord lay under and over and at the heart of the law of Moses.

SIN AGAINST GOD, SIN AGAINST MAN

God's own law of life, that is, His own standards of living and behaviour among His subjects, lay at the root of every law He wrote on stone or otherwise communicated to Moses on Sinai. At that time God was creating His own kingdom of heaven on earth among men in the midst of the nations. He was legislating for His people, creating conditions, ordering their social behaviour and national rectitude. His desire was to live and walk among His people without needing to compromise Himself or be nauseated by what He found. He loved them. His laws were educative, they were neither intended nor delivered by Him to be punitive; corrective, informative, directive, yes, but not destructive of anything but sin. Under Mosaic law a man was not deemed a sinner unless he allied himself with sin by deliberately committing it. The law defined sin in two main ways, sin against God and sin against man, and even then classified these into known recognizable sin and unknown unrecognized sin. The purpose of the law was to engender love towards God and towards man, and to specify also the ways in which this love should be manifested. The main thrust of this tutorial law was both spiritual and social: towards God it was individual and monotheistic, towards man it was individual, general and communal.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN ON EARTH

In order to gain correct understanding of the purpose of the Lord's ministry at this point, it must be borne in mind that He was legislating with a view to His earthly kingdom, that is, the kingdom of heaven on earth. Not yet was He

engaged in setting up the Kingdom of God in men's hearts everywhere. To miss this point is fatal to understanding, and will certainly result in misinterpretation and mis-application of truth. It should never be forgotten that in this connection Christ came to earth with dual purpose:

- (1) to present Himself to the Jews as their Messiah;
- (2) upon His foreknown rejection to build His Church worldwide.

The achievement of the latter resulted from the failure of the former. He did not engineer the former, but obviously He had to be rejected of the Jews before He could be accepted of the Gentiles.

How He could pursue both these aims at one and the same time is not the easiest of things to understand, but this is certain, the standards He set on that mountain obtain in both kingdoms: they were His own standards of living. The heavenly state of human life He taught that day could be theirs also, it was expected of them, they too could live in heaven on earth as did He. At the time of speaking the Lord was very acceptable to the people, they were loving His ministry, possibly trying also to make up their minds about Him: they did not then know that eventually they would have to come to some very real decisions about Him and state openly whether or not Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah.

THE LAWS OF MOSES MAGNIFIED

Whatever the state of peoples minds, without thunder or trumpet or fire that men could hear or see, the Lord delivered to His disciples the rules of life in the kingdom of heaven. In much the same way as He later took up the loaves and fishes in His hands, broke them down and distributed them to His disciples, so He took up the treasured commandments of Moses and magnified them. In many ways there was quite a difference between these two occasions - one took place on a mountain, the other at sea level, but perhaps the difference was not so very great after all. At sea level the Lord broke the loaves, on the mountain He analysed the commandments. Though directed to different ends, the Lord's purpose was the same, He broke the loaves and fishes for bodily food, He analysed the commandments for spiritual food; in both instances he increased the medium in which He worked. Of the two, the latter was by far the more important though. So it was that Christ took His mountain seat and gathered His disciples around Him intent on administering the natural laws of grace to them, He wanted the law of God's life to become as much the law of their lives as of His own, that with Him they should live in the kingdom of heaven on earth.

IMPARTING THE LAW

He had a wonderful way of imparting His law; so different from Moses; not once did He commence with 'Thou shalt not'; instead, He began with some such words as, 'Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill.' He never took away from the force of the commandment thereby, it came out as firmly as Moses ever spake it; in fact he reinforced it by adding, 'Whosoever shall

kill shall be in danger of the judgement'. Who beside He were the people that said that? Certainly God had not spoken the commandment in that form, He said, 'Thou shalt not kill', - others had added the rest, with apparent approval, and it had come to be accepted as a couplet. The Lord made no comment on that, but adding yet more, went on to say, 'But I say unto you', and proceeded to reveal the positive truth in God's heart from which the commandment first came couched in negative form. The Lord Jesus coming into the world from the bosom of the Father was able to reveal what was in God's heart when He wrote the commandment originally, namely this: 'Thou shalt always live in peace and harmony with all men.' See then why the Lord first spelled out the blessings before He proceeded to interpret the heart of God which framed the law. Absolutely positively the Lord said, 'Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God'. Amen.

