



the
Golden
Candlestick

BORN FROM ABOVE

Part 2

T. Austin-Sparks

Volume 201

THE EARTHLY MAN AS HE COMES INTO THE REALM OF HEAVENLY THINGS

Reading: John 3:3,6,8,10-13; 1 Cor. 2:7-16: 3:1-4

When we were opening the matter which the Lord has laid on our hearts for this time, one of our remarks was that the whole of the New Testament is concerned with the superseding of the earthly man by the heavenly Man, and we have been proceeding to see something of how true that is. I could enlarge that and say that the same is true of the Old Testament, bringing the whole Bible into line with that — the superseding of the earthly man by the heavenly, the displacing of the one in the interests of the other. We have also seen how the letter to the Romans fits right into the third chapter of John at the point marked by verses 14-21. We have seen how the two men, Nicodemus, representative of the earthly man, and Jesus, the Son of man, facing each other, had nothing whatever in common, but were looking at each other across a great divide, and then how the cross is introduced, and in the mystery of identification they both go down into death, the one earthly man is left forever behind in the grave, so far as God's view is concerned; the other, the heavenly Man, is raised and goes on eternally. That is the letter to the Romans, the focal point of which is chapter 6.

The earthly man and the spiritual man found in the individual Christian

Now it is very easy for us to see from the passages which we have read from John 3 and 1 Corinthians, how this first letter to the Corinthians fits right into that third chapter of John. The first statement, "Ye must be born from above", that defined as being born of the Spirit, the nature of that is said to be spiritual — "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" — and the tremendous impossibilities connected with the earthly man removed when born of the Spirit, and far reaches and ranges of divine thought and intention are immediately opened up, and that is all marked so clearly for us here in this letter to the Corinthians. We are immediately in the presence of two men when we open this letter: the carnal or natural man, and the spiritual man. Now it is not two men outside of Christ. The two men occupy one body. It is Christians, but divided Christians. I am not speaking of Christians in the plural, but Christians individually. Divided Christians are creating a divided condition outside. The fact is that there is a

schism here, a division, in the Christian. The two are found in a place which is altogether contrary to God's intention; carnality on the one side, and spirituality on the other. The carnal man bringing arrest upon the spiritual man; the spiritual man finding himself unable to go on, under strict and severe limitations because of the carnal man alongside of him. This whole letter proceeds to show how these two are opposed to one another, and how impossible a situation it is for them to coexist.

The earthly man's standard of values

(a) In regard to wisdom

What the letter really amounts to is just this. It says in effect, the born from above man must not follow the earthly man, must not try to go on hand in hand with the earthly man. The letter is almost entirely full of the earthliness of this carnal man, but over against him, shadowing him, is the spiritual man. We find earthliness here in Christians in three categories, earthly standards. The question of wisdom is a perfectly and purely earthly standard with these Corinthians. They are regarding, as the thing of importance, the supreme thing, the wisdom of this world. Their attitude is that if you are endowed with this world's wisdom in any extra sense and fulness, that constitutes you somebody of importance, it is that that makes you important.

(b) In regard to people

And then there is another aspect of their earthly standards. They look at people and judge people entirely from the earthly standpoint. If you are somebody as a person on this earth to take account of in a natural way, even though you might be a very spiritual person, your spirituality gives you some influence and some standing, and therefore your spirituality is misunderstood and misinterpreted, and you are made something important naturally by your very spirituality, so subtle is this earthly man. That of course is borne out by the way they looked at apostles. One said, "I am of Paul." Why did they say, "I am of Paul"? They judged him naturally. Paul had endowments, spiritual values, spiritual measure, spiritual influence; Paul was a spiritual factor, but they did not say, it is the spirituality of Paul that makes Paul what he is. They said, Paul himself is an important person, is someone to take account of. They missed the spiritual meaning, and just made something of the man, did violence to that which made him the influence that he was. Others said, "I am of Apollos". Apollos had certain qualifications and qualities of which we know. He was mighty in the Scriptures, he was an eloquent man (Acts 18:24-25). He could reason and argue and out-argue, and that appealed to the

earthly side of these people, and they judged Apollos purely from the earthly standards. Others said, “I am of Peter”; the same standard of judgment, not their spirituality as accounting for what they were, but simply the fact that they were something, and that is the thing that matters, that you are something, not that you are spiritual. How carnal that is, how earthly that is. That is done a very great deal. People are looked at superficially concerning their standing, their influence, their value, and the person is made something of simply because of the position they hold, and not how they got there, what it cost, all the travail and anguish and crucifixion of self that gave them that position before God.

Of course, the only outcome of viewing things in that earthly way, from that standard of earthly values, was divisions. “Are ye not as men?”, earthly men. When you say these things, that is just men, not the heavenly Man, by any means, but the earthly man. I shall come back there again, perhaps, before we are finished.

(c) In regard to behaviour

The second category of earthly things here in this letter is that of earthly behaviour. Oh, the conduct, the behaviour, of these people as it is set forth in this letter, is terrible and shameful. Disclosure, license, lawsuits, legality, the Lord’s table; earthly behaviour in all directions and connections, shameful behaviour, the earthly man in the church.

(d) In regard to ‘spirituality’

Thirdly — I am going to use a phrase which will sound strange, certainly sound like a contradiction in terms — earthly ‘spirituality’, There is a lot of it about. That is, pulling heavenly things down on to earth. These people gloried in spiritual gifts. Paul says they were spiritual gifts. The Lord gave them from heaven, but these people, because of their earthly position, pulled them right down from their heavenly realm and made them earthly and gloried in them as things for bringing men into prominence, for bringing gratification to the natural, the soul-life of man. It is nice to see these extraordinary things at work. Tongues is extraordinary, supernatural, out of the usual but if it is made something in itself it will not be long before there is fanaticism. Fanaticism is not of heaven; it is devilish and it destroys the church. Earthly ‘spirituality’. I could dwell a long time upon that in its many and various forms. I am simply indicating that in this letter we have on the one hand the presentation of the earthly man as he comes into the realm of heavenly things and disturbs the balance, upsets everything and creates a situation which is a violation of the very nature of things heavenly and a contradiction to that which is born of the Spirit.

