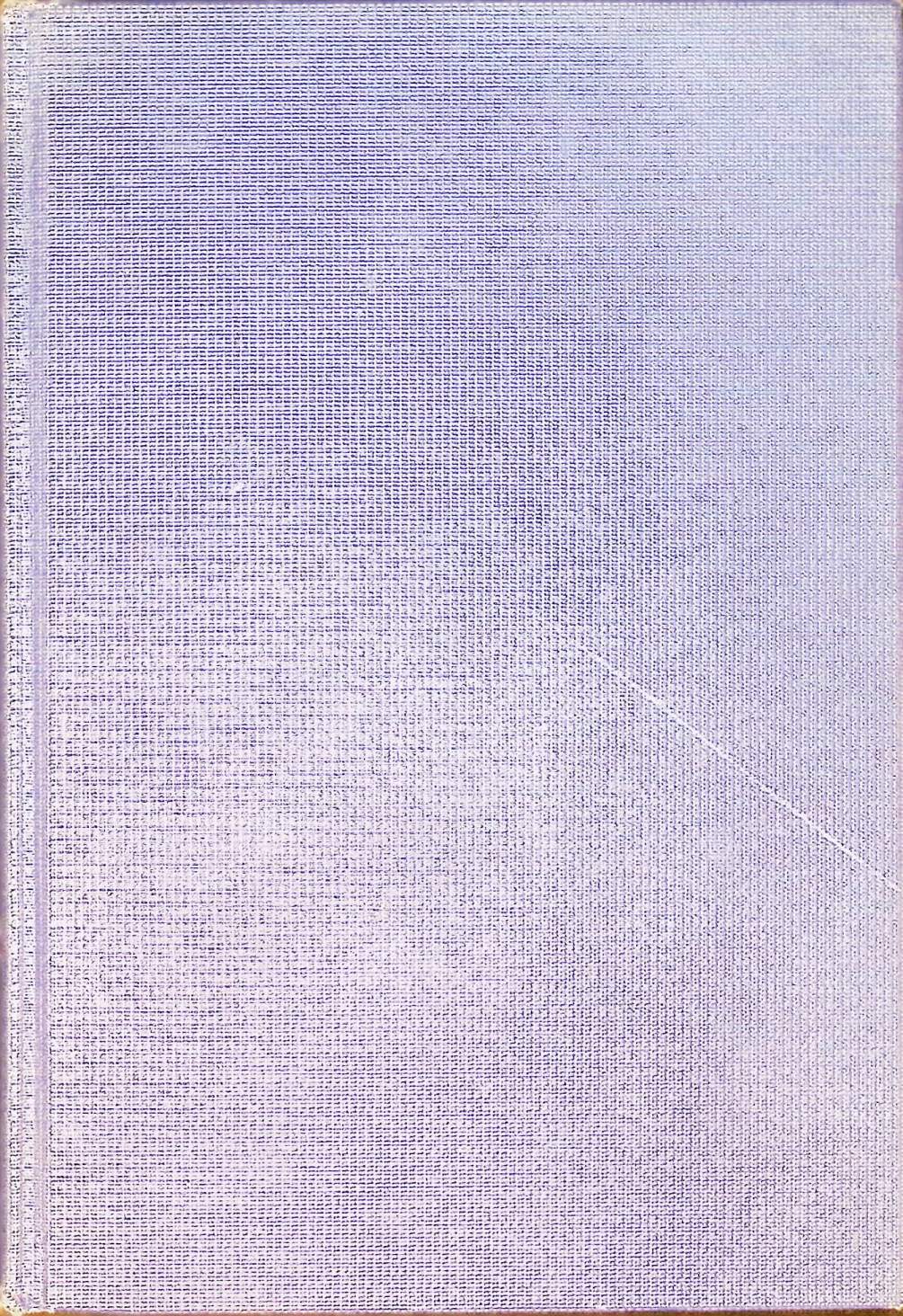


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The
CHRISTIAN
EVANGEL

A Modern Restatement
of the Ancient Faith

By

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AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY

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TO MY STUDENTS

scattered through the world on the business of Christ,
whose response to the teaching embodied herein
encouraged the writing of this book.

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PUBLISHERS' PREFACE

The officers of the American Tract Society announce with profound thanksgiving and great satisfaction that, as a result of the recent One Thousand Dollar Prize Contest "for the best treatise on one or more essential evangelical doctrines of the Christian faith," several manuscripts were presented of such exceptional value and merit that their publication was strongly advised by the Committee on awarding the prize.

Happily arrangements were made with the authors for the early publication of their manuscripts, in connection with and in addition to that which won the prize.

The American Tract Society is proud to announce further that the manuscript of this volume was one of those considered unusually meritorious.

The officers of the Society also acknowledge their indebtedness to a friend whose gift of One Thousand Dollars made possible this prize contest and secured for the Society the prize book and four others of outstanding value and importance.

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PROLOGUE

DURING the winter of 1899-1900 a series of lectures on the subject, *What is Christianity?* was delivered in the University of Berlin by Professor Adolf Harnack, the outstanding exponent of historic Christianity in Germany at that time. They were published at once in popular form, and at the turn of the century they were translated into English and circulated widely.

The very title of the lectures was significant. To ask the question, *What is Christianity?* implied the existence of some doubt and uncertainty. A period had arrived in the history of our religion when its essential nature was somehow becoming obscured, or was beginning to be misunderstood. During the generation that has passed since then, and especially since the Great War, the question has been revived in one form or another again and again, and many an answer has been given in the name of the Christian faith.

These answers go back, as Harnack himself did, to Jesus Christ and His Gospel and to primitive Christianity. This is the true way to seek an answer to the question, for only the religion founded by Christ and His Apostles has the right to be called Christian. It is only as it truly represents the Christianity of the New Testament that the Christianity of today can have any

message for the world. But in order to understand New Testament Christianity and its message it is not sufficient to go back to the New Testament alone.

Christianity came out of a long past. The New Testament is the sequel to the Old Testament. Jesus Christ appeared on the stage of human history at the end of ages of preparation. The majestic march of divine revelation had been moving down towards His appearing ever since the beginning of time. This was the belief of the Apostles. "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). The Son Himself when He appeared claimed to be the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets. It is quite impossible, therefore, to understand Christianity by confining our attention to the New Testament. The historic situation in which it arose cannot be fully explained without the historic approach through the Old Testament.

Attempts to explain Christianity without the aid of the Old Testament approach are due to the fact that, during the last fifty years, the Old Testament has been undergoing a searching examination at the hands of Biblical criticism. A great deal of good work has been done, much light has been thrown on the Hebrew Scriptures, and some valuable results have been obtained. But a critical hypothesis has been assumed, and it has been maintained with so much reiteration that it has been widely accepted as true.

The Old Testament as it stands professes to be the record of the revelation of God to Israel. Under the

critical hypothesis it has been taken to pieces and reconstructed. The reconstruction makes it appear to be the record of Israel's discovery of God and the development of Israel's idea of God. The miraculous interposition of God is read out of Israel's history; the divine preparation for Christ disappears from Moses and the Prophets; and the Christianity of the New Testament, divorced from the support of its Old Testament background, is left hanging in the air.

The inevitable result of this reconstruction appears in all attempts to explain Christianity without reference to the Old Testament preparation. They betray a fundamental weakness. It was the momentum received from the divine revelation of the past that gave New Testament Christianity its purpose and direction. It is the story of the beginnings of the human race, as depicted in the Old Testament, that provides the necessary reason for Christianity's message of redemption. Most of the ideas connected with the redemption described in the New Testament get their real significance from the Mosaic system of worship described in the Old Testament, as well as from the preaching of the Old Testament prophets. When all this is left out, even the most brilliant attempt to account for Christianity's introduction into the world and to explain its nature fails to do it justice, and can only make it go halting on its way.

For this method of approach to Christianity there is no real justification. There has been no valid reason for accepting the critical view of the Old Testament in discussing Christianity. Criticism has an important and valuable function to perform, but its place is in

the witness box and not on the jury. There are other kinds of evidence also to be considered in a just and true judgment regarding the sacred Scriptures. The final judgment is not with the critical expert, but with the common sense, the piety, and the faith of Christians in general. The Christian Church as a whole, with a sure instinct, has quietly ignored the critical reconstruction of the Old Testament, or treated it with only academic interest.

It is the Bible in its old form which still lies upon the pulpits of Christendom and is read in the ears of worshipping congregations. It is the Bible on its own feet that comes forth from the printing presses of the Bible societies and goes striding abroad throughout the world. Common Christians everywhere, intent on the business of Christ, have been content to wait till the critics should agree among themselves. In the meantime, archeology has brought into the field of late such overwhelming evidence of the historic accuracy and reliability of the Old Testament as it stands, and of the New Testament too, for that matter, that the subjective theories of modern criticism, on which so much learned labor has been spent, look strangely out of place in the new light.

The critical and philosophical approach to Christianity, which has occupied so much of the thinking of the Church during the past generation, has had some value, but it can go no farther than the outer courts. It should not occupy the field indefinitely, and it should not be allowed to block the progress of true Christian thought. Christian thinking really begins when reverent faith enters the inner shrine of the

Bible and summons all its powers to contemplate the historic revelation of God to man which its pages record. Only thus can the Christian evangel be discovered. There, in the heart of the New Testament, it is found, in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, with all the lines of the Old Testament revelation converging upon it.

The Old and the New Testament together combine to form the Christian Scriptures, and both are needed for a thorough understanding of the Christian faith. The following chapters are written from this point of view. The Bible is taken as a whole and as it stands. No time is spent on questions which belong to Biblical introduction or Textual criticism. It is assumed that that work has been done and that it leaves the Bible where it has always stood. The entire attention is devoted to interpretation and to an effort to draw out of the sacred text the essential elements in the Christian Gospel. It is of supreme importance that, amid the multitudinous voices in the world today, these should be clearly distinguished and as thoroughly understood as is possible. The Scripture quotations throughout are taken from the *American Standard Edition* of the *Revised Version*.

CHAPTER I

THE GOSPEL JESUS PREACHED

“The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

THE whole public life of the Lord Jesus Christ was marked by the preaching of the Kingdom of Heaven. He began with the message of John the Baptist, “Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17). He went on to describe and illustrate the Kingdom from time to time in a great variety of ways, and He continued to do this up to the very end of His life. “The gospel of the kingdom” is sometimes used as a comprehensive term for the whole of His teaching (Matt. 4:23; Luke 8:1). When He sent His twelve disciples forth on a mission intended to spread His own message more widely He charged them: “As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 10:7). The thought of the Kingdom pervades the Gospel narratives through and through.

But the Kingdom did not appear during the lifetime of Jesus. It was “at hand,” but it was not yet ready. It could not be made ready until His own work on earth was done. When He returned to heaven after His death and resurrection, then the Kingdom of Heaven came down and was opened for men to enter in by

the coming of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of Jesus in preaching the Kingdom was to announce and describe a new order of life which He was preparing for men. It was that spiritual and heavenly order which came into being with the descent of the Spirit and the birth of Christianity on the Day of Pentecost.

I

The Kingdom of Heaven was no new theme. It came out of the Old Testament. Daniel had declared that the God of heaven would set up a Kingdom which should never be destroyed (Dan. 2:44). The prophets before him had proclaimed that the Kingdom of God would come as a revival of the kingdom of David. The throne of David was to be established forever in peace and in righteousness (Isa. 9:7). The Lord would raise up unto David "a righteous Branch" who should reign as King with wisdom and with justice (Jer. 23:5; 33:15). Under this King Israel would be saved; their sins would be forgiven; and they would live a new life. They would fulfil the Law by an inward power from the heart, and they would enjoy a new kind of fellowship with the Lord their God (Jer. 31:33-34). These blessings were not for Israel alone, but were to be shared by other peoples as well. The Kingdom would extend throughout the world. All nations would gather to the God of Jacob; and He would teach them of His ways, and they would walk in His paths; for out of Zion should go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:3).

The psalmists, too, sang of a coming Kingdom. They

saw the Lord setting His King upon His holy hill of Zion, and promising to give Him the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession (Ps. 2:6, 8). His reign was to be so beneficent that it should be like rain upon the mown grass and as showers that water the earth. Under Him the righteous would flourish and peace would abound (Ps. 72:6-7). A unique feature of His reign would be free and spontaneous obedience. His people would be willing in the day of His power; they would offer themselves freely in loyal devotion (Ps. 110:3).

The idea of the Kingdom goes back to the time of David. These announcements of the Kingdom by prophets and psalmists were based upon a divine promise that had been given to him. They were a further unfolding of that promise. The Lord had promised David that He would establish his house and his throne forever (2 Sam. 7:13; 1 Chron. 17:14). This did not mean that the royal seat in Jerusalem on which David sat as the King of Israel should be occupied in perpetuity by a member of his line. David himself did not understand the promise in any such local and material sense. The prayer which follows in the narrative, when David went in and sat before the Lord, shows what a profound impression it had made upon him. His whole soul was moved to its depths as by some new vision that had opened up before him. He could not see, it is true, the full meaning of the promise or what was finally involved in it. But his prayer shows that the spiritual insight of the man did recognize that God had revealed to him a further stage in the great purpose which He was carrying out through

the ages, that purpose which He had in view when He redeemed Israel as a nation for Himself. Hereafter David's house and throne were to have a peculiar place in that sublime and eternal plan.

In order to understand the significance of David's throne in the unfolding of God's redeeming purpose, we need to read with care and discrimination the story of David in the books of Samuel. Old Testament history is not ordinary history. It is a revelation of the mind and the will of God as He moved down the ages; and it is also a revelation of the nature and the heart of man. David came to the throne of Israel after the failure of Saul. Saul failed, notwithstanding all his splendid gifts and great opportunities, because he declined to consult the will of God as it was represented by the prophet Samuel. His throne was the rule of self-will, and his self-will deepened as his reign went on. A kingdom of that kind would not serve the divine purpose and could not continue (1 Sam. 13:13-14). Saul was rejected from being king, and David was chosen in his place because he was a man after God's own heart, who would do all His will (1 Sam. 15:23; Acts 13:22).

When David became king he began his reign by seeking the mind of God at once as to the course he should follow (2 Sam. 2:1). In his subsequent wars with the Philistines, the inveterate foes of Israel in those days, he enquired of the Lord again and again (2 Sam. 5:19, 23). Thus did David establish his throne in the will of God. And even though he sinned grievously afterwards, yet the settled policy of his kingdom was to carry out in Israel the mind of the Lord. The Apostle Paul

could declare, in summing up his life, that David had "in his own generation served the counsel of God" (Acts 13:36). David's throne therefore stands in contrast with Saul's throne; it was the rule of the will of God.

This gives us the point of view of Old Testament prophecy. The prophetic outlook was the final establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth by a king of David's line on the principle of David's throne. This was the Messianic Kingdom. Isaiah spoke of the coming Messianic King as follows: "Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom" (9:7). Jeremiah declared, "Thus saith Jehovah: David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel" (33:17). The same idea is found in Ezekiel in these statements: "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David"; "And my servant David shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd" (34:23; 37:24). Hosea foretold that in the latter days the children of Israel should "return, and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king" (3:5). Amos spoke of a time when God would restore the house of David: "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up its ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old; that they may possess . . . all the nations that are called by my name" (9:11-12).

At the apostolic council in Jerusalem, James interpreted this prophecy as having been fulfilled in the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth, and

used it to show that the blessings of the Gospel were intended for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews (Acts 15:13-18).

This restoration of the kingdom of David which the prophets foresaw, this Messianic reign of a member of the house of David, would establish the kind of rule which David's throne began. It would make the will of God fundamental; and on that basis it would introduce a new order of things in which not Israel alone, but all the world, would share. This would be such an order of things as would secure on earth the doing of the will of God among men. It would bring the Kingdom of Heaven into the world. It was this Kingdom the Lord had in view in the prayer which He taught His disciples: "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth" (Matt. 6:10). These words indicate the nature of the new order as it lay in the mind of Jesus. When the Kingdom should come into being the will of God would be done among men as the angels in heaven do it, not by the compulsion of law and force, but by the glad and free constraint of willing and selfless obedience.

All this Old Testament background lay behind the ministry of Jesus. The opening words of the New Testament introduce Him as, "Jesus Christ, the Son of David." The angel who announced His coming birth to Mary declared that the Lord God should give unto Him the throne of His father David, and that there should be no end of His Kingdom (Luke 1:32-33). Jesus thus came in direct fulfilment of Old Testament promise and prophecy. When He began His ministry with the announcement that the Kingdom of Heaven

was at hand, He meant that the time had come to establish the promised Kingdom. The new order announced by the Old Testament prophets was now on the eve of coming into being. But there was a profound and far-reaching work to be accomplished before that event could take place. If it was to be an everlasting Kingdom, a Kingdom that could not be shaken, its foundations must be laid, not in the visible order of this present world, but deep in the unseen order of spiritual and eternal realities which lies behind the world. It was to this work that Jesus gave His life.

II

The spiritual element in the Kingdom, which had been already foreshadowed in the Prophets, had escaped the notice of the teachers and religious leaders in Israel. They thought only in terms of this world, and they failed to recognize the existence of that spiritual order which lay behind so much of the symbolism of their own system of worship. Having eyes they saw not, and having ears they heard not. They misunderstood the teaching of their own prophets, and accordingly they misrepresented it. They materialized the redeeming purpose of God, which was the heart of Messianic prophecy.

Thus it had come to pass that, along with the eager expectation that existed among the people in the days of John and Jesus, there was also a complete misunderstanding of the nature of the coming Messianic Kingdom. It was regarded as an exalted kingdom of this world, and as intended for Israel alone. It was neces-

sary, therefore, that much of the teaching and preaching of Jesus should be directed towards removing this misunderstanding from the minds of the people and towards creating in the minds of the disciples a truer idea of His purpose in coming into the world and of the new order of things He was preparing for men.

The Sermon on the Mount was an address on the Kingdom. Jesus struck the keynote in His opening words: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). The primary characteristic of the heavenly order which He had come to establish would be poverty of spirit. The kingdoms of men were characterized by self-assertion; they were founded on force, and their power depended on the constant use of force. The Kingdom of God now announced by Jesus, the only kingdom that should never be destroyed, would be founded on self-abnegation and the abandonment of all personal rights and claims. This was entirely new and was contrary to all the old ideas of men.

It was a direct challenge to the kingdoms of this world, and it was delivered on the very spot where the kingdoms of this world had formerly manifested their power. It was in "Galilee of the nations" (Isa. 9:1). At the foot of the hill on which Jesus sat that day there was the great highway of the ancient world along which the armies of Assyria and Babylon had marched when they invaded and devastated the Holy Land. It wound around the shore of the sea, ran out across the plain of Gennesaret, and disappeared among the hills of Galilee. It was in full view. Roman legionaries might be seen passing and repassing along that

road. It was a constant reminder of the kingdoms of this world order, which are ever rising and passing away, and which are characterized by pride and self-interest.

In the midst of that scene, this humble Galilean Teacher was quietly proclaiming to the thronging crowds of poor people around Him a Kingdom of another sort, a Kingdom which was to last forever, whose fundamental principle was humility and self-repression. The people that walked in darkness were seeing a great light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them was the light beginning to shine (Isa. 9:2).

In the course of the Sermon, and especially in the Beatitudes which immediately follow, Jesus went on to describe more fully the character of those who were to belong to the Kingdom. In doing so He presented an entirely new moral ideal, a moral ideal never dreamt of before but now universally recognized to be the highest ever imagined by man. Its peculiar feature is self-effacement. It is the reflection of His own character, who was Himself meek and lowly of heart. It is the complete fulfilment of the Moral Law, and yet it could not be achieved by the most thoroughgoing obedience to the Law. It was beyond the reach of human attainment. The purpose Jesus had in view in the Sermon was not laying down laws for His disciples to obey, or stating principles for them to put into practice; He was describing the kind of life He would enable them to live when His own work on earth was done. This kind of life was possible only when His own Spirit came upon them. It was the life that would be

lived under the Christian system when men would walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

In a subsequent address to the multitudes, Jesus described the Kingdom as a new order breaking into the old order. It was as when wheat is sown in the earth and brings forth fruit for a harvest. It grows from stage to stage by a mysterious power; man knows not how (Mark 4:26-27). Or it was like the mustard tree, developing from the smallest and most insignificant origin, an organized system which would take its place among the other systems in the world (Mark 4:30-32). In these and other parables of the same group, Jesus was explaining what He called "the mysteries of the kingdom" (Matt. 13:11). There would be a peculiar, self-propagating power in the new order, something which was entirely unknown in the old order.

Although His Kingdom was in direct line with the Old Testament order and was a fulfilment of it, yet in its inner nature it was essentially different. The old order was controlled by outward laws and regulated by prescribed forms and ceremonies; the new order would be a living organism, possessing its own inward principles and powers, and developing its own outward forms of manifestation. This new Kingdom was of such a nature that its very presence in the world would cause reactions. Its living, spiritual quality would be imitated and counterfeited by systems alien to it, like tares growing up in a field of wheat (Matt. 13:24-26). It would start hidden movements under the surface of human society, pervading and disturbing it, like leaven working in a mass of meal (Matt. 13:33). All these features have marked the course

of Christianity in world history since Pentecost brought it into being and set it on its way.

Towards the end of His life Jesus gathered His teaching concerning the Kingdom more and more around His own Person. He Himself was to be the center of the new Kingdom. Its powers were already being manifested in Him. On one occasion He reminded the Pharisees that wherever the Spirit of God was operating there the Kingdom of God was present. Since He was working His miracles among them by the power of the Spirit, it was evident that the Kingdom of God was come upon them (Matt. 12:28). On another occasion He was asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God was to come. He replied that it was not coming "with observation," not with any worldly splendor or startling signs of earthly power; "for lo," He went on to say, "the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:21, margin). Jesus did not mean that the Kingdom was within them in the sense of being in their hearts, for that was not true of the Pharisees. He was referring to Himself and to His own presence in their midst. In the kind of life He was living among them they could see, if they would, the powers and principles of the Kingdom already in action.

But these powers and principles belonged to another order of life. The secret of His life was not in this world. "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), said Jesus to Pilate, who knew nothing of any other kind of kingdom or any other kind of life. King though He claimed to be, come to establish a Kingdom in this world, yet Jesus repudiated the methods of the world.

"Now is my kingdom not from hence." The seat of its power was elsewhere. On the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus gave a chosen group of His disciples a glimpse of that supernatural and heavenly order to which He really belonged. In announcing the vision beforehand He had told them that they should "see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matt. 16:28). What they saw was a beatific vision of lives beyond the reach of death. The veil was drawn aside and Heaven for a moment was revealed. So blissful was the experience that Peter's first impulse was to do something to retain it. "Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles" (Luke 9:33). He had seen, though then he knew it not, into the heart of the abiding realities. There, behind the heavenly veil, was the secret of the life of Jesus. There was the seat of His Kingdom.

The Kingdom of God is fundamentally a Kingdom "of heaven." Its powers and principles belong to the heavenly world, where God is, and they operate upon the life of man in this world from the Godward side of the veil. It was very difficult for the Jews to see this. Their false interpretation of their prophets and their materialistic idea of the Kingdom had clouded from view the heavenly side of things. It is significant that Matthew's Gospel, which has the most pronounced Jewish setting and seems to make the most direct appeal to the Jewish people, uses the phrase "the kingdom of heaven" almost entirely as an alternate for "the kingdom of God," which is the only phrase used in the other Gospels. It is as though the Jews were thus being told that they were looking in the

wrong direction for the fulfilment of their Messianic hopes. They should turn their eyes from earth to heaven, from the visible and material to the unseen and spiritual. They should lift their eyes to the hills of God from whence would come their help.