A NEW DIRECTIVE TO LOVE

From that, the Lord went on to illustrate His words by applying His meaning to a situation which must often have arisen in Israel, and which could so easily rise again. A loving heart will not speak evil of his brother, or refuse to come to agreement with an adversary, or refuse to settle any debts. Even if a brother, whether rightly or wrongly, has something against him, he will leave even the seemingly most important things and go and seek reconciliation with his brother. Such a man will never be angry with his brother without proper cause, said Christ. What an astounding interpretation of the commandment this was, and what a kingdom of heaven would this earth be if such conditions obtained here. The old commandments outlawed certain evil deeds in hopes of creating a safe environment in which to live; the Lord's new interpretation of them directed hearts to the love which makes the need for the outlawry of sin quite needless. O, the blessing of meekness, the meek inherit the earth without killing or willingly hurting anyone in order to obtain it.

FURTHER ENLIGHTENMENT

In this vein the Lord continued to take up the old commandments, interpreting them in an entirely new way, adding further enlightening conditions to them to which the truly repentant heart makes no objections at all. Adultery is the next thing to which the Lord addresses Himself: quoting the commandment of Moses, which they all knew, and making the comment which they had now come to expect He proceeded from that to deal with the heart condition in which it was born. 'Blessed are the pure in heart', He said, 'for they shall see God'. A man cannot see God and long after Him and look upon a woman to lust after her as well; one or the other must go, he cannot do both. The Lord is here giving His men their first major glimpse into both the true state of things in the world, as God sees them, and into the kingdoms in which these two exist; He had taken them up into the mountain for that reason. Both kingdoms are invisible, so was one of the kings, the other was visible and now speaking to them. The kingdom over which He reigns is the kingdom of heaven, the other is the kingdom of hell, and the devil is its ruler. The disciples did not know this, nor did they know that the two

kingdoms are not confined to two destinies to one or other of which men must go upon departure from this earth.

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SIN

The two basic states in which each of these opposing kingdoms exist are righteousness and sin; these are conditions of present life and diametrically opposed to each other, they cannot exist together in the same kingdom. They exist together in the earth, but cannot and do not exist together in the same heart. The poor in spirit and the meek in heart possess the kingdom of heaven and inherit the earth, says Jesus; they who are rich in spirit and proud of heart shall abide in the kingdom of hell: they shall not inherit the vast treasures this earth yields up to those who live in the kingdom of heaven. King Jesus lived in the kingdom of heaven, He was inheriting the earth without measure; that is, He was living in the fulness of blessing which a man can obtain in this life, and live out whilst in this world.

FULFILLING OUR CALLING

Before speaking of these things to His men, the Lord had gone out into the wilderness to meet the devil, and had allowed him to tempt Him with the glory of all the kingdoms of the world. He knew that had He coveted them He could have had all those kingdoms and the glory of them, but only at the cost of His own soul - plus forfeiture of the kingdom of heaven. By that act the inheritance of all the blessings and joys and provisions and possessions on earth in which the kingdom of heaven consisted would have been lost: heaven would have turned into the kingdom of hell for Him. But He was poor and lowly in spirit, and had a meek and humble mind, He was so entirely without self-ambition, that some would have thought He had nothing, yet He possessed all things. He lived in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit in heaven, and had come to earth to make peace between man and God, and man and man, that all may live and share with Him in that kingdom on this earth.

There was no stronger desire than this in His heart as He spoke to His disciples that day. By God's will and His own stated intention:

1. The kingdom of heaven was theirs
2. They should inherit the earth
3. They should see God
4. Be called the children of God
5. Be rewarded in heaven
6. Be the salt of the earth
7. Be the light of the world

Should these things become their experience, they - every one as He - would be children of God and fulfil their calling as He was fulfilling His. He made no attempt to convince men that the kingdoms of the world were His and that he was ruling over them, nor did he deny that the earth was suffering under the curse. His presence and His life were an assurance to them that the things He taught could be lived out by them in their day on earth, as well as by Him. He was sharing their day and their environment with them, and He wanted them to share with Him in His spiritual state. While

this universe shall remain not one jot or tittle of the law shall pass from it - all must be fulfilled, the standards of righteousness set by Moses for everyone living in the kingdom remains to this day.