The oneness of the heavenly man

What the Holy Spirit is saying through the apostle in this letter is that a heavenly Man will not do these things. None of these things will be characteristic of a heavenly man. Take as an example this matter of divisions. Paul says here, or the Spirit through Paul, says here, This is carnal, this is natural, this is earthly. “As men”. These divisions are the earthly man aspect of things. “I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal ... do ye not walk after the manner of men?” (1 Cor. 3:1-3). It is not forbidden that we should, in the perfectly human sense, be men. The Lord does not want us disembodied spirits. That is not what is here, but when He speaks about being as men, He means this earthly man, and you are forbidden to be that, and He says that divisions among the Lord’s people are a disclosure of the fact of the earthliness of the Lord’s people, and He sets over against that the heavenly Man, and he gets to chapter 12 — one body, one Spirit, and the complete interrelatedness of all the members of the body, and here, in answer to these divisions, he asks, “Is Christ divided?” The heavenly Man is not divided, and the expression of the heavenly Man is the church as one body, and he comes back with that to the Lord’s table. “The loaf which we break, is it not our *communion*, our participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16). “One bread, one body”. This is the heavenly Man, and there is no division in the heavenly Man, all divisions belong to earthliness, they are characteristic of earthliness, they are signs of earthliness, and there have been many things said and written about division and union, all with a view to try and bring about something more of Christian unity. Sometimes it is made a matter of essential doctrine, that we will cease to be divided by non-essentials, and we will take our common ground united upon doctrinal essentials. Sometimes it is the appeal to John 17, “That they may be one, even as we are one”, the great prayer for oneness of the Lord. Sometimes that is made the ground of the appeal for oneness. There are other things that I could mention which have been set forth as the basis of Christian unity. Now they may not be all wrong. Do not think I am taking a superior position and saying I have higher ground than that. But what I do come to here is this in the New Testament. The place at which divisions among Christians is most openly shown links those divisions entirely with the earthliness of Christians, and over against that shows quite clearly that in the heavenly Man those divisions do not exist and cannot exist. Therefore it is only as Christians take heavenly ground, the ground of the heavenly Man and are conformed to the heavenly Man that such divisions will cease to affect them. That is what is here. It is a matter that we should take careful note of, this whole matter of divisions and schisms, among Christians.

As we have said before, the object of John is to bring in the heavenly

Man, and show how he supersedes and supplants the earthly man, and, ignoring chapter divisions, see the gospel as one thing, and move on to that point which is marked by chapter 17, “These things spake Jesus; and lifting up his eyes *to heaven*, he said, Father, the hour is come ... glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (v.1-5). The setting of that prayer is in eternity, outside of time. And then on through the prayer, how often “they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world”, “I am not of the world”, “the men whom thou gavest me out of the world”, “not of the world”, “out of the world”, “I am not of the world”. The setting is outside of time, and outside of the world, and you have to see that unity, “that they may be one” requires that setting, and you will never have it while men are earthly in their standards of judgment, in their conduct, in their ‘spirituality’. A vast amount of the Christianity today is earthly; it is according to the standards of men. The prayer of the Lord Jesus can only possibly be answered and fulfilled as the Lord’s people become a heavenly people, and He says quite clearly that that does not mean that you literally have to leave the earth. “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one.” “They are not of the world.” It is not a literal leaving of the world. No, it is a spiritual and inward detachment, separation, from the standards of this world as actuating and governing the minds, the ideas, the conceptions, of Christian people. You come down to earth, and you can extend — I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Peter, I am of Wesley. How many people can you mention by name? This all belongs to the same realm; it is earthly.

The measure of Christ in Christians the measure of unity

The only possible way of dealing with this matter is to take the ground of Christ in heaven, and, as Paul says in the second letter, “We henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh ...” — and the Corinthians did that. “I am of Christ”, making Christ a part of it. “Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more” (2 Cor. 5:16). We know Christ after the Spirit, the heavenly Man, and our attitude towards all Christians is of that kind. We have knowledge of one another in so far as Christ is present in one another. It is the measure of Christ that creates unity. We go on just so far as Christ is dominant and pre-eminent and ascendant. When we cease to be Christ, or when it ceases to be Christ, and we begin to take up something else, we cannot go any further. We say, I go with you so long as we meet the Lord in one another, but if you are going down that lane, we cannot go any further.

Disunity among Christians a victory for Satan

But remember, this is a tremendous challenge, this whole question of spiritual oneness and unity, if you are concerned about it at all, and so much depends upon it. Do remember that the soul of man is the playground of Satan. It is not just that Christians are divided. It is that Satan has got what he is after. He is in that way neutralising the very object for which Christ died. “By this shall all men know” (John 13:35). You must remember that it will be a body in perfect oneness which at the end will oust the whole hierarchy of Satan from the heavens, and division among the Lord’s people is Satan’s way of postponing that, hindering that, fighting against that, and that division, disunity, is satanic in its source, something more than just misunderstanding. We have so often said these things here, but let me remind you that if Satan can do it simply, he would sooner do it that way, because it does not betray him. If he can just in a simple way bring division between some of the Lord’s people so that they are really able to put it down to simple causes and say, There is nothing very satanic about that, it is simply that — that serves Satan’s end most suitably. He can hide himself behind simple things and upset Christians in their relationships by petty little things which cannot, on the face of it, be said to be a movement of hell. It suits him very much. If he cannot do it simply, he will do it by very much more drastic means, and he will carry this thing higher and higher, so that if it is not possible to bring about division between Christians by simple means behind which he is hidden, that do not manifest the imprint of his mischievous hand, he will go right up to the place where, not being able to do it along those ordinary simple lines, he will carry it into a realm where it is so utterly spiritual that you cannot track it. You only know that something has happened, and between you and another, or between the Lord’s people, something has come about, a strain, a distance. You cannot say it is for this reason or that, you cannot put it down to anything at all. We have not quarrelled; we have not had any kind of misunderstanding; it is not because of this or that. Here it is, somehow or other a strained relatedness, or unrelatedness. Satan will follow it through like that, and create a situation which is altogether unreal and untrue to practical lines of reasoning, but he will do it. Do take this to heart; it is so important. If God’s end is to be reached — that is, conformity to Christ, the fulness of Christ, that Christ shall be all in all, we must lay this to heart.