III

Nowhere in all His teaching and preaching of the Kingdom did Jesus give His disciples the idea that He expected them to establish it. He did not present the Kingdom as something that was to be brought into the world by any human efforts. When He explained the principles of His Kingdom and expounded its laws, He gave no hint that it was by following these principles and obeying these laws that the Kingdom would come. After His death and resurrection the disciples were to go out and preach "this gospel of the kingdom" in all the world (Matt. 24:14). But that did not mean that they were to impose their Master's teaching upon the world and by their combined efforts get men to change their methods and adopt the principles and methods of Jesus. The disciples did not so understand their Master's missionary command.

The Kingdom was essentially a supernatural order, the founding of which was His work alone. It was not to be established by the efforts of men, but it was being made ready for men by the work He had come into the world to accomplish. Men were called to enter the Kingdom, and the door was very narrow. In the Sermon on the Mount, after Jesus had expounded the principles of the Kingdom and the new

kind of life provided in it, He went on near the end to call upon His hearers to enter by a narrow gate, a gate so narrow that few would find it. Jesus never represented the entrance into the Kingdom as an easy thing. It would be easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God (Matt. 19:24).

The conditions of entrance were searching and thoroughgoing. A complete revolution of life was required, such a revolution as His own disciples had not yet passed through. "Except ye turn," He told them once, "and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). Even their ambition to be great in the Kingdom was violating that poverty of spirit which was the fundamental qualification for membership in it.

The way into the Kingdom was the way of the Cross. "If any man would come after me," He said to His disciples on one memorable occasion, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16: 24). These words must have startled the disciples, for carrying a cross meant going to one's death. They could not yet understand the deep significance of their Master's metaphor. A great deal of the Lord's teaching during His ministry among them was quite beyond their understanding. It could not be understood until His work was finished and it was all illuminated by the coming of the Holy Spirit. After Pentecost they came to understand it thoroughly, not only by the entrance of the light into their minds, but also by the profound spiritual experience of their souls.

The way of the Cross was to lead to a new life. En-

trance into the Kingdom was by a new birth; a new life would be given by the Holy Spirit. This was the great truth which Jesus unfolded to Nicodemus. Nicodemus, being a teacher of Israel, should have known this spiritual principle before, for it lay embedded in the Law and the Prophets; and Jesus expressed surprise at his ignorance of it (John 3:10). The water flowing from the rock in the wilderness, the laver in the court of the tabernacle, Isaiah's prophecy of streams breaking out in the desert, and Ezekiel's vision of the river of life flowing from within the temple, with many another passage, should have prepared a teacher like Nicodemus to understand the teaching of Jesus. But it was just this aspect of the teaching of their own Scriptures which even the best of the Jewish rabbis missed.

As Jesus expounded this truth to Nicodemus, He laid special emphasis on the fact that there could be no entrance into the Kingdom except by a supernatural, spiritual change. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:3, 5.) In mentioning water Jesus referred to the baptism of John, for John's work was still going on and Nicodemus would naturally have that in mind. But John's baptism was only the preparation for a baptism of another kind. John himself regarded it in this light. In speaking of the One coming after him, he said, "I baptize you with water, but he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:8). This spiritual baptism, however, could not yet take

place. Not until Jesus was glorified could His Holy Spirit come down upon men. The Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:39).

After His death and Resurrection, and on the eve of entering into His glory, Jesus said to His disciples, with Pentecost in view, "John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). To be born of water and the Spirit, therefore, is to share in the supernatural event that took place on the Day of Pentecost. It is to receive of that new spiritual life which was then released from heaven with all its new powers and principles, and which has been flowing from above ever since that day. Now men can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Now men can be born again, born from above.

After Simon Peter's great confession at Cæsarea Philippi, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16), showing that he had received such an insight into the secret of His Master's Person as flesh and blood could not have revealed unto him, the Lord announced for the first time the founding of His Church. Immediately afterwards He entrusted Peter with the high honor of opening the Kingdom to men: "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:19). Peter fulfilled this function at Pentecost, when from his lips the Christian Gospel was proclaimed for the first time, and when at his exhortation some three thousand souls turned from their old way of life into the new heavenly life of the Spirit. Thus the Kingdom of Heaven was opened, and thus the Christian Church began.

This is the function which Christ meant His Church to continue. The Kingdom of Heaven is the reality at the heart of Christianity. It is the unseen order which lies behind the visible Church and is the ground for its existence. It is the spiritual basis for the new world order that is to be. It has been established by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and needs no other foundation. The business of the Church is to proceed upon it, to proclaim it and explain it, and to invite men to enter it. During the days of His flesh it was only "at hand"; in this age of the Spirit it is open to all the world.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE JESUS LIVED

“I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”

BEFORE the Lord Jesus Christ could establish His Kingdom among men, man himself had first to be remade. In order that men might do the will of God, human nature had to be changed at its roots and its whole course and tendency had to be reversed. Its springs were in the wrong place and it was set in the wrong direction.

At the beginning it was not so. Man was made in the image of God and was intended for fellowship with God. The will of God was to be the rule of his life, and his moral nature was to be developed and matured by obedience to God of his own free choice. There was no evil tendency in man's nature as it came from the Creator's hand. But the first man, responding to a subtle temptation which came from elsewhere, by an act of his own free choice, turned aside from God's will to his own will as the rule of his life.

This is the meaning of the pictorial story of the fall of Adam, recorded at the beginning of the Bible.

It reveals the origin and the nature of sin. That original act created "original sin." It introduced the bias of self-will into the nature of the human race, and every child of Adam is born with it. Even the saints among men bear witness to this fact by the very nature of their aspirations. So does the Moral Law itself, for when it was given to Israel it was set in prohibitions. Psychology also is lately coming to agree, for it finds beneath the conscious life of man something which frustrates his conscious purposes.

Sin does not exist as a thing by itself which attacks man's nature like a disease. Nor does it consist in a conflict of two opposing tendencies in man's nature. Its essence consists in the very attitude of his nature, his enthroning of self in the center of his being as the law of existence. By virtue of the solidarity of the human race, the choice made and the attitude taken by the original man put a permanent stamp on the human soul, like a bend sinister, which man himself could never afterwards eradicate. This has wrought its tragic consequences of sin and death down through all human history. It was necessary, therefore, if the race was to be redeemed, if the Kingdom of God was to be established in the earth, that this bias of self-will should be removed from human nature, and that the springs of man's soul should be set in God and directed to the will of God. This was the work that Jesus accomplished by living the life of man.

I

Among all the words of our Lord perhaps none takes

us nearer to the inner secret of His earthly life than His statement at the head of this chapter. It reveals His way of life; it contains His ground-principle of action, "not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). There is a deep significance here which at first escapes our notice. If these words were spoken of any other man, we should understand them to refer to the natural antagonism which exists in every human soul between the will of man and the will of God. But there could be no such antagonism in the soul of Jesus. He cannot mean that His will differed from the Father's will and that He put aside His own will because of that difference. It is the operation of His will and not the content of His will that He has in view. His mind moved with complete freedom of choice and with all the fulness of its human powers in accordance with the mind of God. He willed to have no self-will, but to make the will of God His own will. This was the purpose of His incarnation—to live a human life, under human conditions and within human limitations, in which there would be no self-will and no self-interest. His object was to perfect human nature in doing the will of God, and so create man anew.

This mark is seen upon His life from the very beginning. His first recorded words, spoken to His parents as a boy of twelve, when they found Him in the temple after an anxious search, throw a revealing light back over His earliest years (Luke 2:49). It matters little whether Jesus meant "in my Father's house," as the Revised Version has it, or "about my Father's business," as the King James Version and the margin of the Revised Version have it. The significant thing is

not that, but the surprise He expressed, "Knew ye not?" There was something in His life which He thought His parents should have been familiar with. This could not be the fact of His Messiahship; for even if Messianic consciousness was beginning to arise in His soul as early as this, that was not something they could have known. Nor could it be the supernatural nature of His birth; for even if He knew that circumstance at this time, a reference to it in addressing His parents would rob His words of their ingenuous, childlike quality.

What we have here is rather a disclosure of His inner soul from the time of His earliest consciousness. It is a natural and beautiful revelation of the attitude of mind in the growing boy. Through all the twelve years lived in His home in Nazareth He has never had any interests of His own to turn Him aside from the things of God. This is what His parents might have understood. Wherever He was, even when out of their sight for days, they might have known that He would be "about his Father's business" or "in his Father's house." Here, then, is a glimpse into the inner life of a child who has no self-will. Here is human nature pure from the start and conscious of never having been anything but right with God and occupied with doing His will.

Long before His coming into the world this attitude of His soul had been foreshadowed. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews quotes a passage from the fortieth psalm as expressing the deliberate purpose of His incarnation: "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith . . . A body didst thou prepare for

me . . . Then said I, Lo, I am come . . . to do thy will, O God." (Heb. 10:5-7). During His public ministry He gave voice to the same thought again and again. It is echoed in His answer to the wondering disciples when they found Him so refreshed after His talk with the woman of Samaria, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work" (John 4:34). He was giving Himself with such absorbing devotion to this one great purpose that His energies were never dissipated and His life was receiving therefrom unceasing momentum.

This attitude of His towards the will of God was the basis of His argument in the controversy with the Jews after the Sabbath miracle at the pool of Bethesda. "The Son can do nothing of himself," He told them, "but what he seeth the Father doing" (John 5:19). He meant that He had so emptied Himself of His own will that He did nothing from that motive. He had no interests of His own to be occupied with, but only the interests of His Father. For this very reason He could do nothing Himself but carry out the will of the Father. It was on this very ground, He went on to say, that He had been given power and authority to do the works of the Father and perform the miracles He did. It was on this ground, too, that He based His claim to judge: "I can of myself do nothing; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is righteous; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (v. 30). Having no self-interest to bias Him, not being moved by self-will, but only by the will of God, His judgment was therefore that of the Father Himself.

The fact that He made the will of God His rule of

life and action was the central point on which Satan assailed Him in the wilderness. The temptations of the adversary were not directed at getting Him to abandon His Messianic task, but at getting Him to change His attitude in proceeding to carry it out. They were suggestions to shift His ground and to find the guiding principle of His actions within Himself.

They were strikingly similar to the suggestions made by the tempter to the soul of Eve in the Garden of Eden. Behind all the mysterious experience of those forty days there was a subtle attempt on the part of the devil to introduce the element of self-will into the work of Jesus. But there was a striking and fundamental difference in the way Jesus met the tempter. In every case He refused to have the question referred to Himself. On every point He brought an explicit declaration of the will of God into the field to settle it. Thus did Jesus suffer being tempted in order that in Himself human nature might be perfected. He recognized the presence of a personal evil will in the world, antagonistic to the will of God, ever seeking to pervert the will of man, and He met it with uncompromising and irreconcilable hostility. The Second Man refused to turn aside from the will of God.

II

Jesus found the will of God in the Holy Scriptures, and not in His own consciousness. It was not a program already laid out in His mind, but, as He went along, it opened up before Him from His own knowledge of the Scriptures. He made the Word of God His

constant guide, and He consented to order His life by the written revelation already given to man. Though He was the Son of God, whose goings forth were from everlasting, yet He subjected Himself as man to all the limitations set by the Creator around human life and conduct. Though He was Himself the Lawgiver, yet He consented to live under the strict and narrow limits of the Law as it was given to Israel. There is abundant evidence of this in all the Gospel records.

We never find Jesus defending His conduct or vindicating Himself on subjective grounds. He claimed to have come from God, and yet He never appealed to the secret counsels of God which He might have been expected to know. He had a pure and sinless conscience, the only unperverted conscience since Adam, and yet He never even referred to His conscience as His standard of conduct. He had an infallible judgment; He was the only man in all human history who was capable of judging for Himself beyond the possibility of error; and yet the Gospels never represent Him as judging for Himself in any case put before Him independently of the written Word of God. He was led by the Spirit of God—the Spirit was given to Him without measure—but He never used even that fact to explain the reason for His conduct. Never for a moment do we see him falling back on subjective reasons which other men could not use, but always pointing to the same objective revelation of the will of God which other men had.

When He cleansed the temple of its unholy traffic, He did not refer to His Messianic authority as the reason for His act, but to a statement in the Word of

God: "It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer" (Matt. 21:13). When the Pharisees accused His disciples of breaking the Sabbath in plucking ears of grain to eat as they passed through the wheat fields, Jesus did not defend them on the ground of His own authority or His own example, but by citing an example recorded in their Scriptures and explaining the principle of conduct which lay behind it: "Have ye not read what David did?" (Matt. 12:3). When a practical question concerning life was put to Him by a certain lawyer, He referred the inquirer to the written Law, with which he was supposed to be familiar: "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" (Luke 10:26). When His enemies came upon Him in the last week of His life to entangle Him in His teaching, He put them to silence by exposing their ignorance of the Word of God: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures" (Matt. 22:29).

Even as a teacher Jesus did not set His authority above the written Word, but rather drew His authority from it. To Him the Scriptures were infallible and irrefragable. "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets," He declared in the Sermon on the Mount, "I came not to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). And then He went on to expound some of the laws in the most sweeping and searching way. He brought out their inner, spiritual meaning. He showed that they involve the thoughts and intents of the heart, and that when the law of God condemns an act it thereby condemns the motive that prompts the act. His was not the traditional teaching of the scribes and Pharisees; and it was their traditional teaching

of the Law and not the Law itself that Jesus put aside.

Even when He seemed to set aside an Old Testament commandment on His own authority, as in the cases of swearing and retaliation (Matt. 5:33-38), He was not claiming a right to supersede the Scriptures, but rather asserting a right to interpret them. He was carrying the inner spirit of the Law to a further stage of development. The old command had introduced a temporary limitation of the fundamental principle of love to God and one's neighbor which Jesus found to be the essence of the Law, a limitation made necessary because of the perverted moral sense of the people, in the same way as the law of divorce had been allowed because of the hardness of their hearts (Matt. 19:8). Instead of setting aside the Old Testament law and superseding it by His own independent authority, Jesus, by His teaching, magnified the Law and made it honorable (Isa. 42:21).

Even His prophetic utterances had their foundation in the Messianic predictions of the Scriptures. His announcements concerning His approaching death were all based on Old Testament prophecies: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written through the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of man" (Luke 18:31). After His Resurrection He pointed out that it was this very thing that He had been trying to get His disciples to understand. "These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). Jesus not only explained and expounded the Law as a teacher; He

was conscious also that the very manner and course of His life was fulfilling prophecies which ran right through the Scriptures, and He wished His disciples to understand that fact.

It is obvious, therefore, that Jesus meditated much upon the Old Testament Scriptures. They filled His thoughts. He made them the guide of His life and the basis of His teaching. In no case did He place Himself above their authority. On the contrary, He yielded His mind and will to them, and as He did so the plan of His life unfolded before Him. He found in them the mind and will of His Father. It was thus that He produced the impression of teaching "as one having authority," so different from the scribes. They could only pass on their learned traditions about the Law. The teaching of Jesus illumined the Law with a sense of reality. The divine authority behind the Scriptures lived again on the lips of Jesus. Not only did He draw His authority from them, but He also rested His soul upon them in the great crises of His life. It was on the written Word of God He took His stand in meeting every attack of Satan in the wilderness. And on the Cross, when He passed into the awful darkness in which He died, He sank His soul in the Father's will by uttering a final prayer in the words of Scripture: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46; Ps. 31:5).

III

In carrying out the will of God throughout His ministry, Jesus acted as a man entirely dependent upon

the power of God. He denied Himself the use of His own inherent power as the Son of God, and surrendered Himself completely to the Spirit of God. This was the significance of His baptismal experience. It was "thus" that He undertook "to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15), and so accomplish the will of God.

The Gospel of Luke is especially enlightening in showing us how the Holy Spirit entered into the life of Jesus. While all the Evangelists tell us that the Spirit came upon Him at His baptism, Luke says that Jesus was praying at the time (3:21), the implication being that the Spirit was given in answer to His prayer. Luke's narrative from this point on gives some indication of the way this experience influenced His life. He at once began to respond to the leading of the Spirit: "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led in the Spirit in the wilderness" (4:1). He came back triumphant from the temptation, and "returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (4:14). He came to His own home town and attended the synagogue service as usual. But there had been a change in His life since He left Nazareth to go down to the Jordan. He explained this change by reading the passage in Isaiah which begins, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," and applying it to Himself and the work He was now carrying on (4:18, 21).

Thus we follow Jesus step by step from the time the Spirit descended upon Him in answer to His prayer of surrender. We see Him, full of the Holy Spirit, led by the Spirit, entering upon the full tide of His activity in the power of the Spirit. We find Him fully realizing and publicly declaring the fact that the Holy Spirit of

God had equipped Him to carry out the prophetic program of the Messiah.

Here, then, at the opening of the public ministry of Jesus, within the limits of less than two chapters, Luke mentions the Holy Spirit five times. After that, with one doubtful exception (10:21), he makes no other reference to the Holy Spirit's relation to Jesus in all his Gospel; and there are only two further statements in all the other Gospels regarding the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus. The reason for this silence is not far to seek. After it had been shown how Jesus entered upon His ministry under the power of the Spirit, and how He was working and teaching in the fulness of that power, it was quite unnecessary to dwell any more on the fact. There was no need of mentioning the Holy Spirit in any particular case when nothing Jesus said or did was of Himself alone.

The two further statements in other Gospels confirm this. In Matthew 12:28 we have our Lord's own explanation of His miracles in the statement that He cast out demons "by the Spirit of God." And in John 3:34 we have the Apostle's declaration that Jesus was speaking the very words of God because the Spirit of God had not been given to Him "by measure."

This feature of the narrative also goes to show that Jesus was living in quite a natural way. There was nothing abnormal in the way the power of the Spirit was manifested in the life of Jesus. It was in complete accord with the principles of human nature. The super-human life of the Spirit of God was active in the man Jesus of Nazareth, but that activity did not transcend the mold of human nature. The life Jesus was living

was but the natural and spontaneous expression of His own personality. Though the Spirit of God was in Him as the power of His life, and though He was always consciously dependent on the Spirit, yet He always manifested the Spirit's power and presence according to the laws, and within the limitations, of the nature of man.

This fact appears also in the way He maintained His communion with God through prayer. His dependence upon the Spirit and power of God was marked by His constant habit of prayer. His miracles were answers to prayer. This becomes all the more evident from the indirect and unexpected way in which He occasionally referred to it. When the disciples called His attention to the fig tree which had withered away after His curse upon it, Jesus made no reference to the nature of the miracle, but used it as an illustration of faith and of answered prayer (Mark 11:22-24). When He stood before the tomb of Lazarus and was about to call back into life a man four days dead, He first lifted His face in thanksgiving to God because He had been already heard (John 11:41). The power to perform this miracle, the greatest of all His works, was given in answer to an unrecorded prayer. The impression we get from the Gospels is that Jesus hung upon God in prayer continually, and that the power to carry on His work as He went along came out of a life of prayer and fellowship with His Father in Heaven.

IV

Such was the life that Jesus lived. It was a human life

entirely free from self-will or any bias caused by self-will. Its springs were in God, and in God alone. Throughout its whole course it reflected the will of God perfectly. It set the pattern, in its fundamental principle, for what every human life was intended to be in the purpose of God. It is this fundamental principle that Peter had in mind in his First Epistle, when, after referring to the sufferings of Christ, he went on to say that He left us an example that we should follow His steps (2:21). Peter did not mean that we should do what Jesus did, but that we should live as Jesus lived, with His attitude of mind and spirit. He has given us an example of the true way of life.

This life that Jesus lived, with all its absorbing devotion to one purpose, was marked by a calm and steady peace. It gives an impression of poise and power, but not of drive and force. It moves at the heart of the will of God, with no sign of haste and with no waste of energy. An inward quietness pervades all its outward activity. Jesus could wait as well as work.

Thirty years were spent in the obscure ministries of a poor home, with brothers and sisters growing up around Him, and in the daily routine of a village carpenter's shop. During all those years the same conditions prevailed in the crowded cities of Galilee as during the three years of His later ministry; but the need that He saw around Him did not force Him out into public work till His Father's time had come. During the busiest period of His public ministry, the crowds were sometimes so great that "they trod one upon another" (Luke 12:1), and the work was sometimes so urgent that He and His disciples "had no leisure so

much as to eat" (Mark 6:31); but Jesus never showed any sign of hurry or of worry. He was never disturbed by interruptions, and He was never disconcerted when others interfered with His plans.

This feature of His life is well illustrated at the time of the feeding of the five thousand. When the four accounts of this miracle are compared, the only miracle recorded in all the Gospels, it is found to have occurred on a day when the crowds had broken in upon a plan He had made for retirement and rest. He had taken His disciples across the lake that He might be alone with them. But the curious multitude, eager to see more of His miracles, had come round by the shore and were there anticipating His arrival. He gave no sign of disappointment. Mark says that "he had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd" (6:34). Luke says that He "welcomed them, and spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and them that had need of healing he cured" (9:11). He accepted it all without complaint as part of His Father's will and went on with His work among them.

On another occasion, when Jesus was on His way to the house of Jairus at the urgent request of the anxious father whose little daughter was at the point of death, He stopped and would not go on till the woman who was stealing away with a surreptitious healing, got by the secret touch of His garment, had come before Him with an open confession, and He had sent her away with a blessing for her soul as well as for her body. He would not leave any work behind Him unfinished because of the pressure of some other work ahead of Him. He took all the time necessary to do the

will of God thoroughly. He completed the work of each hour and each day as it came. He never allowed crowding circumstances to control Him; He used them as guiding marks of His Father's will.

Jesus was often in the midst of danger, but He was never affected by fear or anxiety. He slept in the storm on the sea of Galilee, a storm so severe that the fishermen disciples, accustomed to the sea all their lives, were afraid that night. He stilled the storm when they awakened Him, but He rebuked them for their fear and lack of faith (Mark 4:40). His faith in God was such that He could sleep in perfect peace through the raging of the wind and the waves. He showed the same peace before the rage of men. His own townsfolk sought to cast Him from the brow of their hill. The Jews in the temple courts at Jerusalem several times sought to stone Him. Once the Pharisees, in an effort to disturb Him during His last journey to Jerusalem, warned Him that Herod wished to kill Him (Luke 13:31). He replied with quiet dignity that He would finish His work day by day, and He went steadily forward on His way, unhurried and unafraid; and yet He knew that He was going to His death.

The title which Jesus almost always used in referring to Himself was "the Son of man." It occurs in the Gospels about eighty times. Though He came from God and was the Son of the Highest, yet He evidently wished to be known among men in His human relations. He was the representative Man. He was not an individual member of the human race! He was humanity itself incorporated. As in Him dwelt the fullness of the divine nature, so in Him dwelt also the

completeness of human nature. In the life He was living all human nature as created by God was actively manifested. There was a completeness and perfect balance in His character; no trait was missing and no trait was weak. In Him, too, the whole human race was present. The very universality of His character is an evidence of this. He shows none of the distinguishing characteristics of the Jewish race. He has no racial or national marks of any kind. He belongs to the whole human family, not to any section of it. This is the instinctive feeling of all mankind, of any race or language, wherever the story of Jesus is known.

And yet He also stands aloof and apart from all other men. There are some features in His life that have never appeared anywhere else in all human history. He was conscious of no sin; He challenged anyone to convict Him of sin (John 8:46). He betrayed no sense of aspiration; there was no attainment beyond Him which He felt He needed still to reach. Here was a righteousness perfect and complete. Here was a purity always pleasing to God, and a fellowship with God never interrupted. Here was a life completely human, yet essentially different from any other life ever seen on earth. It was the ideal and perfect life of man.

