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EDITORIAL

A GOOD PIECE OF EXEGESIS IS OFTEN INSPIRING, WHILE a poor attempt may contribute nothing but uncertainty and confusion. However, such study is so valuable to the Bible student that he may well pay the price of early hazy results, if only he may at last come into a clearer and finer appreciation of the message conveyed by the text.

Every preacher should be able to read his Greek Testament and to enter intelligently into the problems of its translation. If wise, he will not do this to air his "learning" in the pulpit, but that he may increasingly come to think in the very literary atmosphere of the writers themselves and more deeply and broadly comprehend their thought. Now and then a persistent lover of the Greek text arrives at a point where he may well offer the results of his work to his fellow students, often with great profit.

Under the head, Our Lord "Confesses" His Father, a study of Matthew 11:25-26 and Luke 10:21-22, Dr. McPheeters gives us an example of the interpretative value and the stimulating effect of such scholarship. In our American Standard Version the more important Greek verbs of these passages have less specific and significant meanings than are assigned to them in this

OUR LORD "CONFESSES" HIS FATHER

Matthew 11:25-26; Luke 10:21-22

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UNQUESTIONABLY *Ἐξομολογῶμαι* is the key word in this classical passage. A detailed examination of the history of its interpretation lies outside the scope of the present paper; the same is true of the harmonistic questions that have been raised in connection with the narratives in Matthew and Luke. A brief statement by Dr. Broadus, in his admirable Commentary on Matthew, will sufficiently summarize what is essential in the history of the interpretation of this verb; and that the sequence of events as given by Luke is historical and in harmony with that found in Matthew will be assumed.

Dr. Broadus, then, correctly says that, as renderings of *ἔξομολογῶμαι*: "The early and later English versions are about equally divided between 'praise' and 'thank.'" To this statement it will be enough to add that even where commentators depart from these renderings—as many of the best of them do—they are still careful to insist that ideas of "praise" and "thanksgiving" are present as subauditions in their proposed substitutes. Such, for the purposes of this discussion, is a sufficient statement of the facts of the history of the interpretation of the key word in this memorable utterance of our Lord.

That this rendering should have been so long practically unchallenged is remarkable. The difficulties presented by it will be found to begin—though by no means

to end—as soon as we frankly face the meaning that it imparts to our Lord's words as a whole. What this meaning is Dr. Broadus himself shall tell us. "The idea," he says, "seems to be, 'I fully recognize the propriety of thy course, I rejoice over it (consult Luke 10: 21) and praise thee for it.'" Again, this time commenting on the words, "Even so, Father," and expressing himself, if that were possible, even more plainly and pungently, Dr. Broadus paraphrases thus: "'Yea, Father (I thank and praise thee) that so it was well-pleasing in thy sight.'" Notice that this is not as often quoted, an expression of mere resignation. Our Lord acknowledges the propriety of God's sovereign course, and praises Him for it. Whatever pleases God ought to please us." It will be seen that unlike some other commentators—and I may add some very excellent ones—Dr. Broadus does not gloss matters. "What pleases God," he says, and says truly, "ought to please us," and did please Jesus. God finds pleasure, it seems, in hiding from the wise and understanding and revealing only unto babes the things pertaining to their peace; and Jesus rejoices, and thanks and praises Him for so doing. As evidencing piety and fearless loyalty to what one conceives to be the meaning of Scripture this is splendid, but it is not exegesis. As in the case of the "Light Brigade," so here we may be sure that someone has blundered. For, that we might have "strong encouragement" when confronted with the most perplexing problem of His moral government, "seeing that he could swear by none greater," God has been pleased to swear by Himself saying, "As I live saith Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked."

