

humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:14). As it is written, "He humbled Himself, wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him" (Philippians 2:8-9).

Listen to the words from John's Gospel, in which our Lord speaks of His relationship to the Father, and see how unceasingly He uses the words *not*, and *nothing*, of Himself. The *not I*, Christ, is the very spirit of what Christ says of His relationship to the Father.

"The Son can do *nothing* of Himself" (John 5:19).

"I can of My own self do *nothing*; My judgment is just, because I seek *not* Mine own will" (John 5:30).

"I receive *not* honor from men" (John 5:41).

"I came down from heaven, *not* to do Mine own will" (John 6:38).

"My doctrine is *not* Mine" (John 7:16).

"I am *not* come of Myself" (John 7:28).

"I do *nothing* of Myself" (John 8:28).

"Neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me" (John 8:42).

"I seek *not* Mine own glory" (John 8:50).

"The words that I speak unto you, I speak *not* from Myself" (John 14:10).

"The word which ye hear is *not* Mine" (John 14:24).

These words open to us the deepest roots of

Christ's life and work. They tell us how it was that the Almighty God was able to work His mighty redemptive work through Him. They show how important Christ counted the state of heart which became Him as the Son of the Father. They teach us what the essential nature and life is of that redemption which Christ accomplished and now communicates.

Christ was nothing, that God might be all. He resigned Himself with His will and His powers entirely for the Father to work in Him. Of His own power, His own will, and His own glory, of His whole mission with all His works and His teaching, He said, "It is not I; I am nothing; I have given Myself to the Father to work. I am nothing, the Father is all."

Christ found this life of entire self-renunciation, of absolute submission and dependence upon the Father's will, to be one of perfect peace and joy. He lost nothing by giving everything to God. The Father honored His trust and did all for Him, and then exalted Him to His own right hand in glory. And because Christ had thus humbled Himself before God, and God was ever before Him, He found it possible to humble Himself before men, too. He was able to be the Servant of all. His humility was simply the surrender of Himself to God, to allow the Father to do in Him what He pleased, no matter what men around might say of Him,

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Abraham

affections centered, not on the transitory things of time and earth, but on those eternal realities which, lying beneath the veil of the visible, are revealed only to faith.

These are the pilgrims. For them the annoyances and trials of life are not so crushing or so difficult to bear, because such things as these cannot touch their true treasure, or affect their real interest. They are children of a sublimer realm. The pilgrim has no other desire than to pass quickly over the appointed route to his home, fulfilling the duties, meeting the claims, and discharging faithfully the responsibilities devolving on him, but ever remembering that here he has no continuing city, and seeks one which is to come.

The Apostle Peter wrote to scattered strangers (1 Peter 1:1), and reminded them as *strangers and pilgrims*, to abstain from fleshly lusts. And long before that day, in the sunniest period of Jewish prosperity, David, in the name of his people, confessed that they were *strangers and sojourners as were all their fathers*.

We left the patriarch moving leisurely southward, and thus he continued to journey through the land of promise, making no permanent halt, until he reached the place of Sichem, or Schechem, in the very heart of the land where our Lord years later sat and rested by the well. There was no city or settlement there then. The country was sparsely populated. The only thing that marked the site was a venerable oak. Beneath this oak on the plain of Sichem, the camp was pitched; and there, at last, the long silence was broken, the silence which had lasted since the first summons was spoken in Chaldaea. "And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land; and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him" (Gen. 12:7).

He did not stay there permanently, however, but moved a little to the south, to a place between Bethel and Ai, where there is now a high and beautiful plain, presenting one of the finest tracts of pasturage in the whole country.

Three things can engage our thought here: the Tent, the Altar, and the Promise.

1. THE TENT. When Abraham left Haran his age was seventy-five. When he died he was one hundred and seventy-five years old. And he spent that intervening century moving to and fro, dwelling in a frail and flimsy tent, probably of dark camel's hair. And that tent was only a befitting symbol of the spirit of his life.

He held himself aloof from the people of the land. He did not stay in any permanent location, but was ever on the move. The tent which had no foundations, which could be erected and struck in half-an-hour, was the apt symbol of his life.

To the end he dwelt in a tent. It was from a tent that he was carried to lie beside Sarah in Machpelah's rocky cave. "Abraham dwelt in tents, because he looked for the city which hath the foundations" (Heb. 11:9-10 avy). The tent life is the natural one for those who feel that their fatherland lies beyond the stars.