Earthliness makes for divisions

And so it is necessary for us to get off and get further and further away from earthly ground. The plots of the powers of evil, the divisive spirits, are countless

in this matter. Do you not see that it is so often when the enemy has got the Lord's people tied up with some earthly things that you will soon begin to get quarrels; difficulties arise over the earthly things. Satan will get you involved in some earthly responsibility, some earthly liability, some temporal matters, get you taken up with some matter of machinery and organisation, the earthly side of things, and then difficulties arise, and the thing becomes burdensome and problematic and then you are going to look round for a scapegoat — and it is because So-and-so did this. Blame is going to be attached somewhere. He has got you onto earthly ground, and is going to shatter your unity by getting people involved in earthly things. I am trying to show you that any kind of involvement in the earthly things provides the enemy with a ground for bringing about this thing of discord and strain. We have to be very careful how we allow ourselves to become involved in earthly things, how we take up earthly things as Christians. There may be some snare, some snag, in it. The enemy is presently going to bring about some trouble along that line. Simplicity of life, so far as this world is concerned, is the safest way.

Well, this is all within the compass of this letter to the Corinthians. Here is somebody who has some property. Another Christian is also involved, and here is this earthly business affair of this world. One of these people defaults in some way, or asserts some self-interest. The other Christian goes to law. Paul says, "Brother goeth to law with brother, and that before unbelievers" (1 Cor. 6:6). That is an extreme case, but it illustrates what I mean. Christians involved in something, then misunderstanding or personal interest arising in some way, and then proceeding to get your rights secured unto you. It does not matter about the church, it does not matter about the Name of the Lord, you must have your rights established. The church can be split from top to bottom.

The need to keep on heavenly ground

The Lord Jesus, the heavenly Man, never allowed Himself for one moment to become involved in things on this earth. He lived an extremely simple life. It saves a lot of trouble. I know that may raise some problems for some of you. But I am simply trying to emphasise the point. We must abide on the ground of Christ as He is known after the Spirit as the heavenly Man, as the One who is not down here like other men, if there is going to be this triumph of spiritual life. If we are going to get down here on the level of man, and allow our reactions to people's attitudes and conduct towards us to be the reactions of an earthly man — they give us something, we give them equal or better, in word or in deed — if we are coming down on any level like that, to get even, to be even, to stand for our rights and so on, we are violating the very principle of our new birth, we are

going against our being born from above. The whole New Testament says that, and you will be reproached, but you are not to reproach; you will be slandered, but you are not to answer back. You are not to meet the flesh with the flesh, the earth with the earth. You have to keep your position. Peter said, “If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God” (1 Peter 2:20). Keep on heavenly ground.

Only the heavenly can be spoken to as heavenly

Now I want to gather all this up. There is much more in this letter. But I want to sum it up in this way. The proof of earthliness is found in what the Spirit says and in the fact that He has to say it. The fact that this letter to the Corinthians is composed of what is here is itself a proof of the state of the Corinthians. The Holy Spirit speaks according to what He knows to be the state of things. Ministry in the Holy Spirit will always betray the state of the people. You literally cannot speak of some things in the Holy Spirit among some people. “I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual” (1 Cor. 3:1). In the letter to the Hebrews, you have something similar about Melchizedek — “of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing” (Heb. 5:11). You are not in a state, the writer says, to hear them. Think of what is held back of divine revelation because of a spiritual condition! And here the apostle says — “Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:9,10). “And I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual” — there was limitation imposed upon ministry and revelation by the spiritual condition.

On the other hand, is it not a grand thing when the Holy Spirit is free to give in fulness with no restraint and the deep things of God can all come out. It shows that there is a state ready, there is an opportunity presented. The very fact that this letter has in it what it has in it betrays the state of this people. How the Lord speaks, that He has to say things like this, just shows what the people are like. Take, for instance, one point. This letter is full of it. Take 1 Corinthians 13, the great classic on Love. There is nothing like it on love in all the Bible, not because these people were so loving that the Lord could speak to them like that about love, but because they were so unloving. He had to set over against their spiritual condition something which contrasted with their spiritual state. He has to speak like this, and anybody would go down before this revelation of love. Break it up, and everyone of us would have to go down on our knees and say, That finds me out! “Love suffereth long, and is kind.” That is not Corinth, in

the light of all that has been said up to this point. “Suffereth long”. But you go to law against one another. “Love envieth not ... is not puffed up” by worldly wisdom. “Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own.” Any of those fragments will find anyone out, but how it will find out the Corinthians!

Turn over to the letters to the Thessalonians, and what have you there? “The love of each one of you all toward one another aboundeth” (2 Thess. 1:3). “We need not to speak anything” (1 Thess. 1:8), everybody is speaking about you, your love aboundeth, is known in all the church. It is a different way of speaking about love, it shows the state of the people. If you can say — Your love aboundeth and everybody knows about it — there is a good state there. If you have to say, “Love envieth not, ... is not puffed up, ... seeketh not its own”, it is disclosing a state.

Christ presented according to need

The form in which Christ is presented is according to opportunity given. That is another axiom, another truth. How is He presented in the first letter to the Corinthians? “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). “The word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness” (1 Cor. 1:18). You know that word “word” there is ‘logos’, not just a part of speech. It is the word that is used by John. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... And the Word became flesh” (John 1:1,14). That is the word Paul used here, the Logos of the cross. Christ is presented as crucified, the cross; and then corporately. There is one body, one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). That is how Christ is presented to Corinthians. That is all the opportunity that they give for the presentation of Christ. He will be presented in other ways to other people. Compare the presentation of Christ to the Colossians. There is nothing in all the Bible to compare with Colossians 1. Or again, Philippians 2. How marvellous the presentation of Christ is. But here it has to be Christ crucified. What an indictment of spiritual condition!