LOVE FULFILS THE LAW

The law mediated to Israel from God by Moses has never been withdrawn. Every jot and tittle, plus His own extensions and applications of it, was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus during His life among men. Neither God nor devil nor man could find sin or fault in Him, nor a trace of failure either, neither did His own conscience accuse Him. He was perfect as His heavenly Father was perfect. This perfection qualified Him at the last to fulfil the ceremonial side of the law also, and become the redeemer and saviour of man, that He should banish for ever the need for man or animals to die for sin. But while as yet He was interpreting the law to them that day, that necessary ceremonial side of the law had still to be fulfilled, and it was in knowledge of this that He spoke to them, urging them to go beyond legal necessity. They, as He, were living under the law, but as surely as the law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. So, taking up the law, He showed them how grace in a man responded to it, always fulfilling it by superseding it. Even in things about which the law made no demands and gave no instructions, He insisted that His followers must act in grace outwith Mosaic instruction or obligation - almost certainly beyond previous thought. Grace does the unexpected, except before God, in His kingdom grace is expected of all His children - Love fulfils the law, and going on far beyond all legal obligations, is seen to be grace. The Lord brought this into focus by means of a graphic example: 'If any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile go with him twain.'

LIVING IN A HEAVENLY MANNER

His commands and expectations were revolutionary, far exceeding the law they had been taught from infancy. They had been commanded to love God, and to love their neighbours, but to hate their enemies, and they were doing so - especially the latter part of the precept, but Christ was altering this. 'I say unto you love your enemies', He said, and pointed them to the nature of God displayed and proven in nature all around them. The sun shone and the rain fell on and around them everywhere, no-one good or evil was discriminated against, all were treated equally. Love is like the indiscriminating sunshine and the impartial rain, it is heavenly, it is for everybody, in equal measure, whether family, friend or foe; everyone is my fellow. Any person claiming to be a child of the heavenly Father must live on earth among men in a heavenly manner, else how shall he prove he is living in the kingdom of heaven?

FULL OF LOVE AND TRUTH AND GRACE

The all-inclusiveness of Christ's teaching - the range and comprehensiveness of His thought is amazing, what a kingdom He had in mind for them. The heaven is God's throne, the earth is God's footstool, obviously He connects

them both, and Jerusalem is the city of the great king. There must be no murder in His kingdom, no unnecessary anger, no division between brethren, no wrong thinking about any man, no wrongful divorce, no oath-taking, no resistance of personal insult, no claiming repayment for personal damage, no unwarranted anger, no darkness, nothing unsavoury: everything must be perfectly legal, absolutely righteous, full of light, completely savoury, wholesome, unifying, without even a touch of hell about it; in short heavenly, full of love and truth and grace - Christlike, Godlike. All the Lord was doing was showing them what He meant by the word 'Blessed', analysing the state of blessedness, showing them it was no idle wish, or just a nice thought. The 'blessing' though a gift from God, is not without cost to the blessed as they live out their lives among men, only the persevering ones willing to pay the cost shall live in the kingdom of heaven on this earth, no-one else can.

THE FRUITS OF REPENTANCE

This Jesus to whom they were listening was the great king, unrecognized and uncrowned, His seat was a mountain, His throne a piece of rock or a mound of earth, but the law He gave them was wonderful, unequalled anywhere in the world. Jerusalem, His city was occupied by a usurper, His kingdom was trodden underfoot by blasphemers, the poor in spirit were robbed of the kingdom - the mourners went un comforted, the weak were ridden over rough-shod, and they who hungered and thirsted for righteousness, were left in need. Peace-makers were few and persecutors abounded, but the king held out hope for everyone who brought forth the fruits of repentance, to them he was the king bountiful, full of promises, dispenser of blessings, redeemer of the faithful both in the present and in the hereafter.