On the night before His death, in the prayer which summed up His life, Jesus said, "Father . . . I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do" (John 17:1-4). The work He had come down from Heaven to do had now been done. He had done the will of Him that sent Him. Through the course of an ordinary generation of man's

existence, and within all the limits of human experience, He had done the will of His Father in Heaven. The will of God had at last functioned completely and perfectly in the nature of man. He had glorified God on the earth; He had remade human nature; He had created "the new man" (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).

CHAPTER III

THE DEATH JESUS DIED

"I lay down my life. . . . No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself."

THE life which Jesus lived was not subject to death. Death had no claim upon the manhood which He had perfected by His obedience to God. He died, but not as men die who cannot keep the life they have and have to lay it down at last. He was not an individual member of the human race who had to die in any case. He died as the ideal and perfect man upon whose manhood death could not pass but by His own consent.

Before He came to die He made the amazing claim that He had the right, received from His Father, of absolute control over His own life; He could do what He would with it. "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it. This commandment received I from my Father" (John 10:18). When men lay down their lives as a sacrifice for a great cause, they give up something which in the end they have to give up anyway. This is a totally different thing from the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. His death was voluntary in the absolute sense of the word. "Therefore doth

the Father love me," He declared, "because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself." (John 10:17-18.)

I

The true end of the life which Jesus lived was reached in the Transfiguration. This unique event, which all the Synoptic Gospels record, has a profound significance because of its bearing upon His death. In order to see this we need to understand clearly the real nature of what took place. It was not the shining out of His divine nature which had been hidden before under His human nature. It was His sinless human nature, now perfected, manifesting itself in its true glory. It was a revelation of what man was capable of becoming in the order of creation, and what he would have attained ultimately, had it not been for the fall. Unperverted by self-will, uncorrupted by sin, man, the crown of creation, made in the image of God, would have been developed and matured by his fellowship with God and by the response of his will to the will of God, until he had transcended the limitations of the physical world. This was evidently man's divinely appointed destiny when considered in the light of the story of his creation. It had been realized at last by Jesus of Nazareth.

The two men who appeared in glory with Him in the wondrous scene were clothed in bodies which had already passed beyond death. Their material bodies had previously been spiritualized and were present some-

where in the transcendent world beyond. Elijah had been taken up bodily into heaven without passing through death (2 Kings 2:11). Moses had died a mysterious death and no man knew where he was buried (Deut. 34:5-6). The Scriptures speak with great reserve regarding Moses' exit from this world; but the reference in Jude 9, whatever its origin may be, implies the belief that the body of Moses did not see corruption. If this was the case, then Moses had been raised from the dead. This explains his presence with Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Moses and Elijah were there, not as immaterial spirits, but in bodily form as Jesus was. They were men in glory now, who had got beyond the reach of death. Elijah had passed beyond death by his bodily translation into the heavenly world. Moses had passed through death, and his body had been raised again a spiritual body. In both cases the claims of death had been arrested, and the power of death had been reversed by the hand of God.

The presence of Jesus with Moses and Elijah marked the essential connection of the Saviour with the Old Testament dispensation. These two men were the representatives of the Law and the Prophets. The divine purpose of redemption had come down through the ages embodied and unfolded in the Law and the Prophets. And now this redemption was to be carried to its final accomplishment by Jesus Himself. Moses and Elijah had been received into glory on the ground of the coming work of the Redeemer and in anticipation of it. They were there because of their relation to Him and as a kind of firstfruits or pledge of His

final victory. They represented the redeemed of all the past dispensation who were waiting for the salvation of the Lord.

Jesus, however, was there in His own right. He had attained this glory on His own merit. His bodily form had become clothed with glory as the natural crown of His sinless and perfect life. There was nothing in Him to die as being subject to earthly corruption. Death, after all, is really the unnatural thing. To say that it is universal is not to explain it. It is the common lot of all mankind, but it still remains a break in the course of the natural creation. There is nothing in the constitution of things to make it necessary. Science may describe its processes, but cannot discover its original cause. It awaits man always as his enemy.

The Biblical explanation has never been disproved. As Paul puts it, "through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Death has come upon the human race because of the invasion which sin has made into the nature of man. The final purpose of the Creator in making man in His own image was to crown him "with glory and honor" (Ps. 8:5). The scene on the Mount when Jesus was thus crowned was the fitting and natural end of His ideal earthly life, and He might have departed with Moses and Elijah in that transcendent state into the world of glory from which He had come.

But Jesus turned back into the world to go by the way of the Cross, that He might redeem the world. This was the absorbing theme of the conference on the Mount. Luke says that Moses and Elijah spake "of

his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (9:31). This does not mean His death alone. The real word is "exodus," or "departure," as in the margin of the text. It means His way of going out of the world, a theme which would be of special interest to both Moses and Elijah. It includes His Resurrection and Ascension as well as His death. Jesus was to depart from this world, not by the way of the Mount of Transfiguration, as was His right, but by the way of the Mount of Ascension; and in the valley which lay between were the Cross and the tomb.

In going down into death, when death had no claim upon Him, He would not only transcend death ultimately as Moses and Elijah had done; He would conquer death. He would abolish death and bring life and immortality to light (2 Tim. 1:10). Thus did Jesus make His supreme act of self-denial and renunciation, that He might lay down His life in a voluntary sacrifice for the salvation of men. In His own words, the supreme purpose of His mission in the world was "to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

The life He laid down for this purpose was a finished and perfected life. This was what the Transfiguration attested. His death would not have availed for the redemption of the world if it had not been preceded by His perfect life. This is the explanation which the writer of Hebrews gives for the Transfiguration. "We behold him . . . crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste of death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). The manhood which He carried to the Cross was an achievement which it took a lifetime to consummate. The Author of

our salvation had first "learned obedience" and had been "made perfect" (Heb. 5: 8-9).

Peter also, who was an eyewitness of the ineffable wonder, speaks of it as the crowning seal of Christ's earthly life. "For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (2 Pet. 1:17). It was the second time these words of the Father's approval had been heard from heaven. The first occasion was at the Jordan, when, after thirty sinless years of private life, Jesus dedicated Himself to the Messianic task and identified Himself with the people whom He undertook to redeem. And now, after three years of public life in doing the Father's will, when He turned aside from the glory manifestly open before Him that He might accomplish the last act in the work of redemption, the voice of divine approval again came from heaven bearing witness to the perfect life He had lived and was about to lay down.

II

From the Transfiguration to the end of His life Jesus moved with persistent deliberation and with calm and steady dignity on toward the Cross. He was not caught in a rising tide of opposition and hostility and helplessly carried along. This is not the impression the Gospels give us. From the very beginning of His public ministry He knew what was before Him and what He was going to do. He had His death in view from the first, and it was not the death of martyrdom. "De-

stroy this temple," He said to the Jews at His first public appearance in Jerusalem, "and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). He would command the situation Himself. He would lay down His life by their hands, and He would take it again by Himself.

All through the early part of His ministry, before He made any explicit reference to His death at all, mysterious utterances fell from His lips from time to time which show that, behind all His activity of teaching and preaching and working miracles, there was in His mind a consciousness of the Cross.

This is the obvious meaning of His words to Nicodemus who was so perplexed by Jesus' teaching about being born of the Spirit: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). When the disciples of John the Baptist came asking Jesus why His disciples did not fast, He told them the days would come when the bridegroom should be taken away from them, and then they would fast (Matt. 9:15). When the scribes and Pharisees sought a sign from Him, He would give them none but the sign of the prophet Jonah, which He used as a symbol of His coming death: "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40). The address He gave to the people in the synagogue at Capernaum after the feeding of the five thousand is pervaded with the thought of His sacrificial death. "I am the living bread," He declared, and then went on

to say, "the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

Such declarations as these make it clear that the death of Jesus was before His mind from the first and that He moved on towards it with deliberate intent. He had a settled purpose in it. It was the one great crisis of His life. It was the supreme "hour" towards which His whole life moved. He referred to it in this way again and again. Even at the marriage in Cana, the occasion of His first miracle, it loomed up before Him. When His mother suggested His doing something to meet the need that had arisen, He replied, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." (John 2:4.) This was not a rebuke, for Mary did not take it that way; but it meant that not even His mother or any domestic claim could be allowed to interfere with the one object of His life to which He had now set His face. When His brethren, who did not yet believe on Him, were urging Him to go up to Judea and manifest Himself at the Feast of Tabernacles, He replied, "My time is not yet come; but your time is always ready" (John 7:6).

The nearer He came to the Cross the more intense His feelings became, as they are revealed in remarks that He made to His disciples from time to time. "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50.) "Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" (Matt. 20:22.) Sometimes His very manner was affected by strong emotion. Mark depicts a striking scene during His final journey to Jerusalem, when he shows us Jesus striding on before His amazed and

awed disciples, with His face set towards the end He was to accomplish there (Mark 10:32). And on the night before His death, when the work of His life was finished, He began His last prayer with the words, "Father, the hour is come" (John 17:1).

The question arises here, how did Jesus know that He was called to make a sacrificial death the end of His earthly life? Undoubtedly from the Old Testament Scriptures. It was there He found His Father's will for His life. It was from the Scriptures He learned the way He was to go and the work He was to do. As He meditated upon His Father's Word, speaking to Him as it did through all the Hebrew Scriptures, He saw the Messianic task and the Messianic path clearly laid out before Him, not only in the predictions of the Prophets but also in the symbolism of the Law. The types and shadows of the tabernacle and of the sacrificial system of worship were all luminous to Him. His unclouded mind, unaffected by the blindness of the people, saw clearly and profoundly the progressive movement of the Father's plan of redemption as it came down through the ages and was unfolded in Moses and the Prophets. And He saw it all heading up in Himself as the Messiah.

After Peter's great confession of His Messiahship, He became clearly explicit about His approaching death. Then He began to make definite and particular predictions about it. Three different times He told the disciples He was going to Jerusalem to suffer and to die (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:32). But He did not stop with His death. On every occasion He went on to tell them that He would rise again on the third day. He

was going to His hour, but not to His doom. He was going to lay down His life, that He might take it again. He was going down deliberately into suffering and death, and on to the triumphant accomplishment of a great purpose.

III

On the last night of His life, with His disciples gathered around Him in the upper room, Jesus brought His teaching about His death to a head in the institution of the Last Supper. When He gave them the cup and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke 22:20), or according to Matthew's fuller report, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins" (26:28), He made His most complete statement about the purpose of His death. These words gather up in themselves the significance of the Law and the Prophets as they foreshadowed His redemptive work. They can be understood only with the Old Testament background in view.

Jesus had before His mind the covenant of the Law made with Israel at Mount Sinai, which was sealed by sacrifice after the people had promised to obey (Ex. 24:7-8). He had in mind also the new covenant, announced long afterwards by the Prophet Jeremiah: "Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (Jer. 31:31). The reason for the new covenant is explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The first covenant was not "faultless" (8:7-8);

it prepared for redemption, but did not provide it. It was only a "shadow" of the coming salvation and could never by its own sacrifices make the worshippers "perfect" (10:1). It could not secure final remission of sins, and it could not give power to keep the Law. These were blessings contained only in the new covenant. It was this new covenant which Jesus was now about to bring into being and seal with His own blood. The power to keep the Law was to come by the gift of the Holy Spirit after His return to heaven. In the meantime the remission of sins was to be secured by His own sacrificial death.

From the upper room Jesus went out to Gethsemane and on to Calvary. From now on He was treading the winepress alone, and we can follow only afar off. In the garden He entered the penumbra of His eclipse. As the shadows gathered around His soul, and as the loneliness of the sacrifice He was about to make began to lay hold of His spirit, He manifested feelings which He had never shown before. He sought the solitude, as was His wont, that He might be alone in pouring out His soul to God; but a strange desire for human sympathy and companionship brought Him back again and again to the little group whom He had taken into the garden with Him and had left to watch near by. And then there was the agony, from which His whole being shrank, in the cup which His Father's will required Him to drink.

It was not the fear of physical pain or the dread of impending death that made Him pray, "with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death" (Heb. 5:7). It was something vastly dif-

ferent and more profoundly awful. It was the cup He could not escape if He would redeem the world. The Lord God was laying upon Him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:6). He who knew no sin was being made sin (2 Cor. 5:21). He was now coming to know and feel the cost of giving His life as a ransom.

The answer to His prayers and supplications was not the removal of the cup, but a view of the triumph that lay beyond His death. "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2). He came out of the garden with a serene and majestic calmness of spirit which made Him the commanding figure through all the scenes of shame that followed. All along the way there was evidence, if they would but see it, that He was laying down His life by His own consent; they were not taking it away from Him. His assailants in the garden recoiled before Him as He advanced to give Himself up to them. He bade them wait before arresting Him until He had healed the ear of their wounded companion.

In the Jewish council the proud high priest and the religious leaders of the nation forfeited all their dignity before the humble mien of the Man of Nazareth and His quiet assurance of coming glory. The haughty Roman governor discovered in the strange prisoner whom the Jews had brought before him something that first surprised and then awed him. The men who tried the Lord Jesus were themselves on trial before Him. The sin of the world was being exposed in the presence of the world's Sin-bearer.

And then He went out to Calvary. The Cross of Christ stands alone in the midst of the historic events

of the world. Something happened there that was wholly new and strange. There are mysterious depths in the death that was witnessed there that perpetually baffle the human mind. And yet the troubled human heart turns to that Cross again and again with an instinctive feeling that there alone is to be found the secret of its peace. It is the only death of its kind the human race has seen.

When the four Gospel records of the event are read with attentive care, when the unbroken objective calmness of the narratives is considered, when every circumstance in the story is given its due place in the scene which the mind contemplates, then there comes in upon the soul an irresistible impression of some tremendous happening surrounded by mystery unfathomable. The only possible explanation is His own. They were not taking away His life; He was laying it down of Himself. He was going down into death when at any moment He might have exerted His power to avoid it. His death was a voluntary sacrifice in the absolute sense of the term. He was not overcome of death; He gave Himself to death. He died by the consent of His own free will.

The innermost secret of the Cross is to be found in the cry that came out of the darkness: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Both evangelists who record it give it first in the actual words which Jesus uttered before translating them into the language in which they wrote (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34). There must be some reason for this. It was a loud cry, and it penetrated the air. It carried on its very accents and in its every syllable something untranslatable,

notes of a mysterious agony and of an uttermost loneliness. This could not be separated in the recollection of the Apostles from the sounds themselves that fell upon the ear; and when they told the story afterwards they first passed on with solemn awe the very words they heard before they dared to put them in any other tongue.

When we penetrate as near as we can with sympathetic reverence to the innermost depths of what these words reveal, or what they conceal, we approach a mysterious suffering of soul far beyond physical pain or mental anguish. Jesus had hitherto lived in unbroken fellowship with His Father in Heaven. He had carried that perfect life of His up to the open door of heaven, and had stood in the glory of the Mount. But after they had put Him on the Cross, and while He was hanging there, He descended into depths where God was not to be found. Jesus was now where God was not; and He was realizing the full meaning of what that absence meant. There, in that darkness, alone, with that sense of desolation still enshrouding Him, Jesus died by the free act of His own will. He gave His soul away to God in a last supreme act of faith: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

The peculiar ceremonies of the Old Testament Day of Atonement, as described in the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus, help us to understand the relation between the death of Christ and the remission of sins. Two goats were used on that day in order that the type might set forth as completely as possible the one sacrifice that was to make the final atonement for sin. One goat was slain for a sin-offering, and its blood was

presented before the Lord in the Holy of holies. This indicated that sacrifice of life was the basis of atonement. The live goat was next brought before the tabernacle, and all the sins and iniquities of the children of Israel were confessed over its head. Then "the scape-goat," as the King James Version calls it, was taken away into the wilderness and left there. Thus, as the Scripture goes on to explain the meaning of the ceremony, "the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a solitary land," or as it may also be rendered, "unto a land forsaken" (Lev. 16:22).

In this way the sins of Israel year by year were "covered," which is the real significance of the name of the day. In the light of this symbolic transaction, it is not difficult to see the divine purpose in the death of Christ and the complete atonement that He accomplished by dying in the way He died. The great Anti-type, with the world's sin laid upon Him, went away in the darkness of the Cross "unto a solitary land," a land forsaken of God; and dying there, He bore the sin of the world away from the presence of God. As the writer to the Hebrews puts it, "Now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (9:26).

It was in anticipation of this final atonement, which the old Day of Atonement foreshadowed and which God was to accomplish in the fulness of the times, that the saints of the Old Testament could be given such promises as these: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12); "Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Mic. 7:19); "I, even I, am he

that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake; and I will not remember thy sins" (Isa. 43:25).

IV

There are two remarkable passages in Paul's Epistles which throw further light upon the death of Christ. In one of these passages the Apostle reveals the inner spirit of the Saviour as He went down step by step to the Cross. In the other passage he explains the inner significance for the world of the divine transaction which was accomplished there.

In Philippians 2:5-8, after urging upon his readers the lowliness of mind which looks, not to one's own things, but also to the things of others, the Apostle goes on to point out that this attitude of mind was the secret of our Lord's whole history. "Have this mind in you," he writes, "which was also in Christ Jesus"; and then he traces the descent of Christ from the highest place in heaven to the depths of the Cross.

All along the way the Saviour of men surrendered His own rights and interests for the sake of those whom He had come to redeem. Existing originally in the form of God, He did not set His mind upon His own equality with God as a prerogative to be jealously retained. He emptied Himself of all that glory and took upon Himself the nature of a servant. This does not mean that He laid aside His divine personality, or made Himself liable to the defects and mistakes of the fallen human race, but that He became the Servant of God in the form of man and lived in this world like other men. As Man He humbled Himself still further, being contin-

ually obedient to God. He maintained this spirit of obedience to the utmost length of death, even consenting to die the death for sin. Thus Jesus Christ followed the pathway of self-abnegation, emptying Himself step by step of His rights and prerogatives, till He reached the lowest depth to which He could descend and gave His own life away in His surrender to death in the desolation of the Cross. By His last act He died to Himself.

This was the mind of Christ through all His incarnation; and this, Paul insists, should be the characteristic mind of the Christian. It is the mind Christ required of His disciples when He said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). It is the essential mark of "the poor in spirit," to whom He promised the Kingdom of Heaven. It is the secret of victory in the spiritual order, as His own subsequent history proved. For Paul goes on to trace His triumph after the Cross: "Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave him the name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). The way of self-denial and self-sacrifice was the way He took, and it led Him to the throne in heaven. It was by this principle of life He undertook to found His Kingdom, and it is by this principle of life the members of His Kingdom are to be known.

In Romans 3:24-26 Paul defines "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" in a passage marked by great concentration of inspired thought. The Apostle's conception in these verses is that the Cross of Christ stands, as it were, on the border of the unseen world, at the meeting place of man and God. The transaction

accomplished there had a twofold aspect. It was related to man on the one side and to God on the other. On the Cross Jesus Christ was "set forth to be a propitiation, through faith." He was set forth as the object of faith for men. He was made historically manifest for all men to behold as the one sacrifice for the sin of the world. This accords with the Lord's own announcement just before His death: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (John 12:32).

But the Cross of Christ looked out also on the Godward side. Paul's words mean that God set Him forth for Himself also. Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, was "set forth" in the sight of God as the representative of sinful man, bearing the penalty of sin. In that voluntary death of His He became the mercy seat—"a propitiation"—where God could meet the sinner with His pardoning grace. Thus it is in the Person of Christ Himself, as the Apostle says in another place, that "we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7).

The passage in Romans 3 goes on to explain still further that the death of Christ is the key to God's moral government of the world. It is the central fact in human history, and it casts a revealing light both backwards and forwards. Without it God's justice and righteousness would have been completely obscured on earth. In the ages before the Cross, God's forbearance in passing over the sins of men—"the sins done aforetime"—obscured His righteousness when it might have been manifested in their adequate punishment. But the

divine atonement on the Cross has vindicated His justice and revealed His righteousness. And also in the days since the Cross—"this present season"—God's righteousness, which might be manifested in the adequate punishment of sinners now, is revealed in saving the sinner who believes in Jesus. In that one event, the death of Christ, God has condemned sin and vindicated His justice, and at the same time He has provided a way of salvation for the sinner.

Thus does the massive mind of the great Apostle condense into a few words the divine philosophy of human history. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ has secured redemption for men in all time, past, present, and future. Old Testament believers, who offered sacrifices year by year which in themselves could never take away sins, were forgiven because through those sacrifices they looked forward to the Cross; they were waiting for the salvation of the Lord. New Testament believers now look back to the Cross and find that their sins have been already put away. From that one historic event the grace of God flows freely through all human history. The death that Jesus died is the ground of God's forbearance with this sinful world; and it is the basis for the righteousness of the new world that is to be. In the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ "mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. 85:10).

CHAPTER IV

THE GLORY JESUS ENTERED

“Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?”

AFTER His farewell messages to His disciples, and before He went to His death, the Lord Jesus Christ poured forth the longings of His heart in the prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John. He began with a petition that He might be glorified: “Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee.” It was a request that He might be carried through the supreme sacrifice of His humiliation, and that His true nature might be fully manifested in the glory which lay beyond it. He went on in His prayer to sum up His life work in these words: “I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do.” And then He repeated His first petition in this form: “And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” There was a glory lying behind Him as well as the glory which lay before Him.

In these multiplied references to glory, Jesus was not thinking of external marks of splendor or of out-

ward accompaniments of an exalted state. The glory for which He was praying and into which He was to enter would be twofold. It would be the full manifestation of the real nature of the manhood which the Son of God had assumed, and it would be also the restoration of the prerogative of the Godhead which He had laid aside when He came into the world.

I

“The glory which I had with thee before the world was.” In the consciousness of Jesus Christ there was obviously the memory of a pre-incarnate state of glory. This consciousness of an eternal pre-existence pervades His whole ministry. It is involved in the claim which He so often made that He had come down from heaven, sent on a mission by the Father. It is manifest in the tone of self-assertion, so quiet and yet so amazing, that is interwoven with so much of his teaching. It flashes out in such express declarations as these: “Before Abraham was born I am”; “I and the Father are one”; “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 8:58; 10:30; 14:9).

The Apostles whom Jesus chose, “that they might be with him” (Mark 3:14), came to see that behind His human nature there was hidden a divine glory. “We beheld his glory,” wrote one of them (John 1:14), “glory as of the only begotten from the Father.” The wonder of it all never wore away from their minds and hearts. This wonder lingers in the opening words of the First Epistle of John, although they were written half a century afterwards. “That which was from the

beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled concerning the Word of life (and the life was manifested and we have seen and bear witness and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us): that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us." John recalls with a sense of awe how the conviction grew upon himself and his fellow Apostles through their three years of close companionship with Him, that their Master had come from the eternal presence of the Father. He had brought in His own Person from that eternal beginning the divine springs of eternal life for men.

John opens his Gospel by going back to the beginning, "before the world was." With a stately simplicity the Lord Jesus Christ is introduced out of that eternal past. He was there first, before He was in the world. He was "with God," existing in personal fellowship with God from all eternity. He "was God," sharing the glory of the very Godhead. He came out of that eternity down through time as "the Word," the self-revelation of God in history. God is never seen or heard Himself: "No man hath seen God at any time." Whenever He reveals Himself, or whenever He speaks, it is always "the Word" that men see or hear.