Happily, certain of the defects of the exegesis of Dr. Broadus lie, as it were, upon the surface. Thus,

for example, he treats the familiar phrase, "well-pleasing in thy sight," as though it meant pleases thee. Of course, it means nothing of the kind. The phrase has a purely technical significance. To say of anything that it is "well-pleasing in thy sight" means, not that it is something that produces in the divine bosom the emotional reaction designated by the word pleasure, but that it is something which approves itself to the divine wisdom as the thing which, under all the circumstances, ought to be done, as the thing which accords best with God's "vast designs," and that without regard to whether the primary effect of doing it will be to produce either in His bosom or in that of His creatures the emotion of pleasure or the reverse. God does not administer affairs upon eudaemonistic principles. "He doth not willingly afflict the children of men," but nevertheless He afflicts them. His acts are determined by His wisdom, and not by the primary emotional reactions that will follow them. Again the jealousy of Dr. Broadus for a spontaneous, and even spectacular, accord between the will of Jesus and that of His Father has precipitated him into attributing to our Lord emotions not only unnatural, but morally repellent emotions that are wholly foreign alike to His Father and to Himself. The same jealousy has hidden from his eyes the fact that as great moral splendor may attach—I will not say to "mere resignation" to the will of God, but—to a hardly achieved acquiescence in the will of God as can attach to even the most spontaneous accord with that will. But we need not dwell at length here upon these matters.

But for the fundamental explanation, both of the exposition of Dr. Broadus, and of the vitality of the traditional rendering of *ἑξομολογῆσαι*, we must turn now

to Luke 10:21. To that passage Dr. Broadus has himself referred us.

As it stands in the version of 1611, and in the Greek text lying behind that version, it reads: "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father," etc. This being the fuller and clearer passage has naturally determined the exegesis of Matthew 11:25. Obviously, if we are tied to "rejoiced" as the one and necessary meaning of ἡγαλλίασατο, then, painful or not, exceptional and startling or not, we have no option but to recognize the fact that it is here unequivocally said that the words spoken by Jesus were but the vocal expression of the joy that filled His spirit as He uttered them. Fortunately such is not the case. On the contrary this verb is as little tied to the meaning rejoice, as ἐξομολογῶμαι is to the meaning "thank" or praise.

Commenting on Matthew 10:25, Dr. J. A. Alexander calls attention to the fact that in Matthew 3:6, and "usually elsewhere," ἐξομολογῶμαι is rendered "confess." And a glance at any good Greek lexicon will show that the primary idea expressed by ἀγαλλιάω is that of exalted and pleasurable emotion. Exult is one rendering given both by Thayer and Young. Triumph would be equally appropriate as a rendering. Triumph differs from "rejoice" in that it implies opposition successfully encountered, conflict issuing in victory. Certainly the reasonable soul is susceptible of few, if any, more exalted and pleasurable emotions than that elicited by the consciousness of having overcome in a conflict that threatened its moral integrity with irretrievable ruin. Based upon a better Greek text than that of the version of 1611, the translation of Luke 10:21 in the versions of 1881 and 1900 strongly suggests

that the Evangelist is here recording the outcome of an experience similar to that through which our Lord was called to pass but a little while later in Gethsemane. It reads: "In that same hour he rejoiced by [margin] the Holy Spirit, and said," etc. Here both the phrase "in that same hour" and the phrase "by the Holy Spirit" are clearly and highly significant. The former phrase unambiguously implies that there was something singularly untoward in the circumstances by which Jesus then found Himself confronted. The latter phrase with as little ambiguity implies that so very untoward were these circumstances that it was only by an access of moral and spiritual strength graciously imparted by the Holy Spirit Himself that our Lord was enabled to utter the words that immediately follow.

Nor are we left to conjecture as to what it was in the circumstances confronting Him that bore so grievously upon our Lord's spirit. He Himself signalizes it for us in the words, "thou hast hidden these things"—that is, of course, the things pertaining to their peace—"from the wise and understanding, and hast revealed them unto babes." Hence what the Holy Spirit graciously enabled Jesus to do was to see in this hiding from the wise and understanding and revealing only to "babes" the things pertaining to their salvation an expression of "the absolute and sovereign will of God," and with unabated filial confidence to acquiesce in it as such. For clearly it is in the words, "Even so, Father: for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight," that this sublime utterance of our Lord reached its climax. The words "by the Holy Spirit" are without point, except as they signalize the extreme, the intolerable, bitterness of the conflict through which our Lord's spirit was passing "in that same hour." And they give us also the

true measure of the moral and spiritual majesty of His achieved acquiescence in this particular expression of "the absolute and sovereign will" of His Father.