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THE EYE

GEORGE W. NORTH

How instructive it is to note that to the Lord Jesus the eye fulfils an important role in spiritual life. In Matthew 7:22,23, He says, 'The light of the body is in the eye', having preceded it with instructions not to lay up for ourselves treasures on the earth, but to lay up treasure in heaven. How wise is this word! If we lay up treasures on earth the eye will always be upon them, because where our treasure is there will our heart be also. On the other hand if our treasure is in heaven our eye will be heavenward because our heart is there. We must be absolutely single about this. We cannot be in any way divided, one part of us looking at earth and the other at heaven, for then how shall we be the light of the world? There is no doubt that the light we must be is to light men to heaven and Father, who is the source and supplier of all our needs. We have no need to lay up treasure for ourselves on earth, we do not need it, behold the birds and flowers. Jesus says these are fed and clothed by our heavenly Father. All a bird does is move about in its natural element and to its means of subsistence is there. Our heavenly Father feeds them. When winter approaches the time comes for some of them to migrate to other lands. It is God who put within them the natural instinct to move off to the places where He provides food for them. On the other hand He also feeds the anemones that never remove from their native patch of soil. Father made them to stay where they are, so He provides for them there. They feed from their roots all the time they stay in their proper native clime, standing there they grow their own beautiful clothes too. They are fed and clothed in one simple function, that is all part of their life. Birds grow their plumage, and flowers their foliage, and flower so long as they each obey the simple laws governing their life. But this is not difficult to them, it is natural. So also it is with us. Our Father-God may choose to have us stay all the time where we are, putting down our roots into our native patch and never moving from it, but living and feeding and growing where we

are - 'let our light so shine before men that they may glorify our Father which is in heaven'. Or He may decide to send us away from our local nest where we were born and fly off to some other clime or place, and move about in heavenly splendour there witnessing, shining, working. It doesn't matter where we are or what we do, as long as we are in His will and doing His works, for we are to be the salt of the (whole) earth and the light of the (whole) world.

Illustrations of these two different callings are to be found scattered throughout the entire Bible. Mark 5:1-19 supplies that of the former, and Matthew 10 the latter. When Jesus cast the devils out of Legion, the man, in sheet gratitude and devotion, would have left all and gone with Jesus - but we are told that Jesus suffered him not, but sent him home to witness to his friends: he was to be an 'anemone' and feed and grow at home. But the Lord, having selected some men from among His disciples and naming them apostles, sent them out and away from their native patches to move around and preach and work among strangers: these are the 'birds' and live and feed on the move (note the Lord's strict instructions to them in this chapter).

We are to have our eyes upon, and our ears open to the Lord. We cannot have an eye which is both good and evil at the same time. Where the eye is looking and upon what it is fixed determines both the quality or state of the inward man and the source from which we are drawing our life. Let us be sure about this lest we think it is possible to be double-visioned, having a heart fixed on God and an eye looking upon earthly treasures. The inward man can no more be dual than can the eye. The eye not only admits light and impressions of outward objects, it also radiates the transmits either the state of light or darkness in which the person within that body lives.

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In the first study we looked at how the signs (miracles) in John's gospel form a pattern; a pattern which helps us to view the gospel as a whole, and, if we look with eyes open at the details, a pattern which points to the most important teaching in the ministry of Jesus.

ANOTHER PATTERN IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

John has also used another pattern, built around Jesus' 7 I AM sayings. These are the key for beginning to unpack all the lovely fullness of Jesus revealed by the Holy Ghost through this gospel.

The SIGNS point to the deep teaching of Jesus' ministry.

The I AM's reveal the depths of the nature of the Lord.

JESUS IS LORD

As we read through the early chapters of the book of Acts, several features of the early Church are impressed on us: simple but fervent belief, immovable expectation, unlimited sharing of lives, but, above all, boundless confidence in the LORDSHIP of Jesus. From the point where Peter, newly baptized in the Holy Ghost, declares:

'Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ' (Acts 2:36)

... the Church never looked back. On the contrary, the believers then began to realize that the involvement of Herod and Pilate, and the crucifixion of Jesus was not an unfortunate turn of fate, but only that which was according to the determinate and foreordained counsel of God (Acts 4:28).

Ministering as an elder in this dynamic church, John's desire is to make known the essential Lordship of Jesus as revealed in His earthly ministry.

WHERE ARE THE I AM's?

- | | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. 6.35 | I am the bread of life |
| 2. 8.12 | I am the light of the world |
| 3. 10.7 | I am the door |
| 4. 10.11 | I am the good shepherd |
| 5. 11.25 | I am the resurrection and the life |
| 6. 14.6 | I am the way, the truth and the life |
| 7. 15.1 | I am the true vine |

Once again, we see that the I AM's are linked with that special number 7 - there are 7 days in a complete week; 7 lamps to light up the Holy Place in the Tabernacle; the 7th year

is the year of Sabbath, the end of the farming cycle. So 7 is a sign of completeness, or perfection, or fullness. John's intention in including the 7 I AM's, is to allow us to meditate on the fullness and perfection of the Lord Jesus, and all that He becomes to the believing heart.

THE I AM's OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Holy Ghost, who moved and inspired John to write, revealed the depths of the nature of the LORD in a similar way, through the writings of the Old Testament. The Old Testament also has I AM's!

- Jehovah my provider (Gen. 22:14)
- Jehovah is peace (Jud. 6:24)
- Jehovah my shepherd (Ps. 23:1)
- Jehovah who sanctifies you (Exod. 31:13)
- Jehovah my banner (Exod. 17:15)
- Jehovah who heals you (Exod. 15:26)
- Jehovah is there (Ezek. 48:35)
- Jehovah our maker (Ps. 95:6)
- Jehovah our righteousness (Jer. 23:6)

When we realize that the LORD's name, JEHOVAH, contains the word I AM (ehyeh, in Hebrew), we can see that John is providing the New Testament version of this list. He is saying: Jehovah and Jesus are one!

(Have a look for the similarities between the Old Testament and New Testament I AM's)

We then begin to see how clearly Philip's question and Jesus' answer must have rooted in John's mind:

'Lord, shew us the Father'
'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not know Me, Philip?' (John 14:8-9)

If we only took time to reflect on the nature of the LORD as revealed in these Old Testament statements, our experience would be enriched!

THE LORD REVEALS HIMSELF AS THE I AM

The LORD's revelation of Himself as the I AM, is rooted way back in the book of Exodus. Have a look at Exodus 3:14. As John's first readers came across the I AM statements, they would have been reminded of this passage. For Jesus to use these words of Himself could only confirm the opening words of the gospel:

'... the Word was God' (John 1:1)

(NOTE: Almost without exception, when this verse is read aloud, the emphasis falls on the word WAS - as if Jesus WAS

God, but isn't now! The order of words in the original Greek means the stress should fall on the word GOD)

THE DEPTHS OF THE I AM

Before looking at the importance of the 7 I AM statements, we must take a moment to consider the simple words 'I AM'.

Besides revealing Jesus as God, these two small words point to the ETERNAL nature of Jesus. Jesus was, is, and shall be. In the midst of changing ideas, variable relationships, accelerating technology, and the empty changes of human fashion, Jesus is constant.

The Hebrew words of Exodus 3:14, 'I am that I am', could be translated, 'I will be what I will be'. This was in reply to Moses' worry of 'What is His name?'. The LORD refused to become just a name, or an idea, or an explanation or even a doctrine. HE WOULD BE KNOWN BY WHAT HE WOULD BE TO HIS PEOPLE.

So, John also records how Jesus will become known to His people - not merely a 'religious' name, but known by what He does in, to and for human beings: bread, light, entrance, shepherd, resurrection, way, truth, life and source of fruit.

REACTIONS TO THE I AM

There are three places where the words I AM stand alone without being completed by other words:

John 6:20 John 8:58 John 18:5-6

Have a look at these verses. (The Authorized Version of the Bible tries to make two of these I AMs clearer by adding 'He' in italic print, or translating as 'It is I').

Notice that reactions to these words are extreme:

'they WILLINGLY received Him' (6:21)

'Then took they up stones to cast at Him' (8:59)

'They went backward and fell to the ground' (18:6)

This is because the hearers realized that Jesus was declaring Himself to be the LORD, and in the same way today, men react to the revelation of the Lord with either horror, or adoration. The patronising nonsense of 'mild approval' is a sure sign of a life untouched by the I AM.

THE FIRST I AM: THE TRUE BREAD

As we look at the first I AM, we begin to see the beautiful tapestry revelation of the nature of Jesus intertwined into the sixth chapter. A quick look will help us to begin personal study of the other I AMs.