In using this term for the Lord Jesus Christ, John was not borrowing from Greek philosophy. He was doubtless familiar with the current Alexandrian theory of the Logos, but he had no need to get his ideas there. He had a far richer and truer philosophy to draw from,

and one with which his readers also were familiar. John assumes that they will readily understand what he writes. His background and theirs was the Old Testament revelation, and it was there that he found "the Word." With profound spiritual insight, John's illumined mind summarizes in these opening verses of his Gospel the whole revelation of God from the beginning. The Agent of that revelation from creation onward was always the same. That Agent was "the Word," the pre-incarnate Christ.

It was He who appears again and again in the story of the creation behind the oft-repeated words, "and God said"; "All things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made." It is His shadow that falls across the sacred page when the angel of the Lord intervenes in the lives of the patriarchs and in the history of Israel. It is His voice we hear when "wisdom" speaks in the Book of Proverbs: "Jehovah possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. . . . When he established the heavens, I was there . . . Then I was by him, as a master workman; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him" (Prov. 8:22, 27, 30). The many "words" of the Prophets all come from the same source; one "Word" spoke through them all. He was the light shining through all the dimness of the Old Testament times.

Thus did "the Word" continue to reveal God from the beginning down through the ages, until at last "the Word" Himself became flesh and dwelt among men. In the Babe of Bethlehem God came down out of eternity into time and space. Having of old time spoken

unto the fathers by various methods and in various stages of revelation, God at last spoke in the incarnation of His Son. And the Son was His final word to men, for He was the "effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance" (Heb. 1:3). Jesus of Nazareth was all that God is. As the impression on the wax answers to the seal, as the spoken word reveals the unseen thought, so the incarnate Lord answers to and reveals the invisible God. He who prayed for glory in the upper room that night, under the shadow of the Cross, had come from the central glory of the eternal past and was going on into the central glory of the eternal future.

The title which the apostolic church gave to Jesus Christ reveals the fact that they regarded Him as God manifest in the flesh. They called Him "Lord." This was not a mere title of respect and honor, like the term "Master." To regard it in that way is to misunderstand its profound significance on the lips of the early Christians. Paul declares solemnly, "I make known unto you, that . . . no man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:3). A man may call Jesus "Lord," in the sense of "Master," under no other impulse than that of his own spirit. It is obvious that Paul means something far beyond this. He uses the Name in the sense in which the Jews meant it when they used it as an equivalent for the ineffable Name, "Jehovah." No Jew would take that sacred Name upon his lips; whenever it appears in the Hebrew Scriptures another word meaning "Lord" was always pronounced in its stead. The English version of the Bible bears witness to this fact by using the word LORD wherever the

name Jehovah occurs in the original Hebrew and putting it in capitals to distinguish it. It was in this full divine sense that the apostolic church applied the title to the Saviour; and this is what Paul means by calling Jesus Lord.

It was through the Name Jehovah that God had revealed Himself to Moses as the Redeemer of His people from Egypt (Ex. 3:13-15). The later Messianic redemption foretold by the Prophets was often represented as the coming of Jehovah Himself to save His people. This idea is prominent in the Book of Isaiah, where it occurs again and again. It is the keynote of the transformation described in the thirty-fifth chapter: "The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. . . . the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon: they shall see the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of our God. . . . Say unto them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come . . . he will come and save you." (Vs. 1-4.) It is more fully drawn out in the salvation described in the fortieth chapter. There we have first the voice of the herald crying, "Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah" (v. 3); the voice which was fulfilled in John the Baptist. Then there follows the announcement of good tidings: "O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold, your God! Behold, the Lord Jehovah will come as a mighty one, and his arm will rule for him: Behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like

a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and will gently lead those that have their young." (vs. 9-11.)

These sublime announcements of the coming of Jehovah, the God of Israel, in saving and renewing power, were fulfilled by the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ upon earth. The religious leaders of the Jews, blinded by their self-righteousness and perverted by their worldly conceptions of the Messianic salvation, entirely misunderstood these prophecies, and failed utterly to recognize the Saviour when He came. On the other hand, the humble believers in Jesus in the early Church, their minds enlightened and their hearts enlarged by the Holy Spirit, saw these Old Testament prophecies illumined with a new light. They knew by their own experience what a wondrous thing their salvation was, and they recognized in Him who had secured it for them none other than Jehovah, the Redeemer of Israel, the God of all the Old Testament history. He had come down among men to save them in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. They knew that the same Jesus was now highly exalted and had been given the Name that is above every name. To them He was the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8; Jas. 2:1).

II

The Resurrection was the first step in the glorifying of Jesus Christ. He was raised from the dead by the power of God. He was "declared to be the Son of God with power," says Paul, "by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). This was God's response to the faith of

Jesus in surrendering Himself to the death of the Cross. "Wherefore also," because of His obedience unto death, "God highly exalted him" (Phil. 2:9). It was also God's seal upon His redemptive work; it gave efficacy to His sacrifice of Himself for the sins of men. He "was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

The Resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ was the greatest manifestation of God's power which He has ever made. Paul speaks of it as "that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:19-20). In the course of this passage the Apostle heaps phrase upon phrase and calls to his aid different words for power, as though he felt that language was inadequate to convey his conception of the exceeding greatness of the power of God revealed in that divine event. It not only raised Christ from the dead, but also raised Him to the highest place in heaven. God took a man who was dead out of the grave and placed Him upon the throne with Himself, and put every other power in the universe under Him. All this is involved in the process of the exaltation of Christ which began with the Resurrection.

Nowhere is the Resurrection of Jesus described. No one saw the event take place. But when the disciples saw the evidence of it in the tomb, and when the real nature of what had happened dawned upon their wondering minds, then there came upon them a profound sense of awe. God had been in that place and had done something entirely new.

The first to see this fact was the Apostle John. When he and Peter came to the tomb that morning and entered it, they saw something which struck them with amazement. It was not merely the disappearance of the body; it was the way the grave clothes were left lying. There were the linen cloths exactly as they had been wrapped around the body, and there was the head cloth a short distance away, just where the head had rested. Nothing had been disturbed, and yet the body was gone. It had passed through those grave clothes without moving them. John records what he observed, and then he adds simply, but with great significance, "and he saw, and believed" (John 20:8). The true nature of the event had broken in upon him. He now understood what the Lord meant by saying that He must rise again from the dead.

All that was Jesus of Nazareth had passed into another plane of being. His body had vanished, but it had not passed out of existence. Its material substance had been changed and had become the basis for another kind of body, a spiritual body; and with that new body He had risen from the dead. The disciples could not yet understand what this change meant, but they knew enough not to go seeking for Him anywhere. Wherever He was, He had transcended the visible world and the natural plane of life, and they could do nothing to find Him. They "went away again unto their own home" (John 20:10), to think of the wonder of it, to recall to their remembrance what He had told them about His rising again from the dead, and to wait till He should come to them again.

The appearances of the Lord during the succeed-

ing forty days revealed to the disciples more and more, as they were able to understand it, the kind of change which had taken place in Him and the new mode of life into which He had entered. He was the same Person as before, and yet there was a mysterious difference in Him which at first inspired their fear and then claimed their adoration. He was no longer subject to the laws of the natural world or bound by the limitations of matter and space. He was the same Jesus who had been crucified, for the marks of His suffering were upon Him. He had come into the new plane of life by the way of the Cross, and somehow His passion was the very ground and reason for His new life. He had been dead, and now He was alive for evermore. He had overcome death and the grave.

By His death and Resurrection Jesus had bridged the chasm between the material and the invisible world. In Him the natural had become the spiritual; the seen had become the unseen. Here modern science, so far from conflicting with this divine miracle, comes to our aid in helping us to comprehend it. Its latest results resolve the physical world into elements which finally pass into radiation; and in its search for the ultimate basis of matter, it finds itself at last on the shore of an unseen world lying behind the whole material universe, whose mystery it cannot explore.

Jesus was still truly Man. He had carried our human nature through death into a new order of existence, the springs of which were in the heavenly world. By the Resurrection He was constituted the Second Man, the Last Adam, the Head of a new humanity. But the Head of the new humanity was not to remain

among men in this world, for He was not of this world. His place was in that other world, where was the seat of the Kingdom of Heaven; and into that world He must return. Not until then would His glorification be complete. In the meantime His appearances to the disciples were temporary manifestations intended to familiarize them with the sense of the unseen and with the reality of the heavenly world.

It was important, too, that they should be instructed about the fact that Christ had abolished death, about the new life which had come through the Cross, and about the immortality which He had brought to light by the Resurrection (2 Tim. 1:10). These things were the basis of the whole Christian system which was to be established in the world through their preaching. These were "the things concerning the kingdom of God" of which He spake to them during these forty days (Acts 1:3). Before the Kingdom could appear on earth, and before the salvation He had secured for men could be realized, He must return to the Father. "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John 20:17). He had come from the Father as the Son of God; He was to return to the Father not only as the Son of God, but as the Son of man as well.

On the Mount of Olives the Lord Jesus took an impressive farewell of His Apostles. It was His last appearance to them, and as a special parting token, "he lifted up his hands and blessed them" (Luke 24:50). He did not vanish suddenly out of their sight as on previous occasions; but "as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight"

(Acts 1:9). This does not mean that He was carried up into the sky beyond the stars, or that His spirit was diffused like a vapor behind the clouds. It means that He passed out of this world of time and space, which is a world of relativity, relative to our human senses, and that He entered the heavenly world beyond the reach of our human senses, which is the world of eternal and abiding reality. It is the world where the Throne of God is, the source of all life and light and love. There He is present now as "the one mediator between God and men, himself man" (1 Tim. 2:5). It was by thus going back to the Father that Jesus laid the true basis for fellowship between God and man. The incarnate Lord in glory is the only "way" to the Father.

III

The Ascension was the completion of His incarnation. He entered heaven as the representative Man, there to appear in the presence of God for us. His assumption of our human nature did not come to an end when He died on Calvary, or when He rose from the dead. His humanity was not a temporary possession which He assumed when on earth and laid aside at His exaltation. If that were the case, then His incarnation could only bring God to men and make the Son of God to become the Son of man; it could not bring men to God or make the sons of men to become the children of God.

What He did by His incarnation was far greater than that. By His birth in Bethlehem He assumed

human nature; and by His ascent to heaven on the Mount of Olives He glorified human nature. And He glorified it in such a way that the sons of men may now share that glory. On the Mount of Transfiguration He might have ascended to heaven with a glorified humanity, but it would only have been His own. On the Mount of Ascension He glorified a humanity which had gone down through death and had paid the penalty of sin. With that humanity risen again He entered heaven and became the representative of redeemed men, and the Head of the new world.

Before Christ ascended He told His disciples that all authority had been given unto Him in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18). After His ascension Paul draws aside the veil and reveals Him seated at the right hand of God, in the place of power, with all things put in subjection under His feet (Eph. 1:21-22). Paul had received an overpowering vision of the ascended Lord, and his Epistles are all aglow with a sense of His glory. Not only does He rule in the spiritual world, but the whole creation is under Him. "In him were all things created . . . and in him all things consist" (Col. 1:16-17). Paul sees that the whole system of nature is held together by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ going forth continually from the center of things. The universe is the expression of His mind, and the laws of nature are the operation of His will.

Only a mind enlightened by the knowledge of Christ can truly understand this mysterious world and why we are in it. The scientific view of the physical world, obtained by the most patient investigation of men, no matter how true it may be, can never go far enough. It

stops in the vestibule of the universe. It is only when we carry the scientific view on into the light of the revelation of God in Christ that we can enter the inner shrine of the creation and learn its secrets. To the devout Christian heart, this world around us is the realm of the will of God and is ruled by the Saviour of men. It is a world of mystery and suffering, to be sure; it has been "subjected to vanity," and it "groaneth and travaileth in pain." (Rom. 8:20-22.) But there is a moral order at the heart of it, and its fundamental forces are spiritual.

It is in the Book of Revelation that the glory of the ascended Lord breaks out in all its wonder. The book is truly an "Apocalypse," an unveiling of Jesus Christ; and what it reveals is the Christ of the Cross triumphant. Its opening vision, which was so overwhelming that it made John fall on his face like a dead man, is that of Him who is the Head of all the churches, who moves in their midst as the source of all their life and power, the Living One, who was dead, and behold, He is now alive for evermore (1:17-18). The main part of the book is a connected series of visions which John was taken up into heaven to see (4:1). They set forth in magnificent symbolism the spiritual forces that are operating behind all world history. All these forces proceed from the Lamb who is in the midst of the Throne. He is the central figure throughout.

The pivotal event of the whole series of visions is the Ascension. John beheld "in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are

the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth" (5:6). This is a most suggestive symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ, fresh from the Cross, newly ascended, taking the central place of power in heaven. This is the point of time from which the whole message of Revelation proceeds. What John saw was the change that was made in heaven by the exaltation and enthronement of Jesus Christ. In that light and from that heavenly point of view he was shown the significance of the Cross of the Lord in human history.

What he describes is the symbolism of a tremendous conflict between the self-will of man, inspired by Satan, and the will of God administered by the living Christ of Calvary. The first vision to move upon the earthly stage as seen from heaven is a rider upon a white horse, who is given a crown and goes forth conquering and bent on conquest (6:2). He appears as a splendid and imposing figure, a fit symbol of man's self-will going into action in the cause of self-interest. This is the spirit which has pervaded the whole human race since the fall, and which inspires the kingdoms of this world. But he is followed by a grim procession of three other horsemen, representing the dire consequences that inevitably follow such a spirit in world history, and the last of the train is a pale horror.

Then there follows in systematic and ordered procedure vision after vision, depicting the awful nature of the long drawn out conflict, until another Rider on a white horse comes into the scene, with the armies of heaven in His train (19:11). It is Christ Jesus appearing again on the field of human history, coming now as the final revelation of "the Word of God." It is He

who by His first coming laid the foundation of the Kingdom of God in the spiritual and moral order of the universe, and comes again to bring it to a triumphant consummation. He appears now in the plenitude of His power and glory, and He is manifested as "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (19:16). After this the Book of Revelation brings the whole Biblical revelation to a splendid close with a beatific vision of the world redeemed. The center of all its bliss is the Throne of God and of the Lamb. The glorified Christ of Calvary remains for time and for eternity the revelation of the heart of God.

CHAPTER V

THE COMING OF THE SPIRIT

“The Spirit was not yet given;
because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

THE supreme blessing which the glorified Lord bestowed upon His disciples was the gift of the Holy Spirit. Before His departure He promised to send them the Holy Spirit to take His place. “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth” (John 14:16). He told them that the Spirit would do something for them which He Himself could not do if He remained on earth. “It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you” (John 16:7). Just before His ascension He charged them to remain in Jerusalem, and “wait for the promise of the Father”; and then He went on to explain, “Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence” (Acts 1:5). His own ministry upon earth as the Son of God was to be followed by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

I

The Holy Spirit was not new. He had been present in the world since the beginning of time. Wherever God was active, the Spirit was there as the divine energy. At the creation, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2). After the fall He strove with men when they walked in their own wicked ways (Gen. 6:3). In the time of the Exodus He rested upon Moses to give him strength and patience for bearing the burden of the people (Num. 11:17), and upon Bezalel to give him wisdom and skill for the workmanship of the tabernacle (Ex. 31:2-3). After Israel was settled in the land, the Spirit of God came upon the men who were raised up from time to time as leaders of the people to fit them for their special tasks. The Spirit had also a certain sanctifying and strengthening influence upon those who lived in obedience to the covenant of the Law. David prayed: "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me. . . . uphold me with a willing spirit" (Ps. 51:11-12). It was by the Spirit of God that the prophets spoke. He was the moving power of the whole stream of prophetic revelation in the old dispensation (2 Pet. 1:21). The last of the prophets, the forerunner of the new dispensation, was filled with the Holy Spirit even from his birth (Luke 1:15). The Holy Spirit had been dwelling in the midst of Israel from the time of their redemption under Moses throughout all their history (Isa. 63:10-11).

It was in the life of Jesus alone that the Holy Spirit was present in all the fulness of His power and grace.

From the beginning to the end of His earthly history there existed a peculiar and unique relation between the Lord and the Spirit. This began with His miraculous conception (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:35). His human life owed its origin to the Spirit of God. As the humanity of the first Adam was the direct creation of divine power, so also was the humanity of the last Adam. Being thus originated, the human nature of Jesus was without the taint of transmitted debility and depravity. That Holy Being who was born of the Virgin was the only begotten Son of God. The birth of Jesus was a new birth, a birth of an entirely new kind, a supernatural birth from above. He was born, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13).

For thirty years the last Adam lived a sinless human life; and then the Holy Spirit came upon Him in a still fuller way. As the servants of God in the Old Testament days were equipped by the Spirit of God for the tasks to which they were called, so also was the great Servant of Jehovah (Isa. 11:2; 42:1). At the baptism of John He received the divine anointing for the mission on which He was sent into the world. "The heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him" (Luke 3:22).

There was a marked difference, however, between the relation of the Holy Spirit to the life of Jesus and His relation to any of the Old Testament servants of God. The Spirit came upon Jesus to remain; "it abode upon him" (John 1:32). Here at last was a human life in which the Spirit of God could dwell permanently. Hitherto, even in the case of the saints of the Old

Testament, His presence and influence had been only temporary and intermittent. This new feature explains the voice out of heaven: "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). It was the Father's approval of the thirty previous years. Jesus of Nazareth was the only man since the fall of whom God could say, "In thee I am well pleased." This abiding of the Spirit was also the significant sign by which the Baptist was enabled to distinguish the Messiah. "I knew him not," said John, "but he that sent me to baptize with water, he said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit" (John 1:33). Furthermore, the Spirit came upon Jesus not only to abide in Him, but also to bring Him all the unlimited fulness of the divine energy. God "giveth not the Spirit by measure" to Him, was the apostolic explanation of His wondrous ministry (John 3:34). All that was in the Holy Spirit of God dwelt in the Son of man.

From that time onward the entire life of Jesus was lived under the power of the Spirit of God, and the nature of the Son of man was completely filled with the fulness of the divine energy. It was thus He was equipped, as we have seen before, for His Messianic task. His words and His works throughout all His public ministry were due to the Holy Spirit in Him. The great mediatorial transactions also at the close of His ministry were carried through by the same power. He went to the Cross in dependence upon the Spirit of God; for Christ, says the Epistle to the Hebrews, "through the eternal Spirit offered himself without

blemish unto God" (9:14). As the Saviour laid down His life, so also did He take it again, through the Holy Spirit. This fact is implied by Paul when he says, "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (Rom. 8:11).

And when we come to the Ascension, after that mysterious ministry during the forty days in which He showed Himself to His disciples alive after His passion, we read that "he was received up, after that he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles whom he had chosen" (Acts 1:2). His last command, the great missionary commission which sent His Church out to share the blessings of redemption with all the world, was not merely His own command. It was equally due to the all embracing love of the Spirit of God in the heart of the Son of man.

The equipment which the Holy Spirit bestowed upon Jesus for His ministry was not only the divine energy to carry it on to its accomplishment, but also the divine love which was its constant spring and motive. When Jesus surrendered Himself completely to the anointing of the Spirit at His baptism, it meant not only the yielding of His human life to be the instrument of the divine energy, but also the yielding of His human heart to be the channel of the divine love. Henceforth the nature of the Son of man was the reservoir from which flowed the love of God. This was manifested in two features of His life and character which appear now for the first time, a great zeal for God and a great compassion for men.

On the one hand, Jesus began to manifest a great zeal for the glory of God. It flamed out during the first visit He made to Jerusalem after His baptism, when, with a scourge of cords, He drove out of the temple those who were making His Father's house a house of merchandise. The Jews challenged His authority for this act, but His disciples were impressed with the spirit manifested in it. They saw in it a passion for God and recalled the words of Scripture, "Zeal for thy house shall eat me up" (John 2:17). This quality of strong love for God was the ground of that fellowship with His Father which He maintained by His wondrous prayer life. The essential element in this was love in the heart of Jesus seeking the heart of God. His love for God was also the motive which sustained Him through all His ministry of obedience to God. It was the free, willing obedience of a son, not the servile obedience of one who acts only from a sense of duty. The same quality appears again at the end of His life in the manifest joy with which He declared that He had glorified His Father on the earth and accomplished the work which He had given Him to do.

On the other hand, Jesus also began to manifest a great compassion for men. Again and again we read that He "was moved with compassion." Sympathy poured out from the innermost depths of His being upon the poor and needy around Him. His heart was a channel through which there flowed the love of God for the world of men. His sympathy moved Him to action to meet all kinds of suffering and need. He was moved with compassion by the helpless misery of the leper (Mark 1:41), by the lonely sorrow of the widow

of Nain (Luke 7:13), and by the pitiful appeal of the blind men at Jericho (Matt. 20:34). He was moved with compassion by the sight of the multitudes, "distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36); and He ministered both to their spiritual needs (Mark 6:34), and to their physical needs (Mark 8:2). He broke into tears as He thought of the guilt of Jerusalem and the doom that awaited the nation because of her stubborn indifference to the time of her visitation (Luke 19:41-44).

All these things show how, after the Spirit came upon Him, tides of divine love flowed through the heart of Jesus; love that had two poles, one Godward and the other manward. Now it cannot be that there was no zeal for God or compassion for man in the heart of the Lord before His baptism. His nature was just the same before as after that event. There was nothing lacking in His character which the Holy Spirit needed to supply. The difference lies in this fact, that when He received the anointing of the Holy Spirit He presented His own nature as the Son of man that it might become the instrument or the vessel for the expression of the love of God. Jesus not only created human nature anew by His perfect human life; He also made human nature the mold for the Spirit of God to fill. The Spirit of God had now become the Spirit of Jesus also, and as the Spirit of the Man Christ Jesus He could fill the lives of other men as well.

II

The ministry of the Holy Spirit after His departure

was the main theme of the Lord's farewell messages to the disciples in the upper room (John 14-16). The Spirit was to come as "another Comforter," One who should take His place among them as their helper. His coming would not be observed or His presence understood by the world; He would have no visible or material form which the world could distinguish. But the disciples would at once recognize His presence, for He would be more than a mere spiritual influence among them. He would abide with them, as He abode with Jesus. He would dwell in them, as He dwelt in Him. When He should come they would no longer have a sense of desolation because of the Lord's absence from them, for the Spirit would be a real substitute for His own personal presence. The Comforter would be with them for ever, continuing the Lord's own presence in a way He Himself could not do if He remained on earth in His bodily form.

Twice in the course of these messages Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the "Spirit of truth" (14:17; 16:13). This title implies more than the fact that the Holy Spirit would be the revealer and teacher of truth. It would be the function of the Holy Spirit also to bring to light the reality which underlay the symbols of truth. The Old Testament dispensation was true, but its truth was embodied in types and shadows. Jesus meant that the Holy Spirit would reveal the substance which lay behind those types and shadows.

When the Apostle John declared that "the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17), he had no idea of suggesting that grace took the place of the Law as something

different from and antagonistic to it. That would be to make God changeable, using contrary methods in different ages. John was stating here the great truth, that the whole Mosaic system had been fulfilled in the redemption wrought out by the Lord Jesus Christ, and that the grace which was only a shadow in the Law, now stood forth in all its genuine reality. This was not understood by the disciples during the lifetime of Jesus, but it was to be brought out clearly by the Spirit of truth after His departure.

The Holy Spirit was to fulfill His function as the Spirit of truth still further by bringing home to the disciples the real meaning of the Lord's own teaching. "He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (14:26). "He shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself. . . . He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (16:13-14). Many of the words of Jesus which already lay in the minds of the disciples could not be understood by them in their true significance till illumined by the Holy Spirit. The coming of the Spirit into their hearts was like the entrance of light into a dark room, making the furnishings, already there but only dimly seen, stand out clearly in the new illumination.