With the true text of Luke 10:21 before us, therefore, no one can fail to perceive the incongruity of rendering ἠγαλλίασατο "rejoiced" and ἐξομολογούμεαι "thank" or "praise." Not only so, but the context also, both that which precedes and that which follows, protests against so rendering either verb.

In Matthew the "woes" or "alas's" pronounced by Jesus immediately precede, and are by the Evangelist himself formally and expressly connected with, His address to His Father. And in Luke the connection between the "alas's" and the address, while less immediate and less formal, is not a whit less real and intimate. But we know certainly that neither to Jesus nor His Father is the doom of the impenitent a matter of rejoicing. Nor is the rendering, "Jesus rejoiced * * * and said, I thank thee," less repugnant to the context that follows. To suppose that an emotional experience that began in rejoicing, praise, and thanksgiving, in the very next breath issued—to use Dr. Broadus' unduly depreciatory phrase—in "mere resignation" is worse than an anticlimax. It is incongruous and unnatural. Further, the protest of Matthew 11:26 (Luke 10:22) is re-enforced by that of Matthew 11:27 (Luke 10:23), "All things have been delivered unto me," etc. Matthew 11:27 was added by Jesus, so Dr. J. A. Alexander tells us, "to prevent all misconception of his own authority." This is intelligible enough on the assumption that, in the circumstances confronting our Lord, and in the antithesis between His own and His Father's will implicit in the words, "Even so, Father; for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight,"

there was that which created an appearance of lack of harmony between Himself and His Father. But otherwise this calm assertion of comprehensive fundamental harmony and intimate and pervasive co-operation between Himself and His Father has the appearance of being a theologoumenon, and a theologoumenon for the presence of which there is neither justification nor explanation. And so of Matthew 11:28-30. If by "my yoke" Jesus means a yoke that He Himself is even then wearing, a yoke that marks His own subjection to His Father, all becomes clear. That yoke does not gall Him, neither will it gall them, if like Him they "are meek and lowly in heart"; through Him they also can achieve acquiescence in "the absolute and sovereign will of God," an achievement possible only for those who have caught His filial spirit. But once we let go this clue furnished us by the context, then these words of our Lord, beautiful and appealing as they are, become a labyrinth in which we lose ourselves. All references to the yoke of the law merely add to our confusion. Thus we see that the context shuts us up, as it were, to find for *ἠγαλλιάσατο* some other translation than "rejoiced," and for *ἔσομολογούμαι* some other than "praise" or "thank."

If, now, for "rejoiced" in the traditional rendering of Luke 10:21 (Matt. 11:25), we substitute triumphed, and for "I thank" we substitute I confess, we will find that all of our difficulties disappear. The passage will then read: "In that very hour he triumphed by the Holy Spirit, and said, I confess thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding and didst reveal them unto babes."

The first and most obvious effect of this rendering will be that the words of Jesus here immediately relate

themselves to the theme that Matthew has been unfolding in the preceding context. That context extends as far back as the beginning of chapter 10, and from 10:24 on its main theme may be said to be confession. Further, not only is confession the theme of this larger context, but the implications of this pregnant term, as disclosed by this context, are just those needed to bring our Lord's address to His Father (Matt. 11:25-26) into vital harmony both with its own immediate, and with this larger context of which His address forms an integral part. What these implications are it behooves us to notice, both because the circumstances of our own time tend mightily to obscure them, and especially because it is only as we have them clearly before us that we can fully appreciate our Lord's confession of His Father. Obviously, as here used, confession is the acknowledgment of the validity of certain claims, and an acceptance of the relations and obligations involved in them. To confess Christ, for example, is to admit the validity of His claims to be our Saviour and our Lord, and to affirm our acceptance of and our reliance upon Him as such, and our allegiance and obligations to Him in both of these characters. So far all is plain and familiar enough.