It is of the utmost importance that the children of God should live this detached life as a testimony to the world. How will people believe us, when we talk about our hope, if our hope does not pull us from excessive devotion to the things around us?

We must not go on as we are. Professing Christians are too much taken up in business cares, in pleasure seeking, in luxury, and self-indulgence. There is little difference between the children of the kingdom and the children of this generation.

Yet how is it to be altered? Shall we denounce the present practice? Shall we inveigh against the reckless worldliness of the times? This will not affect a permanent cure. Let us rather paint with glowing colors that city that John saw. Let us unfold the

glories of that world to which we are bound, and surely there will come into many a life a separateness of heart and walk that will impress men with the reality of the unseen, as no sermon could do, however learned or eloquent.

Come Down Into Egypt

2. THE ALTAR. Wherever Abraham pitched his tent, he built an altar. And long after the tent was shifted, the altar stood to show where the man of God had been.

Let us also remember that the altar means sacrifice, whole burnt offering, self-denial, and self-surrender. In this sense the altar and the tent must ever go together. We cannot live the detached tent-life without some amount of pain and suffering, such as the altar bespeaks. But it is out of such a life that there springs the most intense devotion, the deepest fellowship, the happiest communion.

If your private prayer has been lately hindered, it may be that you have not been living enough in the tent. Confess that you are a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth; and Abraham building an altar so long as he dwelt in Charran; he could not have fellowship with God while living in open disobedience to Him.

But Abraham's altar was not for himself alone. At certain periods the whole clan gathered there for common worship. "I know Abraham," said God, "that he will command his children and his household after him" (Gen. 18:19). He, in whom all families of the earth were to be blessed, practiced family religion; and in this he sets a striking example to many Christians whose homes are altarless.

3. THE PROMISE. "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12:7). As soon as Abraham had fully obeyed, this new promise broke upon his ear. And it is ever thus. Disobey—and you tread a path unlit by a single star. Obey, live up to the claims of God—and successive promises beam out from heaven to light your steps, each one richer and fuller than the one before. The separated pilgrim life always acquires promises.

There was no natural probability of that promise being fulfilled because "the Canaanite was then in the land." Powerful chieftains like Mamre and Eshcol, flourishing in towns like Sodom, Salem, and Hebron; the elements of civilization—all were there. The Canaanites were not wandering tribes. They had settled and taken root. Every day built up their power, and made it more unlikely that they could ever be dispossessed by the descendants of a childless shepherd.

But God had said it; and so it came to pass. I do not know what promise may be overarching your life with its bow of hope; but this is certain, that if you fulfill its conditions, and live up to its demands, it will be literally and gloriously fulfilled. Do not look at the difficulties and improbabilities of the Promiser. Promise after promise will light your life.

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Come Down Into Egypt  
Genesis 12:10

The path of the separated man can never be an easy one. It is a life, therefore, which is possible only to faith. When faith is strong, we dare cut ourselves adrift from the

Schwabbe's  
True Spirituality

Yet I have a feeling that even people who have been well taught about salvation, and many other aspects of Christian life or doctrine, often find the idea of Christ the bridegroom bringing forth fruit through Christians as his bride a rather exotic and surprising or at least, abstract, doctrine. But surely this cannot be a surprising doctrine, if it is not isolated from the teaching of the Bible concerning the supernaturalness of the total universe in which we live.

This is the Bible's message, and when we see it so, and are in this framework, rather than the naturalistic one (which comes in so easily upon us) the teaching that Christ as the bridegroom will bring forth fruit through me ceases to be strange. The Bible insists that we live in reality in a supernatural universe. But if we remove the objective reality of Christ the bridegroom bringing forth fruit through us immediately falls to the floor, and all that Christianity is at such a point is a psychological and sociological aid, a mere tool. As soon as we remove the supernaturalness of the universe, all we have left is Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, in which religion is to be simply a sociological tool for the future. In Julian Huxley's concept of romantic evolutionary humanism, religion has a place, not because there is any truth in it, but because in the strange evolutionary formation, man as he now is simply needs it. So it must be administered to him, because he needs it. Remove the supernatural from the universe, in thinking and in action, and there is nothing left but *Honest to God*, which deals only with the fact of anthropology, and has nothing to say to questions of the reality of communication with God. We are merely shut up to anthropology, psychology, and sociology, and all that we say about religion in general—and Christianity specifically—falls to the ground except as it relates to a mere psychological mechanism. All the reality of Christianity rests upon the reality of the existence of a personal God, and the reality of the supernatural view of the total universe.