It was to be the Spirit's work also to put significance into the great facts of the Lord's death and resurrection, and to show what they meant for the disciples. The Holy Spirit was to make the absent and glorified Lord a present and living reality. John points this out in recording the great invitation of Jesus in the temple courts on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles,

when "Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John 7:37). This invitation could not be realized, it could not even be understood, till Jesus had ascended and the Holy Spirit had come. Therefore John goes on to explain: "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified." The same thing was true of His invitation to the multitude in Galilee: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). This rest could be realized only after the Holy Spirit was given.

As Jesus went on with His discourse in the upper room, He explained the necessity for His own departure and for the coming of the Spirit. The redemption which He had Himself accomplished could not be brought home to men except by the Holy Spirit. In doing this the Spirit would exercise a new kind of conviction upon the world, a conviction based upon the work of Christ. "And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (16:8). It is the function of conscience to convict men of these three things; but the Holy Spirit would convict men, Jesus went on to explain, in an entirely new way. Conscience convicts men of sin because they have broken the moral law; but the Holy Spirit would convict men of a new kind of sin, the sin of rejecting Christ—"because they believe not on me." Conscience convicts men of the righteousness which the Law demands and which they have failed to attain; but the Holy Spirit would convict of a righteousness made available for men by the

finished work of Christ on earth—"because I go to the Father, and ye behold me no more." Conscience convicts of a judgment to come, the penalty of the broken Law; but the Holy Spirit would convict of a judgment accomplished when Christ bore the penalty of the Law on the Cross—because there "the prince of this world hath been judged."

It is this ministry of conviction on the part of the Holy Spirit that gives power to the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. When the great redemptive facts of His death and Resurrection are plainly set forth, the Holy Spirit illumines them in such a way as to bring conviction along these three lines. The one great condemning sin is now seen to be disbelief in the Saviour in the face of the ransom which He has provided for the sin of the world. Over against the failure of human righteousness, the Gospel reveals a righteousness of God, attested by the Resurrection and glorification of Christ, which is now offered to men as the free gift of His grace. Instead of a judgment to come awaiting those who believe the Gospel, the Spirit assures them that their judgment has been met already. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

When Jesus Christ declared just before His Cross, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12:31), He meant that as soon as He had paid the debt for human sin by His voluntary death, Satan would be nonsuited at the bar of God and would have no more any place in the judgment hall of heaven. The claims of the moral order of the universe would be fully met, and

the great accuser would be cast out. It was in anticipation of this judgment which He came into the world to accomplish that Jesus declared in an earlier part of His ministry, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).

It was a manifold ministry, therefore, that Jesus described as He went on with His discourse about the Comforter in the upper room that night. Although the Cross loomed just ahead, the Holy Spirit was waiting on the other side of it, and He would come in very truth as "the Comforter." This title conveys as fully as any single word can convey it, what the Spirit was to be to the disciples of Christ. He was to continue the work of the Lord, and He was to be all that the Lord Himself had been, but in a different way. On the evening of His Resurrection day, in that same upper room, Jesus stood in the midst of His disciples again. He showed them His hands and His side, to convince them that it was Himself, their crucified and risen Lord, now alive forevermore. Then He breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). It was a symbolical act, intended to mean that, when He should fulfill His promise to send them the Spirit, it would be none other than His own Spirit, the Spirit of the living Christ Himself, sent back again among them.

III

On the morning of the Day of Pentecost, when the dis-

ciples "were all together in one place" (Acts 2:1), somewhere in the spacious courts of the temple, where they had been meeting continuously since the Ascension (Luke 24:53), and where all devout Jews were now gathered for the special services of the day, what the Lord had promised in the upper room came into sudden and surprising fulfilment. A unique and transcendent event took place, accompanied by manifestations of a supernatural character. The Comforter had come. It was not a larger outpouring of the old blessings of the Spirit. It was something entirely new. New powers had been released from the heavenly world and came pouring into the lives of the disciples. "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). They broke out in joyful exclamations, praising and glorifying God for the mighty redemption He had wrought, and doing this in the tongues of the Gentiles as well as in their own.

Some of the manifestations that accompanied the event were temporary, and after a while passed away. But the essential features of the event remained. From that day onward something new and transcendent has existed in the world. The true spiritual temple, of which the old material temple where the event happened was only a shadow and a type, arose into sudden reality. It was the temple of Ezekiel's great prophetic vision; and out from within it began to pour streams of living water which have been flowing ever since (Ezek. 47: 1-5). The Holy Spirit had begun His own special ministry in the world.

The lives of the disciples were at once completely

changed. This change was not due to an exuberance of joy in the fact that their Master was alive again. This element was in it, of course, but they had known that fact ever since His resurrection. It was not due to the conviction that He was now in heaven. This, too, was part of their new joy, but they had seen Him taken up ten days before. It was something in addition to all this which took possession of them that day. Something happened when the Holy Spirit came upon them which gave them an overwhelming consciousness that their living and glorified Lord was among them. Their lives became charged with a sense of His spiritual presence. He had become for them the one great living reality.

He was not only among them; He was in them. What He had told them in the upper room had now come to pass in their own inward experience. The spirit of His own life had become the spirit of their lives. Their lives were steadied by a calmness and a joy which they had not known before. They realized what Jesus meant when He said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you" (John 14:27). The Holy Spirit had brought them a new kind of life, the eternal life whose atmosphere is peace and whose quality is love. It was the life which Jesus Christ Himself had been living among them, and He was now transmitting it to them. The new powers which were being manifested in their lives had sprung from the fountainhead of His exalted Person. By means of the Holy Spirit the Lord in heaven was now repeating Himself in the lives of His disciples on earth.

There was also a new atmosphere about them, the

atmosphere of that other world into which their Master had gone. They looked upon this present world now from an entirely new point of view. They talked no more about restoring the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6), for they found the Kingdom to be "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). They were members of a new creation whose seat and center were in another world, and whose living springs were there in the glorified Person of their Lord. They belonged to a new humanity, whose Head was in heaven. They were in the world, but no longer of the world (John 17:14). The Kingdom of Heaven had come down, and had opened around them, and they found themselves within it. They were born again, born from above.

The disciples now formed a new community among themselves, but without the imposition of any outward organization. They had all gathered around a common Head, drawn by an invisible power as to a magnet. The Holy Spirit had established living and abiding relations between the disciples on earth and their risen and exalted Lord in heaven. By one Spirit they had all been baptized into one body (1 Cor. 12:13). The bond which bound them was the Spirit of their living Lord, the same Spirit of love which had resided in Jesus Christ on earth. And this love manifested itself in the same way. It went out towards God, on the one hand, in a new spiritual worship of praise and prayer; and it went out towards men, on the other hand, in a new brotherly sympathy.

The disciples now began to share a common life, which found expression in a common fellowship. They

had all things common, not because they entertained some socialistic ideas about community of goods, but because their hearts were flooded with the love of Christ. This new community increased in numbers rapidly, and very soon chose officers of its own and took on an outward form of organization. But the organization sprang from the developing life within and was not imposed as a system from without. The early Church was primarily a living spiritual organism, taking on its own bodily form out of the circumstances in which it found itself in the midst of the environment of the world. The essential feature of the Church was not its outward form, but the presence of the Holy Spirit at the center of its corporate life.

This new community was endowed with spiritual gifts which were distributed by the Holy Spirit among its members. The Spirit appeared on the Day of Pentecost as fire, taking the form of tongues distributing themselves among the disciples, thus indicating how the sovereign Administrator of the new life divided the new spiritual powers which had been poured out from on high. These gifts did not appear all at once; but, as the Church grew and spread, they developed into a vast variety. In writing to the church at Corinth, where spiritual gifts were very conspicuous, Paul explained that there were diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit, diversities of administrations, but the same Lord, diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all (1 Cor. 12:4-6). He meant that the distribution and operation of spiritual gifts was part of the one great system of the new spiritual organism represented in the Church. This system was

like the human body, composed of many members, yet all working in complete unity and harmony because perfectly adjusted to the life within. Each individual member was to use the particular gift given him, not for himself, but for the benefit of the whole Church. "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal" (1 Cor. 12:7).

The nature and the number of the Spirit's gifts were conditioned by the needs of the time and the place. Some gifts were temporary, and ceased when their purpose was attained. This was the case with the miraculous gifts with which the first Apostles were endowed, which were intended to attest the miraculous origin and divine character of the Church. Other gifts passed into the regular operation of organized Church life as it developed, such as the gift of knowledge or teaching, the gift of prophecy or preaching, and the gift of wisdom or administration. Some gifts changed their manifestations while retaining their essential purpose and nature. The gift of tongues, for example, which caused so much trouble in the Corinthian church by breaking out in unregulated ecstatic utterances, passed into the ordered worship of the Church in the form of sacred song. This is a genuine and gracious spiritual gift, which has broken out with unusual power in every great spiritual revival in the history of the Church.

While spiritual gifts are special endowments of the Holy Spirit, they are not abnormal. They are not given in an arbitrary way, but in accordance with natural disposition and capacity. As it was in the life of our Lord, so it is in the history of the Church. In Him the

fulness of the Spirit was manifested through the free activity of His perfect human nature; in the Church those who manifest spiritual gifts do so through all the fulness and freedom of their natural powers. And yet these spiritual gifts are not improved natural gifts. The Holy Spirit did not come to reform or refine the natural man, but to create and nurture the spiritual man. There is an essential and radical difference between the Church of Christ, which was brought into being on the Day of Pentecost, and every other human society. All its springs are in another world, and the secret of its life and activity is the Holy Spirit of God.

CHAPTER VI

THE GOSPEL THE APOSTLES PREACHED

“God was in Christ reconciling
the world unto himself.”

CHRISTIANITY began on the Day of Pentecost; but it did not begin as a new religion. The first Christians were Jews, and they continued for some time to attend the temple services and to perform the rites and duties of Judaism. They were not conscious of having changed their own religion for another, but they were profoundly conscious of having entered upon a new life. They knew that they “were being saved” (Acts 2:47). This salvation and this new life had come through nothing they had done, but through something God had done. He had wrought redemption through Jesus of Nazareth, whose disciples they had been. When the Holy Spirit brought home to them the significance of the great events which marked His departure from the world, then they came to understand that God had been in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself and that He had committed unto them the word of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19). This message of reconciliation which the Apostles preached was the Gospel of New Testament Christianity.

I

The first Gospel preacher was the Apostle Peter, and the first Christian sermon was delivered to the Jewish people on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Peter began by explaining the change which had so suddenly come over the disciples and the cause of their overflowing joy. It was not due to drunkenness or the excitement of the human spirit. It was due to the outpouring of the divine Spirit, which had just taken place, and which was the fulfilment of an Old Testament prophecy spoken by Joel long before.

Having thus arrested the attention of his Jewish hearers, he went on to connect this outpouring of the Spirit with their crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth and with His subsequent resurrection and ascension. The Apostle did this in such a way as to show that in all these events God was at work carrying out His own purpose and plan of redemption. And then he concluded by declaring to "all the house of Israel" that Jesus, whom they had crucified, had been exalted to the right hand of God as a living Saviour and was their long-promised Messiah. God had made Him "both Lord and Christ."

The immediate effect of this sermon was great contrition. "They were pricked in their heart." It was the Spirit at work, according to the Lord's own promise that He would convict the world "of sin, because they believe not on me." Their unbelief in rejecting their Messiah and Saviour was being brought home to them. They appealed to Peter and the other Apostles: "Breth-

ren, what shall we do?" Peter's immediate reply was, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

These words recall the preaching of John the Baptist. Peter linked the first Christian message with John's preparatory message. What John's baptism had symbolized was now realized in the supernatural event which had occurred that day. John had baptized with water; Jesus was now baptizing with the Holy Spirit. Those who repented could now share the new life which the Spirit had brought down from above.

This first Christian message, preached by the Apostle who was entrusted with the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, gives us the norm of the Christian Gospel. It was centered entirely upon the death and the exaltation of the Lord. In answer to the pointed question of the convicted Jews, Peter gave an equally pointed reply. He did not say a word about what His Master had taught—Christianity was not founded on the teachings of Jesus. He did not present Jesus as an example to be followed—Christianity did not result from imitating the life of the Man of Nazareth.

Peter's reply may be summed up in two words: Repent and surrender. Repent and turn from your old manner of life; surrender in faith to the crucified and risen Christ. Two results would follow: remission of sins, because on the Cross His blood had been "poured out for many unto remission of sins"; the gift of the Holy Spirit, because the Spirit brought the divine life by the new birth from above. The first message of the Christian Gospel, therefore, comprised forgiveness of

sins for all the past and a new life for all the future; and these great blessings were offered on the ground of a great redemptive act accomplished through the Lord Jesus Christ. In response to Peter's earnest appeal, and under the deep conviction of the Holy Spirit, three thousand were brought to repentance and into the new life on the first day of Christian history.

Some days later Peter preached another sermon to the Jewish people (Acts 3). It was on the occasion of the healing of the lame beggar who had long been a familiar sight at the main gate of the temple. The act of healing a man forty years old lame, from his birth, made such a profound impression that the crowd thronged around Peter and John in Solomon's porch in great amazement. Peter seized the opportunity and began to address them. He explained that the miracle of healing had been wrought by no power of their own, but solely because of faith in Him whom the Jews had delivered up to death and whom God had raised from the dead as the Prince of Life. His theme was substantially the same as on the Day of Pentecost, the great redemptive facts of the Cross and the Resurrection. He dwelt more fully on the preparatory unfolding of God's redemptive purpose in the Old Testament; but he closed with the same appeal to repent and turn to Christ as the Saviour from sin. "Unto you first God, having raised up his Servant, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities" (v. 26).

On two occasions Peter appeared before the Jewish council, and each time he proclaimed the Gospel to the rulers in the same terms in which he had proclaimed it

to the people. The first occasion was on the day after the miracle. "Be it known unto you all," he said, "that in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in him doth this man stand here before you whole. . . . And in none other is there salvation" (Acts 4:10-12).

The next occasion occurred when the Apostles, after being imprisoned by the council, had been released by an angel and were found next morning teaching in the temple. Peter, speaking for the whole band, declared: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging him upon a tree. Him did God exalt with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins." (Acts 5: 30-31.) In both cases Peter's theme was salvation from sin; and in each case this salvation was linked with the death and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ, and with nothing else.

Later on in the story of Acts Peter was called to go to Cæsarea and visit the house of Cornelius; and there, for the first time, he preached the Gospel to Gentiles (Acts 10). His message was still the same. Reviewing the miraculous ministry of Jesus, but saying nothing about His teaching, he referred to His death at the hands of the Jews, and then went on to bear witness to His resurrection. It was not a teacher or an example that Peter preached to this Gentile household, but a living Saviour, who had been dead but was now alive forevermore. He closed with the same appeal he had made to the Jews: "To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins."

The immediate effect upon Peter's Gentile hearers was the same as that which happened in the case of the Jewish disciples on the Day of Pentecost. They broke out in praise to God. They evidently believed at once on the Saviour whom Peter presented to them, and as they did so they entered into the experience of the new life.

We have no record of the preaching of any other member of the original group of the Lord's Apostles; but, as Peter was always their spokesman, there can be no doubt that his preaching represents the preaching of them all. It is obvious that they had but one message to give to the world. It was entirely concerned with a redemption Jesus had accomplished.

It is true that they instructed their converts in the teachings of Jesus (Acts 2:42); but there is no indication anywhere in the New Testament that they ever attempted to impose their Master's teaching on the people of the world, or to propagate it among those who were outside the fellowship of the Church. Their message was of a nature altogether different. They were not propagating new ideas; they were proclaiming new facts. The original Christian Gospel was the good news that God Himself had wrought salvation for men. In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ He had removed the guilt of human sin and had made a new kind of life possible for men. Men had nothing to do about it but to repent and turn to God in faith and surrender through Christ, the living Saviour.

As a result of this message of the first Apostles, believers were added to the Lord in multitudes (Acts 5: 14). Christianity was established in Jerusalem and

their numbers began to grow rapidly. It was not regarded as a new religion. It was given no name. It was known among the Jews as "the Way" (Acts 9:2). The angel who opened the prison doors for the Apostles and sent them out to preach its message again, called it "this Life" (Acts 5:20). Christianity was evidently regarded at the beginning, therefore, as a new way of life. It was a living and virile thing; and it could not be confined within the old religious system.

Its healing streams soon ran out in all directions; and before the Apostles were aware, and almost in spite of them, it overflowed the limits of Judaism and poured out into the world beyond. The Christian Gospel, the message of a great redeeming act of divine love by which men are saved, broke by its own sheer power through the restraints of the Jewish ceremonial law, and made its way out into the teeming cities of the Gentile world with their moral corruption and spiritual despair.

II

The story of the Apostle Paul's missionary journeys shows that he presented the Gospel in the Gentile world in exactly the same way as Peter had presented it in Jerusalem. Paul had nothing to say about Jesus as a teacher; his theme was always Jesus as the Saviour. The most complete record of any of his sermons is his address in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13). As he was speaking to Jews on that occasion Paul naturally made his approach through the Old Testament. He referred to the preaching of John the Baptist,

but passed over entirely the preaching and teaching ministry of Jesus. He brought his message to a head in the facts of Christ's death and resurrection, and then he concluded by placing the Gospel message of salvation on the ground of these facts. "Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins." To this he added a statement for his Jewish hearers, that "by him every one that believeth is justified from all things," and that was something which the Law of Moses could not do for them. When the Jews in that city rejected the Gospel, Paul turned to the Gentiles; and the record implies that there was no change in his message. It was "the word of God" which the Jews had refused that the Gentiles heard with gladness and rejoicing.

As it was with Peter, so it was with Paul. He had obviously the same Gospel for the Gentiles that he had for the Jews. His method of approach differed, of course, for the Gentiles had not the Law of Moses and knew not the Old Testament. But Paul could find a point of contact anywhere in the Gentile world. Among the ignorant native people of Lystra he used the light of nature and pointed to God's goodness in the creation around. Among the cultured Athenians he showed an understanding of their religious and philosophical viewpoint, and he quoted their poets. Paul's superior education and intellectual training gave him an approach to the Gentile world of the Roman Empire which was beyond the original Apostles of the Lord. But his message was in no essential part different from theirs. It was not something Jesus had taught, but something He had done.

Even in Athens, where he might have been expected to say something about what Jesus taught, for that city was the world's center of philosophical teaching, Paul did not even refer to the fact that Jesus had been a teacher at all. After a tactful reference to the extreme religiousness of a city with so many objects of worship (Acts 17:22-23) he brought the one true God before them; and then his address moved straight forward to an appeal for repentance on the ground of the resurrection of Jesus and its ultimate issue in the judgment of the world.

That evangelizing passion which sent Paul throughout the world of the Roman Empire, on an enterprise such as no one had even dreamed of before and into a life which brought him untold suffering and hardship, was no mere enthusiasm for an ethical ideal, no mere subjective conception of religious principle. It was an overmastering conviction of the reality of salvation and the greatness of the Saviour. Salvation was a grand and sublime achievement. The barrier which had existed between God and man since the fall had been removed by Christ's descent into death. A new life was now opened up for all men everywhere by His ascent into heaven. God had done something in Christ which had reconciled the world unto Himself.

Wherever the Apostle went he found that this reconciling message was indeed the power of God unto salvation. All who responded to it were set free from the guilt and bondage of sin, and found themselves at peace with God. They lived a new life, a life radiant with joy and victory. Paul called his message "the word of the cross," or "Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1

Cor. 1:18; 2:2), because the Cross was the central fact in the great redemptive act of the Saviour of the world.

This message had a vital quality; it was self-propagating. Paul and his fellow missionaries stayed in a place long enough to plant the Gospel in it; but they did not settle down anywhere. They counted on the Gospel taking care of itself wherever it was planted. They did not find it necessary to educate people first in order that they might understand the Gospel. Its message was of such a nature that it was understood at once wherever it was properly preached.

And yet theirs was no superficial evangelism. They not only proclaimed the Gospel, but they took pains to explain it in all its manifold relations to life and conduct. They gathered those who accepted the Gospel into an organized fellowship of believing people, and so established the beginnings of Christian churches in local centers, especially in the chief cities, from which it would spread all around. They went back over the ground again and again to encourage and strengthen these new churches; but they left each church to carry out the evangelization of its own district. They themselves were always moving on to regions beyond.

When Paul wrote his letter to the Romans, he was able to declare that he had evangelized most of the eastern part of the Roman Empire—"from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum"—and yet scarcely a dozen years had passed since he had been sent out from Antioch on his first missionary journey. The Apostle's aim was "to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named"; and when he had planted

a church in any city and had seen to its organization and the development of its life, he felt that he had "no more any place in these regions." (Rom. 15: 19-23.)

This Gospel which the Apostles preached was something entirely new. It was unlike anything that the world had ever heard before; and they made no attempt to link it with something that was already in the world. The Apostle Paul invariably approached his Gentile audiences with that sympathetic courtesy which the Spirit of God inculcates; but he never dreamed of comparing the message of the Gospel with any of the religions that were then in the world or with any of the philosophies of men. One could not imagine Paul among the philosophers on Mars' Hill comparing His Master with Socrates or Plato, or going into a conference with the priests of the mystery religions in Corinth or Ephesus to discover what contribution Christianity could make to the lives of the Greeks. Had that method been followed by the first missionaries of the Cross there would have been no Christianity in the world today.

The impression which these first preachers of the Gospel did make upon the heathen world of their day is indicated, in some measure at least, by the statements of their foes, that they had "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6), and that there was danger of the trade of making silver shrines for idol worshippers coming into disrepute (Acts 19:27).

III

The Gospel which the Apostles preached was one and

the same reconciling message for all men everywhere; but it had many aspects and it could be described in many different ways. It was sometimes defined as the Gospel of God, but most often as the Gospel of Christ. God Himself was the Author of the Gospel, and it was never forgotten that salvation was His gift. Paul could speak of "the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust" (1 Tim. 1:11). But, as Christ Himself was the Saviour and redemption was His work, it was natural that His Name should be the one most frequently used in speaking of the Gospel. Paul never tired of using the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ in writing about the blessings of the Gospel. His letters glow with the Saviour's Name. In fact they give the impression that the Apostle believed that his readers would understand the Gospel best and realize the blessings of the Gospel most fully if they kept the Person of the Lord always in mind and heart. "Remember Jesus Christ," he wrote to Timothy in his last letter, "risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel" (2 Tim. 2:8). The Christian message was pre-eminently "the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:4).

When Paul used the expression "my gospel," it was not because his message was any different from that of the other Apostles, but because it had come home to him by a direct revelation of the Lord. At the time of his conversion he had received such an overwhelming conception of the grace of God in Christ through the experience of his Damascus vision that all his proud Pharisaic self-confidence went down in ruins around him. He found that it was grace that saved and not the

Law. After that his whole life was spent going up and down the world proclaiming salvation by "the gospel of the grace of God."

Sometimes Paul spoke of "preaching the kingdom." In his farewell address to the elders of Ephesus he described his ministry among them as testifying "the gospel of the grace of God," and in the context as going about "preaching the kingdom" (Acts 20:24-25). Preaching the Kingdom was the same as preaching the Gospel, for it meant proclaiming the new spiritual order of life which the Holy Spirit had brought into being at Pentecost, and which was now opened to men by the grace of God through the Gospel. It did not refer to the time when the kingdoms of the world will become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Rev. 11:15). Paul was not thinking of that future state, but of the new life of light and liberty now enjoyed by those that are saved, the state which he describes in the Epistle to the Colossians when he says that God "delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Col. 1:13).