Further, it is easy to see that confession always implies a challenge. This challenge may be explicit or merely implicit. It may amount to nothing more than the challenge always inherent in any and all claims simply as such; or it may be accentuated by the fact that the claims to which confession is the response are either generally ignored or denied. Frequently the mere course of events is itself the most crucial of all challenges. This is always the case when, had the claims been well founded, we would have reason to expect that the course

of events would have been different from what we find it actually to be. Today the challenge to which confession of Christ is the answer is ordinarily so veiled and so vague as to obscure rather than to reveal the extent of the reliance and the quality of the loyalty demanded by Jesus of His disciples.

And it is just here that the larger context we are considering comes to our help. In Matthew 10:24-33 the extent of this reliance and the quality of this loyalty stand out as under a search-light. In that passage Jesus frankly forewarns His disciples that a time would come in their personal experience, when events would apparently give the lie to His claim; a time when, at least to the eye of what men mistakenly call "cold reason," there would be absolutely nothing to warrant the confidence that He had invited from them, and that they had accorded Him; a time when discipleship, so far from wearing the face of a privilege, would have become a source of peril and disaster. He forewarns them that that coming hour would seem to sound not only in Nature's, but in Reason's ear the call, "Every man for himself," cancelling all obligation in favor of the so-called primary obligation of self-preservation, and would seem to justify the call by apparently convincing evidence that He, Jesus, Himself had, on His part, failed to make good His claims, and to live up to His character. And to fore-arm them against the exigent peril of that hour our Lord further earnestly impresses it upon His disciples that the only confession of Himself by them that, in the day decisive for their final destiny, will elicit from Him an answering confession of them will be a confession that will sustain and survive the tremendous shock to which the quality of their loyalty to Himself and their confidence in His loyalty to them

were thus to be subjected by the facts of their own personal experience. Thus Jesus Himself makes the magnitude of the challenge with which His claims are to be confronted at once the test and the measure of the worth of a confession of Himself as Saviour and Lord.

The Evangelist next immediately proceeds to show by two concrete instances that the quality of our Lord's loyalty was itself subjected to a test of like rigor. Nothing inspires loyalty like loyalty. And doubtless it is to hearten disciples of every age in the hour of their trial, that we have in Matthew 11:7-11 the record of our Lord's confession of John the Baptist. It was well suited at once to illustrate and to justify the kind of loyalty that Jesus claimed for Himself. In John's case the course of events seemed to have discredited both his claims and his testimony. The brief hour of his popularity was now past. The Baptist lay a prisoner in Herod's dungeon. To maintain the divine authority of John's character as a prophet was to invite Herod's enmity. The mission from John that had just waited upon Jesus with their master's question: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" was little less than a challenge of our Lord's loyalty to His hardly bestead disciple, and subjected John himself to the suspicion of being "a reed shaken by the wind." Such were the circumstances under which Jesus evidenced His loyalty to His disciple, and, by pronouncing upon him His great encomium, confessed him before men.

Then, the "alas's" upon Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum intervening, in Matthew 11:25-30, the Evangelist records Jesus' confession of His Father, the comment by which He safeguarded it from misconception, and the tender appeal to His disciples that He based upon it. One purpose, perhaps the primary pur-

pose of the record here, as in that of our Lord's confession of the Baptist, was, we may be sure, to hearten His disciples for their confession of Himself. How could He more effectually do this than by evidencing His own loyalty to His Father, and His confidence in His Father's loyalty to Himself under circumstances that would test the reality and the quality of that loyalty and confidence quite as severely as the reality and quality of their loyalty to Himself were to be tested? His own example would forever answer the otherwise not unpalatable objection that the character of the loyalty and confidence in Himself that He had demanded of His disciples was unreasonable and impossible. It henceforth stands as an abiding assurance to the reasonable soul that, without discarding its character as a reasonable soul, it can accept the utmost test to which its loyalty to Jesus and its confidence in His loyalty to itself can possibly be put by the course of events; it stands as an abiding assurance that, come what may, the soul can still rationally hold fast its confidence in God, both as Father and as Lord of Heaven and earth. It would henceforth base an immutable rational conviction that no events lie outside the control of Him who is Lord of Heaven and earth, and that all events, even those most baffling to reason and most bitter to be borne, would ultimately be found to be in harmony with God's perfections and with His paternal love.