Heavenly revelation calls for heavenly ground

What does this mean? It means this, that if we want all that God would have us have, if we desire to see Christ as God would reveal Him to us, and to give to us all which lies within the compass of those words — “Things which eye saw not, and ear has heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him”, we have to give God opportunity for it, and the only opportunity is to take heavenly ground. You get heavenly revelation if you take heavenly ground; a full glorious presentation

of Christ if you take the ground of Christ, the heavenly Man. It is our position which determines how far we go on, how much the Lord will give us. So let us ask the Lord, Lord, am I proceeding on the ground of man? My way of speaking — is that man’s way of speaking? My way of conduct — is it man’s way of conduct? My reactions to what I meet — is that how man does it? Am I on that low level? Well, I shall not get very far. We have to come at things from above, not from beneath, and if so, then there is no hindrance to going right on. The Lord commits Himself to the heavenly Man as He will not to the earthly. May the Lord explain to us in our hearts!

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CRISIS OF TRANSITION FROM THE EARTHLY TO THE HEAVENLY (ILLUSTRATED BY JACOB)

Reading: 1 Cor. 15:45-49; Gen. 32:9-12, 24-31; 35:9-15; 46:29-30; 50:7,8,10.

We have been occupied with the matter of the displacing of the earthly man to give place to the heavenly Man. I shall say very little, if anything, about what has gone before. This that we have before us is in itself a concise presentation of that very thing.

We read that portion in 1 Cor. 15 “The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is of heaven”, and we noted the statement that there is to be a transition from the one to the other in our case.

Jacob’s life divided into two at Peniel

Now in these verses which we have read from the book of Genesis, putting together these fragments, we have compassed the life of Jacob, and the great transition which took place in that life from Jacob to Israel, from the first man of the earth to the second man of heaven. Jacob’s life is distinctly divided into two — that of Jacob and that of Israel; divided at Jabbok, at Peniel, on that great, eventful, critic night. Jacob represents self-government; Peniel represents self-dethronement; Israel means God-governed. Those three words or phrases sum up the whole of these two sides of life: the earthly man and the heavenly Man, with a great crisis between. We are not dealing with an unsaved man, although what we are going to say can apply to such in some respects. We are dealing in type, figure, with a man of God, the one who stands closely related to divine purpose and the sovereign choice, the sovereign election, the sovereign

grace of God. We have seen from the letters to the Romans and to the Corinthians that there are two sides to the life of a child of God, the Jacob side and the Israel side. There is the side of the earthly man and the side of the heavenly Man with such as are already vitally related to God through sovereign grace and election.

Jacob wanted God's best

I want to be as concise as possible, so, first of all, with what I have just said as the basis, let me point out that Jacob as Jacob was a man or the man who wanted God's best. Whatever you have to say about his character and about his conduct, if you go right inside of Jacob, you find that, misguided as he was, he wanted God's best. That could not be said of his brother Esau who despised God's best. Jacob had this drawing towards God's best. He knew what the birthright signified, for himself, for his posterity. He saw something of the sovereign counsels of God. He had some measure of perception and apprehension of the great purposes of God, and he set himself in the direction of possessing them, entering into them. He wanted God's best. He had some sense, some intimation, that he was called into the great sovereign purpose of God, and into God's promise in connection therewith. That is where we begin with this man. Leaving aside what that purpose was so far as Israel, that is, the nation, was concerned, I think we can begin.

From the beginning Jacob had a sense of purpose

Undoubtedly there are not a few in this gathering who want God's best, who have said so to Him, who at some time or other have glimpsed that God has a great purpose, and that purpose concerns them. They have heard the phrases of the New Testament — "called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28), and they have in their hearts responded and have said, Yes, I want all God's purpose to be realised where my life is concerned, I want to be in the good of the eternal purpose. You have had some sense that God really has the meaning of a great eternal purpose bound up with your life, or your life is bound up with it. I leave it for you to say whether that is so or not in your own heart, but I venture to think it is true. You have had this either presented in a message or through reading the Word, or it has come to you in some way, at some time, that God has a great purpose, that you are somehow included in it, and you have said, I want all that God wants; I want God's best. But that may have been some years ago. While the sense of it still remains, the truth of it abides, this desire has not faded, you are still in that attitude, that position. It is some time back, and you do not seem to be getting there.

Jacob had that experience. At the beginning, God intimated it to him, he knew that it was wrapped up in the birthright. He heard in his dream that night the voice of God above the ladder. He had this, he knew this twenty years ago, and he is not in it yet, it is not maturing, the whole thing is under arrest; there is delay, there is frustration; all that he was led to believe that meant is not coming into experience, something about it is not satisfying, the situation does not answer to expectation, he is not getting there.

Delay in the realisation of the purpose

In John's Gospel, where we are dwelling so much, immediately after we have got past the cross at the end of chapter 3, the Son of man lifted up, and in spiritual meaning the man of earth has been set aside in the cross, the Nicodemus earthly man, frustration and defeat and limitation, hopelessness, he has in figure been taken to the cross of the Son of man, the very next thing is Jacob's well. "He (Jesus) must needs pass through Samaria" (John 4:4). "So he cometh to a city of Samaria, called Sychar ... and Jacob's well was there" (v.5,6). And then you know all that happens at Jacob's well. "Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well?" (v.12) The greater than Jacob is here. "The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life" (v.14). You have heard that, you have read that, you have hoped for that, and you have felt that that is the thing that will answer. If only there is within you the open well springing up, the living water flowing forth from within, that wonderful satisfaction that the woman of Sychar did not know for the first half of her life, but came to know through Him who was greater than Jacob, the true Israel of God. You want that. If only this well within were a reality — but it is delayed, it is deferred, it is under arrest; with all your wistfulness, hope and belief that that is God's purpose; it does not mature. Time goes on, you are not there. Jacob for twenty years tarried between the hope, the expectation, the mental apprehension, the vision, the inward assurance that that was God's will — and the realisation.