IV

The one object which the Apostles always kept in view, and therefore the supreme aspect of the Gospel, was its saving power. In writing to the Ephesians Paul calls it "the gospel of your salvation" (1:13), and to the Romans he speaks of it as "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (1:16). The writer of Hebrews calls the message of the Gospel "so

great a salvation" (2:3), and Peter tells his readers that the end of their faith is the salvation of their souls (1 Pet. 1:9).

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, into this world meant that the world needed to be saved. He declared repeatedly that His mission had to do with "the lost." "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). His frequent use of the word "save" implies the same thing; it was very often heard falling from His lips. Even His foes had come to recognize that somehow this was the characteristic element in His work, as is shown by their mocking words at the Cross: "He saved others; himself he cannot save" (Matt. 27:42).

The same note is found in the preaching of the Apostles from the very beginning. A careful examination of the Book of Acts reveals a sense of the universal need of salvation underlying all the apostolic preaching. Peter's exhortation to the Jewish people on the Day of Pentecost was, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40). To their rulers he declared that there is not "any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). When Cornelius sent for Peter it was because he was told he "shall speak unto thee words whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house" (Acts 11:14). Paul characterized his message to the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia as "the word of this salvation" (Acts 13:26); and the appeal of the jailor in Philippi, which Paul was able to meet at once with the Gospel

message was, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

These incidents reveal a sense of the need of salvation, not only in the minds of the Apostles as their motive for preaching the Gospel, but also in the hearts of men as their reason for receiving the Gospel. The cultured and devout Cornelius in Cæsarea and the rough pagan soldier in Philippi, both disclose a consciousness of the same deep, unanswered need. When the depths of any human life are probed there is always found a haunting sense of something wrong, a restless feeling after something missing. It is the evidence, whether recognized or not, that the soul of man has lost the way to God. Salvation is the one fundamental need of the whole human race. This need the Apostles met by going out into the lost world of their day and preaching salvation, as the gift of divine grace and not the attainment of human effort.

This message surprised the world; it was so radically different from the salvation proposed by all the religions and the philosophies of men. It was folly to the Greeks and an offense to the Jews. But it was this unique feature of the Gospel which gave Christianity the headway it got in the world in that day. It could not have been devised or invented by man, and it was one of the most conclusive proofs of the reality of the Gospel message and the divine origin of the Christian faith.

The Apostles proclaimed their message of salvation against a dark background. A final judgment awaited the human race; they had learned this truth from the Lord Himself. Nowhere else in all the Bible is the doctrine of a final judgment set forth so clearly and ex-

plicitly as in the teaching of Jesus. He separated the judgment of mankind at the end of the world from the manifestations of God's righteous judgment in the ordinary course of history. The instructions He gave to His Apostles when He sent them out to preach contained a warning of this judgment for any city which would refuse to hear them. "Verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city" (Matt. 10:15). He uttered the same solemn words regarding the cities in Galilee which had heard His Gospel and seen His mighty works, and yet had not repented (Matt. 11:20-22). Sodom and Gomorrah had been judged in the past when they were destroyed by fire and brimstone, but here was another judgment awaiting them; and in this coming judgment the people living in Palestine in His own day were to be involved. Evidently Jesus saw a Great Assize lying in the future for all mankind, a "day" which will come after all earthly judgments are past.

Paul also had the same awful issue in view when he carried his message out into the Gentile world. To the men of Athens he declared: God "hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained: whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). And in his letter to the Romans he refers to "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God," and "the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Christ Jesus" (Rom. 2:5, 16).

The shadow of "the day of judgment" falls across Peter's letters also (2 Pet. 2:9; 3:7), and he throws out several warnings about it. Men "shall give account to him that is ready to judge the living and the dead"; and in the time of judgment, "if the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" (1 Pet. 4:5, 18.) The New Testament makes it clear that the Apostles preached the Gospel of the redeeming grace of God through Jesus Christ as the only way of escape from some impending and appalling doom in the final crisis towards which mankind is moving down the course of time.

And the salvation the Gospel offers is complete and thoroughgoing. It sets a man right with God at the very start, and then carries him on through time and through eternity. It begins as soon as the faith of the believer responds to the grace of God, for then the Holy Spirit renews him by the new birth. In this sense salvation is described as something already accomplished and secured. "By grace have ye been saved through faith," wrote Paul to the Ephesians, referring to the time of their conversion to God (Eph. 2:8).

But salvation is also a process that goes on throughout life as the believer is more and more transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. The first converts to join the Christian church are called "those that were being saved" (Acts 2:47 margin); Paul writing to the Corinthians, including himself with them, speaks of "us who are being saved" (1 Cor. 1:18 margin). In its full sense, however, salvation is regarded as incomplete until a final consummation is reached at the Second Coming of the Lord. In the Epistle to the Romans

Paul writes, "Now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed" (Rom. 13:11); and in the Epistle to the Hebrews we read, "Inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment; so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).

In the midst of a world sinking into spiritual darkness and despair, which had no light for any human soul, the Gospel preached by the Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ held out the only hope; and it was a hope radiant with glory. Christianity triumphed over that old world, not only by the new life it enabled men to live while in the world, but also by pushing back the horizons of life into the eternal world beyond. And only with the same Gospel and the same salvation can Christianity ever overcome the world.

CHAPTER VII

THE NEW RIGHTEOUSNESS

“I am not ashamed of the gospel. . . . For therein is revealed a righteousness of God.”

THOUGH the Gospel which the Apostles preached was itself extremely simple, being the offer of the grace of God to the faith of man, yet the effect which it produced in the lives of those who believed it was exceedingly profound. They manifested a complete change of character; they attained to a new righteousness. This righteousness was of an entirely different quality from anything that had been seen in human character before. It is described by the Apostle Paul as “a righteousness of God” (Rom. 1:17).

I

Righteousness is one of the dominating ideas of the Old Testament. It is primarily that quality of the divine character which is reflected in the Law of the Lord, and is manifested in the moral order of the world. In the field of human history God's righteousness was displayed particularly in connection with His redeemed people Israel.

The character of God is unfolded in the Old Testament, not as a discovery on Israel's part by their searching after Him or because of their natural genius for religion, but as a revelation on God's part through His own personal activity among them. The God of the Old Testament is not the development of man's subjective idea of God; but "the living God," who is known by His deeds (Josh. 3:10). The God of the Israelites was never regarded by them as a tribal deity, but always as their covenant God. It was He who had redeemed the oppressed nation from Egypt. "Jehovah executeth righteous acts. . . . He made known his ways unto Moses, and his doings unto the children of Israel." (Ps. 103:6-7.)

The psalmists interpret the character of God as it was revealed in the history of His people. They find righteousness to be the fundamental quality of His character and the ground of His people's happiness and prosperity. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne. . . . Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound. . . . In thy name do they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness are they exalted." (Ps. 89:14-16.) God's righteousness is sometimes spoken of as being manifested in the national deliverances of Israel. "Jehovah hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the nations" (Ps. 98:2).

Those members of the nation who served and worshipped in His sanctuary were regarded as partaking somehow of the character of God Himself. The priests who ministered before the ark of the covenant were to be "clothed with righteousness" (Ps. 132:9); and

the devout Israelite who approached the Holy Place aright was given the promise, "He shall receive a blessing from Jehovah, and righteousness from the God of his salvation" (Ps. 24:5). The Lord God Himself was considered to be the source of righteousness. Both priests and people alike, by their nearness to Him in His sanctuary, received from His very presence there something of that fundamental quality of His character. When David cried, "Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness" (Ps. 4:1), he meant that God was the ground and spring of all the righteousness that was in him.

In the Prophets we find righteousness associated especially with the Messianic redemption which still lay in the future. In the Book of Isaiah God's righteousness is often identified with His salvation: "I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry." "My salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." "My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed." (Is. 46:13; 51:6; 56:1.) In the Book of Jeremiah the salvation of Judah and Israel is grounded on the character of the Messiah, which is identified with the righteousness of the Lord: "This is his name whereby he shall be called: Jehovah our righteousness" (Jer. 23:6). In Daniel it was revealed that one of the things to be accomplished in the days of the Messiah was, "to bring in everlasting righteousness" (Dan. 9:24). The last message of the Old Testament was the promise of a new day when the sun of righteousness should arise with healing in its beams (Mal. 4:2). It is evident therefore that, as God un-

folded His redeeming purpose through the ages of the Old Testament, the prophets came to see ever more clearly that the salvation He was preparing to accomplish would be in some special way a revelation of His own righteousness.

In the teaching of Jesus, righteousness is represented as something which belongs to God alone. His message was, "Seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Our Lord is silent about any righteousness attainable by human effort. When He told His disciples that except their righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees they should in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 5:20), He meant that the righteousness of the Kingdom was beyond the most punctilious observance of the Law. It was not to be attained in that way. His exposition of the Law in the Sermon on the Mount described a righteousness of a radically different kind. It is true that it was the fulfilment of the Law, but it was not the product of the Law. It was the reflection of His own character, for He Himself was the incarnate righteousness of God.

In the Epistle to the Romans Paul sets the righteousness of God over against the moral failure of man, and he traces that failure to man's neglect of God. "The wrath of God," he declares, "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18). By "ungodliness" Paul means the absence of reverence for God. That is the root of "unrighteousness," by which he means iniquity or unrighteous conduct between man and man. Paul proceeds to show how "ungodliness" has wrought out

“unrighteousness” in human history, and how the whole race, Gentile and Jew alike, has hopelessly sinned and come short of the glory of God. And then he goes on to declare, “But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets” (Rom. 3:21). He means that in the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, which the Law foreshadowed and the Prophets foretold, the righteousness of God has had its final and complete manifestation.

As in the Old Testament days God displayed His righteousness in the history of Israel by the intervention of His own activity from time to time, so in the Gospel history He displayed His righteousness by another intervention, by sending His own Son from heaven to do His will in the form and the nature of man. In the midst of the utter failure of all human righteousness, another righteousness has been achieved on the stage of human history, a righteousness of which God alone is the Author. The character of Jesus Christ is the visible demonstration of the righteousness of God. In the sinless perfection and moral grandeur of the life He lived among men may be seen what righteousness really is and what God meant the human race to become.

II

It is this righteousness, wrought out by the Lord Jesus Christ, that is the gift of God in the Christian Gospel. “Therein,” declares Paul, “is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith” (Rom. 1:17). It is this

righteousness which is offered by the grace of God and is received by the faith of man. Paul calls it in other places "the righteousness which is of faith" (Rom. 9:30; 10:6). The means by which it is secured is not obedience to the Law, but trust in God.

This was the principle of Abraham's life of acceptance with God. Paul explains in the fourth chapter of Romans how Abraham set the example of trust in God and so became "the father of all them that believe." "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4:3). This does not mean that God accepted faith from Abraham instead of righteousness, or counted righteousness to him as a reward of his faith. That would make faith simply another kind of works, and the Gospel simply a concession to man's failure. What is meant is, that Abraham's faith put him in the right relation towards God, and made it possible for God to regard him as a righteous man and to put righteousness to his account.

In explaining that faith and not works is the principle by which men are justified, and in using Abraham's faith to illustrate Christian faith, Paul does not stop to define faith in any simpler terms. Faith is really an elemental thing and cannot be defined. It can be recognized and understood, however, for it is the fundamental feature of man's original relation to God. It is the right disposition of the creature to the Creator. It involves the whole man, mind, heart, and will. It is the attitude of the soul that turns from self to God, abandoning self-trust and self-effort and relying entirely upon Him. Faith, then, is not an arbitrary condition laid upon man, but the only attitude which

makes it possible for God to meet man with His grace and communicate His righteousness to him.

Abraham's faith was that disposition on the part of the patriarch which acknowledged his own hopeless inability and looked to God's supernatural power and grace alone. It is the same disposition on the part of the sinner which enables God to justify him with the gift of His own righteousness. It is those who have no trust in themselves that they are righteous, but trust themselves entirely to God, who receive the righteousness of God. In the Kingdom of God it is not they that seek righteousness by the works of the Law or by their own good deeds that attain it, but they that hunger and thirst after righteousness that are filled.

According to the Christian Gospel God not only counts men righteous who believe; He also makes them righteous. His righteousness not only justifies, but also sanctifies. That righteousness which has been objectively manifested in the life of Jesus Christ becomes a subjective experience in the lives of those who by faith commit themselves to Him. This end is secured by virtue of the representative character of Jesus Christ as the Second Man, the Head of the new humanity. The analogy between Adam and Christ in this respect is explained by Paul in an elaborate passage in the fifth chapter of Romans, and he sums it up in these words: "As through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19).

The human race was created at the beginning a solidarity. The first Adam was a corporate personality;

in him all humanity was included. As its representative head he was put under a probation which was to determine the character and destiny of the whole race. Through Adam "sin entered into the world, and death through sin." His disobedience to the will of God, his one "trespass," was of such a character as to make human nature sinful and bring all humanity under the doom of death.

But in Jesus Christ another representative Head has been provided. As a corporate personality, He too was put under probation. His obedience to the will of God, His "one act of righteousness," was of such a character as to perfect human nature in righteousness and establish it anew, no longer under condemnation, but under "justification of life." And now, by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, God is creating a new humanity. In the old humanity, under the first creation, sin rules and the end is death. In the new humanity, under the new creation, grace makes righteousness rule and the end is eternal life (Rom. 5:21).

This new humanity is the result of the Holy Spirit's work in uniting those who believe with the new federal Head. The whole ministry of the Christian Church in the world, according to Paul, has this one purpose in view. It is co-operating with the Spirit of God "unto the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12). This spiritual activity, which is continually going on at the heart of the Christian system, is what makes the Gospel "the power of God unto salvation." It is the fundamental principle of the Christian life and the secret of the new righteousness. It rests upon the basis which underlies the constitution of the human race,

for the redemption of man proceeds upon the same principle as his creation. As, by means of the first or natural birth, the nature of Adam, with its bias of self-will and sin, is transmitted to all the members of the old humanity, so by means of the second or supernatural birth, the nature of Jesus Christ, with its perfected righteousness, is communicated to all who by faith in Him become members of the new humanity. It is this profound truth Paul had in mind when he appealed to converts to "put away the old man," and "put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. 4:24).

The Holy Spirit is the Administrator of this new righteousness; and it is in the transcendent power of the activity of the Spirit that the Christian lives his new life as a member of the new humanity. The baptism which took place on the Day of Pentecost is repeated in the case of every new believer. He is "baptized into Christ" by the Spirit and made a member of the body of Christ. The life of Christ then becomes the secret of his life; the Spirit of Christ becomes the power by which he lives; and the righteousness of Christ becomes manifest in his walk and conversation.

This was the great discovery Paul made after his bitter experience of the utter failure of the Law, which he describes in the seventh chapter of Romans. He found that the Law could not deliver him from the guilt and power of sin in his own nature. "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 7:24-25.) Paul had found in Christ a deliverance which not only freed him from the sense

of guilt, but also gave him a new power over the old sinful tendency. He discovered that there is now no condemnation to them that have been united with Christ as members of the new humanity, and also that what the Law failed to do is accomplished in them by another power, "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:2). They fulfill the requirements of the Law by following another way of life; they "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The Spirit of Him who perfectly fulfilled the Law in the days of His earthly life dwells in their spirits and writes the Law on their hearts. They no longer attempt to obey the Law as an outward standard in the servile power of the old nature; but, with the glad freedom of children of God, they respond to the inward principle of the new nature and live by the power of the Spirit of Jesus Himself.

III

The mystical union of the believer with Christ is the inner principle of the Christian life and the secret spring of the new righteousness. This means that we are identified with Christ at every step of His redemptive work. The Cross becomes the critical event in our lives, as it was the critical event in His life. Everything hinges upon that. In order to attain to true righteousness of life it is necessary to realize the profound significance of the Cross in Christian experience. We cannot share the righteousness of Christ except by sharing His death. If He is to communicate His new nature to us, we must consent to the death of

our old nature. The death of self is the essential condition of triumphant Christian living. This can take place only by Christ's way of dying, who yielded His human nature to the death of the Cross, thus dying to Himself, that He might be raised by the Holy Spirit into a new order of life.

The innermost secret of this union with Christ is explained by Paul in the sixth chapter of Romans: "If we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (v. 5). That is, if we share His way of dying, we shall also share His way of living. If we consent to the death of self, as He did, we shall also realize the power of the Holy Spirit in a new kind of life; we shall have His righteousness manifested in our lives by the power of His Spirit. After unfolding this inner principle of life Paul gathers up its practical significance in this exhortation: "Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (v. 11). The word "reckon" here is the same as that used so often in the fourth chapter of God's reckoning righteousness to Abraham. Just as God treated Abraham as righteous when he believed in God, so we are to treat ourselves as dead and alive again when we believe in Jesus Christ, our old nature dead to sin, our new nature alive to God. When this is the attitude of the soul, then the mystical union, which is the life of the new humanity, carries on its transcendent function. The spiritual activity of the new creation operates within us, and our members become instruments of righteousness in the hands of God.

The Christian life, therefore, is not self-culture. It is not the result of developing and perfecting our own life, but something immeasurably higher and nobler. Christianity's way of dealing with self is not to assert it, but to repress it and count it a dead thing; and at the same time to surrender to the risen Christ, that the inexhaustible energy of His Spirit may reproduce His own life within the mold of the old nature. The Christian man escapes from evil habits and evil passions, not by the force of his own moral struggles, but by the power of the grace of God. He attains to righteousness of life, not by his own laborious conformity to an ethical standard, but by continually appropriating the spirit and power of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The mistake of the Jews consisted in seeking righteousness by the way of self-culture. In their Law they had the purest ethical code in the world, but they misunderstood the purpose of the Law. They used it as a means of working out righteousness and so they produced self-righteousness, and their great religious zeal only magnified their failure. "Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own," they would not yield to Jesus Christ in faith and subject themselves to the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:3). They followed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees and refused the righteousness of the Sermon on the Mount.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus described a righteousness which is quite the opposite from self-culture. It is the application of the principle of the Cross to human character and conduct. Its whole em-

phasis is on self-suppression and against self-assertion. When Jesus called upon His disciples to turn the other cheek to those who smote them, and to go the second mile with those who would compel them to go one, He was not laying down explicit regulations for them to obey, but illustrating the fundamental principle of the new character which He was making possible for them, and the secret of the new righteousness which He was working out for them. This is a far more sweeping and searching thing than mere self-sacrifice. That denial of self which Christ required of His disciples meant taking up the Cross and following Christ in His way of dying. It could only be understood after Christ Himself had gone to the Cross, and it could only be realized after the Spirit of Christ had come back to repeat the experience in the lives of those that are His. Paul's own expression, reckoning oneself to be dead unto sin but alive unto God, was but putting in another form the principle of life which Jesus was illustrating in the Sermon on the Mount.

Paul regards the crisis of the Cross as so profound and complete that it has put the gulf of death between us and our old self-life. Our former manner of life was lived in the power of the flesh and in the sphere of this world. But we have passed beyond that state into another world, where we live by another power, the power of the Spirit. "Ye died with Christ from the rudiments of the world," he tells the Colossians (Col. 2:20). "Ye died," he repeats, "and your life is hid with Christ in God" (3:3).

That being the case, we are to repudiate the methods of the old life, to mortify our members which are

of the earth, and to live in the new world where we belong. We are to reckon ourselves dead to the old world and set our hearts and minds on "the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1). We belong to the Kingdom of Heaven, our citizenship is there (Phil. 3:20), and the blessings of the Gospel of Christ are spiritual blessings in those heavenly places (Eph. 1:3). If our lives are set in that direction, then the Holy Spirit will administer in our character and conduct the new righteousness which is in Christ Jesus.

In the Epistle to the Galatians Paul explains most fully the place of the Cross in the Gospel of Christ and the meaning of the Cross in the Christian life. He puts it in this way: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me" (2:20). In the Person of Christ Paul sees himself crucified. In the death of Christ his old self-life died. The new life that he now lives has its source no longer in himself, but in Christ. It is Christ living in him. He lives this new life by a continual attitude of trust, trust in Christ as the Son of God and as his own personal Saviour. Thus does the Apostle show his own conscious attitude towards Jesus Christ as an example for his converts to imitate, that they too may be able to apply the Cross to their own lives.

Towards the end of the Epistle he sums it all up this way: "Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world

hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (6:14). His identification with Christ is such, Paul means, that the Cross of Christ has made an irreconcilable and eternal separation between himself and the world order which he describes elsewhere as "this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4). Paul looks back upon the world as on the other side of the Cross from himself; and he would have the world look on him as on the other side of the Cross from itself. Each one of the parties is to be regarded as completely dead to the other. This radical separation of the Christian from the whole system of things opposed to God is made effective by the believer's mystical union with the Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

IV

The character which is produced by the mystical union of the believer with Christ is the righteousness of God manifesting itself in the life of the Christian. There are several passages in the course of Paul's Epistles where he takes occasion to describe this new character. In Galatians he contrasts it with the works of the Law and the works of the flesh and describes it as fruit, the fruit of the Spirit. It is not an attainment of human effort striving after an ethical ideal, or a labored obedience to rules imposed from without. It is the spontaneous product of a germ of life implanted within. This fruit is a cluster of such graces as these: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control (Gal. 5:22). They all have their roots in an experience of

the Cross, and mark the character of those who walk in the liberty of the Spirit, and not under the constraint of any law. In their ripest form they are found only in the life of Jesus Christ Himself.

In First Corinthians, after discussing the various gifts of the Spirit and their manifestations in the Church, Paul goes to the heart of Christian character in the thirteenth chapter and describes the essential thing, without which no gift is of any value. He makes it clear that the spirit of love is the one supremely characteristic quality of the Christian. In his analysis of this grace he presents an ideal of the same kind as the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. It is another reflection of the character of Jesus. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Here the mark of the Cross is unmistakable. Here is a character from which self-interest and self-seeking have completely died away. It is fragrant with the odor of the ointment of a broken alabaster box.

In Romans 12:1—15:13 we have Paul's exposition of practical Christianity. It is his application of the Gospel of Christ to life and conduct. He begins with an appeal to his readers: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God"—by all he has told them in the previous part of the Epistle of the grace of God in the Gospel—"to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God." This is just put-

ting in another form the practical injunction he had given before (6:11). To present one's body a living sacrifice to God is the same as reckoning oneself dead to sin and alive to God. Paul has come back here to the transcendent fact of our union with Christ in order to follow it out to its practical issues.

From this point he goes on through more than three chapters with the most complete and elaborate treatment of Christian conduct to be found in all his Epistles. Though given in the form of precepts and exhortations, it is not a code of ethics or a system of morals. It is a description, rather, of the way the Christian should react to the various conditions of life in which he finds himself, whether in the Church among his fellow Christians, or in the social and political order of the world around him. It all springs from the initial act of self-surrender to God.

Thus does Paul ground practical Christianity upon evangelical faith. Christian behavior rises out of the Gospel. It is a revelation of the righteousness of God. It is but the continuous manifestation in human life of the activity of the Spirit of Christ. It is the spontaneous response of the new man to successive sets of circumstances. The Christian man takes his place with other men in the midst of society, but he holds in his heart a transcendent secret. His feet are on the solid earth, but the springs of his life are in a higher world. He shares with other men the duties and tasks of common life, but the quality of his life is entirely different from theirs.

