

“CHRIST AS LORD.”

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WHEN I was invited to read this paper on the subject of “Christ as Lord,” I was given, very thoughtfully, an indication of what was expected by a reference to 2 Corinthians x. 5, from which the following was quoted: “Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” From this I presume my task is to emphasise the lordship of Christ by the complete surrender of the believer to Him, so that Christ controlling the springs of thought directs all the activities of the Christian’s life.

To give the widest possible meaning to the word “Lord” as applied to Christ, we must consider some of the titles given to Him in the New Testament.

First Διδάσκαλος, which in the New Testament is used of one concerned about teaching the things of God. It is used of John the Baptist in St. Luke iii. 12: “Then came also publicans to be baptised, and said unto him, Teacher, what shall we do?” It is applied by St. Paul to himself in 2 Timothy i. 11: “Whereunto I am appointed a herald and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.” And above all, it is used of Christ in St. John xi. 28: “The Teacher is come, and calleth for thee.” If Christ is Lord, then His teaching must be authoritative, and the Christian evangelist can say with the Old Testament prophet, “Thus saith the Lord.” A weakness in modern evangelism is that in some quarters an emphasis is placed upon human experience out of all proportion to that placed on the teaching of Christ. The result being, in many cases, when the influences of mass psychology are removed, the convert, through lack of sound doctrine, drifts into a state of indifference to religion from which it is even more difficult to save him. Backsliding is a common experience after all evangelistic missions, even when sound doctrine has been given; how much more is it a danger when doctrine is omitted. It is worth reminding ourselves that the amazing results from St. Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost followed an address packed with doctrine. He explained the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Ghost as a fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy; he speaks of the Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ as spoken of by David, and concludes by convicting them of the Death of Jesus, whom God “hath made . . . both Lord and Christ.”

The Lordship of Christ involves a knowledge of His teaching in the heart of the Evangelist and an authoritative prominence given to that teaching in his message.

The second title given to Christ in the New Testament to which I will refer is Καθηγητής, meaning guide or leader. It is a word closely allied in meaning to Διδάσκαλος, and is only found once in the New Testament, in St. Matthew xxiii. 8, where Christ uses

it of Himself when He says, "One is your guide, even Christ." The word was a dignified name for a teacher, but was discarded as a title. It is modern Greek for professor. But returning to its meaning of *guide*, and its association with *one who teaches*, it suggests the idea, not so much of a teacher to be heard, as one to be followed. And the Lordship of Christ demands not only following His teaching, but following Him. Christ's challenge to men was "Follow Me." Now, following Christ does not only satisfy the needs of one's own soul, but awakens a sense of responsibility towards others. Thus Andrew, as soon as he had made the great discovery that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, "First findeth his own brother Simon." Finding Christ initiates a search for men, receiving Christ necessitates His being given. An outstanding feature of our Lord's ministry is His dealing with individuals, and the Bible is consistent in its witness to God's estimate of personality. From the days of Abraham to modern times, God has carried out His purposes through the careful choice of individuals. And when the banner of the Cross was unfurled in Europe, it was not through the deliberations of a Committee sitting at Ephesus; but a man staying at Troas saw a vision, and the result of his obedience was the evangelisation of this continent. And St. Paul, more than any man, knew Christ to be both Lord and Guide.

The third word to which I would draw your attention is 'Επιτοράνης, "overseer," which occurs only in St. Luke's Gospel, and for the first time in chapter v, verse 5, where we read, "Simon answering said unto Him, Master (or overseer), we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net." From the context we learn that our Lord had borrowed Simon's boat from which to preach to the crowd on the shore of the lake. Sitting on one of the thwarts of the boat, with Simon probably sitting behind Him, Christ preaches and Simon listens. The effect of the sermon upon Simon was such that when the Lord told him to let down the nets for a draught, he recognised at once Christ's authority and right to superintend his fishing, although he had toiled all night in vain. The Lordship of Christ carries with it His Right to superintend all that concerns our lives; not only in the realm of spiritual things, but even in that realm which is concerned with our business, or investments, if we are fortunate enough to have any of the latter. To Simon the draught of fishes meant money and probably a ready market amongst the crowd which still lingered on the shore. In this instance, the Lordship or Superintendency of Christ meant two things: first, considerable material gain; and secondly, the glad surrender of it all to follow Christ, for in verse 11 we read, "And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed Him."