Look in 6:32. It is important to realize that Jesus refers to Himself as the TRUE bread. This doesn't mean that other forms of bread are false or artificial or even counterfeit! The Greek word for 'true' in these verses is ALEITHINOS (pronounced alay-thee-nos). There are 2 words for 'true' in

Greek, and one is the opposite of false. True here, though, means the 'ultimate' or 'archetype' or 'original'. In the USA there are thousands of 'Stars and Stripes' flags, but the ORIGINAL design is kept in a glass cabinet in Washington D.C. So for the Jews, bread features several times in the Scriptures, but these are only pointers to Jesus, the true bread.

(Where are the other breads? Have a look at Exodus 25:30, Leviticus 23:20, and Exodus 16:4).

THE HEAVENLY MANNA, FAITH IMPARTS ...

Of course, Jesus is comparing Himself to the miraculous manna in the wilderness. It nourished and sustained the Israelites in the desert, but it was nothing in nutritional value compared to the Bread that the LORD had prepared for mankind before the foundation of the earth; the Bread that now moved among them, and desired to impart Himself to believing hearts.

5000 INVITED TO SUPPER

There are no details of the Last Supper anywhere in John's gospel. Nowhere does Jesus say: 'This is My body, which is broken for you ...' But after the breaking of bread to the 5000, Jesus does say:

'I am the bread of life'.

In John's gospel this is the point of revelation, where Jesus indicates that He is the sacrifice and only source of life.

BEGINNING A STUDY OF THE I AMs

There are certain keys in the study of John which begin to open this treasure trove of revelation:

1. As with the 'signs', what comes before and after each I AM is important: Have a look at 6:35, 'I am the bread of life'. What does the earlier part of the chapter speak of?

What is happening at the point where Jesus reveals Himself as the 'Resurrection and the Life' (11:25)? Why is He the Resurrection NOT the Resurrector?

2. Look at the order in which each revelation is made: BREAD ... LIGHT ... DOOR ... SHEPHERD ... RESURRECTION ... WAY ... VINE.

Is there anything important in the sequence of revelations Jesus made about Himself?

3. Chapter 1 of the gospel is often spoken of as the seed bed, because a simple introduction to all the main teachings of the gospel can be found here. Look at each of the I AM revelations and find the 'seed' beginnings in the opening chapter.

4. The special word for 'true' (aleithinos - see above) is also linked with the Vine (15:1) and the Light (1:9). What special importance does this give to these revelations? If Jesus is the ultimate or real or original Vine and Light, which vines or lights in the Old Testament point to Him?

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LIVING EPISTLES

GEORGE W. NORTH

2 Corinthians 3:1-3

This is a most revealing section of Paul's whole approach to and concept of the ministry. The Corinthians were his epistle written on his heart, he says. They were not the words they were reading, they were the epistle of the Christ he ministered. They were written by himself; that is, by his own spirit by means of the Spirit of God. Paul wrote in or upon the fleshy tables of the heart, and he did it deliberately with forethought. There is not nor could be a loftier concept of the ministry than this.

Before this man either preached, or wrote a letter, he knew, envisaged, pictured, imaged; Christ in his own heart. To Him and upon Him and for Him, Paul modelled the person or churches to whom he spoke or wrote. Before he uttered or wrote one word, in his heart he conformed to Christ those to whom he ministered. All ministry was first a spiritual, heart exercise within himself. He knew he need entertain no hope or expectation of writing anything worthwhile upon the fleshy tables of someone else's heart except it was written first within his own.

CONFORMED TO HIM

All true preaching and writing is a spiritual transmission. Sounds and letters, grouped together and uttered or written are only aural or visual formations from the spirit of the writer or speaker; they are recognizable and understood by the mind of the hearer or reader. They are the language of the soul and spirit and are transmitted for the purpose of conveying and shaping ideas in the mind and spirit of he or she who hears or reads them. Of themselves, they are outlines, empty vessels which must be filled, their content is of spirit. By them some recognized or unrecognized spirit is conveyed and is either received or refused.