Defeat and failure because of self-government

Delay, but more than delay — defeat and failure. Look what occupied the twenty years. Yes, God in a way was blessing, was prospering him in temporal ways, was standing by him in many situations, but there are a lot of things during those twenty years that do not speak of the heavenly Man by any means, do not indicate that Jacob is getting on very well spiritually. The spiritual side of things is very limited, very much held up by delay, defeat,

disappointment, all because it is still Jacob self-governed, the man who is governing his own life and whose interest in heavenly things has a self-ward direction, the man who has his hand upon his own life and wants to realise himself. So he tricks Laban; so he bargains with God. There is, right at the heart of everything, after all, this deeply-rooted, not always perceived, but ever dominant self-direction, self-government, self-interest, wanting spiritual things to bring him somewhere as Jacob, to realise his visions as Jacob — albeit in relation to God. Defeat and failure may be because of this, that which you and I are not prepared to admit or perhaps we cannot see, but it is there. God sees it, God knows it. While the first thing is true, that we are the called according to His purpose and that our lives through sovereign grace have been apprehended by God unto a great heavenly purpose, and there has been a registration in us of our desire to have God's best, delay like this has some reason. There is a reason for it, a cause, an explanation.

The Lord will not commit Himself to Jacob

I hope you are remembering John 2:24,25-3:1: “Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for that He knew all men, and because He needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man. Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus”, and he is one of the men to whom the Lord Jesus will not commit Himself. Are you wondering why the Lord is not committing Himself, why the Lord is so limited in your life, why the Lord is not just going on? He knows what is in man, and He knows the place, the measure, the strength that the self-interest principle has in us, and it is the most dangerous thing to the interests of God. He will not commit Himself to it, for if He did, then our flesh would glory in His presence. There is an explanation, and it is in some way this — Jacob, the government of self, the strength of self.

The Lord precipitates a crisis

Well, what is going to happen? Something has got to happen. This cannot go on indefinitely. You say that this cannot go on indefinitely, this is a contradiction, this raises fundamental questions as to the very truth of all that I have believed and accepted as to whether God is faithful to those who want to be really out and out. We cannot go on like this. It cannot be God who is at fault; we dismiss that. Then it must be me. There are only two parties in this — God and you and me, and this cannot go on. I may only be speaking to some who really do know that something has got to happen or disappointment and tragedy will mark the

life. What is going to happen? Why has God put this word right in our midst? May it not be that God is doing what He did with Jacob? He precipitated the crisis Himself. He said, 'Now is the time, now is the hour, we are going to have a settlement on this matter here and now.' "And there wrestled a man with him" (Gen. 32:24). God precipitated, God took the initiative, and said, 'Now then, we are not going on like this any longer, it is going to happen tonight before the day breaks.' God has taken this step. But Hosea 12:3 tells us it was God who wrestled with Jacob and Jacob came to that conclusion. "I have seen God face to face" (Gen. 32:30). The heavenly Man has come on the scene to deal with the earthly man. "There wrestled a man with him", a heavenly Man. God has come down in the likeness of man to deal with the earthly man, to get rid of him, to put him out of the way, to take his place. Is-ra-el — El is God. God precipitated.

Jacob's positive reaction

But then you know that there are always two sides to a crisis. While God said, in effect, 'The time has come, this has gone on long enough, you have looked for this day, now it has come', Jacob was swift to recognize this was the time, God was on the move, and he came into it, he engaged in this matter with God very definitely. The one thing, if this is your position, that might defeat God's end, even though He may move towards you in this hour, one thing which may make this whole thing abortive may be passivity. Oh, if anything is going to happen, the Lord must do it; I will sit and wait for the Lord to do it all! Passivity may defeat it all. Did not the Lord Jesus say, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence (permitteth of violence), and men of violence take it by force" (Matt. 11:12), indicating that there is another side to this matter. We are not going to inherit anything by works, that is not what is being talked about, but there is this side of coming in with God, taking up the matter with God, recognizing that now is God's time for settling the issue. Jacob entered into, laid hold, said, "I will not let thee go." God said, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." You must understand that God is acting a part. When he asked Jacob his name, do you not think that God knew what his name was? Of course! Why does He say, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." Will this man let Him go? Will He not extend this man to the full, see if he really does mean business, prove that this man is so set upon the blessing, that he will not give it up easily. He has asked for the blessing; will he let it pass, let it go, be put off? God is going to try him right out over this. He prevails with God but not by his strength, not because he is greater than God, and not by sheer force or determination.

Jacob's self-strength touched by God

He prevails with God in this way — by importunity, his refusal to accept less than all that God meant, and he knows God now. So he enters into, he is fully extended, and then, to show that with all his strength and all his determination, that is not the ground on which he is going to be blessed, God touches the sinew of his thigh, and he is a lame, maimed man for the rest of his life. Just a touch of God, and all his strength is gone. Yes, his self-strength is touched at last. There is no virtue in his strength. He has shown God that he means business, but he has not got blessing by his own self-strength. He is touched by the finger of God, and for evermore he is a weakened man and he knows his weakness to his dying day; he went limping for the rest of his life. That will of Jacob's is the will of the earthly man. That will of the flesh, that will of the soul, is broken. That is the point of the trouble. Jacob thought he could do anything by his own strength, his own cunning, wedded to a persistent will; he could have anything, do anything, get anywhere. He is touched in the heart of his self-life, and for evermore that self-life is known to be crippled. That is the focal point of the transition.

Jacob's shattered self-confidence and self-esteem

“What is thy name?”, asks God. Listen! “What is thy name?” Jacob — Supplanter — Trickster. He had to admit, confess, acknowledge what he was by nature. Jacob! I do not think he answered God very jubilantly. He had to come to the place where Esau looms into view and all that Jacob, Supplanter, meant twenty years before where Esau was concerned comes up as a terrible shadow and threat, right into his consciousness. Esau was coming with his four hundred men to greet his brother, but for Jacob it was the most awful prospect because of his awareness that he is Jacob, the Supplanter. There is nothing good about that name. It had to be divulged what he is by nature. “What is thy name?”