In the fourth place, I would mention the word Δεσπότης. Here we have a word that is used of a master in relation to his slaves, and when applied to the Christian in relation to Christ, does not suggest unwilling and compulsory service, but rather absolute ownership. A slave had no rights, even his children might be disposed

of according to the whims and fancies of his master. The stories of the crucifixion of slaves by their masters are evidence enough of the cheapness in which their lives were held. But as though such a relation were not sufficient to teach the absolute ownership of Christ, we find in 2 Timothy ii. 20, 21 the word *Δεσπόνης* used of the owner of inanimate things. "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." The thought is that of complete ownership, that we may be prepared and used for whatever work the Master chooses.

And the last title I would refer to briefly is *κύριος*. This word means owner and master, and so carries the thought of possession, but it is also a title of honour, expressing respect and reverence. In this sense the word is used of God as Ruler of the Universe; and of Christ as the Messiah. Thus it brings out, more than any other title of our Lord, the thought of His Godhead.

From this introduction to the subject of our study, we may learn something of what is included in the thought of the Lordship of Christ. It involves accepting His teaching as our final authority in all things necessary to salvation; following His lead in all matters of Christian service; obeying His commands in recognition of His ownership, and giving Him our worship because of His Deity. In other words, the Lordship of Christ involves for us sound doctrine, clear guidance, willing obedience and reverent worship.

From this it is clear that the Lordship of Christ involves nothing less than the consecration of the mind, will and heart of those who follow Him. The Lord demands a holy and separated people. And this is no new idea in the revelation of God's plan of salvation for the world, through the people of His choice. The position of the Jew in the Old Testament and the Christian to-day is of Grace, and through no human merit. This is made clear in Deuteronomy vii. 6, 7, 8: "For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loveth you, and because He would keep the oath which He hath sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

And again in the New Testament by such verses as St. John xv. 16: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain." And again in 1 John iv. 19: "We love Him, because He first loved us." I quote such verses as these because they teach us that consecration to the Lord is not to be regarded as the price of Christian discipleship, but rather as its privilege. A privilege, because it is the choice of God's love

for His people ; and surely we can trust such love. The rebellious attitude of many towards the teaching of consecration is because of the negative way in which it is often presented ; as when a new convert is immediately told of all the things which must be given up, without any convincing reason having been put forward for such a course of action. Oftentimes the psychological result is first of all genuine perplexity, and then rebellion ; and things which would be far better out of a young convert's life are retained, not because he particularly wants them, but because of an unsympathetic as well as unscientific approach to one whose mind and heart is in the surge of a new emotion. I appeal for a positive emphasis on the privilege of consecration, which will call out everything in a man for the service of God ; and soon the things that used to amuse, perhaps quite harmless in themselves, will be relegated to the lumber room of broken and forgotten toys.

Another thing about consecration is that it is a condition of God's service. Not that what I am can merit my being used by God ; but He does choose agents for His work who are wholly at His disposal. As an evidence that God is not limited to the consecrated in His choice of servants, we have the case of Moses, who made repeated objections to God's choice of him as the deliverer of God's people out of Egypt, insomuch that we read, “the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses” (Exodus iv. 14). Also there was Jonah, to whom the word of the Lord came saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it ; for their wickedness is come up before me” (Jonah i. 1). Against this Jonah openly rebelled, for in response he, “Rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord” (Jonah i. 2). Neither of these men can be said to have been chosen because of their willing obedience, but because of divine grace. On the other hand there are such men as Noah, who “Found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (Genesis vi. 8), belonging to a generation that the Lord determined to blot out ; a man that did “According to all that God commanded him” (Genesis vi. 22), and so was chosen as a saviour of the race. Or again Saul of Tarsus, who at the time of his conversion said, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ?” (Acts ix. 6), and from that moment demonstrated, more than any other man, what the Lord can do with a life wholly consecrated to His Will.

And again, Consecration is surely what Christ should expect from us as our rightful Owner. St. Paul says, “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own ? For ye are bought with a price : therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Cor. vi. 20), and St. Peter tells us that the price was “the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter i. 19), while the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, “We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews x. 10). If, therefore, through the Cross we are God's purchased and sanctified possession, there can be no question as

to what our part in consecration should be. Persuaded, as surely we must be, of consecration as the reasonable demand of Christ as Lord, in the teaching of Holy Scripture, we cannot fail to make some inquiry into the fact that such a relationship to our Lord neither characterises nor interests many who are undoubtedly followers of Him. Why is this ?