However, now I wish to move on to another positive concept, consequent to this. The true Bible-believing Christian is the one who lives in practice in this supernatural world. I am

not saying that no one can be saved and go to heaven unless he lives in practice in this supernatural world. Happily this is not so, or none of us would go to heaven, because none of us lives this way consistently. What I am saying is that the true Bible-believing Christian is one who does so. I am not a Bible-believing Christian in the fullest sense simply by believing the right doctrines, but as I live in practice in this supernatural world.

What does this mean? According to the biblical view, there are two parts to reality: the natural world—that which we see, normally; and the supernatural part. When we use the word "supernatural," however, we must be careful. The "supernatural" is really no more unusual in the universe, from the biblical viewpoint, than what we normally call the natural. The only reason we call it the supernatural part is that usually we cannot see it. That is all. From the biblical view—the Judaistic-Christian view—reality has two halves, like two halves of an orange. You do not have the whole orange unless you have both parts. One part is normally seen, and the other is normally unseen.

I would suggest that this may be illustrated by two chairs.<sup>1</sup> The men who sit in these chairs look at the universe in two different ways. We are all sitting in one or other of these chairs at every single moment of our lives. The first man sits in his chair and faces this total reality of the universe, the seen part and the normally unseen part, and consistently sees truth against this background. The Christian is a man who has said, "I sit in this chair." The unbeliever, however, is the man who sits in the other chair, intellectually. He sees only the natural part of the universe, and interprets truth against that background. Let us see that these two positions cannot both be true. One is true, one is false. If indeed there is only the natural portion of the universe, with a uniformity of natural causes in a closed system, then to sit in the other chair is to delude oneself. If, however, there are the two halves of reality, then to sit in the naturalist's chair is to be extremely naïve and to misunderstand.

<sup>1</sup>For a more complete treatment of this, see the last chapter of my book *Death in the City*, published by Inter-Varsity Press.

stand the universe completely. From the Christian viewpoint, no man has ever been so naïve, nor so ignorant of the universe, as twentieth-century man.

However, to be a true Bible-believing Christian, we must understand that it is not enough simply to acknowledge that the universe has these two halves. The Christian life means living in the two halves of reality: the supernatural and the natural parts. I would suggest that it is perfectly possible for a Christian to be so infiltrated by twentieth-century thinking, that he lives most of his life as though the supernatural were not there. Indeed, I would suggest that all of us do this to some extent. The supernatural does not touch the Christian only at the new birth and then at his death, or at the second-coming of Christ, leaving the believer on his own in a naturalistic world during all the time in between. Nothing could be further from the biblical view. Being a biblical Christian means living in the supernatural now, not only theoretically but in practice. If a man sits in the one chair, and denies the existence of the supernatural portion of the world, we say he is an unbeliever. What shall we call ourselves when we sit in the other chair but live as though the supernatural were not there? Should not such an attitude be given the name "unfaith?" "Unfaith" is the Christian not living in the light of the supernatural now. It is Christianity that has become a dialectic, or simply a "good philosophy." As a matter of fact, I think very strongly that Christianity is a good philosophy. I think it is the best philosophy that ever has existed. More than this, it is the only philosophy that is consistent to itself and answers the questions. It is a good philosophy precisely because it deals with the problems and gives us answers to them. Nevertheless, it is not only a good philosophy. The Bible does not just speak in abstractions; it does not tell about a religious idea far away. It tells about man as Man. It tells about each individual, as each man is that individual. And it tells us how to live in the real universe as it is now. Remove this factor, and it becomes only a dialectic.

As I have said, I am in one chair or the other at any given moment. Unhappily, the Christian all too often tends to vacillate

late between the two chairs. At one moment he is in the chair of faith, and at another moment he is in the chair of unfaith. Once I have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior, I am saved because I rest in the hands of Jesus Christ and on the basis of his completely finished work. But God still deals with me as a man; I am not a machine, I am not a figure of metal. It is perfectly possible for a Christian to alternate from one chair to another. But if I am trying to live a Christian life while sitting in the chair of unfaith, certain things are true. First of all it is done in the flesh. I do not care what my activity may be; I do not care how much noise I make about soul-winning evangelism, or exotic things, for example. It is still in the flesh. I have put myself, the creature, at the center of the universe.