Now then, are you a very fine person? What do you think of yourself, what are you going to say about yourself before God, what is your testimony of yourself now in the presence of God? We have to come down to a very low place where our very name, which is our nature, is something we are not a bit proud of. We may have been able to outwit our Labans, we may have been able to do a lot of things successfully in this world, we may have been something among men, but in the presence of God, what are we now? This is the crisis where we are brought to the place where we abhor ourselves, and admit that our name is Jacob. Are you already there? Are you a successful person in this world, in your business, in your profession, in your affairs? You have usually been able to get

what you set your mind on having, been able to wangle it somehow; you never take No as an answer. But now, there is no obtaining by scheming, no getting round things in God's presence. What are we in the presence of God? 'My name is Jacob.' All right, you have come down there, have you? You are broken in your will, broken in your soul-force, humbled, ashamed, knowing that you can never get through to God's best, with all your desire, by any other resource than God Himself. You know that you must die, that Jacob must be buried. You know that there will be marks of an awful crippling upon that soul self-life.

“No more Jacob, but Israel”

If you are there — “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Is-ra-el.” No longer self-governed because self-deposed. Now God has the government of our life. The thing that was a horror to you, the Esau and his four hundred, and all that which you dreaded has turned into a blessing. It has passed, and now under the sovereign hand of God, has turned to your good. You come to Bethel, and you are able to pour out something to the pleasure of God. You were never able to do that before, to bring a drink-offering into the house of the Lord. And then the Lord speaks and says “Be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 35:11). It is a new prospect, heavenly fruitfulness. The well is open, heavenly fruitfulness is possible now.

Satisfied with Christ

The next picture we came to was of Israel being brought to Joseph, Joseph coming to meet Israel his father, and the words from Israel to Joseph — “Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive” (Gen. 46:30). Joseph is a beautiful type of Christ exalted, and Israel has come to the place in the spirit of the great Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in perfect satisfaction. Christ is exalted, and Jacob is contented because Christ is exalted. “Now let me die.” Oh, this restless, discontented, striving man, this man of care has come to contentment and satisfaction, and now it is not because he has got somewhere and got something, but because this other one is alive. Satisfied with Christ, self removed, Christ on the throne; satisfied.

Glory to God through Israel

And then — and what a different end it might have been — the next picture. Israel dies and is buried, but oh, what a burial, what a picture of honour to Israel. Everybody comes, everybody mourns with great mourning and lamentation for

this one for whom they were so grateful. Thank God for Israel, thank God for what He did in that man's life, thank God for the great transition and transformation, thank God for all the fruit that has come from that life! There was a great mourning. It is an honourable burial. Jacob might have passed out in dishonour but for Peniel. He passed out in honour and glory because of Peniel.

Do you want to come to restful contentment? Do you want to come to an end where people can say, Thank God for the remembrance of So-and-so, their life meant something very much of the Lord. When you met them, you saw the work of grace, you saw what God can do in a life! It is a pity they have gone, the earth is the poorer for their departure! We are not wrong and it is not selfish, to desire that. Do you not hope, I do, that when we have gone people will say, Well, not, 'Good riddance; but now the world is the poorer, there is something less of the Lord, something less of the heavenly Man here.' That will be to the glory of God, and it all hinges upon this — the crisis in the life of the child of God where that self-strength, self-will still unbroken, unshattered, and that ability still to stand up and be erect, has met its match and master in God, and has been broken, with all the wonderful consequences of being broken. Are you a broken man or woman, a broken Christian? Has the self-strength been maimed? Do you know that you cannot go upright in your own strength? Do you know that your own soul is marked by the finger of God and marked down to impotence, that you dare not, cannot, assert yourself in the old way? It turns upon the cross. "I have been crucified with Christ ... it is no longer I ... but Christ" (Gal. 2:20). The earthly man has passed out, the heavenly Man has taken his place. "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is of heaven."

CHAPTER SEVEN

[CHAPTER SIX IS MISSING FROM THIS SERIES]

THE MEEKNESS OF THE HEAVENLY MAN

We have, in the earlier six gatherings of this Conference, been led to contemplate that great divine thought-intention in having man constituted after God's own heart. With that intention, God proceeded with the creation, coming to man, and said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26). So He proceeded and produced the first of that race which was intended by Him to bring Him perfect satisfaction. But we saw that man marred; then God, through the link of faith with a chain of men down the centuries showing in each of those men some glimmer of His thought. Each

one of them revealed, through His in-working, some constituent, among many of the marks of that marring and spoiling, traces of the works of the devil, of the man that God was after, but all of them coming short of perfection. Then in the fulness of the times, God sent His own Son, made of a woman, the incarnation by which the heavenly Man was introduced into this world. He came, as we saw, to do two things. First, to put the former man out, bring him to an end, and then, through the cross, to establish the second Man, the last Adam, in his place, and all God's concern and all the concern of every believer should be His, the formation of man according to Christ, the bringing of Christ in His nature, His manhood, into fulness personally and corporately in His body, the church. Our main emphasis is upon the nature of what God is therefore, from the beginning, seeking to realise that heaven's verdict upon our having been here on this earth as Christians will be entirely a matter of how much Christ has been here because we have been here; not the many things that Christians are often occupied with as objective things, but just how much the Lord Jesus has been here because we were here.

Now we shall spend this time in contemplating this heavenly Man who has come in and who has come to stay, and whom God is with, whom God has established forever, who is going right through to God's end. We are to look at Him. We shall not see all. If we only see one thing, and that one thing comes to us through the eyes of our hearts and therefore makes for conformity to His likeness, our meditation is not in vain.

Pride the point at which the first man was marred

We come then to look at the heavenly Man, to whom it is the intention of God to conform us, apart from which conformity our Christianity has no meaning and we have failed. So we have to start with the second Man, the last Adam, the heavenly Man, at the point where the former man was marred, where Satan did his basic work, for this Son of God as Son of man was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and those works are primarily in man. We have to see that the Lord Jesus, in incarnation, started right at the point where Satan's works were done in man, where the first man was marred, and at what point was that? There is one word which includes the whole range of satanic works, but which is the root of all the works of Satan, and that word is pride. We know from what the Scriptures tell us that it was when pride was found in his heart, that the great rift and rupture took place between God and that covering cherub, Lucifer, that Son of the Morning. "Thy heart was lifted up because of thy beauty" (Ezekiel 28:17), pride was found in his heart. We know that he lost everything of his dominion, his rulership, through pride. He lost his glory, he

lost his place with God, through pride. And, in order to rob the first Adam of his divinely appointed and intended destiny as ruler over the creation, to spoil God's work, it was just on that particular point that he commenced. The question of pride — that is the original sin — is where Adam failed.