This view, namely, that one purpose of our Lord's open and public confession of His Father, and especially of the record of this confession, was to hearten His disciples, explains the stress laid by both Matthew and Luke upon the circumstances under which His confession was made. The former says: "At that juncture, Jesus answered and said," thus, as Dr. Broadus points out,

formally connecting our Lord's confession of His Father with His "alas's" upon Bethsaida and its sister cities, and so admonishing his readers that, if they wish adequately to understand the confession of Jesus, they must view it in the light of the challenge of the circumstances to which it was in effect an "answer."

Luke's language is even more arresting. "In that very hour," it reads, "he triumphed by the Holy Spirit, and said." The words, "In that very hour," of themselves remind us that our Lord's confession of His Father derives its chief significance from the circumstances confronting Him at the time. But it is the added statement, "he triumphed by the Holy Spirit," that is most pregnant with suggestion. They imply that such was the character of these circumstances that, but for the timely and gracious succor of the Holy Spirit, they might well have fatally obscured from our Lord's vision either the paternal love of His Father or His Father's lordship of Heaven and earth, or both. Lordship of Heaven and earth means, of course, the sufficiency of His Father's wisdom and power to control and shape to His own ends all events. Let us, then, now proceed to examine our Lord's confession itself and the circumstances that gave it its significance and its worth.

"I confess thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight." Such is our Lord's confession. It is immediately followed by the words: "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father; and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to

reveal him." These words, addressed to His disciples, are a calm and sublime affirmation by our Lord of the fundamental accord and co-operation obtaining between Himself and His Father. That they were spoken proves that they were not uncalled for. They were primarily designed to safeguard His disciples against any misconstruction of the antithesis between His own and His Father's will implied in His confession itself. That antithesis in its turn must have arrested the attention of His disciples, and emphasized the fact that the course of events evidenced, at least to all appearances, a disastrous lack of harmony of purpose and action between Jesus and Him whose Son and Servant He claimed to be. Looking deeper for a moment, it may well be that it was by bringing vividly to consciousness in our Lord's reasonable soul and vitalizing the great truths embodied in this profound utterance that the Holy Spirit succored Jesus and enabled Him to "triumph" "in that very hour." If so, in giving expression to these truths Jesus, like Paul, comforted His disciples with the comfort wherewith He had Himself been comforted by the Holy Spirit. Certainly they provided a soil in which a sane optimism might root itself, and from which it could derive deathless vitality.

The words, "Even so, Father: for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight," with which our Lord His confession closes, and to which His solemn utterance that we have just been considering immediately attaches itself, will serve as our best approach to a consideration of the confession proper. As already stated, these words are an expression of our Lord's "acquiescence in the absolute and sovereign will of God." The fundamental notion of the word "acquiescence" is merely that

of the acceptance of the will of another. Such acceptance may be unforced or forced, reasoned or unreasoned. Its ethical quality may be neutral, ignoble, or noble and ennobling. Which of these it will actually be will depend upon the nature of that which is accepted, and the motive determining the acceptance. Of course, when, due to mere mental and moral inertia, there is nothing admirable in acquiescence in the will of another. And where such acquiescence arises from cowardice or mere regard for one's own selfish interests it is positively degrading. On the other hand, the acquiescence that is determined by worthy, rational, and moral considerations does honor at once to him to whom and to him by whom it is accorded. In this case one measure of the worth and moral grandeur of acquiescence will be the cost at which it is accorded. This leads me to say that the reasonable soul can render no loftier, worthier homage to God, nor can it perform an act worthier of or more ennobling to itself than to acquiesce in "the absolute and sovereign will of God." That this is no exaggeration will become obvious as soon as we pause to permit the meaning of this pregnant, this portentous phrase to unfold itself before our minds.