The conduct which Paul describes in these chapters of Romans is essentially different from ordinary right-

eousness. There is a different atmosphere about it. It is marked by the absence of self-will, self-interest, and self-love. Its point of view is always a tender and sympathetic interest in others, and it is pervaded by genuine love. Righteousness of this kind is not the product of natural ethics. Its secret is beyond the reach of psychological analysis. It is found by those alone who follow Christ in the way of the Cross. Their lives become fragrant with His Spirit and His righteousness. They are not conformed to the standards of this world; they are being transformed by an inward renewal. Having died in Christ to self-will, they are living in "the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2).

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEW ACCESS TO GOD

“By the way which he dedicated
for us, a new and living way.”

THE change which the Gospel made in the lives of those who received it was more than a change of character. They not only manifested a new kind of righteousness among their fellow men; they also found themselves in a new relationship with God. They had peace with God and freedom of access to Him (Rom. 5:1-2). The instinctive cry of the newly born soul was, “Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). When the early Christians met persecution for the first time, they turned to God in prayer spontaneously, “with one accord,” like children in trouble going to a father (Acts 4:24).

This was something new; it had never been known before. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, after pointing out the weakness of the old Levitical priesthood under the Law and its inability to bring men to spiritual maturity, speaks of the new Christian system under the Gospel as bringing in “a better hope, through which we draw nigh unto God” (Heb. 7:19). Judaism was better than all other religions, in that it

was the worship of the one true God; but Christianity was better than Judaism, in that it brought the worshipper into the presence of God. The Law could only command obedience to earthly ordinances; but the Gospel carried the believer within the heavenly veil. This is the glory of the Christian faith; it opens the way for men into real fellowship with God when everything else has failed.

I

All through the Old Testament there are signs of an unsatisfied longing in the heart of man, and of a restless search for something lying beyond his reach. It is really a longing for God and a search for a way of approach to Him. It appears at the very beginning. In the midst of the story of the first human family, we read, "Then began men to call upon the name of Jehovah" (Gen. 4:26). They had already discovered that the world around them could not supply the deepest need of the human soul.

It appears again in the story of the patriarchs. Abraham set out from his early home in the splendid civilization of Ur of the Chaldees in response to the urge of an inner yearning for something beyond the world. "He looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). A similar longing was aroused in Jacob's heart when he met God in the night of wrestling at Peniel. When he discovered how unavailing were all his own struggles and how helpless he was in the hands of his mysterious antagonist, he cried out as he clung to him, "I

will not let thee go except thou bless me" (Gen. 32:26).

Years afterwards, when his life was drawing to its close and he was pronouncing his final blessings upon his various sons, he paused in the midst of them all and uttered this ejaculation, which seems to have no connection with the context, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Jehovah" (Gen. 49:18). The aged patriarch was contemplating with prophetic eye the earthly destiny of his family in the future; but this outlook did not give him final satisfaction. His heart was set on something far beyond it, his ultimate fellowship with the Lord his God.

This unsatisfied longing breaks out in its strongest form and with its clearest expression in the Book of Job. The whole story is the search of the elemental heart of man seeking for the light of God in the darkness and mystery of human suffering. It is all gathered up in this one cry: "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" (Job 23:3). The same yearning for God runs as an undertone through the Book of Psalms. When the psalmist's soul was cast down and disquieted within him he gave utterance to the real secret of his need in these words: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." (Ps. 42:1-2.) It was to the same deep underlying thirst which exists in the soul of every man, whether conscious of it or not, that the evangelical prophet directed his most eloquent appeal: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine

and milk without money and without price" (Isa. 55: 1). His message looked forward to the time when God Himself would satisfy the hunger and thirst of the whole human race. But this was a promise which could not be realized till Christ had accomplished redemption from sin and the Spirit had been poured out from on high.

In the meantime, during the Old Testament dispensation, a system of worship was provided which gave men a symbol of the presence of God and a certain measure of fellowship with Him. The Levitical system allowed the worshipper to approach God, but at the same time maintained his separation from God. He had no personal access to God; he stood in the outer courts of the temple while the priests alone, acting in his behalf, ministered in the inner courts. The very structure of the Mosaic tabernacle, which provided the ground plan for Israel's approach to God, was intended to emphasize the holiness of God on the one hand and the sinfulness of man on the other. It marked the separation which sin had made between man and God. A long space intervened between the worshippers standing outside and the sanctuary inside where the symbol of God's presence dwelt.

The congregation of Israel assembled at the door of the tabernacle and could advance no farther. They looked in across the outer court, past the altar of sacrifice and the laver of purification, towards the curtains of the tent of meeting. Behind those curtains was the Holy Place, the first of the inner courts, where the priests carried on their daily ministrations. Behind that again was the Holy of Holies, the heart of the

whole Mosaic system of worship, containing the sacred ark of the covenant and the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. To the devout Israelite that dark and mysterious chamber, so far beyond his reach, was the dwelling place of God. But no man could enter it save the High Priest, and he only on one occasion in all the year. On the Day of Atonement, after the sacrifice for the sins of the people was offered upon the altar in the outer court, he carried the blood in and sprinkled it upon the mercy seat, thus presenting it, as it were, before the face of God in token of the completed transaction at the altar without.

But that was the end of the service and it had to be repeated every year. High priests came and passed away, following one another in the order of Aaron, but none of them could ever abide in that inner sanctuary or introduce anyone else into it. The continual repetition of the ceremony marked its imperfection and its inability to secure access to God for the worshipper. That old Levitical system could never provide the kind of atonement which would open the way into the divine presence-chamber. It could not make the worshipper "perfect"; it could not bring him to spiritual maturity. There was no nearer approach to God for the Old Testament saint.

Though the worship of the Israelites was thus associated with the local manifestation of God's presence in the tabernacle or the temple, yet the Old Testament saint did not believe that God was confined to that material abode. Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple shows that clearly enough: "Will God in very deed dwell on earth? Behold, heaven and the

heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded!" (1 Kings 8:27.)

The spirituality and omnipresence of God were quite as well understood by the prophets and the psalmists of the old dispensation as by the Apostles of the new dispensation. Prayer in the Old Testament was always a real expression of religious feeling and a real approach of the soul towards God. But His people then could enter only into His antechamber. This attitude of worship is revealed in such cries of the psalmist as these: "Hear the voice of my supplications . . . when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle" (Ps. 28:2), and, "I will worship toward thy holy temple" (Ps. 138:2). When Daniel prayed in Babylon he kept the windows of his chamber open towards Jerusalem, as though it was by the way of the temple worship there that he thought of God (Dan. 6:10).

All this means that God was not so near to the worshipping Israelite in Old Testament times as He is now to the Christian believer. In those days something barred the way to God. The altar of sacrifice blocked the way to the inner shrine. There a victim always lay, whose blood had been shed, indicating in some symbolical sense that the worshipper himself died there on his way towards God. His life had been forfeited by sin. The sacrificial offering of life was the central principle upon which the whole Levitical system of worship was built up. And yet it was quite well understood by the devout Israelite that it was not the flesh and blood of the sacrifices that God required. "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" (Ps. 50:13). "Sacrifice and offering thou hast

no delight in; burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required" (Ps. 40:6).

And still the Israelites went on with the sacrifices and the offerings of their Levitical system. This system was not of their own devising. It was not copied from their heathen neighbors, who offered sacrifices to appease their gods. Its characteristic emphasis on holiness or moral purity marks its divine origin; for that is never found in any heathen religion. The central message which the whole Mosaic ceremonial system kept before Israel was this: "Ye shall be holy; for I Jehovah your God am holy" (Lev. 19:2).

The prophets who preached against the sacrifices were not attacking the sacrificial system in itself, but denouncing the formality and insincerity with which it was carried on. "Bring no more vain oblations," no empty and insincere sacrifices. "I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting" (Isa. 1:13). Iniquitous conduct and religious worship coupled together God could not tolerate. The end He had in view in the worship He commanded of Israel was righteousness of life and conduct, and when this was lacking the sacrifices were of no value. "What doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. 6:8.)

In statements like these the prophets were not opposing the priests, or repudiating the sacrificial system, but calling the people to recognize the real significance of that system. Its final purpose was ethical and not ceremonial. The most notable religious revivals in Israel, when the temple services were resumed and the Levitical sacrifices were restored, occurred in

the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah, when such outstanding prophets of righteousness as Isaiah and Jeremiah were preaching in Jerusalem.

There is a passage in the Book of Jeremiah which at first sight seems to be a denial of the divine authority for the sacrifices, but when taken in the light of the context bears a very different meaning: "I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices; but this thing I commanded them, saying, Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you" (Jer. 7:22-23). What is in view here is the covenant which God made with Israel at Mount Sinai after giving them the Ten Commandments. That covenant had for its purpose the separation of a people to Him by obedience to His moral law and not merely by ceremonial worship. In that covenant sacrifices and offerings were not the end contemplated, but a people whom God could separate from the other nations of the world and put His own mark upon. That mark was their conformity to His own righteousness as reflected in the Ten Words they had just heard spoken from the Mount. The sacrificial system of worship, which was added afterwards, was His means of separating them to Himself.

He was thus preparing them in the meantime for the true worship which lay in the future, and which could not be offered till the way was opened for sinful man to draw near unto God. This true worship Jesus explained for the first time, to the woman of Samaria,

when He said, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers" (John 4:23). The hour for that spiritual worship had then arrived, for Jesus Himself had come to make it possible; but it still lay beyond the Cross and Pentecost.

The purpose of the Old Testament system of worship was not to train the people of Israel in the abstract principles of spiritual worship until their religious ideas were sufficiently developed to do without the material symbols. The material symbolism of the tabernacle had a profound significance. It was made after the pattern shown to Moses in the Mount, and was expressly designed to be "a copy and shadow of the heavenly things" (Heb. 8:5). It was far more than Israel's meeting place for worship. Its very structure was planned to represent the heavenly world of eternal realities, which the Old Testament worshipper could see afar off, but could not enter. For him there was no access there, and there alone was the presence of God. All he could do was to "wait upon Jehovah," or "wait for him." He waited in the outer courts till the inner chambers in the Father's house were made ready for the redeemed to enter. These could not be made ready till Christ should come and accomplish the work of atonement. Only then would the words of the Prophet be fulfilled when he said, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty; they shall behold a land that reacheth afar" (Isa. 33:17). Only then would the spacious, far-stretching heavenly world be opened for the children of men to contemplate. The Old Testa-

ment saints "received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:40).

II

If we could read the four Gospels anew, thinking only of their Old Testament background and dismissing from our minds all the rest of the New Testament, probably the most striking impression we should receive would be the difference between Jesus of Nazareth and even the best of the Old Testament saints in the matter of prayer. He had an access to God which none of them ever had.

The prayer life of Jesus was different from anything ever seen before. It was one of the most remarkable features of His ministry. It was not merely an expression of religious life as in the Old Testament days. It was not simply a habit of prayer. It was the underlying groundwork of all He said and did. It pervades the Gospel records like an atmosphere. There was a great consciousness of God in the life of Jesus. It made a deep impression upon His disciples and upon all who came under His influence. When the little children were brought to Him, it was "that he should lay his hands on them, and pray" (Matt. 19:13). John describes the spot where the miracle of feeding the five thousand occurred as, "the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks" (John 6:23). The very manner in which Jesus prayed that day had left a permanent impression on the mind of the Apostle.

The presence of God was as real to Jesus as the presence of the people among whom He was moving. The Gospels record incidents in the midst of which He turned aside for a moment to speak to His Father in heaven with an intimacy that was perfectly natural. After His denunciation of the impenitent cities in Galilee, He broke off with this ejaculatory prayer: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes; yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight." And then He turned back to the crowds that were thronging around Him with this invitation: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:25-28.)

Another instance of a similar kind occurred during His last week in Jerusalem, just before His death. Some devout Greeks, who had come up to worship at the feast from the great Gentile world outside Israel, asked for an interview with Jesus. This request raised the old temptation of the kingdoms of the world, which Satan put before Him in the wilderness, and brought Him face to face with the supreme crisis towards which His life was ever moving. He began to speak about it to the disciples who were with Him at the time. As He went on His soul was filled with conflicting emotions, and then He turned to God in prayer: "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." (John 12:27.) And with this renewed dedication of His life to the will of God, Jesus faced the final step

which led Him to the Cross. Immediately there came a voice from heaven expressing His Father's approval of Him. Obviously the access that Jesus had to God was immediate and His fellowship with God was intimate.

This intimate fellowship of Jesus with God was marked by His constant use of the words "My Father" in speaking of God, and by His frequent habit of seeking retirement for prayer. He would often withdraw from the multitude, and even from His own disciples, and go away into the wilderness or up on the mountain side to spend time alone in communion with His Father.

Most of these occasions, as they are recorded in the Gospels, occurred in connection with important steps in the course of His ministry. After His first busy Sabbath in Capernaum and just before His first tour through the villages of Galilee, we are told that He rose early in the morning before daylight and went out of the house, "and departed into a desert place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). Before He chose His twelve disciples, Luke says, "He went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12).

Sometimes Jesus took the disciples with Him when He withdrew for prayer; but even in these cases there are indications in the narrative that his praying was apart from them. We are nowhere told that He prayed with them; but instead of that we have such a statement as this: "It came to pass, as he was praying apart, the disciples were with him" (Luke 9:18). They might be in His presence when He was praying; but

He was in the presence of the Father, and they were not. On the Mount of Transfiguration, while He was praying, Peter and John and James were heavy with sleep (Luke 9:32).

It was on one of these occasions, "as he was praying in a certain place, that when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). The very prayer He taught them, which we know as the Lord's Prayer, marked the difference between Him and them in approaching God, for it contains a petition for pardon which He had never any need to use. All through the Gospel records it is evident that Jesus had access to the inner chamber of the Father's house, while the disciples were still in the outer courts where the Old Testament saints had always been.

This difference was recognized by the Lord Himself, when, on the last night of His life, He told them that after His departure they should be able to pray to the Father in His name, something which they had not done hitherto. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name. . . . In that day ye shall ask in my name." (John 16:24-26.) He meant that, as a result of His redeeming work, when it was accomplished and He had gone back to the Father, they themselves would have the same access to God that He had. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name" (John 16:23). The access which they would have to the Father then would give them the same privilege of asking and receiving that He had enjoyed during His earthly life.

This new access to God which Jesus promised the disciples was to be inseparably connected with Him-

self. It was not as though He were simply a teacher giving them a higher conception of God. Even the highest conception of God is not fellowship with God; nor is it even the knowledge of God. Neither did Jesus mean that He would lead them into a deeper experience of God, in which they might continue by themselves. His function was not to introduce them to God and then withdraw, leaving them with God alone. What He was explaining to them was that there could be no knowledge of God at all apart from a knowledge of Himself, and no fellowship with God that was not sustained by fellowship with Himself. "This is life eternal," said Jesus in His subsequent prayer that night, "that they should know thee, the only true God and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John 17:3). Again: "I have made known unto them thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them" (v. 26).

Knowing Christ is the secret of knowing God. Coming to Christ is the only way of approach to God. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me. . . . He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John 14:6-9.) What Jesus said to the disciples in the upper room on that night about His own relation to the Father, and about their praying to the Father in His Name after His departure, means that in the Christian system, when men come to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith, they find themselves in the presence of God. And, finding themselves in the presence of God through faith in Christ, they have more than an intellectual apprehension of God; they have personal access to the Father.

III

All this was realized by the disciples immediately after Pentecost. With the descent of the Spirit that day the presence of God became a reality to them. Prayer to God was the spontaneous and natural expression of their new life. It was the background of all their new spiritual activity. This is the impression we get from the narrative in the Book of Acts. When the Twelve called upon the Church, in the early days of its rapid growth, to choose officers in order to deal with the daily ministrations among its poor and needy members, it was because they felt that they ought not to turn aside from their own specific work, which they described in these words: "We will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4).

In the life and fellowship of the Church, as it continued to grow and spread, prayer had the central and commanding place. When Peter was imprisoned by Herod after the martyrdom of James, we read that "prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him" (Acts 12:5). The leaders and teachers of the Church in Antioch were waiting on the Lord in the ministry of prayer and fasting when the first missionary enterprise was born (Acts 13:2-3). What had been true of the earthly ministry of the Lord was now proving to be true in the ministry of His Church on earth. The secret of its life and power lay, behind all its outward activity, in prayer and fellowship with God.

The same thing is reflected in the Epistles of Paul

to the churches. He regards prayer as the one supreme business of the Christian, for he constantly insists upon it. Instead of urgent appeals for active service, such as we might expect, we find Paul giving such instructions as these to the members of the churches: "Pray without ceasing." "Continue stedfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving." "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (1 Thess. 5:17; Col. 4:2; Phil. 4:6.) Obviously Paul regarded the Godward side of the Church's life, or its priestly ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, as its most important function. He set the example in this matter himself, for his letters show that prayer with him was not a subsidiary method of assisting his active ministry, but the creative spring which directed and controlled it. The tremendous energy which poured through his missionary life was generated in the secret place of his prayer life. The Apostle doubtless felt that, if his converts were careful to maintain the ministry of prayer and fellowship with God in their private lives, they would not fail in Christian service among their fellow men.

The prominent place which prayer occupied in the lives of the early Christians was due to their consciousness of the new world which had broken open before them. It was the world of the inner shrine where God was. The coming of the Holy Spirit among them with all the new powers which He had brought from above had opened the heavenly world to their view. They looked "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (2 Cor. 4:18).

This new world was none the less real because it was unseen. The consciousness of its presence around them, the sense of the new fellowship with God which it gave them, was the most characteristic thing in the lives of the New Testament saints. While they were still living in the same visible and material world, they knew that they now belonged to an invisible and spiritual world. They were walking in the glorious liberty of the children of God. They realized that they had been delivered from the darkness and bondage of this present evil world, and had been translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son. They had been made to sit with Christ in the heavenly places. Once they were afar off, but now they were made nigh. They found that they had access to God and could draw near unto Him.

This profound truth of the Godward side of the Christian life is most fully explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and there it is associated with the heavenly priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The writer takes the Mosaic system of worship and shows that it has given place to a "better thing," of which it was only the shadow and type. The great High Priest has accomplished eternal redemption once for all and has passed through the veil into the presence of God.

There, in the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, He carries on His priestly ministry. His entrance into this heavenly world was secured by His perfect sacrifice on the Cross. It was "when he had made purification of sins" that He entered in and "sat down" (Heb. 1:3). After that sacrifice of His the sin of the world no longer barred the way to God.

The inner sanctuary now lies wide open. We have now "boldness to enter into the holy place" (Heb. 10:19). The inner secret of the divine presence is reached by the way of the Cross. When we come to Christ we enter this heavenly world; we draw near unto God.

The presence of Christ in that heavenly world as the representative Man, "made like unto his brethren," makes Him "a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God" (Heb. 2:17). He ministers there in our behalf, and in His Name we have the right to enter in. As the high priest of the old covenant entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement on behalf of the people of Israel, so the High Priest of the new covenant ministers in heaven in behalf of those who are His people and have accepted His great salvation (Heb. 2:3). Having entered in once for all, He sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high in the repose of a finished work. From that place of power and dignity, which He has reached by His own merit as the Second Man, He administers for men an atonement which is final and complete. His presence there makes salvation a continual reality, and it is the ground of the eternal security of the saints. He is "able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). He has secured a place for His people in the audience chamber of God.

This spiritual truth has impressive significance when it is contemplated in the light of our increasing scientific knowledge of the world. It is not a subjective conception; it is a transcendent reality. It means that in

the unseen realm behind this vast visible universe, in the secret place of its life and power, where God is, there is a Man who has been tempted in all points like as we are and can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. At the center of ultimate reality there exists not only the Father heart of God, but also the Brother heart of Jesus; not only an infinite and eternal love, but also a comprehending and redeeming sympathy. The heart of the universe around us is the Father's house, and when we come to Him through the Lord Jesus Christ we reach the home of the soul.

There, too, we find what the writer to the Hebrews calls the "sabbath rest" which has been promised to the people of God (Heb. 4:9). When God finished His work of creation He entered into His eternal Sabbath. "God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made" (Gen. 2:3). We are not to conceive of this as a state of passive inactivity, but as a state of divine complacency. It means that after the six progressive stages of the operation of the divine will in creative energy, the Creator proceeded to repose in the perfect enjoyment of His own handiwork. It is a sublime conception.

It was God's purpose that man should share this rest of His, entering into fellowship with Him in the full enjoyment of the creation, of which man himself was the crown. This blissful privilege, which was lost in the fall, is now offered to men through Jesus Christ. Those who enter into the divine presence through the great High Priest find themselves not only in a new world, but also in an atmosphere of perfect peace. This

is what Paul means by "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7). This is what Jesus offers to the weary, laboring multitudes of the world: "Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). When we come to Christ and cease from our own works as God did from His, we are brought into such perfect harmony with the work of the Creator around us that we pass into the enjoyment of the very rest of God Himself. We repose in the peace that is at the heart of the universe.

The privilege of access to God is the supreme glory of the Christian faith. Fellowship with God is not merely a subjective experience. Prayer does not end with its reaction upon the human soul. It reaches out into the transcendent world beyond the veil. Behind Calvary and Pentecost lies an unseen realm as objectively real as those historic facts themselves. It cannot be reached by scientific search or philosophic thought; faith alone can find it. It is the world of the living verities and of the Kingdom that cannot be shaken. The springs of life and light are there; and the secret of power and peace. The nerve centers of the whole Christian system are seated there, and not in the human mind or the human heart. It is there the Christian Gospel leads us. Through Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, we "are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all" (Heb. 12:22-23).

CHAPTER IX

THE NEW CREATION

“Behold, I make all things new.”

THE Christian Gospel contains the announcement of a new creation. The Apostles came to realize that the change which Christ made in the lives of those who accepted the Gospel was part of a divine process by which all things were being made new. “If any man is in Christ,” wrote Paul, “he is a new creature,” or, “there is a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). “Neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature,” or, “a new creation” (Gal. 6:15). What the Apostle points out in these passages is the kind of change that takes place in the saving of a soul. It is the passing away of the old creation and the introduction of a new creation: “the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new.” The same thought is expressed by James when he describes those who have been reborn by the Word of God as “a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (Jas. 1:18).

Man is saved, not by a process of reformation, but by his complete regeneration. So it will be with the whole system of things. The redemption wrought out by the Lord Jesus Christ will ultimately extend to the

universe. The Scriptures declare that the physical world is to share in the deliverance enjoyed by redeemed men. "The creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). This was the glorious outlook of New Testament Christianity. The Christian hope is "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13).

I

The Bible opens with a fitting prologue. The account of creation in the first chapter of Genesis is sublime in its majesty and simplicity. It could not have come from any pagan origin. Its atmosphere is altogether different from the atmosphere that always clings to myths and legends. The mythological accounts of creation contain broken fragments of a primitive revelation of which the Genesis account has unmistakable marks. It is not a scientific account; it transcends science. It is not opposed to science; it is thoroughly consistent with everything which scientific investigation has been able to discover about the origin and formation of the world. The final word of physical science today declares radiation to be the ultimate form of matter and light to be the highest form of radiation. The Bible revealed this secret ages ago. The first act of the divine will in creative energy is set forth in the Biblical account in these words: "And God said, Let there be light."

But this chapter in Genesis is not so much an account of the creation as a revelation of the Creator. Its purpose is not to give information as to the way the

world was made, but rather to reveal God at work in the making of the world. The story is told in pictorial form. The events of creation are described as if they were seen by an observer on the earth while the handiwork of the Creator develops in progressive stages around him. He beholds the progress of the world taking place, not as a process of evolution up an inclined plane, but as a series of steps up a stairway, each brought about by a creative act of God. Each period of creative activity is dominated by a higher grade of life than the preceding period; and each period is also the preparation for a still further advance introduced in the one following.