First of all because many of us do not believe it is necessary. We say we have not time to go to Conventions for the Deepening of Spiritual Life, implying that such meetings are only for those who have the leisure and inclination ; but those who work hard can hardly be expected to attend such luxuries. Also we do not believe God can do what He promises ; and like the report of the majority of spies sent by Moses into the promised land, who returned saying the cities were too well fortified, and the people too strong to be conquered, we argue the standard is too high and attainment is impossible, and we advise our people, by our attitude, if not by our words, that it is better to be content with a second best. And thus we vote against the spirit of a Joshua and a Caleb, who said, " If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us." A second reason why so many give little heed to what is involved in the Lordship of Christ, is because they are too compromised in the indulgences they allow themselves. What these indulgences are it is not for me to enumerate, as they will vary with the temperament and circumstances of a man's life. One man may do things, not because he is indulging his own desires, but because of the circumstances of his life, or relationships in his home, which he feels necessitate his giving way. Such actions may be easily misjudged, and often are ; so that what is really a man's sacrifice is misjudged as his indulgence. It ill becomes us, therefore, to judge one another, as few know all the facts of another's life. I mention this because my endeavour is to lead us each to examine our own reaction to Christ as Lord, and not judge one another.

A third reason is disobedience to the Voice of God. Sometimes a man receives an inner urge to surrender something, but cannot understand why. As he reasons with himself about the demand of this inner voice, he can discover nothing wrong in the thing in question. He knows better men than himself who do this same thing. As far as he knows he is not doing himself nor anyone else any harm in what he is allowing. But still, in spite of the soundness of his reasoning, the inner urge persists and conscience grows tender on the matter of his disobedience, until at last he surrenders and so finds peace. I remember such an occasion in my own curate days, and when I told my vicar of my action some weeks later, he said : " I knew nothing of what you had done, but I have realised a new power in your sermons the last month." In saying this I have referred to things which, as far as we can see, are not wrong in themselves, but have an important bearing on our relationship to Christ as Lord. I have done this deliberately, because if a thing is in itself wrong, then there is no question of what our attitude

ought to be towards it. Alas ! we are often not strong enough to cast out sin, and frequently disappoint our Lord in doing that which is wrong in itself as well as committing the sin of disobedience over that which in itself is not wrong, though it may become the test of our loyalty. And it is on this latter point mostly that the question of “ Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ ” comes into prominence.

There is a fourth reason why many Christians do not concern themselves with the claims of Christ as Lord. And it is because such claims are too seldom taught to the average congregation as an integral part of the Gospel. Too many regard the Gospel as containing only the message of cleansing from sin through the precious Blood of Christ, and not including the glad news of consecration to Him as Lord. St. Paul makes clear to us what he thinks in his defence before Agrippa, when he refers to his conversion and commission to go to the Gentiles, “ To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me ” (Acts xxvi. 18). Such a verse gives the scope of the Gospel as reaching from revelation to sanctification, and I believe it is our duty when we preach the Gospel to preach it all, and to include in our message to men the privilege of sacrifice for Christ’s sake, and His rightful claim to all that is ours because He is Lord. Such a Gospel I find bears fruit, not only in conversions, but in offers for whole-time service. I wish it were not left so much to party Conferences or Interdenominational Conventions to emphasise such a truth as Christ as Lord. I wish the subject could be found in a place of first importance on the Agendas of Convocation and the Church Assembly, and be dealt with by men of recognised position, ability and spirituality, with emphasis on spirituality ; so that the challenge of Christ as Lord might go out to the world with the backing not of one Conference, but of the whole Church. In saying this I believe I am expressing what thousands within the Church are feeling, both amongst the clergy and laity. The man in the street is growing weary of listening to ecclesiastical discussions on economic and social problems for which experts can find no solution ; and all the talk about applying Christian principles to world politics does not move him like the appeal that comes through a life governed by Christ Himself, as Lord of heart, lip and limb. One is glad to know of the Archbishops’ Commission on Evangelism, but cannot some note of urgency be struck by this Conference so that the Archbishops and Bishops be stirred to make an apostolic appeal to both Church and nation to remember and consider the words of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, “ That God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Surely the time is ripe for a Crusade to be launched on a large scale, with these words as its battle-cry, to bring us all to a fresh realisation that it is our sin which crucified Christ ; and that it is equally our privilege to make Him Lord, as it is to receive Him as Saviour.