"The absolute and sovereign will of God." The mere words themselves fill the reasonable soul with solemn awe. Intelligently used, they are to it a crucial reminder of its limitations, of its insufficiency to itself, of the fact that it exists by, at, and for the will of Another, and He one whose "judgments are unsearchable and his ways past finding out." Unreasonable souls they fill with impotent rage and bitter scorn. Such souls deride "the absolute and sovereign will of God" as a mere lying euphemism, employed by pious weaklings as an anodyne to ease their anguish when omnipo-

tent caprice is cruelly mocking and sporting with their human helplessness. To refer events to "the absolute and sovereign will of God" is but an indirect way of saying that they are events that do not carry their explanation or justification upon their face, and for which reason can find none. That is to say, they are events the wisdom, justice or goodness of which is not discernible by human reason. Such events baffle reason and dismay conscience. The dilemma that they create for the reasonable soul is as obvious as it is poignant. To refuse to refer events of this character to the will of God is to deny that God's will is really sovereign, or, to state it differently, is to deny that God is in any real sense "Lord of heaven and earth." And to do this is to leave both the soul and God in the unbreakable grip of omnipotent caprice. On the other hand, to refer such events to God is apparently to deny God's paternal love and care, if not indeed to transform God Himself into malevolent caprice, or else it is to pronounce human reason and conscience an inadequate and useless equipment. But obviously any of these views spells despair; any of them turns the universe into a moral mad-house, and brands man's boasted rational and moral powers as a mere species of megalomania. No wonder, then, that such events create a crisis for the reasonable soul. Much more is this true, when, as here in the case of our Lord, "the sovereign and absolute will of God," no longer a matter merely to philosophize about, comes stark between the soul and the whole thrust and drive of its most cherished desires and worthiest and most strenuous efforts, and their intended goal. Such experiences constitute for the reasonable soul the supreme test both of the rationality and the reality of its confidence in God as "Father," and as "Lord of heaven and earth."

But, paradoxical as it may sound, while such experiences create for the soul its sorest dilemma, they also provide it with its noblest opportunity. To escape its dilemma and to grasp its opportunity the reasonable soul has only to accept in a filial spirit the yoke of its creaturely limitations, and to recognize the fact that even when clouds and darkness are round about it, righteousness and judgment are still the foundation of God's throne. Than such acquiescence in His will, as at once sovereign and likewise paternal, the reasonable soul can render no loftier homage to God; nor is it capable of any nobler or more ennobling assertion of its confidence in the integrity of its own rational and moral powers. This, then, was the homage that Jesus offered His Father in saying: "Even so Father; for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight."

But if we wish to know the greatness of our Lord's triumph, the splendor and worth of His confession as an act of filial homage to His Father, we must proceed to inquire what precisely was "the absolute and sovereign will of God" in which, in this instance, Jesus acquiesced, and what His acquiescence cost Him. What it was in which He acquiesced we learn from the words to which His acquiescence immediately attaches itself, "for thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding and didst reveal them unto babes." What this meant for Jesus we shall best learn by noting in some detail the circumstances confronting Jesus when He spoke these words and the situation that He sums up in them.

Speaking generally, then, our Lord's great confession was made when "the things concerning" Him were hastening to their end. His Galilean ministry, punctuated by His visits to Jerusalem at the Passovers

and other yearly feasts, lay behind Him; and the close of His ministry as whole, now so near, lay clearly in view. Its course and its outcome, both for Himself and for those whom He had come not to condemn, but to save, could now be fully appraised. It is a dull ear that fails to catch the hints dropped by the evangelists that show how thoroughly this matter of the outcome of His ministry, in both of its aspects, had for some time been engaging the thoughts of Jesus. The question addressed to the disciples at Caesarea Philippi: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" indicates our Lord's interest in the kind of reception men were giving to His claims. How far this was from being to Him a matter of small concern is apparent from the question: "Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation?" It reminds one of the question put by Jehovah to Israel: "What more could I have done unto my vineyard than I have done unto it?" That He was profoundly stirred at the thought of what was in prospect for Himself is no less evident. If His soul did not shrink from that prospect, what meaning is there in the statement that, "he set his face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem"? Or how can we explain the fact that, as "they were on the way, going up to Jerusalem," Jesus' bearing was such that His disciples "were amazed," and that as they followed Him they "were afraid"? Evidently the mind of Jesus was busy, painfully busy, with the outcome of His ministry.