These progressive ages of creation are each marked by a crisis, or a culmination of its own particular form of life. They are represented as "days," each with an evening and a morning, each beginning in the dimness of obscurity and dawning into the manifestation of full maturity. Thus through successive and progressive ages did God carry on His work of making the heavens and the earth, until man appeared as the crown of the creation, with a spiritual nature linking him with God Himself. The heavens and the earth are thus brought into view at the beginning of the Bible as the stage upon which man's spiritual development is to be wrought out.

This story of creation properly introduces the revelation of redemption which is the theme of the Bible. It is the true basis of religious faith and the ground of our assurance when we put our trust in God. It means that there is nothing in the universe that exists independently of Him, nothing that is beyond His

sovereign power. We can say with the psalmist, "My help cometh from Jehovah, who made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:2). The story also indicates the way in which the physical world is regarded throughout the Bible. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1).

The inspired writers do not present us with a scientific view of the world, but with a view which transcends all science, and which always remains true, it matters not what scientific theory may hold the field for the time being. They always described the world as they saw it, as men of common sense do when they look out upon it; but when they proceeded to explain the phenomena of the world they swept all second causes by and went straight to the center of things. They attributed all the operations of nature to the direct activity of God. In what we call the laws of nature they saw God in action; and they knew no need for separating His activity in the natural world from His activity in the moral and spiritual order.

The story of the moral and spiritual progress of the world begins in the second chapter of Genesis with another account of the creation of man. It is not contradictory to the first account, but supplementary. It does not deal with the world as a whole, but only with that part of it where man appeared. In the first chapter man comes at the end, as the crowning work of the creation and as God's final purpose in the natural world. In the second chapter man comes at the beginning, as the starting point of human history and as the preparation for a new creation to be dominated by the spiritual. The fall intervened to mar the first

creation, but it did not frustrate the purpose of God.

The redemption of Christ is not a piece of patchwork, introduced after sin entered the world, but part of God's eternal purpose; for "he chose us in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). The redeeming activity of God moves through the Old Testament towards a time when "all the earth shall be filled with the glory of Jehovah" (Num. 14:21). The psalmist who sang of the works of God in creation looked forward to such a time: "Let the glory of Jehovah endure for ever. . . . Let sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more." (Ps. 104:31-35.) Isaiah foresaw a redeemed world in which they should not hurt nor destroy, and a time when the earth should be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9).

The Old Testament reveals the sovereign purpose of God in the history of the world moving towards this consummation. Here we find the true philosophy of history. The Creator of the world is also the Moral Governor of the world. His providential rule over the human race includes the exercise of His sovereign power over the material creation. The nations of the world and the forces of nature are both alike instruments in His hands for the carrying out of His will. The Lord God of the Old Testament is omnipotent everywhere. "Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all" (Ps. 103:19). "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations" (Ps. 145:13). "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are accounted as the small dust of the

balance; behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing" (Isa. 40:15). "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth" (Dan. 4:35).

The procedure of His providential rule is represented as working towards the ultimate consummation of His Kingdom, not in a course of unbroken progress, but in a series of stages marked by crises of judgment. These judgments are described as acts of God in which He uses for His purpose the forces of nature and the nations of the world indiscriminately. The flood of Noah's time, the overthrow of the cities of the plain, the destruction of the Canaanites, the captivities of Israel and Judah, are recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures not merely as historical events; they are all set forth as having a special relation to the moral and spiritual purposes of God. Through such events as these the righteousness of God was manifested in the realm in which He rules; the righteous were saved and the wicked were given over to destruction. They were signs and warnings that the ultimate end of God's rule is the banishment of sin and the establishment of righteousness.

The devout saints of the Old Testament dispensation saw God at work in these acts of judgment, and regarded them as necessary steps in His redemptive process. "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Jehovah, have we waited for thee," they cried; "yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee earnestly: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:8-9).

According to the Prophets all these temporary judg-

ments foreshadowed a final judgment in a period which they called "the day of Jehovah." This was to be the final consummation of the Messianic salvation towards which they were always pointing. It would humble the pride of man and magnify the Lord. "The lofty looks of man shall be brought low, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day" (Isa. 2:11). But it would also be the crowning day of salvation for the righteous people of the Lord. "The Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the reproach of his people will he take away from off all the earth." And then they would sing: "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is Jehovah; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isa. 25:8-9).

This blissful outlook of Messianic prophecy is more fully described in the closing chapters of the Book of Isaiah. There it is represented as a complete new creation of the world, with the redeemed people of God rejoicing in the midst of it, and He Himself rejoicing in them. "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and there shall be heard in her no more the voice of weeping and the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die a hundred years old." (Isa. 65:17-20.)

II

In the course of our Lord's teaching about the Kingdom, He pointed forward to a time when it should come to a consummation. It was "at hand" in His day, and would be inaugurated by the coming of the Holy Spirit immediately after His departure; but there was a period of time beyond that when it was to be manifested in its real glory. He usually spoke of this period as "the end of the world," or "the consummation of the age" (Matt. 13:39-40; 28:20); but on one occasion He called it "the regeneration."

After the rich young man, who was seeking eternal life but had great possessions in this world which he would not give up for that, had turned away from Jesus, and after Jesus had pointed out to the disciples how impossible it was for men who set their hearts on the wealth of this present world to enter into the Kingdom of God, Peter, taking up the Master's words and speaking for the whole apostolic band, asked of Him the question: "Lo, we have left all, and followed thee; what then shall we have?" The reply of Jesus was the revelation of a glorious future for all His true disciples. "Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life." (Matt. 19:28-29.)

These words, taken in their context and in the light of the Lord's other teaching about the Kingdom, mean that the glory of the Kingdom does not belong to the present order of the world, but to a new creation. The Kingdom exists in the world today in the form of the new spiritual order which began with Pentecost. It exerts a beneficent and purifying influence upon the present system of human society wherever it is proclaimed, acting as salt and light; but it does not dominate the world anywhere. Those who belong to it often suffer loss, having "left" something for Christ's sake. It is a preparation, however, for another age when the spiritual order shall carry the material order triumphantly with it.

Then there shall be a "regeneration" of the old world order; all things will be made new. Then the true glory of Christ's power will be seen. Then those who have followed Him in this world and have sacrificed their own interests in it for His sake will share with Him the triumph of His reign. Then a new "day" of God's creative activity will dawn, and the "evening" of the Kingdom of Heaven will pass into the "morning" of its full manifestation.

The parables of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, in which Jesus described what He called "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," all set forth a condition of things which was to come to a head sometime. It would not go on indefinitely. The wheat and the tares would mature together, "until the harvest"; the leaven would work in the meal, "till it was all leavened"; the net cast into the sea and gathering of every kind would be drawn up on the beach at last. Obviously the

Lord thought of the new spiritual and heavenly order which He was preparing to establish in the world as moving towards a consummation.

Later on in His ministry this consummation was associated with another Coming. He had said nothing about this event before the announcement of His death and Resurrection. To speak of His coming again to the disciples before telling them of His departure from the world would have been unintelligible to them. But after that He made many a reference to it, and it is reflected again and again in the parables He spoke during the later part of His ministry. The nobleman who gave a pound to each of his ten servants when he went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return, said to them, "Trade ye herewith till I come" (Luke 19:13). The man who delivered the talents to his servants on going into another country, after a long time "cometh and maketh a reckoning with them" (Matt. 25:19). The midnight cry that awoke the ten virgins was, "Behold the bridegroom! come ye forth to meet him" (Matt. 25:6).

And at the end of all the parables we have the Lord's graphic description of His own final court of judgment, beginning with this statement about His Coming: "But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory" (Matt. 25:31). The scene which He pictures in the verses that follow is no arbitrary act of judgment, but is based upon the principles which He had already laid down in the Sermon on the Mount. It sets forth in symbolic language the consummation of those moral and spiritual powers that

are operating in the present order of the Kingdom and in the present Christian age.

During His trial before the Jewish council, when He was challenged by the high priest to tell them whether He was the Christ, the Son of God, He acknowledged the claim in terms which meant that though His present appearance seemed to belie it—He was a prisoner in their hands—yet they should ultimately see it triumphantly vindicated. "Thou hast said," He declared, "nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64).

These references to His return from heaven are not apocalyptic elements in the teaching of Jesus. The Jewish apocalyptic literature of the time was largely due to a misunderstanding of Messianic prophecy. It had lost sight of the redeeming purpose of God and looked for heavenly aid merely for national and secular purposes. It had no conception of a new creation. The teaching of Jesus, on the other hand, pointed forward to the true fulfilment of Messianic prophecy. By His coming in humiliation He did something which made redemption an eternal fact, and laid the foundation of the Kingdom of God in the unseen spiritual order which underlies the present visible creation. He established its principles in the powers of the heavenly world. These are the powers which were released on the Day of Pentecost and brought the Christian system into being and are now in operation in the Christian Church.

But they are not yet triumphant in this present world; they are "the powers of the age to come" (Heb.

6:5). Their triumph awaits His Coming in glory to inaugurate that age, when new springs of spiritual energy will be released from that heavenly world where now He sits "at the right hand of Power." Then the spiritual order will emerge from its obscurity to dominate the material order of the world and make of it a new creation.

In the meantime the Lord has left His Church with the task of proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom to all mankind as a witness to those invisible spiritual forces which alone have the power to regenerate the world. In the course of the answer which He gave to the question of the disciples, "What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?" (Matt. 24:3), He laid down only one condition on which the event was to depend, and it was this: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come" (v. 14).

When He embodied this missionary principle in the last command He gave to the disciples before His Ascension, He followed it with this promise: "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). It is evident that in the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ "the end of the world," or the heading up of the present Christian age, was to coincide with the Church's fulfilment of its world-wide missionary commission. Not until that task is accomplished, therefore, is that consummation to be expected which is to bring the Kingdom of God into visible and triumphant manifestation on the stage of human history.

III

The outlook of the New Testament Church was the hope of a new creation. It was involved in the very nature of the Gospel. Paul describes the essential nature of the Gospel as "this mystery . . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). The new creation in the heart means ultimately a new creation in the world. This is the true Christian "hope." The word has been emptied today of the meaning it had among the early Christians. It has come to be a vague desire for something better, or a general expectation that somehow things will turn out well. The hope of the early Church was no such shallow optimism. It was the light that shone from the central fact of the Gospel itself and cast its sacred glow over all life and all time, the future as well as the present and the past. The redeeming grace of the sovereign God must have a triumphant manifestation sometime. Paul sums up the whole Christian attitude in these words: "The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world: looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13).

It is quite clear from the New Testament records that the change which the Gospel made in the lives of those who received it first from the Apostles carried with it this expectant attitude. The conversion of the Thessalonians is described as their turning from idols

unto God, not only to serve Him, but "to wait for his Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1:10). The Corinthians, who were very active in the exercise of spiritual gifts, were also "waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:7). To the Galatians Paul wrote, "We through the Spirit by faith wait for the hope of righteousness" (Gal. 5:5); and to the Philipians, "Our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20). This expectation of the Lord's return from heaven, which filled the horizon of the early Christians, was not due to apocalyptic conceptions becoming attached to the Gospel message; it was due to their clear understanding of the essential significance of that message.

There is no indication anywhere in the New Testament that the early Christians entertained the idea of a chart of things to come as a result of the teaching of the Lord and His Apostles about His Coming. They did not attempt to draw out the prophetic Scriptures in a program of events lying flat on the map of time. They did not regard prophecy as history written beforehand. It is true that Jesus had spoken of the signs of His Coming; but these were in the nature of guideposts along the way, marking the path down which the purpose of God was moving towards this consummation. On another occasion the Lord warned the Apostles that the Father had set the times and seasons within His own authority; that is, that in carrying out His purposes declared through the Prophets He had not limited Himself to any date or committed Himself to any program (Acts 1:7).

Prophecy was not intended to provide us with a chart of time or a program of the future. It has a higher and a nobler end. It is a revelation, rather, of the mind of the living God whereby we may recognize and understand His sovereign purpose as it moves along the path of human history. It is a light shining in a dark place until the day dawn (2 Pet. 1:19).

A true reading of the Epistles in the light of the New Testament history does not give the impression that the Christians of those days expected the event immediately, or counted on the Lord's Coming to take place in their own lifetime. Paul had a large commission to fulfill when he was sent forth "far hence unto the Gentiles" (Acts 22:21), and he had the whole Roman Empire in his program. Peter knew that he was to become an old man and then die by martyrdom (John 21:18-19). Obviously the Coming of Christ could not take place during his lifetime; and yet his letters are all aglow with the glorious hope.

When the early Christians spoke of the Lord as being "at hand," it was not the future they were thinking of so much as the unseen world into which He had gone. In their attitude towards His return they were not looking into the future along the level of time and expecting the event to be thrown up by the revolving wheels of human history; they were looking into the unseen and standing face to face with the heavenly order. The event lay in the future, of course, but its springs were within the veil. These would be found not in the world of the old creation, but in the world of eternal realities where their Master was seated on the Throne. He would come "on the clouds

of heaven," not on the events of time. As the Apostles had been told when He was received up from them into heaven, He would "so come in like manner" (Acts 1:11), breaking out from that unseen world in another supernatural interposition to carry His redeeming purpose to its goal and to bring His new creation to its triumphant issue.

IV

The Scriptures present a sublime view of God's great design in the creation. They place the redemption of the whole world at the consummation of the divine movement of grace towards fallen man. The will of God moves with one consistent purpose through all the ages, and the whole Bible bears witness to it. The Christian Gospel contains the germ of the whole movement; it announces the principle of the regeneration of the world.

The Apostle Peter, preaching to the Jews soon after Pentecost, appealed to them to repent of their sin of rejecting Christ, that His return from heaven might take place and God's final purpose be realized; and this he went on to describe as, "the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old" (Acts 3:19-21). The Apostle Paul in his later Epistles wrote of the purpose of God moving on, according to His good pleasure, "unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth" (Eph. 1:9-10). In all things Christ was to have the pre-

eminence. "For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens" (Col. 1:19-20).

"Having made peace through the blood of his cross." These words are planted by the Apostle in the very heart of the Colossian passage with profound significance. The one secret of the final glory is the fact of the Cross. The Gospel which the Apostles preached, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," means far more than the salvation of men. The death of Christ was a cosmic event. Its influence extends to the limits of the creation of God through the moral and spiritual order which underlies it everywhere. It means the reconciling of the universe—"all things"—unto God, and the ultimate subjection of all created wills to the uncreated Will. The victory which Christ won upon the Cross is to bring into final harmony with the sovereign will of the Lord God, not only individual human life, but also the corporate life of the human race and the whole system of things included in the creation of the heavens and the earth.

For the fact of the Cross implies the principle of the Cross. The Cross carries with it the Resurrection and Christ's ascent to the Throne of the universe as the Head of the new creation. It means the continual forthputting of His power, who "must reign till he hath put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:25). This is the principle by which He reigns, and it is the secret of the new creation everywhere. The new birth

of the world can take place only in the way the new birth of the soul takes place. "If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation." His new birth takes place when he surrenders his old life of self-will and self-interest and turns in faith to the Christ of the Cross, who at once comes into his heart with the supernatural power of His own risen life. This is the only way any one can share in the heavenly power of the Ascended Lord in a moral world.

When men are willing to surrender their corporate life of self-will and self-interest, whether social, economic or national, and turn in faith to Christ as the true Head of the race and of all its corporate life, then shall He come again as He came at Pentecost, with new and larger manifestations of His heavenly power. Then there shall come what Peter calls "seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3: 19), new endowments of divine grace for the corporate life of men and nations.

This is the one principle of the Kingdom of Christ. This is the true manifestation of the glory of His power. This is His own method of bringing every creature into subjection to His Father's will. The Lord Jesus Christ went to the Cross in order that He might lead men to do the will of God on earth in the way the will of God is done in heaven. This is the only way it can be done anywhere to the glory of God the Father. In the end, when the consummation comes, when all things have been put in subjection under His feet, when the will of man has been made the will of God, then, declares His great Apostle, "he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have

abolished all rule and all authority and power that God may be all in all." (1 Cor. 15:24-28.)

In the meantime He has entrusted His Church with the Evangel. It is the mission of the Church to declare to the whole world the good news that the Son of God, the Saviour of men, has been here, that He has laid the foundation of the Kingdom of God upon the earth, that He has made peace through the blood of His Cross. Christianity's business is so to proclaim the Gospel of His Kingdom and so to exemplify the meaning of His Cross, be the cost what it may, that the way may be prepared in all the world for the divine event which is to bring His redeeming work to its glorious issue in the new creation.

EPILOGUE

THE progress of the Christian message through the centuries since the days of the Apostles has been like the river of healing and life-giving waters which the Prophet Ezekiel saw flowing from the temple during his great symbolic vision (Ezek. 47:1-5). The waters issued out of the sanctuary in a single stream, which at first was very shallow. But as the stream flowed on the waters rose and grew deeper down their course. At the distance of a thousand cubits they were "waters that were to the ankles." At succeeding points, a thousand cubits farther on in each case, they were "waters that were to the knees," then "waters that were to the loins," and finally "waters to swim in." And yet no tributary waters had been received. Evidently the power of the river to rise and expand as it flowed on down between its banks was in the waters themselves, which came out of the inner sanctuary. The whole river was implicit in its source.

So has it been with Christianity. The Gospel message of divine redemption for the world is all contained in the New Testament, but its vast and varied meaning was not realized all at once. Only as the Church developed through the ages, and only as she met the changes in the world around her in the course of history, did she learn from time to time more of

the depth and fulness of her own message. Her message was adapted to the needs of succeeding times, not by borrowing elements from other religious systems or from the world of thought, but by drawing out of her own treasure things new and old. Church history has been marked by many revivals of Christian experience and many expansions of Christian thought; but none of these has been due to tributary streams coming in to be absorbed by the Christian system. In every case the waters of the original river have risen themselves. All that is true Christianity lies in its New Testament source, and all that Christianity needs in any age is a rediscovery of its own resources.

When the stream of Christian history issues from the New Testament into the post-apostolic age it appears to be very shallow. There is little evidence that the Church of that period had a proper understanding of the teaching of Paul's Epistles or an adequate appreciation of the scope of the Gospel. She realized, however, the essential significance of the Gospel, for she possessed the sense of a great salvation which had been secured by Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the living God.

The Christians of those days had a very simple creed, and they made it very practical. It was adequate for the conditions of their own time. Christianity to them was not a doctrinal system, but the way of life amidst the ways of death, and the way of light amidst the ways of darkness. They explained the way of life and light in terms of the Sermon on the Mount, and they exemplified it in the manner of their own

lives, which stood out in striking contrast with the moral corruption around them. They might not think profoundly, but they could live purely. They might not understand the meaning of the Cross, but they could die for Christ. The Church of that period carried the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with patient endurance through more than two centuries of fierce persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire, and triumphed in the end. The waters of the river rose to meet the banks on either side.

In the next age Christianity had to meet another situation. Currents of thought from Greek philosophy and Oriental mysticism were playing upon the Christian message, and threatened to modify and weaken it. The Christian Church, now set free from persecution, was compelled to think more deeply into her message. Led by the saintly and indomitable Athanasius through half a century of theological conflict, she came at last to see clearly the true nature of Him whom she had always confessed to be her Saviour. He could be none other than the unbeginning and uncreated Son of the Father, very God Himself.

Soon after that the powerful mind of the great Augustine brought out the deeper teaching of the Apostle Paul about human sin and divine grace as had never been done before. His own experience had taught him the hopeless impotence of human nature on the one hand and the sovereign power of redeeming grace on the other. Since his day Christian theology has recognized the central element in the Gospel to be the approach of the sovereign God with His saving grace towards man in his fallen and sinful state.

Christianity was then about to enter the long night which followed the collapse of the Roman Empire, and for more than a thousand years no new light was shed on the nature of the Christian message. The medieval Church almost lost the Gospel altogether. And yet through all those ages of spiritual darkness, religious superstition, and ignorance of the Word of God, this central truth was never completely forgotten that man's salvation was somehow a great gift of grace on the part of God.

But the grace of God, to be fully realized, needs to be received by the faith of man. The rediscovery of this aspect of the Gospel led to the greatest spiritual revival in the history of the Church. The Protestant Reformation was not due to the intellectual awakening in Europe which preceded it, but to something far more vital which came out of Christianity itself. It was due to a fresh experience of divine grace and a new application of the Gospel message. As it was a personal spiritual experience which led Augustine to his discovery of salvation by grace, so it was a personal spiritual experience which led Luther to his discovery of the corresponding truth of justification by faith. In both cases the discovery was made at the original source of the stream, in the Scriptures of the New Testament. The Reformation absorbed what it found of value in the enlightenment of the time, and then proceeded to expand the Christian message into doctrinal systems adapted to the special needs of the new churches which it had created. The waters of the river rose again to meet the banks through which they flowed.

But the Reformation movement stopped before its work was accomplished. Nearly two centuries passed before it dawned upon the Church that intellectual orthodoxy is not spiritual vitality, and that Christianity is practical and not theoretical. The first to see this clearly was Philip Spener, the founder of German Pietism. The Bible Class movement which he originated gave a new lead to Protestant Christianity. It sent men and women back to the Word of God and to the living springs of spiritual life. It gave birth at once to Christian philanthropy and practical evangelism. Its vitalizing influences spread to other lands. From that one fountainhead sprang the main evangelistic and missionary movements of the modern Church, and these finally became world-wide. When the Gospel message of the grace of God was received with a larger faith and a fuller obedience, and with surrender of life to the will of God, then the waters of the river rose and became "waters to swim in."

All through its history Christianity has proved equal to the changing needs of the world. Its divine resources have always been available to the faith of men. They have been released and administered by the Spirit of God in the measure with which faith has appropriated them. Christianity is still equal to the needs of the world; but the needs of today demand a larger faith in the Christian message and a fuller reliance upon the living Christ on the part of those who call themselves Christians.

The witness of the Gospel since the Day of Pentecost, under all sorts of circumstances and in all parts of the world, has shown conclusively that the powers

of the Kingdom of Heaven operate wherever life is surrendered to the Lord Jesus Christ. When any individual surrenders his personal life to Christ in true repentance and faith, He establishes His Kingdom in that life. By the same Christian principle, when groups of men in corporate fellowship will surrender to Christ in true corporate repentance and faith, He will establish His Kingdom in their corporate life. This is the fundamental principle of the body of Christ. There is no other principle by which He can establish His Kingdom in the world. For this the King waits. When Christian men will so trust the living Christ of Calvary that they will dare to take this step, then we may expect such a manifestation of the glory of His power as shall bring His Kingdom to its triumphant consummation on the earth.

The prayer of the Church for the coming of the Kingdom has never been put in nobler form than in these words of Milton's, which occur in his *Animadversions upon the Remonstrant's Defence against Smectymnuus*, and might have been written for today:

"The times and the seasons pass along under Thy feet to come and go at Thy bidding. . . . The power of Thy grace is not passed away with the primitive times as fond and faithless men imagine, but Thy Kingdom is now at hand, and Thou standing at the door. Come forth out of Thy royal chambers, O Prince of all the kings of the earth! put on the visible robes of Thy imperial majesty, take up that unlimited sceptre which Thy Almighty Father hath bequeathed Thee; for now the voice of Thy bride calls Thee, and all creatures sigh to be renewed."

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