I am not going to stay to analyse the temptation and the fall. It is perfectly clear it was a matter of pride. It was a revolt against being less than Satan suggested he might be. Through pride, Satan fell, and through pride, Adam fell, and it is the basis and root of all sin. If we were capable of understanding and knowing and apprehending, we should be able to trace pride in some way through all our troubles.

The meekness of the Heavenly Man

It was there that the second Man, in order to destroy the works of the devil in man, in order to put aside the earthly man, that the heavenly Man began, and the one great, all-comprehensive word about Him is *meekness*. Meekness was found in Him, even before He came here into this scene. Being on an equality with God, He thought it not something to be grasped, to be held on to; He emptied Himself, becoming in the form of a man (Phil. 2:6-7). You see His beginnings. There is no proud, ostentatious entry into this humanity, this world, among men. There is nothing whatever that this world would take account of according to its own standards. His beginnings are in the utmost meekness. It is not just a pretty story of the stable and the manger and no room in the inn and all the humble circumstances. It is a divine principle at work, the mightiest principle in God's universe now for the destroying of the very works of the devil. God is getting right down to the roots of things. There is nothing here to make an impression, nothing impressive from the world's standpoint. Yes, spiritual forces are in operation, heaven is active, but no miracles to see that He has a propitious beginning. It is all very simple. He has entered in in meekness — mighty, and to the kingdom of Satan it is terrible meekness.

Then, as He comes out before us in full manhood, we are able to mark His stand against the spirit of this world and its god, which is the spirit of pride, the spirit of fleshly glory, the spirit of natural impossibility. What a stand He made against the spirit of this world, and that spirit of this world which had invaded Israel, the Jewish nation in its worst form, for the worst form of pride is spiritual pride. He found His greatest antagonism in the realm where spiritual pride was seated and rooted among the Jewish rulers. They would not have Him because He did not come up to standard according to their worldly ideas. He annoyed and provoked them because of His utter other-worldliness. Their ideas were worldly ideas. The most scathing things that He ever said were said

in connection with spiritual pride. The Pharisee went up to the temple, lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “I thank thee that I am not as the rest of men”, I do this, I do that, and so on (Luke 18:9-12); spiritual pride. And to them He said, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do” (John 8:44). You cannot get further back than that and deeper than that, and He simply meant pride, the pride of Lucifer, is the actuating motive of everything. “How can ye believe, who receive glory one of another?” (John 5:44).

But note, it was not what He said, it was what He was. He was the contrast. We can talk about pride and talk about humility or meekness. The real power is not in what is said; it is in the person, what the person is. He was the contrast in Himself.

Obedience the hallmark of meekness

Then we are told by the apostle that, after emptying, humbling Himself, He became obedient. If there is one thing that is the hallmark of meekness, it is obedience. The apostle says “obedient unto death”, and then He adds — “yea, the death of the cross”. Could there be anything more humbling? Could there be anything more demanding and requiring more meekness than to be obedient unto the death of the cross? We might be willing to be obedient unto death, if it could be the glorious death of a martyr who would be conspicuously, manifestly, laying down his life in a glorious way. The cross to the Jew was the very synonym for being cursed of God. “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3:13). To the Roman this was degradation when the Roman idea is one of strength. Their whole idea of manhood was strength and to be crucified meant utter weakness and denial of everything in manhood — shame, degradation. To the Greek, foolishness, a contradiction of all wisdom. To think you are going to get anywhere by being crucified! If you are going to be successful, you will never go to a cross! “Obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross”. Can meekness go further than that? No! Well, this is the man that God is with. This is the man according to God’s eternal thought. This is the man who is destroying the works of the devil in His own manhood. This is the man who is going right back to the very root of all satanic activity and rule it out in His manhood, and He is doing it by meekness. He is not assailing the works of the devil objectively. He is getting down to them subjectively, He is dealing with them in their nature. He goes to the cause before He touches the effect. It is the very essence of things. The works of the devil are not just the things that have come from the devil but the reason why they have come, and the reason is pride, and this Son of man is destroying those works in their nature, their essence, by meekness.

God committed Himself to the Lord Jesus on the ground of His meekness

That is why the Father committed Himself to the Son. We have quoted so often in this series John 2:24-25 — “Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for that He knew all men, and because He needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for He Himself knew what was in man.” But God has committed Himself to this man. “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him” (Matt. 17:5). God was with Him, God committed Himself to Him, to the Son. “The Father . . . hath given all things into His (the Son’s) hand” (John 3:35). And He did so; He committed Himself and all things to Him sheerly and purely on the ground of His meekness. Sometimes God cannot commit Himself to us because of our pride. There is no doubt about it, the least little blessing that the Lord gives us, and up comes old Adam and begins to glory. Oh, how pleased we are; how gratified we are, if something nice is said about us or about something we have said or done. And how little do we go down in meltedness of heart and tears, and thank God that ever He should have been able to say or do something through us that was a help. God cannot commit Himself. We are little used because it is not safe. We are so little blessed because it is not safe. We at once get into the picture. God could commit all things to the Son, and God could commit Himself to Him without the slightest fear, with no reserve, because of His meekness.

Moses a foreshadowing of Christ in his meekness

Moses is a beautiful type foreshadowing this one particular thing. We said that each link in the chain of men represented some feature of this heavenly Man, and it says about Moses, “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3). Well there you see his outstanding distinguishing characteristic and the result was, “The Lord spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (Ex. 33:11). He did not speak to him by an intermediary; He did not speak to him — as the word literally is there — in parables, “dark speeches” (Num. 12:8); He spoke openly face to face. What a thing to be able to say about a man! The Lord spoke to Moses mouth to mouth (Numbers 12:8). But you have to put the two things together. “Now the man Moses was very meek.” Then the Lord revealed to Moses the whole heavenly pattern. Moses had an open heaven, a full, clear and very detailed revelation from God Himself of the things in the heavens. “Now the man Moses was very meek.” The two things go together. The day came when in his own family circle, his brother Aaron and his sister Miriam, are evidently

talking somewhere aside. The spirit of pride and jealousy rose up, and they began to talk disparagingly about their brother Moses. “Hath the Lord indeed spoken only with Moses?” — he is taking too much on himself. Somewhere out of earshot this secret conspiracy was going on. God heard, overheard, and God came down and said, You three come out here, appear before Me at the door of the tent. God took up the case of Moses. The meekness of Moses became the awful terror of Aaron and Miriam. It was the ground on which God called them to account in the most solemn and terrible way. God vindicated Moses because he “was very meek”.