Paul understood perfectly how the revelation of which he wrote in Romans 8 worked out in terms of ministry. He saw that fore-ordination in the mind of God, was by spiritual purpose and disposition. Clearly it must finalize in men and women as predestination unto Christ-conformity; it could not be otherwise. Paul fully grasped this, he saw that these things are fundamental in the nature and ministry of spirit, in this case the Holy Spirit. Jesus having now been raised to the throne at the right hand of the Father, is appearing in the presence of God for US; to God He is AS us, therefore we MUST be conformed to Him. The Spirit having now been outpoured through Him bears His exact image, He comes to us only in His name. The Spirit looks upon His dear face, listens to His words, knows His desires and is come to reproduce His likeness in us. Nothing other can be allowed.

HIS GLORIOUS LIKENESS

This ministry (being entirely of the Spirit) has to be reproduced in anyone who would be a minister. As the Holy Spirit gazes upon the person and face of Jesus Christ, so also must the minister (4:6). In this no difference can be allowed. When the Spirit comes to a man He does so with the sole intention of conforming him to the image of Jesus. He also comes to conform a man's ministry to His own, that is, to reproduce the life and image of Christ in all his hearers. In his heart, with humble joy and sheer devotion to his Lord, and in the tradition of God, the true minister must conform everyone to whom he ministers to that same image. Whether or not he succeeds in obtaining his desires, he must have none other motive in his ministry than this. Every minister must be so in love with his precious Lord Jesus that he can conceive of nothing so great or wonderful as seeing His glorious likeness in his own soul and in the souls of others. Conformity in every exact detail to the image of Christ must be his consuming passion for everybody. In this he must first consider himself, being convinced that only because God Himself is perfect can he expect others to be perfect. Not that selfishness is to be the minister's primary urge - quite the contrary - but in the sure knowledge that unless he himself be first conformed to Christ's image, he cannot hope or expect others to attain thereto.

At all times he must remember that he is the subject of grace and insofar as he himself has attained to Christ-likeness, he has been the object of the Holy Spirit's ministry. He therefore must first be the image of Christ, or else he cannot imagine others in it. 'The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' must shine, in his own heart, or how shall he see what it is he is striving to reproduce? In the beginning did not God originally have in His own heart the perfect image of the man He was about to make? Even so must it be with everyone who with God would join in any effort to bring back man into that heart-image from which he is now so far removed.

THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

We are 'workers together with Him', says Paul, 'we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen'. What a good thing for the Corinthians he did that. Had he looked (the word means to view, inspect, implying fixed detailed concentration) at them, he might have been overcome with tragic despair. Instead he looked at the image of Christ in his own heart and was filled with hope for them. What a wonderful thing it is to be able to descry first the outline and then the detailed lineaments of the unmistakable Christ in a life. On the other hand, what a

tragedy is the life wherein no likeness of Christ can be seen, not even the shape of the good things to come - no promise at all! Until He appears in that person the minister must sustain himself in that hope which together with faith and love is one of the indispensable fundamental qualities without which he could not possibly be a minister. In that hope, with love and faith he must look at those things which are not seen without, or as yet in others but in his own heart, and work together with God until the Spirit has wrought in others what He has wrought within himself. No wonder Paul cried out 'who is sufficient for these things?'

This was one of the great secrets of his success in ministry. All his hopes and faith and love for those Corinthians were already written into his own heart. Before he spoke a word to others he had already spoken it to himself before God. The spiritual man Jesus was, the same spiritual man he himself was, Paul thought, imagined with power, believed with reality, and saw with love within himself, all were there. Consequently he laboured with hope for all those to whom God made him a minister. The result was that when

people saw the Corinthians they read Paul's epistle(s) and saw his heart. They were the epistle of Christ ministered by him; the Christ he 'saw', loved, worshipped, and imaged was the Christ he ministered. He had no exalted ideas of himself though, he thought nothing of himself, nor anything as of himself. He was no originator, he was just a replica and minister. Christ was the beginning and Christ in the Corinthians was the end of his labours.

He was not sufficient for this of himself, he knew - it is an overwhelming expectation; who is sufficient for these things? His sufficiency was of God, he said. To read that breathes hope into the heart of any minister, who, understanding what the ministry is, wants only to fulfil it. Paul's advice to all ministers would seem to be, 'Look up, into heaven and see Jesus: look within and see Jesus: look around and see Jesus; look at Jesus: look at yourself: look at others. Where there are contrasts, rectify them; where there are differences, resolve them; where there are contradictions, eliminate them. Receive mercy from the Lord, be merciless to yourself, be merciful to others.'

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