But the immediate occasion of our Lord's confession was the return of the seventy and their report on the outcome of their ministry (Luke 10:17-20). The striking thing about the record here is the not unnatural, but too easy and ill-grounded, optimism of the seventy, and our Lord's failure to fall in with it. He does

indeed see in their favorable report a forecast of the final triumph of His own mission, but their success creates no illusions for Him. Indeed, the very naïvete of their irrepressible elation, not unmingled apparently with a certain sense of self-importance and self-sufficiency, only served to bring home to Him vividly and painfully their immaturity. And their "stony ground" optimism, quick to spring up and, because it derived its entire vitality from the shallow soil of temporary success, destined soon to perish, served but to cause the outcome of His own mission, so tragic both for Himself and for others, to press with the more poignant bitterness upon His own heart. For His "alas's" upon Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum are still warm upon His lips and weighing heavily upon His spirit.

Now, perhaps, we are in a position better to understand what is implied in Luke's words: "In that very hour he triumphed by the Holy Spirit, and said, I confess thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth: for thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes. Even so, Father." Hidden "from the wise and understanding" and revealed only to "babes," such is our Lord's summing up of the outcome of His ministry as a whole. How sharp, how painful the contrast between what it ought to have been and what it actually was. On any other lips such language, uttered under such circumstances, would be the very essence of caustic irony, chagrined defeat, cynical, self-mocking despair. But here as elsewhere our Lord's words are untainted either by chagrin, cynicism, or despair. No doubt, His applying the term "babes" to His disciples does indicate that He recognized and even felt keenly their limitations, both absolute and relative. But to find in it an expression

of cynical contempt, either for them or for the fruitlessness and bootlessness of His ministry as represented in them, would be worse than gratuitous. On the contrary, on our Lord's lips the term "babes" here implies rather the gracious, tender, affectionate, sheltering interest that His insight into their limitations awakened in His bosom for His disciples. Further, that His words are not a veiled outburst of chagrined defeat and despair, is evidenced by our Lord's calm and sweeping assertion: "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father." Such language breathes the assured conviction that, all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, both the past and the future belonged in reality to Himself.

At the same time, we should not shut our ears to the natural, nay—unless we strip them of all their proper significance and force—the necessary implications of the sharp and pregnant contrast embedded in the words, "thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and hast revealed them unto babes." For if no taint of cynical self-mockery attaches to the latter term, just as little does any taint of cynical irony attach to the former. To assume that His rejection by the "wise and understanding" was a matter of indifference to our Lord is simply to denaturalize Him, to deny to Him the possession of "a reasonable soul." Certainly wisdom and understanding of themselves constitute no bar sinister, explaining why "these things" were hidden from those possessing these high endowments. For high endowments they are. Everywhere in God's Word they are declared to be among His best and most to be coveted gifts. Everywhere they are represented as among the brightest and most priceless ornaments of the soul made in the likeness of God, "only wise." Our wisdom, therefore, will be to accept without the least dimi-

nution the natural implications of our Lord's own terse summing up of the visible outcome of His ministry and mission—"hidden from the wise and understanding," revealed only "unto babes"—and frankly to recognize the poignant surprise and regret and the heart-breaking disappointment with which it is resonant.

On any other interpretation of His words our Lord's ministry becomes an insoluble riddle, and He Himself a psychological and ethical enigma, His "reasonable soul" a docetic delusion. How, for example, are we to explain to ourselves the "mighty works" done in Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum, the Galilean centers of Jewish culture, the home and gathering place of the "wise and understanding," or the "alas's" based upon them, unless these "mighty works" were done with the desire and design of actually commending our Lord and His claims to the minds, the hearts, and the consciences of the "wise and understanding"? "More tolerable," He exclaims, "for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment" than for Bethsaida and Chorazin, "more tolerable for the land of Sodom" than for Capernaum. Our ears tingle, our minds are confounded, and our hearts stand aghast before the abysmal misery implied in the terrible energy of such a contrast. Are we, then, to suppose that the heart of Him who uttered this appalling "Alas" felt no anguish at the thought that the doom He pronounced was but the inevitable moral recoil of the failure of these Galilean cities to make proper response to His tireless efforts to avert from them just such a doom? The mere thought itself is monstrous.