The Lord Jesus meek and lowly in heart

It is just a faint foreshadowing of this One who, far more than Moses, at far greater cost than Moses, was meek and lowly in heart. Did God speak with Him face to face? “The father ... hath given all things into His hand”. Has God disclosed to Him His eternal counsels? Oh yes! Has God vindicated Him? Why, you know there was a day when His own brethren after the flesh called Him into question, and the apostolic writer says — “Even his brethren did not believe on Him” (John 7:5). But you find them among the apostles later on calling Him Lord, the Lord Jesus; one of His own brethren after the flesh saying about his Brother, the Lord Jesus. You see the way of meekness, its importance with God and its undercutting power where Satan’s works are. So He was able to say with every right: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in *heart*” (Matt. 11:29).

True meekness is of the heart

I can quite visualise that we will take this in all sincerity and good meaning, and then we will go away and say, We are going to be meek; and we will put it on. We will begin to talk in a certain way that we think is a meek way of talking; we will begin to say things that we think are very meek things. We begin to behave, and to look very meek. Beware! Satan will just get what he is after and spoil the whole thing. “Meek ... in heart.” It is not something put on, not something from the outside, not the tone in which we speak — a miserable tone thinking it sounds meek. It is not when we begin to use self-deprecating words about ourselves, talking about what poor things we are, letting people know that we feel we are the worst of everything. That is not meekness. There are a lot of other things that could be imitation meekness. Now I do not believe that, if we had met Jesus in the days of His flesh we would have met anything like that, a poor whining tone. I do not believe He went about whining, and I do

not believe that He ever said anything about Himself as to what a poor creature and specimen He was. I do not believe for one moment that He drew attention to Himself in that way. I believe we should have found a man every bit a man, with nothing to despise so far as His manhood or his speech were concerned. He was meek and lowly in *heart*, and only God knows the heart, and God can read through all our make-believe. I am not saying that you have to go away and try to be meek and put on meekness. I am saying that you have got to be conformed to Christ, and you have to put yourselves into the hands of the Spirit of God to do it, and when He does it, or begins to do it, don't begin to kick. This, as we said in a previous meditation, is going to be a deep heart formation, very deep down in the heart, no make-believe, no mockery with God, but reality. We shall be stripped of our pride and everything that accounts for our pride, all that which would in any way make us think something of ourselves, deceive ourselves. "If a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Gal. 6:3). That does not mean that if any particular man thinks himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. That means about *all* men — if any believe they are something when they are nothing, they deceive themselves. All that deception is going to be destroyed. It is pride that is at the root of deception. Adam was deceived, but it was his pride that deceived him. There is nothing more deceiving than pride. Oh, the foolishness of it! You have only to look down upon men from a high enough standpoint, and all the cause of pride has gone. You have only got to go ten thousand feet up in a plane and look down on the earth and see men like ants crawling about, and yet marvellous beings in their own eyes. Get God's standpoint of these men who strut about the earth thinking themselves to be something. What are they from God's standpoint? "When he is nothing, deceiving himself." The Lord Jesus was not deceived in that way. He was meek and lowly in heart.

Some characteristics of meekness

Where shall we begin or end when we begin to speak about meekness? Oh, how different meekness is in its whole behaviour, when you look at it in the case of the Lord Jesus. Well, meekness in Him found no revengefulness. "When He was reviled, (He) reviled not again" (1 Peter 2:23). When they said evil things about Him, there was no revengeful attitude, no revengeful spirit. He gave His back to the smiters (Isa. 50:6). He did not come back to get even. There is nothing revengeful about meekness. Meekness is never offended. It is pride that is offended. But how few of us can be talked to straightly, have things pointed out to us that are painfully amiss and doing harm, and take it meekly and not be offended or show offendedness. Meekness is not offended. Remember

this. Meekness has no airs; it is not superior. Read John 13 again. “Ye call me your Teacher and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet” (John 13:13-14). In the form of a bondservant, laying aside His garments, taking a towel and a basin, pouring water into it, and washing the disciples feet. This is not some act of condescension. This is Himself. It is not put on and He is not acting. It is Himself, it is His Spirit. So we could go on, and on, analysing meekness.

We have not been talking about meekness. The subject was the heavenly Man. This may be one outstanding, or it may be an inclusive feature of the heavenly Man, but you see we started this series with the phrase “born from above”. “Ye must be born from above”, and you know quite well that you do not have somebody who is born, and then begin to stick virtues on to them afterward. It is what they are born with coming out. “Born from above” means that this is inherent in what is from above. It is that, it is a very part of our birth; it may be immature, not very much developed, but it is what is there by the work of the Spirit. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). He is the Spirit of meekness. I would set meekness as the supreme feature of what is from above.

What remains then, as we close for the moment, is that we should really have dealings with the Lord about this. We are not going through to God’s end, we are not going to pass on and even leave this world a success from heaven’s standpoint, unless supremely, in all, through all, this Spirit of the heavenly Man has marked us with the Spirit of meekness. It will in itself determine how much of the work of the devil has been destroyed in manhood; the measure of Christ in terms of meekness. Recognise the importance of this. It is Christ, no less than Christ, and all the mighty meaning of Christ as the Firstborn among many brethren, as the beginning of that race, that manhood, that humanity, which eventually is to reach God’s appointed destiny and fulfil God’s eternally determined purpose in this universe. All is bound up, to begin with, with this matter of meekness. We shall not, in this series, have time to speak on other features of the heavenly Man, but if this one thing takes hold of our hearts, something will have been done which will carry with it many, many other things and open the way for the Lord to do very much more.

To be continued.