Second, if I am trying to live a Christian life while sitting in the chair of unfaith, I am only playing at it, rather than being in it, because the real battle is not against flesh and blood, but is in the "heavens," and I cannot participate in that battle in the flesh. In times of war, while the big brothers are away in the real battle, the little boys at home play soldiers. They act like soldiers all right, but they have no contact with or any influence on the real battle being fought. When I try to live a Christian life while sitting in the chair of unfaith, I am just playing at war. I am not in contact with the real battle at all.

Third, the Lord will not honor our weapons if we are sitting in the chair of unfaith, because they do not give him any honor or glory. In fact, they steal the honor and glory from him, even that of being totally the Creator and the center of the universe. Paul speaks of this when he says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Hudson Taylor said, "The Lord's work done in the Lord's way will never fail to have the Lord's provision." He was thinking primarily of material provision, but surely he would also include the whole provision. I would paraphrase his saying like this: The Lord's work done in human energy is not the Lord's work any longer. It is something, but it is not the Lord's work.

At this point, two questions arise. The first is this: If the real battle is "in the heavens," then are the "heavens" a

long way off? And secondly, Does not our individual part in it really become rather unimportant?

First, then, are the heavens, according to the Scriptures, a long way off? Is the supernatural world remote? The answer is very decidedly, "No." The Mount of Transfiguration makes it very, very plain that the supernatural world is not a long way off. One does not have to take a space ship and fly for two generations, producing the second generation in flight, in order to reach the supernatural world. The supernatural in this case was at the top of the inclined plane of the mountain. There was sequence involved, so that when they came down it was just the next step. This is the emphasis of Scripture, that the supernatural world is not far off, but very, very close indeed.

Speaking of Christ on the Emmaus road, Luke wrote: "And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight" (Luke 24:31).

It would in fact be better to translate: "He ceased to be seen of them." Luke does not say that Christ was no longer there. In this particular place they simply *did not see him* any longer. John 20:19 and 26 gives the same emphasis. This view is not shut up to the one historic moment, following the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the structure of the Scripture. The supernatural structure of the Scripture carries with it the emphasis that the supernatural is not far away, but near at hand, all about us; the supernatural is not just yesterday and tomorrow, it is today.

This is equally to be found in the Old Testament.

"And Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him, and when Jacob saw them he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of the place Mahanaim" (Genesis 32:1, 2).

The Hebrew name "Mahanaim" means "two hosts" or "two camps." And one camp is as real as the other. One is not a shadow and fiction, a product of Jacob's mind. They were two equal hosts; in the first place his own, made up of his own family, and his animals, and all the rest; and the second one, angels, who were just as valid and real, and just as near at hand.

But perhaps the classic passage on this subject is 2 Kings

6:16, 17. Here Elijah is surrounded by an enemy, and the young man who is with him is terrified. But Elijah says to him: "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." To the young man this must have seemed pretty cold comfort at that moment. But very quickly it became a realistic comfort, an actuality: "And Elijah prayed and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elijah." At that moment the young man did not have any more problems! From our present point of consideration, however, the significant thing is that the prayer was not that something would come. It was already there. The only difference was that the young man's eyes had to be opened to see what Elijah already saw. The supernatural was not something far off, it was there. All the young man needed was to have his eyes opened to see it.

When one refers to the supernatural, immediately the naturalistic man is determined to get rid of it. He is determined to argue that it is not there. That is why liberal theology—which is naturalistic—tries to make a theology that will stand when there is nothing left but anthropology. This is really where the battle of truth is being fought throughout the world. But if we see this, then we have thrust upon us the necessity, the high calling and the duty, to live in the light of the existence of the two parts of the universe, the seen and the unseen parts, in the realization that the heavens are not far off. They are about us here.

Now for the second question. If the real battles are supernatural, in the "heavens," is not our part in them rather unimportant? A comment of the apostle Paul relates to this: "For I think that God has set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men" (1 Corinthians 4:9).

Here Paul makes the most fantastic claim, if one views it from merely a naturalistic viewpoint or sitting in the chair that we have called "unfaith." The word in the Greek which is translated as "spectacle" has nothing to do with our modern