We pay but poor tribute to our Lord's Deity, or to our own confidence in it, by denying to His humanity its most obvious and fundamental rights and stripping it of its noblest characteristics. He had given three

years of unparalleled activity to His Galilean ministry. He had mingled day after day with "the wise and understanding" on their streets and in their market places; He had preached to them in the synagogue and on the hill-side; He had been accorded a place at their festivities and at their funerals; as a guest in their homes He had reclined at their tables and eaten their salt; He had taken their tots upon His knee, and pressed their heads to His bosom; He had healed their sick, and comforted their mourners; days of labor among them had been followed by nights of prayer; He had stirred their hearts to the depths and filled them with wonder at "the gracious words that proceeded out of his lips"; He had seen the multitudes of Galilee swept by enthusiasm—unintelligent and unspiritual, it is true, but still genuine enthusiasm—until they were ready to take Him by force and make Him their king; He had seen their hunger and had had compassion on them, their sicknesses and griefs and had been moved with compassion for them, their spiritual desolations and destitutions and had been stirred with compassion for them; and now, as the curtain falls upon the tragedy of His Galilean ministry, His grief breaks forth in this solemn, this dreadful "Alas for thee, Chorazin! Alas for thee, Bethsaida!"

And yet we hesitate to admit to ourselves that His understanding was perplexed and baffled, His heart burdened with disappointment and anguish by this "mysterious failure of His public ministry!" Well, we need not. Long before this time the prophet Isaiah, when he foresaw His labors and their meager results, had foretold that the Servant of Jehovah in the bitterness of His soul would exclaim: "I have labored in vain, and spent my strength for naught and vanity." We see Jesus as with this "mysterious failure" behind Him

He sets His face steadfastly towards Gethsemane and Calvary—and yet we hesitate to admit to ourselves that, as this “horror of great darkness” gathered round Him and settled down upon His soul, the Son of Man’s vision of His Father’s paternal love and sovereign control of all things grew dim and that His star of hope threatened for a moment to disappear. Well, again I venture to say, we need not. Certainly those who a little later stood at the foot of His cross saw in the tragedy there being enacted a challenge to God’s paternal love, and sovereign power. For they said, fearing no contradiction: “He trusted on God, let him deliver him now, if he desireth him. For he said: I am the Son of God.” That was a challenge that only God Himself could answer, and He even only by the miracle of the resurrection and the glory of the ascension.

Indeed, it is only as we lay aside all needless fears for the dignity of our Lord’s Deity and accept the facts of the Gospel record and their natural implications without abatement, that we can hope to appreciate the wonder and the adoring reverence implicit in the words of the Evangelist when he says: “In that very hour he triumphed by the Holy Spirit, and said, I confess thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth: for thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes. Even so, Father: seeing that so it was well-pleasing in thy sight.”

Further it is only as we appreciate the immeasurable strain to which our Lord found the rationality of His confidence in the power and love of His Father being subjected by the outer circumstances and inner experiences of that hour that we can really appreciate the calm majesty of the assurance with which He puts away from His own and other minds the notion of the possi-

bility of any final and real miscarriage of His mission, the possibility of any fundamental lack of accord and co-operation between His Father and Himself, saying: "All things have been delivered to me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him."

Finally, when we ourselves stand confronted with "the absolute and sovereign will of God," no longer merely as a perplexing theory, but now for ourselves a bitter fact of personal experience, it will be only as we grasp the solemn realities of our Lord's experiences that we can know the full preciousness and the sweet persuasiveness of the appeal: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light," as will be yours, if your acquiescence in "the absolute and sovereign will of God," like mine, be grounded in the assurance that God is your Father, and that He is also "Lord of heaven and earth."

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